

The woes of a ‘Straight-jacketed’ Central Business District’: The case study of Odum, Kumasi

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Abstract: Kumasi is the traditional and administrative capital of the Ashanti Region. The location of its Central Business District (CBD) is, literally, in the geographical centre of the city, surrounded and hemmed in by residential facilities, thus bringing in its wake a myriad of problems; congestion of both human and vehicular traffic, inadequate sanitary facilities, poor refuse management, swarms of ubiquitous hawkers, lack of parking spaces, etc. The growth in population has led to a commensurate growth in economic activities but its physical growth cannot be accommodated on the current area of land. This problem has led to high land values, gentrification, and transformation, with residential buildings being converted into commercial facilities without the corresponding requirements, such as parking. Buildings which could be considered part of the national heritage are being renovated, converted or demolished in order to build “modern” commercial buildings. This paper, which is based on a study of Odum in 2006, highlights some of the adverse challenges of a CBD straining at the hems to expand, and the ingenious ways entrepreneurs and the metropolitan authorities are adopting to resolve and resource it.

Keywords: Odum; central business district; gentrification; strait-jacket; congestion;

INTRODUCTION

In most African countries there has been an increasing preoccupation, at policy level, with issues of shelter, employment, poverty, decentralization and municipal reforms. This development has been fuelled by the urgency of addressing the challenges posed by rapid urbanization on the African continent. At the 2005 African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development held in Durban, South Africa, it was observed that in less than two decades, half of the continent’s population will be disposed to living in urban centres and as such, relevant and effective strategies were needed to be adopted to eradicate some of the major menaces associated with such rapid urbanization. Among others, there is the need to improve governance, stimulate local economic development and promote human development as a whole. Current rates of urbanization in Africa exceed 4 to 5 percent in most cities and are therefore close to those of the Western cities at the end of the nineteenth century. One in three African cities plagued by poor governance, poverty, inequalities, destruction of physical and social infrastructure, etc. are most often within war-torn countries (Auclair 2005:1).

However, in the a sub-Saharan African country of Ghana, the causes of most of these problems could be attributed to expansion without economic growth; lack of political will, decisive planning and reforms; corruption; and a penchant by the population to disregard the cities’ regulations and bye-laws, among others. Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana after Accra, is both the traditional and administrative capital of the Ashanti Region with a population of 1,170,270 (2000 census). The CBD is literally in the geographical centre of the city, surrounded and hemmed in by residential facilities. This has brought in its wake a myriad of problems which are progressively impinging on the proper workings, growth and sustainability of such a vital resource; congestion of both human and vehicular traffic, inadequate sanitary facilities, poor refuse management, swarms of ubiquitous hawkers, lack of parking spaces, etc. With the growth in population there has been a commensurate growth in economic activities as well. However, the physical land area of Odum cannot accommodate this increase since it is in the very centre of the capital, surrounded by residential facilities, and as such its lateral expansion is being adversely constrained.

This problem has led to a phenomenon of a combined form of transformation and gentrification, where land lords are ejecting residents in old derelict buildings and converting them into commercial facilities (gentrification) without the corresponding sanitary, parking and even energy requirements. Some local investors have even found a way out by building houses on the outskirts of the city for some families prepared to sell their properties, (especially the indigenous residential compound houses built in mud, with their own peculiar and unique characteristics) demolish them outright and built 'modern' commercial buildings (transformation) thereby changing the character and skyline of the Odum precinct.

This paper, which is based on a study in 2006, would highlight some of the challenges found on Prempeh II Street, the major commercial axis of Odum, since it is believed that problems encountered within this section are a microcosm of challenges within the CBD, in general. It looks at how the CBD is straining at the hems to expand, modes of gentrification and transformation, the ingenious ways by which both the public and the metropolitan authorities are adopting to resolve and resource it, reasons why some of these measures have been ineffective and to recommend, where appropriate, some remedies.

THE CITY OF KUMASI AND ODUM, THE STUDY AREA

Kumasi lies at the centre of a network of roads covering almost the whole of Ashanti and links Northern Ghana, (See Figure 1) as well as the Brong Ahafo Region, with the rest of Southern Ghana. It is known to have the largest open market in the West African sub-region. The beginnings of Kumasi date from the early years of the 20th century with the building of the fort (presently converted into a military museum) in Odum and as such is part of the historic core area. This fort was built to prevent the Ashantis from invading the coastal tribes – as such the colonial government had a military force based in Kumasi. The fort, as reported by Abloh (1972), played a significant role in facilitating the in-migration process, as “commercial transactions could now be conducted in relative security” (Korboe 2001:43). Traders from all parts of the country began transacting business in Kumasi. This, therefore, explains the spontaneity associated with the location of Odum as a CBD. These trading activities were obviously characterized by the building of residential dwellings in and around it.

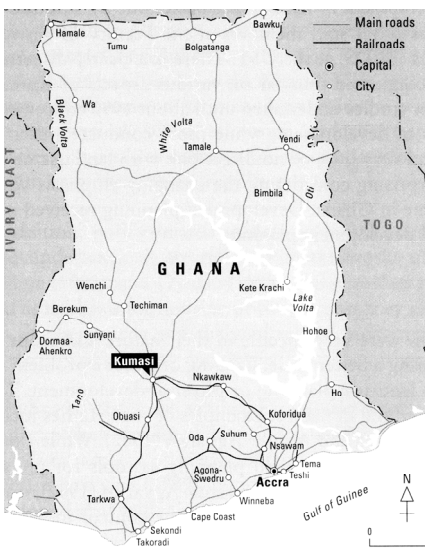


FIGURE 1: Kumasi's location in Ghana.



FIGURE 2: Current major land uses in Kumasi.

The study area of Odum is part of the CBD of the Kumasi metropolis and also, as stated earlier, part of the original nucleus of the city which expanded to embrace other suburbs of the city of Kumasi. The study area is bounded on the North by Stewart Avenue, on the South by Guggisberg Road (now renamed Osei Tutu II Street) and Bogyiwa Street. The Zongo Road bounds the East and on the West by the State Transport Company Road (now Nkwantanan Street). The CBD enjoys a relatively high level of accessibility to several parts of the city as well as the major transportation hub – Kejetia Lorry Park. A few metres away from the city is the Central Market. Even though the precinct within which the study took place is zoned as a commercial area, it has a considerable degree of mixed residential/commercial facilities within it. There are derelict structures, usually residential, which are located on prime land with very high land values. Three important landmarks observed within the precinct

were the Odumhehe's (Chief of Odum's) Palace and Mausoleum of the first Queen of Ashanti, the Palace and Mausoleum of the Akyempemhene of Kumasi, and Kumasihene's (king of Kumasi) Palace.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

There are about 52 buildings along the principal commercial street of Odum (Prempeh II Street) along which the study was conducted. Buildings ranged from single storey to five storeys high. Most were solely for commercial use while a considerable number were for mixed use (office, shops, residential), with the rest being Civic Buildings. Methods of data collection were both quantitatively and qualitatively based, with formal interviews of landlords and occupants of 30 out of the 52 buildings chosen for the study. These interviews covered alterations, conversions, use of space, degrees of ventilation and lighting, availability or access to sanitary facilities, parking, etc. The 30 buildings were chosen randomly, but covered all categories of storey heights; seven (and 15 buildings) out of the 11 one-storey and 33 two-storeys were selected, respectively. All the three to five storey buildings were included since they were few in number. Photographs of some buildings and streetscapes were also taken for contextual analysis. It must be stated that data on most of the properties within the study area were non-existent and as such, dates of construction and conversions of the buildings were based on inferences and verbal information by some surviving landlords and occupants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Characteristics of Odum

The city of Kumasi was planned and modeled on a radial ring road pattern with a centrally located city centre, where all roads from the other parts of the city converge at Odum. The development of Odum as a CBD was somehow spontaneous, evolving out of the way of life of the inhabitants of the city. The presence of the fort became a sort of magnet, attracting traders to transact business in its 'security shadow'. Buildings in Odum were primarily residential, until the growth of commercial activities. With its location and surrounding residential suburbs, Odum can only grow vertically, as the physical land area cannot support the physical lateral growth in commercial activities. It can, however, grow vertically if the status quo is to be maintained. Odum is hemmed in on the North by the residential buildings in the suburbs of Bantama, on the South by Asokwa, on the West by Pataase and on the East Aboabo, all residential areas (See Figure 2). This peculiar situation of Odum has led to numerous problems for entrepreneurs, prospective developers and the Metropolitan Authorities. Since land is a scarce commodity, location and the physical area of Odum has, in a way, hampered growth in both physical and economic terms. In addition to this there is a plethora of problems of congestion, both human and vehicular, inadequate road network, energy deficiency, refuse management, hawkers, drainage, corruption, and general indiscipline on the part of the public, among other things. Pedestrian pavements have been taken over by hawkers, thereby forcing people to walk on the road itself and impeding the smooth flow of vehicular traffic. Most developers do not follow laid down bye-laws for physical development and the authorities also do not enforce the laws to the letter.

Gentrification and Transformation in Odum

All these factors stated above have resulted in a high level of gentrification within the precinct of Odum, a phenomenon which refers to a physical, economic, social or cultural activity through which inner city neighbourhoods are converted into affluent middle class communities, by refurbishment, remodeling or renovation, thereby increasing the property values and relocating the poor. With the location and activities in Odum, it is therefore not surprising that the only way the CBD can expand to accommodate growth in commercial activities is by 'feeding on itself' through this phenomenon. Odum is replete with both residential single and multi-storey compound houses (See Plate 1). This housing typology, which is also the traditional architecture of the area, is in a way, inadvertently facilitating this gentrification and transformation (Plate 1). This is basically due to the plan form of these compound houses; by just fixing a door in the wall abutting a major street, a room could be easily converted into a shop without any structural changes and inconvenience to the tenant in the room that shares a wall with this shop (Afram & Owusu 2006:94). By sealing off the door within the courtyard and using the newly installed door, the room conveniently changes from a private space to a public space. In this case the old tissue of the buildings are respected and maintained as in the normal mode of gentrification. In these instances, property developers and business entrepreneurs offer family members or landlords large sums of monies to vacate the ground floor of their residential accommodation in order to enable conversion into shops or commercial concerns. In rare cases where transformation takes place, the members of the family may be convinced to completely sell off the property at a price the family may feel satisfied with. The building is completely demolished and a new one built in its stead. This usually happens with derelict traditional



PLATE 1: Typical courtyard houses in Odum built with mud.



PLATE 2: A building constructed after complete demolition of an existing structure (Author).



PLATE 3: A derelict building under threat of being gentrified (Author).



PLATE 4: Uncompleted shops are even occupied before completion (Author).

courtyard houses, typical of the origins of Odum. This is rare, because as noted by Korboe (2001:53-54) and Adarkwa & Oppong (2005:87) Ghanaians usually do not consider a house as a commodity to be sold off completely. The phenomenon is, however, gradually changing since in the olden days houses were usually self-built by family members and as such are owned by the entire extended family. Presently, due to their contemporary lifestyles, Ghanaian families are becoming more nucleated and the selling of property is slowly but surely gaining ground. This combination of transformation and gentrification makes Odum a unique case.

Modes of gentrification / transformation

During the study, it was observed that there are, at least, two different modes or levels of gentrification and one of transformation. These are as follows:

Non-structural conversion of property

It was observed that the ground floor of the multi or single storey residential compound houses were usually rented out and easily converted within the existing structural framework of the building. This entailed partitioning of spaces and installation of doors in walls facing major streets, with minor renovation. Family members usually rent these out at higher rates and move out to acquire rented premises out of town, where rents are far cheaper. During the study, one owner converted a building with a minimum of four (4) shops and rented them out at as much as 15,000.00 Ghana Cedis (about \$10,000 at an exchange rate of 1.5 Gh C per dollar) per shop, for a period of ten years. In fact, 96.7 percent of the buildings studied had their ground floors converted to shops while 3.3 percent were changed into offices by these landlords in a bid to make money.

Structural Changes to property

With this mode of gentrification, all the family members in the building are relocated by the developer to temporary accommodation in other areas of town to enable structural changes to be made to the building. This may entail adding an external staircase, in case of a multi-storey building, to allow easy access from the street. Walls may also be demolished in order to expand internal spaces. If there is land available on the property the building may even be extended. Depending on the agreement or contract signed by the family members and the gentrifiers, the family may stay in the rented accommodation or may return after the conversion and live in a part of the property, converted and refurbished to enable it maintain its privacy.

Rebuilding after Demolishing (transformation)

In this last scenario, a prospective developer who has the wherewithal would come into agreement with the family to acquire the property, demolish it and build a multi-storey structure of four storeys or more, as the building regulations require for new buildings within the CBD of Odum (Plate 2), thereby transforming the whole building into a commercial entity. (Only five percent of the buildings were subjected to this.) The agreement may entail making some large initial

payments to the family, with the property reverting back to the family after some agreed number of years (between say 20 to 30 years), or a new agreement made for the family to acquire some percentage share of the proceeds from the property. As also observed by Adarkwa & Oppong (2005:87), this scenario is usually prevalent with families in the low income bracket who live in derelict one-storey compound houses, mostly built with mud. In some instances, the developer may rent temporary accommodation for the family members, complete the new structure with living quarters on the topmost floor and bring the family back to stay in them. In one instance, a completely new single-story building was built to house the family permanently in another part of town. However, the adverse side of this option of members of the families living on the top floor of a multi-storey building upon their return, is the curtailment of the outdoor activities they used to enjoy in their single storey accommodation: washing and drying of laundry, pounding of *fufu* (the staple food of the Ashantis), and play areas for their children. Older family members also find it difficult to take occasional walks outside and may feel imprisoned. When sick, visits to hospitals become a burden to all, since they have to be carried down and up, at least three floors. This practice of still having a link with their properties confirms the Ghanaian culture of families not deeming it an option to sell properties they believe belong to them and their ancestors (Korboe 2001:53-54).

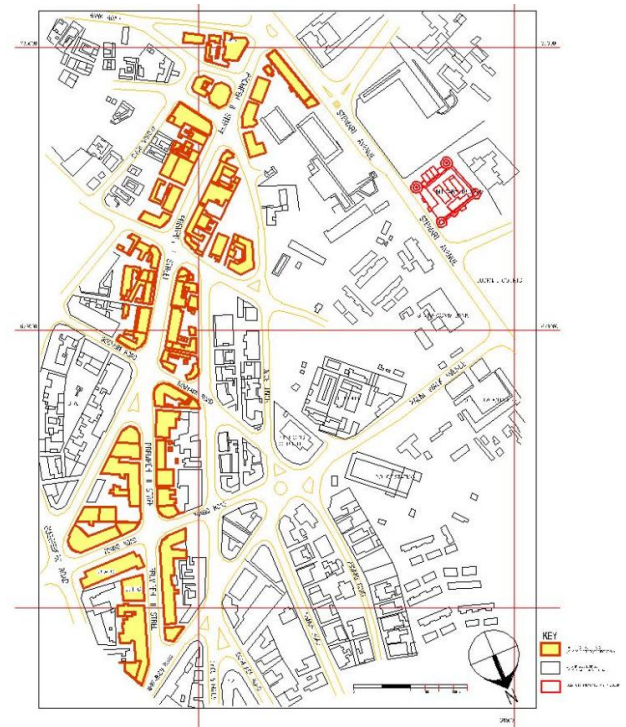


FIGURE 4: Map of a section of Odum showing Prempeh II Street.

TREND OF GENTRIFICATION: 2005-2009

Adarkwa & Oppong (2005:83) undertook a survey of buildings in Odum that enabled them to show buildings that had already been gentrified, those under construction due to gentrification and buildings with a high probability of being gentrified or transformed, etc. In the survey, 12.5 percent of the buildings were in the process of being gentrified, with 62.9 percent under threat of being gentrified (See Plate 3). The demand for shops and office spaces is so high that buildings under construction are occupied immediately when the first floor slabs are completed (Plate 4). In some instances, some developers build just the foundations of the structures and collect monies from prospective shop owners to complete the structure. With this arrangement, prospective shop owners are assured of shops after completion and even a discount for paying in advance, while the developer is spared the trouble of servicing interest-laden bank loans.

STUDY OF A MAJOR COMMERCIAL AXIS OF ODUM

In order to appreciate the challenges that indiscriminate gentrification is introducing into the CBD of Odum as a whole, buildings on the main street (Prempeh II Street), which represents the major commercial axis of Odum, were studied in greater detail. As stated earlier in the methods of data collection, 30 buildings out of the 52 buildings on the street were selected for the study (See Figure 4 and Tables 1 and 2).

TYPE OF BUILDING	No. of buildings	%	No. of households interviewed	%	No. of residents interviewed	%
Gentrified buildings (under construction)	20	19.0	3	12.5	18	15.0
Gentrified buildings (completed)	17	16.2	6	25.0	29	24.2
Buildings yet to be gentrified	66	62.9	14	58.3	70	58.3
Buildings not to be gentrified for cultural and architectural reasons (landmarks)	2	1.9	1	4.2	3	2.5
TOTAL	105	100	24	100	120	100

TABLE 1: Classification of buildings by Proportion of Buildings Surveyed and Residents Interviewed. (Source: Field Survey, Adarkwa & Oppong 2005:84)

Out of the 30 converted buildings, 20 were store/shops, presenting 96.7 percent with the 3.3 percent being Offices/shops. The distribution of the use of space in these buildings is as shown in Table 2, Electrical appliances and General goods lead with 23.3 percent each.

ITEMS SOLD	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Cosmetic / Pharmacy shop	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
Mobile Phone shop	1	3.3	3.3	23.3
General goods	7	23.3	23.3	46.7
Boutique / textile	6	20.0	20.0	66.7
Electrical appliances	7	23.3	23.3	90.0
Office / Warehouse (storage)	1	3.3	3.3	93.3
Communication centre	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
TOTAL	30	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 2: Distribution of Use of Space in converted buildings (Field survey, April 2006).

Lighting and Ventilation

Most of these buildings converted into shops lacked proper ventilation. Out of the 30 buildings, shop owners in only 40 percent of the buildings were satisfied with the level of ventilation. 93.3 percent of the buildings use electric fans for ventilation. With regards to lighting levels in the buildings, it was observed that only 4 percent of the buildings used natural lighting only, with 86.6 percent using some form of supplementary lighting (See Table 3).

FORM OF LIGHTING	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Fluorescent	25	83.3	83.3	83.3
Incandescent bulb	1	3.3	3.3	86.6
Only natural light	4	13.4	13.4	100.0
TOTAL	30	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 3: Distribution to show type of Lighting (Field survey, April 2006).

These figures confirmed the perception that the conversions are mostly done by the gentrifiers without recourse to qualified consultants. The fallout of this situation is the high energy consumption which transfers into high electricity bills. In the light of this, there are always disagreements among shop owners when they share the same electricity meter. This has resulted in the Electricity Company installing a meter in each shop. The study revealed that about 96.7 percent of the buildings had this arrangement. Most of the new buildings within the general area of Odum have glass facades which demand the use of air-conditioners, with the resultant high demand for power. This overloads the city's electrical grid system, often triggering power outages. There could sometimes be as many as two to five power outages of one to four hours duration per day.

Refuse and Sanitary facilities

Respondents in about 80 percent of the converted buildings had no toilet facilities in their buildings. These people therefore employ several options in coping with this serious deficiency. Respondents in 40 percent of these buildings use toilets facilities in a nearby clinic, while 17.7 percent use available public facilities (See Table 4) quite a distance away (about 10 to 15 minutes walk). One very serious health hazard is the use of polythene bags or tins by the respondents; most of them employ the use of tins to urinate in and then pour them into the open public drains which are usually choked with filth. Those who cannot walk to the public toilets sometimes use polythene bags which may find their way into refuse bins. Six percent of the respondents sometimes engage in this obnoxious practice.

TYPE OF TOILET USED	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Public	5	16.7	21.7	21.7
Nearby clinic	12	40.0	52.2	73.9
Polythene / tins	6	20.0	26.1	100
Total	23	76.6	100	
No comments	7	23.3		
TOTAL	30	100.0		

TABLE 4: Distribution of how shop owners /customers cope with buildings without toilets (Field survey, April 2006).

Refuse collection and disposal have been a huge challenge in the whole of the CBD in Kumasi. The Kumasi Metropolitan Authority alone used to collect the refuse but could not cope due to 'lack of resources', e.g. equipment, personnel, funds etc. Presently, the authorities have employed the services of some private

sanitation companies to help, in addition to their own efforts. 56.7 percent of the refuse is collected by the private company while the KMA collects 33.3 percent.

Parking facilities

Parking has been a major problem that the CBD has faced for a very long time and, with the increase in the vehicle population and economic activities, the situation is not getting any better. This is experienced especially on Prempeh II Street where a lot of buildings were converted without the requisite parking facilities. As Table 5 illustrates, out of 30 converted buildings studied, respondents in 66.7 percent of these buildings had no parking facilities.

PARKING	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
By the road (legal)	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
By the road (illegal)	8	30.0	30.0	33.3
No parking at all	20	66.7	66.7	100.0
TOTAL	30	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 5: Distribution of availability of parking spaces (Field survey, April 2006).

Shop owners park their cars on the little available space on the street in front of their shops to the detriment of prospective customers. Customers are sometimes forced to park on the other side of the road, thereby creating a double parking situation. This reduces the width of the two lane road, slowing down vehicular traffic considerably and causing traffic jams. This problem is sometimes exacerbated when large goods-bearing trucks park in front of major shops to unload during business hours.

Hawking

The phenomenon of hawking has virtually engulfed the two major urban cities in Ghana, namely Accra and Kumasi, as well as some minor urban cities such as Cape Coast, Koforidua and others. Efforts by the metropolitan authorities of these cities to control or eliminate hawkers from the streets have proved futile. Hawking is simply the practice of getting goods to the prospective buyer on the street instead waiting for them to enter a shop. This is done by displaying the goods either on a tray on the head of the seller or just by holding them out to pedestrians and occupants of cars. What makes hawking unacceptable to the authorities is that it has completely, in some cases, taken over the pavements meant for pedestrians, forcing them to walk on the street itself and thereby reducing the width of the already congested roads. Another fallout of this practice is that shop owners complain about hawkers blocking the view of prospective customers from their shops. To counter this, they also bring their goods out onto the pavements, directly in front of their shops. Since the authorities are unable to remove the hawkers the shop owners enact the cliché of 'if you can't fight them join' by employing the services of several unemployed youth, as well as members of their extended families, to carry some of their wares onto the streets as hawkers too!

Attempts by the metropolitan authorities to get hawkers off the streets through joint exercises by City Guards, the Police and the Army, have become annual rituals. Periods of successes have been ephemeral since the politicians, both incumbent and in opposition, use the situation to win votes. When the exercise succeeds for a while the hawkers are excused to come onto the streets during December 'to sell and acquire some money for Christmas'. Incidentally, Ghanaian elections are held in December, just before the Christmas holidays. At the time of writing this paper, the new government had just started waging war on hawkers in Accra and it seems to be winning (Daily Graphic, 30th June 2009:Front page). The exercise would be replicated in Kumasi and if government succeeds in getting them off the streets, it is believed that 'all things being equal', they would be back early enough for the elections!

MITIGATING ACTIONS OF KMA

An extensive study on Prempeh II Street of Odum has revealed that what is happening there may be the microcosm of what exists in the larger section of the CBD. The 'strait-jacket' location of Odum has brought about several challenges, to entrepreneurs and metropolitan authorities alike. The survival techniques of the former have, in some way, exacerbated and worsened the already bad situation. But what and how are the authorities doing to mitigate, if not eradicate altogether, some of these challenges? With the challenge poised by indiscriminate gentrification, the Town and Country Planning authority in Kumasi has imposed and enforced a bye-law which makes it mandatory for all new buildings to be four or more storeys high (caveat by Kumasi Metropolitan Planning Committee in the 1990's). No building permits are issued for architectural plans which are contrary to this law. This law has proved successful, since the high land values and demand for accommodation

within the CBD are the driving incentives for the developers to build even higher. What must be considered next is a bye-law that would protect and conserve some of the old buildings that have some heritage value, preventing all from being acquired and either defaced or demolished by the gentrifiers/transformers in order to put up 'modern' buildings.

To help mitigate the lack of toilets in the CBD, some public toilets were built and operated on a commercial basis, but the number is far below what is needed. More such toilets must be built. There is even a law (Legislative Instrument 1630, 1996:87) that requires that toilets are incorporated in public buildings, but these are not enforced since no drawings are made for most conversions (apart from the totally new buildings). Refuse collection has improved a bit with the introduction of private sanitary companies. Apart from what they do in the cities, individuals living in some residential areas have their refuse collected every three or four days for a monthly fee of about GH C5.00 (about \$3.3).

Illegal parking has been successfully dealt with in the CBD. Any car which enters the CBD and parks along any road which has not been marked for parking is, within a few minutes, clamped or towed away. A small charge for a two-hour duration parking is levied by parking attendants who issue tickets. To eliminate any form of corruption (as is most times associated with all governmental organisations), private towing companies have been empowered to carry out this exercise. They are paid a certain percentage of the fines accruing to the work. To help shop owners, customers or office workers who may want to park for long hours, a car park has been created just at the fringe of the CBD and fenced with the requisite security for that purpose. However, only a few people patronise it. Issues with congestion on the roads have also been partially dealt with by converting some of the streets into one-way streets to facilitate quicker movement. Introduction of more traffic lights at the junctions have also helped to improve the movement of cars and pedestrians. To help reduce the consumption of power in the urban areas, the Government of Ghana embarked on an exercise of encouraging people to use energy-saving bulbs instead of the incandescent ones. In a bid to enable households to appreciate the level of savings upon using these bulbs, the government replaced all incandescent bulbs in every house in every city and stopped its importation as well. Presently, the use of these energy-saving bulbs has caught on with the people.

One may be surprised at the lack of political will and the 'unwillingness' of the relevant authorities to carry out the necessary actions to curtail all these problems stated above. It would be prudent for readers to note that the fundamental causes of these problems, (we can say confidential) are both institutional and political. The regulations are present but those in charge are not prepared to carry them out due to fear of political persecution – politicians are also not prepared to carry them out due to political exigencies. The general public, happy that drastic measures are not carried out by politicians due to their parochial interest, vote them back into power, in order to keep the status quo. The cycle thus goes on and on. On the matter of vision, the metro authorities have no comprehensive master plans for proper directional growth of the CBD and rely on very old land use plans, dating back from colonial times, with few additions or changes to reflect current trends and thinking. Most of the base maps of the cities were done during the colonial times and do not reflect the current complexion and texture of towns and cities. A lot of infilling had to be done on the maps during our study to include existing buildings which were missing from it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the studies conducted one would come to the realization that the CBD of Odum, though besieged by a plethora of challenges, still has the ability to manage and sustain itself if certain measures are put in place. As stated earlier, Odum experiences a unique combination of gentrification and transformation, since old buildings are renovated, converted, and used for both commercial and residential purposes. Only a few of them are completely transformed by demolishing and rebuilding without respecting the old tissue of these heritage buildings. The uniqueness lies in the fact that a residential building, usually transformed into a largely commercial facility, may still have some level of residential facilities.

With respect to the context of an African country whose resources are limited and with half of its budget derived from donor sources, the following recommendations could be the best, though old fashioned in some respects:

- (i) Strict enforcement of existing laws and the enactment of new laws; laws on building a minimum of four storeys for any new development should be strictly adhered to since it is working well. Plans for all conversions of any building within the CBD should be demanded and approved only when

the requisite facilities such as toilets and parking spaces commensurate to local standards, have been provided.

- (ii) A floor-area-to-car parking space index should be established as standards to guide consultants when they embark on new designs and conversions for approval by the authorities.
- (iii) Metropolitan authorities should acquire lands on the fringes of the CBD in order to build multi-storey car parks with appropriate security and adequate protection against the weather. This would help improve on the present low level of patronage.
- (iv) A well-organised transportation system into the CBD could also be considered to encourage the park and ride concept. Here car parks could be organized on the periphery or the edges of the residential areas that somehow, overlap with the CBD. Parking tolls within the CBD should be higher in order to discourage people from bringing in their vehicles.
- (v) Bye-laws should also be enacted to restrict huge trucks coming into the CBD to unload. There should be time slots for trucks to unload, that is, before or after business.
- (vi) Bollards could be used to restrict entry of vehicles into some areas of the CBD to enable them be turned into pedestrian malls at some specific times of the day.
- (vii) If lands are secured for more public toilets to be built within certain areas of the CBD, private developers would readily build and operate them on commercial basis and after some number of years revert them back to the KMA.
- (viii) The planning authorities should set broad parameters for the direction of future growth of the metropolis in order to maximize efficiency in the provision of key infrastructure such as roads, sewerage, telecommunication, electricity and water. Presently, the direction of growth in our cities is rather nebulous.
- (ix) Finally, the authorities should employ staff or hire consultants with the requisite skills and managerial capacity to see to the implementation of projects and programmes in the development plan on a continuing and sustainable basis.

CONCLUSION

This paper looked at reasons behind the gentrification and transformation phenomenon in Odum, the heart of the CBD of the city of Kumasi which, as was deduced from the study, stemmed from the spontaneity of how it came into being as well as its central and hemmed in location. This unique combination of gentrifying and transforming the city has however also brought in its wake a number of challenges; vehicular and pedestrian congestion, power outages, non-existent car parking facilities, hawking, inadequate sanitary facilities and problems of refuse collection. Despite the city metropolitan authorities' efforts at mitigating these challenges, they still persist and this, it is believed, stems from inappropriate and ad hoc measures employed to solve problems, insufficient funds, defective managerial skills and capacity, as well as a lack of decisive political will of ruling governments to carry through some of the necessary remedies.

Recommendations from the study border on practical and financially prudent solutions as far as a poorly resourced African country could afford; the enactment and enforcement of bye-laws to manage, if not cure, these challenges, and with planning authorities being encouraged to set broad parameters for future growth of the metropolis in order to effectively maximize the provision of key infrastructure, taking all major stakeholders into consideration. If this is not done, "planning for the metropolis will become an elusive repository of well-meaning intentions that are never implemented" (Adarkwa & Post 2001:208).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge the help of Miss Marian Awuah-Adjapong for the collection and assembling of data on all the converted buildings on the major commercial axis of Odum, as well as the invaluable contribution of the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) and Mr Asiedu of Town and Country Planning, Kumasi.

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