

PRESS RELEASE

BUILDING PLAN APPROVAL AMNESTY EXTENSION.

The 9th of July, 2024.

From: The Executives, Ikeja Branch of Nigerian Bar Association & The Building Collapse Prevention Guild (BCPG) Ikeja Cell The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Ikeja Branch and The Building Collapse Prevention Guild (BCPG) Ikeja Cell hereby call for an extension of the ongoing Lagos State Government Amnesty window on Planning Permits for completed buildings otherwise known as Building Plan Approval in the form of a three-month moratorium in penalties on completed buildings without Planning Permits across the State.

Background

Few months ago, at the presentation of the technical tools in the Lagos State Secretariat, Alausa, which comprised of ICT devices to the Physical Planning and Automation Department and Lagos State Planning Information Centre (LASPIC), in the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development for automation of all physical planning activities in Lagos State; the Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who was represented by the Special Adviser to the Governor on e-GIS and Urban Development stated that, “We have up to five million properties in Lagos but we have less than 500,000 properties registered with the land registry. So, we have less than 10 percent of buildings registered with the land registry. It is only when you have land documentation that you can apply for building approval. That shows that the total number of people who don’t have building approval in Lagos is about 90 percent.” (source: <https://leadership.ng/take-advantage-of-amnesty-on-building-approval-sanwo-olu-tells-lagosians/>).

In recent times, Lagos State has experienced a heart-aching number of building collapses, leading to loss of lives and properties. According to recent statistics published by The Building Collapse Prevention Guild (BCPG) research team, about 56.67% of building collapses between 1974 to 2024 occurred in Lagos State (that is, about 348 incidents) out of a total number of 614 incidents in Nigeria; 8 incidents of building collapses have occurred so far this 2024 in Lagos State. (source:

www.bcpgiqueja.com/2024/07/07/summary-of-recorded-cases-of-building-collapse-in-nigeria-from-1974-to-2024/).

These incidents have highlighted significant gaps in adherence to building regulations and the rule of law which governs the building industry, resulting in urgent calls for reform. The Building Plan Approval or Planning Permits Amnesty is a response to these challenges, aiming to rectify past irregularities and prevent future occurrences.

During the just concluded Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Ikeja Branch Law Week 2024, at an event organized in collaboration with the Building Collapse Prevention Guild (BCPG) Ikeja Cell, the event themed PUBLIC GOVERNANCE IN TROUBLED TIMES: THE RULE OF LAW AND THE PROTECTION OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT. The event guest speakers were the Honorable Commissioner of the Lagos State Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development, Dr. Oluyinka Abiodun Olumide and the Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice of Lagos State, Mr. Lawal Mohammed Pedro, SAN. Both alluded to the rising incident of building collapses in Lagos State and discussed about the economic impacts this avoidable menace is having on the State. It's obvious that the built environment is crucial to humanity's sustainability as well as essentially pivotal to the economic growth and sustainable development of Lagos State. Thus, the rule of law in governance which guides all the activities within this industry must be transparent, accountable and enforced for strict adherence or compliance in order to ensure sustainable economic growth, safety, security and zero building collapse in Lagos State.

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Ikeja Branch and the Building Collapse Prevention Guild (BCPG) Ikeja Cell commend the Lagos State Government for its proactive approach in introducing the Building Plan Approval Amnesty. This initiative is very crucial for ensuring structural integrity, enhancing safety standards, fostering strict compliance and overall the prevention of building collapse in Lagos State.

We strongly believe that the following are parts of the objectives of the Amnesty Program:

1. Ensuring Strict Compliance: The amnesty program is designed to encourage property owners and developers to regularize their building plans and ensure compliance with current building codes and safety standards.
2. Enhancing Safety and promoting zero building collapse: By regularizing building plans, the program aims to reduce the risk of structural failures which leads to building collapse, thereby safeguarding the lives and properties of Lagos residents.

3. Promoting Stakeholder's Accountability: The initiative promotes accountability among stakeholders in the building industry, including architects, engineers, developers and property owners, by ensuring that all building projects meet the required standards.

4. Facilitating Sustainable Development and Resilience: The amnesty program will facilitate smoother and more efficient urban development, aligning with Lagos State's vision for a sustainable and resilient city.

However, in light of current economic challenges and the need for broader dissemination of information, the NBA Ikeja Branch and BCPG Ikeja Cell jointly request an extension of the amnesty window. Extending the deadline will allow more property owners and developers to participate in the program, ensuring its success and the safety of Lagos residents, thereby preventing incidents of building demolitions and building collapses.

Our Rationale for this Extension Request

1. Economic Challenges: The ongoing economic difficulties have significantly impacted the ability of many property owners and developers to engage in the amnesty process. Extending the deadline will provide them with the necessary time to secure resources and comply with the regulations.

2. Dissemination of Information: Despite efforts to inform the public, many stakeholders remain unaware of the amnesty program and its benefits. An extension will facilitate further awareness campaigns, ensuring that more property owners are informed and able to participate.

3. Wider Participation: Allowing more time will enable a broader segment of the population to take advantage of the amnesty, thereby promoting greater compliance and enhancing overall safety standards in Lagos State which will help prevent the occurrence of building collapse and or demolition.

Proposed Extension Period

We propose an extension of additional six (6) months to the current deadline. This additional period will provide sufficient time for property owners to prepare and submit their building plans for regularization process and eventually obtain the required building plan approval or planning permit.

Support and Assistance

The NBA Ikeja Branch and BCPG Ikeja Cell are committed to supporting the Lagos State Government in this initiative. Our organizations will:

- Continue to provide legal and technical assistance to property owners throughout the amnesty process.
- Intensify awareness campaigns to educate the public on the importance of the program through our monthly meetings and public awareness programs.
- Collaborate with regulatory authorities to ensure efficient monitoring and enforcement of building standards.

Call to Action

We urge the Lagos State Government to consider this extension request favorably. Extending the amnesty window will not only accommodate current economic realities but also ensure a higher rate of compliance and extensive inclusion (which is the intrinsic goal of the amnesty program); thus, contributing to the safety and resilience of our built environment in Lagos State.

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Together, let us build a safer and more resilient Lagos.

Signed,



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