



## Urban Agenda Platform

The global platform for sharing progress, action and knowledge on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve sustainable urban development.

# City Planning of Kyoto in Partnership with residents, developers and city authorities

## Region

Asia and the Pacific

## Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

## Summary

Kyoto was founded as capital city of Japan, Heian-kyo, in 794 A.D.. Since then Kyoto has been a place where local people have cherished nature and handed down fine traditional culture. Kyoto has survived ordeals though the wisdom and persistent efforts. The Kyoto city government drew up “The Master Concept of Kyoto City” in 1999. This Concept stated that the citizens and city government could co-operate as responsible individuals to realize a Kyoto shaped by its citizens.

## Background and Objective

Theme: City planning of Kyoto in partnership with residents, developers and city authorities

**SITUATION BEFORE THE INITIATIVE BEGAN**

[Direction of Urban Planning in Central Kyoto] As the outflows of population and industry from the central district to suburban areas have recently escalated, trends have built mid-rise and high-rise condominiums in place of vacant lots. Although low-rise wooden townhouses that traditionally comprised the traditional cityscape are gradually disappearing as a non-uniform landscape emerges. Primary landscape has been disappearing to make way for such modern developments.

**ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIORITIES** [Master Concept & Master Plan of Kyoto City] In 1999, the City drew up “The Master Concept of Kyoto City”. This Master Concept stated that the local citizens and the city government should cooperate as responsible individuals to realize a Kyoto shaped by its own people. As a result, Kyoto citizens will enjoy the benefits of “a Peaceful Life and a Prosperous City” through their own efforts. In 2001, we formulated “The Master Plan of Kyoto City” that brought the main policies of the Master Concept into clear form. The Master Plan indicates various measures that build up a relationship of trust between local citizens and the Kyoto City Government.

**FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES** [Bylaw of Citizen Participation] The many ideas or plans proposed by administration are announced to citizens from the early stage of the projects and try to ask them their public opinions. At the same time, we also established various kinds of facilities including the “Kyoto Center for Community Collaboration” and “Kyoto Citizen’s Activity support Center. We established the “Plan for the Promotion of Citizen Participation” in 2001 indicating how to proceed with the citizen partnership towards a long term basis. The “Bylaw of Citizen Participation” was established as the first case in a cabinet-ordered designated city, large-scaled metropolitan. This is our direction towards creating a partnership with citizens.

**MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCE** [Characteristics of Central Kyoto-“Kyo-Machiya town house”-] Kyoto is famous for “Kyo-Machiya”, historical wooden townhouses, many of which are still used as private residences, restaurants, shops, and so forth. At the same time, the “Kyo-Machiya townhouses” have been cherished as a symbol of the long history and culture of the downtown area. The “Kyo-Machiya townhouses” originated in the 9th century, and the modern prototype, complete with latticework and roof tiles, was created during the 18th century. There is great value, not only in their distinctive exterior, but also the local citizens’ traditional lifestyle and culture that have been passed down from generation to generation. In 1998, we investigated the actual condition of the “Kyo-Machiya townhouse” via a survey in cooperation with local organizations and over 600 volunteer citizens. As a result, we discovered that there are over 28,000 “Kyo-Machiya townhouses” still existing today. We also conducted a further survey of the “Kyo-Machiya townhouse” in cooperation with 30,000 citizens and concluded that the majority supported the implementation of measures for the conservation and renovation of traditional townhouses. We thus realized that a great number of citizens understood the necessity of conservation and renovation of the “Kyo-Machiya townhouse”.

## Actions and Implementation

[Regional Community and Direction of Urban Planning: Living, Working & Functioning] The city of Kyoto has been developed in tradition with its long history, and traditional culture has been handed down from generation to generation. The “Kyo-Machiya townhouses”, temples and shrines are all examples of the unique and precious elements that compose the urban space of Kyoto. As with an example of the inheritance of traditional culture like the “Gion Matsuri Festival”, this shows that the local community plays a part in supporting traditional cultures and lifestyles that leads flourishing urban-oriented industries, through their lively activities & creative exchanges. There is another interesting aspect of downtown Kyoto. The Gion Matsuri Summer festival is one of the largest events. The most respectful feature is that 32 parade floats are operated and circulated in downtown Kyoto by the 32 voluntary neighborhood associations. Thanks to many lively activities by their own regional communities, we are still able to have such a historical



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festival. “The Gion Matsuri Festival” is Kyoto’s summer highlight and a symbol and distinct feature of downtown Kyoto. This festival has a more than 1,000-year history surviving many hardships together with the city of Kyoto and is one of the most famous festivals & cultural heritages in Japan, featuring many precious cultural assets. The main feature of the festival is the decorated parade floats, which might be considered a “moving art galleries”. When we view these gorgeous floats, we are touched by the devotion and commitment put in by generations of local residents to keep this tradition a live. As the outflows of population and industry from the central district to suburban areas have recently escalated, trends have built mid-rise and high-rise condominiums in place of vacant lots. Although low-rise wooden townhouses that traditionally comprised the traditional Kyoto cityscape are gradually disappearing as a non-uniform landscape emerges. Primary landscape has been disappearing to make way for such modern developments. Under these urgent circumstances, we must take advantage of the strengths of the already-existing community, considering factors such as history, culture, tradition and climate. With this solid foundation, we must develop new values for the citizens’ life. The more people live in an area, the more values develop. We must plan a city that attracts many people, and becomes a center for further development. We are attempting to diversify, revitalize and perpetuate local communities. We are also trying to conserve the historical element of the local community through the conservation of the “Kyo-Machiya townhouse”. Our intention is to realize these approaches through promoting partnerships between interested parties like local people supporting the “Gion Matsuri Festival”.

## Outcomes and Impacts

[Practical Measures for Town Planning: Housing construction in symbiotic community] There is an example of local residences working with developers from the initial planning stages of condominium construction. As mentioned above, there are instances where the construction of mid-rise and high-rise condominiums are liable to detract from the traditional cityscape of low-rise wooden houses. Additionally, the influx of new residents into these condominiums over a short period of time may lead to weakening of the unity of the local community that has been created over the course of many years. This is one of the major problems concerning modern urban area. New and older residents have a difficulty creating social links due to differences in lifestyle or generation. In order to promote peaceful coexist with the newcomers, the older residents met with developers to discuss building plan from the early stage of the project. Thus they were able to devise better ways to promote exchange between the older residents and the newcomers. We saw the results put into practice both in hard & soft. We had many meetings between local residents and developers and brought colorful activities into actions; to make flower bed in condominium opened in public, to build gaslight for future generations as a symbol of city planning, to set up the community rule, etc.. Through our experience we learned that various exchanges between the old and new residents allowed for brand new local community to be created. Taking this opportunity, each local community establishes the regional strategy to perform key administrative role for their town planning. In this respect, the plan was a great success.

## Sustainability and Scalability

[Fascination of the City : Kyoto Center for Community Collaboration] We introduced some practical examples of the way the city government and developers have succeeded in planning the downtown area in partnership with local residents. Again let us explain the characteristics of the downtown area and the proposed direction for future city planning. Kyoto was fortunate enough to escape destruction during World War II, and as a result, many ancient temples, shrines and historical cityscapes have survived to the present day. In one sense, it is true that the city lost the opportunity to launch entirely new and bold plan in the urban area, as is the case with other cities. Kyoto was able to retain its quaint traditional atmosphere. Even in the downtown area, many quaint narrow streets still remain, preserving the feel of the traditional lifestyle and character of local citizens. This historical cityscape presents a charming view of the ancient city of Kyoto. In 1997, Kyoto City Government established the “Kyoto Center for Community Collaboration” in order to promote cooperation among local residents, developers and city authorities. This Collaboration Center has acted as the proactive go-between of local citizens and developers to support citizen’s voluntary activities from various viewpoints: transmission of information, advisement & counsel, dispatch of experts and so on. City planning projects are actively in process in many local communities. The Kyoto Center for Community Collaboration is undertaking various approaches towards preserving and renovating the “Kyo-Machiya Townhouses. This Collaboration Center functions as a core role. It is necessary to eliminate the concerns of the “Kyo-Machiya townhouse” residents and create an atmosphere of reassurance. It is necessary to provide residents with reliable living conditions in order to conserve and regenerate the “Kyo-Machiya townhouses” along with its traditions. The Collaboration Center has recently started a consultation program where residents of the “Kyo-Machiya townhouses” can consult specialists on a number of issues. The Collaboration Center also published information booklet with contents ranging from basic knowledge, renovation, devices for improvement to preferential tax treatment for maintaining & revitalizing of the “Kyo-Machiya townhouses”.

## Gender and Social Inclusivity

[Living Historical City, Kyoto] In closing, City of Kyoto would like to present some future prospects of partnership-based city planning. Kyoto has more than 1,200 year-long history and has always succeeded in evolving to meet the demands of the times. The quintessential spirit of Kyoto is a willingness to change. In order to keep and heighten Kyoto’s worth, simply conserving its historical structures and preserving the tradition & culture are not enough. In the context of partnership, pursuing the further cooperation with citizens who spend their lives here in Kyoto is the key. Everyday, we must continue to



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push to develop a peoples' Kyoto. We have bold initiatives for reforms, and it is critical for us to keep Kyoto flexible for change. Kyoto should be a living city forever. There are many world heritages in Kyoto and simply preserving the historical area by administration is not enough. Local people have the responsibility of keeping in touch with their community and current rules. They must consider the issues repeatedly until the ideal city plan with cooperation from the local administration is formed. Local people have the responsibility of keeping in touch with their community and current rules. I believe that partnership-based city planning is crucial for success. In order to develop Kyoto that we can be proud of on the world stage, we must take the lead in creating a city of true partnerships.

## Innovative Initiative

[Revitalization of Heart of the City] In 794 A.D. Kyoto was founded as the capital city of Japan?known then as "Heian-Kyo" which meant the capital of peace. Since then, Kyoto has been known as a city whose citizens cherish nature and handed down the fine traditional culture. Kyoto has endured many ordeals such as wars and natural disasters over the years. Yet Kyoto continues to be surrounded by forested mountains on three sides and is known for its scenic beauty. Kyoto has been taking steady steps as a modern city where its people can enjoy various activities and daily lives, while at the same time, Kyoto is often considered the "spiritual hometown" of the Japanese people. Until the capital was transferred from Kyoto to Tokyo in 1869, Kyoto was the capital of Japan for more than 1000 years. However the people of Kyoto were not disappointed in the loss of capital status. On the contrary, they used this as an opportunity and decided to focus on developing their excellent know-how and strengths as a modern city. For example, a 9-kilo-meter channel was created leading from "Lake Biwa", the largest lake in Japan to build the first water-power plant in Japan. They took full advantage of the canal to supply electricity. They succeeded in running the first electric-powered tram-cars in Japan. Kyoto overcame these difficulties through the wisdom and persistent efforts put forward by our predecessors. In this way, Kyoto was able to succeed with these accomplishments. Through these rehabilitation projects, the modernization of Kyoto has been radically developed. Thus Kyoto has become a big vibrant city with a population of 1,500,000. As evidenced in the previous examples, increased partnerships between parties concerned have been well underway succeeding our ancestor's will. Based on a common goal of revitalizing and regenerating the downtown area, Kyoto is working toward an ideal situation with various entities in the context of partnership. All the people believe that the downtown area will be transformed into a fascinating area with local character.