National Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Japan

July 2025

Executive Summary

(1) The general situation in Japan regarding initiatives for the New Urban Agenda

Since the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) held in 2016, Japan has been facing increasing challenges pertaining to human settlements, including, for example, unprecedented population decline, acceleration of the low birthrate and aging of the population, imminent risk of extremely large disasters, the growing severity of the climate crisis, and loss of biodiversity.

The population of Japan peaked at 128.08 million people in 2008 and then took a downward turn, reaching 124 million people in 2024. It is expected that, going forward, the population decline will accelerate, and the population will be 87 million people in 2070 (projections with the medium-fertility scenario). The demographic distribution is characterized by a continuing concentration in metropolitan areas, in particular the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, while the population in the regions is declining, threatening the sustainability of life and the economy in these regions.

Furthermore, Japan is a country located on the Circum-Pacific Volcanic Belt, with frequent earthquakes and volcanic activity. In addition to earthquakes and tsunamis, the geographic, topographic, and meteorological conditions of Japan cause frequent meteorological disasters, such as typhoons, torrential rainstorms, and heavy snow, with great loss of human life and economic assets every year.

There are concerns that global warming and other climate changes on a global scale will have serious effects in Japan as well, including effects on natural disasters, sea level rise, ecosystems, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, urban life, and economic activity, among others.

(2) Initiatives for the realization of an inclusive society

As population decline and outflow accelerate, the promotion of the social participation of diverse human resources, including young people, women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and foreign nationals, is important for the formation of an inclusive society. In particular, the rapid decline in the birthrate and population must be halted in order to maintain Japan’s economic and social systems.

For that reason, Japan is promoting initiatives to build a society where child-rearing families can live with peace of mind. For example, it is encouraging the supply of high-quality housing and the enhancement of preschool education and childcare, advancing the creation of urban and regional spaces that support child-rearing, and developing safe and comfortable roads and parks.

In particular, in order to create and expand the flow of people to rural areas, where the number of young people who will lead the future of the region is decreasing, the government is promoting the creation of regions that attract the young generation, who will lead the future of the region, by forming regional living zones where the services necessary for daily life are provided sustainably, implementing dual-region habitation initiatives in which people establish a base for life in a specific area separate from their main base for life, and enhancing child-rearing support functions by utilizing existing stock such as vacant houses.

Furthermore, it is essential to revitalize local industries, create places to work, and realize a virtuous cycle of the local economies for the development of the country as a whole. Overcrowding in large cities and depopulation in rural areas against the backdrop of high economic growth have become serious problems in Japan, and in that context, the country has a history of working to promote the regions under the philosophy of harmonized development between regions. Even today, the government, faced with the structural shift of industries towards the service sector and the sophistication of the industrial structure, as well as the remaining overconcentration in Tokyo, has selected a variety of special areas in regions to invite and promote cutting edge industries by providing incentive measures facilitating regional innovation.

(3) Sustainable and resilient city and regional development

Based on the Fundamental Plan for National Resilience and other plans, Japan is advancing initiatives to promote efficient disaster prevention and mitigation and national resilience, including an appropriate combination of hard measures and soft measures and measures that can be utilized effectively not only during disasters but also in peacetime, and is implementing initiatives in cooperation with the national government, local governments, and various other institutions, which are aimed at building adaptable and strong national land that does not succumb to disasters, etc.

Furthermore, in order to realize net zero by 2050, the Act on Promotion of Global Warming Countermeasures (Act No. 117 of 1998) enshrined into law the realization of a decarbonized society by 2050 as a basic principle, and Japan is steadily advancing climate change countermeasures. For example, it has set targets of a 46% reduction in emissions in FY2030, a 60% reduction by FY2035, and a 73% reduction in FY2040, compared to FY2013.

Japan is also working to restore biodiversity. For example, because meticulous initiatives suited to the natural and social conditions and regional characteristics of each region are essential, prefectures and municipalities are advancing the formulation of local biodiversity strategies and action plans, which are basic plans for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

(4) Relationship to the priority items in the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2029

In the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2029, the focus is placed on "housing, basic services, and land." The overview of the status of Japan's initiatives in these areas is as follows.

1) Housing

Japan is working to secure housing for persons requiring housing support, such as low-income earners, the elderly, the disabled, foreign nationals, and others, and to provide support for moving in and daily life, which is integrated with welfare policies.

Furthermore, Japan aims to form sustainable and prosperous communities where multiple generations can coexist, through support for daily life such as the provision of medical and welfare facilities, elderly support facilities, and community spaces that contribute to combatting loneliness and isolation in the rebuilding and redevelopment of housing complexes, and through the development of venues for social events in the community.

In addition, in Japan where major earthquakes occur frequently, construction and retrofitting of earthquake-resistant housing and buildings is considered to be an important issue for achieving disaster mitigation goals concerning both human damage and property damage, and Japan is advancing urgent and priority initiatives in this area.

2) Basic services

(i) Water supply and sewerage

In Japan, the coverage of the water supply system stood at 98.2% at the end of March 2024. On the other hand, most of the water system was developed intensively in the 1970s, and it faces issues such as aging of the facilities, delays in making the pipelines earthquake-resistant, and a decrease in revenue due to population decline and other factors. For that reason, the national government is preparing and publishing rules and guidelines for wide-area collaboration among water utilities and others, the encouragement of public-private collaboration, and the promotion of appropriate asset management.

Furthermore, the percentage of the population with access to public sewerage at the end of March 2024 stood at 81.4%. Today, taking into account the intensification of natural disasters, the aging of sewerage facilities, and growing limitations on government finances and the workforce, Japan is promoting the implementation of sophisticated and efficient maintenance using digital technologies and public-private collaboration, among other measures.

(ii) Waste management

In Japan, waste is managed according to the Act on Waste Management and Public Cleaning (Act No. 137 of 1970). Municipal waste (household waste and human waste, etc.) is under the overall management jurisdiction of municipalities, to whom prefectures must strive to give necessary guidance, while the national government must endeavor to give municipalities and prefectures the necessary guidance and financial support.

In FY2023, 38.97 million tons of municipal waste was discharged in total. Since FY2000, the amount of municipal waste has been on a downward trend.

(iii) Regional transportation

Regional transportation has been placed in an extremely tough business environment due to a decrease in users and a shortage of drivers and other workers as a consequence of population decline, the low birthrate, and the aging of the population, so Japan is encouraging a redesign to regional transportation with high convenience, productivity, and sustainability through collaboration and cooperation with diverse stakeholders in the regions.

3) Land

In response to the problems of an increase in the amount of land with unknown owners and number of vacant houses, deserted agricultural land, and not properly maintained forests against the backdrop of population decline and other factors, Japan is aiming to build an approach to sustainable national land use and management through a National Land Management Concept, which clarifies the land that should be prioritized for maintenance and seeks to change management methods, and other policies.

(5) Strategic ways forward

Through tools such as the Third National Spatial Strategy (National Plan) decided by the Cabinet in July 2023 and the Spatial Planning Platform (SPP) on which stakeholders share knowledge about the spatial plans of the national government and the regions, Japan will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

Index

1. Introduction

Japan's national land is surrounded by the sea on all sides, and the long and narrow north-to-south Japanese archipelago is comprised of five main islands—Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu, and the main island of Okinawa—and many other islands. Approximately 70% of the land area of 380,000 square kilometers is covered by forests and Japan is surrounded on all sides by territorial waters and exclusive economic zones occupying an area of approximately 4.47 million square kilometers, the sixth largest in the world. Approximately 124 million people are living their lives in all areas of the national land, which is formed by an abundant natural environment rich in diversity and blessed with four seasons. Throughout its long history, Japan's beautiful national land has nurtured richly individual climates and cultures, which have been passed down in an unbroken tradition to the present day, thanks to the combination of the unique natural features of each region and the tireless daily work of our ancestors living in those regions.

On the other hand, Japan has faced a variety of challenges with respect to human habitation on its national land to date, such as rapid urbanization, overcrowding and depopulation, pollution and the deterioration of the living environment, extremely large disasters, and others. Each time it has faced challenges, Japan has continued to make efforts to overcome them by gathering together the technologies and wisdom of each era.

Given this history, Japan has consistently supported the activities of UN-Habitat, which tackles problems pertaining to urbanization and human settlements, since its establishment in 1978. In 1997, Japan welcomed the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and Pacific Fukuoka to Fukuoka City, Japan, and since then the national government, local governments, private companies, and others have collaborated to support the organization's activities.

At Habitat III held in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016, Japan contributed to the discussions by conveying the importance of sustainable urban development based on the 2030 Agenda, the importance of quality infrastructure for the sustainable development of cities, the importance of making cities resilient and prior investment in disaster prevention, and the importance of balanced national land development using national land planning and other tools. Moreover, at Habitat III, the New Urban Agenda was adopted as an international guideline for solving issues pertaining to human settlements over the next 20 years.

Since Habitat III, Japan has been facing increasing challenges, including unprecedented population decline, acceleration of the low birthrate and aging of the population, imminent risk of extremely large disasters, the growing severity of the climate crisis, and loss of biodiversity. This National Report on the Implementation compiles the initiatives of Japan concerning human settlements.

We hope that this report will contain helpful suggestions for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in countries around the world and will further contribute to the realization of a world that “leaves no one behind.”

2. System for preparation of this report

(1) Procedure for the preparation of the National Report on the Implementation

This National Report on the Implementation was prepared by the Domestic Committee on the New Urban Agenda Implementation Report (Domestic Committee), comprised of government ministries and agencies and local governments concerned with human settlements. Each of the parties involved in the Domestic Committee prepared a draft regarding the initiatives in the areas under their jurisdiction and exchanged opinions among themselves before submitting this report on behalf of the entire Domestic Committee.

(2) Composition of the Domestic Committee

The Domestic Committee is comprised of ten government ministries and agencies and two local governments, and was established in March 2025. Its members are as follows:

<Co-Chairs>

Director of the Global Issues Cooperation Division, International Cooperation Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

Director of the General Affairs Division, National Spatial Planning and Regional Policy Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism

<Ministries and agencies concerned>

Director of the Policy Coordination Division, Minister's Secretariat, Cabinet Office

Director for International Cooperation attached to the Director General for Disaster Management, Cabinet Office

Director for Policy Planning, Administrator's Secretariat, Children and Families Agency

Director for Culture, Welfare, and International Affairs, Commissioner-General's Secretariat, National Policy Agency

Director of the International Affairs Office, Local Administration Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

Director of the International Affairs Division, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

Director of the International Affairs Division, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

Director of the International Strategy Division, Export and International Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

Principal Director of the International Economic Affairs Department, Trade Policy Bureau, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

Director of the International Strategy Division, Global Environment Bureau, Ministry of the Environment

<Local governments>
Executive Director of the International Affairs Bureau, Policy Planning and Regional Development Department, Fukuoka Prefecture
Bureau Chief, Urban Policy Bureau, Kanazawa City

The Domestic Committee listened to the opinions of the following experts:

Specially Appointed Professor FUKASAWA Yoshinobu, Center for International Affairs, Kyushu Sangyo University
Professor NISHIURA Sadatsugu, School of Architecture, Meisei University
Associate Professor SETA Fumihiko, Graduate School of Engineering, University of Tokyo
Associate Professor SHIMA Norihisa, Global and Regional Studies Faculty, Toyo University

3. Progress report

3.1 Sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty

3.1.1 Realization of an inclusive society which “leaves no one behind”

(1) Changes in the demographic structure and workforce in Japan

In 1950, Japan had a population of 84 million, which continued to increase, reaching 100 million in 1967. However, it peaked at 128.08 million in 2008, and then declined, reaching 124 million in 2024. According to the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (IPSS) the projected future population in Japan (2023 estimate) is expected to decrease at an accelerating rate and will be 87 million in 2070 (projections with medium-fertility scenario).

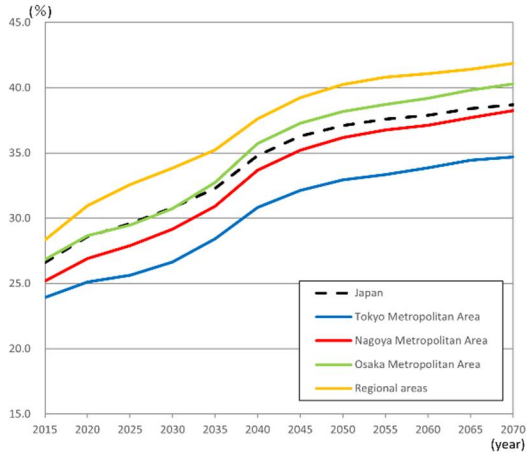
The proportion of elderly people aged 65 or older in Japan’s overall population (the share of aged population) has rapidly increased from 5%[1] in 1950 to 29.3% in 2024, one of the highest shares in the world. The population will continue to age into the future, with the projected share of aged population reaching 38.7% in 2070.

The number of employed persons continued to increase from 41 million in 1955, peaked in 1997 at 66 million, and took a temporary downward turn. In the 2010s it began to increase again, reaching 68 million in 2024. By gender, since the 2010s, the number of employed persons has remained almost unchanged among males, while the female figure has increased, leading to a continuing rise in the proportion of females among employees.

The demographic distribution is characterized by a rapid concentration in metropolitan areas since the 1960s, which was a period of high economic growth, and this concentration has remained particularly in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, despite slowing down during the phase of stable economic growth in the mid-1970s. The proportion of the total population living in the three metropolitan areas[2] exceeded 50% in 2024, with the Tokyo Metropolitan Area accounting for almost 30% of the Japanese population. Going forward, amid the declining population for the entire country, the proportion of the total population living in the metropolitan areas is expected to continue growing.

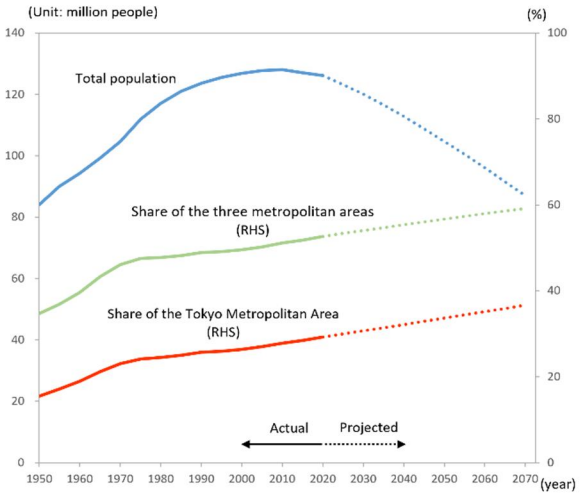
[1] The share of elderly people in 1950 does not include the figure for Okinawa Prefecture.

[2] The three metropolitan areas include the Tokyo Metropolitan Area (Saitama, Chiba, and Kanagawa Prefectures, and the Tokyo Metropolis), the Nagoya Metropolitan Area (Gifu, Aichi, and Mie Prefectures), and the Osaka Metropolitan Area (Kyoto, Osaka, Hyogo, and Nara Prefectures).



Data) Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications "Population Census," IPSS "Regional Population Projection for Japan" (December 2023 projections), the results of estimation by MLIT

Fig. 1 Trends in the share of aged population



Data) Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications "Population Census" until 2020, and IPSS "Regional Population Projection for Japan" (December 2023 projections with medium scenarios) from 2025 to 2050. The results of estimation by MLIT from 2055 to 2070.

Fig. 2 Total population and the proportion in metropolitan areas

(2) Support for persons in need

1) System for supporting the self-reliance of persons in need

The system for supporting the self-reliance of persons in need is a system that establishes consultation support centers in local governments that have welfare offices based on the Act for Supporting the Self-Reliance of Persons in Need (Act No. 105 of 2013), in order to implement a range of support for persons in need against a backdrop of complex and diverse issues, so that they can achieve self-reliance before they reach the stage of needing public assistance.

The specific support content includes, for example, "housing security benefits" which subsidize rent and house moving costs, "housing support" which provides accommodation, food and clothing to those with unstable living arrangements, "household finance improvement support" which gives advice on rebuilding household finances, "job preparation support" which aims to improve basic skills for general employment, "job training" which provides flexible working opportunities, and "learning and living support for children" which provides learning support and support for acquiring lifestyle habits to children from households in need, as well as a place for them to stay. Depending on the situation and needs of the person seeking a consultation, they may also be referred to support, etc. from other systems.

Furthermore, we also collaborate and cooperate with the concerned organizations in the region to develop regional communities, leading to early detection of and comprehensive support for persons in need.

2) Public assistance system

The public assistance system is a system that provides the necessary protection to people who are in need despite utilizing all of the assets, abilities, and other resources available to them, in accordance with their level of need, thereby guaranteeing a healthy and cultured minimum standard of living and encouraging self-reliance. This system is considered as the last social security safety net.

There are eight kinds of assistance, including livelihood assistance, housing assistance, medical assistance, and others, and each type provides, up to the necessary limit, the costs of daily life, such as food costs, housing costs, medical treatment expenses when sick, and other expenses necessary for daily life.

(3) Measures to combat the low birthrate and aging of the population and the building of an inclusive society of coexistence and mutual assistance

1) Policies regarding the aging society

Japan has promoted measures to respond to an aging society in accordance with the Guideline of Measures for the Ageing Society (Cabinet Decision of February 16, 2018), which are the guidelines on the basic and comprehensive measures to respond to an aging society that the government should promote. Furthermore, in 2024, taking into account the fact that a variety of changes concerning the aging society progressed rapidly, we formulated a new Guideline of Measures for the Ageing Society (Cabinet Decision of September 13, 2024), and we have decided to promote a range of measures in accordance with three basic approaches of (i) building an economy and society in which people can continue to play an active role according to their wishes regardless of age, (ii) building a society in which multiple generations can live together with peace of mind by appropriately responding to environmental changes such as an increase in the number of elderly persons living alone, and (iii) developing detailed policy and building social systems that respond to the changes in physical and cognitive functions associated with aging.

2) Medical and long-term care measures

The declining birthrate and aging of the population are progressing rapidly in Japan, and it is forecast that going forward the population of people aged 85 and over, who have multiple medical and long-term care needs, will increase toward 2040, while the productive-age population will decrease. Meanwhile, survey results have shown that many people wish to receive medical care at home or in other environments where they have long lived, and it is forecast that the demand for home medical care and long-term care will continue to increase going forward. For this reason, it will become even more necessary to build a system for providing medical and long-term care services focused on the future and to link this system with other systems.

In the Act on the Arrangement of Related Laws to Promote Comprehensive Assurance of Medical Care and Long-term Care in Local Communities (Act No. 83 of 2014) enacted in 2014, a reform is under way to provide people with home medical and long-term care in an integrated manner through role allotment of medical institutions and a seamless process from hospitalization to home care.

Sidebar 1: Example of the Community-Based Integrated Care System in Matsudo City

To enable people to continue living their own way of life in the community where they have long lived as much as possible, efforts have been made to build a Community-Based Integrated Care System that comprehensively ensures medical care, long-term care, preventive long-term care, housing, and support for independent daily living according to the actual conditions of the community, and it is necessary to further deepen and promote these efforts going forward.

As one example of an initiative for this purpose, Matsudo City,[3] Chiba Prefecture considers the community to be "one hospital" and local medical, long-term care, and welfare institutions and the government are working together to fulfill their various functions and advance development of a community that is easy to live in even for those who are old or sick. Under this system, the city collates the concerns received from local medical and long-term care professionals and residents, then the government, professional organizations, and business organizations consider solutions together, and consider response measures tailored to regional issues.

3) Measures to combat the low birthrate

In order to reverse the course of the declining birthrate trend, the Japanese government formulated the Children's Future Strategy (Cabinet Decision of December 22, 2023) in December 2023. This strategy aims for a society in which young people can marry as they wish, have children, and raise them with peace of mind, and sets out three principles: (i) increase the income of young people, (ii) change the structure and attitude of society as a whole, and (iii) seamlessly support all children and child-rearing households. In order to realize these principles, the Acceleration Plan for Supporting Children and Child-Rearing fundamentally strengthens support for children and child-rearing on an unprecedented scale, including expanding child allowances, establishing a system enabling any child to attend kindergarten, promoting flexible working styles, and other measures, and we are implementing it steadily.

4) Measures for persons with disabilities

Based on the Basic Act for Persons with Disabilities (Act No. 84 of 1970), in order to ensure that no citizens are divided according to whether or not they have a disability as well as the realization of a society of coexistence with mutual respect for personality and

[3] A city located near Tokyo with an area of 61.38 square kilometers and a population of 500,922 (as of March 31, 2025)

individuality, Japan has formulated the Basic Programme for Persons with Disabilities, and the concerned government ministries and agencies are collaborating to promote measures based on this program.

5) Ensuring food access

In the 2024 revised Basic Act on Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas (Act No. 106 of 1999), "food security" was defined as including each citizen's ability to procure food, and with food security being a basic principle, the Japanese government has decided to take necessary measures "to ensure the smooth procurement of food." Based on this law, specific measures were included in the Basic Plan for Food, Agriculture, and Rural Areas, which was formulated in April 2025. There has been an increase in people who are unable to keep healthy eating habits due to the inability to obtain sufficient food for financial reasons, and people for whom purchasing food or eating and drinking is inconvenient or difficult due to the aging population, closure of local retail businesses, and a decline in existing shopping districts, etc. (also known as the shopping disadvantaged). Given this situation, Japan supports the creation of a system where local stakeholders such as local governments, food businesses, logistics operators, food banks, and children's cafeterias, etc. cooperate to provide various foods to such people. Japan is also promoting initiatives for food banks, children's cafeterias, etc. to provide food that is sufficient in terms of quality and quantity, and support for last-mile deliveries, etc.

(4) Realization of a virtuous cycle of women's empowerment and economic growth, including acceleration of appointment of women

The Government of Japan has been working to ensure opportunities for women to participate in policymaking and planning processes in every sphere, and has further strengthened government-wide initiatives to realize policies from the perspective of gender equality in every sphere. Specifically, all sections of the government are in the process of steadily implementing the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality (Cabinet Decision of December 25, 2020) based on the Basic Act for Gender Equal Society (Act No. 78 of 1999), in a unified manner. In order to foster an environment where women can further increase their income, efforts will continue to be made to create an environment where women can work according to their preferences by promotion of reskilling, narrowing the gender pay gaps, promoting regular employment, etc.

(5) Child-related measures and the promotion of education

1) Establishment of the Children and Families Agency and formulation of the Children's Future Strategy and General Principles for Child-Related Measures

Against the backdrop of the tough environment surrounding children, Japan established the Children and Families Agency in April 2023 as a new command center aiming for a Children-Centered Society that always sees things from the perspective of children, puts their best interests first, and places child-related initiatives and policies at the center of

Japanese society.

Moreover, in order to reverse the declining birthrate trend, the Japanese government formulated the Children's Future Strategy (Cabinet Decision of December 22, 2023) in December 2023. This strategy aims for a society in which young people can marry as they wish, have children, and raise them with peace of mind, and sets out three principles: (i) increase the income of young people, (ii) change the structure and attitude of society as a whole, and (iii) seamlessly support all children and child-rearing households.

In December of the same year, the General Principles for Child-Related Measures (Cabinet Decision of December 22, 2023) were decided by the Cabinet based on the Basic Act on Children's Policy (Act No. 77 of 2022). The General Principles aim for the realization of a society where all children and young people can physically, mentally, and socially live a happy life (can maintain well-being), stipulate the basic policies concerning child-related measures, and are fundamentally strengthening child-related measures.

2) Enhancement of free early childhood education and care and other economic support
Japan has been working on the enhancement of economic support through "free early childhood education and care" (implemented from October 2019), the Higher Education Study Support System (commenced from April 2020; a system implementing a combination of tuition fee reductions and exemptions and the provision of grant-type scholarships), etc.

3) Reflecting the opinions and views of children and young people
In FY2023, Japan commenced Kodomo Wakamono★Iken Plus, an initiative to reflect the opinions and views of children and young people in the policies of the national government, and to date we have heard the opinions and views of approximately 4,500 children and young people on 49 themes, including those concerning child-centered community development, and have communicated the importance of hearing the opinions and views of children and young people to society as a whole.

4) Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education
The Fourth Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education, decided by the Cabinet in June 2023, positioned "promoting education to realize a symbiotic society where no one is left behind and the potential of all people is brought out" as one of its basic policies.

5) Promotion of environmental education and ESD
Under the Basic Policy for the Promotion of Environmental Conservation Activities, Motivating Participation in Environmental Conservation, Environmental Education, and Collaborative Efforts (Cabinet decision for full amendment on May 14, 2024) based on

the Act on the Promotion of Environmental Conservation Activities through Environmental Education (Act No. 130 of 2003), which has the objective of promoting environmental education for the establishment of a sustainable society, we are promoting environmental education for the establishment of a sustainable society based on the concept of ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) and we are taking measures such as training for teachers and staff, promoting experiential learning, disseminating information, and encouraging efforts through awards systems.

The current National Curriculum Standard sets out the goal of students being "the builders of a sustainable society," which is the objective of ESD, and initiatives are being promoted at each school.

6) Promotion of shokuiku (Food and Nutrition Education)

Based on the Fourth Basic Plan for the Promotion of Shokuiku (decided by the Council for the Promotion of Shokuiku on March 31, 2021), Japan is working to promote a greater understanding of food, agriculture, forestry, and fishery and the practice of healthy eating habits through the use of local products in school lunches, provision of opportunities to experience agriculture, forestry, and fishing, etc., and enhancing opportunities to learn about food, such as the importance of nutritionally balanced eating habits.

(6) Accessibility of public spaces

From the standpoint of promoting the development of safe and secure cities and local communities, and with an eye to the aging of society, the Act on Promotion of Smooth Transportation, etc. of Elderly Persons, Disabled Persons, etc. (Act No. 91 of 2006) (Barrier-free Act) was enacted in 2006 as a law based on the concept of universal design: "freedom and convenience for anyone and anywhere." The Act obliges newly built facilities (passenger facilities, various vehicles, roads, off-street parking facilities, city parks, buildings, etc.) to conform to the "standards for smooth transportation, etc.," while requiring existing facilities to make an effort to conform. There are also the "basic policies concerning promotion of smooth transportation, etc." in place, which have set development targets to be achieved by the end of March 2026 to promote accessibility.

Also, in accordance with barrier-free basic concepts created by municipalities, the focused and integrated promotion of accessibility is carried out in priority development areas. To increase the "barrier-free mindset" by deepening the national public's understanding and seeking their cooperation for the promotion of accessibility, "barrier-free classes" are hosted where people learn to assist as well as virtually experience being elderly, disabled, etc. These efforts serve to accelerate accessibility measures (sustained development in stages).

Sidebar 2: Fukuoka Prefecture's[4] initiatives for achieving a society of universal design

Fukuoka is working to take universal design into account in community development, so that everyone in the prefecture may enjoy safety, security, and comfort in their life there.

Fukuoka Prefecture has set four pillars of universal design, "town planning," "manufacturing," "information and services," and "awareness raising." The prefecture is implementing the "Fukuoka Compassion Program for Parking Lots," a project that encourages the fair use of parking spaces for people with disabilities. They are also striving to widen sidewalks, remove steps along them, and install tactile paving blocks with a textured surface for people who are visually impaired. They produce pamphlets with embedded digitized voice data printed on them for visitors coming to the prefectural office, and publish the Fukuoka Barrier-Free Map, which introduces information about facilities that people with disabilities and others can use with peace of mind.

Furthermore, efforts are being made to distribute the Disaster Prevention Handbook in multiple languages to foreign nationals, and to establish one-stop consultation windows for issues such as status of residence and employment.

(Red) Permanent wheelchair users with disabilities who drive themselves
(Green) People with physical or intellectual disabilities or a mental disorder
(Orange) Pregnant women and injured persons

Fig. 3 Parking permits for the Compassion Program

Fig. 4 Disaster Prevention Handbook for Non-Japanese

(Prepared in nine languages, including Japanese)

[4] Fukuoka Prefecture, an administrative division facing the Sea of Japan located in the northern part of Kyushu, is composed of 29 cities, including Fukuoka and Kitakyushu Cities, 29 towns, and two villages. The UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and Pacific Fukuoka is located in Fukuoka City. The prefecture has a population of 5,092,442 in an area of 4,987 square kilometers (as of February 1, 2025).

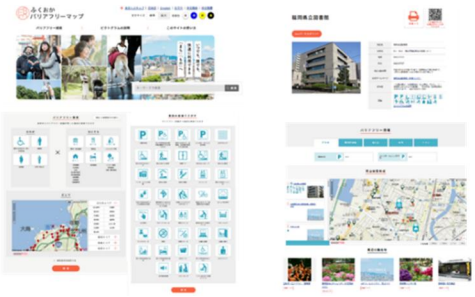


Fig. 5 Fukuoka Barrier-Free Map

URL: https://barrierfree.pref.fukuoka.jp/en/ **2D barcode:**

(7) Policies regarding the declining population in the regions

Japan's population peaked at 128.08 million in 2008 and has declined for 13 consecutive years since 2011. The total population as of October 1, 2023, was 124.35 million, a decrease of approximately 600,000 from the previous year. Studies of demographic changes based on 1 km grid squares demonstrate that by 2050, the population will decrease by more than 50% in approximately half of the inhabited grids squares nationwide, and approximately 20% of the grid squares will become uninhabited. Larger population decrease rates are forecast in municipalities with smaller populations, but there are concerns that going forward the harsh tide of population decline will reach not only small cities but also medium-scale cities which are the center of local daily life services, accelerating the decline in the convenience of these services.

The Third National Spatial Strategy (National Plan) formulated in 2023 (Cabinet Decision of July 28, 2023) (the details are described in 3.4.2 (1)) calls for the "formation of regional living areas" as a way to expand the options for living and working in accordance with the diversifying values of people, especially the younger generation, to change the trend of population decline and outflow from rural areas and create regions where people can continue to live vibrantly and with peace of mind. A regional living area is an area where services necessary for daily life such as regional public transport, shopping, medical care, welfare, long-term care, education, etc. are provided sustainably while making full use of digital technology through public-private partnerships, are not limited to municipal boundaries, and are in accordance with the actual living and economic realities, while taking into account the culture, nature, and unity of the region. The plan aims to form regional living areas to solve regional issues and to utilize regional resources including the regions' unique nature, climates, landscapes, culture, etc., to enhance the appeal of relaxed, abundant, and beautiful regions that attract people, thereby creating and expanding a flow of people to rural areas.

Furthermore, in order to strive towards forming sustainable regions which have diverse values and appeal, it is necessary to secure the human resources who will be responsible for creating the regions. In a depopulating society, it is necessary to not only increase the

residential population but also expand and deepen the population with strong relationships to the areas through dual habitation, in which people establish a base for life in a specific region separate from their main base of life.

Dual habitation fulfills peoples' desire for abundant natural and living environments in rural areas, self-realization, participation in the local community, social participation and collaboration, and hometown return, etc. It has significance because it contributes to revitalizing the regions. It has been advocated as an abundant way of life which, in a sense, enables people to enjoy their lives twice as much and it has been disseminated, encouraged, and practiced as a response to demographic trends.

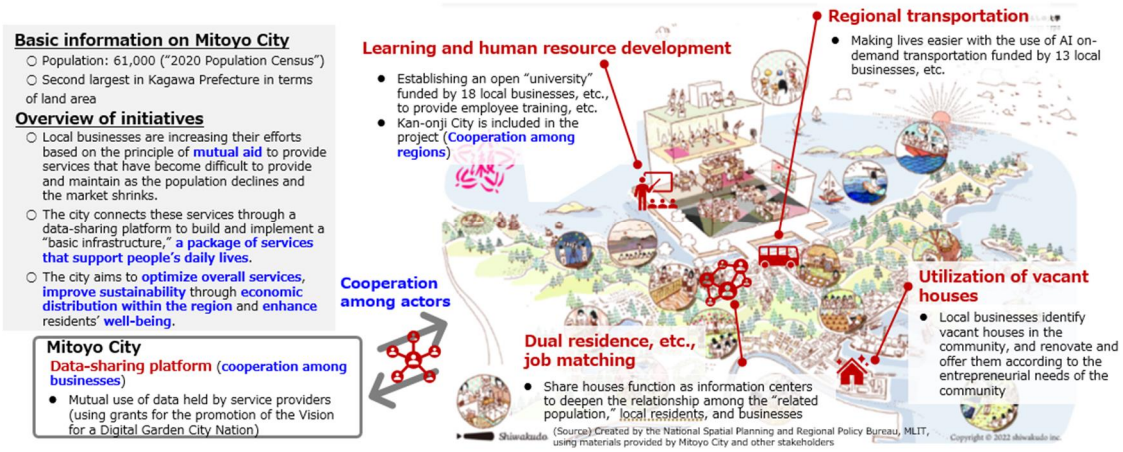


Fig. 6 A model case for the formation of a regional living area (Mitoyo City, Kagawa Prefecture)

3.1.2 Housing

(1) Creation of homes that make childbirth and child-rearing easier

1) Secure good quality housing that makes childbirth and child-rearing easier

We are encouraging renovations which make it easier to raise children and reduce housework burden, and we are working to secure telework spaces inside homes.

In light of the rise in the ratio of house prices to annual income, and other factors, we are promoting the acquisition of housing that meets the needs for living in city centers of young households and households raising children who are pressed for time.

Taking into consideration dual-income households and households raising children who prioritize convenience such as being close to train stations, we are interpreting convenience and scale in a comprehensive manner to promote the acquisition of housing. Furthermore, we are promoting flexible moving into new dwellings in accordance with the number of children and living situation.

Through planned maintenance and repairs of private rental housing and appropriate management work by management companies based on the registration system of property management companies, we are promoting the formation of a stock of good

quality private rental housing that can be used for a long time and the development of the rental housing market. Furthermore, we have reviewed the Long-Life Quality Housing System taking into account the characteristics of rental housing.

We are promoting the development of rental housing that is excellent in terms of soundproofing, energy-saving performance, crime prevention functions, and access to childcare and educational facilities, and medical facilities.

2) Realization and community development of living environments that make it easier to raise children

We are promoting the development of environments where workplaces, houses, and schools are located in close proximity, such as by developing child-rearing support facilities, parks, green spaces, and co-working spaces when rebuilding or redeveloping housing complexes.

We are promoting the enhancement of child-rearing support functions by developing exchange facilities in the region that utilize existing stock such as vacant houses and vacant stores in existing built-up areas.

In addition to promoting the Compact Plus Network in harmony with the community development policy of the region, we are promoting the development of living conditions and housing areas where all generations can live safely and with peace of mind by forming good living environments and streetscapes utilizing construction agreements and landscape agreements, etc.

(2) Formation and development of communities where elderly persons and others can live healthily and with peace of mind

1) Securing housing in which elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and others can live healthily and with peace of mind

We are promoting a comprehensive consultation system for choosing appropriate housing in preparation for old age, including renovations, moving into new dwellings, and the provision of barrier-free information.

We are encouraging the development and renovation of housing with good barrier-free performance, including the installation of elevators, and equipping them with suitable thermal environments that account for the perspective of heat shock countermeasures and other matters.

We are encouraging the spread of services that utilize IoT technologies and other technologies for the health management and remote monitoring of elderly persons.

We are promoting the development of and information disclosure about housing with services for elderly persons through appropriate involvement of local governments, taking into consideration regional demand and systems for the provision of medical and nursing care services, with an emphasis on the nature of such housing being a place where people can live their lives in line with their level of self-reliance.

2) Formation and development of sustainable and abundant communities where multiple generations coexist through mutual support

We are promoting the development of an environment where households of elderly persons can live easily in the region, such as by providing medical and welfare facilities, elderly person support facilities, community spaces that contribute to measures against loneliness and isolation, and other life care in the rebuilding and redevelopment of housing complexes, and through the development of venues for social events in the community.

In addition to facilitating three generations of families living together or nearby one another, and smooth moves into new dwellings in accordance with physical and living circumstances, we are promoting the formation of mixed communities where elderly persons can live healthy lives and diverse generations can connect and socialize through the support of their families and others.

In addition to promoting the Compact Plus Network in harmony with the community development policy of the region, we are promoting the development of living conditions and housing areas where all generations can live safely and with peace of mind, by forming good living environments and streetscapes utilizing construction agreements and landscape agreements, etc.

(3) Development of safety net functions for persons requiring housing support

1) Securing housing for persons requiring housing support (low-income earners, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, foreign nationals, and others)

We are promoting the planned reconstruction of public housing, which plays a central role in the housing safety net, and stock improvements such as barrier-free construction and extending the life of housing.

When advancing the development and management of public housing, we are promoting the utilization of diverse know-how and technologies from private sector companies, including PPPs/PFIs, and the supply of housing units according to household attributes, while taking into account regional conditions, household trends, and other factors.

We are strengthening collaboration between local governments and private sector organizations in order to advance the utilization of safety net registered housing for the

purpose of securing housing in which anyone can live with peace of mind. We are also promoting lower rents alongside initiatives by welfare departments to encourage self-reliance in accordance with the needs of local governments.

Regarding rental housing managed by the Urban Renaissance Agency (UR Agency), we have also fulfilled the function of supplementing the central role of public housing and other parts of the housing safety net in accordance with regional conditions. Taking into consideration the stability of residence of continuing residents and others, we are advancing the provision of rental housing that meets the needs of diverse households, promoting the regeneration of stock, and promoting the development of an environment in which diverse households can continue to live with peace of mind.

2) Move-in support and life care for persons requiring housing support integrated with welfare policies

We are promoting the utilization of public housing and safety net registered housing through collaboration between the housing and welfare departments at both the national government and local government levels.

Housing and welfare departments of local governments, housing support councils, housing support corporations, and others are collaborating to promote the development of a general and comprehensive housing support system that matches and consults with persons requiring housing support when they are moving into housing, monitors them while they are living in the housing, and supports them until they move out, with a view to combating loneliness and isolation.

From the perspective of securing stable rental housing for elderly persons, we are raising awareness of contract clauses that include provisions for the termination of lease contracts and disposal of personal property abandoned by the tenant, so that personal property abandoned by the tenant can be disposed of when a tenant dies. Furthermore, from the perspective of enabling foreign nationals to move into rental housing smoothly, we are disseminating guidelines and other information that include materials on move-in procedures in multiple languages.

Sidebar 3: Creation of regional medical and welfare bases

Aging of housing complex residents and regional medical and welfare bases

As the low birthrate and aging of the population proceed nationwide, aging is progressing particularly rapidly in the UR Agency's housing complexes. In this situation, the UR Agency is promoting the development of living environments that can accommodate the lives of multiple generations, including elderly persons, by building comprehensive support and service provision systems within housing complexes that are tailored to the needs of each community. This includes the enhancement of medical and welfare

facilities necessary for the region, so that residents of housing complexes can continue to live in their familiar neighborhoods indefinitely, rather than being forced to move due to the need to raise children or care for the elderly.

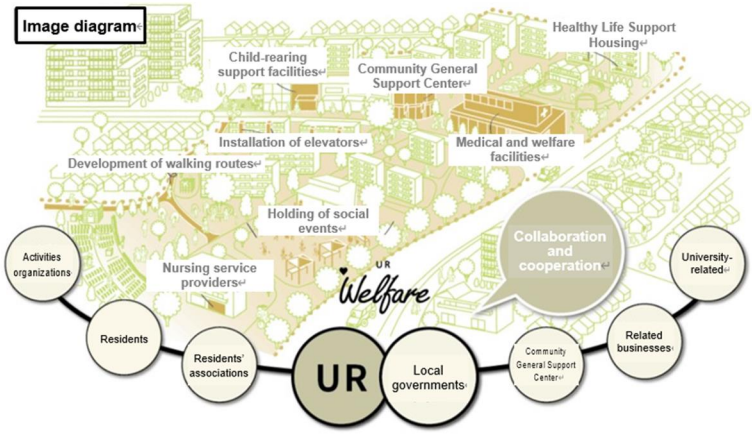


Fig. 7 Image of the creation of regional medical and welfare bases

Initiatives are being implemented that are tailored to the situation of each housing complex. In the Takashimadaira housing complex in Itabashi City,[5] Tokyo, the empty rooms dispersed across the existing residential buildings are being utilized, renovated, and operated as dispersed housing with services for elderly persons. Inside the housing complex, service base facilities include the functions of a Community General Support Center, Home-Visit Nursing Station, In-Home Long-Term Care Support Center (home nursing support business), and a medical consultation room (home medical and nursing collaboration support window). The provision of one-stop medical and nursing services is realized through collaboration among these various functions.

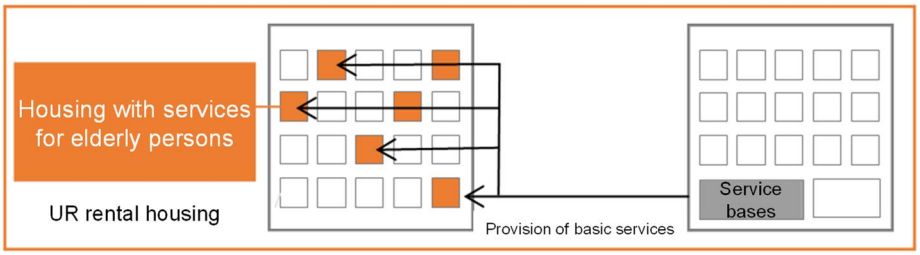


Fig. 8 Operation in the Takashimadaira housing complex

3.1.3 Access to basic services

(1) Access to safe and reliable water

In Japan, the coverage of the water supply system, calculated as the population with water supply services divided by the total population, reached 80% in 1970, and stood at 98.2% in 2023. On the other hand, most of the water system was developed intensively in the 1970s, the era of rapid growth, and it faces issues such as aging of the facilities,

[5] Located in the northwestern part of Tokyo's 23 wards, with an area of 32.22 square kilometers and a population of 580,912 people (as of April 1, 2025)

delays in making the pipelines earthquake-resistant, and a decrease in fees revenue due to population decline and other factors. Furthermore, many of the water utilities are small scale and have weak management foundations, and have inadequately prepared for planned renewal.

In light of this situation, we formulated a New Water Supply Vision in March 2013, which presented the direction initiatives should aim for from the three viewpoints of "safety," "resilience," and "sustainability," and promoted various measures. In addition, the Act on Partially Amending the Water Supply Act (Act No. 92 of 2018), which had the objective of strengthening the water supply infrastructure, was enacted on December 6, 2018 and came into force on October 1, 2019.

Based on this amended Water Supply Act, the national government stipulated the basic policies for strengthening the water supply infrastructure, including promotion of wide-area collaboration across municipalities, and the prefectures are promoting wide-area collaboration by water utilities and others by stipulating a Plan for Strengthening the Infrastructure of Water Supply Systems and establishing a Council for the Promotion of Broad Collaboration and Cooperation.

Furthermore, given the situation of water utilities and others, taking a long-term perspective to collaborate with private companies that have excellent technology and management know-how and private companies that are familiar with the local situation is one effective option for strengthening the water supply infrastructure. For this reason, the national government supports public-private collaboration initiatives by introducing examples of advanced public-private collaboration and holding meetings of the Council for the Promotion of Public-Private Partnership in Operating Water Supply Services.

Moreover, from the perspective of advancing appropriate asset management of water supply facilities and other facilities within water utilities, the national government has made the implementation of maintenance and repairs, including inspections, of water supply facilities and the preparation and maintenance of an Inventory of Water Supply Facilities mandatory, and it has also imposed an obligation to make an effort to carry out planned renewal of water supply facilities and prepare and publish the revenue and expenditure outlook of the business. To promote appropriate asset management, the national government is preparing and publishing rules and guidelines related to these measures.

(2) Treatment of domestic wastewater

During the economic prosperity of the period of rapid growth, Japan saw its population and economic activities concentrated in urban areas, and environmental problems accompanied this process, such as air pollution and water pollution from domestic

wastewater. As a result, the Sewerage Act (Act No. 79 of 1958) was revised in 1970 with the addition of the provision to "contribute to the preservation of water quality in public water areas" to the purposes of the Act. In the 20th century, Japan emphasized mainly on the expansion of sewerage services and greater coverage, working especially on the efficient "removal and treatment" of wastewater to improve public health and the living environment.

Consequently, as of the end of March 2024, the percentage of the population with access to public sewerage reached 81.4%, or 101.28 million people, while the percentage of the population with access to wastewater treatment facilities, which include water treatment facilities other than sewerage services, such as rural community sewerage facilities and Japanese decentralized domestic wastewater treatment systems (Johkasou), was 93.3%, with a certain degree of progress made in achieving national minimum standards, such as improved living environments and flush toiletization.

More advanced wastewater treatment performed mainly for water quality conservation started in 1982 with the addition of total nitrogen and phosphorus to the environmental quality standards. As of the end of March 2024, the percentage of the population with access to advanced wastewater treatment (AWT) was 65.7%. Meanwhile, water pollution due to heavy rainfall sometimes causing combined sewer systems to release untreated sewage containing human excrement became a social problem. Therefore, as a water quality preservation initiative, the Order for Enforcement of the Sewerage Act (Cabinet Order No. 147 of 1959) was amended in September 2003 to require small and medium-sized cities (170 cities) and large cities (21 cities) to take improvement measures, and all of the cities had completed the measures by the end of March 2024.

Today, the socio-economic situation surrounding infrastructure is becoming even more serious, including the intensification of natural disasters, the aging of sewerage facilities, and growing limitations on public finances and the workforce. In order to ensure cities are safe from natural disasters such as intensifying floods and earthquakes, we are promoting comprehensive disaster countermeasures that combine "disaster prevention," including flooding countermeasures such as the development of stormwater control facilities, the preparation and publication of inland water hazard maps, and making important sewerage facilities earthquake-proof and tsunami-proof, and "disaster mitigation" to minimize damage in the event of a disaster. Furthermore, as a measure to deal with the aging of sewerage facilities, we are implementing surveys for planned inspections and reconstructions based on the concept of stock management, and implementing advanced and efficient maintenance using digital technologies. Moreover, in the context of limited government finances and workforce, we are utilizing digital technologies for sustainable business operation, and we are promoting public-private collaboration which maximizes the utilization of private sector capabilities by having

local government and the private sector collaborate to operate the business, and promoting wider-areas measures to strengthen the business operation base through the integration and abolition of facilities and wide-area collaboration among multiple businesses.

To contribute to building a resilient society in which sustainable development is possible, the sewerage administration will continue to carry out these initiatives and will also collaborate in areas other than sewerage, in order to appropriately respond to a variety of societal demands and evolve further.

(3) Waste management

In Japan, waste is managed according to the Act on Waste Management and Public Cleaning (Act No. 137 of 1970). Municipal waste (household waste and human waste, etc.) is under the overall management jurisdiction of municipalities, to whom prefectures must strive to give necessary guidance, while the national government must endeavor to give municipalities and prefectures the necessary guidance and financial support.

In FY2023, 38.97 million tons of municipal waste were discharged in total. Since FY2000, the amount of municipal waste has been on a downward trend. The final disposal of waste stood at 3.16 million tons in FY2023, a decrease of approximately 30% from ten years earlier.

In terms of support that the national government grants to municipalities, which are responsible for the management of municipal waste, the state offers municipalities financial aid for renewing the municipal waste disposal facilities they have constructed. The national government has also prepared a “Guideline for Municipal Solid Waste Management Systems” and other guidelines to help municipalities further promote the 3Rs, as well as revise them, working to ensure that they are fully recognized and understood by municipalities.

In carrying out waste management policy not only from the standpoint of waste disposal but also as a solution to global warming, Japan has sought to incinerate only types of waste where there is no better option for disposal, and collect the heat generated from this incineration for power generation or other purposes as efficiently as possible as part of the efforts to reduce fossil fuel consumption.

For enhanced disaster control measures, Japan, adopting a new perspective on waste disposal facilities and regarding them not only as facilities for the disposal of waste in ordinary times, but also as bases for the smooth management of disaster waste, has established broad administrative areas that maintain the capacities of their incineration plants and final disposal sites with a certain level of margin to secure the availability of

alternatives and redundancy. For waste disposal facilities that should serve as core plants for each region, the government has also determined the work required to make them earthquake-resistant and keep them resilient at the level required for a waste management system.

(4) Initiatives to secure mobility

Regional transportation is truly the foundation of regional revitalization, providing access to essential services for daily life, such as shopping, medical care, and education, among others. However, it has been placed in an extremely tough business environment due to a decrease in users and a shortage of drivers and other workers as a consequence of population decline, the low birthrate, and the aging of the population.

In response to this situation, in April 2023, Japan amended the Act on Revitalization and Rehabilitation of Local Public Transportation Systems (Act No. 59 of 2007). It is encouraging a redesign of regional transportation with high convenience, productivity, and sustainability through collaboration and cooperation with diverse stakeholders in the region.

Furthermore, in July 2024 the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism launched the “Transportation Blank” Resolution Headquarters, and the district transport bureaus and other organizations are directly visiting the heads of local governments that are facing difficulties, providing accompanying support to on-site personnel, and acting as a bridge to related industries, etc., in order to strongly advance initiatives to secure “regional transportation” and “tourism transportation.” Furthermore, in November the same year, we established a Public-Private Partnership Platform for “Transportation Blanks” and put in place a system for utilizing the technologies and know-how of not only local governments and transportation operators but also the private sector, including IT and other industry types.

Moreover, we designated the three years from FY2025 to FY2027 as the Intensive Measures Period for “Transportation Blanks” and based on the “Policy for eliminating 'transportation blanks' 2025 edition” stipulated in May 2025, we are advancing the elimination of each and every one of the “transportation blanks” nationwide and the building of sustainable systems in each region through comprehensive backup support by the national government, including accompanying support, budget support, and other support by district transport bureaus and other organizations.

3.2 Sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all

(1) Background of regional development policy

Alongside the high economic growth leading to over-congestion in metropolitan areas and depopulation in rural areas, a series of Comprehensive National Development Plans (CNDPs) were formulated (the details are described in 3.4.2 (1)). Diverse policies reflecting the policy targets of individual decades were undertaken under the philosophy of harmonized development between regions.

Large infrastructure development in the regions including roads and high speed railway networks was first accelerated, followed by a series of policies promoting regional industries under the recognition that job opportunities are the key to attracting people to the regions, particularly, the younger generations: Development of New Industrial Cities and Special Areas for Industrial Consolidation defined in the 1st CNDP, development of core cities in regions, the relocation of existing factories and other business facilities, and inviting industries to the Areas for Formation and Development of Regional Industrial Clusters through Promotion of Establishment of New Business Facilities, etc. After the oil crises, the government, faced with the structural shift of industries towards the service sector and the sophistication of the industrial structure as well as the remaining unipolar concentration on Tokyo, selected a variety of special areas in regions to invite and promote cutting edge industries by providing incentive measures facilitating regional innovation.

For the regions that are geographically, naturally or socially handicapped including remote islands, snowy, mountainous, peninsular, and depopulated regions, which remain disadvantaged in terms of basic conditions, particularly industrial infrastructure and living conditions, the government has designated areas to provide preferential measures tailored to these disadvantages.

(2) Promotion of local industries

Regarding regional industrial development policies, through the 1990s, as the rise of the yen and other factors led manufacturing bases in Japan to transfer overseas, with the fear of the hollowing out of industry in the country, even in large urban areas, which came with the greater need for decentralization, the regions were called on to ensure self-sustaining development. To help local industries develop in a self-sustaining manner, support programs were introduced for invigorating industrial clusters in the regions and promoting the foundation of new businesses there. In 2001, the Industrial Cluster Plan started for the development of environments in the regions that help generate successive innovation, and under the Plan, 18 projects were carried out nationwide by 2009, with 80,000 new businesses established.

In 2007, partly as a reflection of the movement of Japanese companies returning to their

home base, the Act on Formation and Development of Regional Industrial Clusters through Promotion of Establishment of New Business Facilities, etc. (Act No. 40 of 2007) (Act Promoting Establishment of New Business Facilities) was enacted to make effective use of the strengths of the regions in promoting the establishment of business facilities with a view to generating jobs and reinvigorating local industries there, and policy programs for regional industries were pursued by promoting the establishment of business facilities in the regions and at the same time making effective use of regional resources for reinvigorating them simultaneously.

Moreover, in 2017, regarding businesses which drive regional economies, the Act on Strengthening a Framework for Regional Growth and Development by Promoting Regional Economy Advancement Projects (Act No. 40 of 2007) (Regional Future Investment Promotion Act) was enacted as an amended act of the Act Promoting Establishment of New Business Facilities in order to promote businesses which have a significant economic effect on regional businesses while also creating high added value by utilizing the characteristics of the region, with a view to supporting regional industries in diverse areas. Approximately 4,200 businesses were approved nationwide between enactment of the Act and April 2024.

(3) Promotion of urban agriculture

1) Enactment of the Basic Act on the Promotion of Urban Agriculture

Among the broad range of policies regarding agricultural area development, this section focuses on urban agriculture. In urban areas, farmers leverage their proximity to consuming areas and supply consumers with fresh agricultural products through farm stands and other channels. In addition to this, urban agriculture plays diverse roles in urban areas, such as offering people opportunities to experience agriculture and interact with farmers, securing disaster control areas in case of natural disasters, and helping the urban population better understand agriculture.

Against this backdrop, and in light of situational changes such as declining development pressure on urban cropland due to population decline and aging and a growing public appreciation for urban agriculture, the Basic Act on the Promotion of Urban Agriculture (Act No. 14 of 2015) was enacted in 2015 to create a positive urban environment by ensuring the stable continuation of urban agriculture and the full exercise of its diverse functions.

Furthermore, in 2016, the Cabinet decided on the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Urban Agriculture based on the Act (Cabinet Decision of May 13, 2016), which called for the appropriate preservation and effective use of urban cropland, which had previously been regarded as “land to be converted into residential land,” by recognizing it as something that “should be in urban areas.” Through this, urban agriculture has been promoted

through a variety of measures.

2) Initiatives based on revision of the Productive Green Space Act
Prior to the revision of the Productive Green Space Act (Act No.68 of 1974) in 2017, the facilities that were allowed to be constructed in productive green zones were limited to facilities required for engaging in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries related activities, such as greenhouses, storage facilities for farming machinery and equipment, and rest areas.

However, given that agricultural organizations had long requested that the construction of farm stands and other facilities also be allowed, the Act was revised in 2017, and facilities for processing agricultural products, farm stands, and farmers' restaurants were added to the list of facilities allowed in productive green zones as those that are necessary for stable and sustained agriculture, forestry, and fisheries related activities.

Furthermore, whereas previously it had been possible to request that productive green space be purchased by the municipality after 30 years had passed since the land was designated as a productive green zone, the revision also added the Specific Productive Green Space Designation System, which extends the purchase request period by 10 years in order to continue to preserve agricultural land in urban areas.

3) Initiatives based on the Act on the Facilitation of Leasing of Urban Cropland
As the number of farmers continues to decline and the population ages, it is becoming increasingly difficult for landowners to utilize their urban cropland on their own. Accordingly, the Act on the Facilitation of Leasing of Urban Cropland (Act No. 68 of 2018) was enacted in 2018 to enable urban cropland to be leased to interested farmers and other persons.

The number of initiatives that leverage systems based on this Act continues to grow each year, leading to the effective utilization and appropriate preservation of urban cropland through leasing by farmers seeking to expand their scope of business and new farmers aiming to start farming in urban areas.

(4) Promotion of local tourism
Tourism is an important industry for invigorating regional communities. It is a wide-reaching, comprehensive industry that benefits not only tourism-related businesses such as travel agencies and accommodation facilities, but other business sectors as well. The ripple effect on other sectors has been significant, totaling 36.2 trillion yen in 2022, and resulting in the creation of new jobs for 3.01 million persons in 2022.

In this context, the Tourism Vision to Support the Future of Japan was formulated in

2016, based on concept that tourism is one of the pillars of Japan's growth strategy and a key element for regional revitalization, thereby consolidating reforms to establish Japan as an "Advanced Tourism Country." As a result of concerted and coordinated efforts by the government and the public and private sectors, inbound tourism achieved rapid growth through 2019 with the number of international visitors to Japan reaching 31.88 million and consumption by international visitors totaling 4.8 trillion yen. However, tourism faced an impact of unprecedented severity with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when the inbound demand temporarily disappeared and domestic travel by Japanese residents was reduced by half. This decline was particularly severe in regional areas, and the long-term structural issues in the tourism industry, which is vital to the regional economy and employment, such as low productivity due to delays in adopting digital technology and shortages of human resources, became even more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given these circumstances, a new Tourism Nation Promotion Basic Plan was established in 2023 for the revival of Japan as a tourism nation in a sustainable manner. Specifically, the plan identifies the need to tackle the following three strategies: Strategies to Create Sustainable Tourism Destinations, Strategies to Recover Inbound Tourism, and Strategies to Expand Domestic Exchanges, under the three keywords of "sustainable tourism," "increased consumption," and "promotion of regional tourism." Among these, initiatives for creating sustainable tourism destinations are being promoted to revitalize and add high value to tourist destinations and the tourism industry that were severely impacted by COVID-19, including support for the renovation of accommodation facilities and tourist facilities that serve as bases for stay-based travel, a form of travel with a strong economic boost for communities, and the promotion of tourism DX. The plan also involves the promotion of environmentally friendly travel while promoting the preservation of local tourism resources, such as natural and cultural resources, and balancing such preservation with tourism to develop tourism destinations that consider the needs of local residents. By promoting the development of systems that foster positive cycles for local societies and economies in tourism destinations throughout Japan, the plan advances the development of sustainable tourism destinations that are good to live in and good to visit. As a result of these initiatives, the number of international visitors to Japan reached 36.87 million in 2024, with tourism consumption reaching approximately 8.1 trillion yen, setting new records for both metrics.

However, a trend is emerging whereby international visitors to Japan are increasingly concentrated in certain regions centered on urban areas, even compared to the period before COVID-19, with approximately 70% of international visitors to Japan staying at accommodations concentrated in the three metropolitan areas of Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka. This leaves the promotion of regional tourism as a continuing challenge. For that reason, further efforts must include support for measures to develop content that

encourages stays in regional areas and measures to prevent and curb overtourism.

Sidebar 4: "KANAZAWA SDGs Tourism," sustainable tourism initiatives in Kanazawa[6]

Since the opening of the Hokuriku Shinkansen line to Kanazawa, the city has seen an increase in both domestic and international tourists. This has contributed to the city's vibrancy, but it has also affected the daily lives of residents in some areas. Tangible and intangible local assets have been subject to consumption and transformation, raising concerns about the potential loss of their value over the medium to long term.

In response, Kanazawa City is advancing the "KANAZAWA SDGs Tourism" initiative, which aims to achieve sustainable urban development through collaborative efforts between residents and visitors. The initiative is founded on a shared understanding of the city's authentic heritage, reflecting its biocultural diversity rooted in nature, history, and culture.

Based on the criteria of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), the city has introduced a local certification program that recognizes hotels and travel agencies working toward the SDGs as "KANAZAWA SDGs Tourism Promotion Operators." The program also facilitates the sharing of best practices and fosters sustainability awareness among businesses.

Fig. 9 Trial tour for "KANAZAWA SDGs tourism"

Fig. 10 Community cleanup activities by promotion operators

Fig. 11 Logotype for certified KANAZAWA SDGs Tourism Promotion

2D barcode:

(5) Development of good landscapes and beautiful regions

With an aim of promoting the development of good urban and rural landscapes, building a beautiful, dignified national land, creating an attractive and comfortable living environment, and realizing vibrant communities with distinctive characteristics, the

[6] Kanazawa, a city facing the Sea of Japan and located almost in the center of the main island of Japan, is the seat of the prefectural government of Ishikawa. It has a population of 455,404 in an area of 468.81 square kilometers (as of January 1, 2025).

Landscape Act (Act No. 110 of 2004) was enacted in 2004 as Japan's first comprehensive legislation concerning landscape. Local governments are eligible to become Landscape Administrative Organizations (LAOs), entities that promote landscape administration according to the Act. The number of LAOs has increased to 816 as of March 31, 2024, of which 666 organizations have taken the lead in formulating Landscape Plans, demonstrating progress in initiatives for developing good landscapes. The number of municipalities that have become LAOs and have thereby enacted ordinances under the Outdoor Advertisement Act (Act No.189 of 1949), previously the purview of the prefectural governments, increased to 103 organizations as of March 31, 2024, demonstrating progress in comprehensive landscape-oriented community development.

Furthermore, Japan possesses a good environment comprised of the elegance, atmosphere, and character formed by cultural assets shared among citizens, such as shrines, temples, and castle ruins of immense historical value, and other related historical structures, as well as by the activities that reflect local history and culture that are carried out there, such as the production and sale of traditional crafts and the celebration of traditional festivals and rituals. However, due to factors such as the high costs and effort required for maintenance and a shortage of successors caused by the aging of owners and population decline, historic buildings have been rapidly disappearing across the country, resulting in the loss of good historic landscapes. As a solution, the Act on Maintenance and Improvement of Historical Landscapes in a Community (Act No.40 of 2008, commonly known as the Historical Community Planning Rule) was enacted in 2008.

The national government approves Plans for the Maintenance and Improvement of Historical Landscapes formulated by local governments in accordance with the Act to leverage local history and traditional culture, and provides support for initiatives based on these plans. Since the enactment of the Act, the number of approved cities has been increasing each year, with a total of 95 cities having received national approval as of March 31, 2024.

(6) Strengthening the competitiveness of the National Capital Region

The population of the National Capital Region[7] was approximately 44.3 million as of 2022, with a gross regional product of approximately 230 trillion yen as of FY2019, representing approximately 40% of total national production. Japan's core political, administrative, and economic functions are concentrated in the region, along with international gateway functions such as international airports and strategic international hub ports.

In preparation for the formation of the Japan Central Corridor with the opening of the Superconducting Maglev (Chuo Shinkansen), etc., the region is being called on to

[7] Includes Ibaraki, Tochigi, Gunma, Saitama, Chiba, Tokyo, Kanagawa, and Yamanashi prefectures

leverage its strength in attracting diverse personnel in fields such as digital technology and international business, including young people and foreign residents, to lead Japan by strengthening international competitiveness through creating next generation innovation, etc., as well as to create a positive cycle of coexistence with neighboring regions.

1) Formation of the Japan Central Corridor

Economic growth in Japan is led by the accumulation of industry in the three metropolitan areas of Japan, namely Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka, each leveraging the characteristics of their respective areas. Through the construction of high-standard highways such as the Shin-Tomei Expressway scheduled for full completion, and the phased opening of the Chuo Shinkansen currently under construction, these three metropolitan areas will be connected within approximately one hour, thereby achieving a reduction in time and distance that will make them function as a single metropolitan area. The project entities, the national and related local governments are working together to advance environmental preparations for the early opening of the Chuo Shinkansen.

2) Strengthening of international airport and hub port functions

New flight paths began operating in March 2020 at the Tokyo International Airport to strengthen international competitiveness in both business and tourism, thereby expanding the annual takeoff and landing capacity. At the same time, Narita International Airport is planning initiatives such as the construction of an additional Runway C to increase annual takeoff and landing capacity and the reconstruction of passenger terminals.

Furthermore, as part of an initiative to strengthen port competitiveness, the Keihin Ports in the National Capital Region have been designated as International Container Hubs (ICHs), and comprehensive measures are being implemented by integrating both structural and non-structural measures.

3) Progress in the promotion of urban renaissance measures

In order to strengthen Japan’s international competitive positioning, it is necessary to enhance Japan’s investment attractiveness by developing a world-class business environment, in addition to fostering appealing growth industries. Accordingly, Urban Renaissance Emergency Development Areas (areas requiring urgent and focused urban development through urban development projects, etc.) and Specific Urban Renaissance Emergency Development Areas (Urban Renaissance Emergency Development Areas deemed particularly effective in strengthening international competitiveness) are being designated in accordance with the Act on Special Measures Concerning Urban Regeneration (Act No. 22 of 2002). Under the program, excellent private-sector urban

renaissance project plans in the designated areas that are approved by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism are provided with legal and budgetary support and tax assistance, such as special financial support and tax exemptions. Furthermore, the designation of the National Strategic Special Zones is being carried out in accordance with the Act on National Strategic Special Zones (Act No. 107 of 2013).

(7) Promoting smart cities

Japan is striving to resolve challenges that regional communities face, which include a shortage of human resources accompanying the country's aging and population decline, growing disparities between urban areas and regions in terms of the economy and the services provided to residents, the increasing cost of maintaining infrastructure and transportation systems, and declining business opportunities, by drawing on the participation of various stakeholders, beginning with citizens, and through the utilization of advanced technologies. Japan is promoting initiatives relating to smart cities toward the formation of cities and regions that are diverse and sustainable, and that enhance social value, economic value and environmental value.

In 2019, the relevant ministries and agencies established the Smart City Public-Private Partnership Platform, which comprises participants such as companies, universities and research institutions, and local governments, and carries out initiatives that include project support, information sharing on advanced examples, and providing support for matching organizations that have challenges they wish to resolve with organizations that have solutions and expertise. (Approximately 1,000 organizations were participating in the Platform as of the end of March 2025).

Furthermore, in 2020, the Cabinet Office prepared the Smart City Reference Architecture White Paper, setting out standard frameworks and design concepts for constructing smart cities. By utilizing the White Paper in smart city-related projects around the country, Japan is advancing the development of smart cities that possess interconnectivity and scalability.

In an effort to support local governments, councils and other entities working on smart cities, in 2021 the relevant ministries and agencies published the Smart City Guidebook, which summarizes the significance, necessity, and effects of introducing smart cities, and how to implement them. Moreover, as one step toward the planned implementation of smart cities nationwide, from the same year the processes that relevant ministries and agencies undertake for calling for applications from local governments, private-sector companies and other entities for support projects, and then selecting and implementing those projects, have been undertaken jointly, thus achieving government-wide engagement in promoting smart cities.

As an international initiative, at the 2nd ASEAN-Japan Smart Cities Network High Level Meeting held in 2020, Japan proposed Smart JAMP: Smart City supported by Japan ASEAN Mutual Partnership, as a new support measure that brought together various ministries and agencies in order to accelerate cooperation on realizing smart cities in the ASEAN region. Based on this support measure, smart city project development studies are continuing to be carried out in 34 cities in 10 ASEAN countries.

In 2024, the Cabinet Office enlisted the cooperation of relevant ministries and agencies to prepare the Roadmap for Smart City Initiatives, which addresses developments through 2030 and beyond. As a result of stakeholders sharing initiatives based on this Roadmap, the Cabinet Office is aiming to develop communities nationwide where residents can experience the convenience of digital technology firsthand.

(8) Promoting Regional Revitalization SDGs

The Cabinet Office is selecting advanced local governments that are engaged in Regional Revitalization SDGs (an initiative for regional revitalization that uses SDGs as a driving force by adopting an integrated approach to the far-reaching regional challenges surrounding the economy, society, and the environment, toward realizing a sustainable, diverse and inclusive society with “no one left behind”) as SDGs Future Cities, thus encouraging regional revitalization through the promotion and dissemination of successful examples.

Furthermore, it has set up a platform for public-private collaboration as a forum for partnerships that deepen cooperation between local governments and the various stakeholders engaged in resolving regional challenges and revitalizing regional economies, and is advancing initiatives such as matchmaking support.

Moreover, the Cabinet Office has developed the Guidelines for Registration and Certification Systems for Regional Revitalization SDGs for Local Governments and is undertaking focused support to encourage the formation of an Autonomous Virtuous Cycle for SDGs by local operators.

The Ministry of the Environment’s 6th Basic Environment Plan (Cabinet Decision of May 21, 2024) aims to continue resolving regional challenges through the ongoing creation of enterprises (local SDGs enterprises) that utilize regional resources to improve the environment, economy and society and create self-reliant communities, while positioning the concept of a Circular and Ecological Economy referred to a self-reliant and decentralized society where regional issues continued to be resolved by creating enterprises that utilized regional resources to improve the environment, economy, and society (local SDGs enterprises) and where networks were formed that enabled regions

to support each other by leveraging their regional characteristics. This concept was further built upon in the Sixth Basic Environmental Plan which sought to practice and implement new avenues for growth that bring about well-being and a high quality of life. Through the "Platform for the Creation of a Circular and Ecological Economy to Revitalize Local Communities from Environmental Aspect" project, we have supported a total of 86 regional communities by helping to organize stakeholders and realize local SDGs enterprises.

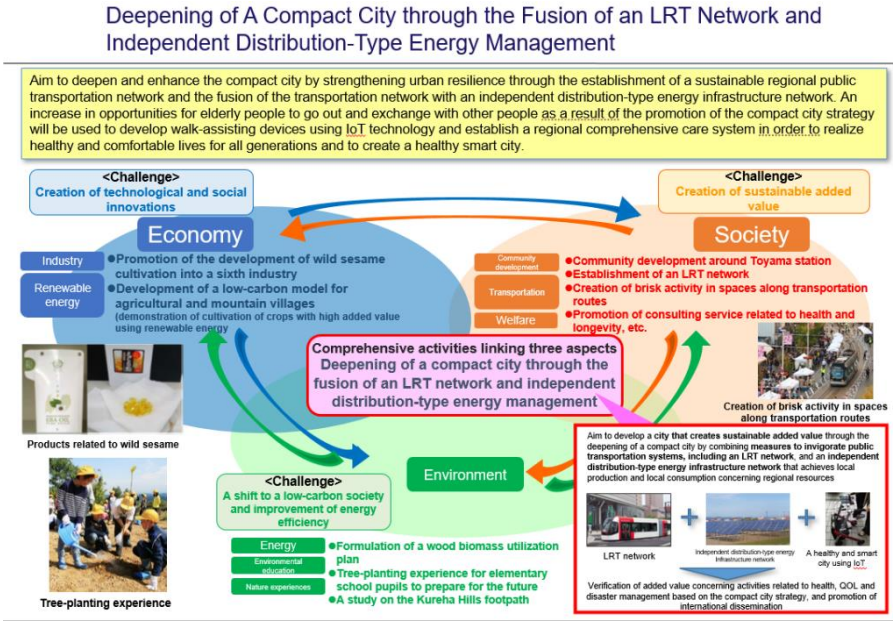


Fig. 12 Toyama[8]'s example

(9) Job creation in the regions

1) Act on Promotion of Job Opportunities in Certain Regions

The creation of jobs in cities and the regions plays a key role in promoting their economies, and measures to generate jobs in the regions must be designed and implemented based on their actual conditions, such as their industries and social situations. With this in mind, under the Act on Promotion of Job Opportunities in Certain Regions (Act No. 23 of 1987), Japan is carrying out the policy programs needed to improve the employment structure in the regions, such as regional employment activation promotion projects (discussed below), and a program for providing grants to employers in regions that are short of job opportunities due to factors such as active job openings-to-applicants ratios below the national average, when they hire local jobseekers for business establishments that they have set up or upgraded.

[8] Area of 1,241.70 square kilometers, population of 402,337 people (as of May 31, 2025)
Formed during the Edo period as a castle town of the 100,000-koku Toyama domain. In the post-war period the development of road networks and land readjustment progressed as a result of post war reconstruction land readjustment projects and other initiatives, and gave rise to the current city center, where government agencies, shopping streets, business establishments, and more are gathered.

2) Job creation support integrated with industry policy programs for regional communities

Although the employment/unemployment situation is improving nationwide, some regions remain short of job opportunities, and securing attractive job opportunities in these areas to attract people has become a challenge. Consequently, there is a need to support initiatives that highlight regional advantages to create attractive job opportunities in the regions.

Based on this situation, in FY2024, 29 prefectures were undertaking employment creation projects for regional revitalization, which endeavor to realize high-quality and stable employment in the regions by ensuring attractive job opportunities and through the integrated implementation of projects to promote employment and human resources training aligned with company needs, while striving to align with national and prefectural policy programs regarding regional employment challenges.

Furthermore, in FY2024, 30 regions were undertaking regional employment activation promotion projects to support innovative initiatives aimed at maintaining and securing "attractive employment" that leverages regional characteristics, as well as "human resources in charge of it," in regions where there is a shortage of job opportunities or where depopulation is advancing.

(10) Expanding investment in individuals who will be responsible for growth industries

At regional companies facing increasingly severe labor shortages, in order to eliminate employment mismatches and secure diverse human resources, including young people, women, elderly persons, persons with disabilities and foreign nationals, there is a need to promote management improvements, such as work style reforms, and by increasing investment in human capital to enhance training and development. Investment in human resources leads to enhanced corporate value, as it boosts workers' job satisfaction and engagement.

3.3 Environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development

3.3.1 Resilient and adaptive urban development

(1) Geographical conditions of Japan and its history of disaster reduction policies

Japan is located on the Circum-Pacific Volcanic Belt, with frequent earthquakes and volcanic activity, and in addition to earthquakes and tsunamis, the geographic, topographic and meteorological conditions of Japan cause frequent meteorological disasters, such as typhoons, torrential rainstorms, and heavy snow, resulting in great loss of human life and economic assets every year.

In response to a succession of natural disasters that resulted in thousands of victims after World War II, Japan enacted the Disaster Relief Act (Act No. 118 of 1947), the Flood Control Act (Act No. 193 of 1949) and other legislation. Subsequently, having been hit by Typhoon Isewan (Vera), in 1959, which claimed more than 5,000 lives, Japan enacted the Basic Act on Disaster Management (Act No. 223 of 1961) in 1961, which prescribes comprehensive disaster management measures for protecting cities and regions and people's lives and assets from natural disasters. Furthermore, the following year the National Disaster Management Council was set up based on the Act. The Council plays an important role in determining key policies, including formulating the Basic Disaster Management Plan, which forms the backbone of Japan's disaster management measures.

The Basic Disaster Management Plan, together with sectoral plans and local plans formulated based on the Basic Plan, defines the roles and responsibilities of the national and local governments in all phases of a disaster: prevention, mitigation, emergency response, recovery, and rehabilitation, and strives to develop and promote a comprehensive and systematic disaster management system.

Through initiatives such as these, which include the development and enhancement of a disaster management system, the pursuit of land preservation, improved weather forecasting, improved disaster response capabilities mainly through the enhancement of methods for communicating disaster information, and the reduction of vulnerability to disasters, Japan had seen a reduction in damage caused by natural disasters from the 1960s.

However, the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995 claimed more than 6,400 lives, and the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 left more than 22,000 people dead or missing, with catastrophic damage over a wide area centering on the Tohoku Region along the Pacific coast. Based on these experiences, Japan has strengthened its ability to respond rapidly to large-scale, broad-area disasters, enhanced local disaster prevention capacity, and formulated frameworks for recovery and reconstruction after a large-scale disaster, among other efforts. Additionally, based on the lessons of the Noto Peninsula Earthquake, which struck in 2024 and resulted in more than 500 people dead or missing,

Japan is working to improve and strengthen areas such as stockpiling and deploying relief goods, improving evacuation shelter conditions, and enlisting private-sector cooperation in assisting disaster victims.

In these ways, Japan has been strengthening and improving its disaster management measures and continues its efforts to prepare for future disasters by learning from the experiences of past large-scale natural disasters and accidents.

(2) Flood, sediment, and tsunami disaster management

1)Water-related disaster prevention measures

In Japan, many large cities are situated in low-lying areas below the water level of a river, with the very serious potential risk of flooding. So far, Japan has implemented flood management measures to safely discharge floodwaters that include widening river courses, constructing embankments, digging flood control channels, and building dams and basins to temporarily store river water. These efforts are bringing about steady improvements in the safety level of flood control.

However, in recent years, damage from water inundation has been becoming prevalent as a result of an increase in outbreaks of short-term heavy downpours and increasingly large typhoons. Furthermore, in the future, climate change is predicted to result in more intense and more frequent water-related disasters. In light of that, along with promoting River Basin Disaster Resilience and Sustainability by All, in which all river basin stakeholders collaborate on both structural and non-structural measures, Japan has also been implementing planned and efficient measures to deal with aging infrastructure, and to earthquake-proof it. Furthermore, Japan is promoting River Basin-wide Integrated Water Management in order to minimize damage from water-related disasters, maximize water's benefits, and maximize rich environments connected by water. By engaging and working together with all parties across entire basins, including those affected not just by flooding but by irrigation and the environment, Japan works to advance integrated initiatives concerning River Basin Disaster Resilience and Sustainability by All, water use, and river basin environments.

2) Sediment disaster control

Every year, Japan experiences some 1,500 cases of debris flow, landslides, and other sediment disasters caused mainly by torrential rain and earthquakes, with serious damage inflicted. Sediment disasters also account for a large percentage of natural disaster victims in Japan. Consequently, in addition to implementing anticipatory disaster prevention measures through sediment disaster structural measures, making sediment disaster risks more widely known through the installation of signs and other markings and the designation of Sediment Disaster Risk Areas and other zones, Japan is promoting efficient and effective sediment disaster measures that are coordinated with the relevant

departments. This includes woody debris measures that are coordinated with forest and field departments, and sediment disaster measures that are implemented in an integrated manner with urban planning.

3) Tsunami disaster control

To make preparations for large-scale tsunami disasters caused by the expected Great Nankai Trough Earthquake and other seismic events, regarding the largest-scale tsunamis, Japan is working to develop tsunami-resilient communities based on multiple protection measures that combine structural and non-structural solutions, and is providing local governments with support for designating tsunami risk areas and preparing evacuation plans.

To protect coastal urban areas against tsunamis that come with a rather high frequency (once in several decades to under two hundred years), sea embankments are being steadily constructed by the government, along with seismic measures. As part of this effort, Japan has pursued the development of sea embankments and breakwaters with a structure resilient enough to be effective even against tsunamis that go over their crown, and furthermore, is promoting the automation and remote control of sluice gates, floodgates, and other tsunami control facilities.

(3) Urban disaster management

One of the solutions Japan has adopted for urban disaster management is the Act on Regulation of Residential Land Development (Act No. 191 of 1961), which requires more stringent technical standards for newly-developed residential areas in relation to earth filling to reduce damage caused by the sliding and/or collapse of large-scale earth filled structures resulting from large tremors during a major earthquake. For existing housing land, the Project for the Promotion of the Earthquake Resistance of Housing Land is underway to prevent damage from landslides, earth collapse, and liquefaction by providing local governments with support for ground deformation forecast surveys and prevention measures, for example.

Immediate improvement and redevelopment of densely inhabited areas is another challenge that must be addressed with urgency, as they are crowded with decrepit wooden buildings, and are short of public spaces, such as roads and parks, posing a great risk of building collapse and the spreading of fires in a conflagration or after an earthquake. Japan pursues improved disaster resilience and better living conditions in densely inhabited areas with meticulously designed solutions, which include: projects for making buildings more fire-resistant along highways and providing the roads with fire-spread prevention and evacuation routes together in order to develop Disaster-prevention Framework Axes (Disaster-prevention Environment Axes) in cities, and for constructing disaster-prevention parks as evacuation areas; disaster-prevention block

improvement projects, and the Project for the Comprehensive Development of Residential Urban Areas, among others, for removing old buildings, combined with replacing the surrounding buildings with fire-resistant ones in collaboration with the landowners, and the widening of narrow roads to enhance evacuation and firefighting.

In addition, to provide cities with better disaster-prevention functions and make them safer and more secure, Japan, among others, is working to develop bases for recovery and reconstruction after an earthquake, disaster-management bases that serve as relay points for subsistence goods and other supplies, and disaster-prevention parks that serve as evacuation spaces to accommodate evacuees from neighboring districts and commuters stranded due to the failure of the transport system, which will protect them from fires in built up areas. The government also has the Project for the Development of Disaster-prevention Parks and City Blocks, an initiative to develop and improve disaster-prevention parks and built-up areas around them, in an integrated manner.

(4) Forming safe housing and housing areas

1) Providing disaster risk information

In recent years, following the frequent occurrence of large-scale water-related disasters in Japan, the government has been working to provide disaster risk information by increasing the areas that are covered by the creation and publication of hazard maps to eliminate areas where there is a paucity of risk information regarding water-related disasters, as well as by making it mandatory to explain the location of properties covered in water-related disaster hazard maps when trading real estate, for example.

2) Curbing the selection of sites for housing and housing areas in places where there is a high risk of torrential rain disasters and other disasters

The Act on Special Measures Concerning Urban Renaissance was revised in 2020 as a response to increasingly frequent and intense natural disasters, and along with reviewing the system for approving development in order to curb new sites from being selected in disaster hazard areas, the legislation in principle excludes Red Zones (highly disaster-prone areas) from districts that may introduce residences when carrying out the Compact Plus Network initiative.

3) Construction and retrofitting of earthquake-resistant housing and buildings

Historically, Japan has experienced frequent large earthquakes, and there is growing awareness that it would be unsurprising to see another severe earthquake occur anywhere in Japan at any time. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that the occurrence of a Nankai Trough Earthquake, Tokyo Inland Earthquake, or similar event is imminent, and that once such an earthquake does occur, it can be expected to cause extremely serious damage.

The National Disaster Management Council formulates plans such as the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Nankai Trough Earthquake Disaster Management Countermeasures. The content of these plans includes specifying disaster reduction targets for large-scale earthquakes forecasted to be highly imminent.

These plans identify the construction and retrofitting of earthquake-resistant housing and buildings as the most important task for achieving their target goals for disaster reduction regarding human suffering and material damage, and position it as something Japan must address with the highest priority and urgency.

It is in this context that the Act on the Promotion of the Seismic Retrofitting of Buildings (Act No. 123 of 1995) was enacted after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in the same year, to set up a framework for the authorization of seismic retrofitting plans and other items.

With the revision of the Act in 2013, owners of large-scale buildings which were constructed under the so-called old seismic code, which was in force until 1981, and are visited by large numbers of the general public, such as hospitals, stores, and hotels, are obliged to execute an earthquake resistance test of the buildings and notify the authorities of the results of the test, with the results to be publicly reported.

The Basic Policy for Promotion of Seismic Diagnosis and Seismic Retrofitting of Buildings, which was revised in 2021, sets a target of largely eliminating houses whose earthquake resistance is inadequate by 2030, and buildings covered by the obligation to undergo earthquake resistance tests and whose earthquake resistance is inadequate by 2025.

(5) Reconstruction after the Great East Japan Earthquake

The Great East Japan Earthquake was brought about by the largest earthquake ever recorded in Japan, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake that struck on March 11, 2011, and it resulted in catastrophic and extensive damage. 19,775 lives were lost, and 2,550 people remain unaccounted for even now (as of March 2024). When the disaster initially occurred, the number of evacuees reached up to some 470,000 people. In addition to the damage caused by the earthquake and tsunami, this earthquake disaster was accompanied by the release of radioactive materials as a result of an accident at TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, leaving many residents with no choice but to evacuate. Not only agriculture, forestry and fishery industries, but all industries including manufacturing suffered a heavy toll, giving rise to an unprecedented, complex disaster that included ramifications arising from harmful rumors.

The Cabinet is addressing the recovery and reconstruction after the Great East Japan

Earthquake as an issue of utmost priority, with the Minister for Reconstruction playing a central role.

In disaster-affected areas, housing reconstruction and community rehabilitation have mainly been completed as a result of the reconstruction projects undertaken thus far, with the Tsunami Reconstruction Base Development Project for developing disaster public housing in municipalities, developing residential land on elevated sites, and using the Acquiring Land System to develop built-up areas as bases for recovery completed at the end of March 2021.

In areas affected by the nuclear disaster where evacuation orders were issued, by March 2020 evacuation orders had been lifted in all areas other than Difficult-to-Return Zones[9].

For Difficult-to-Return Zones, the government has been working together to achieve the earliest possible reconstruction steadily and gradually, beginning with feasible locations based on its determination to take responsibility for lifting evacuation orders on all Difficult-to-Return Zones in the future and ensuring their reconstruction and revitalization, even if many years are needed.

In 2017, the Specified Reconstruction and Revitalization Bases Area (SRRBA) system was established with the aim of repatriating residents to Difficult-to-Return Zones by lifting evacuation orders, with five years as a goal. On that basis, Specified Reconstruction and Revitalization Bases Areas were established in six towns and villages in Fukushima Prefecture: Futaba Town, Okuma Town, Namie Town, Tomioka Town, Iitate Village, and Katsurao Village. Following progress with decontamination and the demolition of houses and other buildings, along with the development of infrastructure and the development of the living environment, including facilities for shopping, medical, and nursing care, the evacuation orders in all the Areas were lifted by November 2023.

In 2023, the Specified Living Areas for Returnees (SLAR) system was established with the aim of repatriating residents in areas outside Specified Reconstruction and Revitalization Bases Areas and rebuilding their lifestyles following repatriation, so that all residents who wish to return can do so over the course of the 2020s. On that basis, by March 2025 SLAR had been established in four towns and one city in Fukushima Prefecture: Okuma Town, Futaba Town, Namie Town, Tomioka Town and Minamisoma City, with efforts underway toward lifting evacuation orders, through decontamination, the demolition of houses and other buildings, and the development of infrastructure.

[9] Regions where the Annual Cumulative Radiation Dose, as estimated from the assumed air dose levels as of March 2012, exceeds 50mSv. (Entry is prohibited in principle, and habitation is prohibited)

(6) National Resilience

Based on the fundamental principles set out in the Basic Act for National Resilience Contributing to Preventing and Mitigating Disasters for Developing Resilience in the Lives of the Citizenry (Act No. 95 of 2013) (the Basic Act for National Resilience), which include safeguarding human life to the utmost and preserving the key functions of the state and society, the government has determined that the Fundamental Plan for National Resilience (Cabinet Decision of July 28, 2023) (the Fundamental Plan) should provide a guide for other national plans pertaining to national resilience, outside of the Fundamental Plan. On that basis, it is seeking to secure the sufficient budget necessary, and to promote initiatives that appropriately combine self-reliance, mutual aid, and public assistance, and integrate structural and non-structural measures, while taking into consideration factors such as the impact of changes in the prices of materials.

Regarding the Fundamental Plan, its content is to be revised every five years or thereabouts, and in the Fundamental Plan that the Cabinet decided on in July 2023, five pillars are positioned as a direction for advancing the national resilience policy: (i) Develop and manage disaster preparedness infrastructure that protects citizens' lives and property; (ii) Make lifelines, such as transportation, communications, and energy that form the foundation of economic development, more resilient; (iii) Increase the sophistication of national resilience enhancing policies through the utilization of new technologies, including digital technologies; (iv) Strengthen public-private collaboration, beginning with ensuring business continuity when disasters strike; and (v) Further strengthen regional disaster preparedness capacities. These pillars take into consideration the lessons obtained from natural disasters such as Typhoon Hagibis (the Reiwa 1 East Japan Typhoon), which occurred following the previous revision of the Fundamental Plan, the impacts of climate change, the realization of the green transformation (GX) as a means of containing those impacts, the stable supply of energy, food and other necessities during international disputes, and changes in social conditions such as natural disasters that occur during pandemics.

The government is steadily advancing efforts based on the Fundamental Plan such as the 5-Year Acceleration Plan for Disaster Prevention, Disaster Mitigation, and Building National Resilience (the 5-Year Acceleration Plan) from FY2021 to FY2025. To ensure that even while following the 5-Year Acceleration Plan, the necessary projects progress steadily forward more than ever before, and do so continuously, stably, and without interruption based on a definite medium- to long-term outlook, the government is moving ahead with considerations for formulating the Mid-Term Implementation Plan for National Resilience, the plan that will run from FY2026. The considerations include carrying out evaluations and other assessments of the 5-Year Acceleration Plan, while taking note of the experiences of the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake.

Additionally, in order to ensure that national resilience is effective, it will be essential to engage in a full-scale effort that involves not just the government but local governments and private-sector businesses, and so the government is preparing guidelines and compiling example cases to further enhance the content of the Fundamental Plans for Regional Resilience that are being formulated by the 47 prefectures and almost all cities, towns and villages. The government is also carrying out awareness-raising efforts and education that include operating a framework under which a third party will certify those operators that are proactively engaging in business continuity as organizations that are contributing to national resilience, in a bid to promote efforts by private-sector operators that contribute to national resilience.

(7) Fundamental policies relating to climate change adaptation

As a result of climate change, disasters are on the rise, heatstroke risks are increasing, and other dangers are appearing, and as global warming progresses, it is predicted that the risk of heat waves and torrential rain will increase. In 2018 Japan enacted the Climate Change Adaptation Act (Act No. 50 of 2018) and formulated the Climate Change Adaptation Plan based on that. Japan is pursuing adaptation measures on the basis of that Plan. Additionally, under the Act, prefectures, cities, towns, and villages are encouraged to formulate Local Climate Change Adaption Plans. When all prefectures and ordinance-designated cities are included, as of October 2024, 24.3% of local governments had formulated such plans. The Strategy for Enhancing the Synergy between Climate Action and DRR in the Era of Climate Crisis, which was jointly announced by the Minister of State for Disaster Management and the Minister of the Environment in 2020, advocates for initiatives that effectively coordinate climate change measures with disaster preparedness and disaster reduction measures, and pursues the mainstreaming of such efforts in policy making as a cross-sectional challenge to be addressed in all sectors.

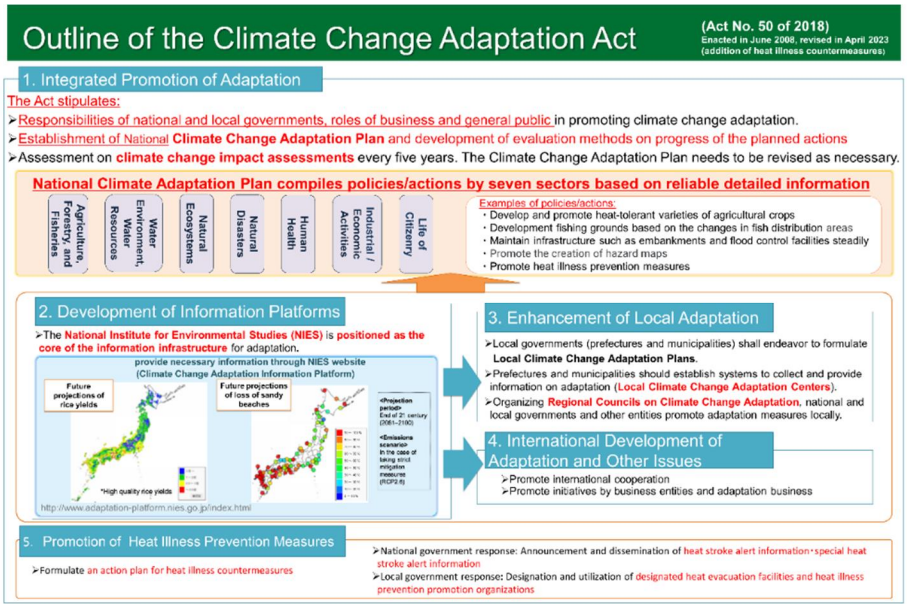


Fig. 13 Outline of the Climate Change Adaptation Act

3.3.2 Mitigation of climate change

(1) Achieving GHG net zero by 2050

In October 2020, Japan declared it would aim to achieve net zero by 2050 based on the idea that global warming countermeasures are no longer a constraint on economic growth, but rather, that proactively carrying out global warming countermeasures will bring about a transformation of Japan's industrial structure, economy, and society, and lead to significant growth. In 2021, the Act on Promotion of Global Warming Countermeasures (Act No. 117 of 1998) enshrined into law the realization of a decarbonized society by 2050 as a basic principle, and in addition, Japan declared that it would aim to reduce its GHG emissions by 46% compared to FY2013 levels in FY2030, as an ambitious target aligned with the 2050 goal, and furthermore, continue strenuous efforts in its challenge to meet the lofty goal of cutting its emissions by 50%. On the basis of this FY2030 reduction target, in October 2021 a revision of the Plan for Global Warming Countermeasures, which strives to promote global warming countermeasures comprehensively and systematically, was decided by the Cabinet, and on the same day Japan's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) that included the FY2030 reduction target was submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat. Furthermore, in the same month, the Cabinet decided on the Long-Term Strategy under the Paris Agreement, which presents fundamental concepts, visions, and other materials for achieving net zero by 2050, and submitted it to the UNFCCC secretariat.

Japan had been implementing measures and policies toward achieving the FY2030 reduction target based on the Plan for Global Warming Countermeasures decided by the Cabinet in October 2021, but in February 2025 the Cabinet decided on a new Plan for Global Warming Countermeasures that includes GHG reduction targets beyond 2030, and measures and policies towards achieving those targets. With this Plan, the government decided to aim to reduce GHG emissions compared to FY2013 by 60% in FY2035 and 73% in FY2040, as ambitious targets that plot a linear course to achieving net zero by 2050 and which are consistent with the 1.5℃ global temperature target. On the same day, it submitted the targets to the UNFCCC secretariat as Japan's NDC. In order to achieve the targets, the government will promote policies that contribute to growth with decarbonization as their axis and are coordinated with its GX policies, which aim to achieve stable energy supply, economic growth, and decarbonization simultaneously.

Incidentally, Japan has been steadily reducing its GHG emissions up to now, and as of FY2023, had reduced its emissions by 27.1% compared to FY2013.

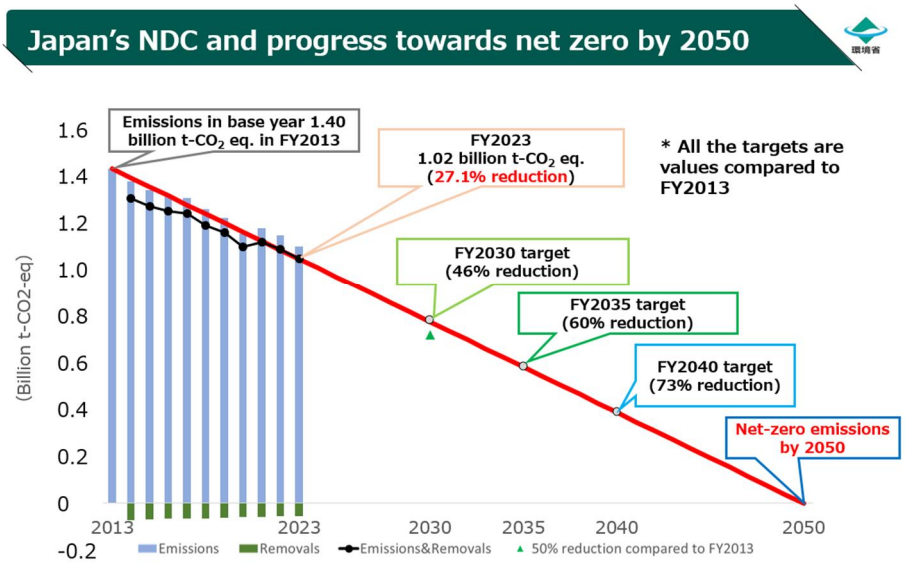


Fig. 14 Japan's NDC and progress towards net zero by 2050

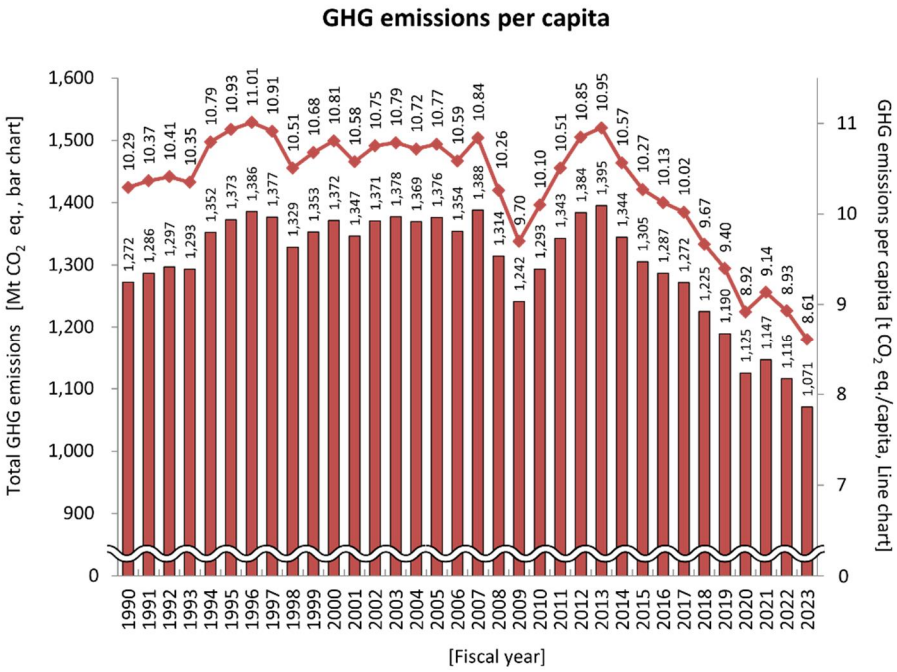
Table 1 Density of fine particulate matter in cities

詳細集計 Disaggregation	単位 Unit	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
PM2.5	μg/m^3	15.3	15.8	14.5	15.4	14.8	13.2	12.0	11.8	11.5	9.9	9.5	8.3	8.8	—	—
SPM	mg/m^3	0.021	0.021	0.020	0.021	0.020	0.019	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.015	0.014	0.012	0.013	—	—

Note 1) Corresponds to SDG Global Indicator 11.6.2

The weighted annualized average according to population by prefecture for fine particulate matter of 2.5μm or less in diameter (PM2.5) and suspended particulate matter (SPM) of 10μm or less in diameter, covering ambient air pollution monitoring stations nationwide that are effective monitoring stations

Note 2) Because there is one monitoring station in place per population of approximately 75,000 people, from 2020 the (non-population-weighted) national averages for PM2.5 and SPM, respectively, are stated.



(Materials relating to population)

- Figures for 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2020 are from the Population Census compiled by the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (population as of October 1)
- All other population figures are from the Population Estimates compiled by the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (population as of October 1)

Fig. 15 Total GHG emissions (per capita)

[Related websites]

○ **Japan's NDCs**

- Japan's 2030 NDC (submitted October 22, 2021)
  https://www.env.go.jp/content/000290590.pdf
- Japan's 2035/2040 NDC (submitted February 18, 2025)
  https://www.env.go.jp/content/000291805.pdf

○ **The Long-Term Strategy under the Paris Agreement (Cabinet Decision of October 22, 2021)**
https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Japan_LTS2021.pdf

○ **Regarding Japan's FY2023 GHG emissions volume and removals volume**
https://www.env.go.jp/en/press/press_04099.html

Sidebar 5: Initiatives for environmental conservation in Fukuoka City[10]

In the 1960s, Fukuoka City faced a problem of contaminated water and other materials seeping from landfill sites, and so in partnership with Fukuoka University it began conducting experiments for improving landfill sites, with the goal of purifying the leachate. Based on the findings of those experiments, a basic concept for a semi-aerobic landfill structure was proposed and was successfully put to practical use. This so-called Fukuoka Method is being adopted as Japan's standard structure for landfill sites.

In the Fukuoka Method, a landfill site is equipped with a leachate collection pipe system composed of stone rubble and perforated pipes at the base, which is a structure designed to discharge the leachate quickly. If the ends of the pipes are kept exposed to the air, the structure allows outside air to naturally flow into the landfill and keep it aerobic, and as a result, waste decomposition is accelerated and the quality of the leachate is also improved. Because decomposition occurs by aerobic bacteria, which suppress methane gas generation itself, the improvement of existing landfill sites using the Fukuoka Method has been recognized as a new Clean Development Mechanism under the UNFCCC.

Fukuoka City undertakes international technical cooperation for the environment that includes improving landfill sites by accepting trainees and dispatching engineers, and is working to popularize and promote the Fukuoka Method via the Fukuoka Method Global Network, which was set up in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment, UN-Habitat and other partners in 2022.

Fig. 16 Accepting trainees from overseas

Fig. 17 Landfill site improvement using the Fukuoka Method (in Myanmar)

(2) Environment-conscious city development

In the field of urban administration, Japan also is promoting the Green Transformation for Sustainable Urban Development in the form of: a transformation toward urban structures that are gentle on the environment, beginning with the Compact Plus Network

[10] Fukuoka City is a large city located in northern Kyushu and facing the Sea of Japan. It is the prefectural capital of Fukuoka Prefecture, and is also home to the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Fukuoka. It covers an area of 343.47 square kilometers and has a population of 1,658,978 (as of February 1, 2025).

initiative; promoting private-sector urban development projects that contribute to the decarbonization of cities; making energy use more efficient through the use of area energy networks and other systems; the social implementation of green infrastructure, including promoting the conservation of green spaces, planting to increase greenery, and developing city parks; and the development of urban environments that can be lived in safely and comfortably even during heat waves.

The Act Partially Amending the Urban Green Space Act (Act No. 40 of 2024) was promulgated in May 2024 and came into force in November of the same year toward resolving challenges such as climate change, ensuring biodiversity, and enhancing wellbeing to promote securing urban green spaces in terms of both quality and quantity. Additionally, for the government to further promote initiatives such as the conservation of green spaces in cities from a national perspective, based on the Act, in December of the same year the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism announced the Basic Policy on Urban Green Space, which sets out the basic direction of, and other factors relating to, the policies that the government should implement. Management of the Certification System for Securing Quantity and Quality Urban Green Space (TSUNAG) was also launched from November of the same year. Under this system, the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism evaluates and certifies high-quality urban green space conservation efforts by private-sector operators and other entities, and in March 2025 14 plans were certified as the first cohort.

Furthermore, from the standpoint of striving to construct a low-carbon and recycling-oriented society and encouraging the development of national land that is sustainable and has vitality, promoting a move toward low carbon in cities is demanded. In December 2013, the Low-Carbon City Development Practice Handbook was formulated. The Handbook explains various kinds of policies and the effects of reducing and absorbing carbon dioxide, and supports the creation of low-carbon city development plans in municipalities, and efforts to make cities low-carbon.

In addition, the Decarbonized Urban Design and Development Awards were established in 2023 to encourage decarbonized urban development by publicly recognizing outstanding decarbonized-model urban development projects and presenting them as good examples.

Meanwhile, in the field of river administration, Japan is carrying out Nature-oriented River Works, a program to conserve and/or create the environments that rivers should by rights provide – namely, environments for living organisms in terms of habitation, growth, and reproduction, as well as the diversity of river landscapes, while taking into account the entire process of nature along rivers, and harmony with the livelihoods, history, and culture of the region.

The Nature-oriented River Works concept serves as the basis for all river development, and covers all activities for river management, including research, planning, designing, construction, operation, maintenance and renewal, and disaster recovery. River development should not be a mere collection of many elements regarded as natural or nearly natural, but the application of the features and mechanisms of nature to the greatest extent possible.

■ **Initiatives for the Maruyama River (Toyooka City, Hyogo Pref.)**

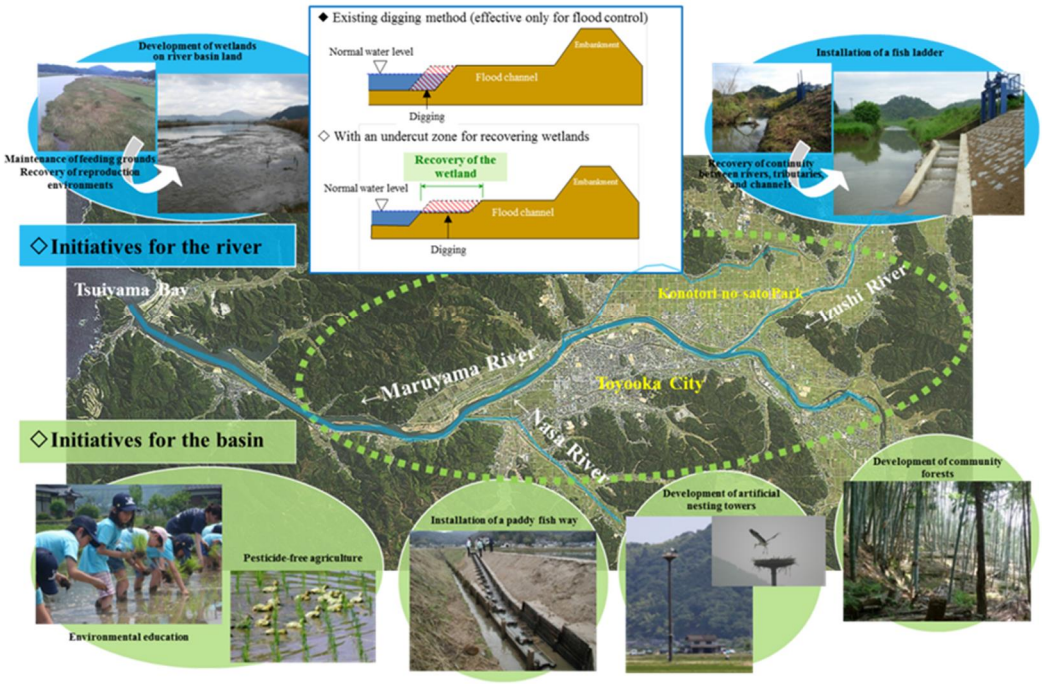


Fig. 18 Example of an ecological network developed along a river

(3) Broader use of new sources of energy and the promotion of energy-saving in the household sector

1) Initiatives for the broader use of new sources of energy

Where renewable energy is concerned, with Japan's energy policy principles of S+3E[11] as a basic premise, the fundamental policy is to encourage the largest possible uptake of renewable energy while seeking to coexist with communities and mitigate burdens on the Japanese people, through fully ensuring that renewable energy becomes the main power source as Japan moves toward the decarbonization of its power sector, and through strengthening policies by having the relevant ministries and agencies collaborate with local governments.

Aldo in Japan, following the introduction of the Feed-in-Tariff system (FIT system) in July 2012, the ratio of renewable energy as a component of the power generation mix

[11] The essence of Japan's energy policy, which pursues Energy Security first, along with improved Economic Efficiency and compatibility with the Environment, with Safety as basic premise.

had risen to around 23% in FY2023, up from 10% at the time the system was introduced. Despite the geographical constraints that Japan faces, which include scant flat areas onshore and steep submarine topography offshore, it is making steady progress with adopting renewable energy, including ranking sixth in the world in terms of the total renewable energy capacity it has introduced.

On the other hand, as a result of the increase in entries by various operators accompanying this rapid expansion in uptake, local concerns are mounting regarding the impact on the environment, including on the safety front, disaster preparedness front, scenery, biodiversity, as well as future waste and other issues. To ensure that renewable energy is accepted by communities and society as a power source that generates stable energy and over the long term, Japan will engage in promoting local understanding and securing appropriate business rules, while simultaneously moving ahead with accelerating technological innovation that supports the cultivation of new suitable locations for generating renewable energy, such as the roofs and walls of buildings and marine areas with deep depths of water.

Additionally, in 2017, the Basic Hydrogen Strategy was decided in Japan toward achieving a hydrogen-energy society, the first such national strategy on hydrogen in the world. In June 2023, the Basic Hydrogen Strategy was revised for the first time in six years, and in a shift away from the establishment of technology as the core of the Strategy, industrial strategy and safety strategy were newly positioned, with a view toward the commercial-use stage. Furthermore, as a means of giving shape to the Basic Hydrogen Strategy, in May 2024, the Act on Promotion of Supply and Utilization of Low-Carbon Hydrogen and its Derivatives for Smooth Transition to a Decarbonized, Growth-Oriented Economic Structure (Act No. 37 of 2024) (the Hydrogen Society Promotion Act) was enacted, and it came into force in October of the same year. The government will engage in constructing a large-scale and resilient supply chain for low-carbon hydrogen and its derivatives by implementing, for example, support over a 15-year period for suppliers of low-carbon hydrogen and its derivatives whose plans have been certified, as part of the support under the Act that is focused on price disparity.

2) Initiatives for promoting energy-saving in the household sector

Initiatives for energy-saving in the household sector comprise two pillars: policy programs for improving the energy efficiency of energy-consuming devices that are used in households, such as home appliances, as well as the energy efficiency of building materials; and policy programs for making housing itself more energy-efficient.

One of the major policy programs in the first category is the Top-runner Program. Under this Program, home appliances or other goods are specified, and the best product in each category at the time in terms of power consumption, energy efficiency, and other

performance indicators is used as a reference for setting numerical standards that producers and importers are then required to ensure their products meet by a specific target year. Improvements in the energy efficiency of appliances such as air conditioning units and household refrigerators have been achieved through the Program thus far. A similar framework is also being prepared for building materials.

Additionally, as an initiative relating to the latter, Japan is aiming to ensure energy-saving performance at the level of the ZEH standard on average across its residential housing stock by 2050, and on arrival, it has set a goal of aiming to ensure energy-saving performance at the level of the ZEH standard for newly constructed homes from FY2030. Where approaches to regulations and programs are concerned, Japan will gradually raise the level of its energy-saving standards for homes so that they match these targets, by FY2030 at the latest.

3.3.3 Biodiversity and ecosystem conservation

(1) Formation of a Sound Material-Cycle Society

In Japan, we aim to establish a "Sound Material-Cycle Society" that minimizes the consumption of natural resources and reduces environmental burdens as much as possible. Based on the Basic Act on Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society (Act No. 110 of 2000), we have formulated the Fundamental Plan for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society and promoted related policies. Promoting the transition to a circular economy in ways that contribute not only to environmental constraints but also to strengthening industrial competitiveness, economic security, regional revitalization, and improving well-being through the realization of a high quality of life is an important policy issue that all stakeholders should work together to address. In August 2024, we formulated the 5th Fundamental Plan for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society as a national strategy that consolidates government-wide policies for forming a Sound Material-Cycle Society. To steadily promote the realization of a circular economy as a national strategy and to implement related initiatives strategically and comprehensively across the government, including those outlined in the Fundamental Plan for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society, the Ministerial Council on the Circular Economy was established. At the first meeting held that same month, the Prime Minister instructed each ministry to compile a policy package that concretizes initiatives by the end of the year. In December 2024, the second Ministerial Council was held, compiling the Package to Accelerate the Transition to a Circular Economy. The Prime Minister instructed each ministry to promptly implement the policy package and stated that the government would continue to push ahead with such efforts as a national strategy under the leadership of this Ministerial Council.

In May 2019, the Resource Circulation Strategy for Plastics was formulated, establishing the basic principles of 3R + Renewable, including Renewable, which reduces

dependence on non-renewable resources and replaces them with renewable resources, based on the basic principles stipulated in the Fundamental Plan for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society, on the premise of enhancing sustainability. Regarding individual laws, the Act on Promotion of Resource Circulation for Plastics (Act No. 60 of 2021) took effect in 2022, and measures were implemented to encourage plastic resource circulation initiatives by all stakeholders. Japan is also actively contributing to international discussions aimed at developing a legally binding international instrument (treaty) addressing plastic pollution. Furthermore, in order to promote decarbonization and resource circulation, particularly securing the quality and quantity of recycled materials, in an integrated manner, Japan enacted the Act Concerning Sophistication of Recycling Business, etc. to Promote Resource Circulation (Act No. 41 of 2024). Under this law, the government will formulate a basic policy, require the reporting and publication of recycling performance by industrial waste disposal operators with large disposal volumes, and establish a certification system for the advancement of recycling-related businesses.

[Related website]

- **English pamphlet on the 5th Fundamental Plan for Establishing a Sound Material-Cycle Society**
  https://www.env.go.jp/content/000264244.pdf

(2) Biodiversity and Nature-Positive

In response to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Japan formulated the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of Japan 2023–2030 in 2023, aiming to achieve Nature-Positive by 2030 while promoting related policies. For example, to realize the "30 by 30" target of effectively conserving over 30% of the nation's land and sea as healthy ecosystems by 2030, we are expanding protected areas such as national parks and promoting the establishment and management of areas that contribute to biodiversity conservation outside of protected areas (OECM). To advance the establishment of OECM, we have initiated a system to certify natural sites where biodiversity is conserved through activities by the private sector and others as Nationally Certified Sustainably Managed Natural Sites. As of March 2025, we have certified 328 sites. To further promote activities by the private sector and others toward Nature-Positive, including OECM, we enacted the Act on Promoting Activities to Enhance Regional Biodiversity (Act No. 18 of 2024), which came into force in April 2025.

Under the Basic Act on Biodiversity (Act No. 58 of 2008), prefectures and municipalities are required to make efforts to formulate "local biodiversity strategies and action plans," which are basic plans for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. While it is essential to have detailed initiatives tailored to the natural and social conditions and regional characteristics of each area to recover biodiversity, local biodiversity strategies and action plans have been formulated in 47 prefectures and 178 municipalities as of

March 31, 2025.

Moreover, the role of local governments that engage in community-based activities and support the efforts of residents and related organizations is critically important. The Local Government Network on Biodiversity has been established, with 199 local governments participating as of March 31, 2025.

Furthermore, in 2024, we formulated the Transition Strategies toward Nature-Positive Economy, highlighting the necessity of transitioning to Nature-Positive management, the elements that companies should understand during this transition, specific examples of newly emerging business opportunities, and national policies that support the transition to Nature-Positive management. Based on these strategies, we are promoting corporate disclosure of nature-related financial information and biodiversity enhancement activities while implementing support to facilitate the transition to Nature-Positive management, where reducing dependence on and impact on nature is integrated into corporate management.

Fig. 19[12] Nationally Certified Sustainably Managed Natural Site
"Tokyo Garden Terrace Kioicho Forest of Light" (Seibu Realty Solutions Inc.)

[Related websites]

○ **Japan's OECM and related policy**
https://www.env.go.jp/nature/biodiversity/OECM.html

○ **Publication of Transition Strategies toward Nature-Positive Economy**
https://www.env.go.jp/en/press/press_02703.html

[12] According to a 2021 survey, 148 plant species from 73 families (including 16 non-native species) were identified. Birds included 7 species observed during the breeding season and 11 species during winter. For insects, 23 species from 4 orders and 13 families were recorded in spring, and 22 species from 8 orders and 14 families in summer (including 2 non-native species).

Sidebar 6: One Health initiatives in Fukuoka Prefecture

Fukuoka Prefecture is conducting comprehensive initiatives based on the One Health concept, which views the health of humans and animals, and the soundness of the environment as interconnected (one health) and protects them in an integrated manner.

Specifically, the prefecture is working to promote One Health awareness among residents by organizing citizen participation-type awareness events, known as the One Health Festival, and producing promotional videos.

Additionally, aiming to attract world-class researchers in medical, veterinary, environmental, and other fields to address cross-sectoral issues through the One Health approach, the prefecture has been hosting the One Health International Forum in Fukuoka annually since fiscal 2020 to disseminate related research findings to the global community.

In addition, to protect the natural environment, the prefecture conducts awareness-raising activities on the protection of rare wildlife and the control of invasive species, and hosts nature observation meetings.

Fig. 20 One Health Festival 2024

Fig. 21 One Health International Forum in Fukuoka

Sidebar 7: Formation of environmentally friendly living environments where humans and nature coexist in Kanazawa City: Initiatives of the Role Model City

Kanazawa City has integrated green infrastructure, such as gardens and waterways, with historical landscapes as vital urban elements through its unique initiatives, including a biodiversity strategy, landscape conservation, and the Wood Culture City Kanazawa initiative. In the Generation Restoration Project, which promotes the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration established by the UN General Assembly in March 2019, the city was recognized by the United Nations Environment Programme as the only city in Japan deemed suitable as a Role Model City, serving as a model for other cities that will pursue urban ecosystem restoration in the future.

In 2025, the city will host an international symposium, inviting representatives from various countries, and will widely disseminate Kanazawa City's community development initiatives utilizing "culture" both domestically and internationally. This will be achieved by introducing the multifaceted functions of gardens and waterways, as well as ecosystem restoration initiatives, and conducting excursions.

Fig. 22 Onosho Waterway

Fig. 23 Nishi Family Garden

Fig. 24 Garden clean-up and wildlife survey

3.3.4 Maintaining or restoring a sound water cycle

In Japan, various factors, including the concentration of population in urban areas, changes in industrial structure, and climate change associated with global warming, have led to shifts in the water cycle in recent years. As a result, issues such as droughts, floods, and water pollution have become more pronounced. Although water cycle-related policies have encompassed a wide variety of individual policies across a broad range of fields, discussions have emphasized the importance of sharing the goal of "maintaining or restoring a sound water cycle" and advancing these individual policies while coordinating and connecting them. They have also underscored the need for the government as a whole to promote policies in a comprehensive manner.

Therefore, to clarify the basic principles for water cycle-related policies and promote them comprehensively and integrally, the Basic Act on Water Cycle (Act No. 16 of 2014) was enacted in July 2014 and partially amended in June 2021.

The Basic Act on Water Cycle stipulates that to promote water cycle-related policies in Japan comprehensively and systematically, a Basic Plan on Water Cycle must be formulated (by Cabinet Decision) as the foundation for Japan's water cycle-related policies.

The Basic Plan on Water Cycle was agreed upon by the Cabinet in July 2015 (later revised in June 2020 and partially revised in June 2022). Based on this plan, policies related to the water cycle have been promoted. However, during the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake, infrastructure such as water supply and sewage facilities sustained damage, making the securing of water for daily life an issue. This event underscored the importance of preparation during normal times, such as ensuring the earthquake resistance of water infrastructure that comprises the water cycle and creating alternatives

and redundancy through the use of groundwater and other means. Additionally, while reconstruction toward optimal and sustainable water supply and sewage systems is necessary, the transfer of water supply administration from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and the Ministry of the Environment in April 2024 also presented an opportunity. This transition highlighted the need to further enhance infrastructure through the integrated reorganization of water supply and sewage systems, as well as to upgrade the efficiency and sophistication of operations through public-private partnerships.

Considering these factors, a meeting of the Headquarters for Water Cycle Policy took place in April 2024. The Prime Minister, who heads the headquarters, directed a revision of the Basic Plan on Water Cycle in response to these changing water cycle conditions. The Cabinet agreed upon a new Basic Plan on Water Cycle in August of the same year. Although the Basic Plan on Water Cycle is supposed to be revised every five years, this revision occurred approximately one year ahead of schedule.

In the new Basic Plan on Water Cycle, for approximately the next five years, priority will be given to:

(1) Ensuring a stable water supply through alternatives and redundancy;
(2) Reconstruction toward optimal and sustainable water supply and sewage systems through integrated facility reorganization and public-private partnerships;
(3) Promoting global warming countermeasures toward net zero 2050; and
(4) Developing River Basin-wide Integrated Water Management toward a sound water cycle.

In addition, efforts will also be made in education and human resource development, raising awareness, developing technology, and fostering international cooperation and collaboration related to the water cycle.

To maintain or restore a sound water cycle, comprehensive and integrated management of river basins is important. The government is therefore promoting the formulation of river basin water cycle plans (84 plans as of March 2025) by local governments and others through the Water Cycle Advisor System and other measures.

Sidebar 8: Establishment of World Lake Day (August 27) and lake environment conservation initiatives in Shiga Prefecture[13]

In December 2024, World Lake Day (August 27) was established to promote the sustainable conservation and restoration of lakes and their associated ecosystems. This date is derived from the opening day of the Shiga Conference on Conservation and

[13] Shiga Prefecture is located roughly in the center of Japan and is home to Lake Biwa, the largest lake in the country, which occupies about one-sixth of the prefecture's total area (approximately 4,017 km2). As of April 1, 2025, it has a population of 1,396,250.

Management of World Lake Environment, which took place in Shiga Prefecture in 1984.

Shiga Prefecture is home to Lake Biwa, Japan's largest lake, which serves as a vital water source for 14.5 million people in the basin. As one of the world's most notable ancient lakes, it boasts many endemic species, a rich ecosystem, and stands as a national asset that should be conserved for the future as a treasure trove of invaluable natural and fishery resources.

In Shiga Prefecture, beginning with the citizen movement for environmental conservation known as "the soap movement" in the 1970s, efforts to conserve Lake Biwa have been ongoing for many years, driven by the spirit of autonomy and cooperation.

In recent years, the prefecture has developed the Lake Biwa version of the SDGs, called "Mother Lake Goals (MLGs)," and is promoting initiatives to preserve Lake Biwa for the next generation in a healthy state. Taking the establishment of World Lake Day as an opportunity, Shiga Prefecture will demonstrate leadership in advocating the importance of lakes and accelerating movements for conservation and restoration.

Fig. 25 Shiga Conference on Conservation and Management of World Lake Environment

3.4 Effective implementation

3.4.1 Establishing urban governance structures: establishing support frameworks

(1) Japan's local autonomy system

1) System framework for the organization and operation of local governments

In the Japanese Constitution, Chapter 8 is dedicated to "Local Self-Government," and the fundamentals of local autonomy are guaranteed by the Constitution, thereby establishing the local autonomy system as a constitutional system. The Local Autonomy Act (Act No. 67 of 1947) serves as the foundational law of the local autonomy system.

2) Division of roles between the national and local governments

The national government primarily assumes the roles that the state should originally fulfill, such as: (i) affairs related to the state's existence as a nation in the international community; (ii) affairs concerning basic rules for citizens' various activities or local autonomy that should ideally be uniformly determined nationwide; and (iii) the implementation of policies and projects that must be carried out on a national scale or from a national perspective. Administration close to residents is delegated to local governments whenever possible.

Local governments include prefectures and municipalities. Prefectures, as broad-area local governments that encompass municipalities, are responsible for handling affairs that: (i) extend over wide areas; (ii) involve liaison and coordination with municipalities; (iii) are considered inappropriate for general municipalities to handle due to their scale or nature. Municipalities, as basic local governments, typically handle "affairs in the region and other affairs stipulated by laws and regulations," excluding those that prefectures are supposed to handle.

3) Types of affairs handled by local governments

Affairs handled by local governments include statutory entrusted functions and local government functions. Statutory entrusted functions are affairs related to roles that the national government (or prefectures) should essentially fulfill, for which the national government (or prefectures) needs to ensure proper handling. Local government functions refer to the affairs handled by local governments aside from the statutory entrusted functions. Statutory entrusted functions are necessarily stipulated in laws and government ordinances, allowing for significant national involvement, including corrective instructions and proxy execution.

4) Main affairs handled by local governments

Affairs handled by prefectures include police operations and maintenance of national and prefectural roads that lie outside of designated sections. Affairs handled by municipalities include firefighting and emergency services, the establishment and maintenance of municipal roads and bridges, and the development and management of water supply and sewage systems.

(2) Crime prevention measures in cities and regions

In Japan, the number of recognized criminal offenses consistently decreased from 2003 to 2021. However, in 2024, there were 737,679 cases, marking the third consecutive year of year-on-year increases since 2021, which recorded the lowest number of offenses since the end of World War II. Police continue to focus on: 1) collaborating with local communities and 2) promoting environmental design aimed at crime prevention, as initiatives to ensure public safety in society.

1) Collaboration with local communities

To realize safe and secure community development, it is essential for citizens to raise awareness about crime prevention and promote voluntary crime prevention activities. As of the end of December 2023, there were 44,113 crime prevention volunteer groups known to the police nationwide, with approximately 2.33 million members. The police provide support to these groups, including sharing crime information and conducting joint patrols.

Additionally, to foster healthy and attractive community development, police are promoting clarity regarding criminal organization activities in entertainment and amusement districts. They are thoroughly cracking down on illegal commercial sex operations and other sex-related crimes, drug trafficking, collection of protection money, extortion, and other crimes related to fund acquisition by criminal organizations. This includes addressing illegal employment, fraudulent residency offenses such as sham marriages, human trafficking, and offenses that hinder the proper development of juveniles, all while ensuring the definitive confiscation of criminal proceeds and supporting crackdowns that contribute to the dismantling and weakening of criminal organizations and the purification of the sex industry environment. To further prevent criminal organizations from operating covertly, police are working to exclude them from mixed-use buildings and advertising media. With the goal of ensuring safety and security in entertainment and amusement districts, they are raising awareness of these issues with shopping districts, chambers of commerce and industry, commercial and industrial associations, local residents, and local governments. They actively participate in community development projects initiated by local governments from the planning stage and strive to enhance streetscapes by cracking down on nuisance activities such as touting and scouting, habitual prostitution solicitation in specific areas, gatherings of juvenile delinquents and antisocial individuals, installation of illegal advertisements, abandonment of garbage and bicycles, illegal parking, and graffiti.

2) Environmental design with consideration for crime prevention

Police are developing safety standards to enhance residential crime prevention performance and improve public facilities with an emphasis on crime deterrence. They are also working to spread these standards to promote safe and secure community development through environmental design with consideration for crime prevention. Additionally, they are encouraging the adoption of systems to register or certify condominiums, parking lots, and other structures equipped with crime prevention-oriented features, branding them as exemplary crime prevention condominiums or model crime prevention parking lots.

3.4.2 Urban spatial development planning and management

(1) Development of national land policy

1) National land planning

In accordance with the fundamental principle of balanced development of Japan's national land and to create a desirable national land structure while responding appropriately to regional issues and demands of each era, a Comprehensive National Development Plan has been formulated five times since 1962. These plans are based on the National Land Comprehensive Development Law (Act No. 205 of 1950), enacted in 1950, and serve as comprehensive and basic plans for the use, development, and conservation of national land. They clarify the direction of comprehensive national land development from long-term and national economic perspectives.

In 2005, the National Land Comprehensive Development Law was extensively revised into the National Spatial Planning Act (Act No. 205 of 1950) to place greater emphasis on aspects such as "utilization" of existing stock and "conservation" in harmony with the natural environment, adapted to the mature society of the 21st century. In response, the first National Spatial Strategy (National Plan) was formulated in 2008, outlining "developing national land to support the autonomous development of various regional blocks, with the aim of creating a beautiful nation that provides a comfortable living environment" as the new national land image.

In 2023, the Third National Spatial Strategy (National Plan) was formulated, establishing "National Land Combining the Potentials of the Regions in the New Era" as the national land image to aim for and the goal of constructing National Land with a Seamless Connection of Hubs as the foundational concept of national land structure for its realization.

Additionally, a Greater Regional Plan is developed through collaboration between national and local governments, summarizing regional strategies and specific initiatives for each broad regional block based on the National Spatial Strategy (National Plan). For Hokkaido, located at the northernmost tip of the national land, and Okinawa Prefecture, comprising islands scattered across a vast sea area, statutory regional development plans are formulated for each while performing necessary coordination with the National Spatial Strategy (National Plan) to promote national land formation suited to the actual conditions of each region.

Table 2 Transitions in the National Land Plan

	Comprehensive National Development Plan (1st CDDP)	New Comprehensive National Development Plan (2nd CNDP)	3rd Comprehensive National Development Plan (3rd CNDP)	4th Comprehensive National Development Plan (4th CNDP)	Grand Design of the National Land in the 21 Century	National Spatial Strategy (National Plan)	2nd National Spatial Strategy (National Plan)	**3rd National Spatial Strategy (National Plan)**
Ground law	Comprehensive National Land Development Act					National Spatial Planning Act		
Cabinet	Hayato Ikeda (second)	Eisaku Sato (second)	Takeo Fukuda	Yasuhiro Nakasone (third)	Ryutaro Hashimoto (second)	Yasuo Fukuda	Shinzo Abe (third)	Fumio Kishida (second)
Cabinet decision	October 5, 1962 (1962)	May 30, 1969 (1969)	November 4, 1977 (1977)	June 30, 1987 (1987)	March 31, 1998 (1998)	July 4, 2008 (2008)	August 14, 2015 (2015)	July 28, 2023 (2023)
Target year	1970	1985	For approx. 10 years from 1977	Around 2000 (2000)	2010-2015 (2010-2015)	For approx. 10 years from 2008	For approx. 10 years from 2015	For approx. 10 years from 2023
Back-ground	1. Transition to the high-growth economy 2. Overpopulation of urban areas and widening income gap 3. Income-Doubling Plan (Concept of the Pacific Belt Zone)	1. High-growth economy 2. Population and industrial concentration in large cities 3. Progress in informatization, internationalization, and technological innovation	1. Stable growth economy 2. Signs of dispersion of population and industry 3. The finiteness of national land resources and energy, etc. became apparent	1. Overconcentration of population and functions in Tokyo 2. Increasing employment problems in local areas due to rapid changes in the industrial structure 3. Progress of full-scale internationalization	1. Global age (Global environmental issues, major competition, exchanges with Asian countries) 2. Age of declining population and aging population 3. Advanced information age	1. Major changes in economic and social conditions (Declining/aging population, globalization, the development of information and communications technologies) 2. Changes and diversification of people's values 3. Situation surrounding the national land (Unipolar uniaxial national land structure, etc.)	1. Trends and issues of the times surrounding the national land (Rapid population decline, declining birthrate, unprecedented aging of society, imminent disasters, aging infrastructure, etc.) 2. Changes in people's values (Increasing awareness of "return to rural life") 3. Changes in the national land space (Increase in underutilized and unused land and vacant houses)	"National land standing at a critical crossroads" 1. Increase in risks that threaten the sustainability, safety, and security of regions (Unprecedented population decline, declining birthrate and aging population, risk of huge disasters, weather crisis) 2. Changed ways of living and working after the coronavirus pandemic (New movement toward return to provincial areas or countryside) 3. Change of Japan's position in the rapidly changing world
Basic goal	Balanced regional development	Creating a rich environment	Development of a comprehensive environment for human settlements	Construction of multipolar and dispersed national land	Building the foundation for the formation of a multiaxial national land structure	Construction of national land in which diverse wide-area blocks develop independently/Formation of beautiful and livable national land	Formation of national land to promote the flow of people	**National Land Combining the potentials of the regions in the New Era** - Building new regional management that supports the Japanese Islands -
Develop-ment method, etc.	Base development method To achieve the goal, it is necessary to disperse industries. Development bases are placed in connection with existing large clusters in Tokyo, etc., and are organically connected with transport and communication facilities in order to influence each other. At the same time, to realize balanced development among regions, development is promoted in a chain reaction-like manner while taking advantage of the characteristics of the surrounding regions.	Large development project concept By developing networks such as Shinkansen and expressways and promoting large-scale projects, uneven land use is corrected to resolve issues of overcrowding, depopulation, and regional disparities.	Settlement concept While suppressing the concentration of population and industry in large cities, a comprehensive environment for human habitation is created while promoting local areas, addressing overcrowding and depopulation, and balancing the use of the entire national land.	Exchange network concept To build multipolar and dispersed national land, (1) regional development is promoted through originality and ingenuity while making use of regional characteristics; (2) the development of basic transportation and information and communications systems is promoted throughout the country by the national government or based on the national leading guidelines; and (3) various interaction opportunities are created through cooperation among the national government, local governments, and private organizations.	Participation and cooperation - Creating national land through the participation of various entities and regional cooperation - (Four strategies) 1. Creation of residential areas with rich nature (small cities, rural areas, mountainous areas, etc.) 2. Renovation of large cities (repair, renewal, and effective use of metropolitan spaces) 3. Development of regional cooperation axes (groups of shaft shape regional cooperation) 4. Wide-area international exchange zones (establishment of zones with global exchange functions)	(Five strategic objectives) 1. Exchange and cooperation with East Asia 2. Formation of sustainable regions 3. Creating resilient national land that is resistant to disasters 4. Management and inheritance of beautiful national land 5. Regional development based on "new public"	Multilayered and resilient "Compact + Network"	National Land with a Seamless Connection of Hubs (Important themes for national land reform) 1. the formation of regional living areas where digital technologies are integrated into real space 2. Structural changes to sustainable industries 3. Creation of green national land 4. Use and management of national land amid population decline 5. Improvement of the quality of the national land infrastructure 6. Securing and fostering human resources who support regions

2) National land use planning

Regarding the use of national land, the postwar economic boom led to an increased concentration of population and industry in urban areas. The high demand for land resulted in skyrocketing land prices and difficulties in acquiring land for both residential and public purposes. Furthermore, speculative land acquisitions exacerbated the severity of land issues, which evolved into nationwide problems.

Therefore, based on the National Land Use Planning Act (Act No. 92 of 1974) enacted in 1974, the National Land Use Plan, which serves as a comprehensive and basic long-term plan for national land use, has been developed six times since 1976 by the national, prefectural, and municipal governments, with necessary policies being designed in accordance with this plan. In 2023, alongside the Third National Spatial Strategy (National Plan), the Sixth National Land Use Plan (National Plan) was created in response to a society in full-scale population decline.

The plan includes three items: a basic concept for national land use, scale targets for each category based on the purpose of national land use and their regional overviews, and an overview of policies necessary to achieve these objectives. The Sixth National Land Use Plan (National Plan) has, as basic policies, “optimal national land use and management that realizes the interests of the entire region,” “wise national land use and management based on the inherent disaster risks of land,” “national land use and management connected by ensuring sound ecosystems,” “national land use and management DX,”

and “national land use and management through participation of diverse entities and public-private partnerships.”

Additionally, the National Land Use Plan includes plans for the entire national territory (national plan), plans for prefectural territories (prefectural plans), and plans for municipal territories (municipal plans). Prefectural plans and municipal plans are developed based on the national plan and prefectural plans, respectively. The national plan and prefectural plans are created after hearing the opinions of prefectural governors and municipal mayors, respectively, ensuring adequate coordination among national, prefectural, and municipal plans.

(2) Development of urban policy

During the economic boom of the 1960s, a concentration of population in urban areas occurred, resulting in rapid urbanization. Although new town development was pursued through land readjustment projects and other methods to manage this population growth, there was no system in place to regulate such development in an orderly way. Consequently, the City Planning Act (Act No. 100 of 1968) (New City Planning Act) was enacted in 1968, introducing land use regulations (including the system of area classification), development permission systems, and other measures to prevent disorderly urban sprawl. Additionally, the rationalization of city planning decisions was achieved by delegating planning authority to local governments and implementing procedures for resident participation.

With the promulgation of the new law, there was some restraint on disorderly urban sprawl; however, urbanization gradually continued. In existing built-up areas, this led to deteriorating residential environments, necessitating improvements in housing supply and urban environment in city centers. Therefore, the Urban Renewal Act (Act No. 38 of 1969) was enacted in 1969 to promote high-level utilization and functional updates of cities, primarily focusing on improving existing built-up areas in city centers. On the other hand, city planning that followed the new law saw few efforts to enhance district-level urban environments. Consequently, the District Plan System was introduced in 1980 to establish land-use and urban development goals based on each district's circumstances. However, a problem persisted due to the lack of city-wide policies coordinating each district. To address this issue, the Basic Policy Concerning Municipal City Planning, which defines overall and district-level urban images and development policies, was legally established in 1992.

In the late 1990s, the development of an automobile-dominated society and shifts in consumer lifestyles contributed to a flight away from city centers. Consequently, the Act on Vitalization in City Center (Act No. 92 of 1998) and other laws were enacted in 1998 for the integrated promotion of urban development and commercial revitalization in city

centers. Moreover, as the necessity for compact community development increased due to a rapidly aging population with a declining birthrate, the three related laws (the "three town planning acts" (City Planning Act, Act on Vitalization in City Center, and Act on the Measures by Large-Scale Retail Stores for Preservation of Living Environment (Act No. 91 of 1998))) were revised in 2006 to regulate the suburban locations of large commercial facilities and revitalize city centers. Simultaneously, as rapid urbanization slowed and the need for uniform area classification systems diminished, area classification became optional. Additionally, in response to growing calls for resident participation and shifts in economic and social conditions, the formulation of a "policy for improvement, development and preservation of the relevant city planning areas" became mandatory in 2000 to clarify desirable urban images and facilitate broader land use coordination. Furthermore, the Act on Special Measures Concerning Urban Renaissance was enacted in 2002 to address changes in socioeconomic conditions, such as rapid internationalization and an aging population with a declining birthrate, and efforts have been made to enhance urban functions and improve urban residential environments.

From the 2010s onward, facing serious issues of population decline and aging with a declining birthrate, it became essential to shift towards concentrated urban structures that align with social structural changes. Consequently, the "location normalization planning system" was established in 2014 to create residential induction areas that maintain population density and to enhance public transportation, as well as ensure the appropriate placement of medical, welfare, and commercial facilities. Policies have been promoted to support sustainable community development.

Subsequently, the Act on Special Measures Concerning Urban Renaissance and other laws were revised in 2020 to promote safe and attractive community development in response to various issues, including frequent and severe natural disasters. Revisions to the development permission system implemented development restrictions in disaster hazard areas, while disaster risk reduction guidelines outlining disaster prevention measures for residential induction areas were included in location normalization plans. Furthermore, to create spaces where diverse people can gather and interact in city centers, designated areas for developing city centers that are "comfortable and make people want to walk" have been established, and initiatives promoting public-private collaboration to create lively spaces are actively being pursued.

Sidebar 9: Urban development through Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

Japan faced urban challenges such as chronic traffic congestion during the high economic growth period from the 1950s to the 1970s. To solve this problem and guide sound urban growth, the concept of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) became essential.

TOD is a development model premised on public transport use that aims for the integrated improvement of suburban urban development and railways, along with terminal station development in city centers. It is important to appropriately utilize related systems, such as the system of land readjustment under the division of roles between the public and private sectors.

Land readjustment projects aim to develop and improve public facilities such as roads and parks, organize land plots, and promote the use of residential land. In areas where public facilities are lacking, landowners contribute a small portion of their land based on their rights for public use, and part of this land is sold to help fund the project.

Various organizations, both within and outside the government, are collaborating to leverage Japan's expertise in TOD, including associated legal systems, for urban development in various countries.

Model 1: Urban TOD	Model 2: Suburban TOD
Compound development that integrates high-traffic areas around urban terminal stations and central suburban stations with the surrounding town	Development of cities along rail lines, mainly residential areas, in coordination with the development of suburban railroads

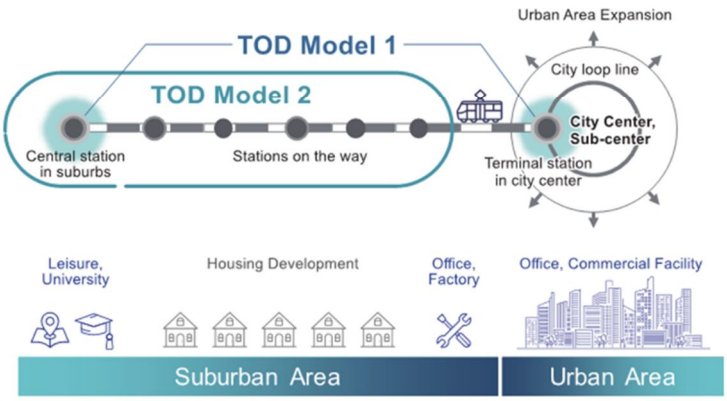


Fig. 26 Japan's TOD model

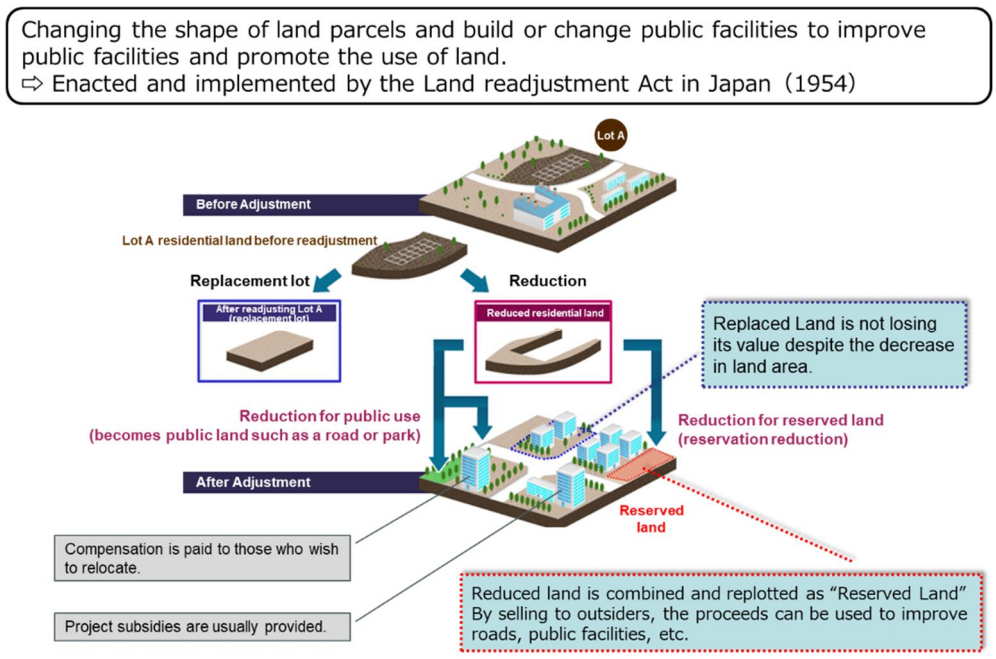


Fig. 27 Land readjustment projects

(3) Development of road networks

The development of highways has been steadily promoted since the First Five-Year Road Development Plan was formulated in 1954 and continues to this day. For example, the expansion of highway networks, such as expressways, has significantly contributed to regional economic revitalization by encouraging the location of factories near expressway interchanges. Additionally, it has greatly improved the quality and safety of citizens' lives by facilitating access to wide-area medical services in rural areas and securing wide-area alternative routes when highways are blocked due to disasters.

For example, the Tokyo Outer Ring Road (Misato-Minami IC to Takaya JCT) opened 15.5 km on June 2, 2018, connecting approximately 60% of the entire Tokyo Outer Ring Road. This reduced congestion-related lost time on metropolitan expressways within the Central Circular Route (including the Central Circular Route) by about 30%. The development of the highway network continues to be promoted to maximize such stock effects.

On the other hand, because there are still areas in the country where highway networks, such as expressways, are not connected, development will continue to be systematically promoted.

Additionally, initiatives are being promoted under the "Interim Report of the Future of High–Standard Road Network," compiled by the Advisory Committee on National Arterial Roads under the Road Committee of the Panel on Infrastructure Development

on October 31, 2023, and the "Policies for WISENET 2050," which outlines specific policies to be addressed by the Road Bureau of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

3.4.3 Information technology and innovation

(1) Development and provision of geospatial information

1) Utilization of geospatial information and positioning technology

Since geospatial information is essential for addressing administrative issues through Evidence-Based Policy Making (EBPM) and for creating new services and industries in the private sector, initiatives must be promoted to enhance and encourage its use. Based on the Basic Act on the Advancement of Utilizing Geospatial Information (Act No. 63 of 2007) (NSDI Act of Japan), enacted in 2007, policies promoting the utilization of geospatial information have been promoted comprehensively and systematically under the Basic Plan for the Advancement of Utilizing Geospatial Information established by the government.

In terms of government-wide initiatives, the usefulness of the Geographic Information System (GIS[14]) was reaffirmed during the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, prompting collaboration between the public and private sectors to promote the development and use of basic information and systems. Furthermore, regarding satellite positioning, each country is advancing the use of its own satellite positioning system. Japan has established a four-satellite Quasi-Zenith Satellite System, which provides high-precision positioning services.

In terms of individual policies, Japan is developing and updating national digital land information, which translates basic information about national land into GIS data. It is also focusing on parcel boundary data and real property registration data (types of basic information for identifying areas and rights relations of individual land parcels), as well as human flow data that contributes to EBPM by local governments, promoting initiatives to encourage their utilization. Furthermore, it has also launched the Real Estate Information Library in April 2024 to stimulate real estate transactions and disaster prevention community development, and is developing various policies to promote the use of geospatial information by displaying real estate-related open data on maps in a clear and user-friendly manner, tailored to meet the needs of users.

Additionally, while the use of geospatial information has dramatically increased due to advancements in data analysis, it remains limited to map-based and geography-focused professionals. Japan is promoting initiatives to create an environment where diverse entities can easily coordinate and analyze varied geospatial information. This way,

[14] A general term for system technologies used to process and manage data containing various types of location-related information, create maps, and conduct advanced analyses.

everyone can engage with geospatial information on a daily basis and enjoy the benefits of DX.

Japan will continue to implement additional initiatives to address administrative issues through EBPM and to create public-private services that maximize the potential of geospatial information in various fields, including disaster prevention, the economy, and community development.

2) PLATEAU

PLATEAU is the name of a nationwide urban digital twin realization project that the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism is promoting in collaboration with various stakeholders from industry, academia, and government. Since FY2020, Japan has been advancing the development, utilization, and open data conversion of 3D city models, aiming for them to serve as digital infrastructure for digital transformation in urban development.

A digital twin is a technology that reproduces an exact digital representation of the real world in a digital space. 3D city models are data that replicate urban spaces by adding semantic information to various objects, including buildings and roads, that exist in urban space, creating urban digital twins. PLATEAU adopts CityGML, an open format defined by the international standardization organization Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC), as the data format for 3D city models. Its greatest feature is that it constructs data not only by reproducing the geometric shapes of objects that comprise cities but also by adding definitions of features such as buildings, walls, and roofs, along with semantic information like usage, structure, and disaster risk. By integrating geometric shapes and semantic information, it can be applied in various fields and applications, including disaster simulation and urban structural analysis.

The original materials necessary for developing 3D city models are typically held by local governments in accordance with the City Planning Act and other laws. In Japan, the national government establishes standard product specifications and standard work procedures for 3D city models, while local governments primarily develop and utilize these models based on these standards to serve their own regions. The national government encourages this initiative by providing subsidies for the development and utilization of 3D city models by local governments. As of the end of FY2024, data for approximately 250 cities has been developed under this scheme.

What is particularly noteworthy is that the 3D city model data developed in this manner is provided as open data. Anyone can download 3D city models for free from the website and use them freely, including for commercial purposes, under the CC BY4.0 license. Additionally, Japan is promoting open access to knowledge and offering related software

as open-source software (OSS), thereby creating a development environment for data that is accessible to everyone. Starting in 2025, subsidies for new services using 3D city models by private companies will also commence, promoting open innovation and the social implementation of 3D city models.

Japan will continue to aim for the creation of new services, solutions for regional challenges, and the transformation of the economy and society through each PLATEAU initiative.

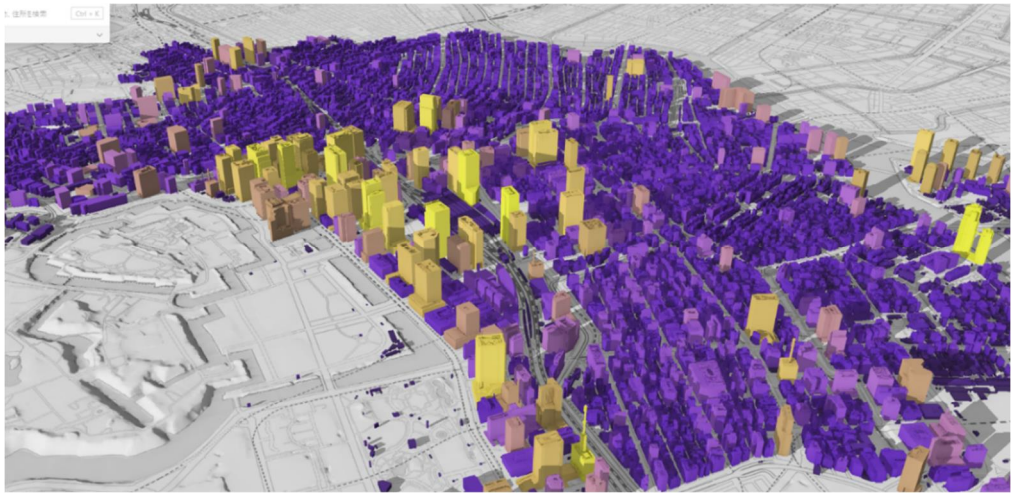


Fig. 28 3D city model in PLATEAU (visualization through PLATEAU VIEW)

[Related website]

○ **English site introducing PLATEAU**

https://www.mlit.go.jp/en/toshi/daisei/plateau_en_2.html

[2D barcode]

(2) Development and provision of land and real estate information

The following policies are being implemented for the development and provision of information on land and real estate.

One piece of information on land published by the national government is the Land Market Value Publication. This displays standard land prices as of January 1 each year, and serves as a guide for general land transactions and inheritance tax assessment, as well as fixed asset tax assessment, and also acts as a benchmark for calculating acquisition prices of public land, making it one of Japan's key institutional infrastructures.

Furthermore, to promote transparency in real estate markets and facilitate smooth, active transactions, surveys have been conducted since 2005, not only on land prices through

appraisal but also on transaction prices of real estate, including condominiums. Additionally, in 2011, drawing on lessons from the subprime crisis and other events, international organizations collaborated to create international guidelines for developing a residential property price index. Japan established the Japan Residential Property Price Index in accordance with these guidelines, began trial operation in 2012, and transitioned to full operation in 2015. Furthermore, the development of indices was advanced by the initiation of trial operations for the Japan Commercial Property Price Index in 2016.

3.5 Future strategic directions

(1) The Third National Spatial Strategy (National Plan)

Japan now stands at a major juncture, which could be seen as a turning point in our times. We face various risks, including regional crises stemming from an accelerating and unprecedented population decline, an increasing frequency and intensity of disasters, climate crises such as biodiversity loss, and a range of ongoing international situations. Additionally, people's lives have undergone significant changes in lifestyle and work patterns after the COVID-19 pandemic, driven by advancements in digitalization such as telecommuting and a growing interest in rural migration.

Given that we are at such a turning point, on July 28, 2023, the Cabinet decided on the Third National Spatial Strategy (National Plan), which outlines the direction of new national land development in the Reiwa era as a message for future national land development for the next generation that will inherit the future.

As detailed in 3.4.2 (1), the National Spatial Strategy is a comprehensive and basic plan based on the National Spatial Planning Act that aims for balanced national land development while focusing on the relationship between people and the national land, including the various activities conducted on the national land. Since the First Comprehensive National Development Plan (Cabinet Decision of October 5, 1962), which was the precursor to the National Spatial Strategy, a total of eight national land plans have been developed. For over 60 years, ideals and future visions for national land development have been established based on the socioeconomic conditions and long-term prospects of each era.

This National Spatial Strategy has a plan period of approximately the next 10 years, while looking ahead to 2050 and beyond. Since it contributes to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the new National Spatial Strategy and its promotion are explained below.

The National Spatial Strategy, based on an awareness of the times that we are at a major turning point described as "National Land at a Major Turning Point in the Era," captures the sense of crisis surrounding issues facing Japan in the form of risks and structural changes. This includes regional crises stemming from an accelerating and unprecedented population decline, risks from mega-disasters, climate crises, biodiversity loss, and themes that have become evident due to various ongoing international situations.

Regarding population decline specifically, as detailed in 3.1.1 (1), the long-term transition of the total population, based on new projections released in April 2023, peaked in 2008 at 128.08 million people. The decline is anticipated to accelerate, reaching 104.69 million by 2050 and 87 million by 2070 (medium-fertility projection;

this applies to future population projections below). Additionally, the aging rate is expected to rise from 22.1% in 2008 to 37.1% in 2050 and 38.7% in 2070. The working-age population is also projected to decrease to 55.4 million by 2050, significantly lower than the 72.12 million in 1970 (when the total population was nearly the same at 104.67 million). Examining population transitions by municipality size, actual results from the past 20 years show a significant decrease in small municipalities with populations under 50,000 people. However, it is anticipated that we will soon enter an era where population declines will occur at a similar rate in regional central cities with populations ranging from 50,000 to 300,000. According to mesh-based future population projections, uninhabited areas are expected to expand domestically, with an estimated 20% of currently inhabited areas projected to become uninhabited by 2050.

Furthermore, although the trend of outflow to the Tokyo Metropolitan Area—primarily among young people from regional areas—lessened during the COVID-19 pandemic, it persists. In 2024, the net inflow of migrants (Japanese) to the Tokyo Metropolitan Area was about 119,000 people.

The regional crisis stemming from an accelerating and unprecedented population decline, including such overconcentration in Tokyo and other regional imbalances, is serious.

On the other hand, changes in lifestyle and work patterns following the COVID-19 pandemic are evident, including advancements in digitalization, such as telecommuting, and a growing interest in rural migration, particularly among younger generations and women. Notably, 45% of people in their 20s express interest in moving to rural areas.

The Third National Spatial Strategy views these changes as opportunities to encourage the movement of people to rural areas. To overcome the challenges faced and restore vitality to these regions, it presents a vision focused on rural areas.

1) New national land future vision

Given this awareness of the times, we present “National Land Combining the Potentials of the Regions in the New Era” as our vision for national land, aiming for the “formation of regional living areas where digital technology and actual situations are integrated,” “safe and secure national land development to address mega-disasters, climate crises, and tense international situations,” and “distinctive national land development that nurtures beautiful nature and a rich culture that is world-class” as our guiding principles.

The term “potentials of the regions” refers to the ability of regions to overcome the various challenges they face (defensive power) and to enhance regional attractiveness and attract people (offensive power)—thus representing the aggregate and fundamental potentials of regions. Japan aims to maximize these “potentials of the regions” through

independent and endogenous regional development driven by diverse human resources living in or connected to the regions. By mobilizing all tangible and intangible regional resources, we will unite the potentials of the regions to usher in new eras across the national land and connect them to the future. This effort will revitalize rural areas, promote safe, secure, and distinctive regions nationwide, enhance the appeal of rural areas to attract people, including the younger generation who will shape the future, and create and expand the flow of people to rural areas. In doing so, we will alter the trend of population decline and outflow from rural areas, leading to greater diversity, inclusion, sustainability, and resilience across the national land and transforming it into a national land where people can have hope for the future.

While continuing to deepen and develop the Compact Plus Network initiative from the previous plan, we set forth the vision of a "National Land with a Seamless Connection of Hubs" as the fundamental concept of national land structure working toward our goals. This vision also integrates a transformation to a national land structure that overcomes the constraints of place and time through the utilization of digital technology, aiming for realization through: (i) correcting the overconcentration in Tokyo and pursuing a decentralized arrangement of population and various functions at a broad regional level throughout the national land; (ii) forming a "nationwide corridor network" that effectively utilizes and connects Japan's two fronts—the Japan Sea side and the Pacific Ocean side—to ensure active flows of people and goods and provide redundancy during disasters; (iii) focusing on the "formation of regional living areas" where essential everyday life services are sustainably provided through thorough utilization of digital technology, regardless of municipal boundaries.

Furthermore, we set forth four priority themes for national land renewal: the "formation of regional living areas where digital technology and actual situations are integrated," "structural changes to sustainable industries," "creation of green national land," and "use and management of national land amid population decline." We also position "upgrading national infrastructure" and "securing and fostering human resources who support the region" as cross-cutting priority themes, working comprehensively to ensure they demonstrate synergistic effects through mutual cooperation.

2) Four priority themes for national land renewal

(i) Formation of regional living areas where digital technology and actual situations are integrated

The regional living areas where essential everyday life services are sustainably provided, which we emphasized this time, are based on actual daily life and economic activities, regardless of municipal boundaries. Their purpose is to solve regional issues and enhance regional attractiveness. While we present a guideline of approximately 100,000 people or more in regional living area populations, this is not a strict condition. The scope of

initiatives should be considered and established from the bottom up, taking into account regional circumstances. The goal is to move away from the idea of creating comprehensive full-set areas, including higher-order urban functions, as population decline accelerates. By leveraging digital technology, we aim to maintain and enhance the convenience of life services as a final stronghold that supports regional living and enhances regional attractiveness, thereby creating and expanding flows of people to rural areas. In forming regional living areas, a major aim is to transition to regional management based on new concepts. This will require regional management from the perspective of three types of cooperations: (i) "cooperation of entities" through public-private partnerships; (ii) "cooperation of projects" that transcends sectoral boundaries; and (iii) "cooperation of regions" that is not bound by municipal boundaries.

On that basis, as an image of initiatives to enhance the quality of regional space while fully utilizing digital technology, for instance, alongside redesigning regional public transport, we will expedite advanced technology services such as autonomous driving, drone logistics, digital activities in hilly and mountainous areas, and remote medical care and education from the demonstration stage to implementation. By comprehensively developing digital infrastructure and hardware for this purpose, along with the necessary software and regulations for the adoption of digital technology, we aim to translate these efforts into a society where anyone can live conveniently and comfortably anywhere in the country, merging "rural richness" and "urban convenience."

(ii) Structural changes to sustainable industries

Given the contraction of domestic demand, declining export competitiveness in Japan's industries, increasingly serious labor shortages, shifts in the international competitive landscape, imminent mega-disaster risks, and the perspectives of GX, DX, and economic security, we will promote the nationwide decentralized location of growth industries, such as semiconductors, that leverage regional characteristics across the national land. We will also facilitate the smooth transition of CO_2-heavy emission industries concentrated in industrial complexes to decarbonized industries, and work comprehensively to improve the earning power of regional industries that support local economies and employment. Through these efforts, we aim to implement strategic structural changes to sustainable industries.

(iii) Creation of green national land

To enhance the beauty of national land comprising diverse and rich natural environments, conserve and expand natural capital, and create "green national land" where the nation can continuously enjoy the blessings of nature, we will promote initiatives such as the conservation and restoration of sound ecosystems through 30 by 30 to realize Nature-Positive and the formation of broad-area ecological networks. Additionally, to support regional development that achieves net zero, we will promote initiatives such as the

circular utilization of forest resources and the introduction of community-coexistent renewable energy. In doing so, we show the necessity of comprehensively addressing regional development, including mitigation measures, adaptation measures, and ecosystem conservation.

(iv) Use and management of national land amid population decline
In response to issues such as the increase of land with unknown owners, vacant houses, abandoned farmland, and insufficiently maintained forests due to population decline and other factors, we will develop sustainable approaches to national land use and management through “national land management concepts” that clarify which land should be prioritized for maintenance and redefine management methods.

Additionally, amid concerns about increasing disaster risks, such as the intensification and frequent occurrence of water disasters due to climate change and the imminent threat of mega-earthquakes, we prioritize safe and secure national land use and management as a basic policy. This includes promoting initiatives such as development restrictions in disaster-prone areas and advising residents to relocate to safer locations.

3) Cross-cutting priority themes
(i) Upgrading national infrastructure
National infrastructure serves as the foundation for a wide range of national life and socioeconomic activities conducted on the national land. As infrastructure related to national land conservation, life, transportation, information and communication, energy, and more, it plays important functions and roles in supporting regional safety, security, life, and the economy. However, much of Japan’s infrastructure was developed during and since the period of rapid economic growth, and the aging of infrastructure is progressing at an accelerating pace. For example, the proportion of road bridges nationwide that will have been in service for more than 50 years is expected to reach about 75% by 2040. Given this situation, to maximize the functions and roles that national infrastructure should fulfill in the medium to long term, we will thoroughly implement “strategic management toward upgrading national infrastructure” that pursues the maximization of stock effects through effective utilization, considering changes in socioeconomic conditions such as DX and GX. This includes furthering functional sophistication from new perspectives, such as DX, GX, securing redundancy, and security perspectives, as well as combinations with natural capital, including green infrastructure. It also involves working comprehensively and multifunctionally from the perspective of wise use while breaking down vertical divisions. Furthermore, it encompasses policies such as strategic maintenance, including a full-scale transition to preventive maintenance.

(ii) Securing and fostering human resources who support the region

As shortages of human resources for regional development become increasingly serious due to the accelerating decline in population and outflow, it is crucial to promote the participation of diverse human resources, including young people, women, and senior citizens, in regional development. This not only helps secure the human resources needed to foster regional development in the future but also contributes to the formation of an inclusive society rich in diversity. To achieve this, from the perspective of national land policy, we will coordinate with child and child-rearing policies to promote environmental development, such as "dual income and shared parenting." Our goal is to realize a child-centered society supported by the entire region and a community where people can give birth to and raise children with peace of mind. Additionally, we will promote women's active participation by developing educational and employment environments in rural areas. We aim to expand the related population nationwide by 1.5 times over the next 10 years through efforts focused on *people*, *place*, and *system* development, aimed at deepening and expanding the related population, including dual habitation.

By realizing such a society, we aim to broaden lifestyle and work style choices based on people's diversifying values, enhance the potentials of the regions, create and expand flows of people to rural areas, and alter the trend of Japan's declining birthrate.

Additionally, from the perspective of strengthening regional management systems, we aim to promote proactive participation and expanded cooperation among diverse entities, including companies, in regional development. By utilizing systems such as corporate hometown tax donations and collaboration with regional revitalization entrepreneurs, we will advance initiatives to address regional issues through partnerships between regions and companies, including social ventures and others focused on solving social problems. We will also promote cooperative initiatives between regions and private companies, such as the use of social bonds and impact investment, expanded PPP and PFI, including concessions, as well as utilization for regional revitalization.

(2) Spatial Planning Platform (SPP)

In August 2018, Japan established the Spatial Planning Platform (SPP) in collaboration with the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and Pacific Fukuoka to create a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive society by sharing knowledge related to national and regional spatial planning among stakeholders.

The objectives for the SPP are: (i) networking among national land and regional planning personnel; (ii) sharing experiences and knowledge related to the development and promotion of national land and regional planning; (iii) mutual learning on significant planning issues; and (iv) providing support for the formulation of national land and regional plans.

Through this initiative, Japan contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and implementing the New Urban Agenda, an international strategy for addressing urban problems and human settlement issues.