Transition in City Planning in Tokyo

By Bureau of City Planning Tokyo Metropolitan Government

1 City Ward Improvement and Its Results

City planning in Tokyo began with the "City Ward Improvement Design" (old design) announced in 1889, which was based on the City Ward Improvement Ordinance enacted in 1888. Planning based on the City Ward Improvement Design targeted the region of the city wards (the area of the old 15 wards). Its contents covered roads, rivers, bridges, railroads, public parks, markets, crematoriums, and graveyards. In 1890 water works planning was added. However, revenue problems were encountered and the city ward improvement project was greatly delayed. Thus a City Ward Improvement New Design was announced in 1903 based on selection of the minimum items for improvement.

(1) Water Works

The initial city ward improvement project made the provision of modern water works for Tokyo a priority in order to deal with the repeated occurrence of fires and the prevalence of communicable diseases. Work on the First Water Works Improvement Project began in 1891 and was completed in 1899.

(2) Road Construction

After the opening of urban railways in 1903, the need for provision of roads under the city ward improvement project was recognized. 123 roads with an extension of about 175 kilometers were planned, and had been largely completed by 1918. However, urban railways (streetcars) were laid out on almost all of these.

(3) Urban Area Development

Development of the Marunouchi district proceeded as part of the city ward improvement project. This included the building of roads near the moat around the Imperial Palace and the development of Hibiya Park. A western-style office district was built that was called "Little London," and Tokyo Station was opened in 1914.

2 Earthquake Recovery and City Planning

The City Ward Improvement Ordinance was repealed in 1919. In its place, the City Planning Law and Urban Buildings Law were enacted. In accordance with these regulations, among other things, an area and district system was introduced as a land utilization plan and a land rezoning project was introduced as a system for urban area development. There were three types of land use areas at that time: residential, commercial, and industrial, with regulations about restrictions on, or inducements for, the establishment of factories. (There were
In September 1923, shortly after the enactment of the City Planning Law, the Great Kanto Earthquake occurred and 44% of the urban area of Tokyo was destroyed in the fires. The city government took earthquake recovery as an opportunity to reorganize the city of Tokyo. A disaster recovery plan was established in November 1923, and executed as a national project.

(1) Urban Area Development Through Land Readjustment
The earthquake recovery city planning works undertaken during the seven years from 1924 to 1930 executed projects in districts covering about 3,600 ha, exceeding the area of approximately 3,465 ha of Tokyo destroyed in the fire. The city center and the shitamachi urban areas were completely renovated. Fifty-two trunk roads with breadths of 22 m or more with a total extension of about 114 km were built, and public parks of various sizes were provided in 55 places. Showa-dori, and Sumida, Hamacho and Kinshicho Parks were the results of these works projects.

(2) Earthquake Recovery and Residential Construction
As part of the earthquake recovery effort, rapid housing production was needed for the earthquake victims. The Dojun-Kai Foundation was established, based on funds donated for the earthquake, and through this foundation, 15 residential concrete apartment building complexes with 2,501 units were provided. These achievements were linked to the later, large-scale provision of public housing.

3 City Planning in the Prewar and Wartime Periods
Along with the execution of earthquake recovery works, the city was pressed by the need for new development of a city planning guideline. This was because of the rapid expansion of the urban area, due to an influx of population and the building of factories on the outskirts of the city. The city also had to cope with the aggravations of war, starting with the Manchurian Incident in 1931 and continuing up through the Second World War, and the destruction of urban areas in the air raids.

(1) Development of Housing Areas in the Suburbs
From 1920 on, development of high-quality housing areas by private developers progressed in the suburbs of Tokyo. Land readjustment was also carried out by land owners. Housing in today's Denen-chofu and Iogi areas are the results of this.

(2) Suburban Location of Factories
The industrial capacity of Tokyo was also rejuvenated, along with the earthquake recovery effort. Location of factories in the suburbs progressed, with their
concentration in the Tama area being particularly intense.

(3) Planning of Green Areas and Air Raid Planning

The new houses and factories resulted in urban sprawl in the suburban areas of Tokyo. A master plan for the formation of controlled urban areas became essential. Green belts were adopted to prevent the expansion of a disordered megalopolis, and in 1939 the Tokyo Green Areas Plan was instituted. In 1940, tracts of land to be used as green areas were acquired in Kinuta, Jindai, Koganei, Toneri, Mizumoto, and Shinozaki to commemorate the 2600th year after the accession of the Emperor Jinmu. Most of these still remain today as large-scale parks.

The War intensified. War with the U.S. began in 1941, and air raids became a reality. In 1943, to minimize air raid damage, empty plots of land and belts of empty land were specified for prevention of air raid damage. Green areas were also incorporated into these.

4 Postwar Recovery and City Planning

In 1945, Japan faced the end of the War in ruins. In December of that year, the national government determined "Fundamental Guidelines for Post-war Recovery Planning." Based on the experience gained from the earthquake recovery works, emphasis was placed on land readjustment. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government instituted a Tokyo Postwar Recovery City Plan in 1946. Satellite cities and ring cities were laid out and population in the ward area was to be held to 3.5 million. In land use, the ring-shaped open areas were reserved and designated without change as green areas. The area of these spaces was some 19,000 ha, which corresponded to 33.9% of the ward area. The trunk road network was made into a radial ring network of wide roads, including seven roads with breadths of 100 m. For block adjustment, about 20,000 ha were designated for planning - an area exceeding the 16,000 ha destroyed by fire.

However, the population of Tokyo recovered rapidly, led by the people who had been evacuated during the war. In 1947 the population reached 3.82 million. This negated the very basis of the recovery plan. In 1949, when recovery plans were reviewed on a nationwide basis under reduced budgetary circumstances, the Tokyo recovery plan, whose works were already delayed, was cut back drastically. Among the cutbacks, the core block readjustment project was cut back to slightly less than 5,000 ha. In the end, the area that was completed only amounted to 1,492 ha, and was limited to the station areas on railway lines such as the Yamanote, Keihin Tohoku, and Sobu Lines.
5 High Growth and City Planning

The recovery from war-damaged ruins was succeeded by the rapid growth of Japan's economy. Through concentration of population and industry, Tokyo developed into a megalopolis, encompassing the surrounding regions.

(1) The National Capital Region Development Plan

The First Development Plan for the Tokyo Metropolis was promulgated in 1958 as a regional plan for the greater Tokyo metropolitan area (National Capital Region). The regions included in the plan were (1) the existing urban area, (2) a suburban zone (green belt), and (3) neighboring regions. The existing urban area was to be restricted, but the concentration of population and industry proceeded, while the provision of basic facilities for daily life was delayed, resulting in the unchecked urban sprawl.

(2) The Olympics and Provision of Basic Facilities

In 1959, a city plan for a Metropolitan Expressway system (roads for exclusive use by automobiles) was determined as a means to deal with ever-increasing automobile traffic. Its construction was promoted as part of developments undertaken for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Before the Olympics were held, the Tokyo Monorail (from Haneda to Hamamatsucho) and the Tokaido Shinkansen were opened.

(3) Floor Area Ratio District System and Super High-Rise Buildings

The specified block system was introduced in 1961 and the floor area ratio district system in 1963. The absolute restrictions on building height were removed, and super high-rise buildings, such as the Kasumigaseki Building, made their appearance.

(4) Large-scale Apartment Complex Construction and Tama New Town

Along with the high economic growth of the Japanese economy, the concentration of the population in Tokyo reached an extreme level, making the construction of large volume housing a necessity. Reinforced concrete multiple housing units were provided at various locations in the city. Moreover, the plan for Tama New Town was established in 1964 and construction began.

6 "New" City Planning Law Enacted

City planning efforts were unable to respond appropriately to the rapid development of Tokyo that accompanied high economic growth. As a result, the metropolitan area spread over a wide area in a disorganized manner and urban sprawl progressed.
Furthermore, overcrowding in Tokyo and the resulting harmful effects became extremely marked. Air and water pollution increased. To solve these problems, it became necessary not only to provide urban facilities, but also to restrain urbanization or restrict construction activity.

(1) Revision of the City Planning Law and Building Standard Law

In 1968 a "new" City Planning Law was enacted, and in 1970 the Building Standard Law was revised. This established the overall framework for the current system of city planning. Through these revisions, the following were newly systemized: ① establishment of a system to divide areas into Urbanization Promotion Areas and Urbanization Control Areas; ② introduction of a system of development permits in connection with the division into the above two types of areas; and ③ detail control by land use zoning and adoption of comprehensive floor area ratio restrictions.

The City Redevelopment Law was enacted in 1969. This provided a framework for redevelopment projects based on a system of the transfer of rights through the participation of the rights holders.

(2) Introduction of District Planning

In 1980, a district planning system was established, in order to make more detailed control of development and construction possible. In district planning, planning of restrictions is carried out in a comprehensive manner regarding: small parks and roadways within districts, the placement, form, and use of buildings, and land use. In order to develop districts that most enhance the features of each area, the opinions of residents and land rights holders are taken into consideration.

(3) Control by Land Use Zoning in Detail

In 1992, the City Planning Law and the Building Standard Law were reexamined as part of the comprehensive land development policies. Since eight land use zoning categories were subdivided into twelve, these new zoning categories allow for more detailed control of land use.

7. A new city planning system

In 1995, the Power Decentralization Law was enacted, and it was confirmed that the State and local governments should join hands to promote the welfare of the people - one of their joint objectives. It was also confirmed that for the purpose of promoting the initiative and independence of local public bodies and bringing into being individualistic and vital regional communities, the State and local governments should clarify the division of roles between them. Since then, the decentralization of power has been made with the policy of delegating to local governments, as much as possible, administrative affairs that are close to residents.

As a result, a law to revise related laws was enacted in July 1999 to promote the decentralization of power, and the division of roles between the State and local governments was reexamined. About 30 years have passed since the "New" City Planning Law was enacted. During that period, the socioeconomic conditions of city-dwellers and urban activities have greatly changed. For the purpose of structuring a new city planning system that suits the new age, the "New" City Planning Law was fundamentally reexamined, and a "Revised" City Planning Law was enacted in May 2000. (This law will take effect in May 2001.)
(1) Details of the revision relating to decentralization
In order to carry out urban development in a way suited to each area, the power to make decisions relating to urban development was reexamined and revised as follows, and part of such power, retained in the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, was transferred to special wards due to the revision of the metropolitan and municipal government systems:
(a) Local public bodies are autonomous in the execution of clerical work relating to urban development.
(b) The scope of urban development planned by wards, cities, towns and villages has been expanded;
(c) Permission by the State required when a prefecture formulates an urban development plan, and approval by the prefectural government concerned when a ward, city, town or village formulates an urban development plan, has become unnecessary and changed into consultation that requires an agreement.
(d) It has become possible to set up a city planning council based on the City Planning Law in each ward, city, town and village.
(e) The power to make decisions relating to such things as specified areas (up to 1 ha in size) and the area for redevelopment (up to 3 ha in size) and garbage incinerators has been delegated to special wards.

(2) Details of the "Revised" City Planning Law
After an age of rapid urbanization, an age of stable, mature urban society has arrived in Japan. In order that this country may meet the needs of the new age, the city planning system has undergone an overall reexamination. Salient features of the revised city planning system are as follows:
(a) It has been decided that the master plans for city planning be formulated in all areas covered by city planning.
(b) Decision-making systems relating to city planning, such as writing the reason for formulating city planning, have been simplified.
(c) For the purpose of improving built-up urban areas, systems for the application of a special floor area ratio have been created.
(d) As new systems for suburban areas, quasi-city planning areas and areas where use of land for certain purposes is banned have been established.

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