

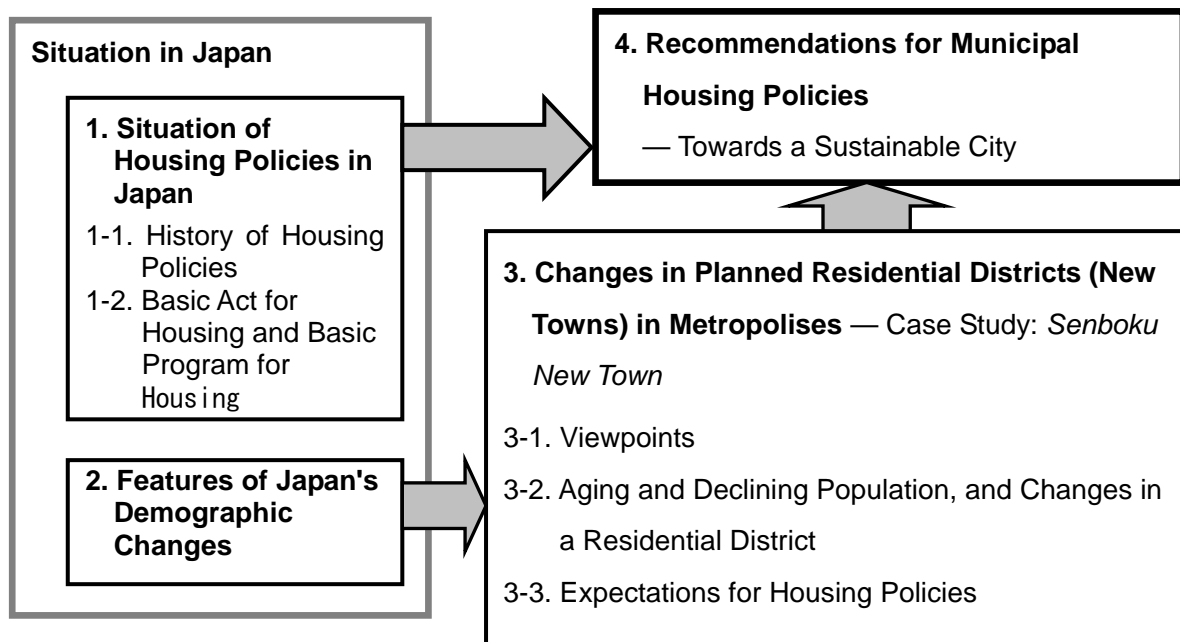
Housing Policy in the Face of Population Decline and Aging — Towards a Sustainable City

Yumi Sato

Adjunct Lecture of Osaka City University, Urban Research Plaza

This report presents housing policy recommendations for addressing Japan's aging and declining population.

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1. Situation of Housing Policies in Japan

This chapter outlines the history of Japan's housing policy, changes in housing situations behind it, and the outcome at this point (the Basic Act for Housing and Basic Program for Housing.)

1-1. History of Housing Policies: Shift to Focusing on Market Function and Housing Stock

- Japan's housing policy dates back to postwar years when there was a shortage of 4.2 million dwellings. Subsequently, the housing supply system, comprising the Government Housing Loan

Corporation, Japan Housing Corporation, and Publicly-oriented housing, was established from 1945 through 1975.

- In 1973, with the number of dwellings exceeding that of households in all prefectures, emphasis shifted from quantity to quality. Subsequently, home ownership contributed to improvement of housing situations from 1976 through 1995.
- In the 1990s, the quality of Japan's housing stock was further enhanced, partly as a result of the bubble economy. At the same time, however, the proportion of problems that could not be solved simply by construction of housing became larger. These problems included qualitative imbalance between types of households and the housing stock, residual regional variations in housing situations, heavy housing expense burdens in metropolises, and demands for safer residential environments.
- Against this backdrop, market function- and housing stock-oriented housing policies have been the mainstream since 1996. The market-oriented concept, suggested by the council of the Ministry of Construction in 1995, became the basis for housing policies through a series of political reforms that included deregulation and privatization of quasi-governmental corporations. Meanwhile, in the public housing sector, Regional Housing planning and Regional Housing Grant subsidies were institutionalized and reforms have been promoted in conjunction with decentralization of power.

1-2. Basic Act for Housing and Basic Program for Housing

- In response to the developments described above, the Basic Act for Housing was enacted in 2006. A shift was made from a law designed for promoting housing construction (the Housing Construction Planning Act) to an act aimed at realizing high quality housing lifestyles (the Basic Act for Housing). Enactment of this law represented a milestone of a significant transformation of housing policy that had continued since the late 1990s.
- The Basic Act for Housing requires prefectural governments to draw up a Basic Program for Housing, but this requirement is optional for municipalities. Basic Program for Housing It remains uncertain whether or not this program will help individual local governments to develop housing policies that best suit local geographical characteristics due to poor awareness of differences from the Housing Construction 5-year Programs.

2. Features of Japan's Demographic Changes

This chapter characterizes recent demographic changes in Japan, particularly the aging and decreasing population and the declining birthrate.

- Japan's population began to decrease naturally — with death rates exceeding birthrates — around 2005, and the gradual downward trend is expected to continue.

- And the age structure of Japan's Population is rapidly becoming that of an aged society.
- While the number of elderly persons aged 65 and over will plateau at about 35 million by 2020 and level off afterward, the proportion of those aged 75 and over will continue to increase. Meanwhile, household sizes will shrink further, and the proportions of one-person and two-person households will rise. In other words, it is projected that population aging and shrinking of household size will proceed in parallel.
- Specifically in metropolises, the proportion of elderly people will rise rapidly. According to mid- and long-term forecasts, nearly all municipalities will experience population decreases.

In cities, It become a issue how we support life of elderly people.

With these demographic changes as a backdrop, the next chapter examines specific changes in residential districts.

3. Changes in Planned Residential Districts (New Towns) in Metropolises — Case Study: *Senboku New Town*

This chapter examines changes in residents and residential districts, using an example of a new town (planned residential district) in the suburbs of a metropolis, and identifies the issues that housing policies should address in order to make residential districts more sustainable.

3-1. Viewpoints

- Some new legislative measures to address population decline, aging have been taken from the perspective of city planning. They include national-level planning and a review of fundamental city structural approaches, as represented by the concept of the compact city.
- As to housing policies for metropolises, the Basic Program for Housing specifies "encouragement of residence in a metropolis" and "restoration of existing planned residential districts" as basic measures. The latter measure, designed to constrain expansion of urban areas, is considered in line with the direction of urban policies that presume effective use of the existing infrastructure.
- New towns were deliberately developed in Japan in the 1960s through 1970s to solve the problems of high population concentration in metropolitan areas. In a short period, a large number of uniform residential lots and dwellings were provided through combined city planning and housing construction projects, which involved massive and intensive investment and legal acquisitions of land by the national and local governments. In other words, new towns are the results of the national-level, quantity-oriented housing policy.
- Today, suburban areas are faced with common issues such as low demand for suburban

housing in association with a return to urban residence, uneven distribution and aging of population, and aging housing stocks. Consequently, initiatives for restoring new towns have been undertaken in some planned residential districts.

- Generally, the population of a planned residential district increases when people start moving in, peaks, and then falls into decline due to the shrinking of household sizes; furthermore, the number of households decreases due to alternation of generations. Subsequently, residential districts tend to be polarized depending on housing demand.
- In some districts, the populations, which have remained unchanged, begin to increase again as a result of subdivision of residential lots and construction of collective housing. However, in other districts, the populations further decrease due to an increasing number of unoccupied dwellings and vacant residential lots. These districts are likely to be seen as less attractive residential localities, which can lead to further reduction in their populations. Transportation, commercial services, and other services become less convenient, while existing urban facilities become idle and community functionality deteriorates. Consequently, it may be extremely difficult to maintaining a community in a district caught in such a cycle.

By this report, I use a word of "sustainability" based on a viewpoint such as the above.

3-2. Aging and Decreasing Population, and Changes in a Residential District

(1) Features of *Senboku New Town*

- *Senboku New Town* was developed primarily by the Osaka prefecture over a long period dating from Japan's high-growth phase. With its area of 1,557 ha, *Senboku New Town* is one of Japan's largest new towns developed under the description of "New Residential Town Development Project" and accompanied by use of eminent domain to acquire the necessary land.

(2) Demographic Changes

- In addition to a population decline in all residential areas that began in 1992, the number of households has been decreasing in recent years.
- Aging of population accelerates at the same time. However, that I greet super aged society is expected ten years later by the thing with much population of an age group of 55-59 years old.
- Demographic changes and the aging population are closely associated with housing characteristics (types of housing by town and street); areas with a population reduction overlap areas where the proportion of public rental housing is 50% or higher. Areas dominated by owner-occupied houses and detached houses overlap areas where the proportion of elderly persons is over 25%.

(3) Changes in Residential Districts

- Changes in residential districts are related to a decline in the use of railways, falling land

prices, integration of schools, and higher incidence of vacant dwellings and housing lots. Meanwhile, residential development of unused land is increasing in each area. However, many of these projects are not in line with original city planning objectives.

- With respect to accommodation, public rental housing, comprises buildings with no elevators and tiny, uniform apartments, which are outdated from the perspective of current housing demand. By the Influence of revision of the Publicly-operated Housing Act in 1996, it led an exodus of family households with growing children and reduced competition for new occupation of these dwellings.
- On the other hand, community activities are becoming increasingly diversified. Conventional, residents' association-based activities are being replaced with those organized by like-minded people, such as NPOs, and group activities through lifelong learning opportunities.

3-3. Expectations for Housing Policies

- The general plan, master plans for city planning and housing planning, and other plans developed by the city of Sakai lack awareness of issues and discussion of measures to deal with the changes described above.
 - This section discusses the relationship between changing features of New Town and housing, and identifies the issues that future housing policies should address from the perspective of city sustainability.
- (1) Encouraging exchanges of dwellings to promote alternation of generations — motivating home-owners (the elderly) to swap their dwellings with those of families with children
Example1) *Anshin Sumikae Joho Bank* (the information system of housing exchange) in Fukuoka Prefecture — demand for house-swapping is high, but there are many issues involved in realizing this program. There is a need for personal consulting services.
- (2) Creation of housing and residential environments that address the characteristics and changing nature of residents — encouraging creation of a community where elderly people can live their lives in safety, and creating a framework for transforming the community in line with changes in both types of residents and their preferences.
Example2) Community-based social services in the *Kitasuma* housing complex in the city of Kobe— one issue is the need to share information and tasks in order to energize community residents.
- (2) Maintaining, renovating, and reconstructing housing with a view to revitalization of a residential area — carrying out comprehensive programs to create new demand for housing. Issues include establishment of administrative bodies to manage the residential area.

Example3) *Yukarigaoka* Area in Chiba prefecture -- multifaceted measures to maintain and manage the entire area under the theme of "creation of a community that will never become a slum." One issue is continuity of the activity.

Example4) Community creation conference for the *Minami* ward in the city of Sakai — aimed at creating a single community within the ward. One issue that was identified is the need to establish a new means of communicating with the local government.

4. Recommendations for Municipal Housing Policies

This concluding chapter presents recommendations for municipal housing policies, based on specific examples described in Chapter 3.

(1) Focus on the relationship between housing policy and community creation — Develop a housing policy that can address local issues.

- It is important that choosing the technique that is not same for a housing policy to sustainability of a city. The reason is because the factor is different from a change of population by a characteristic of a residential area.
- For example, with a focus on the housing policy's population-control function, combine measures to encourage settlement and housing exchange (strategic housing supply) in order to balance the demographic make-up. And flexible use of a public house system.

(2) Carry out the market function- and housing stock-oriented national housing policy so that it can address local issues — Revise the role of municipalities.

- Municipalities should concentrate on their role of managing their regions, instead of focusing on housing construction.
- Motivate owners and users (residents) of housing stock to participate in drawing up a housing policy.
- Specifically, measures for developing a stock of public rental housing must be carried out in a localized and strategic manner, with a focus on the "location" of the housing as an index in addition to the date of completion of such housing. The municipality must play a coordination role in respect of such measures.