

**NEW GARDEN CITY PROJECT IN JAPAN
GARDEN CITY MAITAMON, MITSUIKE COMMUNITY PROJECT IN KOBE**

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NEW GARDEN CITY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2001

In Kobe and Tsukuba, Japan, in 2001, “The New Garden City International Conference” was held to mark the 100th anniversary of The Garden City concept. The conference bore many fruits. 18 items were discussed and were further categorized into three phases for the purpose of creating “New Types of Communities” and “A New Design”.

PROBLEMS AND PRACTICES FOR NEW GARDEN CITY

The phases for New Design Concept are: “Nature and Ecology”, “Human & Society”, and “Sustainability & Management”. And the phases for New Community Concept are: “Region & Town”, “Human Settlement & Community”, and “Home & Houses”. The conference identified “Human Settlement & Community” and “Sustainability & Management” as the weakest points of the current urban development all over the world.

The conference was organized by Takahito Saiki of Kobe Design University, and supported by Ministry of Education (currently, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology), Japan Agricultural Co-operatives, Urban Develop Corporation (UDC, currently Urban Renaissance Agency), Newspaper companies, academic organisations, Ibaraki and Hyogo Prefectures. UDC gave consent for Takahito Saiki’s Office to make a proposal for the redevelopment plan of a former golf course owned by UDC, as the consignment research to implement the ideas expressed at the New Garden City International Conference 2001.

EXPERIMENT OF “GARDEN CITY MAITAMON” MITSUIKE COMMUNITY PROJECT AND THREE SUBJECTS

The “Garden City MAITAMON” Project aims at the new types of suburban inhabitants and the sustainable community, and has been developed by Industry-University Cooperation consisting of Urban Renaissance Agency (UR) and Kobe Design University (KDU), with future residents’ participations.

“Garden City MAITAMON” has been developed in the rural Kobe municipal golf course (about 108Ha), and the first development area named “MITSUIKE Community Project” has 68 residential lots, greenery park, town park, and community hall, and an area of 6Ha.

A leasehold system applies to all residential lots, which are more spacious than common lots in Japan with the average size of 700 m² (the minimum size of 363 m², and the maximum size of 1,642 m²). The minimum monthly rent fee is 48,000 yen, and the maximum one is 128,000 yen, when 2 million yen is paid in deposit. The list of new residents was agreed in December 2004, and after completing the construction of the project at the end of March 2006, they signed the leasehold contract. Presently, almost 10 residences out of 68 are under construction.

In accordance with the outcome of the New Garden City International Conference 2001, a study on the spatial composition system of historical agricultural settlements in Kobe, and the practice of community development, which the research representative has been engaged in for more than 30 years, three main strategies for the project were defined:

1. Attractive town planning which the residents can be proud of
2. Integrated community planning in which the residents can share the value of living environment
3. Promotion of community-based management system to sustain and improve the value of living environment.

ATTRACTIVE TOWN PLANNING WHICH THE RESIDENTS CAN BE PROUD OF

In order to realize a sustainable local community, the attractive town planning which the residents can be proud of have to be achieved through consultation. This chapter briefly details the town planning process of the “Garden City MAITAMON” MITSUIKE Community Project.

(a) The town planning process of “Garden City MAITAMON” MITSUIKE Community Project

Urban Renaissance Agency (UR) once intended to develop the project site of MITSUIKE for

med/high-rise apartments. However, UR made a decision to change the plan, and develop the site based on the outcome of the New Garden City International Conference 2001, as the first example of the practice of the “New Suburban Habitation Campaign” promoted by UR.

Firstly, Takahito Saiki’s Office investigated the geographical feature and vegetation of the former golf course. Secondly, while considering the theory of the environmental unit derived from Asian philosophy, the office identified the places of hills, valleys, streams, ponds, woods, and viewpoints. Thirdly, the office considered minimizing reclamation, exploring the proper numbers of lots by imitating the existing old settlements in the local area, sharing the visually valuable landscape features, and linking pedestrian routes. After completing those steps, planning a road pattern respecting the land, a mixture of household types was proposed.

(b) Reservation and management of the green space

The green space in the northern part of the project site of MITSUIKE, and the pond and the surrounding green space in the southeastern part of the site have been designated as a preservation area by Hyogo Prefecture Regional Environmental Assessment. In addition, more green spaces in the central part of the project site and inside of the town park can be preserved in the town planning. Furthermore, a proposal that the green space in the northern part is included in housing sites and preserved by the residents was accepted by UR.

(c) The use of leasehold system

For the purpose of common ownership of high-value estate, the leasehold system has been accepted. This makes it possible for the residents to rent the more spacious lands for lower fees. The age group of owners can vary from the 30s to the 70s.

(d) Housing design strengthening the local identity

Nowadays, in most Japanese new towns, lots and buildings have been provided separately. Furthermore, many buildings are constructed by the prefabrication system, so that it creates rather monotonous streets. In MITSUIKE Community Project, having investigated the arrangement of housing in the neighbouring traditional settlements with high-valued landscapes, a plan of arrangement of buildings in harmony with the sites was proposed. Moreover, in order to create the MAITAMON-style housing and settlement that strengthen local identity, private houses of historical agricultural settlements and the residential style of old town houses in Kobe were studied.

INTEGRATED COMMUNITY PLANNING WHICH THE RESIDENTS CAN SHARE THE VALUE OF LIVING ENVIRONMENT

Because the community spirit depends on involvement of the residents, an integrated community planning in which they can share the value of living environment was proposed in order to avoid the isolated life seen in existing Japanese old “new-town”. For this, the following method was devised and practiced.

(a) Market research and formation of MAITAMON Club

In the beginning of April 2003, in order to identify the local needs of the concept of MITSUIKE Community Project, Takahito Saiki’s Office distributed a brochure and questionnaire to 45,000 neighbouring households. About 480 households expressed an interest. In August of the same year, 77 respondents attended a site inspection meeting of the former Maiko Golf Course to ensure the actual interest of the candidates. After that, the MAITAMON CLUB was formed to enable the candidates to receive information about the project and to attend public lectures and workshops concerning the project. At the same time, the official web site for the MAITAMON Project was launched. Currently, the total number of members has grown to about 1,600.

(b) Public lectures and workshops

To enhance the awareness of MAITAMON Club members to the living environment and the promotion of the communications between club members, public lectures and workshops have been held continuously at Kobe Design University. The basic subjects of those lectures and workshops are housing, community, and ecology. While the attendants have gained insight into practical town planning, they

have been able to improve their own skills and knowledge about living environment. Moreover, in open lectures and workshops, the attendants talked to the newcomers, and this contributed to improve all members' skill and knowledge. In addition, the open lectures and workshops are always recorded, and they are shown on the official web site. A newsletter is also distributed to all the members of the club.

(c) Group application and consecutive workshops for grouping

MITSUIKE Community Project consists of seven small community units divided on the basis of the Japanese traditional theory of "nearest neighbours". In 2/3 of each community, a system of group application was adopted to realize the unified community. In the remaining 1/3, a system of individual applications was used.

The workshops had been held in order to promote the formation of groups. Each attendant of the workshop made a choice of community depending on the environmental characteristics, and then found the nearest neighbours, and then had an exchange of ideas about the ideal home, community, and living environment. Each group was required to summarize the result of the exchange as a memorandum, and to submit it on application.

Through the continuous workshops, 15 groups were formed, and in the middle of December 2004, the selection of group applications took place. Next the selection of individual applications was performed. This had 412 applicants for 28 lots.

At the beginning, the system of group applications was supposed to be adopted in all community units of MITSUIKE Community Project. However, because UR is a semi-public organization and has the duty to make information about their issues freely available to Japanese people, UR made the decision to adopt a system of individual applications for the 1/3 of all community units. This led to too many applicants, and unfortunately some applicants who subscribed speculatively were selected, and other applicants who had eagerly participated in the public lectures and workshops were not selected. Although this result is very much regrettable, it offered a rehearsal for future residents that the successful candidates of the group applications accept the successful candidates for the individual applications. However, it is unfortunate that there were quite a few eager candidates who were disappointed.

(d) Community workshop

In preparation for being the residents in the near future, the successful candidates have the duty to participate in the community workshops held by UR and KDU every two months for about one year (from February 2005 to March 2006) until the properties are ready for delivery. The purpose of the community workshop is to discuss the construction agreement and the green space agreement and to promote communication between the future residents, while studying houses, streets, and natural environments in the public lectures.

In the 5th workshop in November 2005, the construction agreement and the green space agreement and the design guideline were prepared by the future residents, and submitted to the Kobe Municipal Office.

- **Parking, outside equipments**

The construction of a multi-level car parking tower is prohibited.

When building a carport, it should be in harmony with the surroundings.

Outside equipment should be invisible from the front road.

The instalment of vending machine is prohibited.

- **Signs**

The instalment of signboards on the roof is prohibited.

Signs, such as flags and banners, over the height of 2M, are prohibited.

Every signboard should be in harmony with the surroundings.

- **Open garden frontage**

The front wall must be set back more than 1M or 2 M from the road to keep an open garden frontage.

In the open front gardens, the construction of wall, fence and gate is prohibited.

The sidewall must be set back 1M from the boundaries.

- **Landscaping and trees**

The residents should plant trees and grasses in the green spaces and open front gardens.

The boundary should be kept open as much as possible, yet when installing the partitions for reason of security, hedges or transparent fences should be chosen. The height of the hedge or fences and their preservations should be agreed with neighbours.

The residents must offer a part of the front garden as a sidewalk. The sidewalk is finished with interlocking bricks and grasses.

Cars cannot be parked in the front garden.

In the parking lot or approach, the use of natural material is required in order to ensure the high quality landscape.

- **Preservation of green spaces**

The Common green spaces are preserved by all the residents, under supervision of a community self-governing body.

- **Design Guideline**

Since an agreement with all residents could not be reached, some items could not be included in the construction and green space agreements. Items which were agreed by 2/3 of residents were adopted as guidelines.

- **Sidewall**

The sidewall should be set back 2M from the boundaries.

- **Symbol tree**

Each resident should plant one tree within 1M from the boundary of the open front garden as a symbol tree.

- **Height of partition**

The height of hedges or fences on the boundaries should be lower than 1.5M.

- **Open space**

Each resident should keep 20% of flat space of the site from the front road including the open front garden as open space.

(e) Meetings and workshops for housing design

Simultaneously with the start of the community workshops, Takahito Saiki's Office began individual meetings to propose the basic housing design for each future resident. There are two main purposes of the meetings. First of all, currently, many Japanese people have the tendency to consider the prefabricated house as the standard housing design. Moreover, many housing designs appearing in Japanese technical magazines are to be built on flat and square-shaped lots of around 200 m². Those

kinds of housing designs are not suitable for the MITSUIKE Community Project where residents own lots of an average 700 m², and most of them wanted more customized houses. Secondly, if the future residents had discussions about the construction and green space agreements without any information and materials about the housing design for each of them, the discussions themselves would become impractical.

The basic housing plans proposed through the individual meetings offered a framework where each future resident involved an architect or a construction company. While the individual meetings are not mandatory for the future residents, 60 households out of 68 have the meetings.

Through the individual meetings, the needs and desires of each future resident for housing were identified, whilst agreeing basic housing plans by considering neighbours, communities, and environments. The communication between the future residents and members of Takahito Saiki's Office established a method of enhancing the awareness of people on community design and housing design. During construction and until the completion of new housing, it would be necessary to develop the awareness of architects and builders.

PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY-BASED MANAGEMENT SYSTEM TO SUSTAIN AND IMPROVE THE VALUE OF LIVING ENVIRONMENT

In order to sustain the value of living environment, and to make the residents feel comfortable, a community-based management system aiming at self-governance is necessary. For this, networking systems have been revised and implemented.

(a) Establishment of MITSUIKE Community self-governed committee, and community network by using information technology

In order to govern the construction and green space agreements, the establishment of MITSUIKE Community self-governed committee has been proposed. Currently, the representatives of each community unit are elected. The support of UR and Takahito Saiki's Office has been available to establish the organization.

In addition, a community network system using the information technology for the purpose of the promotion of the communication between residents and the accumulation of information concerning MITSUIKE Community Project has also been prepared.

Although the system was established with the support of KDU, MITSUIKE Community self-governed committee has taken its own initiatives. Currently, two residents of MITSUIKE are named as the staff of the community network system.

(b) MAITAMON Architectural Network and support of removal

MAITAMON Architectural Network is the organization which supports the cooperation of architects, builders, clients of MAITAMON Project. Currently, 33 architects and 9 builders who agreed on the concepts of MAITAMON Project are listed in the network.

Moreover, support and advice on when to sell the property and the choice of real estate companies has been offered. While many of the future residents of MITSUIKE Community Project will move from the existing old new-town constructed from 1960's to 80's, Takahito Saiki's office has proposed that they would provide their neighbours' properties with leasehold system, in order to make the lots of the old new-town more spacious.

(c) Ecological network and green network

On the campus of Kobe Design University, experiments of the ecological network aimed at ecological housing design, and a green network aimed at sharing skills and knowledge of greeneries have been set up. For the ecological network, a small cabin built with wood-burned boards for the outer walls, cellulose fibers for the insulation, and plant-oil paint for the finishing is displayed. The passage in front of the cabin is paved with interlocking blocks made from used tires. For the green network, easy-care grasses and grasses resistant to shade are laid in front of the cabin, experimentally. Moreover, greenery experts have been encouraged to acquire the skills and knowledge of planting and preservation of woods in the public lectures and workshops.

POSSIBILITIES OF GARDEN CITY

For “Garden City MAITAMON” MITSUIKE Community Project, the design of living environment with more spacious landscape surrounded by a lot of natural resources is proposed, and the design attracts people who have longed for this kind of place to live. In addition, the continuous public lectures and workshops can enlighten the future residents on the value of living environment, and contribute to the opportunities to realize a valued and sustainable community design.

However, there are some problems to be solved: housing design and community management.

For housing design, even though attractive town planning is proposed, if the quality of housing design would be lowered as time passes, the sustainability of the community would be lowered at the same time. Yet, many Japanese people have the tendency to choose a housing design like they would choose a motor vehicle or furniture. Japanese people must learn to appreciate that housing design is different from design of consumer goods.

Since the postwar constitution have guaranteed the individual property, many Japanese people who have been interested only in the maintenance of their own site, would find it difficult to participate in community management. Even though it would help to establish the sustainable community, people might find it a burden to be a member of a management committee,

When reconsidering “the design of living environment coexisting with nature” and “the establishment of the sustainable local community”, there are quite a few things to be learned in the Japanese historical living environments from the prewar years. The age group of participants of the public lectures and workshops ranges from 20’s to 80’s, but the middle aged had experienced themselves “housing based on the local culture and climate”, “collective habitation”, and “wisdom of coexistence”, in their youth. Therefore, their own experiences can attract and interest the younger generations.

The Garden City MAITAMON Project has been aimed at the design of living environment with specific values, while cooperating with the local old new towns.