

# **Planning Standards for better Townscape in Japanese Rural Cities?**

## **Planning Ordinances for Out of City Planning Area and Non-Zoning Area**

Miki Muraki, Kosuke Kunitani & Toshimitsu Kuno

### **Abstract**

The purposes of this paper is to examine how local councils can control developments, and keep and create better townscape under planning ordinance. From the analysis, detailed regulations, such as place of landmarks, natural resources or adjectives for townscape must be clarified, cooperation with citizens, and inter-section partnership should be developed, then control developments under the vision of area might be appropriate.

### **1. Introduction**

The City Planning System in Japan is based on the City Planning Areas; however, the designated City Planning Areas is addressed only 25% of the land area in the nation. The remainder of the land, outside of the City Planning Areas, is agricultural, forest, national parks and natural resources, which are controlled by a variety of departments and regulated by different laws. Sectionalism among departments at the local council levels remains; even decentralisation is progressed (Kawakami, 1999). Therefore, the construction is progressed even in outside of the City Planning Area, and neither limited number of local councils has land use strategy for whole the municipality, nor planning control is less existed (Wada, 1994).

On the other hand, great number of cities has planning ordinance in order to create better framework for planning standards, and controls the new developments for sustaining their own townscape. However, effectiveness of the planning ordinance to control new

developments, particularly rural areas, is unclear.

The purposes of this paper is to examine how local councils can control developments, and keep and create better townscape under planning ordinance. In this paper, we attempt to clarify the roles of local councils and recommend a more desirable framework for controlling townscape in Japanese rural cities.

### **2. Japanese Planning System and its Problems**

#### **2-1 Planning Areas and Development Control**

Currently there are 663 City Planning Areas impacting (2025 local councils). These City Planning Areas divided into two types: Divided City Planning Areas and Un-Divided City Planning Areas. Former is metropolitan areas such as Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya and is again divided into urbanisation promotion area with zoning regulations and urbanisation control area. Latter is cities with a population over a hundred thousand and has zoning areas and non-zoning areas. This paper particularly focused on the development control and visions within non-zoning area and out of City Planning Area. The problem is, small cities with un-divided planning areas, planning control is not enough particularly in non-zoning areas, because of limited number of planning staff.

#### **2-2 Vision of the Area**

The City Planning Act 1992 required entire city planning authorities to draw up comprehensive plans to 2025. The central government required two types of planning for the comprehensive plan: strategic planning of road, housing, land-use, and area planning. The citizen participation to the plan preparation is highly required, particularly for area planning (Ministry of Construction, 1992), as people can share the vision and materialise the visions in the future. Even though, historic cities, such as Kyoto and Kanazawa, or

areas where vernacular housing style remains, it is not hard to share the vision, and can sustain townscape under planning standards. However, rest of the areas, typical image of the city is hard to draw up, as our townscape is rapidly changing under the scrap & build culture.

As we mentioned earlier, the City Planning Area is limited, 46.9% of 525 local councils that have portions of City Planning Areas in their municipalities have so far drawn up their land use strategies for the whole of their council areas (Questionnaire survey by the Ministry of Construction in May 1998). Apparently, cooperation exists despite the sectionalism of the departments in the local councils, and comprehensive plan preparation has encouraged close relationship between departments at the local council levels. However, it is again, hard to cooperate with the other departments, and similar plans with different strategies are identified in the same local council.

Accordingly, rural councils with non-zoning areas or out of City Planning Areas have difficulties in controlling developments, while urban councils typically have number of staffs and zoning regulations entire municipality.

### 3. Development Activities in the Rural Area

To clarify the current development activities in the rural areas, we had questionnaire survey to 255 local councils either have out of City Planning Area and

Table 1 Development Activities in Rural Area

Development	No. of councils(no=119)	
Housing	67	56%
Retail	44	37%
Public Building	44	37%
Factory	37	31%
Road Construction	35	29%
Park	31	26%

non-zoning area and that have planning ordinance (15-26 Apr. 2002, collection rate:

47%). Even development is restricted within those areas, construction activities are unfortunately found. Table 1 shows the most common development activities in out of City Planning Areas and non-zoning areas in each local council. Housing construction is the largest, followed by public buildings, such as city halls, libraries and hospitals, as they required large sites. Not surprisingly, the most developments were caused change the use from agricultural lands (Table 2), as they are geographically flat and easy to develop.

Even Ministry of Construction reported that

Table 2 Area of Developments in Non-Zoning Area and Out of City Planning Area

	Non-Zoning Area(101)	Out of City Planning Area(60)
Change the Use from Agricultural Land	51(50%)	24(40%)
Along Trunk Road	33(33%)	16(27%)
next to Housing Area	33(33%)	11(18%)
Limited Developments Only	16(16%)	41(68%)
Change the Use from Woodland	28(28%)	28(47%)

the size of agricultural land to the other use was decreased; 27,270ha (6.7 acre) was still altered to the other use in 2000. In spite of development control under planning ordinances, development activities are not difficult in those areas.

Therefore, rural developments can be concentrated in agricultural lands, as there is a relationship between geographical advantages.

### 4. Planning Ordinances and their Visions

Most planning ordinances are enacted for better townscape; however, there are various types of objects. Here, we can classify the 92 ordinances into following three types:

- Type A: Maintaining agricultural and forest resources (32cases). Objects are preventing urban sprawl, agriculture and wood protection, coexistence with agriculture, wood and urban;
- Type B: Environmental protection (22 cases). Objects are rural environmental protection, maintaining historic interests

and resources, protecting national resources, and maintaining tourist areas:

- Type C: New townscape making (38cases). Objects are area identity, symbolic zone, and new townscape making.

Even out of City Planning Area and non-zoning area have less vision compare with zoning areas. Local councils with planning ordinance tend to have visions (Table 3), however, local councils belong to

Table 3 Vision of the Area by 3 Types

	with Vision	without Vision	Total
Type A	30	2	32
Type B	10	12	22
Type C	30	8	38
Total	70	22	92

Type B have less vision compare with the other types. As they are protecting natural resources, and do not intend to create new townscape.

As mentioned earlier, number of plans is prepared in the local council levels, and they have already drawn up their own visions, so that there is a close relationship between the other plans as shown in Table 4. 48% (out of 64) of local councils answered the close relationship between vision of the area and local council strategies, followed by comprehensive plan (35%), as the hierarchy of plans in the local council, the council strategy is in the highest position. Secondly, comprehensive plans, only cover City Planning Area, 31 local councils (out of 51) drew up vision entire municipality, beyond City Planning Area.

## 5. Development Control in Rural Area

For achieving objects, most

Table 4 Relationship of Vision of the Area between the Other Plans

Vision of the Area in Planning Ordinance	total	Local Council Strategy	Planning Ordinance by Prefecture	Green Master Plan	Compre-hensive Plan	National Landuse Strategy	etc.
Import the Vision	29	18	6	8	14	6	5
Export the Vision	15	9	0	1	6	5	1
Create the Vision & Vision is the Same	10	5	2	4	4	3	0

ordinances regulated following factors: colour (38%), advertisement and signboard (34%), shape of lands (24%) and height of

building (22%). However, the colour and advertisement are hard to control, particularly, nationally authorised companies, as the colour and the size of signboard are mostly controlled by headquarter and difficult for the negotiation. Table 5 shows number of councils, which has the most controversial regulations: signboard & advertisement and colour. We could not clarify the differences between types, however, local councils within Type C tend

Table 5 No. of Regulation for Signboard and Colour

	Signboard & Advertisement		Colour	
	Regulation	Non Regulation	Regulation	Non Regulation
Type A	7	15	8	14
Type B	13	25	14	24
Type C	14	18	15	17
Total	34	58	37	55

to have much regulations compare with the others. In this stage, current development pressure should be weak in Type C councils, and prepare for unforeseen developments.

Problems of development control by planning ordinance are shown in Table 6. Firstly, local councils pointed out the limited compulsory status, particularly ordinances without penal regulations, they are hard to direct better developments. The second largest issue is general consensus making; however, it is hard to build agreement without vision-less area such as agriculture and woodlands which we discussed earlier. These problems should highly concerned citizen's less cooperation. Moreover, the vision of the area is fundamental requirements for citizen's understanding and cooperation, accordingly, it should finally be concerned to development control.

Therefore, even in the agriculture or woodlands, local councils should develop image of the area at the early stage, cooperation with local people, and share the vision with them, is highly important.

Type A (no=32)	Limited Compulsory Status	Citizen Agreement	Vision Loss
	59%	50%	25%
Type B (no=22)	Limited Compulsory Status	No Guidelines	Against
	41%	23%	23%
Type C (no=38)	Limited Compulsory Status	Citizen Agreement	No
	53%	24%	24%

concentrated in the conservation areas. Even rest of the areas have own vision, there is a lack of

## 6. Evaluation of Planning Ordinance in Otaru City

### 6-1 Planning Ordinance

Because area based strategy is drawn up whole the municipality, we will analyse planning control in Otaru City, Hokkaido as a case study.

Otaru City enacted the planning ordinance in 1992, in order to prevent historic buildings and natural resources. The characteristics of the Ordinance, particularly vision of the area and its control are summarised as follows:

- Whole the area of municipality including non-zoning area divided into 8 zones, and each area has vision of the city;
- The vision of the area is explained by three factors: 1) townscape, consists of following factors, such as mountain, streetscape, street, hill, rock, waterfront and river, 2) concept of the area, 3) landmarks, such as park, tree, vista, public building, temple and shrine;
- Typical image of the area is explained by "adjective";
- For understanding the vision, figures, pictures and concept map are prepared.

### 6-2 Negotiations for better Townscape

Planning Ordinance in Otaru regulates the negotiation between applicants and local council. It is dedicated conservation areas, which form typical Otaru townscape. All the planning applications in the conservation areas should have negotiation 25 days before the submission, and large building applications within whole municipality, such as over 15m (35feet) in height or over 1000 square meters (1110 Sq. feet) projects should be notified.

Even they have visions of the area entire municipality, we could point out the following problems:

- Development control is highly

planning control under local council's discretion.

- There is a lack of cooperation between comprehensive plan. Plan preparation is progressed at the moment; however, area boundary is differently drawing up in the comprehensive plan. Accordingly, sectionalism of departments is identified.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper has focused particularly on factors of planning standard and their problems in Japan. The importance of planning standards in order to create better townscape are:

1. Tackling the problems of vision preparation, drawing up the strategy for whole municipality, including agriculture and woodlands is important. Therefore, detailed factors, such as landmarks or natural resources or adjectives for townscape must be clarified, cooperation with citizens.
2. Vision of the area can be functioned as the basis of development control. However, City Planning Area is limited, particularly in the rural cities, accordingly, inter-section cooperation should be developed and control the developments under the specific vision might be appropriate.

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