Invitation to the system of preservation districts for groups of historic buildings

People gather together and form towns; towns acquire a culture.

Agency for Cultural Affairs
Villages and towns that are rich in character make up the Japanese culture, which we should inherit to the next generation.

Mountainsides, riversides, basins and seashores, Japanese people have built villages and towns at various locations in the Japanese islands along the north-south direction. The southern islands have open houses protected by windbreak forests and stone retaining walls. Areas with high snow have houses of Gassho-Style (hatched gable roof). Towns have lines of Machiya (tradesmen's houses) with beautiful and fire Koshi-nago (windows of wooden latticework). Villages have many farmer houses with large, thatched roofs. People improved their life in their environment. From one generation to another, they refined the culture of their daily life. While each building had its own characteristics, the buildings harmonized with the other buildings.

In the past 40 years, villages and towns have changed drastically. Many historic buildings and neighborhoods are torn down.

Many residents and civil groups started preservation movements all over Japan in the early 1970s, which caused local public bodies to establish their own preservation measures, which produced favorable results. This kind of valuable scheme should be promulgated in the future.

Thus, "the system of preservation districts for groups of historic buildings" was established in order to support such preservation activities. This system aims at preserving the historic landscapes of villages and towns, improving the historic landscapes as the "oody" place for living, and for inheriting them to the next generation with the assistance of the national government.

Sixty-two preservation districts all over Japan:
More preservation districts are under consideration

The system of preservation districts for groups of historic buildings (hereinafter referred to as "preservation districts") started in 1975. Since then, many cities, towns and villages which were rich in history and culture, have designated preservation districts.

In the more than 20 years since the introduction of the system, the number of preservation districts reached 64 (as for "the important preservation districts for groups of historic buildings"); 61 as of July 2004.

The whole historic landscape, particularly historic buildings, have been preserved and improved, which have become essential for local activation while making use of historic characteristics.

System: carried out by municipalities

In the system of preservation districts, municipalities, taking opinions of community, designate preservation districts. Thus, municipalities are the center figures in promoting preservation projects, in terms of giving permission for the alteration of the present state, repairs and enhancement within preservation districts.

Classification of Important Preservation Districts for Groups of Historic Buildings

The national government classifies important preservation districts (or groups of historic buildings) after receiving applications submitted by municipalities. Within the important preservation districts for groups of historic buildings, the national government gives financial assistance and technical instruction, with To, Do, Fu, or Ken (Prefectures), to the preservation projects executed by the municipalities.

Improving daily life while preserving historic landscapes

Within preservation districts, municipalities grant subsidies for the repair of damaged historic buildings, the enhancement of existing non-historic, newly built or rebuilt buildings; cover the expenses of the exterior and fundamental structure. The municipalities execute projects, which refresh or enhance the daily life of the residents while preserving the historic landscape, and facilitate the acquisition of fire prevention equipment for the improvement of the disaster prevention function of preservation districts. Favorable tax incentives, such as the municipal property tax, is improving.

Municipalities establish and promote their own plans, such as repairs and enhancements, ensuring the safety of preservation districts and the improvement of the environs. On the other hand, the national government and Prefectures provide instructions to the municipalities by the formulation of plans and guidelines for their execution, and they support them with a variety of favorable treatments.
Let's review the local history and culture

The classification standard of important preservation districts for groups of historic buildings:

These which make up preservation districts for groups of historic buildings whose designs are especially high value.
(1) Preservation districts for groups of historic buildings whose original state is well preserved.
(2) Preservation districts for groups of historic buildings and their environments which notably show local characteristics.

Exemplifiers classified of Important Preservation Districts for Groups of Historic Buildings.
Outline of the System of Preservation Districts for Groups of Historic Buildings

Flow chart of Preservation Districts for Groups of Historic Buildings

Preparation study for preservation district

Establishment of Regulation

Establishment of the Advisory Council

Determination of the Preservation Plan

Outside of the City Planning Area and Quasi-city Planning Area
- [Board of Education]
- Determination in accordance with the Regulation

Inside of the City Planning Area and Quasi-city Planning Area
- [City, Town, Village]
- Determination in accordance with the City Planning Act

Determination and Announcement of the Preservation Plan (Board of Education)
- Determination of the Preservation Master Plan
- Designation of the Historic Buildings
- Preservation Maintenance Plan for the Historic Buildings
- Environmental Maintenance Plan of Preservation District

Repair, Enhancement, Disaster Prevention

Flow chart of Important Preservation Districts for Groups of Historic Buildings

Application filed by the municipality to the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

Important Preservation Districts for Groups of Historic Buildings

Repair, Enhancement, Disaster Prevention

Agency for Cultural Affairs
Prefectural Board of Education

Grant a Subsidy

Technical Guidance

The Council for Cultural Affairs
Consultation and Report of the Classification

Grant a Subsidy
Tax Incentive

National tax
(1) 30% inheritance tax deduction for assessed values within preservation districts for groups of historic buildings.
(2) No land value tax is imposed on land within preservation districts for groups of historic buildings.

Municipality tax
(1) No fixed assets tax is imposed on listed historic buildings within important preservation districts for groups of historic buildings.
(2) The fixed assets tax for land on which are located listed historic buildings that are within important preservation districts for groups of historic buildings is reduced to within one half of the property's taxable value. The fixed assets tax for land for buildings other than listed historic buildings is also reduced in accordance with the particular conditions within the municipalities.

Long-term preservation projects for the rebirth of towns and villages

After enduring wind and snow, many of the buildings which comprise preservation districts for groups of historic buildings are dilapidated and are in need of immediate repairs. Such buildings that are not in harmony with the characteristics of the preservation districts should be enhanced so that they become harmonious with the historic landscape.

Disaster prevention facilities are essential to the preservation of villages and towns

The preservation districts which are mostly composed of wooden buildings need disaster prevention measures. Many preservation districts are improving disaster prevention device, such as improvement of fire prevention facilities and the reinforcement of stone walls which are in need of repair, while at the same time considering the historic landscape. They also practice disaster prevention training periodically.
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