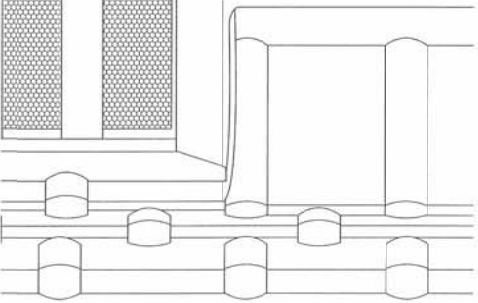
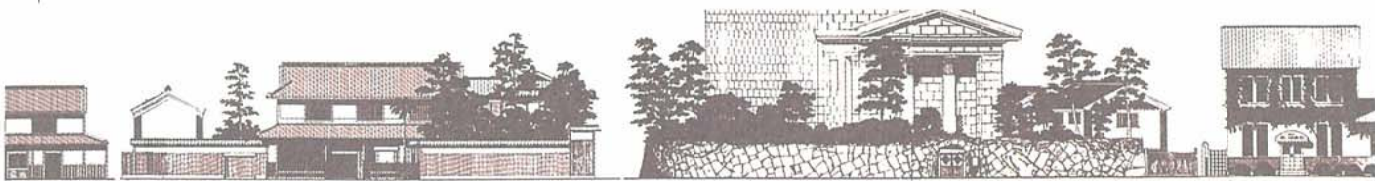
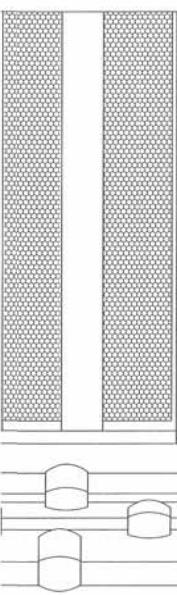


**Invitation to the system
of preservation districts
for groups of historic buildings**



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





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 on 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 (thatched gable roof). Towns have lines of Machiya (tradesmen's houses) with beautiful and fine Koshi-mado (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 1970's, which caused local public bodies to establish their own preservation measures, which produced favorable results. This kind of valuable scheme should be promoted 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 "today" place for living, and for inheriting them to the next generation with the assistance of the national government.



Illustrations by Kenzo SAKASHITA



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 central 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 for 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 landscapes, and facilitate the acquisition of fire prevention equipment for the improvement of the disaster prevention function of preservation districts. Favorable tax incentive, such as the municipal property tax, is improving.

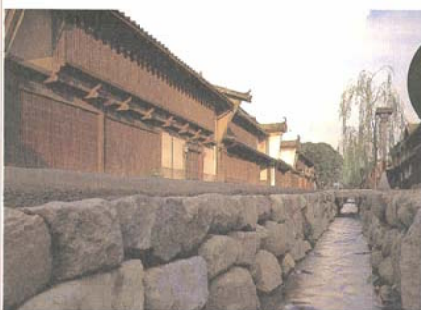
Municipalities establish and promote their own plans, such as repairs and enhancements, ensuring the safety of preservation districts and the improvement of the environs. On the other hand, the national government and Prefectures provide instructions to the municipalities by the formulation of plans 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

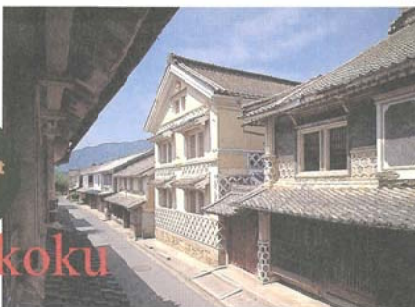
Those which make up preservation districts for groups of historic buildings fall under one of the following.

- (1) Preservation districts for groups of historic buildings whose designs are of especially high value.
- (2) Preservation districts for groups of historic buildings and subdivision, whose original state is well preserved.
- (3) Preservation districts for groups of historic buildings and the environs which noticeably show local characteristics.



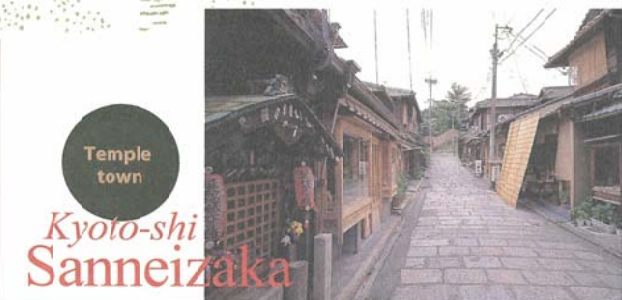
Post town,
Sericulture
manuf.

Toubu-machi
Unno-juku



Merchant
town

Uchiko-cho
Yokaichi-gokoku



Temple
town

Kyoto-shi
Sanneizaka

Samurai
quarter

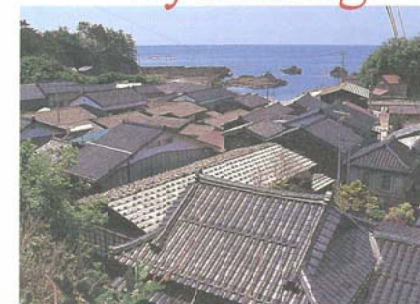
Chiran-cho
Chiran



Exemplifications classified of
Important Preservation Districts for
Groups of Historic Buildings.

Port town

Ogi-machi
Syukunegi



Merchant
town

Sawara-shi
Sawara



Island
village

Taketomi-cho
Taketomi-jima

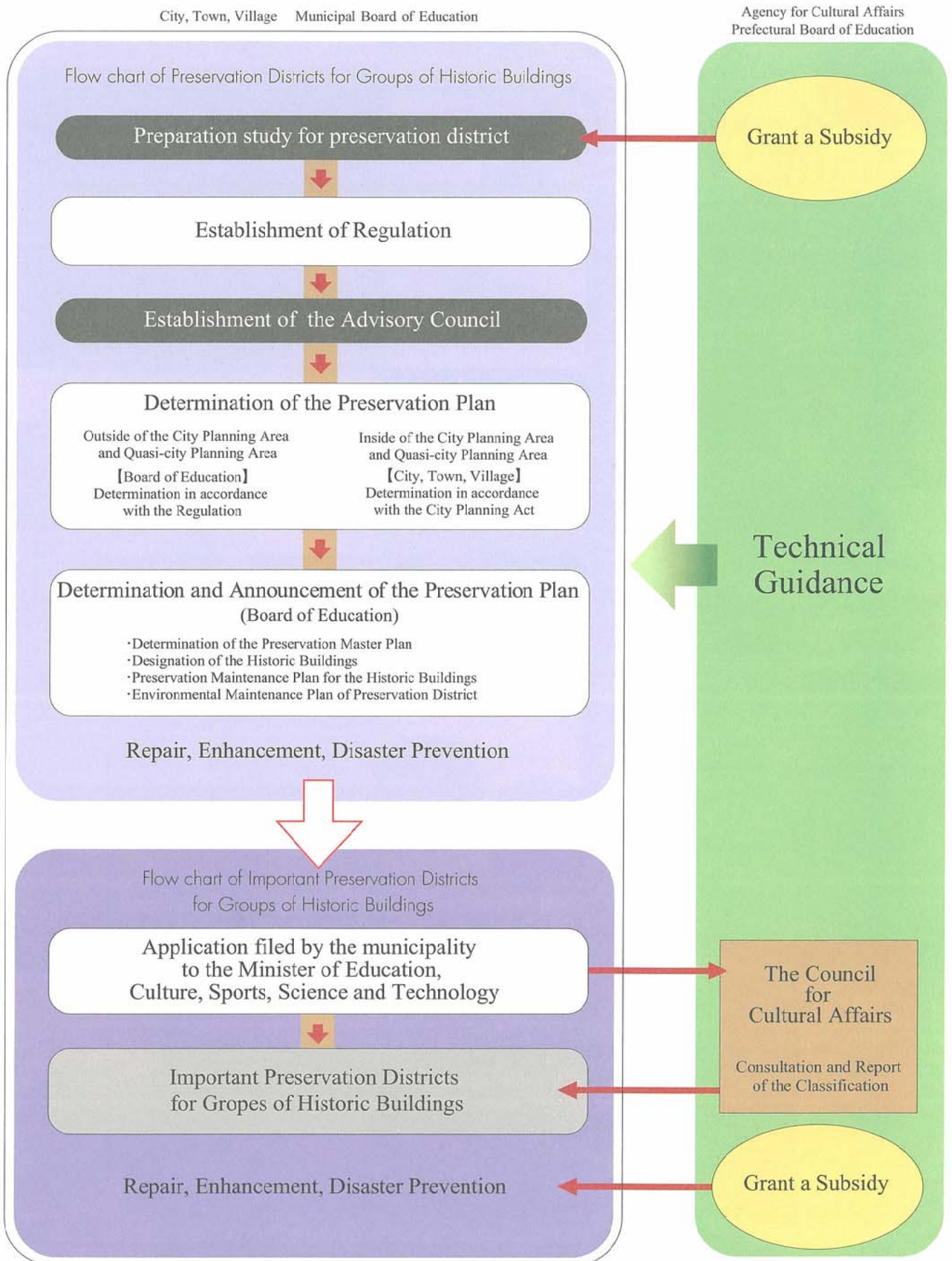


Temple
town

Tondabayashi-shi
Tondabayashi



Outline of the System of Preservation Districts for Groups of Historic Buildings



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.



Repair of a historic building (Machiya) at Minamimachi, Waki-machi



Enhancement of a building other than the historic buildings at Mimitsu, Hyuga-shi



Repair of a historic building (vernacular house with thatched roof) at Kita, Miyama-cho

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.

Training for prevention of disasters at Ouchijuku, Shimogo-machi



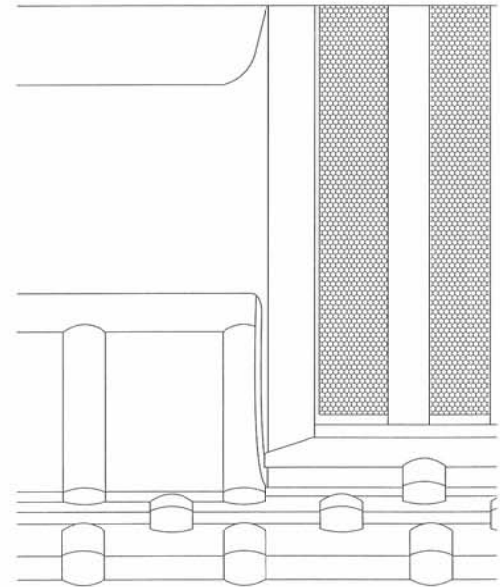
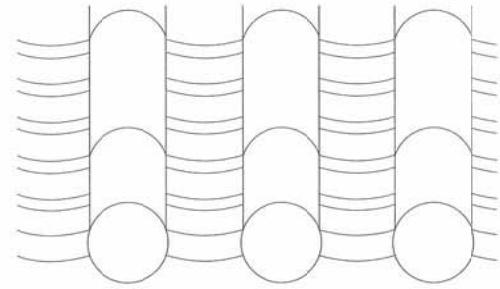
Facilitating fire prevention equipment at Sanmachi, Takayama-shi



Facilitating a water tank for fire protection at Omoriginzan, Oda-shi



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



Architecture and Other Structure Division
Cultural Properties Department,
The Agency for Cultural Affairs
Government of Japan

100-8959
2-5-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan
T:81-3-6734-2794 F:81-3-6734-3823

