

An Overview of “Streetscape Planning Approach – Towards Urban and Regional Planning in a Matured Age– ”

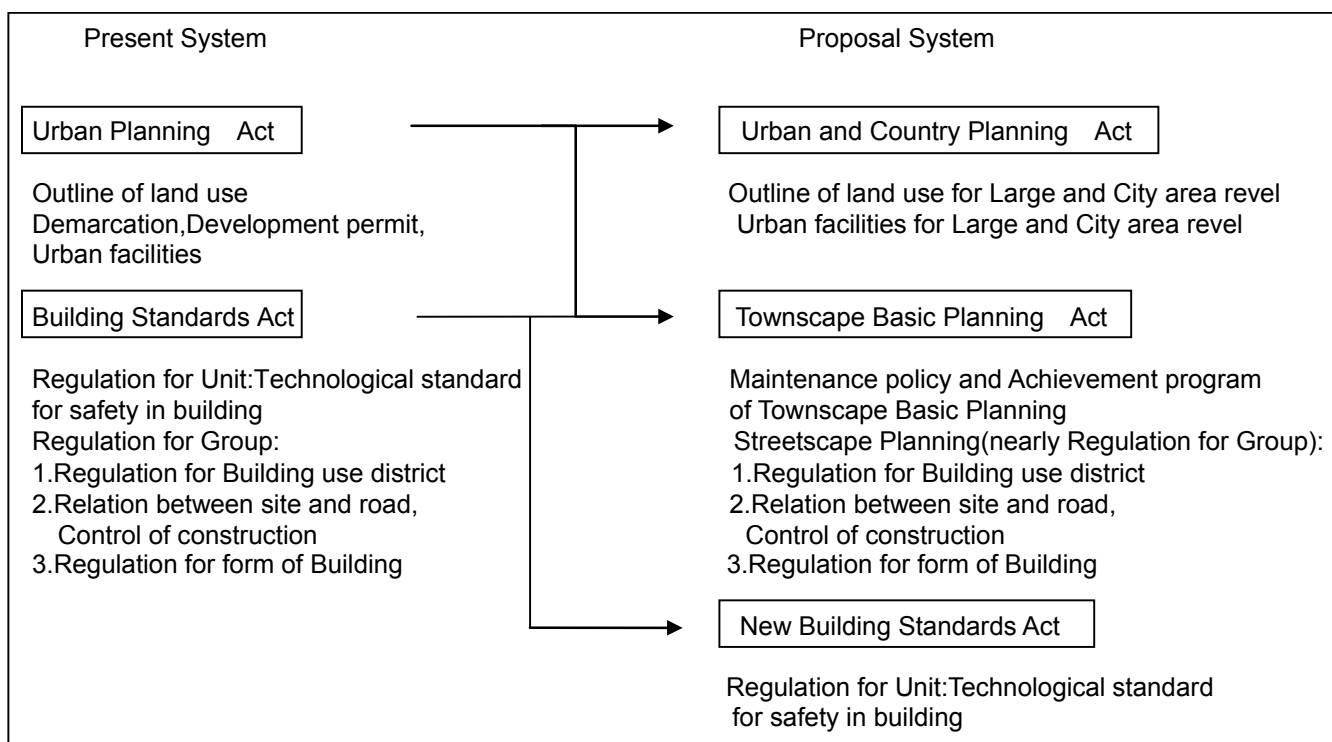
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In Japanese cities where there is a mixture of small to medium sized building lots along side large-scale lots, it is difficult to realize the formation of orderly urban space through the application of separate building regulations for each individual site. On the other hand, it is also unrealistic to expect all urban development to be undertaken in the form of large-scale projects. That said, there is also the argument that the pleasantness of a city is created through the linking of small to medium sized architectural structures. No matter how this urban space is formed, it is the common opinion of this committee that establishing rules geared towards the formation of orderly streetscapes is a pressing issue.

However, in discussions concerning the establishment of these kinds of rules difficulties are erupting from all corners, these include problems such as individual municipalities’ ideologies concerning the nature of urban planning, issues regarding city culture, the extensive societal and economic challenges surrounding urban planning, legal issues, and issues related to the true state of government structure. Over a period of many years this committee has engaged in countless discussions in regard to these problems.

Two major events occurred during the process of compiling this report. One of those was that Japan at last legally recognized scenic value and introduced the Landscape Act. And naturally, the administrative act concerning landscaping is accompanied by discretionary conduct otherwise known as authorization. However, the system concerning building height and capacity which has the most profound relationship with landscaping was left unchanged as a verification procedure, leading to unavoidable confusion at the job site. As noted in this report, amendments to the aggregated regulations of the City Planning and Building Standards Acts must be carried out.

(Taken from the Introduction)



From Problems Posed

Basic Stance for the Streetscape Planning Act

1. Fundamentals of the Proposal

- The aim of enacting this law is to regenerate the beautiful and traditional streetscapes and agricultural communities that existed in Japan prior to modernization through density and space that supports modern day sensibilities and present day technologies. This scenery which has been destroyed over the past 50 years will be regenerated over the next 50 years.
- A portion of the current City Planning Act will be integrated with the collective structure regulations of the Building Standards Act resulting in the creation of the Streetscape Planning Act. Technical standards for standalone structures in the Building Standards Act will remain as they are currently organized.
- This will be established as a national law, however, formulation and administration of substantive standards will be entrusted to local area governments.
- New building construction and renovation and maintenance of current structures, to the extent possible, will be carried out according to local area standards.

2. Basic Stance

- The principle of decentralization will be followed to the maximum possible limit. To the extent allowed by the constitution, urban planning will be undertaken by municipal governments.
- Individuals and corporations who carry out the actual work will be able to cooperatively participate in the urban planning process. Public constraints (regulations, standards, processes, responsibilities, etc) will be organized, simplified and rationalized.
- Citizen participation and information disclosure will be fundamental principles. Furthermore, urban and rural planning will not proceed without first establishing a relationship of mutual trust between political and administrative leadership and neutral experts through active and continuous involvement.

3. Addition of New and Essential Rules for Streetscape Formation

- Direct Sunlight: When taking an entire town into consideration the current direct sunlight regulations are meaningless, similar to civil arbitration provisions for adjoining properties. In residential areas it should be an issue whether or not a property can receive direct sunlight, and one result of a town's ongoing development should be the amendment of criteria so that definitive direct sunlight standards can be observed.
- Visual Range: In the planning of residential use building groups, necessary consideration should be given to the visual range attainable from windows, in particular from the main living room window. It is necessary to establish a standard for the visual range at which roads, parks, courtyards etc intervene. This will aid in ensuring sunlight and ventilation.
- Ensuring Public and Cooperative Space: Hereafter, realizing the creation of public parks which accompany land enhancements will be difficult. As a result it is necessary to promote the maintenance of open spaces within privately held properties and public spaces within buildings.

Taken from Reference 2, Basic Stance in Regard to Urban Planning

Publicness of Urban Planning – Legal Basis for Streetscape Planning–

- The intention here is not to have a big, abstract discussion about publicness. Rather, we will organize the legal issues to the necessary extent, so that the characteristics of the “streetscape plan” in the new urban planning proposal can be properly understood.

1) Public Diversification and Urban Planning

Urban planning and publicness, classical publicness, discussion will be organized into the two categories of national and regional publicness.

2) Principle of Future Urban Planning and Soft Publicness

Classification of hard and soft publicness, possibility for a category called (intermediary public value “soft publicness”), organizes arguments regarding the necessity of a system for maintaining public value in public and private intermediary domains

3) Intermediary Public Debate and Streetscape Planning