

City Planning Using Historic Cultural Heritages

³/₄World Cultural Heritage Himeji Castle as a Core³/₄

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Abstract: The number of visitors to Himeji Castle has been rapidly increasing since around three years ago. The number of foreign visitors, in particular, is increasing by about 30,000 each year; Himeji City is listed as a “City Abounding in Foreigners” by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

In December, Himeji Castle will mark its 15th anniversary since being designated a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage. Since this designation, Himeji City has been committed to various projects—not only maintenance of the castle, but also human resources development—in order to conserve and leave this precious asset to the next generation. In March, the City drew up “Master Plan for the Improvement of the Himeji Castle Special Historic Site” as a grand design of the City living with Himeji Castle. This vision targets the Himeji Castle site, which consists of the core zone of the World Cultural Heritage—a national special historic site with an area of 107 hectares—and the buffer zone, with an area of 143 hectares. The objective of the vision is to conserve Himeji Castle, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage, and leave it to the next generation, while also improving it as an international center of tourist attractions.

The vision is based on the concept of “Creating a castle city suited to a World Cultural Heritage, conserving its history and culture and passing them down to the next generation.” In the vision, the entire area is divided into four areas: inner zone, middle zone and exterior zone, like a castle in the Edo period (1603-1867), and buffer zone. The ideal future image for each zone is shown and policy is established regarding conservation/management, improvement, usage etc.

On the basis of this fundamental vision, Himeji City will establish a concrete plan for conservation/management and improvement, with the aim of creating an “International exchange city of history and culture,” using this special historic site and its surroundings as the core of the project, for building an attractive city where history harmonizes well with culture.

I. Introduction

According to a survey of visitors to Himeji City in fiscal 2007, the number of visitors to the main donjon of Himeji Castle totaled 1.023 million. Exceeding one million for the first time in 14 years, the number surpassed the record set in fiscal 1993, when the castle was registered as a World Heritage site and received 1.019 million visitors.

Visitors to the Himeji Castle donjon have been increasing sharply in number over the past three years. Notably, overseas tourist visits have been increasing by about 30,000 annually, reaching 161,000 in fiscal 2007 and accounting for 15.7% of all donjon visitors. This implies a growth of about 100,000 over the four years since fiscal 2003, when the first count of overseas visitors recorded 65,000 visitors.

Reasons stated for the increase in overseas visitors include: (1) the government’s Visit Japan Campaign; (2) attraction activities targeting overseas agents; and (3) the three-star rating awarded by Michelin in its Japan travel guide published last year. However, the main reason is presumed to be the growing economic power of East Asia, whose tourists have comprised 70% of all overseas visitors to Japan in recent years; it is also because of the value of the yen, which has been weak against the euro and relatively undervalued against the dollar.

The Michelin guide introduces Himeji Castle as a three-star site that should not be missed in Japan. Other recommendations include such cities as Kyoto and Nara, distinctive Japanese architectural structures such as Itsukushima Shrine, and Japanese gardens such as Kenrokuen and Korakuen. This suggests a high level of overseas tourist interest in the history and cultural traditions of Japan.

For overseas tourists, who are showing a remarkable increase, it is clear that their choice of destination is greatly influenced by whether or not the site is registered as a World Heritage site. This aspect is also reflected in the fact that almost all locales with a World Heritage site are among the 36 domestic “areas crowded with foreigners” listed by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

II. World Heritage Registration and Tourism

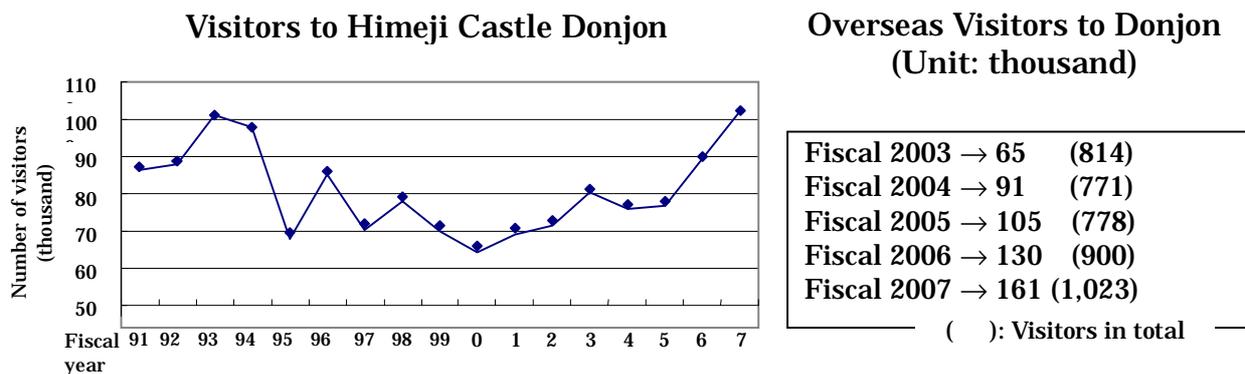
Himeji Castle was registered as Japan’s first World Cultural Heritage in December 1993, along with Horyuji Temple.

The reasons for registration were because: (1) Himeji Castle is a symbol of the “wooden culture” that is unique to Japan; (2) it is the most outstanding structure throughout the history of Japanese castellation, having been completed in the early Edo period, when fortification technology was at its peak of advancement; (3) its original structure at the time of completion remains almost entirely intact; and (4) efforts to maintain, preserve and pass down the castle site were highly valued.

The World Heritage registration boosted the number of donjon visitors from 0.88 to 1.02 million, which became 0.98 million in the following fiscal year. These figures show that visitors increased by more than 0.1 million after registration. Against the backdrop of poor domestic knowledge regarding the World Heritage concept (Japan became a state party to the World Heritage Convention in 1992), a variety of registration commemoration events were held around Himeji Castle in order to attract visitors by promoting “Himeji Castle as a World Cultural Heritage site”; such efforts are considered to have been the driving force for the increase in donjon visitors.

Visitors decreased drastically to 0.69 million in 1995 because of the Great Hanshin Earthquake, and thereafter remained between 0.7 and 0.8 million — even less than before registration — until fiscal 2005. These figures suggest that World Heritage registration itself is not enough to attract visitors.

Although many municipalities in Japan seek to have a World Heritage site, expecting to benefit from what is called the World Heritage registration effect, registration alone does not guarantee an increase in tourism. Such an increase results from various projects, including environmental arrangements toward registration, creation of a mechanism for preserving and passing down the heritage and supplying information through events and other measures, all implemented with the aim of improving facilities as well as contents/services, in order to achieve registration. Such efforts should continue even after registration.



III. Major Approaches since World Heritage Registration

1. Improvement Programs

- (1) Building conservation and repair project
Based on this repair project (1994 to 2022), the castle buildings are being repaired in turn, each year.
- (2) Installation of disaster-prevention equipment
All architectural structures were equipped with sprinklers, and surveillance cameras were installed inside the castle.
- (3) Dredging, cleanup and bank protection for moats
- (4) Development of Karoyashiki Ato Park and Sakuramon Bridge
- (5) Urban redevelopment project (establishment of Egret Himeji)
- (6) “Street Work in Historic Areas” project
Some of the streets within the area were improved to match the landscape.
- (7) Installation of guideboards in foreign languages

2. Regulations

- (1) Enactment of the Outdoor Advertising Regulation (1996)
Advertisements are regulated in consideration of historic streets and castle.
- (2) Enactment of the Ordinance to Make Himeji a Beautiful, Safe and Comfortable City (1996)
- (3) Revision of the Cityscape Guide Plan for Himeji Castle and Surrounding Areas (2005)

The original plan, compiled in 1989 as a guideline for comprehensive and systematic landscape creation in the periphery of Himeji Castle as the symbol zone of Himeji City, served as the basis for determining the buffer zone for a World Heritage site. The plan underwent revision upon World Heritage registration and enactment of the Landscape Act.

- (4) Designation of Nakabori-dori Street as an urban landscape creation area (1993)

Guidelines were established regarding building height, color and design, taking into account the scenic view of Himeji Castle.

3. Enlightenment

- (1) Preparation of brochures in foreign languages (four languages)
- (2) Production of Himeji Castle promotion video (six languages)
- (3) Compilation of the “*Himeji Oshiro Monogatari* (Himeji Castle Story)” textbook (1995)

This educational material for children is distributed to all fourth-graders annually (approx. 5,800 pupils in fiscal 2008).

4. Volunteer Activities

- (1) Cleanup activities by elementary, junior high and high school students
- (2) Staff enhancement for volunteer guides speaking foreign languages

5. Framework for Cooperation with Residents

Himeji Otemae-dori Machizukuri Kyogikai (Himeji Otemae Street Community Development Council) was established (1999).

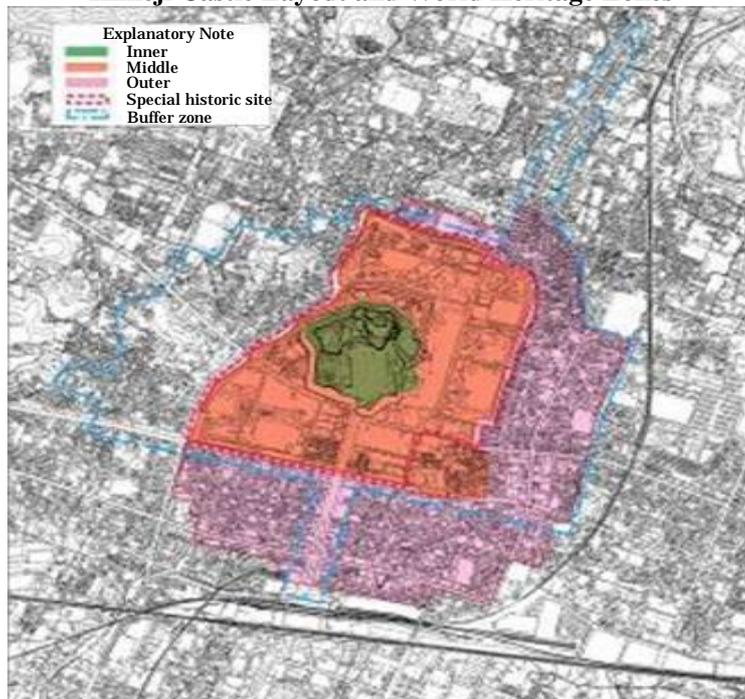
6. Approaches to Handing Down of Conservation Techniques

Various activities were carried out, including a hands-on seminar of castle wall repair techniques.

IV. Master Plan for Himeji Castle

Himeji Castle will mark the 15th anniversary of its World Heritage registration in December this year. In connection with this, in March 2008 the Himeji municipal government formulated a “**Master Plan for the Himeji Castle Special History Site**” to present the government’s future vision, as well as its fundamental policy of preservation, management and improvement, for the 107-hectare special historic site as the core zone of the World Heritage Site, as well as for its 143-hectare buffer zone.

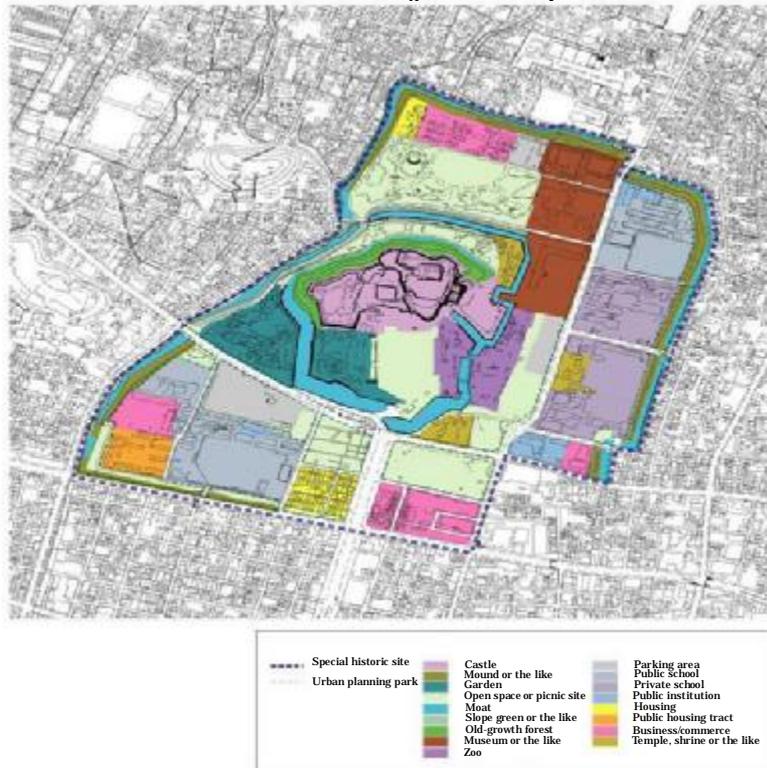
Himeji Castle Layout and World Heritage Zones



Old castle area (special historic site): 233 hectares
World Heritage core zone: 107 hectares
World Heritage buffer zone: 143 hectares

Current Land Use for Himeji Castle Special Historic Site (107 hectares)

Current Land Use for Himeji Castle Special Historic Site



1. Objectives of Master Plan for the Himeji Castle Special Historic Site

The Master Plan was formulated by updating the 1986 Master Plan for Improving the Himeji Castle Special Historic Site, taking into account the World Heritage registration of Himeji Castle, as well as various social and economic changes. Revised mainly in regard to the points listed below, the new Master Plan aims to present a **“grand design for the city where people live with Himeji Castle”** and serves as basic guidelines for preserving and passing down “Himeji Castle as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage,” and also for preserving, managing, improving and guiding the core/buffer zones as a base for international tourism.

Ÿ Future image of the Himeji Castle site deserving of its World Cultural Heritage

Ÿ Land use program for the future

Ÿ Maintenance and restoration programs for buildings and stone walls

Ÿ Use and improvement of historic landscape

2. Future Image of the Entire Historic Site

Under the concept of **“a castle city with a World Cultural Heritage that preserves and transmits its history and culture,”** the municipal government will promote the preservation, restoration and display of historic buildings and remains, with full regard for the facts. In the middle enclosure of the castle, learning functions will be strengthened to enhance the dissemination of knowledge, explain displayed materials and offer greater convenience to visitors.

Spaces with a historic and cultural atmosphere will be created to enable visitors from around the world to observe a real pre-modern Japanese castle and learn and experience unique Japanese culture, and to enhance residents’ pride in and attachment to the city, and improve their quality of life.

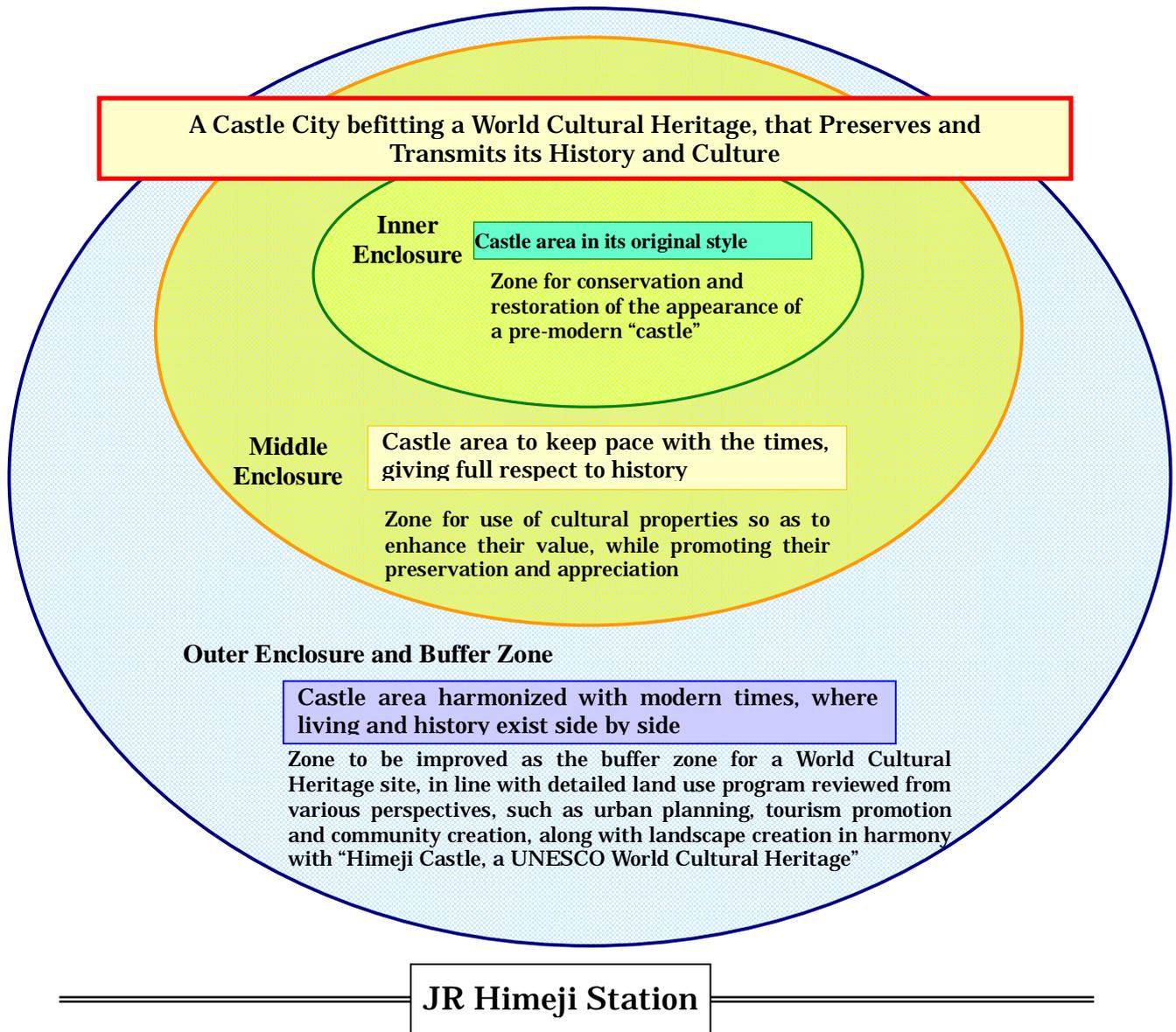
(1) Zoning

The special historic site, registered as a core zone of the World Heritage site, has been divided into “Inner Enclosure” and “Middle Enclosure,” both of which are parts of the castle from the Edo period. At

the same time, the “Outer Enclosure and Buffer Zone” have been specified from the standpoint of peripheral landscape conservation, although these areas are not designated a historic site. The municipal government has determined future images of the respective zones, and has announced the “basic policy of conservation, management and improvement,” as well as the “basic policy for use,” for their realization.

(2) Future Images and Basic Concepts of Conservation, Management and Improvement for the Respective Zones

Basic Concept and Image of Improvement/Conservation of the Three Zones



(3) Future Images of Respective Zones

- Inner Enclosure

In parallel with the conservation of existing building structures, the remains of the castle will be restored in accordance with historical facts.

- Conservation and repair of the existing architectural structures

- n Restoration of such sites as Sannomaru Hiroba (tertiary bailey square) and Sannomaru Oji (tertiary bailey boulevard)
- n Restoration of the inner moat
- n Use of Osakuji-sho Demaru (detached bailey for construction bureau), which is to be restored
- n Restoration of buildings and remains

, Middle Enclosure

In the middle enclosure, which used to have old samurai residences, remains will be restored and displayed while old streets will be used. Land use here will be pursued in harmony with the donjons and other structures within the inner enclosure, and with the historic landscape created thereby.

The municipal government will provide visitors from around the world with opportunities to observe and learn about Himeji Castle, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage, while also contributing to higher quality of life for residents.

- n Restoration of buildings and remains
- n Harmonization with historic landscape
- n Preservation of pre-modern remains and heritages of modern times
- n Ensuring easy touring of the premises
- n Maintenance of and guidance to facilities within the middle enclosure
- n Improvement of public institutions within the middle enclosure
- n Rearrangement and improvement of parking facilities
- n Expansion of areas designated special historic sites

f Outer Enclosure and Buffer Zone

The outer enclosure and periphery, which used to have town houses, temples and shrines, have been designated the buffer zone for the World Heritage site, despite their being outside the special historic site.

Since these areas currently form an urban zone with business districts and residential quarters, considerable time will be required in creating a landscape matched with Himeji Castle. Land use should be promoted by considering such other plans as the “Himeji Inner-City Area Development Plan” as well as “Landscape Planning.”

As for the buffer zone, its use should be pursued with the World Heritage site in mind, including efforts of landscape preservation, to ensure a fine view of the core zone.

- n Road maintenance and improvement in the outer enclosure
- n Conservation and use of green zones
- n Conservation and use of historic streets
- n Ensuring open spaces and viewing spots
- n Display of remains
- n Expansion of the buffer zone

3. Basic Policy of Preservation, Management and Improvement

(1) Comprehensive System Development

A cross-sectional organization consisting of interested departments, such as those in charge of cultural properties, urban development and road improvement, will conduct a thorough study and establish a framework for integrated implementation.

(2) Basic Policy of Improvement

- Systematic excavation and research
- , Adherence to the truth; restoration according to basic research results
- f Display of remains; establishment of facilities for displaying cultural properties
- „ Use of moats and rivers to create landscapes with water and greenery, and to enrich pleasant spaces with a water-accessible environment.

(3) Basic Policy of Management

- Formulation of an appropriate preservation/management program for land use and facility site location
- , Research of historic building structures
- f Survey and maintenance of trees in the special historic site
- „ Identification and evaluation of heritages of modern times

(4) Basic Policy of Landscaping

- Landscape creation in the buffer zone
- , Ensuring a good distant view

ƒ Securing viewing spots

4. Basic Policy of Use

(1) Advance Improvements to Facilitate Use

Various improvements will be made to enhance castle tour courses, public institutions and explanation/exhibition facilities, so that visitors from home and abroad will stay longer and fully recognize the appeal of a “genuine castle.”

(2) Promotion of Cultural Tourism

Against the backdrop of dramatic escalation of the impact of tourism on cultural heritage, the municipal government will promote “cultural tourism” that enables visitors to experience the history and culture of the region. The underlying idea is the basic concept of the International Cultural Tourism Charter, which stresses the importance of management in making heritage emotively accessible so that visitors can understand its significance and value, since protection alone cannot help preserve heritage.

On the basis of the idea that conservation of donjons and other building structures will boost tourism, the municipal government will seek the ideal form of tourism, in which the exposure and use of cultural assets bring about positive effects on urban development, and as a result attract people from outside the area, while enabling the coexistence of local residents and visitors.

(3) Development of Castle Tour Routes and Improvement of Explanations/Exhibitions

The adoption of universal design in consideration of people-friendliness, as well as the standardization of design for signposts and guideboards, will be studied to make citizens and tourists more familiar with cultural properties.

Efforts will be undertaken to establish themed tour routes, improve rest houses and other roadside facilities, train local residents as volunteer guides to introduce cultural properties, and enhance the quantity and quality of guideboards.

In response to overseas tourists, who have been growing in number year by year, more signposts in foreign languages and guides will be provided.

(4) Cultural Property Preservation and Community Development through Citizen Participation

In recent years, autonomous “community development” activities have been carried out by neighborhood communities in various aspects. Most such activities are themed on the history or culture of the region.

Local residents take pride in their history and culture, which are fruits of people’s lives, and serve as the basis of attachment to the community. Conserving, handing down and further using historical heritage as an identity of a particular region increases the togetherness of the local residents, while enhancing the appeal and vitality of the region.

Since Himeji Castle is representative of Himeji residents as a whole, its improvement should be pursued with a view to conducting “town development” with the participation of residents, by studying how the municipal government can cooperate with residents.

The “Restoration Project for the Main Donjon of Himeji Castle,” scheduled to be launched in fiscal 2009, will serve as a test of these approaches.

V. Toward the Future

The maturing of society has brought about opportunities to reconsider the value of cultural properties and traditional cultures. Even on sightseeing trips, the main purpose in recent years has been to observe the history or cultural properties of a region, and to experience its cultural traditions. Tours to cultural properties are successful everywhere, and attract people of a broad generational range, from young adults to seniors, reflecting the growing interest of the entire society.

This trend, to seek the riches in history, culture and other elements that provide spiritual wealth, appears to be growing even further. Such riches are also what overseas tourists expect from their visits to Japan. It is therefore important to promote “cultural tourism,” in terms of both facilities and services.

Heritage, as a core in developing an attractive city of rich In keeping with the concept described in this document, the municipal government should create an improvement master plan that contains concrete plans for conservation, management, improvement and utilization, as well as land use restrictions and inducement for the buffer zone. Various approaches should then be taken toward making Himeji a “city of international exchange with a historic and cultured atmosphere” by using Himeji Castle, a UNESCO World Cultural history and culture.