

ABOUT THE SYSTEM OF NEIGHBORING HOUSING ENVIRONMENT PLANNING IN KOBE CITY

—HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING BY THE MEAN OF PUBLIC ROAD ATTACHED NEIGHBORS—

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Abstract: The first phase of the reconstruction from the disaster of Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake has been achieved. The city of Kobe is now seeking for the renovation type planning of high density residential towns which are thought to be weak from the disaster like earthquake. Even though, they had survived from Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake disaster luckily. By try and error city of Kobe has developed the method of “Neighboring Housing Environment Planning System”.

This system has the two aims of planning method measures. The first aim is to prevent disasters by mean of developing the physical institutions. The second aim is to develop community ties between traditional meaning of neighbors.

If the residents of neighboring housings decide to make “Neighboring Housing Environment Plan” by the agreement, the city of Kobe will ease the restrictions of Building Standard Law to facilitate the plan. The city has included the expectation of reuniting of neighbors community in the guideline of the plan by the process of making up the plan.

This plan is differ from authorized project of “District Planning” in two means. One of the mean is that this plan focuses on neighboring district which is small scale district than district of “District Planning”. The second mean is that this plan can achieve easement of restriction compare to restriction hardened type of project of “District Planning”.

This paper will introduce the example of the district which made the “Neighboring Housing Environment Plan”. The district is named town of Komagabayashi and located in the south of Nagata-ku. The residents of Komagabayashi has experienced the disaster of Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, so they are very enthusiastic in building up the disaster safe environment and that the one of the reason they made up the plan.

Keywords: neighboring community, densely inhabited district, eased restriction, Japan

1. Introduction

The severely damaged districts by Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake were the districts with less than 3 meter width road, which aged housings were built on small lots. The residents of those districts can not rebuild their aged houses because of newly amended law of buildings and city planning restricts to build even the same size of the house now they are living.

The characteristic of the house damage cause by the earthquake was that the most of the houses collapsed due to the aged housing and densely built houses. Not only houses that were built before the war, but even the newly built houses have collapsed. As a result unbelievable rate of 80 percent of death cause by the earthquake can be found inside their houses. Most of them were crashed to death. As the consequence, the importance of community activity was recognized. If the communities functioned well the people were aware of how to prevent disaster by everyday communication and practices and may not have count so much casualties.

The experience of the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake made the municipal bodies to reexamine the city planning policy to prevent disaster. To buildup the safety and secure minded district, municipal bodies realize the importance of not only the policy related to hardware but the policy related to software.

2. Buildup Neighboring Housing Environment Planning System

(1) History

There were policies which proceed “neighboring housing environment planning”. But they are not adequately adapted. Before the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, the year of 1993, under the purpose of housing environment development of highly inhabited district, city of Kobe buildup “row houses district rebuilding guide (inner row houses system)”, which secure flexibility of applying “the Building Standard Law of Japan (BSLJ)”. But the districts where this guide can be apply was limited to where official project of “district planning” or “building agreement” were adapted. As result the guide was apply to no districts.

After the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, to help rebuild the collapsed housing of small lot, city of Kobe ease the ratio of building occupied area to lot area under the condition which made by the city.

The city of Kobe assembled the council named “Housing and Town Development Considering the Characteristic of the Housing and Town and Meanwhile Policy Execution (now changed to Housing Council)”. The council made the report title “Basic Viewpoint of Housing and Town Development and Execution”. The main point of the report can be summarized as below.

- ① development of housing and town from small scale community
- ② totally and continuous participation of every body who are related to housing and town development
- ③ problem solving participation
- ① suggest the importance of participation of small scale community which is traditional community. The community is organized by the connection of small width of road (path or alley) with 3housing opposite of the road and 2housing right and left side. This community is named “mukousangen ryoudonari”, and composed by least 6 housings. In this community the road functions like plaza in European towns and patio in Chinese towns.

The city of Kobe install as a meanwhile direction of policy. That is “establish the planning basically by narrow road and visualize image plan of the future district housing environment”.

As a practical policy, city of Kobe establish the “neighboring housing environment planning system” according to the report by the council in November of 1999.

(2) Structure

- ① By the municipal Act

To establish the system, the city of Kobe amended the Act of “Preservation and Enhancement of Housing Environment of Citizen of Kobe”. The definition of “neighboring housing environment planning” was amended to be established by the idea of residents and mayor of the city will authorize the idea.

- ② By the flexible adaptation of BSLJ and planning support

To realize the plan by solving the problems effectively and speedy, the city of Kobe decided to ease the restriction flexible under the allowance of the law.

Practically he used the proviso and various easements of permissions and recognitions.

(3) Legalization of easement

The legalization of easement can be adapted when there are multiple beneficiary. As example, if you want to apply appointment of horizontal distance (BSLJ article 43 clause 3) , it is able by getting agreement from neighbors.

(4) Enhancement effect

① Evaluation of housing environment by multiple lots community

This system can change the regulation standard of a single lot to the evaluation of multiple lots community. The residents usually consider housing environment of their individual conditions and maybe disappointed they can not improve their housing environment. But if you associate with neighbors you can have a chance of easing the restriction of the law and may achieve better housing environment.

② Residents their self can deepen the recognition of building law to make rule of their own

Residents their self can deepen the recognition of building law to make rule of their own by evaluating the characteristics and problem of their district.

③ Influence to the neighboring communities to expand the planning

The small scale community participation of the plan will be open to public. The city of Kobe expects their participation can influence the neighboring communities and hope to spread the participation and expand the planning. The city of Kobe hopes that this system can work as the bottom up system rather than top down system.

There are various types of planning adapting this system. In this paper we would like to introduce the type of plan which made by utilizing the narrow roads.

3. About the South District of Komagabayashi 1 Choume

(Type of plan which made by utilizing the narrow roads)

From start, one of the residents living in south district of Komagabayashi 1 choume made consultation to the municipal office about rebuilding his house. The road attached to his house lot is very narrow and if he wants to rebuild his house he has to give away part of his lot area to public road area according to BSLJ. According to BSLJ, road attached to house lot should be more than 4 meters. His house lot is attached to the road which is less than 4 meters. That means if he rebuild his house, he can get only smaller house than now he is living. Not only him but the residents in Komagabayashi 1 choume are in same condition. So the problem is recognized by all the residents and also by the city of Kobe.

(1) About Komagabayashi Town

Komagabayashi town is the part of Nagata-ku Kobe City. Komagabayashi town is located about 5 kilometers south east of city central of Kobe City and south most of Nagata-ku. The town area is about 19ha and has the population of 3,042, 1,610 households. The ratio of aged people over 65 is 33 percents (statistics at March 31, 2008).

The town of Komagabayashi's history is very old compare to other towns in Nagata-ku. In the town there was good fishing port from ancient times. As an old town, there are many scenic resources like shrines and temples. Now this town is consisted mainly with housings but there are some shops and fish processing factories and other factories. If you look to the road distribution of this town, there are several narrow road networking systematically till the beach. As this town luckily escaped from the war and earthquake disaster, still old days landscapes of town are remaining. As a result, this town has the same kinds of characteristics and problems that can be seen on old towns generally. They are as follows.

① There are many old wooden made housings remaining

- ② The roads are very narrow like paths and alleys
- ③ Because of narrow roads, there are some difficulty of emergency vehicles to reach to the scene immediately
- ④ Because of narrow roads and densely built housing, the fire can easily spread
- ⑤ Decreasing of population
- ⑥ Aged population

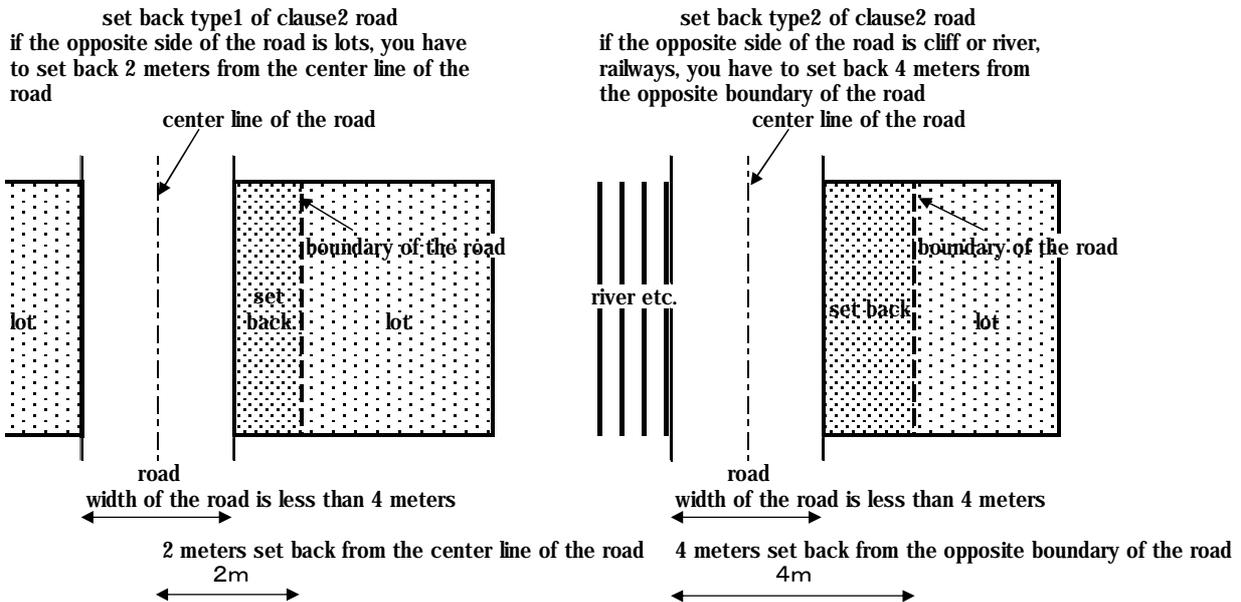
The town of Komagabayashi consists of 6 choume (districts). Every choume are divided to south and north by the main regional road named Takamatsu line. Now “neighboring housing environment plan” is made only to the south of 1choume district which area is almost 100 meters by 100 meters.

(2) About the roads in south district of Komagabayashi 1 choume

About the half of the roads are recognized as roads by BSLJ. Although the width of the roads is narrow and partly below 2 meters. If resident want to rebuild the house, he can build the house from the line which is set backed 2 meters from the center line of the road. That means the area of the lot will decrease and the resident can build only smaller house than the house he is living now.

And other half of the roads is the roads which are not recognized as road by BSLJ. By the BSLJ, you can build the house if the lot is connected 2 meters with the road that is recognized by BSLJ. That means they are not roads, and considered as only public vacant lot. So if residents want rebuild his house, they have to use proviso of BSLJ.

If residents use regular regulations of BSLJ to rebuild their housing, some people worry about the disappearance of historical and traditional landscape.



(3) Aim of neighboring housing environment plan in Komagabayashi

To renovate the densely inhabited town like town of Komagabayashi, the many methods like “relocating the lots plan project” and “redevelopment plan project” are discussed among city planning officers in Kobe city for long. But the officers felt such methods are not suitable because reasons such as follow.

- ① Many residents do not want to lose traditional landscape of which was made by the communities tied due to the narrow roads
- ② Such authorized common methods of the projects take long time to realize and need some rapid way because some residents move out the district recently for they cannot rebuilt their old houses
- ③ Experiencing the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake the residents are aware of weakness to disaster but no measures are made to prevent disaster, so they are very anxious

(4) Participation in the south district of Komagabayashi 1 chome

To realize the plan, Mr. Karino officer of city of Kobe and Mr. Matsubara the city planning consultant of Studio Catalyst have participated to accumulate the opinions of the residents of the district. Also they set up proceeding activities as follow.

- ① Proceeding public project —relaxation plaza

From 2000, by the “Spot Creating Project” in Higashinomachi within this district, the relaxation plaza was constructed.

- ② Continuous public project —relaxation alley

After the relaxation plaza project, the relaxation alley was constructed.

- ③ Multiple use of workshop

Procedure of the process to make up the neighboring housing environment plan, they examine the function and importance of every road by mean of workshop by the residents and municipal officers, consultants.

The discussions in the workshop were as follow.

- To clarify the image by making models of the district if residents rebuild the houses
- At the site, workshop prepare the mark to indicate the width of 2.7 meters road and 4.0 meters road, so that residents can feel if they rebuild the houses.
- To revive the old days road, from help of city officers, workshop search the material which fit the texture of old days road.

Those several discussions became useful to makeup the plan afterward.

- ④ Various events were held

The workshop held various events that the people can have the opportunities to participate in redevelopment on their housing environment.

(5) Build up the concept of redevelopment of housing environment

After the completion of the first “relaxation alley” construction project, second “relaxation alley” project was sought. Then some of the residents proposed of total planning of housing environment of the district, instead of planning partially (only on certain sites). That was the opportunity to build up the concept of redevelopment of housing environment of the district.

By this purpose the workshop started to accumulate the opinions considering the concept and discussed to find the ways to the destination.

In the process, the keywords of the concept were also discussed by walking around the district according to the theme like “making good landscape map” and ”making bad landscape map” etc.

The workshop considered the concepts not only by physical (hardware) planning, but also mental (software) planning.

(6) Application of neighboring housing environment planning system

The residents decided to apply the neighboring housing environment planning system about the time when second “relaxation alley” construction was agreed. After the decision, studies of planning system started. The municipal and consultant made rough planning of the district by many aspects like follow.

- ① According to BSLJ road or not
- ② The roads (alleys) where residents want to preserve
- ③ The roads (alleys) where rebuild are accepted

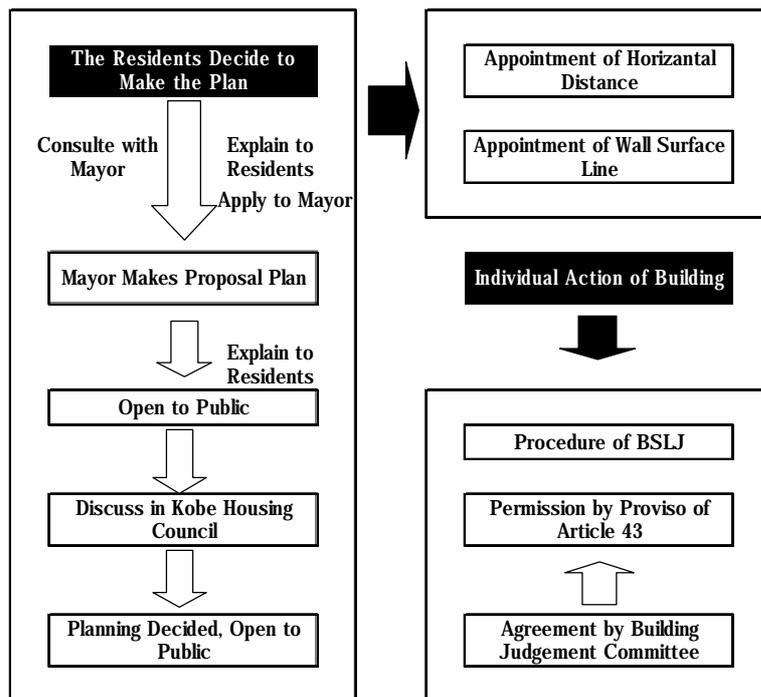
After the discussion, the plan was made, and explanation was made to the concerning residents. In May of 2007, the “neighboring housing environment plan” was decided by the residents of the district and in 2008 the plan will be expected to be recognized by the Kobe City.

The details of the plan are as follow.

- ① The roads of BSLJ article 42 clause 3 (appointment of horizontal distance) ¹⁾
- ② The roads of BSLJ article 43 proviso²⁾
- ③ The roads of BSLJ article 46 (appointment of wall surface line)³⁾
- ④ The easement of the ratio of building occupied area to the lot area

As the result, almost all the roads in the district are planned 2.7 meters wide. Of course, also the disaster safe restrictions were made according to the easements.

FLOW OF NEIGHBORING ENVIRONMENT PLANNING SYSTEM



(7) Forecasting the future

The “neighboring housing environment plan” will be recognized by the Kobe City in September of 2008. Now in meanwhile, the workshop is seeking what kinds of project will be adapted to make the plan effective. And some of the plans are expected by the workshop. One of the projects will be to make the district safe from disaster by preparing the

park when people can evacuate during the disaster. Other project in mind is “townscape environment refinement project” which preserve the historical landscape which the people in the district are intimated for long.

4. Viewpoint of the New Redevelopment of Housing Environment

What is new about this trial of the system of the “neighboring housing environment planning” from already existing projects? This system is new because, it starts from small district like “mukousangen ryoudonari” which consist of small community. The residents in this community feel the problem of the housing environment by their everyday concern. They discuss about how to solve the problem and make up the plan. The plan will influence neighboring communities and they will also become enthusiastic about the redevelopment of their housing environment. By the consequence such small communities increase and unite to make larger plan. As a fact, the plan expanded to the existing town conference of Komagabayashi. The characteristics of the system of this planning can express as follows.

- ① Activating method of redevelopment of housing environment
- ② Connecting the housing environment space with social tie like community
- ③ Start up with residents ideas
- ④ The seed of the plan is “mukousangen ryoudonari”
- ⑤ The many feedbacks are made between the small communities and town conference
- ⑥ The system includes to mature the conscious of the residents to their housing environment

5. Conclusion

The system of the “neighboring housing environment planning” has the important tools of town planning, they are as follows.

- ① The system aim to ease the restriction of the law as BSLJ by considering the historical and traditional condition of housing environment and their communities
- ② The planning starts from small communities like “mukousangen ryoudonari”
- ③ The adequate use of existing projects

There are already proceeding projects like “district planning” and the system of “neighboring housing environment planning” can be identify as small “district planning”. Further to say, expectation of new era, small “district planning” will be new tool for rebuilding the town, where ever place in Japan.

Reference

- 1) The roads of BSLJ article 42 clause 3 (appointment of horizontal distance): according to land conditions and etc. clause 2 road can be decreased the horizontal distance from center line of the road between 1.35 meter to less than 2.0 meters and also if the opposite boundary of other side of the road is cliff and etc. clause 2 road can be decreased the horizontal distance from the opposite boundary of the road between 2.7 meter to less than 4.0.meters. If the municipal body recognizes the decrease will not be the obstacle to secure the transportation and safety, fire safe, sanitary condition.
- 2) The roads of BSLJ article 43 proviso: lot must be connected to BSLJ road more than 2 meters but proviso accepts if the lot connected with vacant lot which has the function of road, and the building judging committee agree that it secure the transportation and safety, fire safe, sanitary condition.
- 3) The roads of BSLJ article 46 (appointment of wall surface line): municipal body can appoint the wall line of the

building by the agreement of the building judging committee.

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