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JAPAN, FUKUOKA

Compact Principles for Improved Quality of Life

Fukuoka City is located on the northern shore of the island of Kyushu in the southern part of Japan. With 1.5 million inhabitants, it is the sixth most populated city in Japan. Since Japan's accelerated economic development from the 1950s, managing controlled urbanisation has been a major focus for city planners and leaders. The risk of urban sprawl, an all too often outcome of rapid urbanisation, was a major concern due to the negative impact it has on social, environmental and economic sustainability. With limited water resources, water scarcity has also been an important consideration in land use patterns and spatial distribution, with the need to efficiently and equitably deliver resources to current and future populations.

To ensure the sustainable development of the city, forward thinking leadership instilled compact planning principles in policies and plan from the 1960s. Primarily seen as a service and commercial centre, successive master plans concentrated Fukuoka's urban development around Hakata bay, creating a doorway to Asia while providing economic and recreation opportunities for citizens. The Basic City Framework in 1976 supported compact urbanisation by promoting transit oriented development.

Adequate densities has allowed for a comprehensive and diverse transport options, including trains, subways, bike paths and private transit options, strengthening the connectivity among core economic centres with the seaport, rail and airport hubs. . Additionally, to minimise the adverse impacts of densification, The Urban Landscape Ordinance was enacted in 1987, with an emphasis on preserving the amenity of cityscapes and reinforcing the historical and cultural characteristics of the area for improved quality of life. High quality urban environments are also incentivised through 'Urban Beautification Award' which promotes design quality.

Fukuoka has successfully developed as a major urban centre through compact urban planning principles, resulting in a productive, attractive and inclusive city. It has been widely reported as Japan's most liveable city, an attribute which is commonly sought after in our increasingly urbanised world, and one which is innately linked to features of compact development. The efficient and multi-modal public transportation network has resulted in a commute time of less than half an hour for nearly 50% of the population increasing productivity and quality of life. Furthermore, over 250,000 people ride to work each day due to proximity, a trend which begun before environmental consciousness was as widespread as it is today. A testament to Fukuoka's inclusive and progressive urban development approach is the response of its citizens, with 90% of reporting that they were proud of their city.