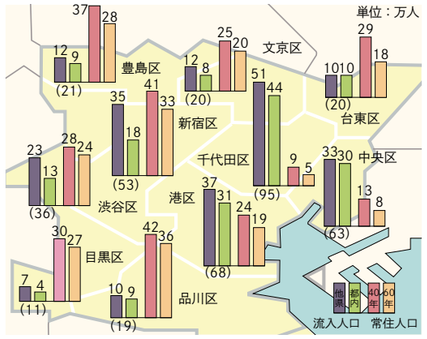
03 Returning residents to the city center

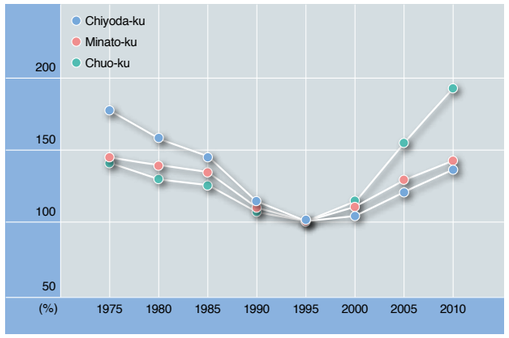
Soaring land prices from the latter half of the 1980s accelerated the shift of land use in the city center from residential areas to office districts, and brought about the out-migration of the population. The resultant urban "donut" pattern gave rise to social issues in the city center such as collapse of communities, the decline of retail stores selling items for daily life, and the underuse of resident-related facilities such as elementary and middle schools.

In response, with the aim of promoting the supply of housing in close proximity to work, and the practical and sound use of land, projects to build residences in the city center were promoted by leveraging the eased FAR standards set in the Tokyo Metropolitan Guidelines for Comprehensive Design Permits (1988) and utilizing exclusive districts for medium- and high-rise residences and districts encouraging the construction of high-rise residences. Moreover, the deregulation of floor-area ratio through amendment of the Building Standards Act in 1997 and other factors led to the construction of many super high-rise condominiums in the city center. The population in the three central wards of Chiyoda-ku, Chuo-ku and Minato-ku began increasing from 2000, with this increase continuing up to the present day.

Japan passed through the period of postwar economic growth to face a society that had a shrinking population and smaller number of households looming on the horizon, and this shifted the focus of housing policy from quantity to quality. Efforts were made to enhance the quality of not just individual housing units but residential life as a whole, including the creation of a better housing environment through a system established in 2000 to display housing performance, and the formulation in 2006 of the Basic Plan for Residential Life (a national plan).



Resident population and commuting population in the central wards of Tokyo
The population in Tokyo's ward area peaked at 8.839 million in 1965, and in the 30 years up to 1995, it decreased by about 10 percent. Just looking at the three central wards (Chiyoda-ku, Chuo-ku, Minato-ku), there was a significant decrease of about 55 percent in the 40 years from 1955. With this was an expanding difference between the nighttime population and daytime population, which gave birth to serious issues such as the collapse of communities.
Prepared from *Tokyo no toshikeikaku 100 nen* (100 years of Tokyo's city planning). Bureau of City Planning, Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

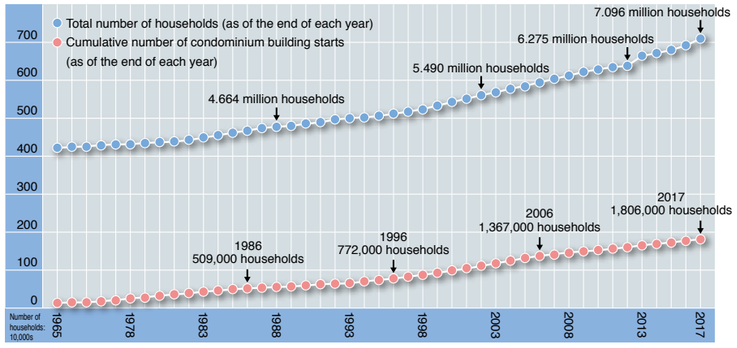


Population recovery in the three central wards (1995=100)
The central wards of Tokyo also implemented their own measures to encourage residence in the city center from 1985, such as establishing a system where large-scale commercial developments were required to also develop residences. In 1996, when Chuo-ku introduced district planning for formation of townscapes to replace district planning that provides bonus FAR, over 2,000 housing units per year were supplied as a result of relaxed regulations on floor-area ratio, this resulted in the population of Chuo-ku, which was under 64,000 in 1995, more than doubling in less than 20 years.
Prepared from the annual editions of the Population Census. Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

Introduction of the system for districts encouraging high-rise housing developments
The system to have districts encouraging high-rise housing development was established with the amendment of the City Planning Act in 1997. For proper distribution of residential functions in the city, this system positioned districts where the construction of high-rise housing should be encouraged within city plans, relaxing regulations on FAR and setbacks, and excluding the application of shadow regulations.
In 1999, the Shibaura 4-chome district in Minato-ku (Shibaura Island) was the first in Japan to receive designation as a district encouraging high-rise housing development. The district now has a total of 4,000 housing units, and a population of 10,000.
Source: Mitsui Fudosan Residential Lease Co., Ltd.

A children's park built together with a super high-rise residence (Kachidoki, Chuo-ku)
The high-rise residence is connected to the station and the building has a children's center, daycare center, supermarket, clinics, and other facilities. A farmer's market is regularly held at the children's park at the foot of the building.

Tsukudajima, Chuo-ku (left) 1989 (right) 2010
Many super high-rise residences, called "tower condos," were built in the city center and the waterfront area. Tokyo's landscape changed significantly, and families began residing in the tower condos due to their proximity to train stations and other facilities. Tsukudajima, which only had one high-rise building as of 1989, has now become an island like Manhattan with many high-rises. Chuo-Ohashi bridge was completed, linking Tsukudajima to Shinkawa.
Source: Tokyo Metropolitan Government official photo archives.



Changes in total number of households and number of condominium units in Tokyo
Condominiums in Tokyo, which numbered 500,000 in 1986, increased rapidly to number 1 million in 2001, and surpassed 1.5 million in 2010.
The stock of condos in 2017 was about 1.81 million units (corresponding to one-fourth of all total households), with condos spreading widely as a major form of housing for the citizens of Tokyo.
Prepared from "Tokyo's Households and Population According to the Basic Resident Register." Bureau of General Affairs, Tokyo Metropolitan Government, and "Housing Construction Starts Statistics." Bureau of Urban Development, Tokyo Metropolitan Government.