

Section 4 District plans, etc.

1 District Plans

The conventional town development was carried out based on two kinds of approaches: land use restrictions, facility plans and urban development projects under the City Planning Act from a macroscopic viewpoint, and site-based building regulations under the Building Standards Act. Afterwards, in May 1980, the “district planning system” was established to fulfill the interstices between the City Planning Act and the Building Standards Act in light of the potential threats of deterioration of living environment and that of disaster prevention functions in urban areas due to the increase in small-scale development and the underdeveloped state of narrow street networks.

The district plan is a system to set restrictions on road/park locations and buildings in inhabited areas of more than certain sizes in order to guide good improvement and preservation of the urban environment that is suitable to the characteristics of the entire district from viewpoints of building forms and public facility locations, the active utilization of which will continue to be required. Municipalities that are in charge of regional administration and thoroughly familiar with the local situations are to decide on district plans so that the plans adequately reflect residents’ opinions, while the prefectural governors are to give consent to certain parts of the plans.

In light of the needs of the times, the district planning system has been expanded by several revisions of the Building Standards Act in which the following exceptional schemes were established: the “grade-separated Road system” (established in 1989) that promotes comprehensive development of roads and buildings and so on, the “Urban housing development promotion-type” (established in 1990) that eases the maximum floor area ratio (FAR) for buildings including houses in order to promote housing supply, the “Public facilities development promoting-type” (established in 1992) that applies the high FAR along with improvement of roads, etc. by setting out a two-staged FAR in order to promote public facility development and efficient land use, the “Floor-area ratio transfer-type” (established in 1992) that promotes reasonable land use by reallocating more detailed FARs in a zone, and the “Building shapes coordinating-type” (established in 1995) that excludes the FAR and setbacks restrictions attributable to frontage roads, thereby promoting the formation of townscape in which building heights and wall positions are well-ordered.

Also, the revised Building Standards Act, etc. of July 2002 streamlined and integrated the district planning system, repealed the conventional redevelopment district plan and residential area high-level use district plan, integrated these plans into redevelopment promotion districts in district plans, and established an Efficient land utilization-type district plan.

Also, as of March 31, 2023, 949 areas in total have been designated in city plans: 499 areas in the special-ward area and 450 areas in Tama area.

District plans that designate redevelopment promotion districts

The district plan that designates redevelopment promotion districts is to integrate, and thus combine their characteristics of, the following conventional types of plans: Redevelopment District Plan that was established as a method to ensure the integrated improvement of urban infrastructures (e.g. roads) and buildings and the conversion of land use in under-used or unused land (e.g. former sites of factories, railway yards and port facilities) and to encourage efficient land use, improvement of urban functions, promotion of supply of residential floors, base development for regional revitalization; and Residential Area High-level Use Area Plan that was established in order to encourage the development of good mid-high rise urban residential areas in cases of integral conversion of land use into urban residential

areas or reconstruction of old housing complexes in farmlands, under-used or unused land within Residential districts.

In terms of redevelopment promotion districts, basic policies on land use, locations and sizes of major public facilities (e.g. roads and parks) as well as matters to be decided in district plans (e.g. policies for improvement, development and preservation in said districts) are to be decided.

Also, as for buildings that meet the requirements of the district development plans in redevelopment promotion districts, they may go beyond the general regulations if a specified administrative agency finds them as not causing hindrance to traffic, safety, disaster prevention and public sanitation in terms of their FAR, building coverage, restrictions on building use and height.

In addition, although municipalities are to make city plans in terms of district plans, TMG is, as an exception, to make district plans for designating redevelopment promotion districts that exceed 3 ha in the special wards of Tokyo. As of March 31, 2023, 89 districts in the Special-ward area and 6 in Tama area have been designated in city plans.

2 Roadside District Plans

The roadside district plans were introduced by the revised Roadside Act of October 1996 by replacing the roadside development plans that had been formulated under the Act for the Improvement of Roadsides along Trunk Roads of May 1980 (hereinafter referred to as the “Roadside Act”) that was enacted in order to ensure the prevention of nuisances arising from road traffic noise and to promote adequate and reasonable land use.

Municipalities may include roadside district plans in city plans, in terms of roadsides of trunk roads (i.e. roadside development roads) that prefectural governors designated as those that (are expected to) experience environmental impacts due to road traffic noise. The plan sets out the roadside development policy, matters on building structure and use, and allocation of buffer spaces (e.g. green spaces), which aims at the formation of buffer building zones by promoting the high-level use of buildings facing the roadside while improving the sound insulation of existing buildings, and prevention of nuisances arising from road traffic by allocating buffer spaces at intervals to encourage the townscape with good sound insulation.

In addition, as exceptional measures, there can be roadside district plans of Floor-area ratio transfer-type, Urban housing development promotion-type, public facilities development promoting-type, building shapes coordinating-type and Efficient land utilization-type, or those in roadside redevelopment promotion areas.

As of March 31, 2023, 43 areas in total (Circular Road 7 and 8, National Road 4 and the roadside of National Road 254, etc.) have been designated in city plans in Tokyo.

Roadside district plans that designate promotion areas for roadside redevelopment

Roadside redevelopment promotion areas are intended to promote high-level land use and urban functions as well as contribute to the prevention of nuisances arising from road traffic noise by carrying out the integral redevelopment while developing necessary public facilities in considerably under-used or unused land along roadside development roads.

The contents that are set out in roadside redevelopment promotion areas are matters that are set forth in roadside district plans such as policies on roadside development in said areas, basic policies on land use in the same manner as those of redevelopment promotion areas, and locations and sizes of main public facilities (roads, parks, etc.).

Also, as for buildings that meet the requirements of the roadside development plans in roadside redevelopment promotion areas, they may go beyond the general regulations if a specified administrative agency finds them as not causing hindrance to traffic, safety, disaster prevention and public sanitation in terms of their FAR, building coverage, restrictions on building use and height.

In addition, like redevelopment promotion areas, TMG is, as an exception, to make roadside district plans that designate roadside redevelopment promotion districts exceeding 3 ha in the special wards in Tokyo. No designation, however, has been made as of March 31, 2023.

3 Disaster Prevention Block Improvement District Plans

The disaster prevention block improvement district plan is a system of district plans established under the Act on Promotion of Improvement of Disaster Control Districts in Populated Urban Districts in May 1997. This can be utilized for areas that lack public facilities (e.g., roads and parks) and have problems in terms of fire spread prevention and evacuation.

The plan is intended to secure evacuation roads, evacuation routes to regional evacuation sites and temporary evacuation sites and to promote disaster prevention in concentrated urban areas by putting fire prevention restrictions on buildings as well as improving public facilities (e.g. roads and parks) in areas surrounded by evacuation roads such as city planning roads within said areas.

In addition, the disaster prevention block improvement district plan may be used in tandem with plans for Urban housing development promotion-type, public facilities development promoting-type, Floor-area ratio transfer-type, or Building shapes coordinating-type.

As of March 31, 2023, city planning decisions have been made on 19 areas in the Special-ward area.

4 District Development Plans for the Maintenance and Improvement of Historic Scenery

District Development Plans for the Maintenance and Improvement of Historic Scenery is a system of district plans that was established in accordance with the Act on the Maintenance and Improvement of Historic Scenery in a Region in May 2008.

This plan intends to ensure maintenance and improvement of historic scenery, and reasonable and sound land use in areas that are particularly required to develop a good urban environment by promoting conservation and utilization of historic buildings with the purpose suitable for historic sites in spite of restrictions in use districts.

In addition, District Development Plans for the Maintenance and Improvement of Historic Scenery may be used in tandem with townscape formation-type plans.

As of March 31, 2023, no area has been designated in Tokyo.