



Co-op Olympia luxury condominium building near Harajuku Station completed in 1965

Multi-family housing to relieve a housing shortage

People have always gathered in Tokyo, regardless of the era. That is because the city that is Tokyo has a powerful appeal that attracts people and the strong ability to take them in. However, as people gravitated to the city along with the changing times and society, issues related to housing and the living environment emerged from time to time. To resolve these issues, Tokyo addressed housing and urban development through housing policies.

The most noticeable feature of housing in Tokyo is its high share of multi-family housing, accounting for as much as 70 percent of housing. According to the FY2013 Housing and Land Survey conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, multi-family housing accounted for 42.2 percent of housing nationwide. From this data, you can see just

housing amounted to nothing more than reasonably achieving minimum functionality and space, it played the role of spreading apartment living as the model for urban living.

The condominium boom and shift from quantity to quality

The supply of multi-family housing by private sector entities began in earnest following the establishment of the 1962 Act on Building Unit Ownership, etc. The Act defined the legal framework for condominium unit ownership and made it possible to use housing loans to finance condominium purchases. Condominiums were first located in central Tokyo. However, that area alone could not support the population influx. And, from the 1970s, condominiums simultaneously spread to areas neighboring central Tokyo and the suburbs to also shoulder the role of accommodating that volume. A path was developed to popularize condominiums and make them affordable to the “salary-man” (white-collar worker) class, and condominiums for families equipped with living rooms, water heating equipment, and balanced-flue bath boilers became firmly established. As condominium booms have come and gone, condominiums built by the private sector have also become a model for urban living.

From the mid-1970s, when housing stock surpassed the number of households, the goal of housing policy transitioned from “quantity to quality.” And, from the late 1980s, policy aimed to build quality housing stock and a good living environment. When Japan became an aging society around 1994, the need to develop housing for a graying population emerged. More importance also began to be placed on housing policies that aimed to improve quality in areas such as the creation of eco-friendly housing and renewal of densely built-up areas.

The appearance of the high-rise condominium

Meanwhile, entering the 1990s, Tokyo’s urban space and living environment began to fall within the realm of the economy. The supply of housing by public entities was scaled back, leaving private sector markets to supply a majority of housing. The huge impact that the bubble economy and its collapse had on changes in housing and the city tells this very story. Amid these circumstances, the large number of high-rise condominiums in Tokyo has also become a major feature of the city’s housing profile.

In Tokyo, there are currently over 500 high-rise condominium buildings. In central Tokyo, large pieces of unused land were created in industrial districts located in the waterfront area through factory closures and consolidation of facilities. In advancing the redevelopment of these areas, issues such as how to overcome rising land prices and achieve high-level land

how high the percentage of multi-family housing is in Tokyo. To understand the background, it is necessary to go all the way back to the time following World War II.

In post-war Tokyo, the first housing challenge was a chronic shortage of housing. Central government-led housing policy drove relief of the housing shortage. Through establishment of the Housing Loan Corporation in 1950, Act on Public Housing in 1951, and Japan Housing Corporation in 1955, in addition to alleviating the housing shortage, fire resistance, effective land use, reduced construction costs, and modernization of housing and facilities were advanced.

During the post-war period of rapid economic growth, concentration of the population in central Tokyo accelerated, and the construction of apartment blocks in central Tokyo, as well as the construction of “new towns” and *danchi* (large housing estates) outside of the city center by public entities, facilitated the supply of a large volume of housing. Although that



Takashimadaira Danchi, which first opened to residents in 1972

Policies on Housing Creation for an Urban Center where People Concentrate

Development of multi-family housing from the post-war era

Masayuki Suzuki



The large Akabane-dai Danchi completed in 1962 shown in a 2006 photo. The development has been rebuilt, and is now named Nouvelle Akabane-dai.

use emerged. By making condominiums high-rise buildings and creating large-scale developments, efforts were made to improve the ability to shoulder land costs. In the 2000s, with deregulation, relaxation of floor area ratio restrictions, and other developments, construction of high-rise condominiums is advancing not only in the city center, but in the surrounding areas as well.

Upcoming challenges related to housing policy

While housing policies have responded to changing times, population inflow to Tokyo still continues. In this environment, issues closely related to housing still remain unsolved, including a super-aging society, responding to population concentration and living infrastructure, a growing number of vacant homes, rebuilding of condominiums and *danchi*, urban disaster preparedness, and environmental issues.

When developing housing policy, it is now necessary to consider such a broad range of areas in a comprehensive and integrated manner. And, while not only resolving issues and creating a future vision that

encompasses urban living, it is necessary to demonstrate functions that support even more attractive urban living.



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Okawabata River City 21 high-rise condominium development, which opened to residents around 1990.