The Changing Face of Tokyo
From Edo to Today, and into the Future
The first year of the new Reiwa era, 2019, marks the centennial of the enactment of the City Planning Act and the Building Standards Act. In this milestone year, we compiled The Changing Face of Tokyo: From Edo to Today, and into the Future to look back at the history of urban development in Tokyo from its beginnings in the Edo period so that this legacy can be carried on into the future.

Today’s Tokyo has been built on the foundation of Edo, an early modern city that began developing when Tokugawa Ieyasu established the shogunate there. Edo became the center of politics and culture, and with the development of canals and roads, water transport came to support people’s livelihoods, and Edo thrived as a “city of water.” Famed historical sites dating back to the Edo period, such as the Koishikawa Korakuen Gardens and Sensoji Temple, are treasured today as quintessential Tokyo attractions.

Entering the Meiji era, new technologies and aspects of Western civilization were aggressively introduced and absorbed to develop the city into one befitting the capital of a modern state. In order to address issues that arose as a result of the rapidly growing population and urban sprawl, a modern city planning system was established. Not long after this, Tokyo was devastated by the Great Kanto Earthquake, but under the strong leadership of Shinpei Goto and the project for reconstruction of the Imperial capital, key roads, bridges, and other infrastructure were newly built. Even now, these continue to function as the structures supporting the city.

In the years following the end of World War II, against the backdrop of recovery efforts by the people and Japan’s economic growth, Tokyo transformed into a modern city through the advancement of projects making intensive use of land in central Tokyo, and, with the Tokyo 1964 Olympic Games on the horizon, the introduction of new infrastructure such as the Tokaido Shinkansen bullet train and the Tokyo Metropolitan Expressway. Moreover, with the progression of globalization and intensifying competition between the cities of the world in recent years, Tokyo is working vigorously to enhance its appeal through urban renewal and other developments.

In order for Tokyo to evolve even more using the soon-to-be-held Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 as a springboard, it will be indispensable to make the most of the historical and cultural assets and infrastructure we have inherited, and heighten their value.

There is no end to urban development. In order to carve a future brimming with hope for each and every resident of Tokyo, we will take a macro perspective to ensure the sustainable growth of Tokyo as a highly mature megalopolis that is the world’s most sought-after city, and to hand this legacy down to following generations.

I hope that this booklet will serve to deepen your understanding of Tokyo’s urban development and heighten your expectations toward Tokyo in the future.

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Koike Yuriko
Governor of Tokyo
# The Changing Face of Tokyo: From Edo to Today, and into the Future

## Contents

### The Transformation of Tokyo’s Administrative Districts

### Introduction

#### Urban Development in the Edo Period

- The origins of Tokyo (1590s-1860s)
  - The expansion of Edo
  - Water transport and kashichi river banks
  - The Great Fire of Meireki
  - Land use in Edo

**Column** Naoko Fujita: The Significance of the Lasting Presence of Shrines and Their Groves

### Chapter 1

#### The Dawn of Modern City Construction

- Spread of new technology and development of the capital (1860s-1910s)
  - Introduction of railway technology
  - From horse-drawn trams to streetcars
  - Ginza Bricktown
  - The emergence of Western architecture
  - Government office centralization plan
  - Tokyo City Planning Ordinance
  - The birth of city parks
  - Development of the modern water supply and sewerage system
  - The path to construction of Tokyo Port
  - Opening of Tokyo Station and the development of Marunouch
  - The Greenbelt Concept
  - Postwar reconstruction

**Column** Megumi Matsuyama: Private Sector Urban Development in the Meiji Era

### Chapter 2

#### Evolution of the City Planning System

- Reconstruction following the Great Kanto Earthquake and World War II (1910s-1950s)
  - Establishment of the City Planning System
  - Reconstruction following the Great Kanto Earthquake
  - Enhancement of transportation in the city
  - Development of private railways and the Tokyo suburbs
  - The Orient’s first subway starts service
  - Development around terminal stations
  - The Greenbelt Concept
  - Postwar reconstruction

**Column** Yasushi Aoyama: Shinpei Goto’s Urban Concept: Advocating Governance with Human Life at the Core

### Chapter 3

#### Urban Sprawl and Improvement of Urban Infrastructure

- High economic growth and the Olympic Games (1950s-1980s)
  - Expansion of the urban area and formation of the National Capital Region
  - Period of high growth and the transformation of housing
  - Tokyo Olympics and new urban infrastructure
  - The advent of the automobile society and the shift to subways
  - FAR zoning and the super high-rise age
  - Commuting congestion and the five-direction strategy
  - Construction of Tama New Town
  - Pollution in the city
  - A new city planning scheme
  - The turning point in urban redevelopment
  - Preparations for urban disasters

**Column** Yasushi Aoyama: Policies on Housing Creation for an Urban Center where People Concentrate

### Chapter 4

#### Tokyo Takes the Leap to Become a World City

- Accumulating urban functions and bolstering international competitiveness (1980s-2010s)
  - Reorganization into a multi-center city
  - Development of Tokyo Waterfront City
  - Returning residents to the city center
  - Promotion of the development of built-up areas
  - Development of new railway lines by public-private corporations
  - Enhancing urban development for a disaster resilient city
  - Shift to a circular megalopolis structure
  - Policy-led urban development
  - Advancing urban renewal

**Column** Masayuki Suzuki: Tokyo’s Urban Development: Taking on the challenge of becoming a competitive and attractive Tokyo

### Chapter 5

#### Toward Realizing a Highly Mature City

- The Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 and beyond (2020s)
  - Creating the legacy of the Tokyo 2020 Games
  - The Grand Design for Urban Development

**Column** Takayuki Kishii: Tokyo’s Urban Development: Taking on the challenge of becoming a competitive and attractive Tokyo

### Resources

- The History of Tokyo’s Development (timeline)
- References