

## Field Report

# The Effectiveness of the Close Residential Relationship for Urban Redevelopment in Japan

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Around large Japanese cities, such as Tokyo and Yokohama, suburban residential areas were developed during the 1960s and 70s as receptacles for a new urban working population. In recent years, however, the physical deterioration of buildings in these areas has led to their more general decline, and their residents have started to face challenges related to aging. Despite these conditions, many residents resist moving from familiar areas where they have lived for many years. This means that simply redeveloping them with new structures may not offer the best solution. To understand life in these suburbs, this report considers the importance of a “close residential relationship” between family members of different generations. Such an alternative condition represents a change from the big, multigenerational households that formerly pertained in traditional Japanese culture. And this new approach has been promoted recently by local governments and developers as a way to improve the quality of life in suburban regions. The report analyzes how the daily lives of residents of one suburban area have changed as a result of the area’s recent redevelopment, and it documents how maintaining a close residential relationship has proven beneficial during this process.

Before the industrial revolution reshaped Japan in the late twentieth century, a typical family structure consisted of multiple generations, and even extended families, living together. In rural areas it was common, and even necessary, to have a large household, as agricultural laborers were in high demand. However, as Japan became more industrialized, job opportunities increased, people left their traditional homes, and families became smaller. Yet even today when multiple generations typically no longer live together strong

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ties remain within Japanese families, and many people prefer to live independently yet in close proximity to their relatives. Such a pattern of living is known as a “close residential relationship.”<sup>1</sup>

As has happened at other times during the country’s long history, conditions of life have been changing recently in Japan. In particular, life expectancy has increased, and people now live for decades after retirement. But as the nuclear family has become the norm, younger generations no longer feel they must take care of their aging parents. And, at the same time, the elderly wish to remain in their homes instead of moving to nursing homes. This has created a dilemma because there are not enough services workers to satisfy the demand for in-home nursing care for the elderly.<sup>2</sup>

Maintaining a close residential relationship is seen as one solution to this problem. By living near each other, family members of different generations can find ways to help each other. For example, in the vicinity of major cities many older residents do not own cars and must rely on public transportation. However, if a close residential relationship exists, younger family members may step in and drive older family members when they need to visit a hospital or shop for groceries. And even when members of different generations don’t have daily interaction, simply living nearby can provide comfort and psychological relief.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, in recent decades it has become more common and socially acceptable for Japanese women to continue professional careers after marriage. However, maternity support is extremely poor in workplaces, and independent childcare is sometimes unavailable. Older family members can thus be of great help with such activities as picking children up from school, preparing meals, or offering advice on how to raise children.<sup>4</sup> These synergies are one reason that local governments and social organizations are now promoting the close residential relationship and encouraging people to move to be closer to their relatives.<sup>5</sup>

#### THE ORIGINS OF JAPANESE SUBURBAN AREAS AND HOW THEY HAVE CHANGED

During the 1960s and early 1970s Japan enjoyed strong economic growth, as the nation continued to flourish and recover from the devastation of World War II. At this time major cities such as Tokyo and Yokohama saw rapid increases in their populations, as people migrated from the countryside to find new industrial jobs. A large number of new commercial and residential buildings were constructed in central metropolitan areas to meet this demand. But when existing infrastructure proved increasingly inadequate, the Japanese government also sought to disperse heavily concentrated populations by developing new suburban areas.

Typically, the first of these suburban housing projects were planned on large empty sites just outside the central

city. However, as housing demand continued to rise, real estate development companies turned to areas further from the city, and new communities were built far from existing metro stations. As a consequence, residents sometimes faced having to spend up to an hour commuting to and from work. Aggressive suburban expansion without proper transit planning also created traffic problems that had not been seen in previous decades.

The two main developers established in the 1950s and 60s were the Housing Supply Corporation and the Japan Housing Corporation (now named the Urban Renaissance Agency). These companies constructed many middle-income suburban housing complexes in response to the urban housing shortage of the 1960s, and launched a business in redeveloping cities in the 1970s. Most of the new suburban areas they developed targeted families with three or four small children and consisted of concrete apartment blocks four to five stories tall. A typical new housing area would also include a shopping mall, a public-service center, kindergartens, and elementary schools. Such communities allowed children to go to local schools from an early age, and allowed their parents to shop and spend leisure time together. Such cohesiveness strengthened the entire community, and it was common for neighbors to come together for such occasions as summer festivals and annual sporting events.

After nearly fifty years, however, much has changed in these communities — both in terms of their demographics and appearance. Of particular concern is that 40 percent of their populations on average are now older than 65 years of age.<sup>6</sup> Japan’s declining birthrate has certainly played a role in this change. But a younger generation is also less willing to live in outdated houses. And they are less likely to move to inconvenient locations, far from metro stations that offer convenient access to jobs in the central city.

Another factor in the decline of these areas is that apartments built in the 1960s cannot easily support multiple generations. Their average size is 40 to 50 square meters, which was sufficient to raise a family during the 1960s. But as children grew older, they were forced to move out after graduation or marriage. And, when new young families did not move in, elementary schools were forced to merge or even close in response to a decline in the number of children in the community. Vacant stores also began to appear as aging business owners failed to find younger people to take them over.

There have been corollary impacts from an aging population as well. For example, it is typical in Japan for residents of an apartment complex to take care of its common areas by such acts as cleaning the staircases and maintaining the gardens. Such engagement frequently encouraged residents to plan and participate in common events such as picnics or athletic competitions. But as the population of suburban areas has grown older, many such events have become difficult to organize and even ceased to exist, causing a former lively community atmosphere to diminish.

Despite such changes, there remains strong sentiment among elderly residents to continue living in their communities, which they consider their hometowns.<sup>7</sup> And they do not wish to move to other areas that might be more convenient for them. Communities have thus turned to promoting their positive qualities to attract younger residents. Some communities have even sought professional help in researching ways to balance the effects of an aging population.<sup>8</sup> This is often how the idea of close residential relationships has surfaced as a solution to the dilemma of demographic change.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, just as the Japanese government once implemented rural-to-suburban migration policies to create new housing areas in the 1960s, it has now sought to implement policies to revitalize these same communities. In response, local government and real estate development companies have proposed various strategies to improve these areas. One such approach involves partially or completely demolishing existing buildings and rebuilding them in new configurations, often with improved amenities, on the same location.

Rebuilding communities and upgrading their infrastructure in this way can be an appealing option to existing elderly residents. For example, the elderly residents of a building without an elevator may find walking up and down

the stairs physically challenging.<sup>10</sup> They would certainly embrace a new building with an elevator. But such projects can be costly and time consuming, and finding a temporary place to relocate residents to while their community is being rebuilt can represent a huge burden both physically and financially. The pros and cons of redevelopment can thus divide sentiment in a community slated for redevelopment. And the success of such projects typically depends on understanding and accommodating the needs and concerns of residents.<sup>11</sup>

#### THE CASE OF HAMAMIDAIRA

The Hamamidaira housing district was selected as the location to collect data to identify the challenges associated with such a redevelopment and to understand how various groups of residents might experience it. Hamamidaira is located in Chigasaki, a city in Kanagawa prefecture best known as a quiet beach resort with lots of green space (FIG. 1). But Chigasaki is also a popular place to live for people who commute to work in Yokohama or Tokyo, as it takes about thirty minutes to Yokohama and one hour to Tokyo by train (FIG. 2).



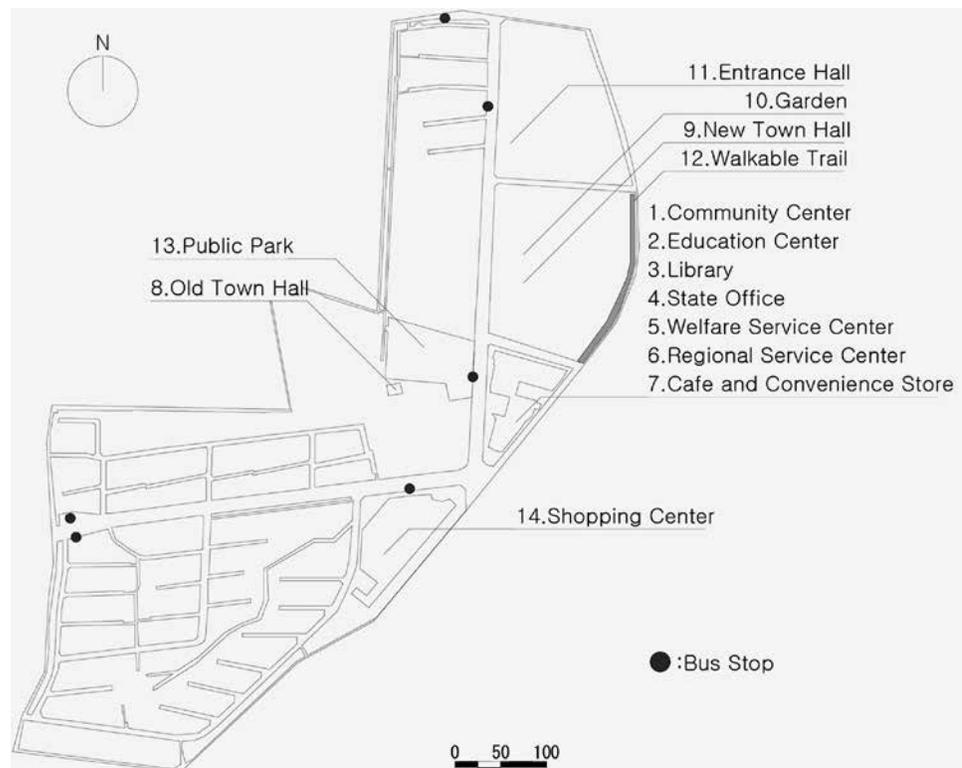
**FIGURE 1.** Aerial view of the Hamamidaira housing district and surroundings in 1988. Source: Geospatial Information Authority of Japan (<https://www.gsi.go.jp/index.html>).

**FIGURE 2.** Map showing the distance from and location of Chigasaki in relation to Tokyo and Yokohama.



Initially, there were no direct bus routes through the area to Chigasaki train station. But after the Hamamidaira housing district was constructed, community leaders worked with the city council of Chigasaki to create one that cut directly across it, and today this route has greatly increased the area’s appeal.

The Hamamidaira housing complex was initially developed in 1964 by the Urban Renaissance Agency (called UR) and consisted of 93 buildings and 3,407 total units (FIG. 3). Like most other suburban residential areas developed at the time, Hamamidaira included a shopping mall, a park, public-



**FIGURE 3.** Site plan of the original Hamamidaira housing complex and related facilities.



**FIGURE 4.** Old and new apartment building typologies in Hamamidaira. The left picture above shows the new condition; the right shows the old. Below is a bird's-eye view, in which some of the remaining old apartments can still be seen in the upper right corner. Because of the increased height of the new buildings and their arrangement, the spaces between them are rather dark. In addition, to maintain vehicle access and parking space, it is mostly covered by asphalt. By comparison, the older buildings had green lawns between them, and there was more sunlight because they were not as high.

service facilities, and a conveniently located community center. Open spaces were left between the buildings, which created excellent airflow, and the trees that were planted when the complex was originally built have grown large and today improve both the living experience and thermal comfort of residents (FIG. 4).

However, like other aging suburban developments in Japan, the main issue with Hamamidaira became one of maintenance. And in 2008 a redevelopment plan was approved that envisioned replacing approximately 2,500 to 3,000 of its hous-

ing units by the end of 2023. The project was to be a cooperative effort of the city government, the developer (UR), and other private interests. To upgrade the housing, everything on the site would be demolished and rebuilt. This would, however, require temporarily relocating its residents. And, although most residents in and near Hamamidaira were happy about the prospects of redevelopment, some worried about having to move out to make way for reconstruction, and others feared that rents would be higher for new homes on the site.

To address its complexity and the sheer number of households that would need to be relocated, the decision was made to split the project into three phases. According to this plan, the group of residents whose buildings were in the first phase of the redevelopment were temporarily relocated to vacant units in other areas of Hamamidaira or to other housing complexes owned by UR. Fortunately, the logistics of this move did not present a serious challenge because there were enough alternative units available. Some residents involved in this first phase (and the second one that followed), however, did decide to move away completely instead of waiting for new units. But most others decided to return when replacement apartments were built for them to move back to.

It is important here to note that Hamamidaira was originally developed as a rental property, and when the redevelopment began all its apartment buildings and land still belonged to UR. However, since the rebuilding would decrease the total number of units on the site, it was projected that it would result in a financial loss for the developer, despite the support of local government. Raising rents was seen as one solution to this problem. But large rent increases might drive away former residents, which was not the purpose of the project. Thus, to make the project profitable, UR decided to sell off part of the land formerly occupied by residences and also the area of an existing shopping mall. The strategy was made feasible by a change in building typology: the new apartment blocks would be up to ten stories tall, replacing existing four- to five-story buildings. The change also allowed UR to set aside space for more profitable uses, and even to auction some space off to other private interests (REFER TO FIG. 4).

Another strategy used to pay for the Hamamidaira redevelopment was the building of a new shopping and service center. An upgrade to existing facilities, it was imagined this would attract more businesses and small stores to the community. However, UR's plan was to lease land to private companies to build the facility — which was to include space for such public uses as a kindergarten, library, and post office — and then reclaim that land after thirty years when the leases expired. And this strategy was criticized by some residents, who saw it as being focused entirely on profit, in disregard for potential negative impacts. Some residents also worried that constructing a big shopping plaza inside the residential area would disrupt Hamamidaira's once peaceful environment (FIG. 5).

At the time of this study, the Hamamidaira redevelopment had progressed through completion of its first two phases, and phase three was just beginning. Phase one had been completed in March of 2011, when 521 households moved into new units. Phase two had been completed in October of 2015, when another 349 households moved in. In addition, the new community center was nearing completion. As of 2016, this meant that approximately half the overall project had been completed. At the time the study was undertaken, therefore, existing residents waiting for the sites of their buildings to be redeveloped in phase three were also coexisting with newly arrived residents from earlier phases.

The research focused on identifying the expectations of these different groups and how they believed the plan was affecting their community.

**FIGURE 5.** *Old and new shopping centers at Hamamidaira. The upper two pictures show the new shopping center. The bottom picture shows the old shopping center, which was demolished and became the park. The new shopping center includes various service facilities such as library and post office. The old shopping center had a wide-open space and town hall right next to it. The old shopping center was two stories tall, with shops on the first floor and the housing on the second. Some residents feel sorry about losing the old shopping center, which had a warm, neighborly atmosphere compared to the new one which contains a big supermarket and franchise shops.*



## RESIDENTS' VIEWS ABOUT THE REDEVELOPMENT

To evaluate the effect of the redevelopment on residents' lives, the data presented here were gathered by means of two separate surveys among Hamamidaira residents, one before and one after the redevelopment began. The first survey was conducted in 2006 by Ryo Okamura, a scholar at Yokohama National University.<sup>12</sup> It consisted of a series of formal questionnaires sent to Hamamidaira residents inquiring about their current living experience and their expectations for how the community would change after the redevelopment. The second survey was conducted under the direction of the author in 2016. It consisted of a total of 1,674 surveys, 824 of which were sent to residents of existing (un-redeveloped) buildings, and 850 to residents of new buildings. The second survey had a response rate of 23.2 percent. This included responses from 169 residents of existing buildings and 219 residents of new buildings.

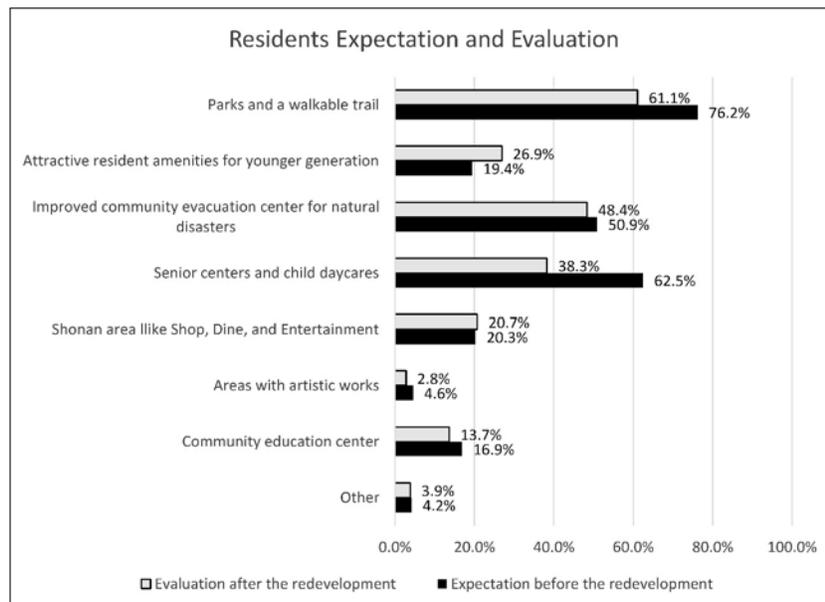
Interestingly, in terms of demographics, 77 percent of the residents who returned the second questionnaire were from the over-65-year-old age group. This number increased to 81 percent when only the respondents from new buildings were counted. Even after including younger family members, the over-65 age group represented more than 70 percent of the entire population surveyed. It could thus be concluded that the percentage of elderly residents had actually increased as a result of the redevelopment. Before the redevelopment, the 2006 survey found that 72 percent of respondents and 64 percent of the overall population belonged to the over-65 age group.

Of the residents of existing buildings who responded to the 2016 survey, 36 percent identified themselves as living alone, and 49 percent answered that they were part of a two-person family. Of the residents of new buildings, 44

percent identified themselves as living alone, and 42 percent answered that they were part of a two-person family. Within the over-65 age group, the majority of respondents thus either lived alone or lived only with a spouse. The increase in elderly residents after the redevelopment can partly be attributed to the fact that original Hamamidaira residents represent 83 percent of the total population of the new buildings. Without a significant number of new, younger residents moving in from outside, the average age might thus have been expected to rise. But the percentage of elderly residents was likely also driven up by the fact that many former younger residents, who were more adaptive to change, had chosen to move completely out of Hamamidaira during the redevelopment.

An important concern in designing the surveys was to determine whether people's expectations before the redevelopment were being met. In 2006, when the redevelopment project was originally being proposed, the first survey had sought to understand what residents expected. In 2016, after Phase Two was complete, the same group was asked as part of the second questionnaire to evaluate its success to date (FIG. 6).

Based on responses to the first survey in 2006, residents most expected the redevelopment to produce three enhancements: 1) a public park with trees and a walkable trail; 2) senior centers and child daycare facilities; and 3) a community evacuation center for use during natural disasters. Since the Hamamidaira complex already had enough trees in 2006, its residents were largely satisfied with the existing natural environment, and were more concerned about maintaining its natural aspects than improving them. It should also be noted that a desire for new social-welfare facilities — such as a senior center, a daycare facility, and a community evacuation center — is typical of other suburban residential areas as well.



**FIGURE 6.** Residents' expectations and evaluations. The bar graphs compare the results of two surveys, before and after the redevelopment. The former survey asked what residents expected from the redevelopment. The latter sought to determine whether they were satisfied with the results.

**FIGURE 7.** Typical interiors of the old (A) and new (B) housing units.



However, in the follow-up survey in 2016, residents gave a lower rating to both “public parks with trees” and “welfare services.” This appeared to be attributable to the fact that many old trees had been cut down during the redevelopment. New trees had been planted, but residents could now see that it would take many years before they would replace the extensive green cover provided by the old trees.

“Welfare services” was also rated poorly after the redevelopment. This was clearly a result of UR failing to incorporate a senior center in the first two phases of the redevelopment. Even though a new child daycare center and new medical facilities were included, the lack of a senior center was a huge disappointment to a majority of elderly residents. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the elderly population had actually

increased during the first two phases of the redevelopment, and they had various needs which weren't being met. To help resolve this issue, a nonprofit organization and community forum had been created to facilitate communication among residents and support the needs of the elderly. But many residents saw this as an inadequate response.

Of the other criteria measured by the surveys, "Attractive floor planning for younger generations" received a notably higher rating among residents after the redevelopment. This question concerned the design of individual unit plans, excluding common spaces such as corridors and entryways. In this regard the redevelopment had introduced great changes to the living environment. The old apartments were nearly identical in size, at about 50 square meters. They were also configured with two or three flexible *tatami* rooms, a toilet, a bathroom, and a kitchen. This layout had been broadly suitable in the 1960s, when most families who moved in were composed of a father who worked in the city, a mother who was a homemaker, and several children. But family types have become more varied in the ensuing decades, and today it would have been unnatural to supply only one unit type. Based on the expectation that a new, younger generation would be moving in, the new units were thus designed to offer various one- to three-bedroom plus LDK (living, dining, kitchen) floor plans.

And not only have family types become more varied, but lifestyles have changed as well. The old housing units were based on *tatami* rooms, a traditional multipurpose Japanese space where a standard-size, rush-covered straw mat called a *tatami* provided a floor covering. Three *tatami* rooms would typically be connected with completely removable doors, creating a space for traditional practices of sitting and sleeping on the floor. Such a room would also include *osire*, built-in

storage spaces. These measured about 90 by 180 centimeters (sometimes bigger), and were divided into upper and lower areas for futons and folded clothes. Such a division, however, made it hard to hang coats in them as in a modern closet.

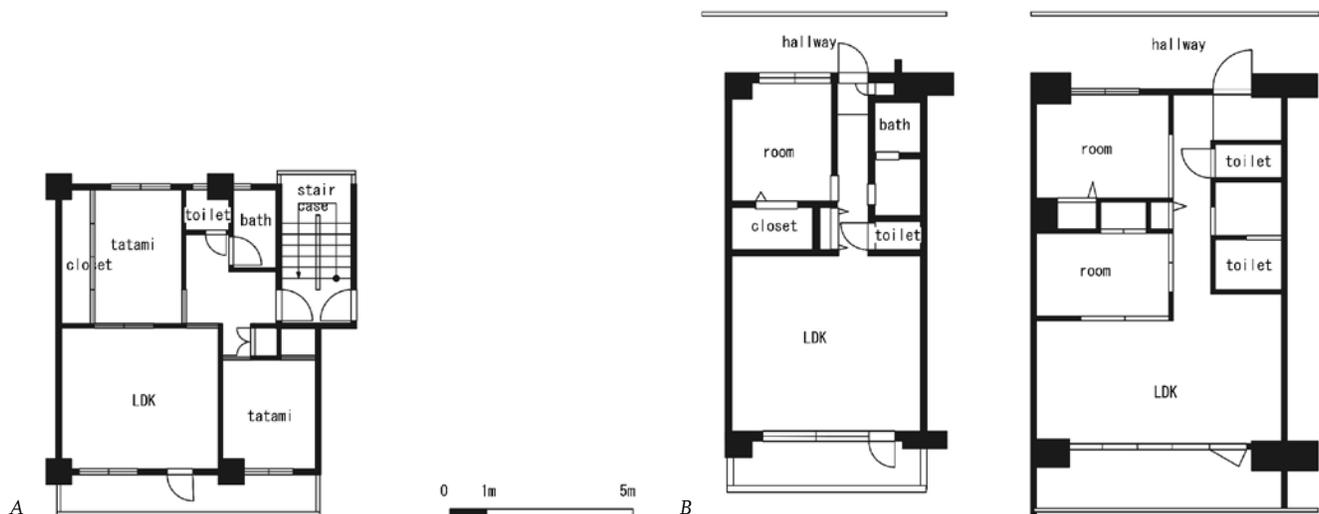
In addition to these characteristics the ceiling and door heights in the old apartments were quite low. Based on the traditional Japanese module, the door height was about 182 centimeters, and the ceiling height was 240 centimeters or less. Both of these are today quite low, considering that people taller than 180 centimeters are not that rare in Japan anymore.

There was also a problem with insulation in the old apartments. Indeed, in the 1960s most houses weren't built with insulation, and as a result were typically quite cold during the winter. This was a particular problem in bathrooms.

Considering these factors, it is clear the old apartment units were unsuited to those accustomed to a Western lifestyle. And lately, most Japanese have also become unused to maintaining *tatami* mats. As a result, Hamamidaira's new apartments feature wooden floors, insulation in the walls and bathrooms, double-glass windows, and other modern equipment. The floor plan is also much more suited to the use of Western-style furniture, and storage areas are no longer designed as *osire*, but as closets (FIGS. 7, 8).

Based on expectation and evaluation, the surveys clearly showed that most residents were happy with the new units, their modern floor plans, insulated interiors, and updated facilities. There were only a few, mainly elderly residents who had had trouble adjusting to them because of old habits.

The 2016 survey also considered relative satisfaction with several broad measures related to the entire housing environment. And it sought to determine differences of view between residents of the remaining old apartments and those



**FIGURE 8.** Typical floor plans of the old (A) and new (B) housing units. The old plan features three *tatami* rooms and is based on a shared staircase to the exterior. The new plans, 1LDK and 2LDK, are based on a shared hallway and elevator.

**FIGURE 9.** Satisfaction with the overall housing environment based on four categories of experience, before and after the redevelopment, among residents of new apartments.



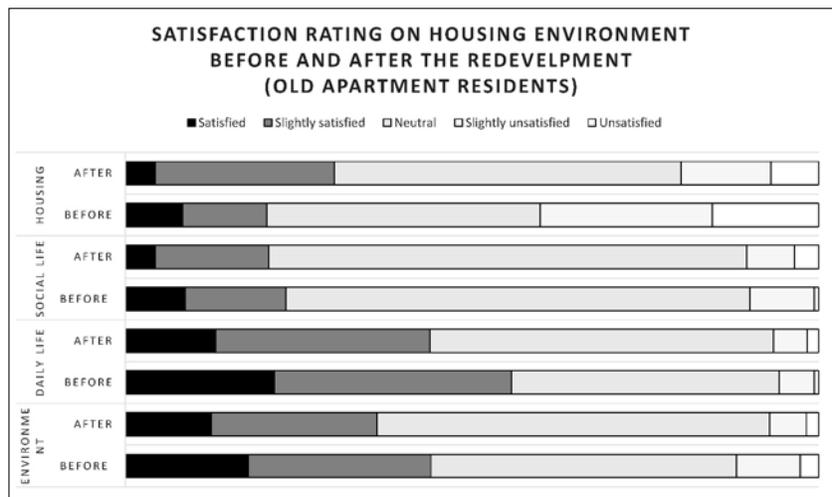
who had moved into the new redeveloped ones. The accompanying figure represents satisfaction levels among residents in new buildings (FIG. 9). Within this group, “housing” saw the greatest increase in satisfaction rating. This was an expected result, since the new apartments were generally seen as an improvement over the ones. “Daily life” also saw a 10 percent increase in satisfaction, while “environment” saw a slight increase. However, there was no significant change in satisfaction regarding “social life” among this group.

By comparison, residents of existing buildings reported lower levels of satisfaction after the redevelopment (FIG. 10). Unlike the residents of the new buildings, who had benefited from upgraded facilities and brand-new amenities, the residents of existing buildings had yet to receive any of these benefits. During the redevelopment, their buildings had not changed; only the surrounding common facilities and shopping areas had been renovated. It may thus be presumed that the sudden change in daily patterns of life precipitated by the rebuilding had actually decreased their satisfaction with the overall residential environment.

In particular, these existing residents reported an even lower level of satisfaction with regard to “social life” than the already low rating they had given to this measure in 2006. Typically, residents of suburban housing complexes in Japan maintain good relationships with their neighbors, many of whom they have known since these complexes were first built. Yet, as these complexes have aged, and as the number of their younger residents has decreased, the number and availability of places for people to interact has also decreased. Many people likewise want to maintain relationships with neighbors they have known for years. But as part of a typical redevelopment, long-time neighbors may be assigned to separate floors, or different buildings, or be temporarily relocated completely out of the area.

Also, when new apartments are of a “hallway type,” using elevators for access, their entrances are lined up on hallways. This typically results in a weaker sense of connection between neighbors than in older “staircase type” buildings, where the apartments of neighbors typically faced each other across the landings of shared staircases (REFER TO FIG. 4).

**FIGURE 10.** Satisfaction with the overall housing environment based on four categories of experience, before and after the redevelopment, among residents of old apartments.



Moreover, in the old floor plan, when two *tatami* rooms adjoined each other, residents could open or remove the sliding doors between rooms and use the combined area as one big space. Since “staircase type” apartments were typically through-units with windows facing out to opposite sides of a building, when residents opened all the windows the wind could also pass through the unit and provide a more open atmosphere. By comparison, in “hallway type” units, residents typically hesitate to open the interior windows; and even when they do, Western-style doors and closets may prevent the wind from passing easily through the unit. Residents used to the old apartment may have seen this as another reason to lower their rating for “social life” in the new building environment.

Overall, therefore, it may be concluded that the redevelopment improved the quality of environment and the appearance of buildings. But after waiting for its completion for twenty years, many residents found the experience unsatisfactory, as the length of the redevelopment process had placed a great toll on their social life.

#### THE CLOSE RESIDENTIAL RELATIONSHIP IN HAMAMIDAIRA

As part of the 2016 survey, 23 percent of Hamamidaira residents indicated that they maintained a close residential relationship with other family members. Among those who had been temporarily relocated to existing buildings the figure was even higher, at 31 percent. The percentage of original Hamamidaira households that are living in new buildings and are currently involved in a close residential relationship was 25 percent, slightly higher than 22 percent of the original residents living in existing buildings. This implies that the group who had experienced relocation or who were currently being relocated were more likely to be involved in a close residential relationship.

Clearly among elderly people a sudden change in lifestyle or moving due to a long-term redevelopment project can create a physically burden. This may be especially true for households who may be required to move more than once before being allowed to settle permanently in a new apartment. There were some cases of elderly residents who chose not to wait for completion of the redevelopment plan, and who decided to move out of the district completely or to check into senior housing while they were still healthy and able. But in general the survey seemed to indicate that it was easier for elderly residents who had relatives living nearby to participate in the redevelopment plan.

The new facilities and clean buildings of the redeveloped complex likewise encouraged families to maintain these relationships with their relatives. Evidently, out of 89 close-relationship families, nine answered that they had convinced their relatives to live nearby after the redevelopment plan. Of the residents in new buildings who maintained a close residential

relationship, only four households had migrated from the outside area — but these four had moved from Chigasaki City. Since a total of 21 households had moved from Chigasaki City, this represented a rate of close residential relationship of about 20 percent, which is not particularly low. From this data, it can be concluded that there were a few residents who strongly considered the importance of maintaining a close residential relationship when they planned for their new lifestyle.

In comparing the experiences of the generations, among households that did not move the percentage of elderly households claiming to be in a close residential relationship was 21.7 percent, while among younger households the figure was almost 21.6 percent. However, among elderly households that had experienced a move, the figure was 24.9 percent, and it was still higher among younger households, at 30 percent. Such figures may show that younger people may also benefit from close residential relationships and consider it as a factor when they change their place of residence.

Survey respondents were further divided into four subgroups based on the type of building they occupied (old or new) and whether or not they maintained a close residential relationship (FIG. 11). For the purposes of the survey a close residential relationship was defined as living within a fifteen- to twenty-minute walk of Hamamidaira. A total of 80 percent of the residents who claimed to currently have a close residential relationship with other family members replied that they were close enough, while 14 percent responded that they wished to live closer. Meanwhile, a total of 10 percent of residents who identified themselves as not maintaining a close residential relationship answered that they wished they lived closer to their relatives. These twelve residents did, however, answer that they had relatives living in the same *ken* (equivalent to a state). And they identified their preferred method of transportation for visits as “car,” “bus,” and “train.” Furthermore, even though they lived far apart, they answered that they frequently visited these relatives. Five of twelve also answered that they received some form of support from them.

Among the residents who identified themselves as maintaining a close residential relationship, more than 60 percent answered that they expected to receive assistance from their relatives in the future or in case of an emergency. A total of 45 percent of those living in existing buildings and 47 percent of those living in new buildings answered that they received some assistance daily. Even if residents were not involved in a close residential relationship they identified living close to relatives as a source of comfort and security. Interestingly, the residents of new buildings were more likely to provide this answer than those living in existing buildings. But such a trend might be expected among those who had recently moved in, because they would have been more able to consider the needs of their extended families while planning the move. When asked if they felt burdened by their relatives, both groups answered similarly.

**FIGURE 11.** Chart comparing the experiences of those in the over-65 age group who maintain a close residential relationship with those who do not. The chart additionally compares the experience of those in the old and new apartment buildings, and elicited their future outlook.

		previous building *close-residential relationship *age over 65		new building *close-residential relationship *age over 65		previous building *none close-residential relationship *age over 65		new building *none close-residential relationship *age over 65	
total		29	100%	36	100%	92	100%	116	100%
distance from the relatives	close enough	24	83%	29	81%	37	40%	42	36%
	too close	1	3%	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%
	Want to live closer	4	14%	2	6%	3	3%	12	10%
	not close	0	0%	1	3%	34	37%	54	47%
comfort from the relatives	nothing	2	7%	3	8%	22	24%	24	21%
	helpful in daily life	13	45%	17	47%	25	27%	37	32%
	might helpful in future	18	62%	24	67%	24	26%	46	40%
	might helpful in emergency	15	52%	25	69%	30	33%	43	37%
	helpful as a legal guardian	6	21%	13	36%	15	16%	29	25%
burden from relatives	nothing	24	83%	27	75%	51	55%	68	59%
	physical burden by helping relative	1	3%	2	6%	3	3%	4	3%
	economical burden by helping relative	1	3%	2	6%	4	4%	2	2%
	worry about the future of relative	1	3%	3	8%	6	7%	8	7%
	Be mentally concerned	0	0%	2	6%	3	3%	5	4%
Items sharing with relatives	Relatives have a spare house key	21	72%	29	81%	51	55%	72	62%
	I have relatives' spare key	18	62%	17	47%	25	27%	22	19%
	Relatives have my spare car key	2	7%	4	11%	0	0%	1	1%
	I have relatives' spare car key	1	3%	1	3%	1	1%	0	0%
	I store personal belongings in relatives' house	2	7%	0	0%	2	2%	0	0%
	Relative stores personal belongings in my house	1	3%	3	8%	1	1%	1	1%
	I store emergency food for relatives	1	3%	4	11%	3	3%	4	3%
	Relative store emergency food for me	1	3%	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%
Others	0	0%	1	3%	7	8%	16	14%	
Future outlook	I'd like to continue this life style	19	66%	32	89%	65	71%	97	84%
	I'd like to live at senior center while I am still healthy	1	3%	0	0%	5	5%	13	11%
	I'd like to move to senior center when I need assistance	9	31%	10	28%	27	29%	40	34%

Among items that households shared with relatives, the most common answer was a spare house key (REFER TO FIG. 11). Among the residents of new buildings who maintained a close residential relationship, 81 percent had given spare keys to their relatives, while 47 percent also answered that they kept a copy of their relatives' keys. It was further observed that some 10 percent of those who lived in the new buildings kept personal items for their relatives or stored food for them. This seems to indicate that these households were more likely to share space with their relatives than were those in the old buildings. However, one important reason for this may be that the new buildings are more spacious and better suited to visits by family members. Improved public amenities, such as parks and recreation centers, could also be used together with relatives.

As for the timing of an eventual move to a senior center, slightly more than 30 percent of people answered "when I need assistance." The answer "while I am still healthy" was given by 5 and 11 percent of those households with no close residential relationship in the existing and new buildings, respectively. Almost none of the households who claimed to maintain a close residential relationship replied "while I am still healthy." The difference shows that maintaining a close-residential relationship may potentially encourage elderly residents to live independently for a longer period, rather than seeking senior support even when they are physically capable.

In answer to a question about whether they used the new facilities "more than one or two times a month," households that maintained a close residential relationship answered

“yes” fairly frequently. The purpose and frequency of elderly residents engaging in activities outside the home also tended to be greater and more varied in the case of those who maintained a close residential relationship.

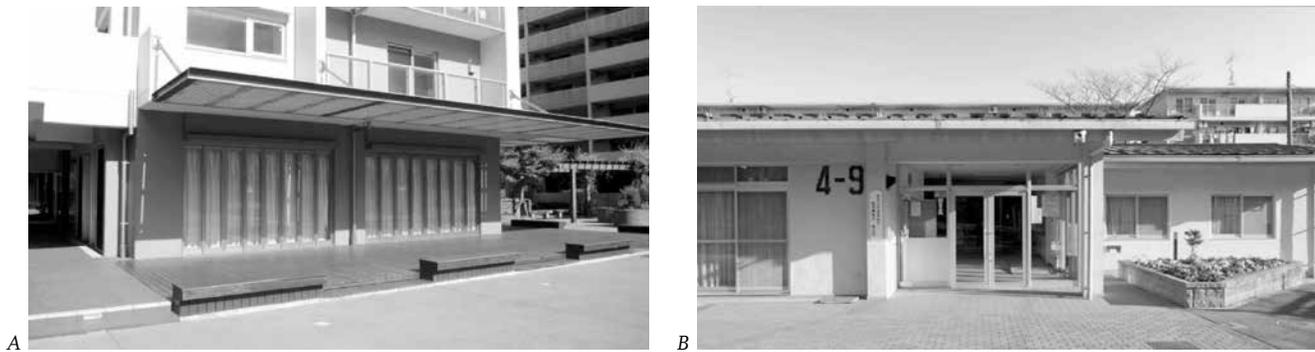
The accompanying table indicates the type of activity for which residents of the new buildings visited the community facilities and how frequently they did so (FIG. 12). “Cafes and convenience stores,” “garden,” “walkable trail,” and “park” were the most popular choices and served the greatest number of purposes. These places were particularly selected as a “location to visit after grocery shopping.” In the case of households who maintained a close residential relationship, “meeting location” and “use with relatives” were the most popular answers given for the purpose of their visit. In this regard, households who claimed a close residential relationship were found to be more inclined to choose the answers “use with others” and “use with relatives,” rather than “use alone.” One conclusion that may be drawn here is that residents who maintained a close residential relationship were more likely and willing to interact with others daily than those who did not.

Town halls were identified as a “place to socialize” and to “use for a large group event.” There was not much difference between the old and new town halls in terms of preferred use, but there was a higher demand for the new town hall (FIG. 13). The old town hall was located at the center of the district, adjacent to the shopping mall. A stand-alone, single-story structure, it had several rooms that residents could use for activities. Although the community was well organized, if a resident was not part of a particular group or had no specific reason to use it, it was difficult to gain access to the building. The new town hall, by contrast, is located on the first floor of one of the apartment buildings. This not only makes it convenient but easier for residents to freely stop by. It is therefore more comfortable to use both for residents and for visiting relatives than the old town hall. And instead of having multiple rooms, it contains only two significant spaces, which can be divided with movable walls to adapt it to various uses.

Of course, residents may also use their apartments as meeting places when relatives visit. But overreliance on apartments as social spaces might limit the frequency of visits

		Place to chat	Meeting location	Use with others	Location to visit after shopping	Use Alone	Use with large group	Playground for children	Use with relatives	No interest
Community Center	total	8%	7%	5%	14%	8%	5%	1%	0%	0%
	CR	11%	7%	7%	13%	9%	4%	0%	2%	24%
Education Center	total	7%	0%	4%	11%	12%	6%	2%	2%	30%
	CR	2%	0%	1%	2%	3%	0%	0%	0%	4%
Library	total	5%	3%	3%	9%	48%	1%	2%	3%	13%
	CR	0%	4%	0%	13%	44%	0%	2%	2%	11%
State Office	total	4%	2%	3%	13%	34%	2%	1%	6%	8%
	CR	0%	2%	0%	11%	27%	2%	2%	9%	4%
Welfare Service Center	total	7%	1%	3%	7%	11%	1%	0%	11%	30%
	CR	2%	0%	2%	4%	9%	2%	0%	16%	27%
Regional Center	total	7%	1%	4%	7%	11%	1%	0%	12%	29%
	CR	2%	0%	4%	2%	9%	4%	0%	13%	29%
Café and Convenience Store	total	15%	11%	10%	29%	18%	4%	2%	10%	11%
	CR	16%	18%	13%	33%	11%	4%	2%	16%	9%
Old Townhall	total	7%	2%	3%	5%	3%	9%	1%	2%	46%
	CR	9%	0%	2%	2%	4%	11%	0%	0%	31%
New Townhall	total	11%	3%	5%	3%	5%	18%	1%	3%	28%
	CR	9%	2%	2%	4%	2%	20%	0%	0%	24%
Garden	total	7%	7%	3%	13%	12%	6%	9%	5%	22%
	CR	9%	11%	4%	13%	9%	4%	7%	4%	13%
Entrance hall	total	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%	3%	1%	4%	47%
	CR	7%	0%	4%	7%	2%	0%	0%	0%	58%
Walkable trail	total	4%	5%	10%	15%	13%	1%	8%	4%	22%
	CR	4%	9%	9%	13%	9%	0%	11%	7%	22%
Public parks	total	8%	9%	9%	16%	12%	4%	13%	5%	23%
	CR	7%	16%	13%	18%	9%	4%	16%	7%	20%

FIGURE 12. Residents' views of the usefulness and purpose of available community facilities and services.



**FIGURE 13.** *The new and old town halls in Hamamidaira. A) The new town hall is located on the first floor of an apartment building. B) The old town hall was located almost at the center of the complex, adjacent to the shopping center.*

by relatives. Indeed, an increased availability of places to go and events to attend has been shown to enhance the social options available to the elderly. It also creates stronger networks among them and provides a healthier social environment.<sup>13</sup>

The convenient location and significantly larger size of the new town hall were thus shown to be sufficient to meet the needs of the residents and compensate for what was lacking in the old town hall. However, it is also true that some residents, especially the elderly, needed a period of time to get used to it. And because the new town hall is located on the first floor of an apartment building, despite its open exterior, some residents living in other buildings were initially hesitant to use it. Thus, even after the new town hall has opened, the old town hall remained in service for several years, and although it is now closed, many residents still used it during that time (FIG. 13).

#### WHAT IS NEEDED TO CONTINUE LIVING IN A SUBURBAN AREA

The benefits of a close residential relationship have been known since the 1960s. It may even be considered a new residential tradition in Japan now that the nuclear family has become more common. Local governments and developers often herald the mutual support provided by the close residential relative, and strongly recommend it as a reason to live close to family members of a different generation. Not only is it useful as a way of offering physical support, such as by providing childcare or doing housework, but, as this study has shown, it can also directly and indirectly affect daily-life satisfaction. Direct observation further indicates that the benefits of a close residential relationship need not be limited to blood relatives.

People in Japan expect that redevelopment projects will revitalize aging suburban communities by rehabilitating existing buildings and constructing new ones. However, as the total population of the country has begun to decline, it may

be unrealistic to expect that more residents, especially younger households, will choose to move into these communities after they are redeveloped. Clearly, one of the main reasons for the declining population of these areas is their inconvenient location. And even if the buildings there are rebuilt, it is not likely that those unfamiliar with the area will choose to move in. In Hamamidaira, more than 80 percent of those who have moved into the new apartment blocks are former residents over age 60. Nevertheless, the redesign project focused on attracting a younger generation.

As mentioned above, in the Hamamidaira area the ratio of older to younger residents has not changed much — and has even gone up since the project was completed. But this is not an untypical situation for suburban areas in Japan. And to address it, suburban redevelopment projects have introduced barrier-free infrastructure and sought to provide general caregiver support to elderly residents.

Most of the existing residents have lived in the same community for a long time. Thus, it is significant for redevelopment projects to identify how elderly residents feel and offer them essential services to meet their needs. This is a much different condition than in the 1960s, when real estate development companies focused on building new apartments in empty spaces without much concern for the special needs of residents.

One issue that has arisen during the Hamamidaira redevelopment has been its extraordinary duration. The project was first introduced to the residents in 2004, but its completion is not projected until 2023. This has created a sense of uncertainty among residents, especially those who were older than 65 years of age at its beginning. They have not been thrilled to find that they might need to wait until they are well into their eighties before they can settle in new buildings. Some elderly residents have therefore been forced to move to other places if they want to age in a familiar setting. However, this is a typical problem in the redevelopment of suburban areas near big cities. Near big cities, even if populations have declined from their peak, suburban housing is still in great

demand. And these suburban areas are huge, and will take a long time and much effort to redevelop.

To increase the chances of success for such redevelopment projects, it is important to maintain the social harmony of the community while the redevelopment is in progress. In the case of Hamamidaira, most residents have spent their entire lives in the district, and there was a strong desire among them to keep its existing community character intact. This sentiment was observed in the survey, as residents gave an unsatisfactory rating to the cutting down of old trees to create a new public park. Some new amenities were included specifically to address this issue. Thus a new town hall and education center were included to maintain a sense of stability. Its other features include a walkable trail, a flower garden, and recreational places where families can spend leisure time together. Yet, despite the better facilities, it is also true that residents remain attached to things they are used to. Sudden changes of environment can be risky for the elderly.

It was also observed that residents in close residential relationships tended to utilize and enjoy new additions to the community more than their counterparts who did not have such relationships. This may be because connection to relatives allowed them to feel less uncertain about their new environment. The close residential relationship can thus provide the emotional support that elderly residents need. Com-

munication among residents may be important, but it is even more essential to help close the gap between the generations. The close residential relationship has achieved a great deal of success in this regard.

The idea of a close residential relationship also does not need to be limited to family members. Indeed, it may be expanded to the entire community to achieve even more significant synergies between young and old. And even though the primary purpose of the close residential relationship is mutual support in case of emergency, its benefits can expand to other areas. Therefore, it is essential that governments in Japan create an environment in which close residential relationships can flourish.

The close residential relationship represents a transformed tradition from the old multigeneration family. It provides a means of both mental and physical support for families, and it can greatly improve the quality of daily life. This report has also shown that the proper conditions supporting close residential relationships can be created by redevelopment. In this way, redevelopment may not only re-create existing support services but create a new supportive culture. The concept of the close residential relationship should thus be included in any architectural proposals related to suburban redevelopment in Japan.

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