

More than 50 Years Have Passed Since the Birth of Tsukuba Science City

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1. Birth of Tsukuba Science City

The construction of Tsukuba Science City was approved at the Cabinet meeting in 1963. More than 50 years have passed since then, and Tsukuba Science City, which shares the same area as Tsukuba City of today, was constructed to become one of the leading cities in southern Ibaraki Prefecture. The shape of Tsukuba Science City has been changing day by day ever since. We believe that it is one of the roles of NILIM, which is located in Tsukuba Science City, to record, as succinctly as possible, the history of the formation of this new city, which has been in existence for more than 50 years, as well as problems and issues that the city had to address along the way, together with their solutions. This is the reason why we published our research paper on Tsukuba Science City.¹ Here in this paper, I would like to introduce a general outline of the Research Paper.

2. Period from Phase I to Phase III in Urban Development

In the Research Paper on Tsukuba Science City,¹ we developed our own definitions of the development phases of Tsukuba Science City, and we call, as Phase I, the period from September 1963, when its construction was approved at the Cabinet meeting, until March 1980, when the relocation or establishment of 43 institutions in the city were completed, the so-called general completion of city construction as a national project. We define the Phase I period as the period for urban development as a national project by the public sector. We call the period from April 1980 until July 2005 the Phase II period when the city expanded due to joint development initiatives by the public and private sectors. In 1985, this city hosted the International Exposition on Science and Technology, which made the name of Tsukuba widely known to the world. We call the period from August 2005, when the Tsukuba Express (TX) train services were launched, and onwards the Phase III period. The launch of TX train services linking Tsukuba City to Akihabara in Tokyo brought about transformative changes and further expansion in the city. The Phase III period until March 2013 has been covered in our research paper.

All through these periods, there were always many issues in the development of Tsukuba Science City in terms of both its hard and soft aspects. However, most of them were overcome and resolved through new legislation and creative solutions devised by our predecessors. I firmly believe that the framework for the urban development of Tsukuba Science City that had been established, riding on the wave of great economic growth in Japan before the first oil shock in 1973, has contributed positively to the development and expansion of Tsukuba Science City.

I encourage the readers of this paper to read the research paper¹ as it is intended to provide a comprehensive history of Tsukuba Science City, focusing on the accurate description and interpretation of facts. Also I recommend the readers to read the literature on Tsukuba Science City noted below² as well for reference.



Photo 1. Underground TX Tsukuba Station and Traffic Square



Photo 2. Former Takezono 3-Chome National Public Officer's Housing Complex and Private Sector Housing under Construction at the Vacant Lot of the Former Housing Complex

3. Is Tsukuba Science City Now Entering Phase IV Period?

Tsukuba Science City underwent drastic changes with the inauguration of TX train services. Since then, a number of other changes are taking place, including the sale of vacant lots of former national public officers' housing complex to the private sector and more active implementation of new housing construction activities by the private sector. Tsukuba Science City used to be mostly populated by academic researchers, who were then called new residents in the city, but the composition of residents in the city is changing. In addition, as part of initiatives to renovate and enhance research systems, which is one of the purposes of the construction of this new Tsukuba Science City, the fruits of scientific and technological development are actively being applied and commercialized. We view such trends as a sign of the beginning of the new Phase IV period and continue to collect relevant information on a routine basis.

☞ For further information, please refer to the following documents:

1) NILIM's Research Paper No. 815 of January 2015 by Takashi Kawanaka and Hiroshi Kaneko, "Tsukuba Science City's Problems on Formation Process through a Present State and Subjects".
<http://www.nilim.go.jp/lab/bcg/siryou/tmn/tmn0815.htm>

2) Yasuhisa Mitsui's "Tsukuba Science City Theory" published by Kajima Institute Publishing Co., Ltd., May 2015. The author views Tsukuba Science City as the fruit of Japan's urban planning system that has been deployed since the pre-World War II era.