



From the collection of the National Diet Library. As Minister of Home Affairs, Goto led the reconstruction of Tokyo after the Great Kanto Earthquake.

### City planning that takes people into consideration

Shinpei Goto's urban concept is centered on people/human beings. It emphasizes that "city planning should never stray from the people" because cities are places where people gather to live.

The Tokyo City Government Outline created when Goto was mayor of Tokyo was a solid plan that carefully addressed areas related to human life, including roads, waste management, social welfare facilities, education, waterworks and sewerage, housing, electricity and gas, ports, rivers, parks, funeral halls, markets, and public halls. This plan went on to become the model for the long-term plans created by Japanese local governments.

In 1923, the Great Kanto Earthquake struck. As the Minister of Home Affairs responsible for reconstruction following the quake, Goto proposed his

cities, these terms aim to broadly encompass factors such as welfare, education, the economy, and environment, centered on the people who live their lives there. A century ago, Goto was already considering this.

### Efficiency and comfort

Goto's urban concept focuses on efficiency and comfort. Through reconstruction following the earthquake, major arterial roads such as Showa-dori Avenue, Hibiya-dori Avenue, and Harumi-dori Avenue were constructed. The Uogashi fish market in Nihombashi was relocated to Tsukiji. And, famed iron bridges, including Azuma-bashi, Komagata-bashi, Kototoi-bashi, Umaya-bashi, were built across the Sumida River, creating a bridge museum of sorts. Goto foresaw that the movement of people and goods would become more active as society transitioned from the industrial age to the information age, declaring "the number of automobiles would more than double in the years following the earthquake." Goto created a plan that combined radial roads and ring roads and established a ring road configuration that had not been implemented in Europe or the United States. The ring road plan for eight roads, including the roads we affectionately call Kanni (Ring Road No. 2) and Kan-nana (Ring Road No. 7), was determined by the project for reconstruction.

In the area of comfort, Dojunkai apartment complexes and various parks were developed, including Sumida Park, Kinshi Park, Hamacho Park, and Yokohama's Yamashita Park. There were small plazas created at the edges of bridges, parks attached to schools, and greenery placed in the center divider area of Showa-dori Avenue to name a few of the improvements. (Following the war, this space was converted to road.) Hibiya Public Hall was built as a venue for citizens to debate politics. The principle ever present in 20th century urban theory is efficiency, while the principle that permeates 21st century urban theory is comfort. At the time, Goto's urban concept balanced these two principles well.

### Putting the "Spirit of Autonomy" first

Goto's urban theory placed great importance on local development. When serving as mayor of Tokyo, Goto said, "Autonomy means that each and every citizen is mayor," and "Autonomy exists within the citizens and no place else." This view stipulates that rather than being dealt a share of authority and fiscal resources from some entity, conveying policies from local communities is indeed local autonomy. Goto said that "city planning must not veer away from a healthy spirit of autonomy." Cities naturally seek freedom and autonomy. And, with that comes obligation and responsibility for each and every citizen. Goto stipulated that "city planning should permit free business," and that "rail-

## Shinpei Goto's Urban Concept: Advocating Governance with Human Life at the Core

### Yasushi Aoyama



Showa-dori Avenue in the early Showa era, looking in the direction of Kyobashi-kobikicho from near Edo-bashi Bridge. Source: *Daitokyoshashincho* (Great Tokyo Photo Album), 1930.



Just after the Great Kanto Earthquake. The army makes emergency repairs to the deck of the Azuma-bashi Bridge, which was destroyed by fire. Source: "The Reconstruction of Tokyo" published by the City of Tokyo.

"Opinion on the Reconstruction of the Imperial Capital" to the cabinet. Stating, "Tokyo's recovery is not simply an issue for one city, but rather a fundamental problem for Japan's growth and the lives of its people," Goto created the reconstruction plan.

Various types of urban facilities centered around human life were created through reconstruction, including Dojunkai apartment complexes built using fire resistant construction, which aimed to be a prototype for modern living, as well as many parks, such as Yokohama's Yamashita Park, which should be called Japan's first seaside park, and Tokyo's Sumida Park, which became Japan's first riverside park, and Hibiya Public Hall as a place for citizens to gather to discuss issues.

In Japan, the word *machizukuri*, a word expressed in hiragana meaning community-focused urban development, is becoming more commonly used than *toshikeikaku*, a word for city planning expressed using four Kanji characters. In Europe as well, the term "spatial planning" is now used more often than "land use plan." And, in the United States, what used to be referred to as "growth management policy" is now called "comprehensive planning." In either case, when considering



ways, waterworks and sewerage, electricity and gas, markets, and ports" should be "public services run by cities," concluding "city planning that deviates from the spirit of autonomy is useless."

Modern city governance theory denounces the top-down approach to governance and speaks of governance in which the authorities and citizens cooperate as equals. Goto pioneered city governance theory.

Goto understood cities not only from a macro perspective, but also by understanding the area and the individuals. There is more demand for creative abilities in an advanced information society as opposed to the mass production society of the industrial age. Goto once wrote, "survive using science and information."

Goto put great importance on the feasibility of city planning. In Japan and abroad, there are many ideal city plans. However, few have been realized. Goto has a place in history because his plan was realized, albeit not in its entirety.

### Building the foundation for urban planning

The reconstruction plan was greatly downsized from the original plan. This was due to the fact that land rights holders were opposed to land readjustment plans. The budget for the reconstruction project was also cut to just one tenth of the original amount. Goto was told that "he was defeated." However, Goto was more concerned about recovery than saving his reputation, and carried out large-scale land readjustment projects, aware of their unpopularity. As a result, land adjustment was implemented over an area close to that

consumed by fires caused by the earthquake, and the foundation for Tokyo's current urban planning was established.

Urban planning is not the act of taking a blank page and drawing a picture. Plans are destined to change towns where people really live and work, while at the same time, preserving their way of life and industries. Goto drew up his urban plan based on such realities faced by cities. We still use the roads, bridges, parks, and public hall that Goto built. In contrast to these accomplishments, we must reflect on what we have left for future generations.



*Daitokyo toyoichi no rakuten Sumida Koen no haru*, a 1930s era postcard depicting spring in Sumida Park. From the collection of the Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library.



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Tokyo City Public Hall, which would go on to become Hibiya Public Hall (pictured in the center) Source: *Daitokyoshashincho* (Great Tokyo Photo Album), 1930.