

# To create a vibrant atmosphere in the city

Kitakyushu City



## Background and Reason for the Project

In the central area of Kokura-kita Ward, in the centre of Kitakyushu City, Uomachi shopping street on the main street which runs north to south, has flourished since long ago as a regional shopping street, playing the important role of the commercial centre in this area.

However, due to the declining population of the city, the advanced aging of society and the influence of the expansion of large shopping centres from suburban areas, visitor traffic and sales have declined and the shopping street faces problems such as the withdrawal of large commercial facilities and an increased number of vacant shops on the street. Under these circumstances, it has become important to prevent shoppers from leaving for the suburbs and increase the number of visitors.



## Project Aim and Outline, Features and Innovation

### (1) Facility development and attracting large events to create a vibrant atmosphere

To create a vibrant atmosphere in the central area of the city, Kitakyushu City developed the following facilities in collaboration with the private sector over a period of about six years, starting in 2008.

- Established a park and developed the roads around it to allow for holding events in front of the Shinkansen station, a highly convenient location where people can gather easily
- Established a commercial facility specializing in manga and animation in an empty building after a large commercial facility's withdrawal
- Established an arcade roof over the road between shopping streets so that visitors can shop without getting wet when it rains
- Established a square to allow the holding of large events near the department store in the centre of the city

Making use of the developed urban infrastructure and facilities where visitors can gather and aiming to attract people to the city to create a vibrant atmosphere, the city has held large events such as fashion shows for young girls and pop-culture festivals including a manga and animation festival, which visitors come to from across

Japan. They have also actively attracted various private events. As a result, the city annually had over four million visitors in the fiscal year 2018, exceeding the annual target of three million set to be achieved by the fiscal year 2020.

(2) Use of unused real estate through renovation

Not on the initiative of the government but as a collaboration between Uomachi shopping street and real estate owners, the city has held 13 renovation classes since FY 2011 to find and develop human resources with renovation knowledge, and engaged with them in the City Renovation Project to reuse vacant shops. As a result, renovation techniques provided by private businesses increased the number of projects making use of unused real estate including vacant buildings by 50, creating jobs for more than 600 people and improving the value of the area.

This project has gathered attention nationwide and improved the awareness of the city's City Renovation Project. A lot of municipal governments from across Japan have visited Kitakyushu City every year, which is improving the image of the city.

Since Uomachi shopping street is the first shopping street that installed an arcade roof on a public street in Japan and is open to new things, the renovation was successful under the initiative of not the public sector but the private sector.



(3) Holding of a night market on a public street

An open-café business was started along with the holding of a night market on a public street, which became possible by obtaining approval as a special zone from the national government and being allowed to sell food, beverages and other things on a public street, which was until then not allowed.

It helped recover visitor traffic in the shopping street at night and resulted in the opening of restaurants where young people, a new customer segment, gather in vacant shops.

(4) Engagement as an SDG model shopping street

Because the city was approved as the first SDG model city in Asia by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) in April 2018, Uomachi shopping street decided to aim to become the first SDG model shopping street in Japan as a shopping street with innovative characteristics.

To be more specific, the city has introduced LED lights for the lightning in the arcade, installed solar panels on the joint arcade roof and engaged in the Cool Choice

initiative from an environmental perspective. It also holds Machi-zemi (Uozemi), where shop owners on the shopping street provide various knowledge to customers as lecturers from an educational perspective and promote the City Renovation Project and cashless payment from an industrial perspective.



### **Future Developments (expected effects and project vision and issues)**

The city's future vision includes the use of Mikuni World Stadium. It opened in March 2018 and has become the home stadium of Kitakyushu City's professional football team with a capacity of 15 thousand spectators. In fiscal year 2019, it was the pre-training-camp site of the Welsh rugby team, a participant country of the Rugby World Cup, and 15 thousand citizens came and cheered for the team at the open training session and

supported their great games. The stadium also holds events other than sports, such as outdoor music festivals and firework displays. Such projects lead to an increase in the non-resident population in the area. The city wishes this to lead to rejuvenating the entire city by enhancing the attraction of the city in cooperation with the private sector, and increasing the number of visitors from inside and outside the city, outside the prefecture and overseas.

### **Reference URLs**

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#### **Terminologies and Coined Terms Used**

Cool Choice: A national campaign to promote "smart choices" that contribute to energy-saving and low-carbon products, services and actions that Japan is proud of to the world.

It refers to, for example, actively choosing to purchase eco-friendly cars and build eco-friendly housing.