

Creating a Major Hub for Promoting Healthy Longevity

Obu City



Background

In fiscal 1988, Aichi Prefecture drew up the *Aichi Kenko no Mori* Basic Plan and established *Aichi Kenko no Mori*, a cluster of specialised institutions for promoting good health and for medical and welfare services in an 80-hectare area straddling the city of Obu and the town of Higashiura. The city of Obu followed it up with the establishment of an advisory board for the creation of a new industry foothold around *Aichi Kenko no Mori* in fiscal 2000 and came up with a proposal in fiscal 2001 for creating a new industry foothold.

Regional efforts to promote healthy longevity gained momentum in fiscal 2005 with the establishment of the prefecture-led *Aichi Kenko no Mori* promotion council. This council aims to create an Aichi Prefecture with healthy longevity by starting an association that would promote the collection of industries contributing to healthy longevity. The association would encourage cooperation among government, industry and academia in this new industry field of promoting healthy longevity.

Based on such moves, Obu and Higashiura began drawing up the Wellness Valley initiative in fiscal 2005. This marked the start of studies on creating a major exchange hub for promoting healthy longevity through effective use of the Wellness Valley. The Wellness Valley hosts numerous institutions related to health, medical, and welfare services. Such institutions include the National Centre for Geriatrics and Gerontology, as well as Aichi Health Plaza, which offers accommodation and is equipped with a fitness room and other indoor exercise facilities.

Purpose of Project

Obu City, and the Higashiura Town in Chita-gun, have branded *Aichi Kenko no Mori* and its vicinity as Wellness Valley. *Aichi Kenko no Mori* hosts a cluster of facilities related to health and medical, welfare and nursing care services. Under the Wellness Valley initiative, the two municipalities aim to create a major hub in this region for promoting healthy longevity. Japan faces a super-aging society, with no international precedent. In Wellness Valley, organisers hope to push ahead with advanced measures to resolve challenges confronting the super-aging society across a wide range of fields, including health promotion, medical services, welfare and industrial development. They hope to realise this by working with related institutions, local residents and people in the industry sectors concerned. Information about these efforts will be shared with local governments throughout Japan.

Outline of Project

The project will carry out specific measures in many fields, so Wellness Valley will grow into a major exchange hub for promoting healthy longevity.

◆Creating and nurturing industries related to healthy longevity, such as health, medical services, welfare and nursing care

1. Coordination among related institutions (business operators, universities and administrative offices, etc.) to conduct demonstration tests of advanced measures
2. Assistance for matching business corporations

in the region with manufacturers in the fields of medical and welfare services that have nationwide sales channels

3. Road construction and maintenance in surrounding areas, as well as infrastructure construction and upgrades, including for water supply and sewage systems

◆Exchanges and revitalisation by attracting people

1. Organising events to attract people at the initiative of a working group of related institutions
2. Promoting tourism targeted at middle-age and older people who have keen interest in healthy longevity

◆Land use plan

To promote the measures described above, the project will divide Wellness Valley into four areas--a medical and welfare zone, a health exchange zone, a healthy life zone and a health industry zone--with the aim of creating a major hub for promoting healthy longevity in a well-planned way.

◆Establishing consortia

1. Creating a Wellness Valley promotion council as the anchor group for implementing the Wellness Valley initiative and holding meetings of the council
2. Organising an execution committee tasked with considering and implementing specific measures, as well as working groups
3. Providing information to the personnel of related business corporations and local residents
 - Publishing featured articles in the publicity journal, introducing the Wellness Valley initiative on cable television programmes, providing information at medical equipment exhibitions and trade fairs, coordinating business negotiations, holding study sessions on the development of so-called activity support equipment, which assists mobility functions

4. One-stop contact

The Wellness Valley Promotion Office of the Obu municipal government's Planning and Policy Section operates a one-stop contact to deal with inquiries from business corporations that hope to work with health and medical services and nursing care institutions located in Wellness Valley

Features and Advanced Aspects

- ◆Expert institutions in health and medical services, nursing care and other related fields are involved in the project. They include the National Centre for Geriatrics and Gerontology; the Aichi Health Plaza Comprehensive Health Science Centre; the Aichi Children's Health and Medical Centre; *Ruminasu Obu*, which is a nursing care and health service facility for the elderly; stock company *Genki no Sato*; *Aichi Kenko no Mori* park; Shigakkan University; and local chambers of commerce and industry.
- ◆The city of Obu and the neighbouring town of Higashiura work together to carry out the project as a wide-area initiative.
- ◆In addition to cooperation among government, industry and academia, the project encourages the participation of local residents.
- ◆The project offers opportunities for demonstration tests for products and systems that are devised by business corporations and university professors.

Effects of Project

The project supported the development and nurturing of industries and promoted exchange programmes to attract many people by making good use of a cluster of facilities related to healthy longevity. The aim was to create a major hub, in terms of both software and hardware, for promoting healthy longevity.

For developing and nurturing industries, the

project encouraged collaborations between participating institutions and local business corporations, mainly in the city of Obu and the town of Higashiura, in the hope of supporting the birth of new products and services related to healthy longevity in the region. In fiscal 2014, information on 46 cases of specific needs and so-called seeds was collected primarily from facilities related to healthy longevity and companies that manufacture and sell medical and welfare equipment, and 11 collaborative projects were successfully brokered. The term "seeds" refers to solutions, such as technologies and know-how, owned by institutions and business corporations that have the potential of being commercialised or used in products. Such efforts are still under way.

The project allowed a wide range of business corporations to carry out model projects in Obu and Higashiura, in which demonstration tests were conducted for products under development, and to work on improvements on issues that were discovered during the tests.

Model Projects

1. Under the concept of meals that help prevent osteoporosis, the National Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology, *Genki no Sato* and Shigakkan University jointly developed a diet rich in calcium, vitamin D and vitamin K, all nutrients that are vital to bone tissue. The diet was reflected in the release in 2014 of a "bento" boxed lunch named Wellness Valley *honebuto* (large-boned) bento, which mainly uses vegetables grown by local farmers. In 2015, Wellness Valley Mediterranean-style *washoku* (Japanese cuisine) bento, which features many ingredients with strong antioxidant effects, was released.
2. In 2014, a smartphone-based system for keeping an eye on dementia sufferers was demonstrated during simulated training on a

search for dementia sufferers who wander. Under the system, developed by the Nagoya Institute of Technology's e-Health Laboratory, smartphones with a downloaded dedicated app detect signals from sensors attached to wandering dementia sufferers and provide their families or other related people with location information. Compared with sensors incorporating the Global Positioning System, the sensor used in the system is smaller and lighter. It also features a low price and long-time use of more than one year without battery recharging. These measures to develop and nurture industries were aimed at encouraging business corporations to venture into new fields and served as encouragement for local companies to enter the business field of promoting healthy longevity.

Programmes to promote exchanges and attract people included a "stamp rally" event in which participants walk around Wellness Valley to collect stamps at individual facilities and a festival under the theme of promoting healthy longevity. Such programmes, intended to facilitate people-to-people exchanges and raise public recognition of Wellness Valley, have contributed to strengthening the valley's image as a place dedicated to healthy longevity.



Wellness Valley *honebuto* (large-boned) bento created by collaboration among government, industry and academia Community



A demonstration test for a system to keep an eye on wandering dementia sufferers (a smartphone-based system to search for elderly people)

Problems and Responses

◆Before Project Implementation

Due to the absence of specialised coordinators for pairing facilities related to healthy longevity with business corporations in the city of Obu and the town of Higashiura, administrative offices and local chambers of commerce and industry had to assume the main role for brokering project collaborations.

As administrative offices and local chambers of commerce and industry lacked knowledge of individual facilities' research needs and seeds, as well as of companies outside the region, the personnel involved started with visits to researchers at the facilities and relevant people at companies to build relationships and gather basic information, including what they do and what their needs are.

◆After Start of Project

In linking facilities related to healthy longevity and local business corporations, mainly auto parts manufacturers, the project worked on not only direct collaborations between the two sides but also so-called "producer-seller-driven model" tie-ups involving the mediation of companies that manufacture and sell medical and welfare equip-

ment. As there are only a few medical equipment manufacturers and sellers in this region, collaborations with medical equipment manufacturers in Tokyo's Hongo area were explored. But it was not easy to create collaborative opportunities due to the difficulty of maintaining frequent communication between related parties located far apart, in Tokyo and Aichi. Project organisers plan to look at welfare equipment manufacturers based in neighbouring areas as potential tie-up partners, instead of focusing only on medical equipment.

As neither facility was related to healthy longevity nor did local business corporations have specialised knowledge on their tie-up partners, exchanges of information and views often do not go smoothly. The municipal governments of Obu and Higashiura as well as local chambers of commerce and industry, therefore, play mediator roles to help facilitate communication between the two sides. Local business corporations' lack of sales channels for medical and welfare equipment is another major hurdle standing in the way of smooth business collaborations.

Outlook

By setting up a mechanism for supporting the creation of new products and services related to healthy longevity in this region, the project aims to increase the number of companies entering new business fields and attract related companies to the region.

By promoting efforts to attract many people and bring vitality to the region under the theme of healthy longevity, the project will communicate the image of Wellness Valley as a place that contributes to healthy longevity, in a bid to encourage population inflows to the region.

Reference URL

<http://www.city.obu.aichi.jp/wv/> *Japanese

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