

Makuhari New City and Makuhari Messe as International Exchange Center

By Arata Hidetomo

About 30 minutes from Tokyo International Airport at Narita on your way to metropolitan Tokyo on an expressway, you can see a group of high-rise buildings with modern architectural designs. This is "Makuhari New City" including the "Makuhari Messe" complex, where the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) Economic Ministers' Meeting will be held in September. Makuhari New City is one of the most successful cases of a new urban area developed to become a center for Japan's international exchanges in the 21st century. More specifically, Makuhari New City has been developed as a multi-faceted new city with urban facilities for international exchange activities, industrial development and cultural promotion.

Chiba City, where Makuhari Messe is located, has been designated a model city for the "Teletopia Plan" and the "High-Vision Plan" drawn up by Japan's Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications.

From residential community to "new city"

With the rapid expansion of the Japanese economy since the 1960s, the concentration of population in metropolitan Tokyo has become extremely high. In response, the Chiba prefectural government has promoted the construction of new, large-scale residential communities. The Makuhari area was chosen for the development of a new metropolis not only with a residential community but also with urban business facilities.

The name "Makuhari" began to be heard in 1989, when Makuhari Messe was opened. This was Japan's first full-scale, multi-functional facility capable of hosting major trade shows and conventions simultaneously. The opening of Makuhari

Messe marked the advent of an era of major conventions in Japan.

In addition to its business facilities, represented by Makuhari Messe and other office buildings, the reason for Makuhari being called a "new city" is based on its integration of residential, academic and entertainment facilities. I will now describe each of these in more detail.

Business zone

When we hear the word 'Makuhari,' our impression of it tends to be based on Makuhari Messe and the Tokyo Motor Shows held there every other year. In fact, over 6 million people visit Makuhari Messe every year. Makuhari Messe has been highly evaluated for its vast exhibition floor space and ability to host trade shows and conventions at the same time. In addition to major trade shows by the electronics and computer industries, such as "COMDEX," "World PC Expo," and "SEMICON Japan," Makuhari Messe has

hosted a number of major conventions and conferences, including the "World Energy Council" in 1995, in which 5,200 people from about 100 countries participated. The cumulative sum of visitors since its opening totals 47 million to date. However, Makuhari Messe has been experiencing intensified competition from the recently opened "Pacifico Yokohama" in Yokohama City, and "Tokyo Big Sight" in Tokyo's waterfront development area.

In response, construction is under way to increase the size of the halls at Makuhari Messe in order to expand its facilities. One of Makuhari Messe's major



Tokyo Motor Shows



Makuhari New City

advantages is that it includes an adjacent parking space for about 6,000 cars. It is said that Tokyo Motor Shows are now held there because so many visitors come by car.

Business facilities have been accumulating steadily, centering on the Makuhari Messe complex. In the late 1980s, a growing number of companies relocated their head offices from metropolitan Tokyo to Makuhari because of the skyrocketing office rents in downtown Tokyo. To date, the number of companies locating their offices in Makuhari has reached over 200, including 13 foreign companies. The total number of corporate employees working in Makuhari now stands at about 35,000. In addition to companies with their own corporate buildings, about 100 companies each have established offices in the "Makuhari Techno Garden" and "World Business Garden" buildings, the latter of which houses Asia Advisory Service K.K., a company which provides such services as office leasing, consulting and secretarial services to foreign companies wishing to set up in Japan.

Residential zone

Makuhari's residential zone is even more advanced and ambitious in its scope than the business zone. Under the name of "Makuhari Bay Town," this residential zone is planned to accommodate some 8,900 residences. With an average floor space of 86 square meters (926 square feet), each residence will have far more living space than the average typical residence in metropolitan Tokyo.

This condominium complex called "Patios" features a different architectural design for each building. Built along a main street, each condominium building has shops and restaurants on the first floor. Fifteen buildings in the medium-rise area and a part of the high-rise area have been built, and the number of occupants has been increasing steadily. The atmosphere of this residential zone is quite different from that of traditional Japanese residential areas or even more recent conventional high-rise residential communities. In short, the atmosphere is something totally different from the rest of Japan.

Underground facilities for this residential zone are also unique, with utility tunnels which extend to a total of 4.2 kilometers (2.6 miles). These are equipped with an air-pressurized duct system for garbage disposal. Garbage discarded in slots situated at various locations is transported by wind at a velocity of 20 to 30 meters per second to the Makuhari Clean Center, where it is compacted before shipment to an incineration plant.

Academic zone

The academic zone is also growing steadily, though this is not known by most Japanese people. The Institute of Developing Economies, one of the world's largest research institutions for social sciences, will be relocated here from downtown Tokyo. Other educational institutions which have moved to Makuhari include the University of the Air and Kanda University of International Studies.

Makuhari Sogo Senior High School was opened in 1996, as a new type of public high school. In this school, students are free to plan their own curriculums. Its architectural design is so innovative that people tend not to realize that it's a school at first glance. In addition, Utase Elementary and Junior High Schools, located in the residential zone, have been designated for experimental education using unique programs.

Entertainment zone

With a combined total of 2,300 guest rooms, six hotels are already open for business in Makuhari. Each hotel, with a unique architectural design, contributes to the individuality of the Makuhari area. The Town Center area also accommodates commercial establishments such as a shopping mall, creating an urban atmosphere



Mihama-en

with many people.

Another feature of the Makuhari area lies in the concept of an "Urban Resort with Water and Greenery," with 20% of the total area devoted to parks. The Japanese-style garden Mihama-en, a landscape garden in the go-round style with an arrangement of trimmed trees, and large rocks, is located at a corner of Makuhari Seaside Park, the largest park in Makuhari. At the Japanese tea-ceremony house in the Mihama-en garden, visitors can also experience the traditional Japanese tea ceremony. There is also a white sand beach where many people, including corporate employees, go sun bathing.

While the number of more casual drinking and dining establishments, such as Japanese-style bars, *izakaya* or pubs was initially rather small, it has grown, with sushi bars, *yakitori* bars and *ramen* parlors increasing in line with the growth of the community. Of course, there are also karaoke establishments where people can engage in Japanese-style business communications.

Makuhari New City will ultimately accommodate 150,000 corporate employees and 30,000 residents. I believe it will become Japan's model metropolitan area of the future in the 21st century.

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