



City profile

Sejong Si (City): are TOD and TND models effective in planning Korea's new capital?



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ABSTRACT

Sejong Si (Sejong City), the second capital city of South Korea, is a new city initiated to achieve the national policy agenda of balanced territorial development by mitigating the excessive concentration of public and private facilities in the Seoul metropolitan area (SMA). The master plan for Sejong City was formulated in 2005 through a project initiated by the Korean government and is noteworthy in that it presents a new urban design paradigm of construction reflecting the Korean experience. This paper explores the characteristics of Sejong City's urban structure and neighborhood design. One major characteristic is Sejong City's ring-shaped design (decentralized and empty in the central area), which makes the city structurally distinct from other modern cities with hierarchical and symbolic structures. Another major characteristic is the presence of approximately 20 neighborhood units located in accordance with the ring-shaped structure. This is consistent with the transit-oriented development (TOD) and traditional neighborhood development (TND) systems. The urban design method based on TOD and TND models has been effective in terms of Sejong City's decentralized urban structure. These results are expected to provide a better understanding of urban design for future development projects.

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Introduction

Planning a new capital city requires a full combination of the country's urban design techniques and political, economic, and academic knowledge, and the physical planning of a new capital involves not only a solution to the country's urban spatial needs but also its national vision and philosophy. That is, a capital city has crucial implications for urban design.

For example, Canberra, designed by W. Griffin, is a representative capital city planned in the early twentieth century famous for its modernized planning based on the concept of a symbolic axis and a garden city. Brazilia, designed by L. Costa, also reflects modernized planning in which central government buildings are located along the symbolic axis. These new capital cities of the modern era have been criticized for their excessively hierarchical planning, but they are all symbols of urban design trends. Plans for these new capital cities have meaningful implications not only for urban planning and design but also for national land-planning strategies for balanced development.

Since then, in the late twentieth century, several new capital cities were established in developing countries, such as Putrajaya in Malaysia, Islamabad in Pakistan, and Astana in Kazakhstan, which were under construction or completed. In addition, developed countries such as Japan planned to build new capital cities for balanced development. Japan planned to mitigate its overly centralized metropolitan area (i.e., Tokyo) but never achieved it. These new capital cities were planned and built for the purpose of developing national lands, achieving balanced development, and facilitating political gains, but their urban structures and designs also had some symbolic meaning in terms of representing urban design trends.

Historical development

In the case of South Korea, there was a plan for a new capital in the 1970s, when the country saw steady national economic growth, but at that time, the policy to move the capital was not realized because the then president of South Korea (Jeonghui Park), who pushed this policy, was killed in 1979. Planning a new capital city scheme in those days typically aimed at addressing the problem of overpopulation in the Seoul metropolitan area and ensuring enhanced security. Because the confrontation between

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South Korea and North Korea at the time was far more serious than the present and Seoul is closer to the Military Demarcation Line than Pyongyang, the South Korean government sought to move the capital southward as part of its national security strategy (Joongang Ilbo, February 11, 1977), experts who took part in the planning process at that time played a pivotal role in South Korea's contemporary urban planning and design.

It was in the early twenty-first century that the policy to move national government offices was realized. In the 2000s, the relocation of the capital was pursued again as one of the election pledges of Moo-hyun Roh, then a presidential candidate. With the relatively low tension between South Korea and North Korea, the primary goal of the relocation policy was to relieve the highly concentrated capital area and promote balanced national development. The South Korean economy grew quickly in the 1970s and 1990s, and in recent decades, unbalanced national development models led by the government were adopted to pursue compressed growth. As a result, physical and economic resources were focused on certain industries and areas, resulting in a sharp increase in the country's GNI per capita from \$82 (1960) to \$16,000 (2005). Although the country achieved rapid economic growth within a short period of time, this gave rise to side effects such as the over-concentration of the population in the Seoul metropolitan area (capital region) and unbalanced development across the country. This overconcentration increased social costs such as traffic congestion, environmental pollution, and decreased house/supply ratios, resulting in decreases in the quality of life for people residing in the capital region. The capital region, which accounts for about 11.8% of the country in terms of the gross area, is expected to cover more than 50% of all people in the country by 2030 (Fig. 1).

The South Korean government reorganized its national development strategy for the twenty-first century to focus on balanced development across all regions and thus promoted the construction of the new capital city as a core project designed to enhance national competitiveness by fundamentally addressing the over-concentration issue and finally realizing balanced national development.

For this reason, the location of the new capital was considered an especially important factor. Because of President Moo-hyun Roh's pledge to create a new capital in Chungcheong Province, several candidate sites were identified within the region and assessed to determine the final site. The factors considered in this process included the site's potential to facilitate balanced national development and further growth as well as the need for conservation.

Finally, the Yeongi-Gongju region of Chungcheong Province was selected. The framework for the creation of the new capital was developed from April 2003 to October 2004 (Fig. 2).

However, the Constitutional Court ruled the Special Act on the Establishment of the New Capital City, which served as the legal basis for the new administrative capital, to be unconstitutional, bringing the project to a halt. The Court reasoned that there was a "customary constitution" recognized by the people of South Korea that Seoul was the capital and that a national referendum was required for any amendments. To avoid the political risk that could arise from a national referendum, President Moo-hyun Roh instead sought to build an administration-centered city, a plan that would exclude the relocation of the presidential office of Cheong Wa Dae, the Supreme Court, and the National Assembly.

Despite the change in plans, however, the construction did not proceed smoothly. The Myung-bak Lee Administration, which followed the Roh presidency, attempted to change the city into a science-and-education city. However, this plan failed to garner a national consensus, and the original plan to build an administration-centered city was finally approved.

South Korea has abundant experience planning and constructing new towns around the Seoul metropolitan area, including Bundang, Ilsan, and new planned industrial cities such as Changwon and Ansan in the 1970s and 1990s, the country's economic development era. At the time, various urban design trends were accepted as part of the development plan. In the case of a new capital city, the one promoted in the 1970s was related to modernized urban theory with a symbolic axis, whereas the one designed in the 2000s (a multifunctional administrative city called Sejong City) was related to current urban design theory. That is, the Sejong project is noteworthy in that it is the first grand urban planning project for South Korea in the twenty-first century and provides opportunities to showcase South Korea's expertise in planning and constructing new towns (similar to Bundang in the 1970s) (Fig. 3).

This paper examines the urban design and spatial structure of Sejong City based on the concept of transit-oriented development (TOD) and traditional neighborhood development (TND) models. More specifically, the paper provides important insights into the future direction of urban design based on the meaning and value of the planning of Sejong City. The spatial structure of Sejong City and its urban design are analyzed, and the effectiveness of the TOD and TND models in formulating this design is explained.

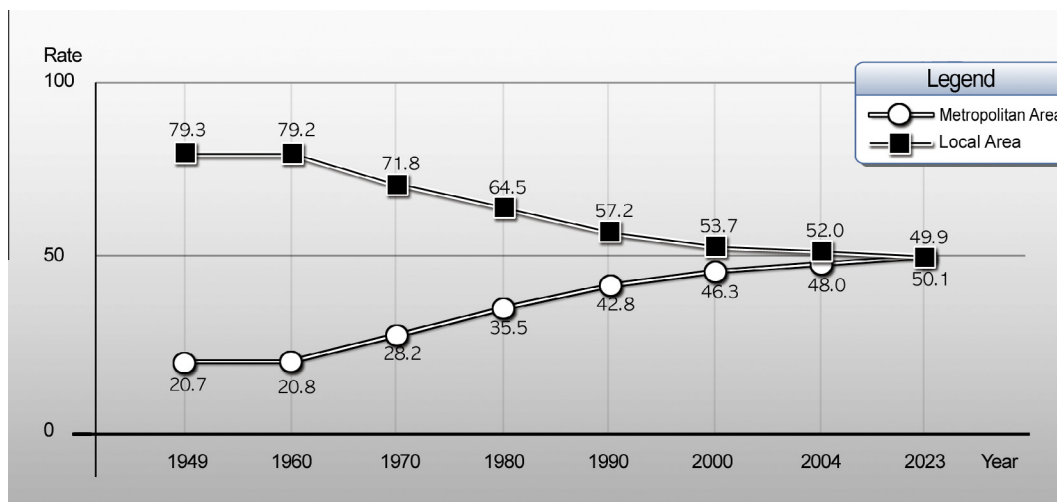


Fig. 1. The transition of the national population residing in the capital region and local areas (Ministry of Construction and Transportation, 2006).

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