

Enhancing the Habitability of Historic City Centers

Gimhae Old Downtown Urban Regeneration Project

Context and Objectives

Gimhae is a historic city that served as the center of the Gaya Kingdom and contains major heritage assets. However, due to urban expansion and the development of new towns, the old downtown experienced population decline, commercial stagnation, and declining residential conditions. In response, the project was implemented from 2018 to 2022 to restore the historic city center as a livable space and strengthen its residential functions.

Project Overview

The project was carried out as an integrated urban regeneration initiative combining physical, social, economic, and cultural approaches.

Key components include:

- Residential environment improvement
- Living SOC and community recovery
- Economic revitalization
- Heritage utilization

Implementation

Residential environment improvement focused on enhancing pedestrian conditions and housing quality. Alleyways were reorganized into pedestrian-oriented spaces through pavement improvement, traffic calming measures, and improved lighting systems, while vacant houses were remodeled into public rental housing, community facilities, and start-up spaces.

The project also promoted the development of living SOC and community recovery by establishing small-scale cultural, educational, and community facilities and introducing a resident-led approach to planning, operation, and management.

To revitalize the local economy, vacant commercial spaces were utilized as low-rent start-up spaces, and existing merchants were supported through environmental improvements and consulting programs. Cultural and historical themed streets and events contributed to increasing visitor traffic and economic activity.

In addition, heritage assets were integrated into everyday life through improved pedestrian connections, storytelling programs, and cultural events, strengthening accessibility and local identity.

Results

Through these integrated approaches, the project improved residential conditions, revitalized local commerce, strengthened community networks, and enhanced the utilization of heritage assets. As a result, the old downtown was reestablished as a connected living space where heritage and urban functions coexist.