

# How should Japan make use of vacant homes in old new towns?

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OMU researchers have found that transforming vacant homes into health care facilities can mean older adults don't have to move from their neighborhood. Credit: Haruka Kato, Osaka Metropolitan University

During Japan's 1960–90 population boom, new towns sprouted up across the nation. These new towns were quiet residential neighborhoods of suburban areas, many of which are now shrinking in terms of

inhabitants. They have become old new towns, aging neighborhoods amid Japan's population decline, frequently dotted with vacant homes.

Dr. Haruka Kato, a junior associate professor at the Graduate School of Human Life and Ecology at Osaka Metropolitan University, examined the nonlinear relationship between population decline and the urban transformation of residences to other land-use plots in old new towns. His research group wanted to explore which land uses are effective for preventing rapid population decline in new towns in Japan.

The findings were published in [Cities](#).

As a result, the study of old new towns in the Osaka [metropolitan area](#) showed that [population decline](#) correlates with the urban transformation of houses into [health care facilities](#) in old new towns in Japan. This means that urban transformation from homes to health care facilities would make it possible for older adults to continue residing where they are without needing to move elsewhere.

"The validity of our findings is supported by the Healthy New Towns program in England, which aims to explore how developing new places could create healthier and connected communities with integrated and high-quality services," said Dr. Kato.

"Old new towns, which have changed from what they were, should be further transformed into similar healthy new towns for the increasing population of older adults."

**More information:** Haruka Kato et al, Urban transformation and population decline in old New Towns in the Osaka Metropolitan Area, *Cities* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.cities.2024.104991](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2024.104991)

Provided by Osaka Metropolitan University

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