

Tsuruoka City Internationalization Plan

February 2024
Tsuruoka City

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I. Formation of Tsuruoka City's Internationalization Promotion Plan

1. Context and Objectives

With the aim of fostering grassroots international exchange and nurturing future leaders, Tsuruoka City established the Dewa Shonai International Forum in 1994. Serving as a hub for international engagement, this facility offers citizens a platform for information dissemination, diverse opportunities, and venues for cultural exchange. Through a plethora of international events and language classes, it facilitates multicultural understanding while providing crucial support to foreign residents in their daily lives, including Japanese language instruction, counseling services, and practical life guidance.

In recent years, the forces of globalization have significantly impacted Japan, resulting in a growth of foreign residents, multinational corporations, and international visitors nationwide. Concurrently, the landscape surrounding multicultural conviviality¹ policies has evolved, driven by revisions to immigration control frameworks, the advent of digitalization, and an intensified commitment to global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Tsuruoka City has experienced a corresponding rise in foreign residents, representing an array of nationalities, owing to expanded government initiatives for foreign workforce integration. Moreover, since joining the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in the gastronomy field in 2014, Tsuruoka has initiated novel exchanges with fellow UCCN members worldwide.

To capitalize on the burgeoning inbound tourism trends, the establishment of the DEGAM Tsuruoka Tourism Bureau as a Destination Management Organization (DMO)² in 2019 fortifies the city's efforts to attract tourists, projecting a rise in future inbound demand. Additionally, Tsuruoka's designation as an SDGs Future City in 2020 underscores its commitment to crafting a community where diverse values are embraced, fostering a sense of collective prosperity and contentment.

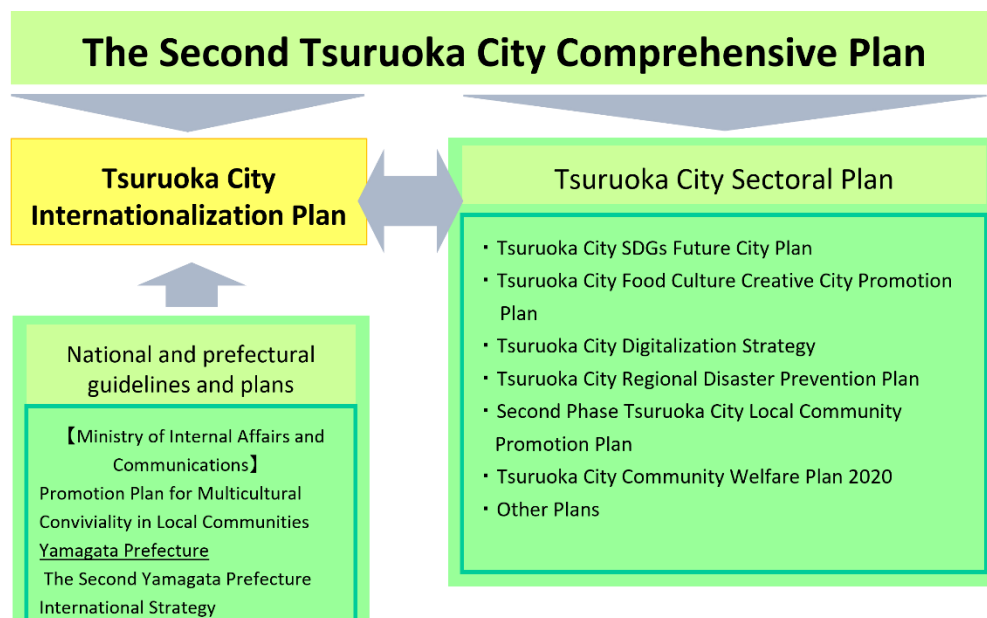
¹ People of different nationalities and ethnic groups living together as members of a local community while recognizing each other's cultural differences and building equal relationships (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, "Report of the Study Group on the Promotion of Multicultural Conviviality," March 2006).

² An organization that promotes strategic tourism region development based on the continuous collection and analysis of various types of data by bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders from the public and private sectors.

Against this dynamic backdrop, Tsuruoka City recognizes the imperative of adeptly navigating the realm of internationalization. Thus, the formulation of the "Tsuruoka City Internationalization Promotion Plan" aims to delineate the city's core philosophy and fundamental objectives for internationalization. This strategic blueprint seeks to systematically implement measures fostering a multicultural environment, where diverse cultures are celebrated, mutual recognition prevails, and internationalization efforts are fortified.

2. Positioning Plan

The "Tsuruoka City Internationalization Promotion Plan" draws inspiration from the national "Regional Multicultural Conviviality Promotion Plan (revised in September 2020)" and the "Second Yamagata Prefecture International Strategy (formulated in April 2020)". Positioned as an independent initiative under the overarching framework of the "Second Tsuruoka City Comprehensive Plan", our plan is intricately aligned with related strategies and policies. As we advance the internationalization agenda of our city, we remain steadfast in our commitment to harmonize our efforts with those of relevant stakeholders and plans.



3. Plan Duration

The plan is set for a duration of six years, spanning from fiscal year 2023 to fiscal year 2028.

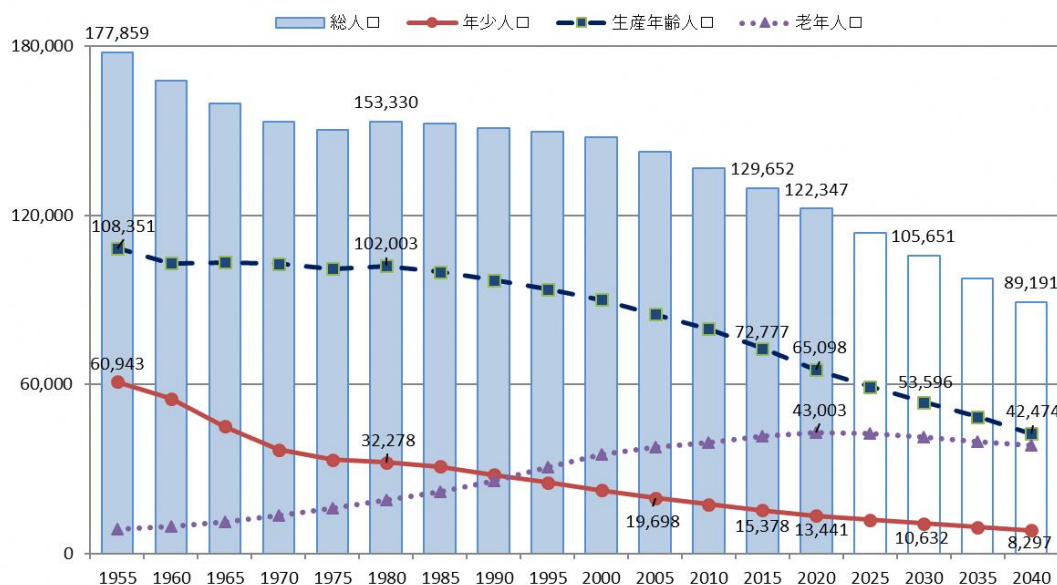
II. Current Status and Issues of Internationalization in Tsuruoka City

1. Reduction in the Population of Working Age Individuals

Tsuruoka's population reached its peak at 177,859 in 1955 but has since seen a steady decline, with figures reaching 118,692 as of December 31, 2023. Projections by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research in 2018 indicate a further decrease to 105,651 by 2030 and 89,191 by 2040. As of 2020, the population breakdown by age group is estimated to be 13,441 (11.0% of the total population) for youth, 65,098 (53.2%) for working age, and 43,003 (35.1%) for the elderly.

All across Japan, the shortage of human resources continues to escalate due to declining birth rates and an aging population. Consequently, the government has initiated deliberations on instituting a new system for the acceptance of foreign human resources. In response to the expected increase in foreign professionals, measures to address these trends are also necessary in Tsuruoka.

【Tsuruoka City Population Demographic Break Down by Age Group (youth, working, elderly)】

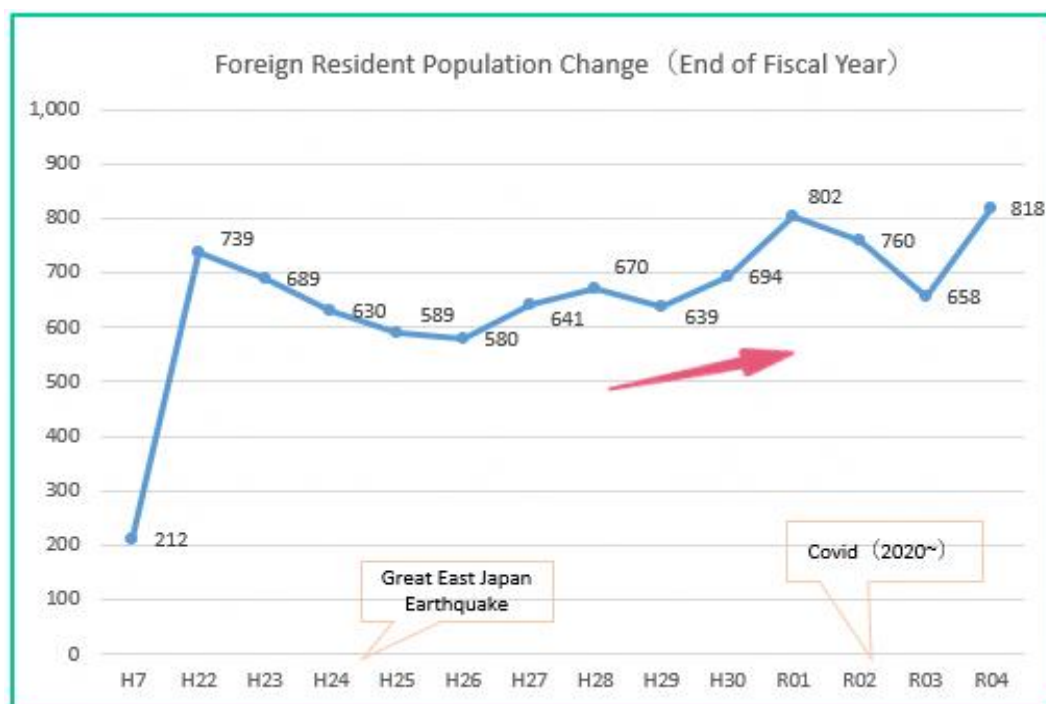


Data obtained from the National Census and the National Institute of Population & Social Security Research Projections

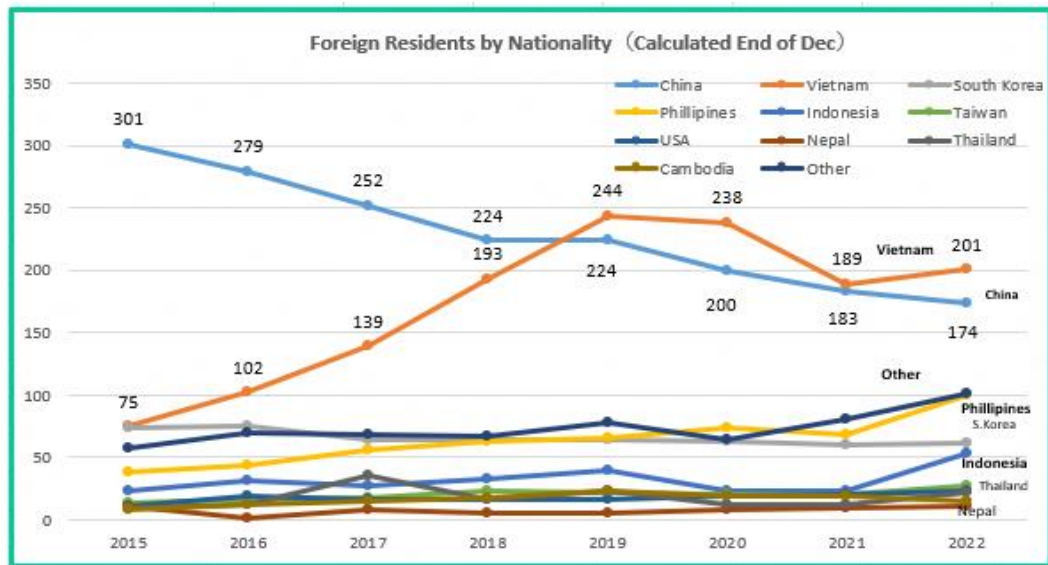
2. Growth in Foreign Resident Population & Diversity in Nationality and Residence Status: Background and Implications

In response to the escalating trend, the city has witnessed a steady rise in its foreign resident population since 2014, a trend projected to persist in the foreseeable future. Notably, there has been a significant increase in residents from Southeast Asian nations such as Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia, alongside a rise in individuals holding technical internship and study abroad visas. This diversification in nationalities and residency statuses has introduced a spectrum of challenges in daily life, including language barriers, requiring a comprehensive and proactive approach.

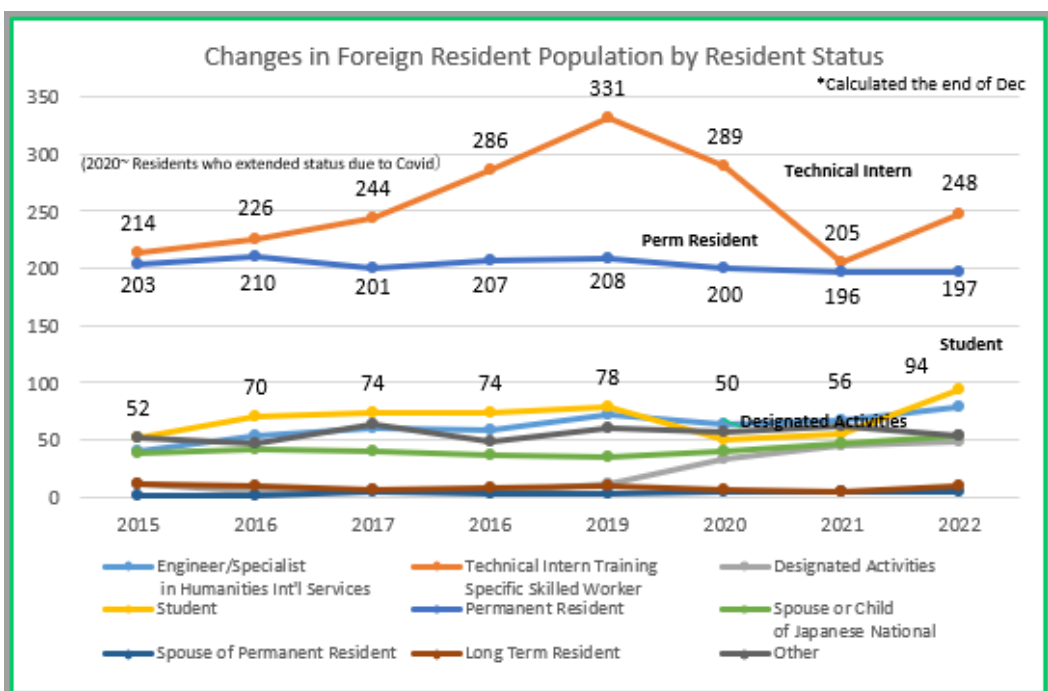
Furthermore, the expanding presence of foreign residents underscores an opportunity for greater interaction and collaboration between local and international communities. It is imperative to cultivate a culture of inclusivity and global engagement by fostering intercultural understanding across all generations, thereby enriching our collective experience through exposure to diverse perspectives and cultural exchange.



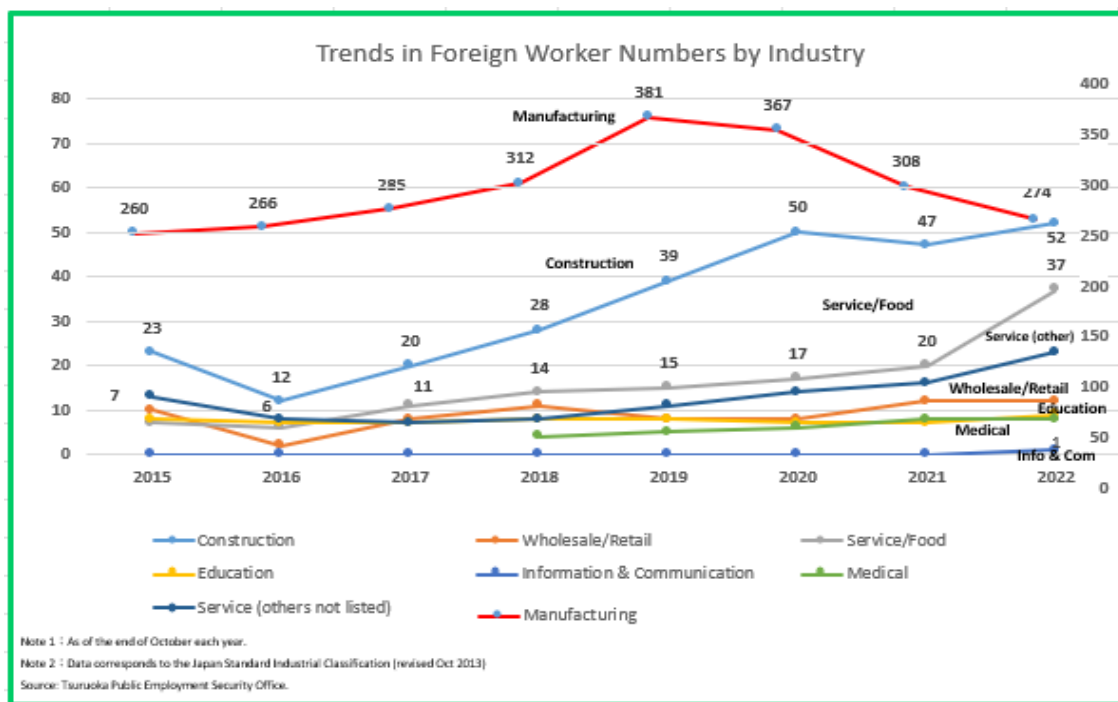
H7	H22	H23	H24	H25	H26	H27	H28	H29	H30	R01	R02	R03	R04
1995	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
212	739	689	630	589	580	641	670	639	694	802	760	658	818



	H27 2015	H28 2016	H29 2017	H30 2018	R01 2019	R02 2020	R03 2021	R04 2022
China	301	279	252	224	224	200	183	174
Vietnam	75	102	139	193	244	238	189	201
S. Korea	74	75	65	65	65	63	60	61
Philippines	39	44	56	63	66	74	68	100
Indonesia	24	31	28	33	40	24	24	53
Taiwan	14	16	18	23	22	21	20	27
USA	11	19	16	16	17	19	21	24
Nepal	11	2	8	6	5	8	9	11
Thailand	10	12	35	17	23	13	12	22
Cambodia	8	13	15	18	23	19	19	15
Other	57	70	69	67	78	65	81	101



	H27 2015	H28 2016	H29 2017	H30 2018	R01 2019	R02 2020	R03 2021	R04 2022
Engineer/Specialist in Humanities Int'l Services	40	54	61	59	72	64	67	79
Technical Intern Training Specific Skilled Worker	214	226	244	286	331	289	205	248
Designated Activities	12	5	6	4	11	34	45	49
Student	52	70	74	74	78	50	56	94
Permanent Resident	203	210	201	207	208	200	196	197
Spouse or Child of Japanese National	39	41	40	36	35	40	46	54
Spouse of Permanent Resident	2	2	4	3	3	4	4	4
Long Term Resident	11	9	7	8	9	6	5	10
Other (Special Permanent Resident, Dependent (Family Stays))	51	46	64	48	60	57	62	54



	H27 2015	H28 2016	H29 2017	H30 2018	R01 2019	R02 2020	R03 2021	R04 2022
Manufacturing	260	266	285	312	381	367	308	274
Construction	23	12	20	28	39	50	47	52
Wholesale/Retail	10	2	8	11	8	8	12	12
Service /Food	7	6	11	14	15	17	20	37
Education	8	7	7	8	8	7	7	9
Information & Communication	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Medical				4	5	6	8	8
Service (others not listed)	13	8	7	8	11	14	16	23

3. Dewa Shonai International Forum Initiatives

The Dewa Shonai International Forum was established in 1994, amidst a relatively small population of registered foreigners (212, as per the 1995 census). Its inception aimed to foster grassroots citizen-led international exchange and bolster international understanding.

Operated and managed by the Dewa Shonai International Exchange Foundation (Public Interest Foundation), the Dewa Shonai International Forum is a facility that serves as a designated hub for various initiatives. The Foundation oversees the provision of international exchange events, lectures on international understanding, Japanese language classes tailored for foreign residents, and lifestyle consultation services.

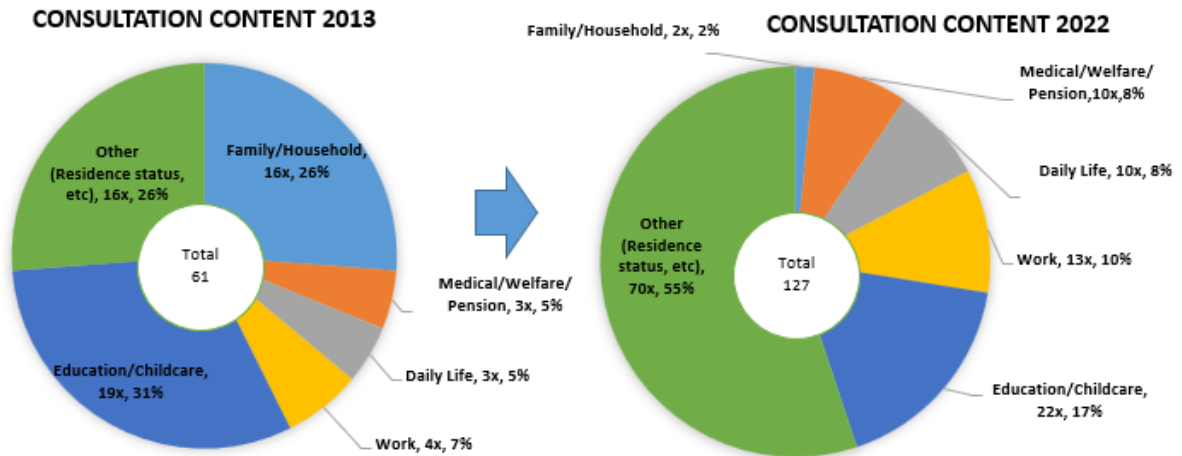
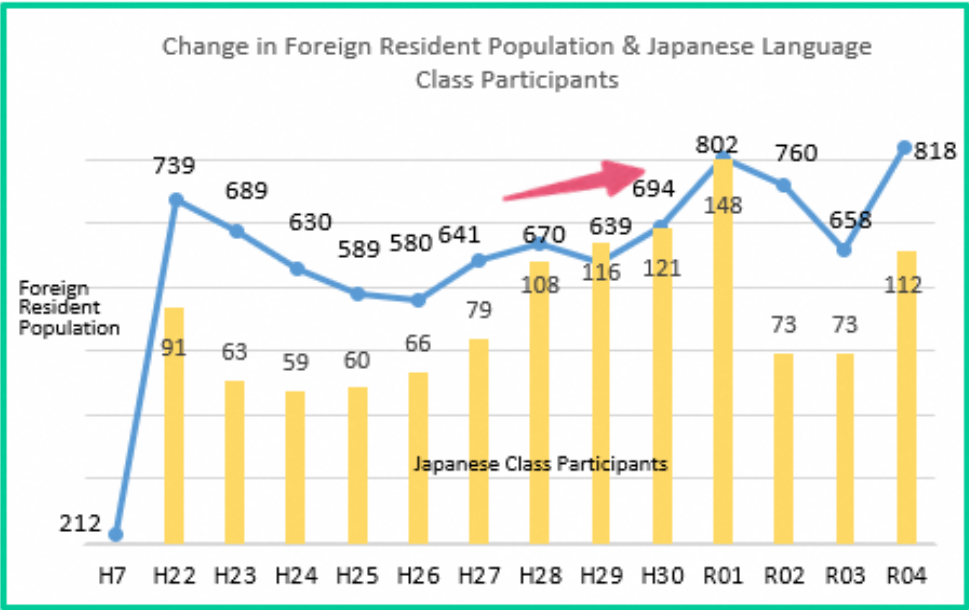
In recent years, the rising population of foreign residents has led to an increase in enrollment for Japanese language classes. Concurrently, a growing demographic of long-term foreign residents, alongside aging Japanese citizens, has heightened concerns among foreign residents regarding their future livelihoods. These concerns span various aspects, including access to healthcare, long-term care, pension provisions, and inheritance planning.

To prepare for the anticipated rise in the foreign resident population, leveraging the Dewa Shonai International Forum as a hub has become imperative. This entails cultivating a multicultural ethos to embrace and coexist harmoniously with diverse cultures, languages, and ways of life. Collaboration with specialized organizations is essential to deliver tailored support across various life stages.

Moreover, with an anticipated increase in foreign visitors for work and leisure in our city, concerted efforts in accommodating and catering to their needs have become even more important.

In a survey conducted in 2023 among foreign residents of Tsuruoka City, it was revealed that a significant number of respondents were unaware of the Japanese language classes, daily life counseling, and other services provided at Dewa Shonai International Forum. This lack of awareness was particularly concentrated among residents with shorter stays, such as technical intern trainees and foreign exchange students. Therefore, to ensure that these invaluable services are available to all residents, regardless of their length of stay,

it is imperative to promote these services in a more proactive manner.



4. Advancements in International Exchange Programs

Tsuruoka City established a sister city relationship with the city of New Brunswick, U.S.A. in 1960 and La Foa, French New Caledonia in 1995. Since then, the city has implemented a student exchange program, facilitating mutual engagement between students from both sister cities.

In 2009, a friendship agreement was established with the Southern Black Forest Nature Park in Germany, aimed at fostering exchanges for the conservation and sustainable utilization of forest resources. Additionally, in 2014, Tsuruoka City became a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in the field of gastronomy, further facilitating overseas exchange programs under the UCCN umbrella.

At the grassroots level, the "Shonai International Youth Festival" was a prominent event held annually for 15 years starting from 1985. During this festival, local youth invited foreign students to the Shonai area every summer for cultural exchange. Presently, numerous citizen groups continue to actively engage in exchange activities with individuals from diverse countries, contributing to grassroots international exchange efforts.

Notably, as part of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Tsuruoka City served as a host town³ for Germany and Moldova, promoting mutual exchange through sports. Furthermore, the International Badminton U16 Shonai event, initiated in 2019, attracted athletes from 10 countries to Tsuruoka City, where local residents enthusiastically cheered in various languages.

Looking ahead, by nurturing the next generation of leaders through cross-cultural experiences, we aim to cultivate a vibrant and globally connected community, leveraging the momentum from these international exchange initiatives to advance regional revitalization and industrial development.

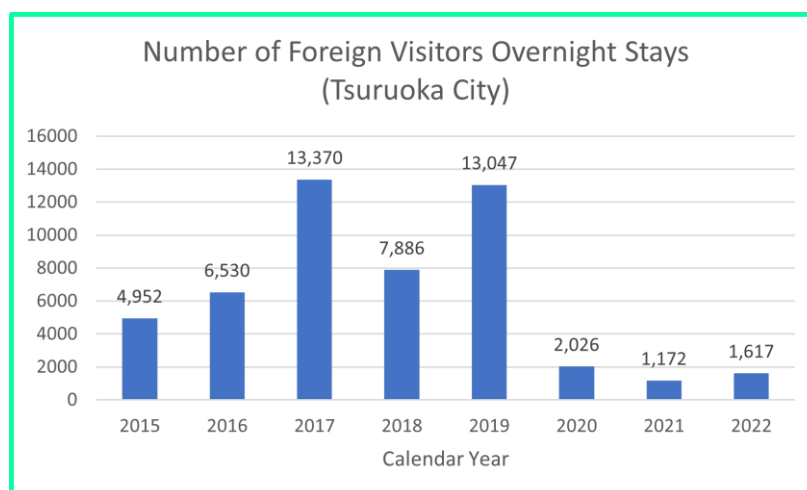
³ A local government that will promote human, economic, and cultural exchanges with participating countries and regions in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games from the perspective of contributing to a sports-oriented nation, promotion of globalization, regional revitalization, and promotion of tourism.

5. Increase in Foreign Tourists

Established in 2019 as a Destination Management Organization (DMO), DEGAM aims to position Tsuruoka as a globally recognized tourist destination and elevate "tourism" as a key economic sector supporting regional growth. Through collaborative efforts with local tourism associations, economic entities, financial institutions, the municipal government, and other stakeholders, DEGAM spearheads tourism promotion initiatives.

Since its inception, DEGAM and Tsuruoka City have collaborated to prioritize activities such as training multilingual guides, enhancing inbound traveler information dissemination, and developing commercialized travel products. Moreover, the tourist information center, accredited as Category 2⁴ by the Japan National Tourism Organization, offers comprehensive multilingual assistance to visitors at Tsuruoka Station.

Aligned with the national government's tourism promotion strategies outlined in the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Tourism (Fourth Round, 2023 Cabinet Decision), the government focuses on "inbound recovery" alongside initiatives for sustainable tourism region creation and domestic exchange expansion. Anticipating an increase in foreign tourist arrivals, efforts are underway to optimize the city's tourism infrastructure and enhance overseas visitor information distribution channels.



Data: Department of Tourism & Local Products

⁴ At least one staff member must be available in English. Must provide wide-area information. (From the Japan National Tourist Organization home page)

III. Plan's Core Concept

1. Basic Principles

Tsuruoka City: A City of Unity, Collaboration, and Happiness for All
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We aspire to transform into a vibrant multicultural community, fostering mutual recognition, cooperation, and active participation among diverse individuals, including foreign residents. Our goal is to cultivate an environment where everyone can experience happiness and live with peace of mind.

Furthermore, to ensure the provision of exemplary civic services in the future, we are committed to advancing initiatives aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We leverage the wealth of knowledge and experience gained through our city's longstanding engagement in international exchange and understanding, as well as the resources offered by the Dewa Shonai International Forum. With these, we aim to nurture a broad-minded perspective and foster mutual understanding among our citizens, thereby driving the advancement of our city.

2. Basic Objectives

① Creating a Multicultural Community

This initiative is dedicated to fostering a multicultural society where individuals from various nationalities and ethnic backgrounds can coexist harmoniously, embracing cultural diversity and respecting differing customs and values. As we are committed to enhancing life support, such as multilingual assistance and consultation services, we aim to cultivate an inclusive environment where diverse talents can thrive and contribute, ensuring that both local and foreign residents feel empowered to showcase their strengths.

② Local Revitalization and Global Society

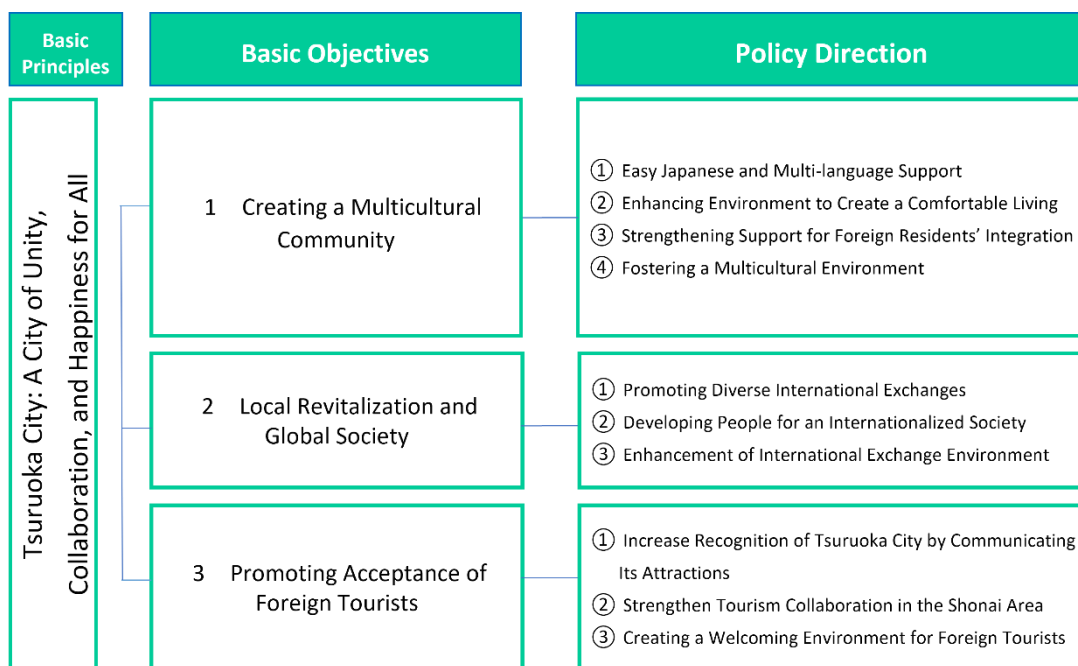
Building on our longstanding history of friendship and sister city exchanges, we are committed to advancing citizen-driven international city exchanges. Through various exchange programs involving foreign residents in our community, we aim to cultivate a local ethos of multicultural harmony and nurture individuals with a global perspective, ultimately contributing to the revitalization of our region. Furthermore, we will establish a framework for collaboration and cooperation with relevant organizations and

neighboring municipalities.

③ Promoting Acceptance of Foreign Tourists

Tsuruoka City has a wide range of rich tourism assets encompassing history, culture, nature, and culinary delights, which appeal not only to domestic visitors but also to international tourists. We plan to fully utilize these assets and focus on information dissemination to increase the recognition of our city. Moreover, we are committed to fostering an environment conducive to travel ease, and cultivating a destination that beckons visitors to return time and again.

3. Plan Structure



IV. Policy Direction

1. Creating a Multicultural Community

① Easy Japanese and Multi-language Support

To enhance communication with the growing multinational community of foreign residents in local communities and workplaces, we are advancing the adoption of "easy Japanese⁵," a simplified language format tailored to their comprehension needs. Additionally, we are committed to providing essential daily life information in multiple languages. Moreover, to address the rising demand for Japanese language acquisition among foreign residents, we are actively supporting their Japanese language learning endeavors.

Furthermore, we will cultivate international resources such as interpreters and translators, whose demand is expected to rise with the growing number of foreign residents and tourists, and will seek to enlist volunteers to support our efforts.

Examples of Initiatives:

- 1 Promoting the use of "easy Japanese" to communicate information effectively to foreign residents.
- 2 Offering administrative guidance and consultation services in various languages.
- 3 Expanding specialized Japanese language courses to meet diverse learning needs.

② Enhancing Environment to Create a Comfortable Living

We are committed to delivering services in areas such as healthcare, welfare, childcare, disaster preparedness, housing, and community engagement, ensuring a sense of security for a diverse population, including foreign residents. Moreover, we aim to foster an inclusive environment that encourages the participation of foreign residents in community initiatives and projects while promoting awareness of local norms and regulations. Additionally, we will integrate universal design principles into public facilities and infrastructure to accommodate diverse cultures and international perspectives.

⁵ Easy Japanese is a simpler and more accessible form of Japanese. It involves rephrasing difficult words and phrases to convey information in a way that is easy for many people to understand, including foreigners, the elderly, and people with disabilities. (Reference: "Guidelines for Easy Japanese for Resident Assistance," August 2020)

Examples of Initiatives:

1. Implementing lifestyle counseling in cooperation with specialized organizations.
2. Providing multilingual support in times of disaster and training for foreign volunteers.
3. Assisting children who have difficulty learning Japanese language.

③ Strengthening Support for Foreign Residents' Integration

We are committed to creating an environment that fosters the well-being and satisfaction of foreign residents by enhancing their ease of living and working. Furthermore, we will collaborate with relevant organizations to facilitate opportunities for foreign students and individuals seeking employment in our community.

Initiatives Include:

1. Organizing seminars and training sessions for local businesses
2. Collaborating with organizations that assist foreign residents
3. Providing accommodation support for foreign students in municipal housing

④ Fostering a Multicultural Environment

Given the growing number of foreign residents and the ongoing transformation into a multinational community, we are committed to enhancing our facilities to better support diversity through multilingual assistance and the effective use of ICT⁶.

Initiatives Include:

1. Implementing multilingual consultation services using ICT
2. Enhancing consultation environments with a focus on privacy considerations

2. Local Revitalization and Global Society

① Promoting Diverse International Exchanges

We aim to enhance our engagement with international friendship and sister cities, fostering citizen-led exchanges and creating opportunities for interactions between foreign and local residents. This will deepen international understanding among our citizens. Additionally, we will promote global exchanges through sports, education, and

⁶ ICT (Information and Communication Technology)

industry, and collaborate with cities renowned for their food culture through the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN).

Examples of Initiatives:

1. Mutual exchanges with friendship and sister cities involving children and friendship groups.
2. Exchange programs with overseas cities and organizations.
3. Regional development projects utilizing food and gastronomy.

② Developing People for an Internationalized Society

As English education becomes increasingly important in our globalized world, we are committed to enhancing the English proficiency of our city's children and students. To cultivate an international mindset among our citizens, particularly the next generation, we will develop human resources capable of thriving in an increasingly interconnected society. This will be achieved by creating opportunities for interactions with people from various countries.

Furthermore, to foster a sense of multicultural harmony within our community, we will create opportunities to learn about different cultures and customs and provide information on international contributions.

Examples of Initiatives:

1. International understanding education in elementary and junior high schools.
2. Hosting lectures on international understanding and multicultural conviviality.

③ Enhancement of International Exchange Environment

By leveraging ICT for exchanges with overseas countries, we aim to create an environment that allows more citizens to participate in international exchange projects and facilitates interactions between foreign and local residents. As a creative city of gastronomy, we are committed to improving the environment to promote international exchange and understanding through food and culinary traditions.

Examples of Initiatives:

1. Implement international exchange programs utilizing ICT and strengthen information dissemination.

2. Enhance the environment for cross-cultural exchange, including initiatives focused on food and gastronomy.

3. Promoting Acceptance of Foreign Tourists

① Increase Recognition of Tsuruoka City by Communicating Its Attractions

By utilizing Tsuruoka City's rich tourism resources, including history, culture, nature, and cuisine, we aim to attract more inbound visitors. We will enhance tourism content for foreigners and disseminate information to boost the city's recognition globally.

Examples of Initiatives:

1. Strengthen information dissemination using social media platforms.
2. Enhance experiential offerings for foreign visitors.

② Strengthen Tourism Collaboration in the Shonai Area

By collaborating with related organizations and neighboring municipalities, we will increase the added value of the Shonai area by combining our strengths and attractions to draw more foreign tourists.

Examples of Initiatives:

1. Implement promotion in cooperation with related organizations and neighboring municipalities.
2. Develop experiential offerings based on common themes such as spiritual culture, food, and history.

③ Creating a Welcoming Environment for Foreign Tourists

We will create a welcoming and comfortable environment for foreign tourists, fostering a community that will want to continue to come back and visit.

Examples of Initiatives:

1. Support for foreign language services at tourist facilities, lodging, transportation, restaurants, and shopping areas.
2. Training and enhancing the capabilities of foreign-language tourist guides.
3. Improving secondary transportation and its convenience.

V. Promotion Structure of the Plan

1. Cooperation and Collaboration

We will create a network for information sharing and cooperation by working with the municipal government, the Dewa Shonai International Forum, companies and organizations that employ foreign residents, local communities, and commerce, industry, and tourism organizations. This collaboration aims to promote the development of a multicultural community.

2. Promotion of Internationalization Centered Around the Dewa Shonai International Forum

To foster internationalization and multicultural community development in our city, we will advance international exchange, understanding, and multicultural projects centered around the Dewa Shonai International Forum.

3. Utilization of Diverse Human Resources

In cooperation with local communities and international exchange groups, we will actively involve both Japanese and foreign individuals in various roles such as lecturers, homestay hosts, community interpreters, and translators. This approach aims to develop policies and projects that reflect diverse perspectives.

4. Municipal Government Internal Coordination System

To promote this plan systematically and comprehensively, the municipal government will develop an organizational structure that facilitates coordination and communication across departments responsible for internationalization promotion and related departments.

VI. Progress Management of the Plan

To effectively manage the progress of the Plan, we will organize annual international-related projects within the relevant sections and monitor their status. Additionally, to achieve the Plan's basic objectives, we will regularly review and evaluate the issues of each project, striving for continuous improvement and development.