

2nd Kumamoto City International Strategy Overview

April 2024 ► March 2031

Striving for a 'City of High-Quality Living' Chosen by the World

In March 2010, the city of Kumamoto formulated the 'Kumamoto City Internationalization Guidelines' and the 'Kumamoto City East Asia Strategy,' and has since been promoting initiatives for regional internationalization and overseas expansion, particularly focusing on the East Asia region.

Subsequently, in March 2018, after the Kumamoto Earthquake in April 2016, efforts to quickly restore and rebuild the city led to the formulation of the 'Kumamoto City International Strategy.'

In recent years, changes in our social environment have occurred, such as lifestyle shifts due to the global spread of COVID-19, unstable international situations, the creation of new residency statuses, and the entry of semiconductor-related industries into Kumamoto, among others.

In response to these changes, further advancing the internationalization of our city is expected to lead to increased vitality in the regional economy through the expansion of inbound tourism, improved quality of life for residents through promoting a multicultural society via human and cultural exchanges, and the enhancement of the city's attractiveness and sustainable growth through global perspectives in urban development and policymaking. Thus, as of March 2024, the city has formulated the 2nd Kumamoto City International Strategy.

Aiming to become a 'city of high-quality living' chosen by the world, the city will focus on two main pillars: the 'promotion of strategic overseas expansion' externally, and the 'promotion of regional internationalization' internally. With five basic measures and 11 leading projects, Kumamoto aims to become a city chosen by the world in various fields.

[Position]

As a sectoral strategy of the city's highest-level plan, the '8th Comprehensive Plan of Kumamoto City,' this will be positioned as an initiative to promote international efforts across the entire administration, in alignment with the overall vision and policies.

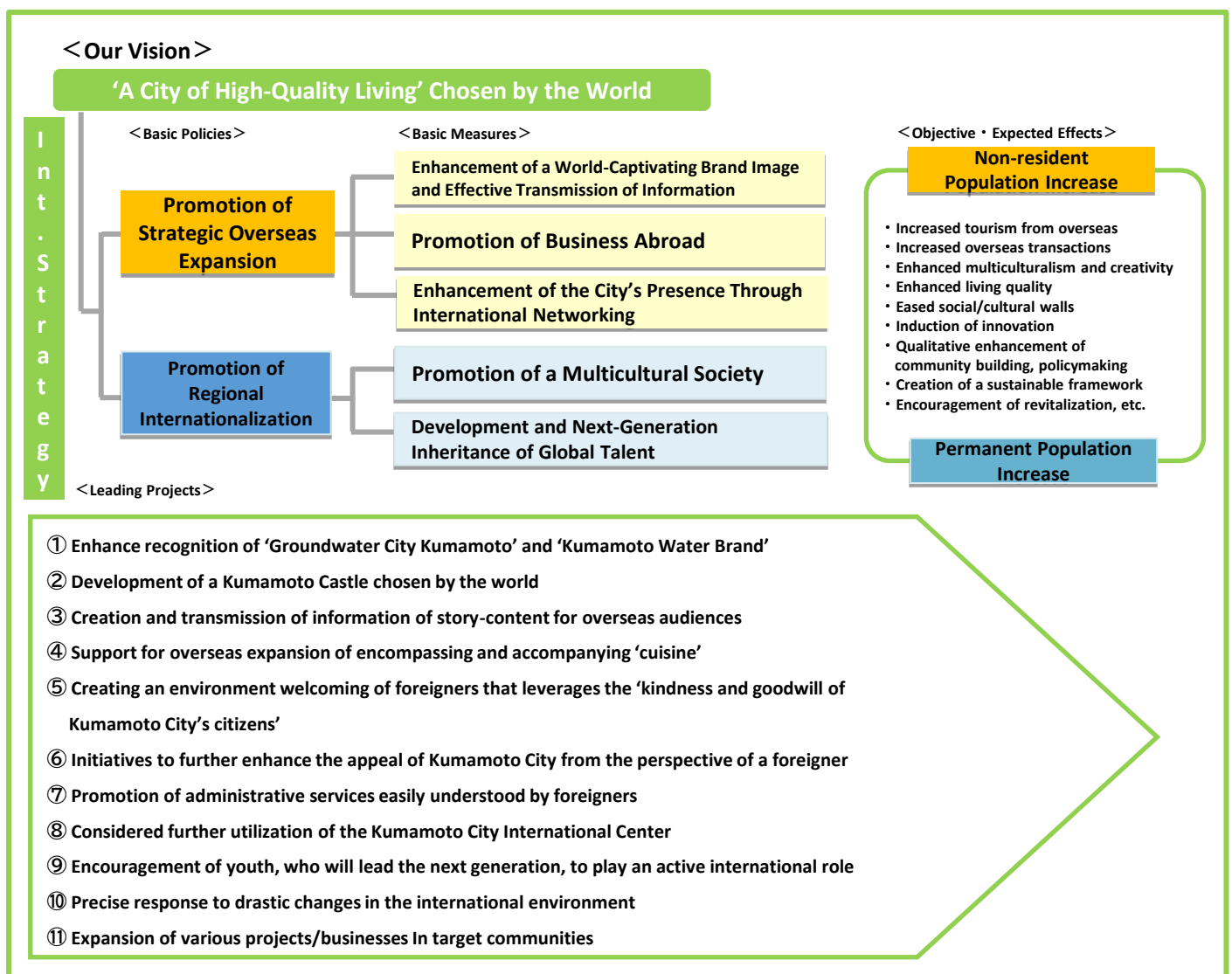
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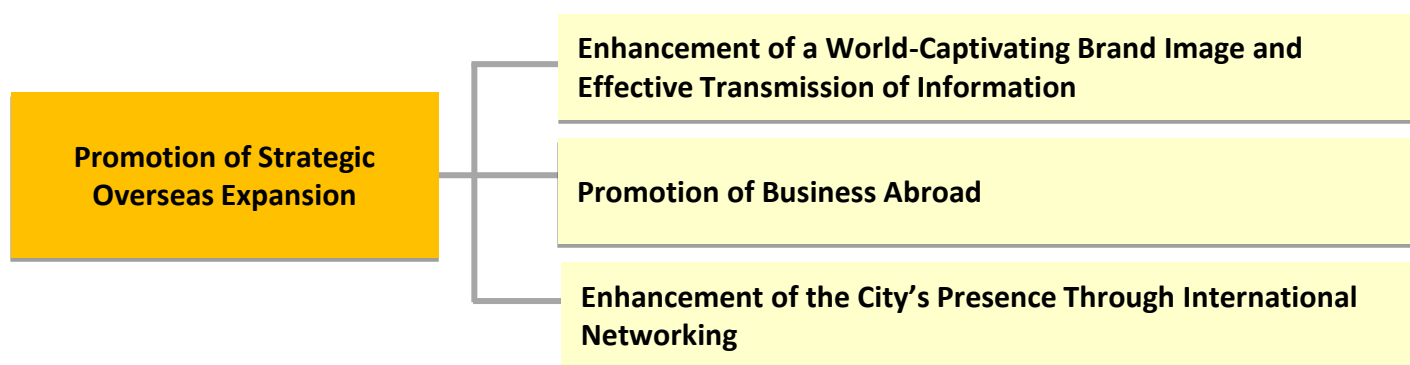
April 2024 – March 2031

Time frame is in correspondence with 8th Comprehensive Plan. To undergo interim revisions as of 4th year.

[Structural Diagram]

Under the two basic policies for achieving our envisioned city, five 'basic measures' will be established. Additionally, as focused initiatives to drive these basic measures, 11 'leading projects' will be set.





[Basic Policy]

- By promoting the appeal of our city overseas, we aim to enhance our city's international presence and stimulate the exchange of people, goods, information, and culture.
- In expanding overseas, we will conduct targeted efforts based on the characteristics of each country/region and the relationship with our city and carry out strategic overseas promotion.

[Current Standing of Kumamoto City Based on Statistical Data in Comparison to Other Cities]

Growth Rate of Foreign Overnight Stays (2018-2019)

146%	Among 16 ordinance-designated cities	2nd	1st...Sendai (164%)
	Among five Kyushu prefectural capitals	1st	2nd...Kagoshima (127%)

No. of Held International Conventions (2019)

18 conventions	Among the 20 ordinance-designated cities	14th	1st...Kobe (438)
	Among five Kyushu prefectural capitals	2nd	1st...Fukuoka (313) ※Kitakyushu (150)

No. of Businesses That Have Expanded Overseas (2021)

28 businesses	Among Kyushu prefectural capitals	3rd	1st...Fukuoka (400) 2nd...Kagoshima (39) ※Kitakyushu (296)
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Promotion of Strategic Overseas Expansion

Basic Measure 1

Enhancement of a World-Captivating Brand Image and Effective Transmission of Information

[Current Situation and Challenges]

- Facilities aimed at expanding the flow of people, such as 'KUMAMOTO-JO HALL,' 'Kumamoto Station Shirakawaguchi Station Square,' and the renewed 'Aso Kumamoto Airport,' have been developed, and efforts have been made to improve the reception environment for foreigners, including the introduction of multilingual location systems, support for foreign mobility, and the multilingualization of public signage.
- In the future, for our city to be chosen by foreigners, we must enhance the brand strength of our tourism resources with high storytelling potential, such as Kumamoto Castle, our pure water resources, and the high-quality agricultural and marine products cultivated from these water resources. Additionally, through catering to the growing demand for increasingly personalized and diversifying demands of experiential tourism and international conference excursions, we must differentiate ourselves from other cities, improve our city's brand strength, and work towards the expansion of international exchanges.

[Initiative Policy and Main Initiatives]

Enhancement of content with storytelling and strategic transmission of information in line with foreign needs

- We will refine the unique content of our city into a 'story that captivates the world' and promote it both domestically and internationally.
- We will use efforts for groundwater conservation as a driving force to enhance the city's brand strength and international presence, while disseminating information across various fields.
- Leveraging our geographic advantage with Taiwan and our relationship with our friendly exchange city, Kaohsiung, we will engage in activities aimed at expanding the flow of people from Taiwan.

Creation of an international bustle that fully leverages the city's allures

- By leveraging the unique characteristics of our city, we will work to attract MICE events, including international conferences, business meetings, and incentive tours from overseas.
- In line with the growing trend of hybrid events, we will expand our target audience for attraction and promote the city to online participants while staying aware of sustainable practices, including SDGs and diversity. We will also offer unique venues and excursion tours that utilize the city's distinctive content, addressing the intensifying competition in the MICE sector.

Facilitation of transportation and preparation of a reception environment from the perspective of a foreigner

- We will work on strengthening the road network and core public transportation network that promote wide-area exchanges, such as through the '10・20-Minute Concept' and enhancing the functionality of public transportation and key transfer hubs.
- We will also strive to improve the reception environment for foreigners to facilitate smoother communication, starting with easy-to-understand signage and the provision of free Wi-Fi.

[Validation Values]

Validation Value	Unit	Ref. Value	Validation Value
No. of overnight stays in Kumamoto City	People	342,649 (2019)	800,000 (2031)
No. of international conventions hosted	Case	18 (2019)	25 (2027)

Promotion of Strategic Overseas Expansion

Basic Measure 2

Promotion of Business Abroad

[Current Situation and Challenges]

- In international business, it is expected that building a hybrid business model combining online and offline businesses—having emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic—will become necessary.
- On the other hand, for medium-sized and small businesses, expanding into overseas markets remains a high hurdle due to factors such as export-related legal systems, local business customs, language differences, and securing local partners. In addition, with the shift in business models during the pandemic, there is a noticeable gap in international business efforts between companies of different sizes.
- Taking these characteristics into account, it is important to create opportunities to acquire the necessary knowledge and information for international business, such as through seminars, and to foster a mindset oriented towards overseas markets. Moreover, for companies considering expansion into international business, we need to focus on providing tailored, specific support.

[Initiative Policy and Main Initiatives]

Comprehensive accompanied support for the expansion of sales channels for agricultural products and processed goods

- Through the 'Kumamoto Export Promotion Network,' we will provide comprehensive advice and export support for overseas expansion. Additionally, we will implement overseas market development and expansion support measures in collaboration with relevant organizations.
- We will support the skill development of farmers, fishermen, and processed goods manufacturers through seminars and other events related to overseas exports, and work to establish, develop, and enable a self-sustaining export system based on market orientation to promote the expansion of sales channels. Furthermore, by holding promotional events across all of Kumamoto, we will further expand opportunities and effectiveness for promoting the appeal of Kumamoto's cuisine.

Promotion of business exchange on the opportunity of the entry of semiconductor-related industries in Kumamoto

- Kumamoto is attracting attention both domestically and internationally due to the entry of semiconductor-related industries. Recognizing this as a business opportunity, we will promote strategic industrial attraction, with a particular focus on expanding business exchanges with Taiwan, to revitalize the regional economy.

Development and overseas expansion support for Kumamoto startups

- While building a mechanism to create sustainable entrepreneurs and promoting new and growing industries centered on the business support facility 'XOSS POINT.', we will foster the motivation of startups and others to expand overseas through seminars lead by mentors.

Transboundary EC expansion support for small and medium-sized enterprises

- By supporting small and medium-sized enterprises aiming to expand their sales channels overseas through e-commerce (EC), we will promote the efforts of local businesses in Kumamoto to engage in international business.

[Validation Values]

Validation Value	Unit	Ref. Value	Validation Value (2031)
No. of businesses that have expanded overseas	Company	28 (2021)	35
No. of businesses that participated in business meetings, seminars, etc., related to the development of overseas sales channels for the food business (cumulative)	Company	149 (2021)	180



Promotion of Strategic Overseas Expansion

Basic Measure 3

Enhancement of the City's Presence Through International Networking

[Current Situation and Challenges]

- The relationships Kumamoto has with eight foreign cities, including sister and friendship cities, are the results of our city's international exchanges over the years and can be considered a unique strength that other cities do not possess. It is important to pass this international network on to the next generation without interruption, while leveraging this network to enhance Kumamoto's international presence.
- Furthermore, through exchanges and collaborations in a multi-city network, events such as the '4th Asia-Pacific Water Summit' hosted in Kumamoto (2022) and our participation in the 2023 United Nations Water Conference have further raised the international recognition of Kumamoto's groundwater conservation efforts.
- In the future, Kumamoto needs to effectively utilize these international networks to improve the quality of urban development and policies, thereby enhancing the city's charm. By collaborating with cities and organizations around the world, we aim to further enhance Kumamoto's international presence.

[Initiative Policy and Main Initiatives]

Enrichment and development of international exchange with friendship and sister cities

- We will focus on understanding the unique characteristics and strengths of each of our sister and friendship cities and prioritize administrative collaboration that can leverage each city's strengths and know-how.
- In exchanges with sister and friendship cities, we will create opportunities for citizens to connect, which will contribute to the development of international human resources and the revitalization of local communities.
- By mutually promoting the appeal of each city with our sister and friendship cities, we will work towards enhancing Kumamoto's international presence.

Transmission of the city's allures and qualitative improvement of administration through international conference

- We will actively participate in highly specialized international conferences, using these opportunities for promotion of our city while also sharing best practices to contribute to solving administrative issues.
- Regarding groundwater conservation efforts, we will continue with proactive promotion, as well as promoting the restoration of 'Forest City Kumamoto' as part of our efforts for natural environmental conservation.

Enrichment of networks with cities and international institutions around the world

- We will strengthen our network with overseas diplomatic missions in target regions and engage in the collection and dissemination of information.
- We will utilize our Shanghai office as a hub for collaboration with various institutions in China and work on building a strong network.
- Through our Tokyo office, we will focus on building networks with embassies and other entities in target regions.

[Validation Values]

Validation Value	Unit	Ref. Value	Validation Value (2027)	Validation Value (2031)
Ratio of citizens interested in exchange with sister and friendship cities or other foreign cities	%	34.3 (2023)	50	70
No. of instances in which the allures of Kumamoto City were promoted through networks with foreign cities and international institutions	Case	33 (2022)	45	60

Promotion of Regional Internationalization

Promotion of a Multicultural Society

Development and Next-Generation Inheritance of Global Talent

[Basic Policy]

- We will implement initiatives to promote a multicultural coexistence society, taking into account the national policy developments and the unique characteristics of our city, aimed at both foreign residents and Japanese citizens.
- By promoting initiatives that foster international understanding, we will cultivate global talent who will go on to lead the region. Particularly, we will focus on international activities for the next youth generation, and by actively publicizing these activities, we will encourage the development of an international perspective.
- We will establish a network based at the Kumamoto City International Center, collaborate with various organizations, and promote these initiatives.

[Current Situation of the City Based on Statistical Data & Comparisons with Other Cities]

No. of Foreign Residents (2022)

7,434
residents

Among the 20 ordinance-designated cities

19th1st...Osaka (154,838)

Among Kyushu prefectural capitals

2nd1st...Fukuoka (41,582)

No. of Foreign Students (2022)

1,217
students

Among the 20 ordinance-designated cities

18th1st...Osaka (23,170)

Among Kyushu prefectural capitals

3rd1st...Fukuoka (13,343)

※Kitakyushu...2,519

Beppu...2,859

Promotion of Strategic Overseas Expansion

Basic Measure 4

Promotion of a Multicultural Society

[Current Situation and Challenges]

- As of December 2023, the number of foreign residents in Kumamoto City reached a record high of 9,061, which is approximately double the number from about 10 years ago. With the increasing and diversifying foreign population, it is crucial to help foreign residents quickly understand the city's rules, customs, and culture, and ensure that they integrate into the local community as members of society.
- At the same time, considering this social context, it is necessary to enhance awareness building aimed at Japanese citizens to promote cross-cultural understanding and respect for human rights.
- In a survey conducted in August 2023 for foreign residents in Kumamoto, the majority of respondents answered that "Kumamoto is easy to live in," with one of the main reasons being that "the people are kind and warm." It is essential to preserve and continue the kindness and warmth of Kumamoto's citizens as one of the key attractions of 'a Kumamoto City chosen by the world.'

[Initiative Policy and Main Initiatives]

Enriching various types of support for foreigners

- At the Kumamoto City Consultation and Support Plaza for Foreign Residents, we will establish a consultation system that addresses the nationalities, residency status, and diversifying needs of foreign residents in our city.
- We will also provide a variety of Japanese language learning opportunities tailored to the life stages and lifestyles of foreign residents. In particular, for children of foreign descent, we will offer support, including assistance with advancing to higher education, as needed.

Development of initiatives to promote a multicultural society for Japanese citizens

- We will hold Japanese language classes for beginners in various regions to facilitate smoother communication between Japanese citizens and foreign residents.
- In response to the needs of local organizations, industries, educational institutions, etc., we will provide consultations services offered by dispatched consultants and lecture sessions.
- We will also work to create opportunities for exchange between Japanese citizens and foreign residents.

Establishment of a multicultural network based on the International Center

- We will position the Kumamoto City International Center as the hub for our city's international exchange activities. In collaboration with various organizations, we will provide information, consultations, and support for foreign residents, as well as promote initiatives for citizen-to-citizen international exchange.
- We will actively utilize the facility as a space where foreigners and Japanese people can connect and relax, while also considering the future approach of the facility.

Responding to foreigner needs at Community Development Centers

- In collaboration with the Kumamoto City Consultation and Support Plaza for Foreign Residents, we will serve as a consultation desk for foreign residents regarding community-related matters. Additionally, as a bridge between the community and foreign residents, we will work to create an environment that makes it easier for foreign residents to participate in local activities and events.

[Validation Values]

Validation Value	Unit	Ref. Value	Validation Value (2031)
Ratio of foreign residents who feel it is easy to live here	%	73.3 (2023)	90
No. of consultations at the Kumamoto City Consultation and Support Plaza for Foreign Residents (cumulative)	People	752 (2022)	1,500
No of participants in international volunteer activity (cumulative no. of people)	People	3,459 (2022)	7,000
No. of participants in Japanese language support programs (cumulative no. of people)	People	2,512 (2022)	5,000



[Current Situation and Challenges]

- It is becoming increasingly important for youth, who will lead the next generation, to understand others through communication with people of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, and to develop the ability to solve difficulties together while expressing themselves.
- On the other hand, in our city, we see that opportunities for daily use of English are low and do not lead to an international career vision for the future.
- In the future, we will create opportunities to use English daily and to develop an awareness of looking abroad by providing opportunities for integrated studying at school and youth exchange with foreign countries, especially for the younger generation.
- By focusing on youth participating in international activities and actively publicizing their achievements, we aim to support the success of global talent, while encouraging youth to consider these activities as part of their career vision and to choose them. Additionally, we aim to create a positive cycle in which their achievements are passed down to the next generation.

[Initiative Policy and Main Initiatives]

Development of global talent to lead the region

- We will provide information and hold seminars to increase citizens' interest in and deepen their knowledge of foreign affairs and different cultures.
- We will dispatch CIRs (Coordinator of International Relations) to schools, community centers, and organizations to promote international understanding in the community.
- Through youth exchange programs with sister cities and other friendly cities, we aim to improve the international response skills of young people.

Attraction of foreign students, researchers, and companies from abroad and utilization of foreign talent

- We will promote cooperation between universities in our city and universities in our friendship and sister cities, supporting mutual dispatch and exchange of researchers and students.
- We will promote the utilization of foreign talent by supporting foreign students who have studied in Kyushu and Kumamoto to find employment in local companies and establish businesses in their hometowns, through an all-Kyushu and all-Kumamoto effort.

Encouragement of next-generation youth to play an active international role and inheritance of legacy

- By supporting youth exchanges, friendship and sister city programs, and youth involvement in international conferences, we aim to raise awareness of global activities and inspire young people to participate. At the same time, we will build upon these achievements as a legacy and pass them down to the next generation.

[Validation Values]

Validation Value	Unit	Ref. Value	Validation Value (2031)
No. of international relations seminars and courses organized by the city	Case	69 (2022)	100
No. of youth participants in exchanges with friendship and sister cities and in international conferences, etc. (cumulative)	People	14 (2023)	30



4

Leading Projects

11 'leading projects' have been established as prioritized initiatives to lead the five basic policies.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ① | Enhance recognition of 'Groundwater City Kumamoto' and 'Kumamoto Water Brand' |
| ② | Development of a Kumamoto Castle chosen by the world |
| ③ | Creation and transmission of information of story-based content for overseas audiences |
| ④ | Support for overseas expansion of encompassing and accompanying 'cuisine' |
| ⑤ | Creating an environment welcoming of foreigners that leverages the 'kindness and goodwill of Kumamoto City's citizens' |
| ⑥ | Initiatives to further enhance the appeal of Kumamoto City from the perspective of a foreigner |
| ⑦ | Promotion of administrative services easily understood by foreigners |
| ⑧ | Considered further utilization of the Kumamoto City International Center |
| ⑨ | Encouragement of youth, who will lead the next generation, to play an active international role |
| ⑩ | Precise response to drastic changes in the international environment |
| ⑪ | Expansion of various projects/businesses in target communities |

[Two Representative Indicators]

To promote our strategy, we have established the following two indicators, 'promotion of strategic overseas expansion' and 'promotion of community internationalization,' which will serve as benchmarks for measuring the degree of accomplishment of our basic policies.

Promotion of Strategic Overseas Expansion

No. of Overnight Visitors to Kumamoto City

Reference Value (2019)		Validation Value (2027)		Validation Value (2031)
342,649 visitors	⇒	600,000 visitors	⇒	800,000 visitors

*As inbound tourists, international conference participants, clients, and others are expected to stay overnight, we have established the indicator 'Number of Overnight Visitors to Kumamoto City' to show the foreign nonresident population.

Promotion of Regional Internationalization

Ratio of Citizens Who Feel Progress Has Been Made Towards a Multicultural Society

Reference Value (2023)		Validation Value (2027)		Validation Value (2031)
24.5 %	⇒	50 %	⇒	70 %

* We have established the 'Ratio of Citizens Who Feel Progress Has Been Made Towards a Multicultural Society' as an indicator of whether citizens perceive progress in areas such as opportunities for interacting with foreigners, international events, and the creation of a multilingual environment welcoming to foreigners.

[Collaboration/Promotion Framework]

- Since international initiatives span a wide range of fields, from economic efforts to matters related to citizens' daily lives, it is important to promote cross-departmental information sharing and collaboration within the government. Furthermore, to grow as an international city, it is necessary to develop personnel who are capable of handling international protocol and providing multilingual support. Based on these considerations, we will work on strengthening our internal organizational structure.
- Utilizing the networks held by various organizations and institutions is highly effective when promoting strategic initiatives, such as establishing contact with overseas counterparts. Additionally, in exchanges with friendship and sister cities, it is important not only to foster administrative interactions but also to encourage grassroots exchanges among citizens. Therefore, we will promote initiatives in collaboration with external partners.

(Reference) Our Friendship/Sister Cities

Our city has established friendship and sister city relationships with eight overseas cities and has carried out various exchange programs. These relationships are the result of the international exchange efforts our city has cultivated over the years, and they represent a unique strength not found in other cities. Thus, we will focus on policy-based collaboration that leverages the characteristics and strengths of each of these cities, making use of one other's advantages and expertise.

Friendship City Guilin, China (1979-)

Guilin, one of China's leading international tourist cities, became a friendship city with us in 1979.

So far, we have carried out exchanges such as youth programs and mutual delegation visits.

Looking ahead to the 50th anniversary of this partnership in 2029, we will further promote exchanges in the fields of youth and tourism.



Sister City San Antonio, USA. (1987-)

San Antonio, a major U.S. city with a population of approximately 1.5 million and one of the country's leading tourist destinations, became a sister city with us in December 1987.

To date, we have conducted youth exchanges, including student exchange programs. Moving forward, we will continue to promote exchanges in various fields such as education, culture, economy, and technology.



Friendship City Heidelberg, Germany (1992-)

Heidelberg, one of Germany's leading academic cities and recognized as an environmental capital, became a friendship city with us in 1992.

Up to now, we have conducted exchanges such as mutual visits in fields including healthcare, youth, and sports.

Going forward, we will continue to deepen exchanges across a wide range of fields.



Sister City Rome, USA. (1995-)

Rome, the largest city in Floyd County, Georgia, established a friendship agreement with the former Ueki-machi in May 1995. Following the merger with the former Ueki-machi, Kumamoto City carried on the sister city relationship in June 2015.

So far, we have conducted exchanges such as mutual delegation visits through youth programs. Going forward, we will continue to promote exchanges across various fields.



Friendship Partner City Ulsan Metropolitan City, South Korea (2010-)

Ulsan Metropolitan City, widely known as a major industrial city, established a friendship partner city relationship with us in 2010. Since then, various exchanges—mainly led by the private sector—have been conducted in areas such as youth programs and sports.

Moving forward, we will continue to promote exchanges in fields such as culture, tourism, and sports.



Exchange City Suzhou Gaoxin District, China (2013-)

Suzhou New District, designated as a National High-Tech Industrial Development Zone, became an exchange city with us in 2013.

To date, we have conducted mutual delegation visits and other forms of exchange.

Going forward, we will continue to deepen exchanges in fields such as tourism, sports, and education.



Exchange City Aix-en-Provence, France (2013-)

Exchanges by private organizations began in the 1980s. In particular, the donation of a fully cypress Noh stage by Noh master Shuho Kano, a resident of Kumamoto City, in 1992 marked a turning point, leading to greater collaboration at both the private and governmental levels. In February 2013, an exchange city agreement was signed.

Going forward, we will continue to deepen exchanges in a wide range of fields, including culture and the arts.



Friendship City Kaohsiung, Taiwan (2017-)

Kaohsiung, Taiwan's largest port city and its third-largest city, entered into the 'Kumamoto Prefecture—Kumamoto City—Kaohsiung City Friendship Exchange Agreement' with us in 2017.

So far, we have conducted exchanges such as mutual visits in areas including marathons and youth programs.

Going forward, we plan to further deepen exchanges in fields such as economy, tourism, education, sports, and culture.

