

京都基本構想

The Kyoto Philosophical Charter



京都市

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Note: The translation of the title and content of the “Declaration as a Cosmopolitan City of Cultural Freedom” differs from Kyoto City’s previously established standard translation; it has been reinterpreted in the process of formulating The Kyoto Philosophical Charter.

Preface

We, the citizens of Kyoto, remain committed to unremitting effort so that this city may endure as a place where, through history and culture, humanity recovers its truest human ground; a place where reverence and gratitude toward nature are cultivated as the very ground of life; and a place where the lives of self and other are inseparably affirmed, upheld, and mutually respected.

Human beings are granted existence by the past, and we exist always oriented toward the future.

This city, founded as an ancient capital more than twelve centuries ago, has become a singular presence in the annals of civilization, a city of history and culture admired and revered across the world. Yet it must never be forgotten that it was the devotion of countless predecessors, both renowned and anonymous, that has brought our city to this moment. The layered sites of history, the *Kōgei* (Crafts) and *Geidō* (Arts) that embody the highest refinement of the human body and mind, are not only monumental creations of legendary masters but also the humble and precious traces of everyday lives, infused with attachment and creativity.

We, the citizens of Kyoto, inheritors as well as beneficiaries of this lineage, aspire to honor both the privilege and the responsibility of transmitting into the future the crystallized dedication of those who lived in this city, with moderation, with a dignity that refuses diminution, and with an orientation toward the posterity that transcends short-lived gain.

Human beings are granted existence by nature, and we exist as nature itself.

This city has cultivated sensibilities and philosophies, from faiths to the aesthetics of daily life, through its enduring coexistence with the natural world. Encircled by mountains that evoke eternity and blessed with waters of clarity and abundance, Kyoto has long embodied the indivisibility of nature and humanity. Upon this soil and within these flowing waters, the culture and history of Kyoto have taken root, and life has been sustained.

We, the citizens of Kyoto, aspire to offer the world the vision of nature cultivated here—and inseparably, the vision of humanity it encompasses. Through resonant engagement (*Kyōsō* [1]) with other traditions and philosophies, we aspire to shape a future in which human beings, together with their sciences and economies, no longer stand over nature as its masters but dwell within it in genuine *Kyōsei* [2] (Symbiosis).

Human beings are granted existence by community, and we exist through community.

This city has, even in an age where short-term and individual profit is held paramount, remained faithful to the pursuit of the commonweal and mutual flourishing, preserving bonds that modern rationality too often dismisses as inefficient or obsolete. Here, communities continue to breathe: not only those formed by neighborhood or vocation, but also by scholarship, ritual, practice, and even nameless forms of belonging. These living bonds, complex and fragile, and all the more cherished for their fragility, stand as quiet refutations of the abstractions that have reduced society to contracts and markets. They are what have woven Kyoto into a fabric of countless layers, resonances, and communities.

We, the citizens of Kyoto, in the quarter century to come—amid shifting global demographics, the dissolving of linguistic frontiers, and the profound transformations of the economy and society—shall weave new connections, as members both of our local society and of the wider community of humankind. Within these horizons, opened together with peoples across the world, we wish to sustain the living breath and steadfast stewardship that has long suffused our daily lives, and, in mutual respect for history, culture, nature, and the ways of being human, to labor toward the realization of lasting peace and a shared prosperity that belongs to all.

[1] *Kyōsō* 響創: A newly coined term, developed through discussions with experts, that builds on the concept of co-creation to express how the synergy between self and others expands and deepens—from individual inner worlds to spaces and ultimately the entire city.

[2] *Kyōsei* 共生: Symbiosis

Chapter 1. Background of The Kyoto Philosophical Charter

Section 1. Declaration as a Cosmopolitan City of Cultural Freedom: Shaping a History-Making City

“Without ideals, no city can endure.” The Declaration of Kyoto as a “Cosmopolitan City of Cultural Freedom,” proclaimed in 1978 as the city’s supreme guiding principle, began with this sentence, which itself captures Kyoto’s essence as a city. It then envisioned a future in which Kyoto would play a significant role in global history through a profound reflection on its own cultural heritage, a clear recognition of the state of the world, and the dedicated efforts of its citizens to realize their ideal: to remain a timeless, yet innovative, city of cultural achievement, where people from around the world can freely and peacefully gather for cultural engagement.[3]

The Declaration of Kyoto as a Cosmopolitan City of Cultural Freedom articulated the commitment shared by all citizens of the city toward realizing this ideal, and even after nearly half a century, it remains a cornerstone for our community.

Section 2. The Master Concept of Kyoto City: Looking Ahead to the 21st Century

Based on the principles set forth in the Declaration of Kyoto as a Cosmopolitan City of Cultural Freedom, The Master Concept of Kyoto City was formulated by the city government in 1983. Later, following extensive deliberation among Kyoto’s citizens, an updated Master Concept was developed in 1999. The Concept, looking ahead to the first quarter of the 21st century, was written in the voice of Kyoto’s citizens and reaffirmed the core values they share, expressed through six distinctive strengths: *Mekiki* (discerning eye), *Takumi* (craftsmanship), *Kokoromi* (venture), *Kiwame* (mastery), *Omotenashi* (hospitality), and *Shimatsu* (zero waste mindset). It also outlined a vision for rebuilding civil society founded on mutual trust. By calling on each citizen to take an active role in municipal affairs, guided by pride and responsibility, the Concept—together with the deliberative process involved in its formulation—laid the foundation for a new era of citizen-led city development.

[3] The Kyoto Philosophical Charter is structured to address the city’s profound reflection on its own cultural heritage in Chapter 2, its clear recognition of the state of the world in Chapter 3, and the dedicated efforts of its citizens to realize their ideal in Chapters 4 and 5.

Section 3. Formulating The Kyoto Philosophical Charter: Revisiting the Ideal of the City

Despite the 2011 revision of the Local Autonomy Act abolishing the legal obligation to formulate a new master concept, the decision to nonetheless develop its successor—this Charter—was motivated by a heightened awareness of the times and the belief that the ideal of the city described in the Declaration of Kyoto as a Cosmopolitan City of Cultural Freedom holds greater significance than ever in 2025.

Since The Master Concept of Kyoto City was developed in 1999, humankind has experienced numerous changes, including the advancement of globalization, widespread adoption of the internet and AI (artificial intelligence), climate change and the intensification of natural disasters, epidemics of infectious diseases, outbreak and continuation of wars and conflicts, emergence of various social divisions, and a plethora of changes related to these circumstances. Amid the growing complexities of our time, this Charter revisits the ideal of Kyoto as a Cosmopolitan City of Cultural Freedom. It seeks to outline the path forward for the city and its citizens over the next 25 years while also carrying forward the legacy of The Master Concept of Kyoto City into the future.

Chapter 2. The Shape of Kyoto

Section 1. Within the Enduring Kyōsei (Symbiosis) with Nature

The history of Kyoto dates back to before 794, when it was established as Heian-kyō. Kyoto City as a modern, self-governing body was officially founded in 1898, after first being established under special municipal regulations in 1889. Since then, the city has undergone reorganizations of administrative districts. In 2005, it merged with the former Keihoku Town—which supplied timber for the construction of Heian-kyō 1,200 years ago—reaching its current boundaries. Despite being a major city with a population exceeding 1 million people, Kyoto still preserves rich forests and farmland, which is a distinctive feature of the city.

Through life in this city—gazing upon the majestic mountains and embracing the city’s abundant blessings of water, from the Kamo River, Katsura River, and Lake Biwa Canal all the way to the wells—our predecessors have cultivated a philosophy that sees humans and nature as inseparable, unified beings. This conception of nature is reflected in diverse lifestyles and cultural forms, from cuisine, architecture, and landscapes to fashion and the arts—all deeply attuned to the changing seasons—and has taken firm root to this day, enriching the lives of Kyoto’s citizens as well as all those connected to the city.

Section 2. Layered History, Cultural Depth, and Continuity of Human Bonds

This city has played a significant role in Japanese history, yet its trajectory has been neither singular nor linear. Amid the complex interplay of political systems such as the imperial court and the shogunate (feudal military system of government), religious doctrines including Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism, and the economic activities associated with them, the city has repeatedly rebuilt itself through the resilience of its culture, even in the aftermath of armed conflicts and other such crises. The culmination of this long-standing, multilayered, and pluralistic historical development is Kyoto as we know it today.

Shaped over the layered course of history, the foundations of cultural practices such as *Geidō*, martial arts, and *Kōgei* reflect an aspiration toward the highest refinement of human potential. The spiritual sensibility that perceives body and mind, self and other, and humanity and nature as fundamentally inseparable has been expressed through practices such as tea ceremony, flower arrangement, Noh theater, and martial arts, as well as through the implements and architecture integral to them, permeating everyday life. We must not forget that this cultural legacy has been passed down not only by famed masters and artisans whose names are known to this day, but also by unnamed bearers of the traditions and ordinary townspeople who admired and sustained these cultural practices.

These layers and depths of history and culture have long served as both a catalyst and a cornerstone for new interpersonal relationships, and in turn, these relationships have generated new history and culture. Kyoto, through its historical and cultural richness, sustains a seamless continuity of real human bonds—now increasingly overlooked in today’s fast-moving world—while linking these connections inseparably to both the past and future. We, the citizens of Kyoto today, live within the city’s history and culture, carefully woven by those who lived in this city, and carry the responsibility of threading them into the fabric of our future.

Section 3. Open Civic Character Rooted in Moderation and Dignity

The history and culture of this city have been sustained by the moderation and dignity of people across different eras and pursuits. The quiet dignity of our predecessors who dedicated their lives to safeguarding and sharing the essence of tradition, undeterred by shifting trends, is etched not only in their works but also in the city's landscapes, shaping its very atmosphere. Furthermore, it is this very atmosphere that has fostered within people a sense of moderation, enabling collaboration and resonant engagement (*Kyōsō*) with others while respecting the boundaries of one's own tradition. Emerging from these shared qualities of moderation and dignity, an exquisite sensitivity to appropriate distancing and the in-between (*Awai* [4])—demanding a delicate interplay of embodied experience [5] and tacit knowledge [6]—has taken root among people, providing a foundation of human trust in this city that transcends superficial language and short-term economic rationality.

Kyoto has not only preserved its traditions but also given rise to a diverse range of cultures and industries through its pioneering and enterprising spirit and ingenuity infused with playfulness. In addition to nurturing a rich heritage of arts, crafts, Kyoto cuisine, and *sake*, Kyoto remains one of the world's leading academic cities, home to many universities and research institutions, and serves as an industrial hub where cutting-edge technology industries are concentrated, particularly evident in its southern region. At the core of all this creative and exploratory inquiry is an open culture rooted in moderation and dignity. Kyoto's commitment to fostering transdisciplinary and transregional interactions in pursuit of innovation, without simply conforming to prevailing trends, is a true embodiment of the concept of *Shuhari*.^[7]

Our daily lives as citizens of Kyoto likewise unfold within a civic character defined by openness. Streets are lined with an array of unique shops, offering multiple ways of engagement, whether simply strolling by, pausing to take a close look, or stopping by a familiar shop. By the riverside, people spend time in their own ways: walking, running, sitting, reading, gazing at the water, touching the trees, and so forth. Within this diverse community, people maintain a respectful distance from one another, share smiles, occasionally strike up conversations, and discover mutual friends. Moments like this quietly blossom across the city every day.

[4] *Awai* あわい: The interval or space composed of unclear and uncertain boundaries in the midst of fluidity and fluctuation.

[5] A state grounded in experiences and memories imprinted on one's very being as bodily sensations, not necessarily processed through language or thought.

[6] Knowledge that is difficult to convey or acquire through language due to its lack of clear expression or definition, or because it is inherently challenging to articulate in words.

[7] *Shuhari* 守破離: A three-stage concept of mastery widely used in Japanese traditional arts and martial arts: "shu" (internalizing the basics by following established forms and the teacher's instructions); "ha" (breaking away by critically challenging and deliberately departing from the teachings); "ri" (transcending both Shu and Ha to develop one's own style and creative freedom).

Section 4. A Preeminent Seat of Scholarship and the Arts

Owing to the dedication of our warm-hearted predecessors, this city has preserved and cultivated academic institutions as well as tangible and intangible cultural heritage, earning a rare standing in the world. Kyoto's reputation as a university city and student town, its production of 13 Nobel laureates, and the 15 UNESCO World Heritage Sites—including temples, shrines, and a castle—exemplify its status as one of the world's leading cities of scholarship, culture, and the arts: a preeminent seat of scholarship and the arts.

Still, what has made this city a seat of scholarship and the arts goes beyond the officially recognized individuals and celebrated heritage sites. It is the cumulative efforts of countless others—teachers and students pouring their heart and soul into daily practice, artisans devoting their lives to perfecting minute distinctions, and ordinary enthusiasts with a discerning eye for the essence of any given practice—that has deepened Kyoto's quest for the truth and ultimate expression of human potential through scholarship and the arts. Both well-known and lesser-known devotees involved in the academic and artistic life of the city (in effect, the Kyoto scholarly and artistic fellowship) also constitute a living human heritage that Kyoto is proud to share with the world.

In response to the advancement of globalization and digitalization, the scholarly and artistic endeavors rooted in this city, together with the community that nurtures them, are fostering ever-stronger connections with the global community. As one of the world's foremost seats of scholarship and the arts—intricately woven by the city's eternal nature, layered history, cultural depth, enduring human connections, moderation and dignity, and an open civic character—Kyoto possesses remarkable potential to extend its esteemed academic and artistic heritage to the whole of human society, transcending barriers of language and cultural difference.

Section 1. Demographic Changes and Their Impact

Throughout the first quarter of the 21st century, the global population has continued to multiply steadily. Meanwhile, Japan's population started to decline after peaking in 2008, and as of 2024, stood at approximately 120 million. By the 2050s, the population is projected to fall below 100 million, with tangible impacts already emerging, including shrinking domestic demand, labor shortages, and rising social security costs.

Kyoto City's population hovered around 1.47 million for many years, but began to decline in the late 2010s, with a marked outflow of young people at pivotal life stages, such as entering the workforce, getting married, and raising children. This demographic shift is not only weakening social ties in communities throughout the city but also undermining the tradition of local self-governance and the spirit and practice of mutual support that have been cultivated over Kyoto's long history. Consequently, there is an increasing need to maintain and expand welfare services—particularly measures addressing isolation and loneliness—while also preserving local historical events and the tangible and intangible cultural assets that enrich these occasions. Furthermore, as one of Japan's leading university cities, Kyoto is expected to face considerable impacts from the declining number of students, which will likely drive significant transformations in the city's collective identity and direction.

Section 2. Japan's Economic Outlook and Kyoto's Industrial Landscape

Despite the lingering effects of the economic stagnation that began in the late 20th century, Japan maintained the world's second largest GDP until 2010. However, due to factors such as population decline, low birthrate, an aging society, and the weakening of Japan's global position in fast-growing industries, Japan's GDP ranking has fallen to fourth place globally as of 2025. During this period, income disparities have increased and the labor shortage has worsened; traditional employment practices such as seniority-based pay and lifetime employment systems have undergone change; working hour regulations have become stricter; career transitions, side jobs, and multiple employment arrangements have become widely accepted; and women's roles in society have expanded. The rapid advancement and spread of AI technologies, particularly since the outset of the 2020s, are expected to significantly reshape future industries and employment.

In Kyoto, large companies—primarily in the manufacturing sector—continue to hold key positions in the global market, yet small and medium-sized enterprises that have long supported the city's economy as well as the local livelihoods and culture, are facing labor and succession shortages. While the city is implementing various support measures to promote the emergence and growth of startups and other new businesses, the ongoing trends of globalization and digitalization are creating an increasing need to secure and nurture a forward-looking workforce. Such talent should be capable of sustaining and advancing industries grounded in local history and cultural heritage, for example, by commercializing cutting-edge research findings from institutions such as universities and effectively connecting cultural values with market needs.

The number of tourists visiting Kyoto has increased by over 20% in the past quarter century, surpassing 50 million in 2008. Although these numbers temporarily declined due to the COVID-19 pandemic which began in 2020, visitor numbers returned to pre-pandemic levels in 2023 and have continued to grow significantly since then, especially among international tourists. This growth has also brought about challenges such as the overconcentration of tourists in specific areas, overcrowding on public transportation, traffic congestion on major roads, conflicts arising from differences in culture and daily customs, and changes in traditional streetscapes and local commerce, all negatively affecting the daily lives and livelihoods of Kyoto's citizens.

Concern is also growing that Kyoto's historical and cultural assets are being reduced to superficial experiences. With the number of visitors from both inside and outside the country expected to remain high, it is increasingly vital to adopt new strategies to communicate the depth and essence of Kyoto's heritage to audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds. Meanwhile, Japan's labor norms and regulations are evolving year by year, posing challenges to overcoming the shortage of successors in traditional industries and performing arts, where practitioners have historically been expected to complete extensive apprenticeships and devote their entire lives to their art.

Section 3. Escalating Environmental and Natural Disasters and the Weakening Ties to Nature

The current quarter century has also been a period in which environmental issues have become increasingly pronounced worldwide. In response to challenges such as urbanization, population concentration in urban areas, climate change, and loss of biodiversity, there has been a growing push for global collaboration that transcends national frameworks. However, as efforts toward international cooperation advance, limitations stemming from political, economic, and religious beliefs have also become apparent.

In Japan, environmental issues such as the decline of agricultural and mountain villages, population concentration in urban areas, deterioration of urban living environments, and the degradation or loss of the multifaceted functions of *Satochi-Satoyama* [8] landscapes are emerging with growing clarity. Moreover, with recurrent natural disasters such as earthquakes and typhoons, the role of disaster prevention and mitigation is becoming ever more important.

In Kyoto, too, the natural environment that has sustained its history and culture is under threat. In addition to the expansion of urban areas into the foothills, depopulation and aging in mountainous areas, and the rise in record-breaking torrential rains and extreme heat days, native species that have underpinned the city's culture and customs—including *Chimakizasa* (bamboo leaves used in the Gion Festival's talisman and as a decorative base for Kyoto cuisine) and *Futaba-aoi* (a symbol of the Aoi Festival)—are now endangered. Amid social changes such as the concentration of population in urban areas, the citizens' connection to nature has gradually weakened, and the natural environment has changed in parallel. Just as the degradation of *Satochi-Satoyama* landscapes is inseparably linked to the decline of agriculture and forestry, changes in the natural environment are steadily impacting not only cultural and historical heritage but also industry and the everyday lives of citizens.

[8] *Satochi-Satoyama* 里地・里山: Traditional landscapes characterized by farmlands, irrigation ponds, managed forests, and grasslands near human settlements.

Section 4. Other Global Challenges

The global COVID-19 pandemic, which began in 2020, threatened the survival of many cultures dependent on physical and tangible activities, while also inflicting severe economic losses in Japan and around the world, forcing numerous businesses to suspend operations or permanently close. During the same period, the limitations of international organizations and frameworks became evident, as did disparities in economic strength, technological capacity, and administrative responsiveness among nations. So too did we rediscover the consequences of competitive dynamics among firms involved in vaccine development and distribution.

Moreover, even in the 21st century, the tragedies of war and conflict persist, with international tensions further escalating since the outset of the 2020s. Japan, and in particular Kyoto City, have growing potential to contribute to global peace, through strengthening mutual understanding between countries based on the trust and respect cultivated since the postwar era.

Since the 2010s, there has been an increasing emphasis on ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance), SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), as part of comprehensive global efforts to advance the public good. Yet these efforts also face challenges and limitations, and signs of a retreat to nationalism are evident as of 2025. The coming quarter century will demand the cultivation of renewed momentum and the establishment of frameworks for international cooperation, particularly given both expected and unexpected changes in global population dynamics, and the resulting transformations in the structure of international politics and economies.

Chapter 4. The City We Envision

Our city, Kyoto, is one of the world's leading seats of scholarship and the arts, thanks to the passion and dedication of artisans and experts rooted in local communities, researchers and engineers spearheading global advancements, local enthusiasts, and traditional arts masters and skilled craftspeople carrying a legacy of history and tradition. They have inspired the respect and affection of people worldwide, and together, woven a rich tapestry of human connections that continues to open new horizons for humankind. The ongoing pursuit of ultimate truth that the people of Kyoto maintain and their commitment to inheriting and reimagining tradition—across academia, the arts, and other human endeavors that transcend conventional categories—are irreplaceable assets to us, the citizens of Kyoto, along with the rich natural environment that has shaped their way of being.

These individuals shape both the everyday and exceptional aspects of life throughout the city's diverse neighborhoods, transcending positions and titles as they watch over children on their way to and from school, sweep in front of their homes, patrol the streets to ensure preparedness for disasters and fires, volunteer at local festivals, engage in lighthearted conversation at cafés and pubs, exchange thoughts at art galleries and antiquarian bookstores, and unwind in public baths. The initiatives and businesses themselves have also played a multifaceted role in sustaining the city's distinctive charm.

We, the citizens of Kyoto, along with the Kyoto scholarly and artistic fellowship—people connected across the city and generations, united by the enduring culture of scholarship and the arts that flourishes in every corner of the city—seek to contribute to the future of humankind by embodying the ideal of serving as a Cosmopolitan City of Cultural Freedom. Guided by our enduring view of the indivisibility of the past, present, and future; humanity and nature; and self and other, we shall continue presenting to the world our city as a place where humanity recovers its truest human ground through history and culture; a place where reverence and gratitude toward nature are cultivated as the very ground of life; and a place where the lives of self and other are inseparably affirmed, upheld, and mutually respected.

Section 1. A City Where Humanity Recovers Itself Through History and Culture

(1) Pursuit and Creation of the Authentic

We, the citizens of Kyoto, cherish the philosophies inherited from our predecessors: righteousness before profit (*Sengi kōri* [9]), the unity of the timeless and the ever-changing (*Fueki ryūkō* [10]), and the inseparability of self-benefit and benefiting others (*Jiri rita* [11]). Instead of chasing short-term gains, our focus lies in steadily refining our skills over time. By actively collaborating with individuals both within and beyond the city and leveraging state-of-the-art technology, we will continuously create new and unique value unmatched anywhere else in the world.

In undertaking this effort, we will uphold the spirit of moderation and dignity long cultivated in Kyoto, remaining unswayed by the changing times, and continue to sharpen our sensibility to recognize the authentic (*honmamon*, a Kansai dialect term), ensuring it is passed on to future generations and shared with the global community. Through trust rooted in genuine human connection, we will sharpen and refine one another and collaborate with neighboring cities to explore, adopt, and create diverse expressions of authenticity, making these a source of vitality for the economy and ultimately for the entire city.

Furthermore, by deepening the ties between the Kyoto scholarly and artistic fellowship—a diverse collective preserving the city’s traditions in scholarship and the arts—and various educational spheres [12] and local communities, we will create opportunities for the next generation to inherit and develop the sensibility to recognize true authenticity. These connections will extend beyond the city and the nation, forming a vital foundation for advancing educational spheres and strengthening local communities in concert with others around the world.

[9] *Sengi kōri* 先義後利: The idea that if one first practices “gi” (righteousness as a person), then “ri” (profit) will naturally follow. This concept, based on Confucian teachings, was promoted by Eiichi Shibusawa as a motto for business ethics.

[10] *Fueki ryūkō* 不易流行: The view that “fueki” (the unchanging essence) and “ryūkō” (changing styles) share a common foundation, making their integration essential. This idea was expressed by Matsuo Basho in his thoughts on haiku poetry.

[11] *Jiri rita* 自利利他: The belief that personal benefit (whether profit, pleasure, or happiness) and the benefit of others are essentially inseparable, and that serving others ultimately leads to finding one’s own happiness. This idea has its roots in Buddhist teachings.

[12] The social relationships based not only on elementary and junior high school districts but also on diverse learning environments and opportunities.

(2) Global Cultural Engagement and Synthesis

Guided by a tradition of civic openness, we, the citizens of Kyoto, will continue to engage with global cultures, creating new cultural expressions that enrich the international community and the legacy of humankind. In an era of advancing globalization and digitalization, we must not forget that the authenticity alive in Kyoto today was born from a spirit of enterprise and ingenuity combined with playfulness. Furthermore, the city's history and culture have at times been shaped by the acceptance of ideas once considered unconventional or marginal, as well as through active engagement with those beyond our immediate circle. Drawing on this legacy, we shall persist in our efforts to ensure that local talent can fully express this innovative and playful spirit and take their activities onto the global stage, while also attracting exceptional talent from around the world. By actively embracing the new culture that arises from the harmonizing of these diverse and multifaceted individuals, we aim to further enhance Kyoto's diversity and inclusiveness, making it a city chosen as a center of activity by people across Japan and the world.

(3) Endless Learning Fueled by Passion and Inspiration

We, the citizens of Kyoto, reside in a city where history and culture are deeply woven into daily life, and where diverse personalities have long been accepted. Within this environment, we strive to discover the passions that compel us to learn, refine, and pursue certain practices throughout our lives. By honoring each other's aspirations and perspectives, and allowing these values to flow through the very air of Kyoto, we will sustain a city full of enthusiasm and wonder, one that draws people from across the country and around the world. Above all, we must ensure that the children and young people who will shape Kyoto's future can develop refined sensibilities through engagement with the city's nature, history, and culture, while exploring a wide range of interests—whether in academics, art, martial arts, crafts, or sports—in ways that align with their unique personalities. Furthermore, embracing Kyoto's rich concentration of universities, museums, scenic landscapes, historic sites, and traditional and advanced industries, we shall envision the entire city as a living campus. By organically connecting these diverse resources, we seek to cultivate lives and communities enriched with passion and inspiration, where people of all ages, genders, nationalities, and cultural backgrounds learn side by side and from each other.

(4) Contemplation of Self and the World in Peace and Tranquility

Amid the peace and tranquility fostered by the city's nature, history, and culture, we, the citizens of Kyoto, will continue to reflect daily on our own way of being with sincerity, while thoughtfully contemplating our relationships with others, the local community, and global society. In a world marked by the growing frequency and persistence of wars and conflicts, weakening of genuine human bonds, diminishing connection between people and nature, and deepening social divisions, we bear the responsibility not only to preserve the city's profound serenity for the future citizens of Kyoto, but also to ensure that our city remains a place where visitors, whether from other parts of the country or from abroad, can quietly and deeply engage with their inner selves and the wider world. Through culture, we shall collectively explore the essence of what it means to be human, embracing humanity's transience, fragility, and nobility. By remaining a city where we, as human beings, can reaffirm our mutual respect beyond national and cultural boundaries, Kyoto will contribute to promoting lasting peace and prosperity for the whole of human society.

Section 2. A City Where Reverence and Gratitude for Nature Ground All Life

(1) Humble Coexistence with Nature

We, the citizens of Kyoto, will never forget that it is the rich gifts of nature that have shaped this city's history and culture, and remain committed to a harmonious *Kyōsei* with nature. In Kyoto, nature not only forms the foundation of life through the changing seasons but also serves as the wellspring of our very existence. We shall maintain our daily lives and livelihoods with profound awareness that we are one among many lives sustained by nature.

At a time when humanity feels increasingly divorced from nature, we will actively create opportunities for people to rediscover and internalize our inseparable unity with nature. Moreover, we will honor our identity as the birthplace of the Kyoto Protocol and actively support those who have earnestly worked toward living in harmony with nature, sharing this philosophy not only with the citizens of Kyoto, but with all humankind.

(2) Flexible Recovery from Disasters, Epidemics, and Other Crises

Building on the resilience this city has cultivated over a thousand years of history, we, the citizens of Kyoto, will continue to nurture a city that proactively prepares for various crises, explores effective responses, overcomes challenges, and recovers. This city has endured many periods of conflict and rebuilt itself time and again. The continued existence of this city and its urban functions over a millennium is owed to the unwavering spirit, wisdom, and ingenuity of our predecessors, as well as to the cultural strength that has upheld them through the ages. Over the past quarter century, we, the current citizens of Kyoto, have also endured and risen from threats such as natural disasters and infectious diseases. At the heart of this recovery was the multilayered network of human connections that the city has cultivated throughout its long history.

Local residents, local businesses, community organizations, and citizen groups are called upon to prepare for disaster prevention, mitigation, and recovery, and to collaborate closely throughout these efforts. Together, we shall continue to protect the natural environment, history, culture, and human connections that define this city, sustaining the deep attachment and respect held by us, the citizens of Kyoto, as well as by people throughout Japan and around the world.

Section 3. A City Where Self and Other Thrive in Mutual Respect

(1) Diverse and Living Human Connections

We, the citizens of Kyoto, will uphold the tradition of local self-governance—epitomized by the establishment of Bangumi elementary schools and still embodied today in neighborhood associations and school districts—while continuing to foster living, inclusive connections with everyone involved in the life of the city through shared interests, cultural practices, business, and festivals. It is also our mission to pass down to future generations the cultivated poise of the people in this city, who look beyond titles and roles, greet one another with smiles, engage in warm conversation, and share *sake* as fellow human beings. In addition, we appreciate and respect those who commute from outside Kyoto to work or study, as well as tourists and other visitors for their contributions to our city's growth. With this in mind, we will persist in fostering diverse, multilayered connections to shape a city where everyone belongs and feels at home.

(2) The Practice of Daily Life Through Mutual Support

We, the citizens of Kyoto, will protect and expand a welfare system based on mutual care, remaining a community where no one is left behind and every person can lead a healthy, culturally rich life in a safe and secure environment.

Through a flexible shifting of roles—between those who provide support and those who receive it—members of our community have mutually sustained one another while weaving a shared history and culture. As people engage with the city in many forms, they are not only met with gratitude and smiles but also find themselves enveloped in the community’s multifaceted support. Local residents collectively watch over children as they travel to and from school, while the children’s voices and smiles infuse the neighborhood with vitality. Within these interdependent relationships, smiles and gratitude have spread throughout the community, while pioneering initiatives like nighttime childcare services, which set a national precedent, have been promoted, nurturing the vibrant city that Kyoto is today.

We shall each embrace our roles and connections within society as we work together to build a city where everyone can live as their authentic selves, supported by a multilayered network of mutual care.

(3) Mutual Respect of Personalities and Values

We, the citizens of Kyoto, seek to create a city where everyone can express their individuality, affirm and respect one another, and find their own place to belong and a chance to contribute in the community to fully appreciate daily life—regardless of race, faith, gender, social status, family background, or any other individual differences. To this end, we will carry forward the ethos of human rights respect and the progressive initiatives advocated by our predecessors, exemplified by the founding of Zenkoku Suiheisha (“National Levelers’ Association”)—the first Japanese group to adopt a human rights declaration—and the establishment of Kyoto Lighthouse, which served as a national pioneer in welfare services. We envision a community where everyone accepts diverse personalities and cultivates a heart that cares for and seeks to understand others—a city where people can choose to live in a safe and secure environment, enjoy equal opportunities for employment and social participation, and follow the paths of life and daily rhythms they desire.

Chapter 5. Our Path Forward in Kyoto

As stated in Chapter 1, The Kyoto Philosophical Charter was formulated based on our supreme guiding principle: the Declaration of Kyoto as a Cosmopolitan City of Cultural Freedom. With the vision of that Declaration in mind—that the city would play a significant role in global history through a profound reflection on its own cultural heritage, a clear recognition of the state of the world, and the dedicated efforts of its citizens to realize their ideal—each chapter has discussed its respective aspects.^[13]

Chapter 4, in particular, set forth three visions for the city that we, the people living in Kyoto, should strive to achieve: a place where humanity recovers its truest human ground through history and culture; a place where reverence and gratitude toward nature are cultivated as the very ground of life; and a place where the lives of self and other are inseparably affirmed, upheld, and mutually respected. These are grounded in our ideal, as expressed in the Declaration, of serving as a timeless, yet innovative, city of cultural achievement, where people from around the world can freely and peacefully gather for cultural engagement.

Whether these visions for our city can be realized, and whether Kyoto can fulfill a significant role in global history through the preservation and further development of its historical and cultural values, depends entirely on how we, the people of Kyoto, choose to shape our future way of being. In other words, we live with both the privilege and responsibility of being able to contribute to not only the future of Kyoto but also to that of humankind, through the history and culture of this city that we have inherited from our predecessors.

The city that we envision shall be realized through a continuous cycle of collaboration among the citizens, the administration, and the city council, each fulfilling their respective roles, engaging sincerely in ongoing dialogue and discussion, incorporating insights into daily actions, and feeding the progress and outcomes of those actions into further dialogue and improvement.

[13] As noted in Footnote 3, The Kyoto Philosophical Charter is structured to address the city's profound reflection on its own cultural heritage in Chapter 2, its clear recognition of the state of the world in Chapter 3, and the dedicated efforts of its citizens to realize their ideal in Chapters 4 and 5.

The core of city governance has always been the citizens who live in the city and elect the mayor and city council. Based on the desires of the citizens, the mayor sets the city's policy direction, which is then implemented by the administration. The city council has served not only as the voice of the citizens—conveying their views and activities to the administration—but also one of the two key pillars of city governance alongside the mayor.

Nonetheless, our city has not been shaped solely by its citizens. Kyoto is a city that is connected to many people in diverse ways: those who commute into the city daily to work, study, or relax; those who have moved out for further education, employment, or childcare but still maintain a deep affection for the city; those who have visited for sightseeing; and even those who have never set foot here, yet hold deep admiration for the city. We must not lose sight of the fact that Kyoto stands upon the heartfelt thoughts and contributions of these people as well.

To fulfill our shared vision for the future of Kyoto, it is essential to realize a pluralistic citizenship that transcends traditional definitions and to collaborate more actively with those who, even in small ways, contribute to shaping Kyoto's present and future. This calls for a framework that allows individuals to engage flexibly with Kyoto based on their own preferences, along with initiatives that foster and visibly express a rich, multilayered sense of belonging. With the help of digital technology, we must build a system that enables those connected to Kyoto to stay engaged with the city over time, transcending physical and temporal distances. We must also nurture continuous dialogue with these individuals and deepen our conversations.

Amidst ongoing population decline, a low birthrate, and aging population throughout Japan, Kyoto City is also likely to face a decline in the functions that support the city across public, communal, and private spheres, due to factors such as administrative staffing and budget constraints, weakening local ties, and the shrinking role of mutual aid within families and relatives. Until now, our city has been sustained by the self-driven and selfless efforts of neighborhood associations, municipal cooperation committees, citizen groups, volunteer groups, local businesses, informal gatherings, and unnamed networks, all working together in collaboration. In a future where human resources and administrative functions are expected to gradually diminish, it is imperative not only to actively encourage the formation of new organizations and activities but also to integrate them seamlessly with ongoing efforts.

This attitude deeply reflects the civic character of Kyoto, which has gradually bridged the gaps between generations and between public and private spheres, all guided by moderation and unwavering dignity. The administration has a responsibility to always put itself in the shoes of Kyoto's citizens who lead their daily lives in this city, engage sincerely with their opinions and proposals, carefully evaluate them, make well-rounded decisions, and translate them into concrete policies for implementation. It shall continually review the nature of public service while striving to reduce barriers among the public, communal, and private spheres, and create a system that links those living their everyday lives in Kyoto with the wider community of Kyoto's citizens who engage in the life of the city to varying degrees, empowering them to collaboratively shape the city's development. By ensuring that everyone involved finds their own place to belong and a chance to contribute within the community, and by working together to create new spaces for belonging and opportunities to contribute, we shall lay the foundation for Kyoto's next millennium of history.

Questions for the Future

As stated in the Declaration of Kyoto as a Cosmopolitan City of Cultural Freedom, proclaiming ideals is far easier than putting them into practice. Yet this city has preserved its nature, history, culture, and character over more than a thousand years—overcoming countless hardships along the way—to become the Kyoto we know today.

We, the people of Kyoto, will also inevitably face numerous challenges as we progress from the present into the future.

- As technological innovation in pursuit of convenience and comfort continues to reshape or even diminish human connections, how can we identify and achieve an optimal balance between the two?[14]
- In anticipation of demographic changes, how can we redesign communities and industries, and promote emergent innovation?
- As the number of tourists to Kyoto continues to increase, how can we harmonize our daily lives and livelihoods with the tourism industry, and leverage that balance to enhance the charm and vitality of our city which is borne on traditional streetscapes and local commerce?
- With the increasing number of people requiring support and care, due to social factors such as a declining birthrate and aging population, and the simultaneous decline in caregivers, how can we build communities that leave no one behind?
- Are we fulfilling our responsibility by living in a manner that genuinely embodies and upholds the history and culture of this city?
- Are policies and civic activities grounded in the values that this city has long nurtured and protected, rather than being driven solely by current circumstances and immediate concerns?
- Is the Kyoto we are shaping today a city that honors its thousand-year history, and can it proudly uphold that legacy for the next thousand years?

[14] For example, technological and social trends advancing remote communication and the simplification of linguistic expression may, over time, dramatically alter the embodied and tacit forms of human relationships deeply rooted in this city. This transformation is expected to significantly affect a broad spectrum of issues, ranging from the survival of local communities to the transmission of cultural traditions.

The Kyoto Philosophical Charter affirms the values and philosophies cultivated over more than a millennium in this city, reflects on the current state of the world, Japan, and Kyoto, and outlines the core principles for the future development of our city. However, the present document serves merely as a starting point for considering the shared aspirations of the people of Kyoto. Thus, the future of Kyoto lies in our hands, and the direction it takes over the next quarter century will be determined by the choices we make.

Using The Kyoto Philosophical Charter as a foundation, each and every citizen of Kyoto must contemplate the questions mentioned above and proactively raise new questions relevant to our times. Through ongoing reflection in our daily lives and regular dialogue and discussion with one another, we must diligently work toward practical outcomes despite the complex and delicate realities we face. It is through this very process that Kyoto will earn the trust of people across Japan and around the world—contributing to the future of all humankind and fulfilling its vision as a Cosmopolitan City of Cultural Freedom.

We, the people of Kyoto, are both inheritors and beneficiaries of the living human heritage that this city has cultivated and safeguarded throughout its long history. While embracing the significance and joy that come with our role, we pledge our efforts toward establishing Kyoto City as a Cosmopolitan City of Cultural Freedom. With quiet determination, we conclude this Charter by reaffirming our commitment to continuously seek the ideal form of Kyoto and ourselves—together with the world—as we receive life with gratitude and carry its meaning forward.^[15]

[15] Based on the concluding sentence of the Declaration of Kyoto as a Cosmopolitan City of Cultural Freedom: “A declaration of ideals is, of course, much easier than its execution, but we, the citizens of Kyoto, would like calmly to make this resolution and pledge our efforts towards what we can do for the realization of this ideal.”

For information on initiatives related to the formulation of The Kyoto Philosophical Charter,
please visit the Kyoto City Information Center



Kyoto City Official Website