

## Aging Society and Urban-rural Area

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# Strategy for Sustainable and Advanced Urban Renewal in Aging New Towns

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## 1. Research Background and Purpose

Aging new towns, which were constructed in large-scale areas in a short period of time for the purpose of housing supply according to the central government’s Two million Housing Construction Plan (1988-1992), may create problems, such as lack of infrastructure for the entire city and difficulties in securing new urban functions in line with the changing times if urban renewal projects are carried out on each individual community. In addition, if urban renewal projects are pursued simultaneously, it is expected to disrupt the real estate markets (especially the rental market) due to a high demand for migration.

In response to these concerns, the government enacted the Special Act on the Improvement and Support of Aging New Towns (December 26, 2023), which has been in effect since April 27, 2024, with the goal of systematically and comprehensively improving aging new towns to enhance urban functions, improve residential conditions, and promote the transition into future cities.

In this context, this study aims not only to explore strategies for renewing these aging new towns but also to support the establishment of a legal system for effective improvement of aging new towns by considering the current status and problems of aging new towns. Accordingly, the study also aims to provide specific policy measures so that the newly enacted law can operate without any difficulties by gathering opinions from various stakeholders, and analyzing key issues that the government must consider when establishing a renewal system tailored to aging new towns.

## 2. Issues and Tasks in the Improvement of Aging New Towns

These aging new towns were originally planned based

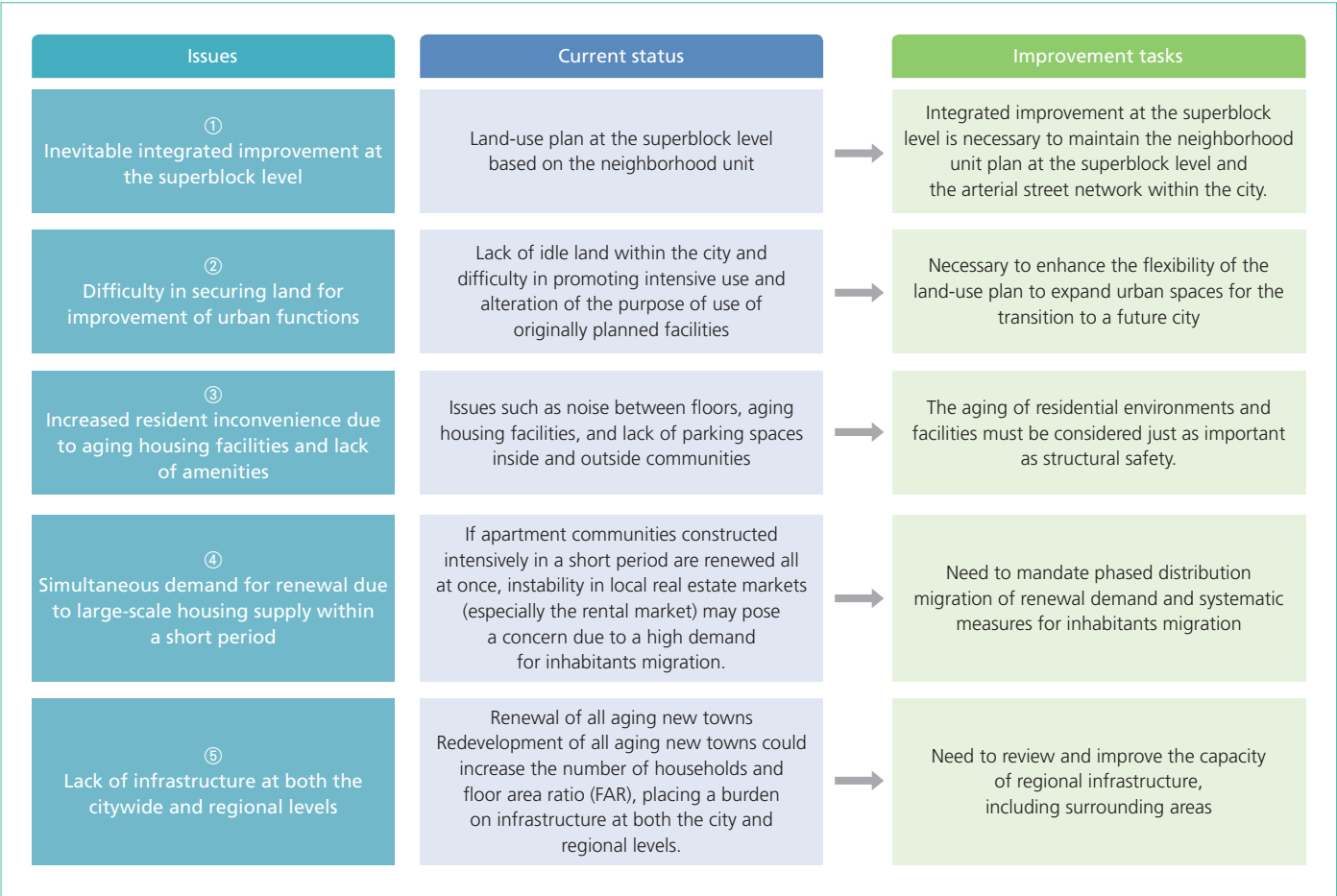
on Clarence A. Perry’s “Neighborhood Units”, with the land-use plan formulated by setting superblocks as the basic unit of the community, which is why integrated improvement is required for renewal by incorporating these characteristics. Moreover, although the First-Generation New Towns in Seoul metropolitan area were completed only about 30 years ago, certain communities (generally consisted of apartment complexes) are already experiencing severe deterioration in housing facilities, along with a serious lack of parking lots due to the low standards for parking lot plans in the original design. Aging new towns were created on a large scale in a short period of time to stabilize housing prices. For this reason, if renewal projects of apartment complexes in ageing new towns are carried out at once, local real estate market instability such as a sharp rise in prices in the rental market may occur. Moreover, after the completion of these new towns, similar urban development projects have continued in the surrounding areas, which raises the need for a thorough review of the adequacy of regional infrastructure such as roads, water and sewage systems, and energy supply facilities.

The current issues and tasks regarding the improvement of aging new towns can be summarized in <Figure 1>. **Figure 1**

## 3. Policy Issues and Institutionalization Plans Related to the Improvement of Aging New Towns

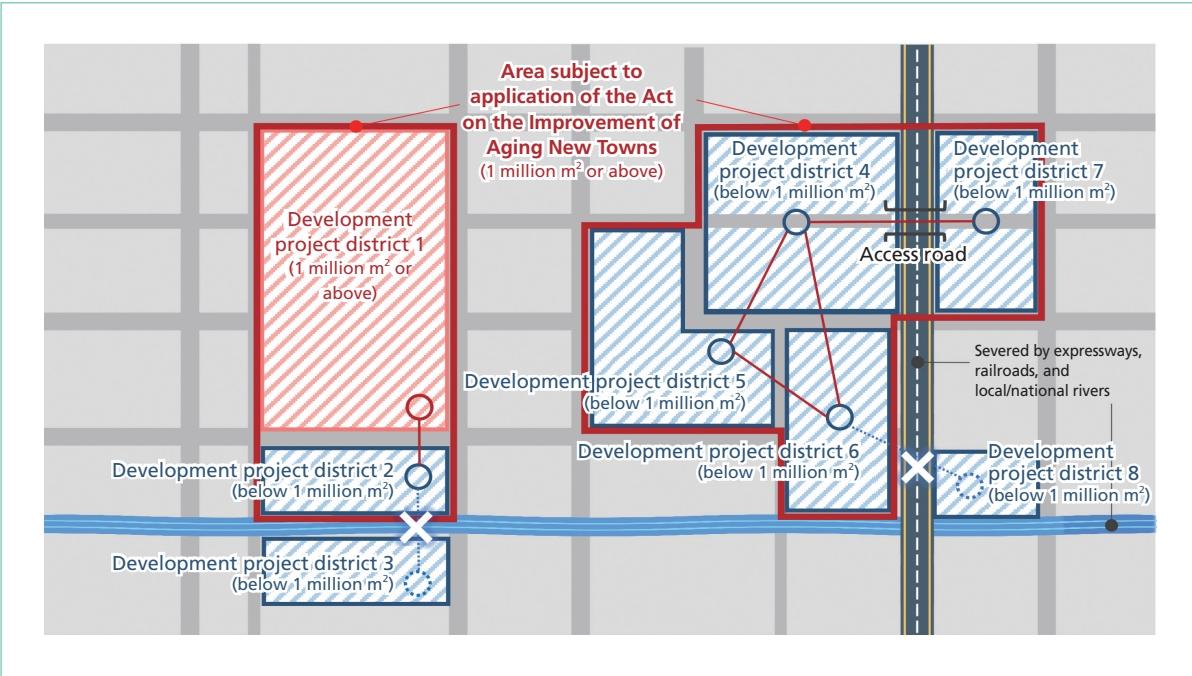
The policy issues related to the improvement of aging new towns can be placed into four categories: ① application scope of the Special Act on the Improvement and Support of Aging New Towns, ② direction and method of improvement, ③ special exemptions and public contributions, and ④ inhabitants migration measures. The key points to be examined in institutionalizing each issue are as follows.

Figure 1. Issues and tasks in the improvement of aging new towns



Source Created by the authors

Figure 2. Conceptual diagram for applying the Act on the Improvement of Aging New Towns by integrating multiple development project districts



Source Created by the authors

### ■ Application scope of the Special Act on the Improvement and Support of Aging New Towns

First, for development projects that are subject to the Special Act on the Improvement and Support of Aging New Towns, even if the project was not implemented for the purpose of large-scale “housing supply,” it should be considered for inclusion if the residential areas in the land-use plan meets the conditions of the Special Act (e.g., industrial communities).

One million sq.m (a space scale capable of supplying housing for a planned population of 20,000–25,000 people and 10,000 housing units), which is suitable for expanding insufficient infrastructure or self-sustaining functions through large-scale improvement at the city level, is set as the minimum area requirement for applying the Special Act. At the same time, even if a region is not part of a designated development project district, inclusion below a certain area should be allowed if it is necessary for creating inhabitants migration sites or expanding infrastructure during the improvement of aging new towns. [Figure 2](#)

### ■ Directions and methods for improvement

To maintain a pleasant residential environment within communities, we provide guidelines to ensure that even if the floor area ratio (FAR) increases due to the application of special exemptions during the implementation of renewal projects. These guidelines include securing open spaces, ensuring access to sunlight and views, mitigating air pollution, and reducing noise.

In order to improve urban functions and seek transition into future cities, it is necessary to set specific directions for enhancing urban functions using station areas and commercial areas along with improving residential environment. Since city- and intercity-level infrastructure shortages are expected due to the increase in the number of households and floor area ratio due to the maintenance of ageing new towns, the capacity of infrastructure should be reviewed at the city-level and transportation measures should be established in accordance with metropolitan transportation improvement measures too. [Figure 3](#)

For smooth implementation of integrated renewal projects, the general project manager system is adopted to lead the integrated development of multiple communities within a superblock where individual renewal projects are actually impossible.

Meanwhile, for communities that choose to withdraw from integrated renewal, such as those whose residents do not want for the application of the Special, relatively unfavorable criteria will be applied compared to those applied to communities being renewed under the Special Act, thereby encouraging systematic improvement of the entire aging new town.

### ■ Special exemptions and public contributions

The renewal density is determined by considering the capacity for infrastructure expansion and its impact on the residential environment. Regarding standards directly related to the residential environment such as FAR, building height, and

the requirement to secure parks and green spaces, easing the standards will be considered to the extent that doing so does not damage the fundamental residential environment, ensuring a pleasant quality of life after the renewal project.

In line with the intention of supporting prompt and integrated renewal through simplified procedures, an exemption from the safety inspection will be granted only if all communities within a special renewal district are integrated into a single reconstruction project. In addition, if the purpose of designating the special renewal district is met, the safety inspection for reconstruction may be waived, or relaxed standards may be applied after review by the ageing new town renewal.

These special exemptions will be granted selectively and differentially by the local government, who will consider the difficulty of meeting the designation requirements of the special renewal district and the level of public contribution, after which the local ageing new town renewal committee will conduct a review.

It is also necessary to impose public contributions corresponding to these special exemptions. Public contributions will be levied on the FAR exceeding the standard FAR set in the district unit plan, and these must be progressively imposed on any development density exceeding the appropriate level set out in the master plan for the improvement of aging new towns. [Figure 4](#)

### ■ Inhabitants migration measures

In the event of a simultaneous demand for mass migration, localized market instability such as rising rent prices becomes a concern, which is why it is necessary to consider various factors influencing the market when calculating the annual appropriate volume of renewal projects. Therefore, the central government should provide criteria to set annual appropriate volumes for each local government in the National Policy Guidance on ageing new town renewal, and each local government must set detailed volumes by region and year according to these criteria when formulating the ageing new town renewal master plan.

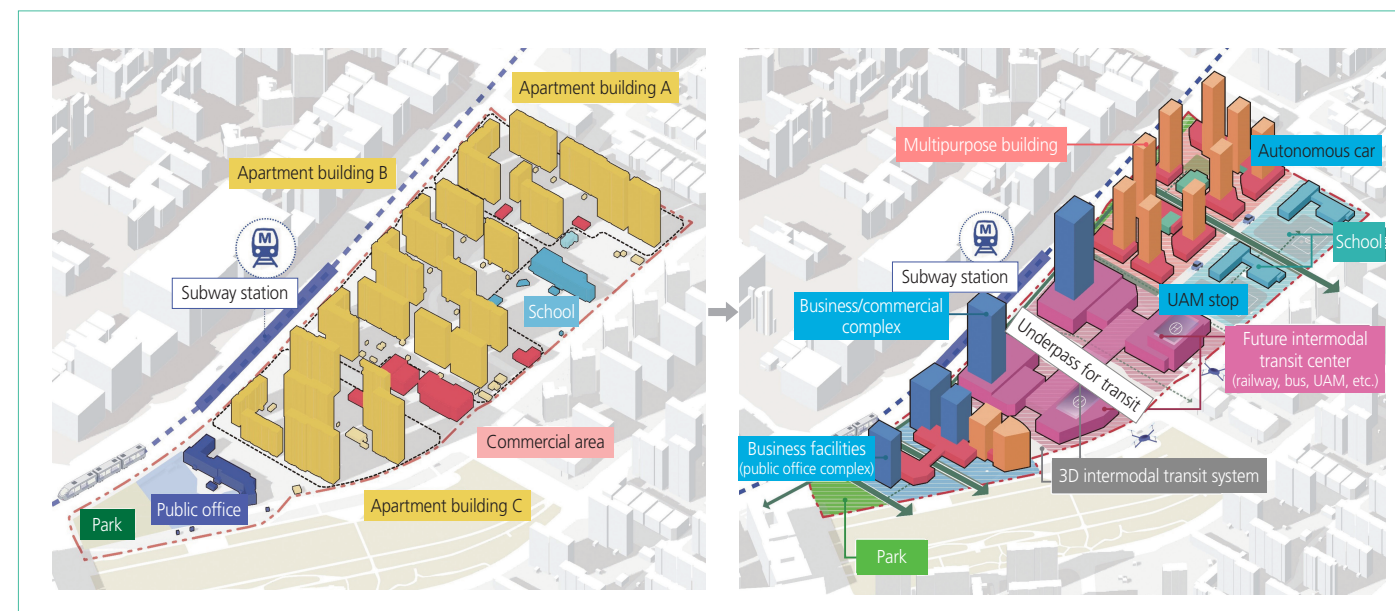
Furthermore, the creation of migration sites can be encouraged by comprehensively considering local conditions such as annual volumes of renewal projects within aging new towns, the housing supply status in surrounding areas, and the rental market conditions, and by selecting appropriate types of migration sites.

## 4. Policy Suggestions for Promoting the renewal of Aging New Towns

### ■ Establishing an institutional framework at the national level for the renewal of aging new towns

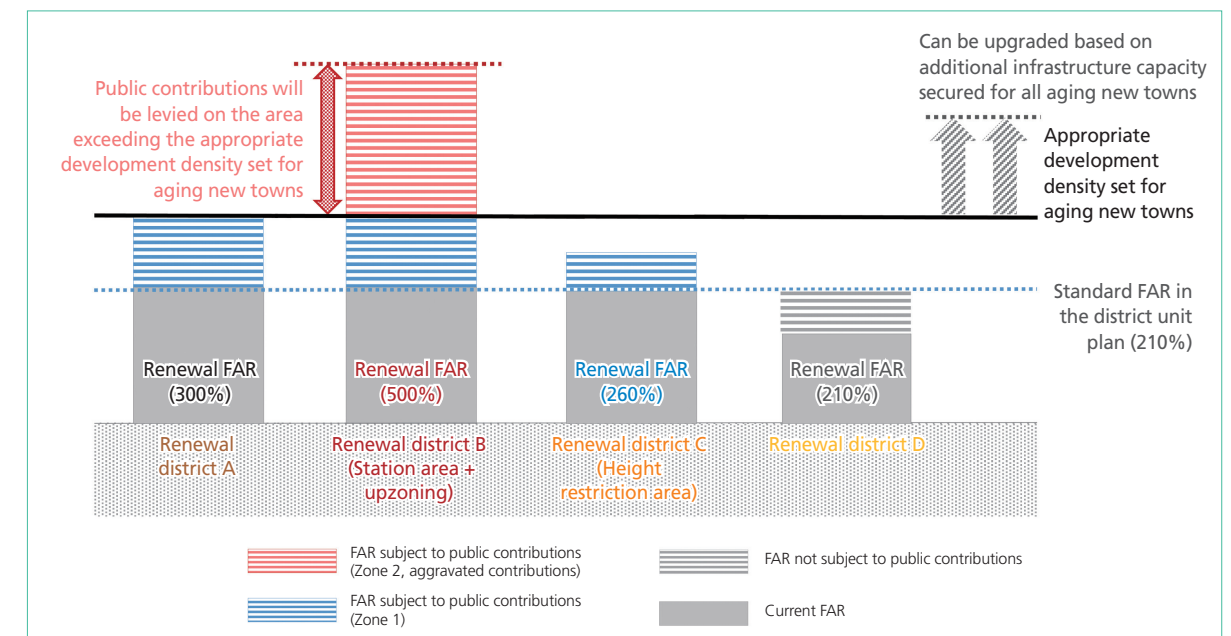
The central government should establish legal and institutional bases and guidelines such as the special Act and the National Policy Guidance on ageing new town renewal to

**Figure 3.** Example of renewal directions around transit hub areas



Source Internal data of Han-A Urban Research Institute as cited in Kim, J. et al. 2023.

**Figure 4.** Example of applying the adequate development density to average FAR within the renewal district



Source  
Created by the authors



systematically improve aging new towns, thereby providing institutional frameworks for local governments to carry out systematic projects by establishing their own ageing new town master plan.

■ Encouraging integrated renewal at the city level beyond individual communities

To encourage integrated renewal at the city level beyond individual communities, it is necessary to first review the designation of first implemented districts among communities pursuing integrated reconstruction. In addition, the Ageing New Town Assistance Organizations are responsible for supporting establishment of the Action Plans for relevant districts, and it is also necessary to consider additional measures to support for smooth renewal project implementation

■ Establishing a cooperative system among the central government, local governments, and public institutions

A consultation group or council should be formed among the central government, local governments, and public

institutions to support and coordinate the interests of various stakeholders throughout the process of renewal of aging new towns and to promptly and efficiently carry out complicated project procedures.

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02

## Aging in Place Perceptions of Elderly People Living in Urban Areas and Gun Districts and Direction of Support

Soyang Jung

### 1. What is Aging in Place?

■ The concept of Aging in Place (AIP)

As a country with one of the fastest aging rates worldwide, South Korea is expected to enter the ultra-aged society in 2025. It is important to prepare for the ultra-aged society because the challenges associated with aging, such as the sharp increase in elderly support expenses and the need for medical treatment and care due to geriatric diseases, can lead to societal shocks beyond the individual level. Countries that have already experienced an aging society ahead of Korea have gradually shifted their policy focus from institutionalized care to one that aims for Aging in Place (AIP). Generally, older people are attached to the homes and communities where have lived for an extended period and hope to live out their lives there as long as possible, which is reflected in the concept of AIP (Jang, H. et al., 2022, 22). This concept, mainly applied in recent studies, is defined as “the elderly living as long as possible in a place of their choosing while maintaining existing familiar relationships” (Lee, Y. et al., 2017, 22).

■ The need to support AIP

The need for AIP support can be identified in the general characteristics of the elderly and in the “demand” aspect—the fact that most of them want it. All human beings feel a sense of attachment to their homes and a sense of comfort and security in the familiar. This sense of attachment increases

with age. The desire of the elderly to remain in their homes and neighborhoods is a common survey finding not only in Korea, but also in many countries where aging is already underway. The relatively low cost of “in-home services” compared to “institutionalized care systems” is a major factor that has led many countries to adopt AIP as a policy. Additionally, it can improve the quality of life of the elderly by providing them with housing stability, bringing positive “effects” at both the individual and community levels, such as greater community attachment and civic engagement (Lee, K. et al., 2018, 182; Jung, E. 2018, 40)<sup>01</sup>. Most of the elderly in Korea live within their community, with only a small number residing in retirement homes or nursing homes<sup>02</sup>. It is noteworthy that the availability of senior housing is limited because their supply is low compared to the elderly population, and they are expensive. Nursing homes are negatively perceived by the public because independent living is impossible and there has been a substantial number of reported cases of elderly abuse. The long-term care insurance program, which is based on the basic principle of “prioritizing in-home care,” has witnessed a drop in-home care and an increase in institutional care (Lee, Y. et al., 2017, 13). Despite their desire to live at home, even with physical disabilities, there has been an increase in the proportion of elderly people using nursing facilities because of insufficient in-home services (Choi, S. 2022, 40). Such an “institutional” aspect suggests that greater active support for AIP is required in the future.

\* This article is an overview of “Strategy for Sustainable and Advanced Urban Renewal in the Ageing New Towns” by Kim, J., Lee, J.H., Song, J.E., Yoo, Y.J., Lee, W.M., and Park, H.S. 2023. Sejong: Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements.

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- 01. It was identified that the Australian government spent 4.3-times more on institutional care per elderly person on an annual average when comparing the money spent between institutional care and home care (2019).
- 02. As of the end of 2020, there were 15,414 persons—or, 0.18% of the total elderly population—living in residential care facilities for the elderly, including nursing home facilities, community living homes for the elderly, and welfare housing for the elderly. The proportion increases only slightly, to 2.19%, even after including all residents of welfare care facilities and community living homes for the elderly (Jang Hee-an et al., 2022).

2. Perceptions of AIP Among the Elderly Living in Urban and Rural Areas

■ Overview of the elderly’s AIP perception survey

The AIP perception survey was conducted for the elderly, who are the actual target of AIP, to understand their perceptions of and needs for AIP, and to identify the key factors of support for AIP. The survey was based on individual interviews with a nationally representative sample of 847 elderly people aged 60 and older who had lived in their current residence for at least three years. When designing the sample, more than a certain number of samples was designated for each group according to individual characteristics such as age and gender. As the area of residence is expected to significantly impact the elderly's AIP intentions and demands, the samples were categorized into urban areas (large cities, small and medium cities) and gun districts (a provincial unit in Korea). Among the respondents, 49.8% were male and 50.2% were female. By age, 47.8% were in their 60s, 35.5% in their 70s, and 16.6% in their 80s. A total of 38% of the respondents lived in large cities, 38.3% in small and medium-sized cities, and 23.7% in gun-districts. [Table 1](#)

■ Spatial scope of AIP

(Significance of neighborhood to the elderly)  
According to the survey results, the elderlies view their

“neighborhood” as “the area where amenities, religious facilities, and community centers are located” (47.8%), followed by “the area where neighbors whom they know from their daily activities live” (22.6%). Overall, they perceive the area where they conduct their daily lives (70.4%) as a neighborhood. In terms of the spatial scope of “neighborhood,” the majority (79.7%) perceive it as an area within walking distance, with the highest responses being within 20 minutes on foot (41.0%) and within 10 minutes by car (50.6%) (Table 1). Compared to those living in urban areas (large and medium-sized cities), respondents in gun districts are more likely to perceive their neighborhood as a distance that can be traveled by car, which reflects the geographical characteristics of their living space that center on traveling by vehicle and inconvenient access to public transportation.

(Spatial scope of realizing AIP) Respondents were asked to indicate the maximum range of space they would not want to leave for the rest of their lives. The answers included: “the neighborhood where I live (34.2%),” “the house where I live (18.8%),” “the city, gun, or gu-district where I live (14.8%),” and “the eup, myeon, or dong where I live (12.0%).” A total of 20.2% responded “does not matter.” This shows that the elderly consider the “area” where they live (61%) rather than their actual “home” as the scope of AIP realization. In other words, the spatial scope of realizing AIP is recognized at a communal level beyond one's home.

Table 1. The scope of neighborhood (community) perceived by the elderly

Category		(Number of cases)	Means of transportation		Time required	
			On foot (%)	By car (%)	On foot (average: minutes)	By car (average: minutes)
Total		(847)	79.7	20.3	18.1	15.7
Area of residence	Large city	(322)	83.2	16.8	19.2	16.8
	Small/mid-city	(324)	83.3	16.7	17.4	17.3
	Gun-district	(201)	68.2	31.8	17.1	13.4

Source  
Jung, S.Y. et al., 2023. *Research on Community-based Integrated Support for the Aging in Place in the Super-aged Era*

Table 2. AIP intention when healthy

Category		(Number of cases)	Want to move to a different neighborhood	Want to move to another house within the current neighborhood	Want to continue to live in the current home
Total		(847)	14.5	16.4	69.1
Area of residence	Large city	(322)	15.2	19.9	64.9
	Small/mid-city	(324)	15.4	17.3	67.3
	Gun-district	(201)	11.9	9.5	78.6

Source  
Jung, S.Y. et al., 2023. *Research on Community-based Integrated Support for the Aging in Place in the Super-aged Era*

■ AIP intentions of the elderly

(When healthy) Approximately seven in 10 (69.1%) elderly people aged 60 or more said they would like to “continue living in their current home” as long as they are healthy, 16.4% would like to move to a different house within the same neighborhood, and 14.5% would like to move to a different neighborhood (Table 2). The intention to continue living in their current home is higher among the elderly living in gun districts (78.6%) compared to those residing in large cities (64.9%) and medium-sized cities (67.3%). Similarly, the intention to continue living in their current neighborhood is also slightly higher among the elderly in gun districts (88.1%) compared to those living in large cities (84.8%) and medium-sized cities (84.6%). [Table 2](#)

(When health is deteriorating) In the case of declining health, which limits their mobility, 41.4% of respondents would still want to “continue living in their current home (using in-home services),” followed by “moving into a retirement home” (18.1%), “moving near their family and friends” (14.6%), “living with family” (14.4%), and “moving to public senior

support housing” (10.9%). By region of residence, in contrast to the finding that those in gun districts are more likely to stay in their current homes than their urban counterparts when healthy, only 34.3% of them show AIP intention in deteriorating health, which is lower than the average. The number of respondents with the intention to live in a facility as a place other than one’s home decreases in large cities (33.2%), small and medium cities (31.2%), and gun districts (18.4%), while the elderly’s intention to live with family members or living in close vicinity to their family or friends are highest in gun districts (46.8%), followed by those living small and medium cities (26.5%), and large cities (20.4%). [Table 3](#)

■ Necessary factors to support AIP

(Facilities needed in proximity) “Healthcare facilities” (39.9%) and “shops to buy daily necessities” (34.6%) are the most frequently cited facilities needed within close proximity for AIP (Table 4). This suggests that accessible healthcare centers are a key facility for the elderly to continue living in their communities. In urban areas, healthcare centers are the

Table 3. Desired place of residence when health is deteriorating

Category		(Number of cases)	Continue to live in current home	Live with spouse, children, or siblings	Move near children, siblings, or friends	Move to a retirement home where services are provided	Move to a public senior support housing	Other
Total		(847)	41.4	14.4	14.6	18.1	10.9	0.6
Area of residence	Large city	(322)	45.3	10.2	10.2	21.7	11.5	0.9
	Small/mid-city	(324)	42.0	12.0	14.5	18.5	12.7	0.3
	Gun-district	(201)	34.3	24.9	21.9	11.4	7.0	0.5

(Unit: %)

Source Jung, S.Y. et al., 2023. *Research on Community-based Integrated Support for the Aging in Place in the Super-aged Era*

Table 4. Facilities needed in close proximity for current AIP

Category		(Number of cases)	Shops to buy daily necessities	Healthcare facilities	Administrative welfare centers	Elderly welfare centers	Bus stops and subway stations	Parks for walks and other physical activities
Total		(847)	34.6	39.9	4.5	9.9	4.8	6.3
Area of residence	Large city	(322)	24.8	46.9	3.4	9.3	6.2	9.3
	Small/mid-city	(324)	33.0	37.0	5.9	13.0	4.6	6.5
	Gun-district	(201)	52.7	33.3	4.0	6.0	3.0	1.0

(Unit: %)

Source Jung, S.Y. et al., 2023. *Research on Community-based Integrated Support for the Aging in Place in the Super-aged Era*

03. In-depth interviews with residents of gun districts revealed that hospitals and supermarkets are located in distant towns and villages. Additionally, as access to public transportation such as buses is difficult for people with physical disabilities, they use call-taxis for the disabled, which are not always available. A few interviewees stated that they shop for daily necessities during their visits to the hospital. Public health centers used to provide travel-checkups once or twice a year, but this has been discontinued since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

most needed facility, while in gun districts, shops to buy daily necessities are the most needed facility. Thus, it can be inferred that the elderly living in gun districts, especially those far from city centers, experience difficulties with even the basic activity of buying necessary goods<sup>03</sup>. [Table 4](#)

**(Needed services)** The survey respondents were asked about the services needed for AIP under the following categories: housing, daily life support, healthcare, care, safety, and leisure and socialization. The scores are the highest for the need for support services related to the physical environment of the home, such as “home maintenance and management services” (3.42 pts) and “home environment improvement for comfortable living” (3.36 pts) (Table 5). The elderly living in urban areas responded that they need greater maintenance services than home renovation, while those living in gun districts answered that they need greater home environment improvements for comfortable living (3.36 pts) than maintenance services (3.25 pts). It is noteworthy that following housing issues, the elderly living in urban areas show a higher need for support for cultural and leisure activities. [Table 5](#)

3. Measures to Support AIP

■ Community-based approach to support

The perception survey among the elderly confirms that AIP should be viewed as a community level rather than one’s home. To the elderly, “community” refers to the area where they conduct their daily lives, typically within an 18-minute walking distance or 15.7 minutes by car. AIP support for the

elderly should be based on a policy approach centered at the community level, where they live and conduct their daily life. Various policies are being planned at the community level, but it is necessary to identify more readily the demand for needed support within a community, and to link and cooperate with numerous resources from the public and private sectors.

■ Support that considers regional characteristics

There is a need for support that takes into account regional characteristics. In the case of the elderly in gun districts, the intention to AIP, which was high when they were healthy, fell below average when their mobility became impaired with declining health. Such contrasting responses can be attributed to the regional characteristics that make it difficult to conveniently fulfill basic life needs such as purchasing daily necessities. Additionally, expectations for social ties, a preference for living close to family, and a low preference for facilities were identified. While identifying specific needs within a region, consideration should be accorded to appropriate ways of providing services, such as group homes using senior centers, transportation support through demand-based vehicles, and delivery services to neighborhoods. Conversely, the demand for support for leisure and cultural activities is high among the elderly in urban areas, where communities are relatively weaker compared to gun districts. Senior centers, as well as neighborhood-based community centers should become the base of daily life for the elderly and create an environment where various social interaction activities can take place.

■ The importance of policy attention to comfortable housing for the elderly

The AIP support that the elderly need the most is the maintenance of and improvements to their homes to make them more comfortable. To date, policy support for home modifications has been extremely limited, such as the Repair and Maintenance Benefits Project (Seo Jong-kyun 2022, 24). Removing thresholds, installing safety handrails, and slip-resistant flooring are low-cost measures that can be highly effective in creating conditions that enable the elderly to live in their communities for as long as possible. The government must take a greater interest in AIP home modifications and engage the private sector. One of the most important policies to assist people age in place is to ensure that their homes are adaptable, easy to maintain and manage, and that there is appropriate housing in the community for the elderly who need stable housing. Additionally, an elderly friendly environment should be created by supporting the connection of key services that assist their daily life, and improving access to facilities and services in the community.

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\* This article is an overview of “Research on Community-based Integrated Support for the Aging in Place in the Super-aged Era” by Jung, S., Lee, J., You, H., Kim, Y., and Jung Y. 2023. Sejong: Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements.

Table 5. Needed services for current AIP (Unit: average point out of 5 points rating)

Category		(Number of cases)	Home environment improvement for comfortable living (house renovation and repairs)	Home maintenance and management services (e.g. wallpaper, light fixture changes)	Daily life support (housekeeping, grocery shopping, meal support etc.)	Intensive care services (nurse care service, visiting ambulatory bathing service etc.)	Well-being support (regular check-ins, connecting services in emergency etc.)	Medical and health services via home visits by healthcare workers	Vehicle and companion services when traveling (visits to hospitals, shopping etc.)	Consulting services (provide the information needed for daily life)	Support for various social/ cultural leisure activities
Total		(847)	3.36	3.42	3.14	2.97	3.21	3.14	3.20	3.17	3.34
Area of residence	Large city	(322)	3.38	3.50	3.25	3.06	3.25	3.23	3.26	3.22	3.36
	Small/ mid-city	(324)	3.34	3.46	3.13	2.98	3.29	3.17	3.23	3.21	3.43
	Gun-district	(201)	3.36	3.25	2.98	2.83	3.00	2.96	3.04	3.02	3.18

Source Jung, S.Y. et al., 2023. Research on Community-based Integrated Support for the Aging in Place in the Super-aged Era

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## Study on the System for Enacting a Special Act on the Renovation of Vacant Houses in Agricultural and Fishing Villages and Surrounding Areas

Jungeun Park

### 1. Background and Significance

#### ■ The damage caused by vacant houses, which is a key issue undermining the residential environment in agricultural and fishing villages, is not easily resolved

The first noticeable effect of population decline is the increase in vacant houses. Recently, as the number of vacant houses in agricultural and fishing villages has increased rapidly, complaints about these vacant houses have also increased. Although social issues such as community damage caused by vacant houses are being raised, fundamental solutions for vacant houses in agricultural and fishing villages, villages where vacant houses are concentrated, and deteriorated residential environments are still not established. Various projects, such as the use or renovation of vacant houses, are being carried forward as part of policy initiatives, but these projects have stalled due to difficulties in identifying vacant house owners and handling unauthorized buildings.

#### ■ There is an urgent need for institutional improvements related to the renovation of deteriorated residential areas in agricultural and fishing villages to comprehensively prepare for the increasing number and area of vacant houses

There are no existing area-based management plans for regions where multiple vacant houses occur within a single village, in addition to management targets such as single vacant houses. It is essential to establish systematic management plans that differentiate between areas to be renovated by converting vacant houses into residential or communal facilities based on the characteristics of regions with multiple vacant houses and areas such as marginal villages that need to be fully repurposed for other uses. As such, there are currently no management plans for deteriorated residential areas in agricultural and fishing villages. This highlights the need to proactively establish systems and policies for this purpose in the long run. Here,

the key is to establish legal systems specialized for agricultural and fishing villages that have different characteristics from the renovation of deteriorated residential areas in urban areas. In particular, since systems are separated based on project targets, scale, and methods without a comprehensive management strategy for deteriorated residential areas, it is necessary to generally consider the issue of blind spots in terms of renovation.

### 2. Status and Issues of Vacant Houses in Agricultural and Fishing Villages

#### ■ The number of vacant houses in agricultural and fishing villages has more than doubled over the past 20 years and is distributed sporadically throughout the villages

According to KOSIS, in 2000, there were approximately 243,000 vacant houses (8.6% of houses in agricultural and fishing villages) in these areas, but by 2022, this number more than doubled to 527,000 (12.7%). In eup (town) areas, the number of vacant houses more than tripled from 72,000 (7.0%) in 2000 to 226,000 (11.0%) in 2022. In myeon (township) areas, the number of vacant houses nearly doubled from 171,000 (9.4%) in 2000 to 301,000 (14.3%) in 2022. Unlike urban areas where houses are densely packed, agricultural and fishing villages have a village-level spatial structure, with houses dispersed over relatively large spaces, and vacant houses tend to be distributed sporadically rather than being concentrated in specific areas. [Figure 1](#)

#### ■ Increased risks in the physical, health and hygiene, and community aspects due to vacant houses

Identifying the damage caused by vacant houses is necessary for specifying why and how vacant houses should be renovated. First, in the physical aspect, vacant houses often pose higher risks of collapse or fire due to their deteriorated

building condition. Moreover, these houses are likely to suffer from internal and external damage, may have various items piled up inside, and are surrounded by unmanaged vegetation, which disrupt the village landscape. Second, in terms of health and hygiene, vacant houses may have unmanaged and exposed sewage systems and septic tanks, which are likely to lead to contamination and foul odors and be inhabited by pests or wild animals. Third, in the community aspect, vacant houses are likely to be used as places of crime since they are visited by no one, which may threaten the safety of nearby residents. Third, from a community perspective, vacant houses can become places of crime due to their lack of regular human presence, posing a safety threat to nearby residents.

### 3. Systems and Policies Related to the Renovation of Vacant Houses in Agricultural and Fishing Villages

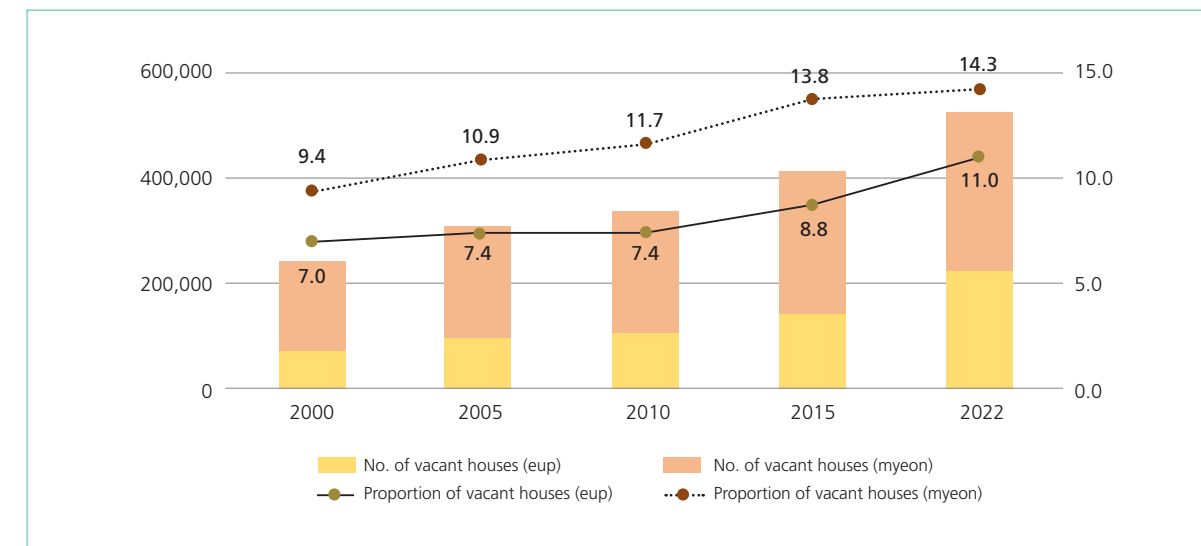
#### ■ Summary of three laws related to the renovation of vacant houses and residential areas in agricultural and fishing villages, and the limitations of current systems

There are three laws related to the renovation of vacant houses in agricultural and fishing villages: the Agricultural and Fishing Villages Improvement Act, the Agricultural and Fishing Villages Remodeling Act, and the Act on Support for Rural Spatial Restructuring and Regeneration. The most foundational law is the Agricultural and Fishing Villages Improvement Act. However, this Act focuses on “installing and renovating

production infrastructure” for agriculture and fisheries and “improving living conditions in agricultural and fishing villages,” including general matters regarding vacant houses but not the direction for a renovation that includes surrounding areas. Next, the Agricultural and Fishing Villages Remodeling Act was originally established with the goal of “improving living conditions in agricultural and fishing villages” and “renovating agricultural and fishing villages” to prevent deterioration and improve the functionality of buildings in these villages, but no project has been implemented by this Act. Finally, there is the Act on Support for Rural Spatial Restructuring and Regeneration. However, this Act was established to address issues such as rural sprawl and imbalances, which do not concern vacant houses and surrounding deteriorated residential areas.

In other words, the three laws currently in operation are all focused on their legislative purposes such as increasing agricultural production, improving agricultural and fishing villages, and promoting efficient land use in rural areas. Although they include some issues such as deteriorated houses and vacant houses in agricultural and fishing villages, there is no legislation thus far that comprehensively addresses the specific system in terms of the systematic renovation of deteriorated residential areas in these villages. Therefore, it is difficult to synthetically resolve the issue of the declining resident population in agricultural and fishing villages with only the current method of improving the living environments in individual housing units and vacant houses. Furthermore, the laws are concentrated only on post-management and

Figure 1. Trend in the occurrence of vacant houses in agricultural and fishing villages (2000–2022)



**Source**  
Park, et al., 2023.  
A study on the system for enacting a special act on vacant house maintenance in farming and fishing villages and surrounding areas, p.22



improvement rather than prevention before the occurrence of vacant houses, which limits comprehensive measures for managing vacant houses in agricultural and fishing villages.

■ Main content and limitations of current policy projects related to the improvement of vacant houses and residential areas

Various policy projects related to the renovation of vacant houses are being carried out by each government department, such as improvement of living conditions in vulnerable urban areas, old housing improvement based on public–private partnership, general rural development, homes for returning farmers, and homes for returning fishermen. However, a fundamental improvement system must be established for deteriorated residential areas in agricultural and fishing villages that are becoming obsolete and facing a population decline to achieve balanced national development and livable local regions, but such a system does not yet exist. There is currently no framework for improving deteriorated residential areas in agricultural and fishing villages, and there are only projects limited to specific targets such as renovating old and deteriorated houses, slate roof houses, and vacant houses in agricultural and fishing villages.

When vacant houses are clustered in agricultural and fishing villages, different approaches are needed based on the village's location and the degree of household clustering. However, the current system only focuses on renovating individual vacant houses. It is necessary to also consider improving the surrounding infrastructure if households are clustered within a certain radius of the village's location in the future. Thus, to efficiently improve deteriorated residential areas in agricultural and fishing villages in the long run, there is an urgent need to establish a comprehensive system tailored to the realities of these areas to improve deteriorated residential

areas where old and deteriorated houses, slate roof houses, and vacant houses are concentrated.

4. Formulation of a System to Improve Vacant Houses and Surrounding Areas

■ Enactment plan for a special act

It is necessary to first consider establishing a special act to efficiently and promptly carry out the renovation and improvement of vacant houses in agricultural and fishing villages and surrounding areas. This is because, although vacant houses are typically private properties, they have significant impacts on the surrounding environment and regional revitalization, making it inevitable to not only implement measures to encourage improvements but also establish compulsory provisions such as fines or vicarious administrative execution for owners failing to manage their vacant houses. In addition, it is necessary to comprehensively consider not only financial support from the public sector but also premeditated and institutional support to promptly carry out the renovation and improvement of vacant houses and surrounding areas at the individual or regional level.

In light of these matters, three alternatives can be considered for establishing a special legislative bill. First, Alternative 1 is to establish a new, separate law specialized for vacant houses and surrounding areas. The advantage of this alternative is that it can provide clear legislative grounds tailored to the renovation of vacant houses. However, there is a possibility of overlapping or conflicting content in area-based improvement projects. Moreover, the establishment of a new law involves complicated procedures and a long period of time as opposed to amending an existing law. Second, Alternative 2 includes matters regarding the improvement of vacant houses

and surrounding areas by fully amending the Agricultural and Fishing Villages Remodeling Act. The advantage of this alternative is that it can minimize redundancy in content and improve the effectiveness of the system by reorganizing the current law that has shown extremely low application since its enactment in 2014. This will also help resolve the issues of overlapping or conflicting concepts of area-based improvement. However, there are limitations in seeking a significant change in the content and composition of the current law.

It is deemed preferable to finally select Alternative 2, which can not only save time but also promote the execution of the current system in expediting the improvement of vacant houses and surrounding areas. In this bill, it is important to implement a complete revision under the basic direction and principles of focusing on concise guidelines rather than detailed regulations, prioritizing the use of vacant houses over acceptance, and emphasizing occupancy over ownership. [Table 1](#)

■ Complete amendment (plan) of the current Agricultural and Fishing Villages Remodeling Act

This section seeks to establish a legal framework for the improvement of old and deteriorated houses in agricultural and

fishing villages and the use or demolition of vacant houses and to propose a short- to long-term improvement and remodeling plan for areas with a high concentration of such vacant and old and deteriorated houses. The current Agricultural and Fishing Villages Remodeling Act includes the concept of “improvement projects,” but 1) it does not include matters related to the use or demolition of vacant houses and 2) there is a need to simplify the area-based improvement method to increase the effectiveness of the three types of projects proposed. It is necessary to simplify the types of renovation or improvement by providing the direction and framework of the most fundamental method so that the system can be used flexibly in the actual settings while also establishing the legal grounds for residents to make suggestions in carrying out these projects.

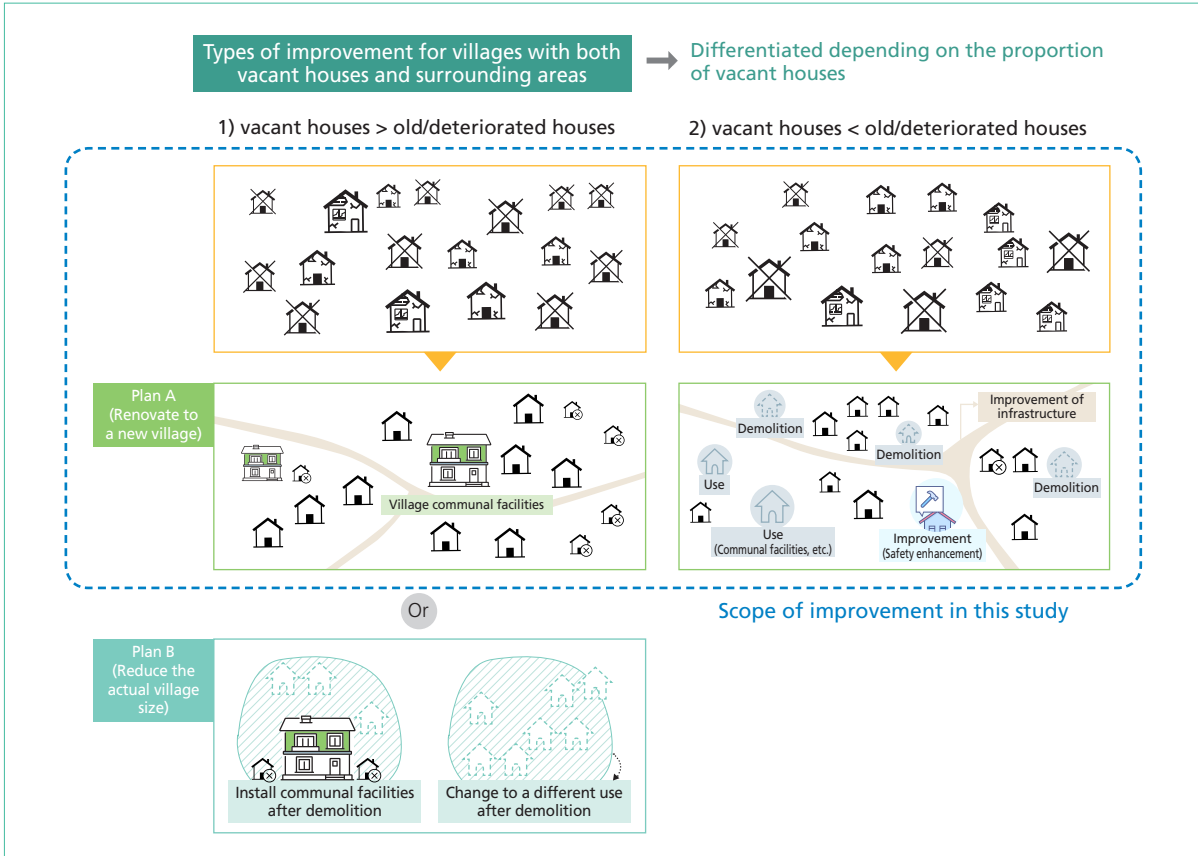
Before completely amending the Agricultural and Fishing Villages Remodeling Act, matters regarding the establishment of vacant house renovation and management systems must be fully amended to comprehensively manage matters regarding the demolition of vacant houses, which had been addressed in the Agricultural and Fishing Villages Improvement Act. In addition, it is necessary to transfer and integrate them into the Agricultural and Fishing Villages Remodeling Act,

Table 1. Review of alternatives for the establishment of the special act

Category	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
Characteristic	Establish a new, separate law specialized for vacant houses and surrounding areas	Include matters related to the improvement of vacant houses and surrounding areas by fully amending the Agricultural and Fishing Villages Remodeling Act
Advantage	Can provide clear legislative grounds tailored to the renovation of vacant houses	Can minimize redundancy in content and improve the effectiveness of the system by reorganizing the current law that has shown extremely low application since its enactment in 2014
Disadvantage	Overlapping or conflicting content in area-based improvement projects	Limitations in seeking a significant change in the content and composition of the current law

Source  
Park et al. 2023. A study on the system for enacting a special act on vacant house maintenance in farming and fishing villages and surrounding areas, p.72

Figure 2. Types of improvement for vacant houses and surrounding areas (2 types)



Source  
Park, et al., 2023. A study on the system for enacting a special act on vacant house maintenance in farming and fishing villages and surrounding areas, p.81



which addresses the renovation and improvement of old and deteriorated houses. It is also necessary to include the term “improvement or renovation of vacant houses” in the current Agricultural and Fishing Villages Remodeling Act. Considering these matters, this study proposes the amendment of the current Agricultural and Fishing Villages Remodeling Act to the “(tentative) Special Act on the Improvement of Vacant Houses and Agricultural and Fishing Villages.” This is because of the need to provide keywords in the title of the law to clearly identify the key issues in matters that readjusted the general content by newly including matters regarding the improvement of vacant houses.

The main contents of the special act that will be fully amended include a complete overhaul of the planning system (establishing the basic guidelines for the improvement of agricultural and fishing villages, village improvement planning, and systems such as vacant house surveys), classifying the targets and methods of projects, defining vacant houses, and implementing nationwide monitoring of vacant houses.

Additionally, provisions should be included to categorize methods for improving villages that have both vacant houses and old and deteriorated houses. If the number of vacant houses exceeds that of old and deteriorated houses, systems must be included to improve vacant houses and infrastructure, as well as redevelopment procedures, to prioritize area-based improvement. Furthermore, if the number of old and deteriorated houses exceeds the number of vacant houses, there is a need to include review procedures, the amendment or establishment of related plans, and detailed project implementation procedures and methods to prioritize point-based improvements such as remodeling and demolition. [Figure 2](#)

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