

## I Profile of Sumida City

### 1 Outline

Location: Sumida City is located on the east side of the Sumida River in the eastern part of Tokyo. (Tokyo Metropolis consists of 23 special wards that include the central part of Tokyo, and other cities, towns and villages. Sumida City is one of the 23 special wards.)

Foundation: Mukojima City and Honjo City merged into Sumida City in 1947.

Origin of the name: The combination of the two Chinese characters “boku” (also called “sumi”) of “bokutei,” meaning the banks of the Sumida River, a popular area for viewing cherry blossoms in the spring since the Edo period (1603-1868), and “da” of the Sumida River.

Area: 13.75 km<sup>2</sup> (ranked 17th of the 23 special wards)

Population: Approximately 250,000 people (ranked 16th of the 23 special wards)

### 2 History of Sumida City

As shown on the old maps of Edo (present-day Tokyo), Sumida City covers the areas of Honjo and Mukojima, each of which has its own distinctive characteristics and history.

#### Honjo

With development beginning in 1657 (in the early Edo period), the town of Honjo was located relatively close to Edo Castle where samurai (warriors) families, craftsmen and townspeople lived, with common people being in the majority. During the Meiji period (1868-1912) when Japan began to industrialize, Honjo also started to prosper as a manufacturing town. The neat grid pattern of streets developed at the time can still be seen today. The area is the birthplace of a number of historical figures, including Katsushika Hokusai and Katsu Kaishu.

#### Mukojima

The farming village of Mukojima was inhabited much earlier than Honjo and supplied fresh produce to the central part of Edo during the Edo period. Mukojima was also an area where the Tokugawa shoguns enjoyed boating on the Sumida River and falconry. After cherry trees were planted along the banks of the Sumida River, Mukojima became a popular holiday destination for people in Edo. The area’s scenery of brooks and fields attracted writers, poets, artists and people of refined taste.

Japan’s industrialization beginning in the Meiji period also affected Mukojima, prompting it to develop as a commercial and residential area. As a former farming village, the paths once used by farmers often became routes for pedestrians and vehicles, and many of these pathways remain today as complex networks of alleys that are part of the cityscape of Mukojima.

## II Inherited traditional Edo culture

### Cherry trees along the Sumida River

The cherry trees lining the banks of the Sumida River date back to 1717, when Tokugawa Yoshimune, the eighth shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate, planted 100 cherry trees. This is a popular spot in Tokyo, with crowds of visitors enjoying the beautiful cherry blossoms in the spring.

### Sumida River Fireworks Festival

The Sumida River Fireworks Festival dates back to 1733, when fireworks were displayed at the opening of the boating season on the Sumida River to console the souls of those who died during the great famine in western Japan and the cholera epidemic in Edo and to pray for protection from evil. The fireworks display became the most favorite pastime for commoners in Edo as well as a popular ukiyo-e (woodblock prints) motif. Today, a total of 20,000 fireworks launched from two sites illuminate the night sky on the last Saturday in July.

### Professional Sumo

It was in 1781 that professional sumo, Japan's national sport, became a regular feature in the precincts of Ekoin Temple in Ryogoku, a major entertainment district in Edo. After the original Kokugikan (sumo stadium) was built in Ryogoku in the late Meiji period, many sumo stables and restaurants serving "chanko" (a meat, fish and vegetable dish cooked in a large pot and traditionally served to sumo wrestlers) were established in the area. Today, three of the six annual Grand Sumo Tournaments are held in Ryogoku. During each 15-day tournament, the whole town is filled with enthusiasm for sumo.

### Katsushika Hokusai

It is said that Katsushika Hokusai, the world-renowned ukiyo-e artist, was born in Sumida, where he lived most of his life and produced many woodblock prints and drawings until his death at the age of 90. Sumida City, which collects his works, will open the Sumida Hokusai Museum in 2015 to honor this great home-grown artist.

### Festivals

The festival of Ushijima Jinja, the oldest shrine in Sumida City, has been observed since the Edo period. On the occasion of the Grand Festival, which is observed once every five years, a replica of the Imperial carriage pulled by a bull and 48 portable shrines parade through the city. In Mukojima, famous for its geisha district, a group of geisha moves gracefully around the area, singing kiyari (songs originally sung by laborers when carrying heavy logs) dressed in the Tekomai costume.

### Traditional crafts

Traditional crafts passed down from the Edo period to the present day, such as Edo-style cut glass, tortoiseshell objects and Kimekomi dolls, reflect the history and culture of Sumida through the art of handicrafts. As Japan's traditional crafts disappear, many craftspeople in various fields keep these handicraft techniques alive in Sumida City.

### III TOKYO SKYTREE, and manufacturing and craftsmanship in Sumida

#### 1 Challenge facing Sumida as a manufacturing district

Home to manufacturers producing consumer products used “from when getting up in the morning to when going to bed at night,” Sumida City has developed as a manufacturing district. However, as manufacturers relocate their production base to other Asian countries and Japan’s industrial structure changes, manufacturing in the city has been sluggish in recent years.

#### 2 TOKYO SKYTREE aiming at the synergistic effects of industry and tourism

Sumida City bid to become the construction site of TOKYO SKYTREE with the aim to boost tourism and revitalize manufacturing in the city by taking advantage of the synergistic effects of industry and tourism.

The decisive factor in winning the bid was the above mentioned “inherited traditional Edo culture.” While Tokyo, the capital of the nation has changed dramatically, Sumida City is the only remaining area that has inherited the traditional Edo culture.

As TOKYO SKYTREE, which began operation on May 22, 2012, is expected to attract 44 million visitors a year, local people have high hopes that the tower will transform the area into a tourist city and have a great impact on the local economy.

#### 3 Evolving traditional crafts

Traditional crafts are a valuable part of craftsmanship in Sumida, helping to preserve techniques passed down from the Edo period. Craftspeople have also come up with various ingenious ideas to adapt to the new age.

##### (1) Traditional crafts applied to TOKYO SKYTREE

As a symbol of progressive city culture, TOKYO SKYTREE also adopts the techniques of traditional crafts found in various parts of the tower. The wall of the ticket counter and the ceiling of the elevator hall are adorned with patterns of “Edo Komon.” Panels depicting each of the four seasons are found separately inside the four elevators carrying visitors to the observation deck, 350 meters above the ground. These features are the work of a young designer in Sumida and crafted by artisans dedicated to woodwork, decorated battledores, and other crafts.

##### (2) Traditional crafts preservation society and Partire

Groups of traditional craft/handicraft artisans, such as a traditional crafts preservation society and Partire, continue to exist in Sumida City.

These groups produce and preserve traditional crafts, and attract tourists through workshops where adults, students on a school excursion, and foreigners can experience the skills of crafting.

(3) Traditional craftworks responding to the times

Some traditional crafts no longer suit the lifestyles and culture of today. Preserving tradition also requires taking on something new. Take, for example, the cellphone holders developed at the request of Sony Ericsson, a cellphone device manufacturer. They are crafted making use of the techniques of traditional crafts, namely Edo-style cut glass and ornamental metal fittings.

4 Local brand strategy “Sumida Modern”

One of the initiatives undertaken by Sumida City is a local brand strategy: the branding of manufacturing and craftsmanship in Sumida based on its traditional culture dating back to the Edo period and its DNA for making things. The strategy is aimed at increasing the value of local brands by raising the overall popularity of Sumida, enhancing its added value, and letting people at home and abroad know what Sumida has to offer.

(1) Sumida Modern

Products certified as Sumida brands are called “Sumida Modern.” Once a year products proposed by Sumida-based companies are examined before being certified as “Sumida Modern.”

The criteria for certification as Sumida Modern are as follows: the product must (1) possess the DNA for making things handed down from the Edo period; (2) enrich people’s lives; (3) pass on the local culture to the next generation; and (4) help the community develop by promoting interaction among visitors, residents and workers.

(2) Examples of the products certified in fiscal 2011

Some of the products certified in fiscal 2011 include not only items in the fields of traditional crafts, but items supporting modern life as well. Some products were devised through collaboration between Sumida-based companies and designers.

(3) Marketing strategy for Sumida Modern

Products certified as Sumida Modern are advertised and provided to consumers through participation in exhibitions; dissemination of information via magazines and other mass media; and sales at the Industry and Tourism Information Center “Sumida City Point” (open on the fifth floor of the East Yard in the Tokyo Solamachi commercial complex in TOKYO SKYTREE TOWN). As a result of this marketing strategy, some companies have been successful with their products selling well at “Sumida City Point” or receiving many orders after being featured on television.

Lastly

Stimulated by a number of success stories involving Sumida Modern products, some Sumida-based businesses are trying to follow suit by developing new products of their own. As new events are organized around the city taking advantage of the popularity of TOKYO SKYTREE, an increasing number of people who find Sumida interesting have begun to visit the area. Focusing on these trends, the municipal government is working to revitalize the community by promoting industries in the city based on the strategy of “making new ‘things’ happen.”