

auri research brief

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Oh, Sunghoon
Senior Research Fellow

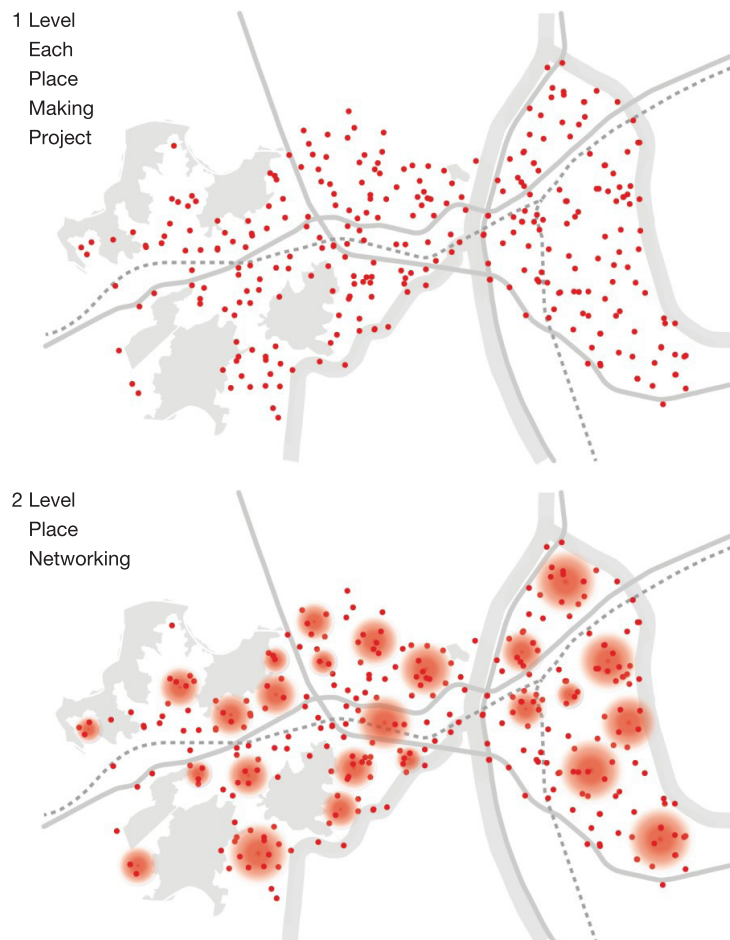
Place-based Strategic Plan for Effective Urban Design Practice

Although the value of urban space is highly recognized, the actual practice of making improvements on the planning, design, or spatial qualities of individual places lacks flexibility, speed, and integration. The current planning methods exhibit several problems: the plans may be drafted on a higher spatial level which fails to recognize the actual physical aspects of the urban space; the plans may be able to tackle physical problems but is limited to specific aspects. Or at times, it is specific to a site but envisioned on a comprehensive level that fails to address small-scale, site-specific problems that occur sporadically within the urban realm. Thus, this study aims to improve the contents and institutional aspects of urban design practice to cope with small-scale place-related issues that are difficult to integrate or improve upon quickly. In order to do this, the study reviewed the existing concept of urban design and examined the Korean urban planning system through these lenses in order to suggest viable improvement measures.

The current urban planning system is practical for large-scale developments or for urban planning projects but is inefficient for improving small-scale urban places. As a result, these smaller projects are left to the means of individual local governments. In analyzing the list of urban environment improvement projects in Guro-gu, this study found that aside from large-scale projects which were

carried out by urban regeneration or architecture departments, most other projects were taken up by the other, non-related diverse departments. Each department planned and implemented projects with respect to their own disparate department objectives and managed project progress on their own. This type of disintegrated process makes it difficult for planners to collaborate with other managing departments in regards to the spatial values and conditions of common sites.

Before commencing the planning process, the department in charge might first check whether the spatial boundaries of the project overlap with other departments, projects and seek cooperation if positively confirmed. However, there is little collaboration among related entities after this initial contact. In the case of Guro-gu, a large number of urban projects were focused on their own issues or aspects related to urban infrastructure and it was difficult to integrate or make linkages among different projects. Furthermore, approximately half of the projects related to daily urban environments such as pedestrian walkways or landscapes were found to be small-scale projects with budgets of less than 100 million KRW.



[Figure] Place-making and place networking process in a specific administrative area

The majority of projects derived from the needs of the residents (resident participation budget project) focuses on street-related elements or urban infrastructures and are often related to pedestrian convenience. Components of place-making that commonly affect a number of small-scale projects in close proximity or elements of projects installed around the same urban facility, should be comprehensively addressed. In addition, it is desirable to establish a mid- to long-term strategy to ensure continuous management of individual projects with spaces activated and expanded rather than being limited as one-time projects.

Although projects are carried out with a clear view of their urban contexts, planning and implementing projects through individual departments deprive the planners of the benefit of having an overarching neighborhood-based perspective. This study suggests that it would make more sense to have a larger, collective plan and budget based on a single location rather than to simply secure budgets for single projects; this would increase fiscal efficiency and improve actual spatial outcomes.

Here, we propose improvement plans alongside their respective budgets for 12 target sites in Guro-gu as a scheme for place-based strategic planning. Future place improvement projects can be forecasted and recommended based on this scheme. The simulations of Guro and Gaebong station areas were expanded over the whole of Guro-gu to identify the locations that may require future improvement. When the same place categorization and improvement measures are applied, there are 81 places near Gyeongin Line and 243 places overall in Guro-gu eligible to be considered for improvements.

The purpose of such place-based strategic planning is to enhance the quality of life in Guro-gu through making expeditious improvements to places that are the backgrounds to people's daily lives. Following an analysis of the budget for each of the department's space-improvement projects, the study found that it would be possible to execute the recommended projects within the next five years without requiring any additional funds if appropriate changes can be made to the current methods of budget execution.

There are two ways to include place-based strategic planning into the existing urban planning system. First, a place-based strategic plan can be added as a non-legal plan to the basic urban plan. In such a case, the strategic plan along with improvement measures for the targeted areas can be prepared as an administrative plan and used as a guide for local governments to implement place-based projects. Second, a place-based strategic plan may be established through separate legal (official) planning. The advantage of this is that place-based improvements can be implemented more rapidly by prompting the local governments to selectively set up plans for projects exceeding a certain size. The latter method may be a turning point for citizen participation, as this method is only recognized as a formal procedure

under the top-down urban planning system in regards to bringing changes in specific urban areas.

Making Improvements to our urban spaces not only enhance our quality of life but give opportunities for residents to participate in community projects and increase a sense of ownership and enthusiasm around a local area. It is also critical to the physical preservation of locality. Place-based strategic planning is not a mere revision of any previous methods but rather a new tool for urban design practice that fosters efficient spatial improvements without additional budgetary requirements.

Keywords : Place-based strategic plan, Place-making, Place network, Citizen participation

