

Woven City Press

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① Voices that Connect Our History to Our Future

The Cornerstone of Woven City: Reflections from the Higashi-Fuji Plant



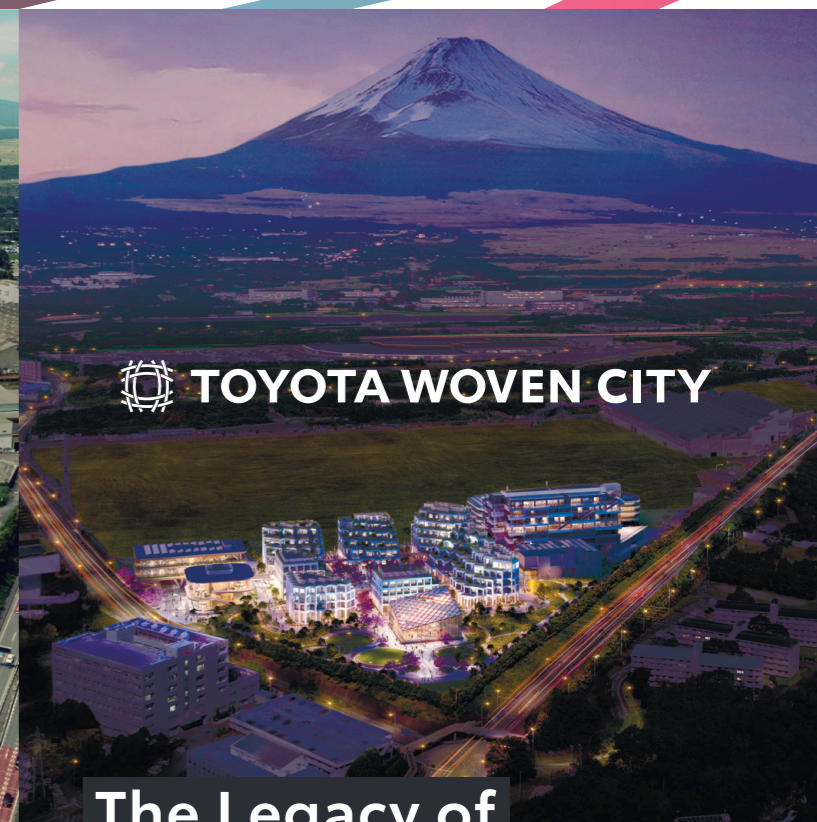
② Voices that Bring Us Together

How Woven City Connects to the Future



Woven City— A mechanism for exploring well-being that benefits others

At the heart of the Toyota Group is a young man who wanted to help his mother live a better life. Sakichi Toyoda invented the automatic power loom to make his mother’s weaving work easier. His commitment to taking action for the sake of others’ happiness is the core of the philosophy that has driven Toyota for decades and continues to propel us forward. Caring for others has been important as we evolved from a loom manufacturer to a car maker, and is critical to our transformation into a mobility company. Today his legacy is dedicated to improving the overall quality of life on the planet. Motivated to deliver the freedom and joy of movement to everyone – Mobility for all. We’ve replaced outdated transportation concepts with a new set of mobility principles and dynamic approaches that allow us to invent a mechanism to generate well-being that goes far beyond what has been possible until now. Woven City is an important model of our efforts to benefit all humanity and make well-being accessible to all. Unlike hypothetical theory, fantasy, or science fiction, we are working with partners to build a real-life test course for mobility. There we will pilot experiments and develop innovations that can propel society forward and form the future fabric of life. The innovations we make today, and through the endless evolution of Woven City going forward, will expand the possibilities of mobility. We hope you’re as excited about our ever-evolving city and the future as we are!



The Origin of Woven City

The Legacy of the Higashi-Fuji Plant



Susono City, Shizuoka Prefecture, is the future site of Woven City, which is currently under construction. It is also significant as the home of the Higashi-Fuji Plant of Toyota Motor East Japan (TMEJ), which manufactured products for over half a century. Why was this place chosen as the birthplace of Woven City? What is its unique history, and how will its legacy become a part of Woven City? Through conversations with former Higashi-Fuji Plant employees and the Woven by Toyota employees who currently work for Woven City, we look to unravel the evolving story of Woven City.

The Origin of Woven City A Desire to Work for Others

[History of Higashi-Fuji Plant]

1966

Completion of the Automotive Performance Test Center
(later Higashi-Fuji Technical Center)

Established to support the motorization of Japan



1967

Completion of the Passenger Car Assembly Plant
(later TMEJ Higashi-Fuji Plant)

Produced the first model, Toyota Sports 800



1977

Launch of the Toyota School

Total participation of over 40,000 people



1980s

TMEJ Higashi-Fuji Plant
Total production: approx. **7.52M** vehicles
Total employees: approx. **7,000** staff



1990s



2000s



2010s



2012

Launched TMEJ

Production was consolidated in the Tohoku region to assist in recovery after the earthquake



2018

May

Higashi-Fuji Plant closure announced

July

Akio Toyoda, the then Toyota Motor Corporation President, discussed the concept of a "living laboratory" in a dialog with employees



2020

January

Woven City announced at CES 2020

December

Closed the Higashi-Fuji Plant



A Momentous Dialog with the President

Following the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, Toyota Motor Corporation established Toyota Motor East Japan (TMEJ) to generate jobs, pay taxes, and provide long-term support for reconstruction in the Tohoku region. To further boost their competitive edge, they gathered the long-cultivated skills, wisdom, and ingenuity of the Higashi-Fuji Plant employees and brought them into the Tohoku region plant.

Even after the decision to close the Higashi-Fuji Plant, the desire to work for the sake of others endured. Just two months after the closure announcement in July 2018, a milestone event occurred. Akio Toyoda, the then Toyota Motor Corporation President, visited the plant to speak directly to the employees.

At this gathering, one employee asked the president: "Although I want to continue to make cars at the Tohoku plant, sadly, some of my

colleagues won't be able to make the move and may even have to resign. Please share your plans for the future of Higashi-Fuji with us."

Standing before the emotionally charged employees of the Higashi-Fuji Plant who had gathered to hear him speak, the president presented this bold idea for the first time. In his answer, President Toyoda shared his vision of transforming Higashi-Fuji into a "Connected City." He explained that it would become a place making significant contributions to the next 50 years of automobile manufacturing—a place where experiments for innovations such as autonomous driving could be conducted.

That very moment was the crucial starting point, the seed that would grow, transform, and evolve the Higashi-Fuji Plant into the Woven City of today, and tomorrow.

Birthplace of Iconic Automobiles: The Higashi-Fuji Plant

In 1966, within sight of Mount Fuji at the dawn of the motorization of Japan, Toyota laid the foundations of the Higashi-Fuji Plant in Susono City, Shizuoka Prefecture. Following the completion of the Automotive Performance Test Center (later Higashi-Fuji Technical Center), the Passenger Car Assembly Plant (later the Higashi-Fuji Plant) began operations in 1967.

Until its closure in 2020, more than 7,000 employees worked at the plant for over 53 years, producing approximately 7.52 million vehicles. The Higashi-Fuji Plant features multi-model mixed-flow production, manufacturing various types of vehicles on a single line. Beginning with the Toyota Sport 800, the plant produced a wide variety of vehicles, including the AE86 Corolla Levin, which became the origin of the Hachi-Roku (literally, "86"), Sprinter Trueno, Century, Toyota's luxury car, the Lexus SC, high-class vehicle and the JPN TAXI, which is a dedicated cab model that drivers depend on for their durability.

A Culture of Human Ties & Local Contribution

The production of such a formidable number of models required high coordination between processes and across boundaries. Amid various challenges, the Higashi-Fuji Plant developed a diligent "kaizen" culture to improve productivity. This enabled efficient collaboration and nurturing of mutually respectful human relationships – the foundation of "monozukuri" (craftsmanship). Constantly striving to become the most reliable and beloved company in the local community, in addition to their usual business, Toyota initiated local social programs. In 1977, they launched a Higashi-Fuji Plant Tour Social Studies field trip program known as Toyota School, which allowed 40,000 children to learn about the automotive industry and regional businesses.



We interviewed two employees, Mr. Sakaki and Mr. Nagatani, who worked at the Higashi-Fuji Plant at this time

(P.7-8)

Connecting the Higashi-Fuji Plant Past to the Future of Woven City



2021 Groundbreaking Ceremony

“Woven City is not going to be built on a vacant lot. Instead this place and its history have been woven into the future. The value and spirit you have passed on, of always thinking about others and their feelings first and foremost, will be inherited by all members developing the city.

“We want to weave the history of Higashi-Fuji Plant into the future of this town.’ ‘We want to be a best-in-town company that people in the local community love and rely upon.’ This is the aspiration that all of us at Toyota would like to carry on. I would like to end my comments today with a promise that every step forward into the future will be taken together with everyone in the community.”

These are the words of Toyoda at the closing ceremony of the Higashi-Fuji Plant in 2020 and the groundbreaking ceremony for the first phase of Woven City in 2021.

In the name of well-being for all, work preparing for the start of initial trials in 2025 is underway. With every new day and every new construction, the history and hopes of the Higashi-Fuji Plant inspire the progress of the Woven by Toyota project team.

The Legacy of the Higashi-Fuji Plant

Built on craftsmanship and a philosophy of working “for others,” the Higashi-Fuji Plant has served Toyota for over half a century. It made a significant impact on both the automotive industry and the local community. Through Woven City, this philosophy and vibrant history of craftsmanship will persevere and continue to grow and evolve.



The Higashi-Fuji Plant Press Facility

This press facility marked the earliest days of automobile production. Not only was the historical press not destroyed, but instead, it is being lovingly renovated into a facility that will serve as the starting point for inventions in Woven City.

Woven by Toyota Initiatives

Restoration and utilization of the plant's press facility is one of the many ways Woven City inherited value from the Higashi-Fuji Plant. The first step in the production of automobiles is a process called “pressing,” in which steel sheets become transformed into car frames and parts. Renovating and not dismantling this press facility will make it a tremendously useful space for inventors and others who gather at Woven City.

Additionally, a creative remembrance of the Higashi-Fuji Plant is displayed at Woven by Toyota’s office in Nihonbashi, Tokyo. There,

you will find wall art made from scrap wood obtained from the Higashi-Fuji Plant, as well as the dry landscape garden of the historic plant. This beautiful art evokes emotion as it connects the old and the new and transcends generations.

An ongoing commitment to maintaining ties with the local community includes area cleanup efforts at the Higashi-Fuji Plant with participation in TMEJ/Toyota’s “Toyota School” as of FY2022.

Through mindful considerations such as these, the legacy inherited from the Higashi-Fuji Plant to Woven City is now beginning to take a clear, tangible shape. Efforts are moving forward as a project for a better future for all.



Toyota School



Area Cleanup Activities



Wall art using recycled materials (screws, etc.) from dismantling efforts



A dry landscape garden moved from the main building of the Higashi-Fuji Plant



A message on temporary fencing at the construction site



Exhibitions at local events

Interview with Woven by Toyota members (P.9-10)



①
Voices that Connect
Our History
to Our Future

Interviews with
Former Employees of
TMEJ Higashi-Fuji Plant

TMEJ トヨタ自動車東日本

The Cornerstone of Woven City: Reflections from the Higashi-Fuji Plant

The Higashi-Fuji Plant has long supported the motorization of Japan. Despite the significant impact of the plant's closure, its spirit to act in the best interest of others remains strong. The evolution of Woven City amplified this desire. We interviewed former employees who helped bridge the past to the future.



Kazuyoshi Sakaki

General Manager of Administration Div.,
Miyagi Taiwa Plant

Sakaki joined the former Kanto Auto Works in 1990. After working in Production Control Div. and later Production and Procurement Planning Div., he joined the Higashi-Fuji Plant in 2013, becoming the general manager of Administration Div. in 2021.

The Pride of Bridging the Future

As reconstruction efforts were underway to gradually shift production to the Tohoku region, in May of 2018, the Higashi-Fuji Plant was marked for closure. Sakaki, who was uniquely able to empathize with both management's perspective and employees' feelings, reflects on that time. "I remember it was just before a long weekend in May. Then, President Shirane gathered all the managers and higher-ups to announce its closure. I was worried during my holiday, but when it came time to tell the members of each division that we were closing the plant, the first words out of my mouth were 'I'm sorry.' I couldn't find anything positive to say but everyone said reassuring things like, 'We'll be fine,' or 'We know you care and are sympathetic to our perspective'"

Two months later, in July 2018, then Toyota Motor Corporation President Akio Toyoda was in the area for a ceremonial visit for a new model car and a forum was planned for him to address the employees. There, plant employee Takaki Nagatani shared his thoughts on his colleagues who would not be able to move to Tohoku. He asked Toyoda about the plans for the future of the Higashi-Fuji Plant. Nagatani, who was working in painting processes at the plant at the time, recalls his experience: "They said we could ask anything, but that wasn't the atmosphere I felt in the room. Then, during the Q & A session, President Akio and I made eye contact (chuckles), and I was inspired to speak up. It was not a question I had prepared in advance, but something that I felt in the moment. I think I worded it well, all things considered." Nagatani hailed from the former Kanto Auto Works, TMEJ's predecessor, and had been transferred to the Higashi-Fuji Plant when the Yokosuka Plant closed in 2000. It was his



Takaki Nagatani

Expert, Painting Section No.2, Painting
& Plastics Molding Div., Iwate Plant

Nagatani joined the former Kanto Auto Works in 1991. He transferred to Higashi-Fuji Plant in January 2001 and was assigned to the Painting Section, holding his current position since 2021.

second brush with closure. "Many good colleagues worked with me at the Higashi-Fuji Plant. I decided to speak up since I had prior experience with another plant closure."

In response to his comment, Toyoda spoke for the first time about the concept that would later become Woven City. Nagatani recalls how he felt after hearing the President's answer. "Those of us leaving the company and those transferring to Tohoku had already made our respective decisions, but with this vision, I felt a glimmer of hope for the plant's future."

Sakaki remembers, "Although it may have been Nagatani's comment that caused President Toyoda to unveil the idea for Woven City, I think it was the 53 years of cultivating a work culture of "for others" that allowed the moment to come. Knowing that the Higashi-Fuji Plant would not become an empty lot was a relief. The site we had built together would instead lead into the future, and we would be its bridge. This new goal gave me and everyone else there a sense of pride."

Until the plant's closure at the end of 2020, Sakaki made it a point to get to know each employee through one-on-one conversations. He implemented various initiatives to connect the history of the Higashi-Fuji Plant to the future, and express gratitude for the past. Plant tours for family members and alumni celebrated the plant's signature "monozukuri" techniques. During this time, TMEJ helped accelerate the preparations for Woven City by taking down the buildings around them, even as they continued manufacturing cars. "I still feel a rush of positive energy



Entrance to the Miyagi
Taiwa Plant

when I think of how the memory-filled plant will live on to be integrated into plans for the future and become filled with new possibilities."

Looking to the Future

For those who know Higashi-Fuji, there is great anticipation about the future becoming a home. The entrance to the Miyagi Taiwa Plant, where Sakaki now works, features brightly colored wood flooring, and a rest area and counters that were DIY projects led by the employees.

"We are doing here what we did at Higashi-Fuji," he explains. "Kaizen is not about efficiency but about making it easier for people to work in the best interest of others. If the environment improves and people can talk to each other and help each other, our quality will improve, and we can deliver better products to customers."

Finally, Nagatani spoke on his high hopes for Woven City: "I want Woven City to be a place that provides possibilities to many people. It's not enough if only one person is smiling. We aim to produce happiness for all and widen the ring of smiles."



You can watch the interview video from here





②
Voices that Bring Us Together

Interviews with Members of Woven by Toyota

Sho Mizuno

Mizuno has worked for Toyota Motor Corporation on domestic and international building and plant construction projects and has been involved in Woven City since 2020. He has worked on the Woven City master plan, other plans for the future, and the renovation project of the press facility.

How Woven City Connects to the Future

The extraordinary history and traditions of the Higashi-Fuji Plant make its site fertile ground for building Woven City. In the following paragraphs, we'll hear from members of Woven by Toyota, who work toward creating our future by evolving the press facility and joining the Toyota School. We'll hear how they carry and project the spirit and accomplishments of those who came before. Thanks to the now-historical Higashi-Fuji Plant leadership, actualizing our bold vision of the future is now possible.

Tatsuya Ota

Ota had joined Central Motor as an engineer. When three companies merged, he was in charge of administration and Toyota School in Administration Div. After resigning in 2021, he joined Woven by Toyota, where he was responsible for liaising with local governments and communities.

Remi Ono

After joining Toyota Motor Corporation, Ono was in charge of external and public relations with foreign countries. In 2021, she was transferred to Woven by Toyota, where she currently oversees and manages programs for the Toyota School.

Phase 1 of Woven City construction is underway at the former Higashi-Fuji Plant site. Sho Mizuno, who leads architecture, reflects on the reasons for renovating, rather than demolishing, the original press facility.

"In the fall of 2020, I visited the site while it was still operating to assess what could be saved or reused. The passion was evident in the ingenuity of craftsmanship known as 'karakuri (simple but intelligent automation of processes based on physical principles – with no drives, sensors, electricity or compressed air.) Along with the respect for the skillful mechanisms in place, I also felt a strong connection with the local community when admiring the many messages displayed in the cafeteria. They were from the elementary school students who had participated in the plant tour. I was deeply moved by the fact that it's not only meaningless 'objects' being passed on but the philosophy and culture of 'monozukuri' and the deep love and consideration of everyone at TMEJ for the local community. It was important for us to make the site a place the people who worked there could call home—and a place that would continue to be connected to the community. As a valuable source of craftsmanship—the decision to keep the press came naturally for us."

Although demolition had already begun on some parts of the plant, the team proposed that Toyota preserve the historic press



A look inside the press facility during renovations

facility. This proposal, in the spring of 2021, obtained quick approval. Tatsuya Ota, who served as a guide for the inspection group, recalls, "It was quite a thing." At the time, he was an employee of TMEJ and belonged to the Administration Div. of the Higashi-Fuji Plant, but now he works for Woven by Toyota. He says he was very emotional about the plant's planned closure when he had to accommodate the inspection group.

"I had no choice but to tell these people exactly what I was thinking, and I wanted to ensure I conveyed it properly. I tried to explain my thoughts but felt strongly that the inspection couldn't be performed with apathy. I did my best to guide them through the pain I was experiencing, and I think they understood how I felt."

Meanwhile, Mizuno discusses press facility as follows:

"Pressing is the very first process where an automobile's white body (pre-painting) is created. It serves as the starting point for vehicle production. I think it was fate that we could preserve the press facility, and I would like to make it a wellspring of craftsmanship in Woven City."

Sharing Visions & Passion

In the transition from the Higashi-Fuji Plant to Woven City, what is inherited is not only a part of the building and the manufacturing culture but also the people's thoughts and the passion they put into their work.

TMEJ and Toyota Motor Corporation's Higashi-Fuji Technical Center have run the Toyota School since 1977. Even after the plant ceased operations in 2020, the beloved Social Studies field trip program continues.

Ota, who was in charge of the program at TMEJ, played a central role in approaching elementary schools in the city. They changed it from a plant tour to a visiting lecture program.

"Before I retired from TMEJ, I wanted to keep the fire burning

and somehow connect it to the future," says Ota. "I wanted to do what I could to show my gratitude."

Woven by Toyota also began to participate starting in 2022.

Remi Ono, who handles the Toyota School with TMEJ and Toyota Motor Corporation alongside Ota, says:

"When I began working at Woven by Toyota in 2021, the Higashi-Fuji plant was closed. Even so, I want to ensure that I properly portray the visions of everyone at TMEJ, Ota, and many others who were integral to the plant and its many contributions while it was in operation. I think of them and try to project their legacy every time I stand before a group of students."

In these visiting lectures, Woven by Toyota provides elementary school students a virtual experience of walking through a digital twin of a complete Woven City. Junior high school students are introduced to the history of the Higashi-Fuji Plant and asked to think about what they would like to do for the sake of others. With a smile, Ota and Ono confess that they are often surprised and impressed by the creativity and originality of the children's answers, many of which would never have been thought of by adults.

Says Ota, "I love President Akio Toyoda's ambition to become the 'best in town.' We have always aimed to be loved and relied upon by the local community. For me, it's more important than being the best in the world or even in Japan. The future is being created here in Susono City, and I hope that the children here know we are building it for them. I want it to be clear that we are here to collaborate with our neighbors and build a bright future that we can all enjoy."

Connecting to the Future

There are several initiatives that members of Woven by Toyota have explicitly designed to connect the legacy of the Higashi-Fuji Plant to the future.

Preserving press facility...

Mizuno explains, "The employees of the Higashi-Fuji Plant would eventually leave the plant, so there was no need for them to work so diligently for Woven City. That being said, I believe that TMEJ's strong desire to connect the history of the Higashi-Fuji Plant to the future is all due to this ongoing philosophy of working for the sake of others. Although the members will change, we must preserve that way of thinking, and I think that's just what we need to do."

And when it comes to the Toyota School...

Says Ota, "This initiative expresses our gratitude to the people in the community who have been so kind to us. Teachers sometimes tell me they vividly remember participating as elementary school students. I want to continue these activities, remembering how thankful we are to the local community for accepting Toyota since establishing the technical center and plant."

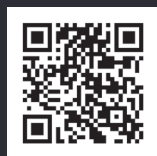
Ono concludes, "Despite the plant's closing, Ota and the other long-time staff have been instrumental in connecting the Toyota School and other community-based activities and events with the company's long history. Through these efforts, I would like the local community to know about their intentions, experiences, and the history of the Higashi-Fuji Plant and how we continue to work together toward common goals."



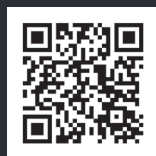
A message from an elementary school student on a tour

You can watch the interview video from here

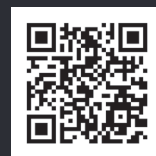




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