

Hakodate International House (HIH)

A Northern Gateway Vision for Japan

Simple Proposal for Japanese Political Leaders and Public Representatives

Project	Hakodate International House (HIH)
Purpose	International exchange, cultural diplomacy, youth development, academic collaboration, and regional revitalization
Location Focus	Hakodate, Hokkaido, with Nishi Junior High School and Nishi Elementary School or other suitable public assets, subject to official review
Model	Nonprofit, government-led, public-private partnership, or private-public mission structure
Public Message	From Hakodate to the world: a new northern gateway for Japan

1. Executive Summary

Hakodate International House (HIH) is proposed as a public-interest platform in Hakodate, Hokkaido, designed to promote international exchange, cultural dialogue, academic collaboration, youth development, and regional revitalization. HIH would be an open civic institution where residents, students, researchers, artists, business leaders, and guests from Japan and abroad can meet, learn, and create together.

The project does not need to be limited to a private organization. HIH may be developed as a nonprofit organization, a public-interest foundation, a government-supported institution, a public-private partnership, or another structure that best serves the public good. The essential principle is public purpose, not ownership form.

2. Why Hakodate

Hakodate has a rare identity among Japanese cities. It is a historic port city, a northern gateway, and a place shaped by international exchange. Its history includes early foreign settlement, maritime culture, Western-style architecture, Goryokaku, Mount Hakodate, and links to Hokkaido frontier development.

Because of this history, HIH is not an imported idea. It grows naturally from Hakodate itself. The city already carries the spirit of openness, dialogue, and ambition that an International House should represent.

3. Vision for Japan

HIH is not only a local project for Hakodate. It is a model for Japan. At a time when Japan needs stronger regional revitalization, international cultural communication, youth development, and new forms of public-private collaboration, HIH can show how a regional city can contribute to national identity and global presence.

Tokyo has long served as Japan's main international center. HIH would demonstrate that Japan's global dialogue can also be led from regional cities with authentic history, strong local culture, and deep civic pride. Hakodate can become Japan's northern gateway for culture, learning, diplomacy, and future leadership.

4. Possible Site Direction

The proposal should include a careful study of Nishi Junior High School and Nishi Elementary School, together with other suitable public assets or existing facilities in Hakodate. Any site decision should be made in alignment with Hakodate City policy, public needs, safety, accessibility, cost, and long-term community value.

The goal is not simply to reuse a building. The goal is to transform an existing civic asset into a living platform for education, exchange, culture, and regional renewal.

5. Main Functions of HIH

Function	Description
International Exchange	Public lectures, policy dialogues, sister-city programs, and forums connecting Hakodate with Asia, North America, Europe, and the wider world.
Culture and Arts	Exhibitions, artist residencies, Japanese art programs, Ainu and northern culture programs, and collaborations with museums and cultural institutions.
Youth and Education	Programs for students, young leaders, university partners, visiting scholars, and international learning groups.
Research and Dialogue	Discussion programs on northern Japan, maritime history, regional revitalization, tourism, culture, and global cooperation.
Guest Residence Function	A modest stay function for visiting researchers, artists, speakers, students, and short-term international participants, supporting sustainable operation.

6. Public Benefits

- Strengthens Hakodate's identity as one of Japan's historic international gateway cities.
- Creates a new civic platform linking culture, tourism, education, and local community life.
- Supports youth development, international awareness, and future leadership.
- Encourages effective use of existing public assets and civic facilities.
- Attracts high-quality visitors including scholars, artists, students, cultural leaders, and international partners.
- Contributes to Japan's soft power by creating a regional model for cultural diplomacy beyond Tokyo.
- Builds pride among citizens by transforming Hakodate's history into future public value.

7. Possible Institutional Models

HIH should remain flexible at this early stage. Possible models include:

- Nonprofit organization or public-interest foundation focused on culture, education, and exchange.
- Government-led initiative supported by Hakodate City, Hokkaido, national agencies, and public institutions.
- Public-private partnership combining public purpose with private expertise in operation, hospitality, culture, and fundraising.
- Private organization with a formal public mission and advisory structure, if that proves the most practical route.

The best model should be selected after feasibility review, public discussion, and consultation with relevant agencies and community partners. This flexibility is important because the project should be shaped around public benefit, local needs, and long-term sustainability.

8. Proposed Next Steps

1. Form an HIH study group with Hakodate City, Hokkaido representatives, educational institutions, cultural leaders, and civic stakeholders.
2. Conduct a preliminary site review including Nishi Junior High School, Nishi Elementary School, and other appropriate facilities or public assets.
3. Prepare a feasibility study covering governance, renovation cost, safety, operating model, funding, community benefit, and phased development.
4. Launch pilot programs such as a public lecture, cultural exhibition, youth forum, or international dialogue event in Hakodate.

5. Develop a final implementation plan with confirmed partners, operating structure, budget, timeline, and public communication strategy.

9. Message for Political Leaders

HIH offers political leaders a positive and easy-to-communicate public vision: regional revitalization through culture, education, international exchange, and youth development. It is not merely a facility project. It is a story about how Hakodate can contribute to Japan's future.

Suggested PR Message

Hakodate International House is a new public-interest vision from Hakodate for Japan.
It connects regional revitalization, youth development, culture, tourism, and international exchange.
From Hakodate, Japan can share a message of openness, dialogue, and ambition with the world.

10. Short Speech Version

"Hakodate International House is a new public-interest vision for Japan. It will transform Hakodate's historic role as an international port city into a modern platform for culture, education, youth development, and global dialogue. From Hakodate, Japan can create a new northern gateway to the world."

11. Closing

Hakodate has always been a city connected to the world. HIH gives that history a new purpose. By creating a center for learning, creativity, exchange, and public dialogue, Japan can show that regional cities are not places of decline, but sources of future leadership.

HIH is a practical, hopeful, and nationally meaningful idea: a project rooted in Hakodate, open to the world, and useful for Japan.

Prepared By

Kumiko Iwasawa

Iwasawa Oriental Art

75 University Avenue, P.O. Box 1660, Los Gatos, CA 95031-6071

Tel: 408-395-2339 | Email: iwasawaart@comcast.net

Website: <http://www.japaneseartantiques.com>