



**Ginza Design Council
and
Ginza Design Rules**

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I-i. Ginza: Area's Characteristics and Organization

In 1868, the Tokugawa Shogunate in Edo collapsed after 400 hundred years and the new Meiji government was established. The Meiji government was determined to put Japan on par with Western nations as a modern state. Thus, using a large sum of the national budget, the government created Ginza as a town of brick buildings, which was modeled after the street facades of European cities, marking Japan's first act of modern urban planning.

In its early days, Ginza attracted merchants full of entrepreneurial spirit, dealers of the Western goods that had not previously been known in Japan, and those testing innovative new business models. Since then, Ginza has been prospering as Japan's most prominent center for shopping. While it suffered great damages by the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and the American air raids of 1945, both of which burned down the entire area, Ginza was reconstructed with amazing speed and became more powerful and prosperous each time.

Today, its major streets are lined with first-class global brands and traditional Japanese shops. Ginza has become an area where tradition and innovation coexist, giving its bustling streets a distinguished air.

At the same time, Ginza is known as a self-governing town of merchants. The Ginza Association comprises a collection of smaller local councils for each zone and street of Ginza as well as various business-based groups. The Ginza Association meets every month in order to discuss issues concerning the community and to make decisions for the whole area. It is rare in Japan that such an organization, one that binds an entire area together, exists.

I-ii. The Regulations Concerning Ginza

At the moment, there are several levels of the regulations that govern the communities in Ginza:

1. There are municipal and national laws and regulations such as Building Standards Law, Urban Planning Law, and Regulations Concerning Outdoor Advertisement Objects. One must observe these laws and regulations as a matter of course.
2. Chuo-ku (city) has its own "district plan." This law was enacted specifically for the district of Ginza in order to regulate building height, floor area ratio, and setback of wall surface line, which quantifies the underlying shape of the community.
3. Chuo-ku has enacted a bylaw called "Administrative Directive for Urban Zone Development," which covers the matters that cannot be regulated by the laws mentioned above. This suggests the direction of development that Chuo-ku regards as preferable or the ways laws and regulations should be applied in actual cases. Ginza Design Council is authorized under this bylaw.

Thus, for new construction of a building whose plot measures more than 100 square meters or creates objects, including those for advertisement purposes, that require a building permission application, one must submit an application to Chuo-ku and consult Chuo-ku according to the "Administrative Directive for Urban Zone Development". Only after reviewing this application would Chuo-ku agree to the construction of such buildings and objects. This process also requires advisory consultation with Ginza Design Council. Without a report of agreement issued by the council, Chuo-ku will not agree to the construction of such new

buildings and objects (see figure 1).

4. What Ginza Design Council is concerned with during the advisory consultation process is that those buildings and objects described above should not deviate from the images of Ginza that have been accumulated historically and shared by the people in the community as well as by visitors. It also discusses whether submitted plans match the direction of area management that Ginza is aiming at as well as whether the planned buildings and objects are aesthetically appropriate to the sophisticated and mature streetscapes of Ginza.

As a foundation of such discussions, Ginza Design Council has created its own Ginza Design Rules. These rules are an expression of the collective will of the community based on the area’s history--not a law but a request. We will later discuss the details of Ginza Design Rules.

Organization of Ginza Design Council

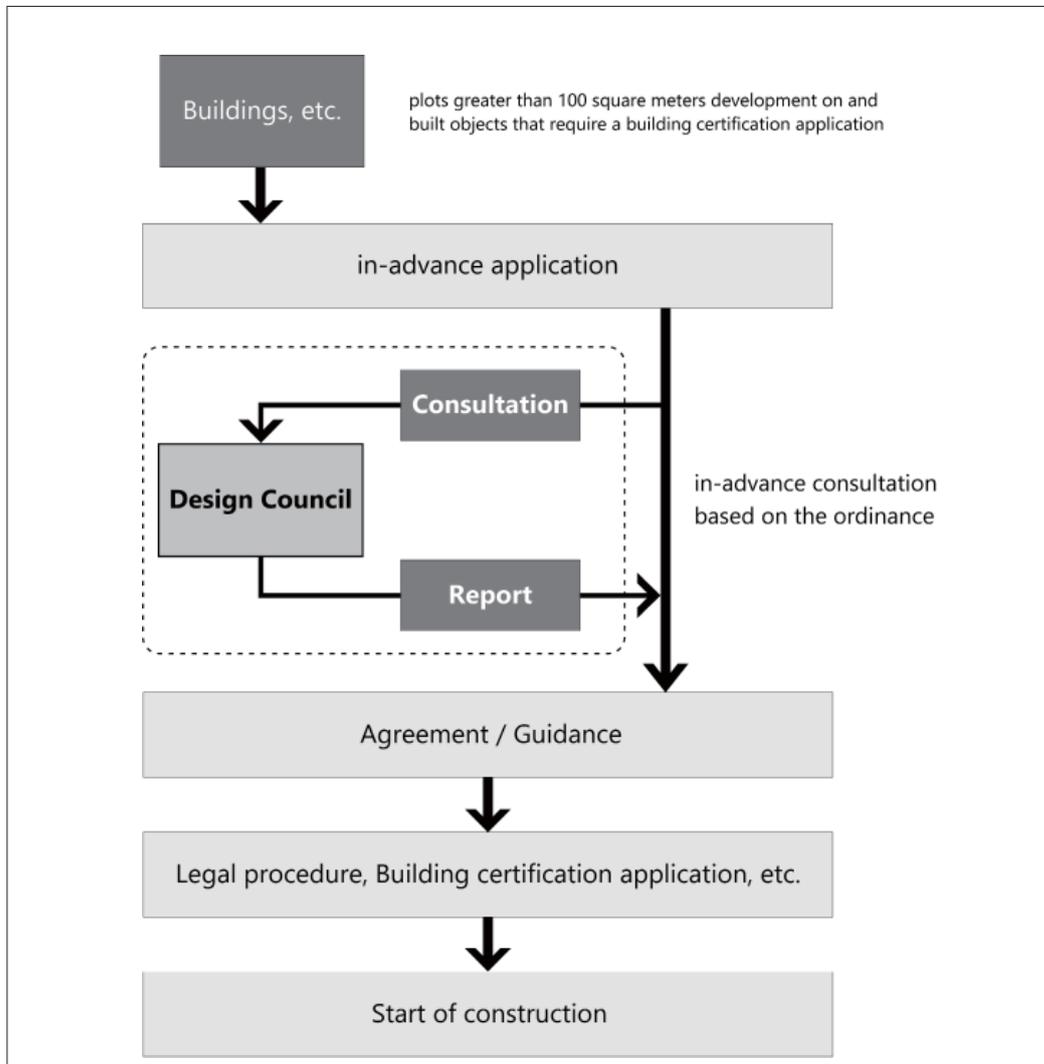


Figure 1. Organization of Ginza Design Council

I-iii. The Unique Characteristics of Ginza Design Council

Ginza Design Council is a non-governmental organization, which is appointed by the president of Chuo-ku to conduct advisory consultation, respecting the intentions of the Ginza Association. Such consultation is given within a framework which has been devised to control the designs of new buildings and objects—including façade designs, advertisements as well as rooftop signboards—and thus manage the streetscape of the community.

Ginza Design Council does not have power to enforce any laws, and Ginza Design Rules are not to be understood as a law. Therefore, Ginza Design Council, for each case of consultation, individually gives advice concerning whether a particular case of development is appropriate for Ginza and whether its façade and advertisement designs match the streetscape of Ginza. The rules do not, however, prescribe the range of permissible sizes, colors to be banned, standards of color brightness and saturation, luminance, and sound volume. Given that construction plans do not violate official regulations including those for controlling outdoor advertisement and preventing air and other pollutions, Ginza Design Council, consulting specialists whom the Ginza community trusts, gives advice that complements legal-level considerations and sends reports to Chuo-ku at each step with the agreement of all parties involved.

Ginza, since its beginning, is a community which respects the will to start something new. It does not simply try to preserve what is old and would not reject new expressions and advanced technologies. It expects that the creations of talented designers will energize the community.

Each case of new construction and object/advertisement installation is unique in terms of its concept and purpose. It is also true that a case involving those that would face Ginza Street is entirely different from those facing Showa Street. Therefore, Ginza Design Council deals with each case separately, considering the characteristics of an area/street for which construction and installation is proposed and gives advice so that designers' intentions and creativity would materialize in the final product. In such cases where designers' intentions are entirely different from our vision for Ginza, we will hold discussions with them so that they would come to understand our view.

Agreeing to what has been described above, more than 200 cases of advisory consultation with Ginza Design Council take place every year. And the cumulative total since 2006, when it was established, is above 1,600, more than half of which were not required by the bylaws of Chuo-ku. We can neither grasp all the cases that would be outside of what such bylaws cover or force business owners and operators to submit applications. It is the case those businesses who would expect their designs to affect Ginza's streetscape are voluntarily participating in the consultation process by submitting an application.

It is notable that most of those who submit an application are supportive of our opinions and adjust their designs according to what Ginza Design Rules stipulate. Only a small percentage of applicants do not understand our opinions and proceed to materialize their intentions according to their original designs. In such cases, we make public the process of our discussions - what kind of thinking informed our requests and how they were discussed. By publicizing the process, we hope for our intentions to be understood widely.

II-i . Contents of Ginza Design Rules

Ginza Design Rules describe how Ginza should be characterized in terms of its history, area, and urban planning features. By reading the rules, one can also come to understand how the people involved in the Ginza Association have tried to build their community and what kind of district they are hoping to create.

What kind of design business owners and operators present, after having read Ginza Design Rules, as an appropriate design for Ginza depends on how talented they and their designers are. It also depends on whether they are able to share their vision with the community.

Based on the past cases of advisory consultation and realized plans, several definite directions have emerged. The following is clearly described in Ginza Design Rules:

II-ii . Philosophies common to the entire design practice

Colors: Original colors are acceptable but one should avoid colors and color combinations that stand out too much and are not harmonious with the surroundings. One should try to arrange colors so that they will harmonize with the streetscape.

Sense of Scale: One should examine designs in terms of their relation to human scale. In particular, enabling a comfortable sense of scale for pedestrians should be considered.

Height: Height of buildings and rooftop objects should be within the limits determined vis-à-vis the street width.

Materials: Designs should be devised considering the characteristics of the materials to be used. Materials that reflect light because of high luminance value can cause trouble to the environment. One should avoid materials that will break the continuity of streetscape and that are radically different from the surroundings. Exterior materials that contribute to the creation and maintenance of a dignified streetscape should be adopted.

Illumination: Light sources that are too bright, flash on and off too frequently, and are undistinguishable from traffic lights are not desirable. One should pay attention to their color and luminance values. Intentionally emitting strong light outward and casting images and light against buildings across a street is also to be avoided. A sustainable approach to energy consumption is encouraged.

Designs that uniquely fits Ginza: If stores that belong to globally expanding brands and corporations emphatically present their corporation identity (brand logo, etc.), Ginza's streetscape could end up looking like that of any other cities in the world. Therefore, designers are expected to create building exteriors, signs and advertisements which can be seen only in Ginza. We do not want to see in Ginza things which might be seen on TV commercials. Advertisements that are of uniform design across the nation and the world, and designs that feature a huge face of a famous figure are also undesirable. Like other forms of advertisement, direct reference to prices, expressions of erotic and violent nature, religious and political messages, and contents relating to any other "isms" are absolutely unacceptable.

Thorough discussions: Starting discussions in the early stage of an application is the best way to establish strong understanding between the community and business owners and operators and to make sure that such plans are realized smoothly. The business owner and operators' secrets will be safe with us. We urge them to come to consult us in the early stages of any plan for new construction, façade renewal, and advertisement changes.

Harmony and cooperation with neighbors: As Ginza is a commercial district, it is natural that shops make efforts to attract customers through advertisement and public relation activities. However, in order to let various types of visitors enjoy strolling along Ginza streets, we expect each store to control strong expressions and respect harmonious cooperation with its surroundings with the aims of raising the value of Ginza as a whole.

Designs considering local characteristics: Within Ginza, there are various areas and streets with their own characteristics that differ from each other. Therefore, we suggest that designers should create designs that match such characteristics of each area and street.

Businesses and purposes: It is preferable to attract tenants whose business is appropriate to this high-quality shopping zone. Pachinko parlors, karaoke bars, and off-track betting places should not be here. Particularly, “charnel houses—including those for pets” are banned by the zoning plans.

Management of a building after its completion: In most cases, Ginza Design Council holds advisory consultation meetings with building owners and designers before and during construction. After the completion of the buildings, the contents of such consultation should be passed on to property management companies.

The Ginza Design Rules leaflet deals with other topics such as our philosophy behind area management, the characteristics of our community common to entire Ginza area, our philosophy regarding the spatial organization of streets, the realization of Ginza colors in the case of large scale developments, our philosophy regarding maintenance and evolution of streetscapes, observations of each area and street, and the issues for the future of our community. Designers, developers, and retailers are encouraged to consult it whenever necessary.

II-iii. About Digital Signage

In recent years, the problem of how to deal with digital signage has become very important. With rapid and wonderful advancement of technologies, people continuously come up with new ways of expression, as old signboards are replaced by digital signage while moving images are seen adorning store fronts and building facades. The impact of this new tool upon our streetscape is not small. It is our understanding that a great amount of information sent out via moving images does not contribute to the bustling streets of Ginza. Rather, these images increase noise levels and visual distractions. Also, this is a trend ongoing all over the world, which we expect to result in streetscapes that look similar everywhere and the loss of unique color in many communities. There are also cases where new digital equipment has been adopted but failed to host continuously updated, thoughtful content resulting in the decline of content quality.

Now we also see building facades composed of moving images using LED technology. This is a growing trend, which Ginza does not welcome. When streets are lined with buildings covered by moving images, our streetscape would become as chaotic as a TV section within a mass electronics retailer.

We do not want Ginza to resemble the “scramble cross” in Shibuya, Akihabara, and Times Square in New York City, which have been hi-jacked by digital signage. We would like to see Ginza as a community that expresses the beauty of its streetscapes through a matured culture of elegant building designs and window displays. Ginza does not simply reject the world’s most advanced technologies, but would rather be cautious and pay close attention to digital signage, especially moving images.

Given the thinking described above, we announced in April 2015 the following policies concerning digital signage:

#1 It should not be allowed to display moving images which size exceeds human scale—

either by using equipment installed outside of a building or by casting images toward outside from inside of a building. Especially, we should avoid moving images presented to become a part of streetscape when they are seen from intersections.

The images and brand value of Ginza should be expressed through building façade designs, and we should try to eliminate extra information that could be “noise” in our streetscape.

Digital signage installed at the second-floor level or above tends to become larger in size as it tries to be visible from afar. This should be avoided. When it is installed on the street level, as it would greatly affect pedestrian experiences, one should pay special attention to its size, image movement, speed, light intensity, and luminance value.

Intersections are key traffic points where colors and flashing of light emitted from digital signage could be confused with traffic signals. For this reason as well, installing digital signage whose size exceeds human scale and the display of moving images should not be allowed. This is especially the case for the intersections of Harumi Street and Ginza, Nishi-Ginza, and Showa Streets. These intersections are the “face” of Ginza and powerfully represent the unique atmosphere of Ginza where any kind of representation through moving images are to be most strongly discouraged.

There are cases when, with separate consultation for each case, we would allow use of digital signage: cases such as special events use, temporary use inside display windows, temporary use within small open space which is a part of the premises, or guide signs placed near a building’s entrance.

Note: How big is “human scale”?

“Human scale” as a rough standard, refers to the height of a person’s eye level and the width of two open arms. Digital signage installed at the second-floor level or above and visible from afar, for example, is generally considered as exceeding human scale.

#2 Moving images themselves should not be overpowering elements of the building façade and store-front designs.

It is desirable that Ginza’s streetscape is represented by the designs of buildings. Even when they are within the permissible range designated by the municipal regulations for outdoor advertisement, designs by which moving images, themselves, constitute the building façade or store front are not welcome. In the case of façades adorned by blinking and moving light, designs should be composed with less movement, low in luminance value, slow in speed, and by monochromatic and abstract expressions.

#3 When digital signage is installed, those responsible for it should consult Ginza Design Council in advance every time new content is to be adopted.

Before creating new content, designers should consult with Ginza Design Council

each time. This applies both to static and moving images. If the council judges that the proposed content is not appropriate for Ginza, it may request changes. The following types of content have been deemed inappropriate for Ginza:

- content with busy movement and rapid blinking
 - content with sound
 - images which luminance value is high and too bright; content with great variation in illuminance and luminance values
 - content similar to that of other media such as TV commercials
 - reference to actual products, service contents, and prices
 - content involving numerous sponsors and emitting various types of information
- When creating digital signage content, one should consider a period of consultation as a part of the production schedule.

Even after we announced the policies above, business owners and operators who wanted to adopt digital signage came one after another. With strong demands from these stakeholders, we have come to be gravely concerned that our policy of maintaining, developing, and maturing Ginza's streetscape through excellent architectural designs and window displays will be fundamentally upset.

Therefore, in August 2015, we created a set of guidelines for installing digital signage as follows:

#1 Digital signage should be a means of expression to make buildings look beautiful.

Ginza aims to represent its beautiful streetscape by architectural façade designs and not by constantly changing advertisement—especially those which change instantly like moving images. Ginza has made efforts to nurture the culture of window displays, encouraging good window displays and raising them to the level of artistic expression, which led to a popular notion of “Gin-bura” (strolling around Ginza). This is a part of our culture in Ginza, and we are proud that our efforts have contributed toward higher level of sophistication in the community as a whole. Thus, we expect that expression through digital signage will also raise the area's level of dignity and cultural sophistication.

#2 Digital signage should present images of high degree of abstraction and not commercial-based advertisement messages.

We would like to restate our opinion that moving images on digital signage are not agreeable. However, when digital signage is unavoidable, it should present images of high degree of abstraction and not commercial-based advertisement messages. Images of the human figure should not be larger than actual size, and close-up photos of merchandise, price information, price-based advertisement, explanation of goods, and other explanatory and forceful textual information should be avoided. When images of goods are presented, one should choose the “available-only-in-Ginza” merchandise. Goods and services not actually offered at a particular commercial facility should not be posted at the facility. It is most unacceptable to adapt the same advertisement seen on TV, magazine pages, and newspaper for Ginza.

One should try to come up with the content and methods of expression that will

become a part of our dignified streetscape. Efforts to improve a corporate image should simultaneously mean efforts to raise the image of Ginza. Designs are expected to maintain and improve the beauty of Ginza's streetscape by means of small, beautiful, and easy-on-eyes digital signage that complements the sense of shopping season and atmosphere. We strongly oppose allowing Ginza to be taken over by too many installations of digital signage.

Digital signage should not simply be a means of advertisement, and it should be used in a "uniquely Ginza" manner. It can be not only a tool for improving brand image --but also a showcase of connecting architecture and commerce in a way that heightens their sense of beauty. It can also incorporate a sense of season and can be used to deliver public notices as well.

#3 Speed of the moving images should be made as slow as possible so that they would not damage the mature and relaxed atmosphere of the community.

The speed of the moving images should be at most as slow as the speed of still images slowly switching from one to the next.

#4 When digital signage is planned to be installed near an intersection, one should get an agreement from the police as it is expected to become a major safety issue.

#5 Please consult us on each and every new piece of content that will be expressed through digital signage.

Even with all the precautions and considerations described above, digital signage could greatly transform the face of community depending on the content. Therefore, we expect business owners and operators to consult Ginza Design Council at every stage as content changes. The council will also try to work with requests by considering the future possibility of this technology, learning about its ways of representation, and accumulating examples of excellence.

III. SUMMARY

We are a local organization without legal authority. We have been, however, trying to discover a certain direction for the streetscape designs in Ginza by examining each case of construction and installation with business owners and operators. The way we work does not have immediate and coercive effect, but we can shape the cityscape as time goes by. In a diverse community, we believe that Ginza Design Council is an effective way of dealing with a constantly changing city and to accumulate consensus within a community to create long-term visions.

We would most appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

