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Utilizing School Sites for Regional Revitalization and Changes in School Facilities

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Abstract



In recent years, the Korean Ministry of Education has broadened the scope of its policy initiatives, as they have come to have a particular emphasis on refurbishing school spaces to align with the evolving curriculum. Despite these space enhancement efforts, the rising number of school closures caused by demographic shifts has made it necessary to explore alternative uses.

Given the changes in demographic and social fabric, transforming small schools into “integrated residential complexes” that are focused on education appears to be a particularly reasonable solution. This approach both caters to the need for lifelong learning and addresses the housing scarcity faced

by vulnerable communities. Therefore, the current study aims to present a feasible direction for repurposing closed school sites in response to Korea’s social transformations.

Conducting preliminary surveys and case studies concerning the repurposing of school facilities and sites was foundational to this study. In this process, I initially focused on school sites in Korea that have been converted into buildings sites with non-educational purposes. In my subsequent analysis, I considered a variety of international examples. Altogether, this paper aims to articulate a forward-looking plan that can be used in repurposing school sites in Korea.


The findings obtained herein suggest that the first priority should be integration with local communities, the second priority should be utilizing sites for public housing development, the third priority should be establishing cultural and educational centers, and the fourth and last priority should be advancing eco-friendly and sustainable initiatives.

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Notes

1. The School Space Innovation Promotion Team was established in March 2019. It is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, and it encompasses a variety of spatial restructuring projects across the country, such as the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education's "Classroom Project with Dreams" and the Gwangju Metropolitan Office of Education's "Ajit Project." The hallmark of the space innovation project is its integration of participatory design and spatial education into the curriculum, all centered on student involvement.
2. The Green Smart Future School project aims to refurbish or renovate educational structures that are over 40 years old into state-of-the-art facilities. Between 2021 and 2025, 4,800 schools were identified for participation, and these schools were supported by a budget of 18 trillion won. The design and construction processes actively involve students, faculty, parents, and local community members. Following policy adjustments in 2024, both the overseeing agencies and the finance office are scheduled for updates. Selection and review are currently conducted by two entities: the Korea Education Development Institute and the Korea Education Facility Safety Institute. Accordingly, the initial phase of this future Green-Smart school project will channel a total of 18.5 trillion won over five years from 2021 to refurbish 2,835 schools that are part of the '40 + year-old buildings' category.

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