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1. Connecting Places that Have Maintained Strength

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As an urban design strategy, it is only possible to connect places that need to be connected. Karatsu has many elements that have maintained strength; historic and culturally significant structures including Karatsu Castle, Karatsu Shrine, the former Karatsu Bank, and the historic city walls; streets including Kyomachi, Gofukomachi and Ochawan Kiln Street; and natural systems including the Chouda River, Matsuura River, Nishinohama Beach, and the surrounding mountains. These elements are dispersed throughout Karatsu without being clearly connected in a functional, visual, or spiritual manner. Stronger connections between these elements and greater permeability to the natural systems will provide Karatsu residents and visitors with better access, legibility, and orientation through their city.

Our proposal focuses on enhancing the existing connections throughout Karatsu in addition to creating new connections that further emphasize these strengths. We consider the city as an integrated system with inter-relationships supported by real (physical and visual) and symbolic (cultural and spiritual) connections. At a regional scale, our strategies aim to enhance connections with the natural surroundings. At a citywide scale, we aim to enhance the relationship between the districts while supporting the identity of the collective spirit. At an inner city scale, we aim to empower the relationships within three districts we defined based on the clustering of existing strengths: the Castle District, the Shrine District, and the Merchant District.

Our strategies include interventions along corridors and at key intersections that better define the pedestrian experience through a concentration of connective experiences. Infill development strategies are used to better define street edges through a rhythmic variation of facades, walls, and landscape treatments that address the street while preserving and promoting critical view corridors to the mountains and water systems. The implementation of these strategies will unify the strengths of Karatsu that have been maintained throughout history.