

Policy Tasks for the Revitalization of Small and Medium-Sized Provincial Cities in an Era of Declining Population

Park Sehoon (KRIHS research fellow) et al.

Summary

1. (Changing conditions) Small- and medium-sized provincial cities in Korea are facing changing conditions, including low birth rates and aging trends, globalization, population decline and hollowing of inner cities, broadened spatial patterns of daily life, and increased interchange with neighboring regions.
2. (Classification) Korea's 40 small- and medium-sized provincial cities may be classified into regional growth centers, industrial cities, or small cities according to their population scale, industry structure, and demographic changes.
3. (Functional specialization) Some manufacturing hub cities or cities with advantageous locations have experienced growth, while regional base cities remain stagnant and small cities show continued population decline.
4. (Developmental expansion) In all cases, developed regions have been expanding and linkages with neighboring communities have grown stronger, including increased commuting for work and school purposes.
5. (Stagnant inner cities) Despite their trend of population decline, many small and medium-sized provincial cities have experienced hollowing of their downtown areas due to urban sprawl and the decentralization of key infrastructure.

| Policy Implication |

- ① (Establish urban zone-centered linkages and cooperation) Urban zones should be designated for small- and medium-sized cities as the focus of linkage/cooperation strategies based on a "center-periphery" or "network city" spatial concept.
- ② (Assign greater growth center function to city centers) A "compact city" strategy should be implemented in light of Korea's current situation, with urban functions downscaled and adjusted to center on downtown areas; "smart city" projects and other new policy efforts should be focused on city centers.
- ③ (Create jobs through innovation and renewal) Manufacturing hub cities should supply small-scale multipurpose industry complexes to foster innovative manufacturing, while history and culture cities should implement cultural asset-based urban renewal and business improvement

district (BID) systems for downtown commercial zones.

④ (Strengthen local communities) Potential neighborhood resources, vacant spaces, and community economic organizations should be used for “village renewal” efforts allowing residents and local communities to improve their own quality of life.