

Promoting “Space Town Development” Centered on the Hokkaido Spaceport

Taiki Town, Hokkaido Prefecture / SPACE COTAN Co., Ltd.

Overview of the case

Over the 40 years since it was selected as a candidate site for the Hokkaido Aero-Space Industrial Base Project, Taiki Town, Hokkaido Prefecture has been leveraging its geographical advantages to work on “space town development.” Initially, the town’s focus was on attracting government experimental sites. However, after the enactment of the Basic Space Act accelerated private-sector participation in the space industry, the town itself began developing rocket launch sites that would be open to private-sector use. This is promoting sustainable town development with space at the core, and the town is taking on the challenge of creating a “space version of Silicon Valley” centered on Hokkaido Spaceport (HOSPO), and of establishing a space base that will be open to the whole world.



Key points regarding receiving the award (Comments from the selection committee)

For many years, the local community, companies, and other players have been working together on “space town development,” actively pursuing diverse activities such as developing and launching from rocket launch sites, capturing overseas demand, working toward international standardization of commercial spaceports, and fostering human resources. These contributions to promoting space development and utilization, economic and social development, and technological advancement are highly commendable. In the future, this town can be expected to develop into one of Japan’s leading private-sector rocket launch sites and spaceports.

Specific results, etc.

1. Contributing to the creation of new fields in space development and utilization

Taiki Town is making full use of its long years of experience in “space town development” and its unparalleled geographical advantages (including open ocean to the east and south, vast plains, and stable weather conditions) to push forward with the development of rocket launch sites that will be open to the private sector, and the LC1 launch site that is currently under development is due to be completed in FY 2026. In addition, SPACE COTAN was selected for the Space Strategy Fund’s Phase 1 in January 2025, and development of fundamental technologies has begun toward achieving a next-generation launch site capable of launching multiple types of rockets at a high frequency. This is expected to enable unprecedented flexibility and efficiency in terms of the launch site’s operations. These initiatives are pioneering challenges that will support the business development of rocket development companies and in addition, promote the integration of related industries and the establishment of supply chains, and drive the growth of Japan’s space industry as a whole.

2. Contributing to the expansion of the space development and utilization market

Based on the concept of being a “broadly open launch site,” HOSPO actively invites rocket launches and experiments not only from domestic companies but from overseas ones as well. At HOSPO’s runway, a diverse range of experiments are conducted throughout the year, including ones involving unmanned aerial vehicles. Also, demand for HOSPO is increasing year by year. For example, the number of users and estimated economic impact had reached approximately 3.4 times their 2019 levels by 2024. In July 2025, the Taiwan-based jtSPACE launched a suborbital rocket from HOSPO, achieving Japan’s first-ever rocket launch funded by foreign capital. HOSPO has also commenced discussions with multiple domestic and international operators regarding launches, and will continue to play a role as a place for contributing to the expansion of Japan’s space development and utilization market. Furthermore, the next-door JAXA Taiki Aerospace Research Field is home to scientific balloon experiments and a diverse range of other research and development activities, so Taiki Town has become a crucial region that underpins Japan’s aerospace research and development infrastructure.

3. Contributing to the advancement of the economy and society

HOSPO is being utilized as an aerospace-related research and development field for a diverse range of experiments, and is being used by companies, universities, and various other entities as a site for researching and developing new technologies that will contribute to future advancements in terms of industry, society, daily life, and administration. In addition, Taiki Town and SPACE COTAN have held the “Hokkaido Space Summit” every year since 2021, doing so jointly with other relevant organizations. This event serves as a platform

where people involved in space affairs, related companies, and research institutions from Japan and overseas come together to contribute to regional economic revitalization, industrial promotion, and network formation. HOSPO is not just a research and development base, but is also playing an important role in regional development and the formation of a space industry ecosystem.

4. Contributing to technologies

Taiki Town is supporting the promotion of research and development activities in Japan by developing facilities that serve as infrastructures for research and development and providing them to companies, universities, and various other research and development institutions. In addition, SPACE COTAN is working on research and development through the Space Strategy Fund project, and in collaboration with Taiki Town, it signed a memorandum of understanding in October 2024 with eight commercial spaceports across five continents (including HOSPO) regarding international cooperation on commercial spaceports, and commenced discussions toward establishing international standards for commercial spaceports. Consequently, there are high expectations that the technologies developed will provide the bedrock for formulating domestic and international standards and specifications. In addition to providing a common infrastructure necessary for space development by private companies, etc., HOSPO’s initiatives will also contribute to enhancing Japan’s technological competitiveness in the space field and to the formulation of international standards and specifications.

5. Contributing to the enhancement of citizens’ understanding and to human resource development

Taiki Town holds special classes taught by researchers at each school every year, and is also developing an environment where children can engage with space on their own. In addition, under a cooperation agreement with JAXA, the town is carrying out educational activities through JAXA, and since 2016, it has been holding “Aerospace School,” an event where high school students from all over Japan learn about space in earnest. Furthermore, Taiki Town and SPACE COTAN are promoting the development of next-generation human resources through problem solving-based learning. For example, they have been conducting an inquiry-based learning program that is set in HOSPO since 2023, and some 700 high school students have taken part in it to date. HOSPO’s runway is lent to students free of charge and provides an environment where university students, etc. can take on research and development challenges within limited budgets. Taiki Town has been keeping these initiatives going for a long time, and has steadily achieved results not only in terms of educational activities utilizing space, but also in terms of developing the next generation of human resources.

