

Laforet Harajuku's 30-year History of Growth as a Fashion Enterprise alongside the city of Harajuku

The establishment of Laforet Harajuku has attracted other commercial businesses to Harajuku and Laforet's own staff has been taking part in community-based activities. In these ways, Laforet has been contributing to the vitalization of Harajuku.

Development of a fashion-based city that began with Laforet Harajuku

Thirty years ago, Harajuku was a city known for Meiji Shrine. The average number of passengers getting on and off at Harajuku station was mere 2,000 on a weekday and 8,000 on a weekend. That is when Laforet Harajuku was born at the intersection of 1-Chome, Jingumae. Since it began operation, the city of Harajuku began experiencing major commercial accumulation and eventually became known as the "city of fashion." Today, approximately 150,000 passengers use Harajuku station.

Laforet Harajuku has led efforts for the city as a whole to attract customers, through such means as calling on local shopping districts to incorporate the phrase "City of Fashion, Harajuku," onto the calendars and business cards printed by each of the shops. Through its internal and external efforts, it has succeeded in branding the city of Harajuku as the center of cutting-edge fashion. The image of thousands of customers crowding the streets during the annual bargain season has become Harajuku's signature site.



"Incubation" business involving the entire city

Based on the philosophy, "Development of a city is development of people," Laforet Harajuku cultivates young talents not as a business goal of the shopping center, but as part of the efforts to develop the entire city of Harajuku. Laforet as a matter of course has continued to make efforts to "incubate" the entire city in order to develop it as the center of fashion. It has, since its opening, offered retail space to manufacturers and brands with promising aesthetic sense, regardless of their business scale, an opportunity to test themselves. In addition, Laforet in 1987 opened "Hyper on Hyper," a company-owned shop for which Laforet itself selects products by up-and-coming designers and small-scale manufacturers. Ten years later, in 1997, Laforet created "L Factory," a system for discovering and fostering new, up-and-coming designers.

Laforet has continually worked toward developing Harajuku as the city of fashion not simply as a shopping center, but as a project of collaboration with its tenants and young talents. It continues to work on "incubation" businesses today in various ways. In 2004, "Side by Side," a company-direct shop opened as a space for young designers from around the world specializing in cutting-edge London fashion to present their work. Additionally, TOPSHOP / TOPMAN, one of the top British high street fashion brands which opened its first branch in Japan at Laforet, expanded and reopened on October 16, 2008, bringing with it a breath of fresh air to Harajuku.



Laforet: a community-based business that grew with the city

Another significant aspect of Laforet Harajuku is its community-based activities through which the shopping center worked closely and grew along with the city of Harajuku. Its director and staff members have all worked together with the local shopping district as part of its grassroots city-development efforts.

Crime watch patrols were started by the shopping district to put a stop to the city's moral degeneration. Soon, the town council asked to be a part of it, and ultimately ward assembly and Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly members also became involved. Also, the community actively takes part in the city's cleanup activities.



(Left) The "Clean Busters" of Laforet Harajuku. They clean Meiji Street through Omotesando every Saturday afternoon.



- (1) Yasutaka Tsutsui, Great Troop Launching Show "Jesus Christ Trickster" (1982)
- (2) American Pop Culture TODAY (1986-1989)
- (3) Harajuku Bunraku (1987-1993)
- (4) A TOMATO EXHIBITION "REAL AND IMAGINARY FLOWERS" (2001)
- (5) Brian Eno Music Video Installation Exhibition "77 MILLION" (2006)
- (6) Harajuku Collabo Apartment 2006 "STYLIST MEETS" (2006)
- (7) Takagi Masakatsu concert "PRIVATE/PUBLIC" (2006)
- (8) Jan and Eva Švankmajer Exhibition: Alice or Pleasure Principle (2007)

City Development and Cultural Activities: Harajuku as the Center of Cultural Resources

With the view that cultural activities are an essential part of city development, LAFORET MUSEUM HARAJUKU was opened in 1982, three years after the opening of Laforet, as "a place to integrate multiple forms of cultural information for the vitalization of a city." Performance of a play written, stage directed and led by Yasutaka Tsutsui touched off as the premier event to commemorate the opening. Since then, the museum has continually held a wide range of genre-straddling cultural events. They include art exhibitions at which work by such major artists as Tadanori Yokoo, Toshio Iwai, Cindy Sherman, David Byrne, Brian Eno, and Jan Švankmajer are showcased in casual and approachable manner, in addition to high quality, cutting edge stage events that are ahead of domestic and overseas trends, projects focusing on the subculture, fashion events, and *Harajuku Bunraku*, which gained attention for having shed new light on traditional Japanese performing arts.

At the same time, the museum also supports and provides opportunities to young talented artists. From them, new projects involving art, music, and theatrical performances are born, bringing in new cultural ideas.

Mori Building Group's First Commercial Facility: Serving as the Foundation for the Group's Commercial Facility Business

Mori Building Group formerly specialized in offices and promoted city development mainly through office buildings in Toranomon. Driven by the desire to manage and operate a commercial facility it had never before taken charge of and to use it toward redevelopment, Mori Building Group entered the world of city development done through a shopping center.

The various challenges faced and knowhow gained through experiences involving Laforet Harajuku are put to use in later projects: large-scale multi-use complex redevelopment projects such as ARK Hills and Roppongi Hills, and commercial facilities such as Venus Fort and Omotesando Hills. The concept "Being the only one," on which the development of Roppongi Hills is based, is a spirit passed on from Laforet Harajuku. The principle that made tenants have their head offices at Laforet Harajuku was invariably adhered to and new business models proposed by undiscovered brands and existing manufacturers were actively adopted to be a part of its operation. Commercial facilities business run by the Mori Building Group, which began with Laforet Harajuku, now covers an area of approximately 99,170m² in Japan and their total annual sales amount to about ¥100 billion. It is now one of the core businesses of the group.



Establishing itself as the Landmark of Japan's Fashion Scene

Laforet Harajuku, which produced various trends, such as the "DC brand boom" of the 1980s and the "Heisei brand boom" of the 1990s, succeeded in making the name of Harajuku known to the world as the mecca of fashion.



Initiating Numerous Fashion Booms

Laforet Harajuku, tucked in between two mega terminals Shibuya and Shinjuku, is a commercial facility that takes up a mere 6,612m². Believing from the beginning that this needed to be a highly original facility, different from those in these two terminals, Mori Building Group approached "mansion makers," who were creating clothing in "mansion" (i.e., apartment) rooms located in the Harajuku vicinity. As these emerging domestic independent brands distributed wholesale and did not own their own retail stores, they began selling directly at Laforet. This unique lineup of tenants that adheres to the principle that made tenants have their head offices at Laforet Harajuku led to the subsequent "DC (designer and character) brand boom" of the 1980s. Many popular brands also developed from the "incubation" business in which Laforet poured efforts into to cultivate young talents. The same spirit that supported the business at its opening was passed on to subsequent years and greatly impacted the market with such phenomenon as the "Heisei brands" of the 1990s and "select shops" and "indies."

Since it first opened its doors thirty years ago, Laforet Harajuku has developed and has continued to boldly move ahead with a spirit of challenge, always changing and offering something new. Even though it has already developed into and established itself as the hub of fashion trends, it continues to stay half a step ahead of the times to continually change as the authority of latest non-age or gender-defined trends.

Fostering front line fashion makers

As its decision to hire the "mansion makers" exemplifies, Laforet Harajuku actively seeks out creatively promising manufacturers and brands even if they are small in business scale. It even modified its conditions in order to provide an environment conducive for the retailers of such manufacturers to open their shops.

As Harajuku's landmark and cutting-edge fashion provider, Laforet makes sure it selects a lineup of shops that would stimulate and appeal to customers with great fashion sense regardless of age. It consistently proposes products that are better quality and are needed by the next generation, without placing top priority on short-term popularity or business sense. It has always focused on fostering new manufacturers and designers based on its policy as a shopping center to not just provide retail space but to create together with the retailers. As a result, it is popularly believed that a great number of fashion makers who now work in the front lines of the fashion world have grown up along with Laforet.

In order to maintain this type of "Laforet-like way of doing things," the shopping center encourages brands which have come to record great sales or developed to a national scale retail store to "graduate" from Laforet so that new up-and-coming tenants can take their place and thus the shopping center can maintain its "metabolism."

Cutting-edge advertisement symbolic of ever-changing Laforet Harajuku

Laforet Harajuku also promotes its unique image and expresses its concepts, stance, and keen aesthetic sense through its advertising graphics and TV commercials. It hires ahead-of-their-times artists such as Antonio Lopez, Fiorucci and Takuya Onuki. Expressions developed by such artists precisely symbolize the concepts on which the "forever changing" Laforet is based. By viewing the transitions of such advertisements, one can see the trends of the times and messages communicated by Laforet.

Laforet's style of working with an art director in charge of advertisements is to first take its time to get the director to thoroughly understand Laforet's philosophy, and once the decision is made to hire a particular art director, he or she is given almost full reign and Laforet will no longer make any detailed requests.



Laforet Harajuku and fashion trends

Laforet Harajuku	Fashion trends	Notes
1975 76 Property is acquired on 1-Chome, Jingumae, Shibuya Ward 78 Laforet Harajuku opens	Takenoko-zoku	73 "Harajuku Champs-Elysees Association" is established 78 Hanae Mori Building opens
1980 82 LAFORET MUSEUM HARAJUKU opens 83 "Harajuku Collection" is held	"Designers brand" boom	
87 Opening of "Hyper on Hyper"	"DC brand" boom	86 ARK Hills opens 88 "HARAJUKU QUEST" opens 89 Harajuku Apparel Council is established 90 First year Omotesando is illuminated for Christmas
1990 97 "L Factory" is established	"Gal-kei" casual style Rise of "street brand" Sharp increase of "select shops" "Heisei brand" boom "Ura (back streets) Harajuku" boom	99 Venus Fort (Palette Town West Mall) opens
2000 04 Opening of "Side by Side"	"Goth-Lolita" style	03 Roppongi Hills opens
2005 07 Exhibits at Japan Expo held in Paris * 08 Exhibits again at the Japan Expo 08 New and expanded TOPSHOP/TOPMAN reopens	"Fast fashion" boom	06 Omotesando Hills opens



Reference: Outline of Laforet Harajuku

With two themes—“cutting edge fashion” and “culture”—Laforet Harajuku has, since it opened its doors 30 years ago, continued to adhere to its unchanging principles described with such words as “challenge,” “source of trends” and “incubation.”

Laforet Harajuku's name

Laforet Harajuku's name is derived from “la forêt,” a French word meaning “forest.” Individual trees that make up the forest called Laforet Harajuku are steady nurtured to further enhance the rich forest, which brings great affluence and joy to the lives of those who gather there. Further, the even deeper and larger forest called Harajuku is fostered so that it can grow to become even more attractive. This is the goal of Mori Building Group's city development efforts.

Facility outline

Location: 1-11-6 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo

JR Yamanote Line, Harajuku Station,
Omotesando exit (5 minutes on foot)

Meiji-jingumae Station, Tokyo Metro Chiyoda
Line or Fukutoshin Line, exit 5 (1 minutes on foot)

Hours: 7 days a week, 11:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Strawberry House (1F) (11:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.)

Opened: October, 1978

No. of floors: Aboveground: 6, Underground: 2

Ground floor area: 2,776m²

Total floor area: 15,672m²



Area map

