

Obama Traditional Townscape Preservation Center

The distinctive townscape of the Nishigumi district reflects Obama's long history as a thriving port town that connected Kyoto to the sea. To support preservation efforts throughout the area, the Obama Traditional Townscape Preservation Center was opened in a restored *machiya* townhouse in 1997, becoming an example of how old buildings can be renovated while maintaining the atmosphere of the district. In 2016, the center was moved to the current building, another former townhouse and shop. It serves as an educational facility, showcasing the typical *machiya* architecture and culture of the Nishigumi district, and provides tourist information about the area.

Traditional Architecture and Layout of the Former Shop

The building dates to the Taisho era (1912–1926), and its long, narrow structure is similar to the *machiya* townhouses of Kyoto. The overall layout is divided into two halves lengthwise. The left side of the first floor is comprised of a suite of four rooms with tatami floors; the one nearest the street originally served as a storefront. On the right is a narrow, hall-like entryway with a door in the back that separated the part of the building accessible to customers from the private area used only by the residents. The door leads into a kitchen area with a large traditional stove and a very high ceiling, which helped filter out smoke. The rear part of the property contains a bath, a toilet, a courtyard garden with a well, and a large storehouse. The second floor is comparatively smaller and was used primarily as sleeping quarters for the family and servants. At present, it functions as storage for festival items.

Obama Culture and Tourist Information

Pictures of landmarks and festivals of Obama are displayed on the walls throughout the building, and books with old photographs show the scenery and everyday life in the city in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A reception desk is set up in the second room of the preservation center, and tours of the building are available if a guide is present. Please note that tours are offered only in Japanese.