

## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Friends of Japan in Georgia Construct Traditional Japanese Bell Tower for President Carter's "Peace Bell"**

**ATLANTA** – The Japan-America Society of Georgia and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Georgia, in cooperation with the Consulate General of Japan in Atlanta and Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) Atlanta, are constructing a traditional Japanese bell tower to hang President Carter's "Peace Bell" on the grounds of The Carter Center.

The bell tower, intended to be a symbol of friendship between the people of Japan and Georgia, will raise awareness of the contributions of President Jimmy Carter to the Japan-Georgia relationship, as well as highlight economic, cultural, educational, and political ties between Japan and Georgia. The "Peace Bell Tower" will be a replica of the bell tower at Shoganji Temple in Konu, Miyoshi City, Hiroshima Prefecture where the bell originated in Japan. Construction will be directed by carpenters from Konu. The ribbon cutting and opening ceremony will be September 30, 2022 at 4:00 PM, the day before President Carter's 98<sup>th</sup> birthday.



During World War II, an ordinance to collect metals was promulgated throughout Japan, and the temple bell from Shoganji Temple in Konu was supplied to the Kure Naval Arsenal. An estimated 95% of temple bells in Japan were lost during this period. However, before Shoganji's bell could be turned into bullets, the war ended. Following the war, the bell ended up in England, where it resided for a time with James Taylor. His son, Milos, discovered the bell in 1958 while sorting through his father's belongings. In 1982, Milos moved to East Orange Park, Florida with the bell. In 1985, before returning to England, Milos put the bell up for sale. The Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Atlanta solicited donations to purchase the bell, and on July 24, 1985, Consul General of Japan in Atlanta Tadayuki Nonoyama and Hiromitsu Araki, Chairman of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Georgia, presented the bell on behalf of the Japanese community to President and Mrs. Carter to commemorate the construction of The Carter Center, the groundbreaking of the Japanese Garden, and in appreciation for President Carter's work promoting world peace.

An inscription on the surface of the bell bears the name and location of Shoganji Temple, so on September 26, 1987, Mr. Hajime Akiyama, a member of the Japanese House of Councilors, and Mr. Noriyuki Oku, former Consul General of Japan in Atlanta, visited Shoganji to report that their temple bell had been donated to President Carter. Shoganji was pleased to learn that their temple

bell, which they thought had been destroyed, was in fact carefully preserved at The Carter Center as the “Peace Bell,” a symbol of goodwill between Japan and the United States.

The mayor of Konu invited President Carter to visit, which he did, together with his daughter Amy, on October 21, 1990. President Carter’s visit consisted of the unveiling of a monument featuring his handwritten message at Shoganji Temple and his expectations for world peace and mutual exchange through the “Bell of Friendship,” the replica bell the people of Konu had constructed.

The following year, Konu (now Miyoshi City) and Americus, GA established a sister city relationship. Visits between the two cities continue annually to this day. President Carter has always taken time to meet the students from Konu and teach them Sunday school in Plains. In return, the people of Konu have hosted delegations from Americus.

In 1994, Miyoshi built the Jimmy Carter Civic Center, which includes a gallery called the Peace Learning Center that tells the story of President Carter’s life, his presidency, and the work of the Carter Center in Atlanta. On July 7, 1994, President and Mrs. Carter attended the opening ceremony for the building. Today, Konu’s main street is named Carter Avenue and the town boasts a baseball stadium named after President Carter as well as four houses built to resemble homes in Plains, Georgia. Many of Konu’s farmers grow “Carter Peanuts,” and there is a Carter Peanut Festival each year in November.

*Download photos and videos of the Peace Bell Tower project [here](#).*

## Project schedule

**February 5, 2021: Project kick-off meeting** with The Japan-America Society of Georgia and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Georgia, the Consulate General of Japan in Atlanta, and Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) Atlanta

**June 11, 2021: First meeting with representatives from Konu, Hiroshima**

**September 1, 2021: Cutting of cypress trees**

The lumber for the bell tower was harvested from the hill behind Mr. Kimiaki Takafuji’s property in Sera, Hiroshima. He provided a magnificent 150-year-old cypress tree. Video link [here](#).

**Early December 2021: Wood processing**

Kondo Kensetsu construction company processes the wood using Japanese building techniques. Video links [here](#) and [here](#).

**April 17, 2022: Bell tower construction completed in Konu, Hiroshima**

Video link [here](#).

**April 26-27, 2022: Disinfection treatment of wood**

Disinfection treatment was conducted at the Sasabe Lumber Mirasaka Plant.

**May 6, 2022: Bell tower transported to packing company**

Sanyo Kaiun Co., Ltd. transported the bell tower from Sasabe Lumber Mirasaka Plant to Sanyo Kaiun's warehouse in Fukuyama City.

**May 12, 2022: Packing**

Sanyo Kaiun Co., Ltd. transported the bell tower from its warehouse in Fukuyama City to OSS Fukuyama Factory, a packing specialist.

**June 2022: Shipping**

Yamato Transport Co., Ltd. handled custom clearance procedures and container loading at Kobe Port. The shipment departed from Kobe on June 4.

**June 25: Arrival in Los Angeles**

From Los Angeles, the cargo will be transported overland (by rail and truck) to Atlanta.

**July 8, 2022 at 10:00 am: Groundbreaking Ceremony**

The groundbreaking ceremony at The Carter Center will feature a traditional Buddhist ceremony by the Soto Zen Buddhism North America Office.

**July 11, 2022: Construction of the concrete foundation**

Construction of the concrete foundation for the tower will commence at The Carter Center by Mazza Landscape, Inc. Surveying and project plans were provided by Phillips Partnership and Atwell, LLC.

**August 2-19 2022: Carpenters from Konu dispatched to Atlanta to oversee construction**

Four personnel from Kondo Kensetsu (two carpenters - Mr. Noritaka Kondou and Mr. Daisuke Koyama, and two tile workers - Mr. Yoshihiko Hirata and Mr. Chikashi Miyaguchi) will oversee the construction of the bell tower in Atlanta. Airline tickets have been provided by Delta Air Lines. They will be assisted by local Japanese carpenter Mr. Hitoshi Kawamura and team.

**September 30, 2022 at 4:00 PM: Opening ceremony and ribbon-cutting at The Carter Center**

A completion ceremony featuring a Buddhist ceremony will be held with the attendance of all parties concerned as well as local dignitaries.

**Comments from the leaders of partnering organizations**

“The Carter Center has been the paragon of the Japan-Georgia relationship for many decades and in many areas ranging from business relationship, cultural exchange, youth exchange, sister city relationships and many others,” said Kazuyuki Takeuchi, Consul General of Japan in Atlanta. “What lies as the underlying guiding light has always been the Carters' vision of and dedication to peace and humanity. The Peace Bell donated by the Japanese community in Georgia to The Carter Center in 1985 has been a symbol of such steadfast relationship between Japan and Georgia. The Bell Tower initiative is sure to bring it to a new height by enshrining the bell in a fitting abode on the premises of The Carter Center. Just as the then Consul General represented the Japanese

community along with the Japanese Chamber of Commerce when the bell was donated in 1985, I am wholeheartedly delighted to be able to cooperate with this initiative.”

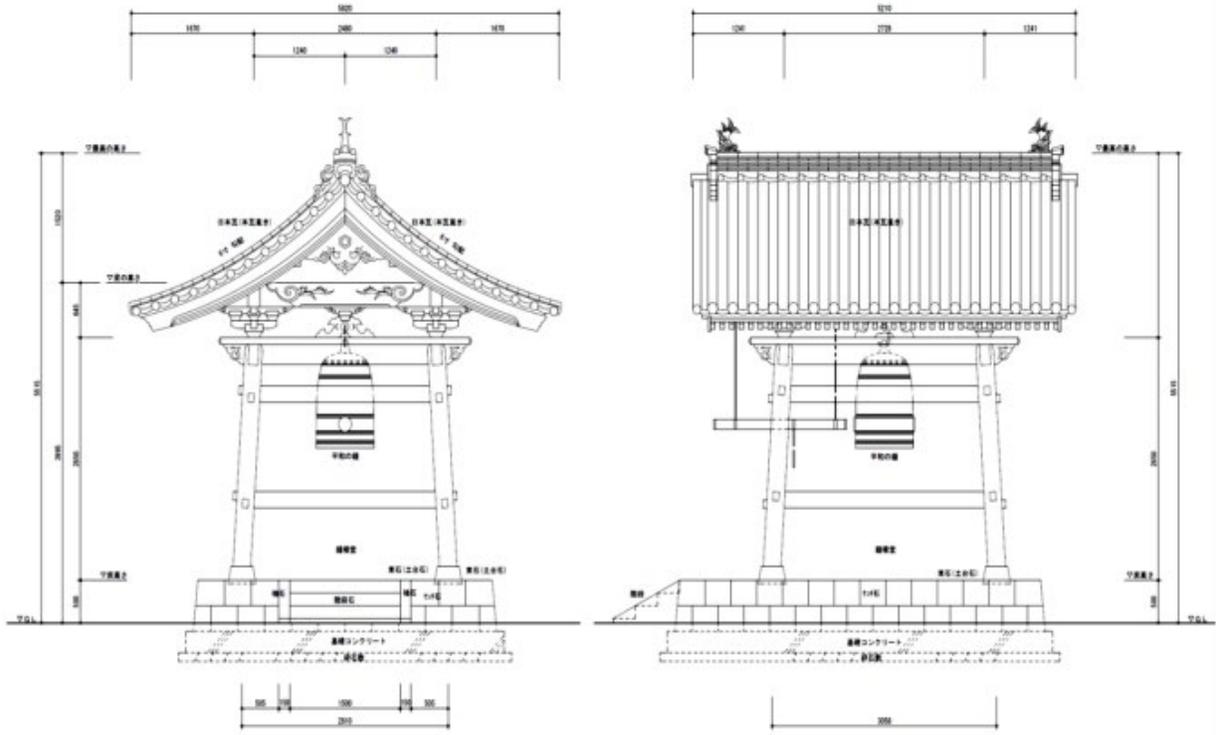
“The Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Georgia is dedicated to supporting the activities of Japanese companies and people in Georgia,” said Tetsuya Takemoto, Chair of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Georgia. “By introducing Japan and its culture to the local community, we are not only able to deepen their understanding of Japan but also to strengthen the exchange between the U.S. and Japan, which in turn will increase the presence of the Japanese community. Understanding and exchange are difficult to express in a tangible way. By participating in this project, we believe that we will be able to express the meaning and importance of deepening mutual understanding and continuing exchange through the symbol of the Peace Bell. We hope that the Peace Bell will continue to speak to us about the importance of exchange between Japan and the U.S. for many years to come in Georgia.”

“We can think of no better place in Georgia to build a symbol of enduring friendship between Japan and Georgia than on the grounds of The Carter Center, an organization started by a man who has dedicated his life to ‘waging peace,’” said Jessica Cork, Chair of The Japan-America Society of Georgia. “From his work while governor to recruit Japanese companies to invest in Georgia, to his multiple visits to Japan, including two trips to Hiroshima, to hosting students from Hiroshima each year in Plains, President Carter has been building bridges between Japan and Georgia his entire career. When students from Hiroshima visited with President Carter several years ago, he told them, ‘I think it’s very important for all the students ... to remember the importance of peace, human rights, and love for one another, and the principles that never change in our lives.’ This bell tower will serve as an important reminder of President Carter’s words.”

“The Peace Bell Tower will not only be a symbol of friendship between Japan and Georgia but will also make Japanese companies feel they are welcome here in Georgia, which will lead to closer economic relations,” said Takuya Takahashi, Chief Executive Director, JETRO Atlanta.

“President and Mrs. Carter have long treasured the Peace Bell,” said Nicole Kruse, interim vice president of development at The Carter Center. “It’s a powerful symbol of friendship and goodwill, and we are delighted that it will soon have a beautiful new home where it can be appreciated by the thousands of people who visit our campus each year.”

Full list of sponsors and project details are available at [www.jasgeorgia.org/Georgia-Japan-Peace-Bell/](http://www.jasgeorgia.org/Georgia-Japan-Peace-Bell/).



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