Yamagata City and its Old Town Names

Mogami Yoshiaki developed a castle town said to have been among the largest in the Tohoku region, arranging craftsmen and merchants along the Ushu route. The livelihoods of the townspeople are reflected in the historical district names. Artisan quarters included Zaimokumachi (Lumber Town), Rosokumachi (Candle Town), Yumimachi (Bowmakers' Town), and Sayamachi (Scabbard Makers' Town). Merchant districts included Mikkamachi, Itsukamachi, Muikamachi, Yokamachi, and Tokamachi.

Many town names were also related to their location or function. Old maps show that, before later urban redevelopment, Kajimachi (Blacksmith Town) was an area inhabited by craftsmen who worked with fire. To reduce the risk of fire spreading to the castle town, it was located across the Mamigasaki River.

Yamagata Castle Town was protected by Gassan Shrine and Chokai Shrine to the north and Mutsukunugi Hachimangu Shrine to the south. Other temples were strategically placed around these shrines and near entrances along the old highways leading into the castle town. This reflects the defensive planning of Yamagata's flatland castle town, where temples and shrines also functioned as military strongholds. Town names derived from temples and shrines include Teramachi (Temple Town), Miyamachi (Shrine Town), and Hokkemachi.

After the Residential Address System Act (*jyukyo hyoji*) was enacted in 1962, most of the old town names disappeared except for a few cases. In response to requests from local residents, Yamagata City installed markers displaying the former town names in 1988 as part of the city's 100th anniversary commemorative projects.