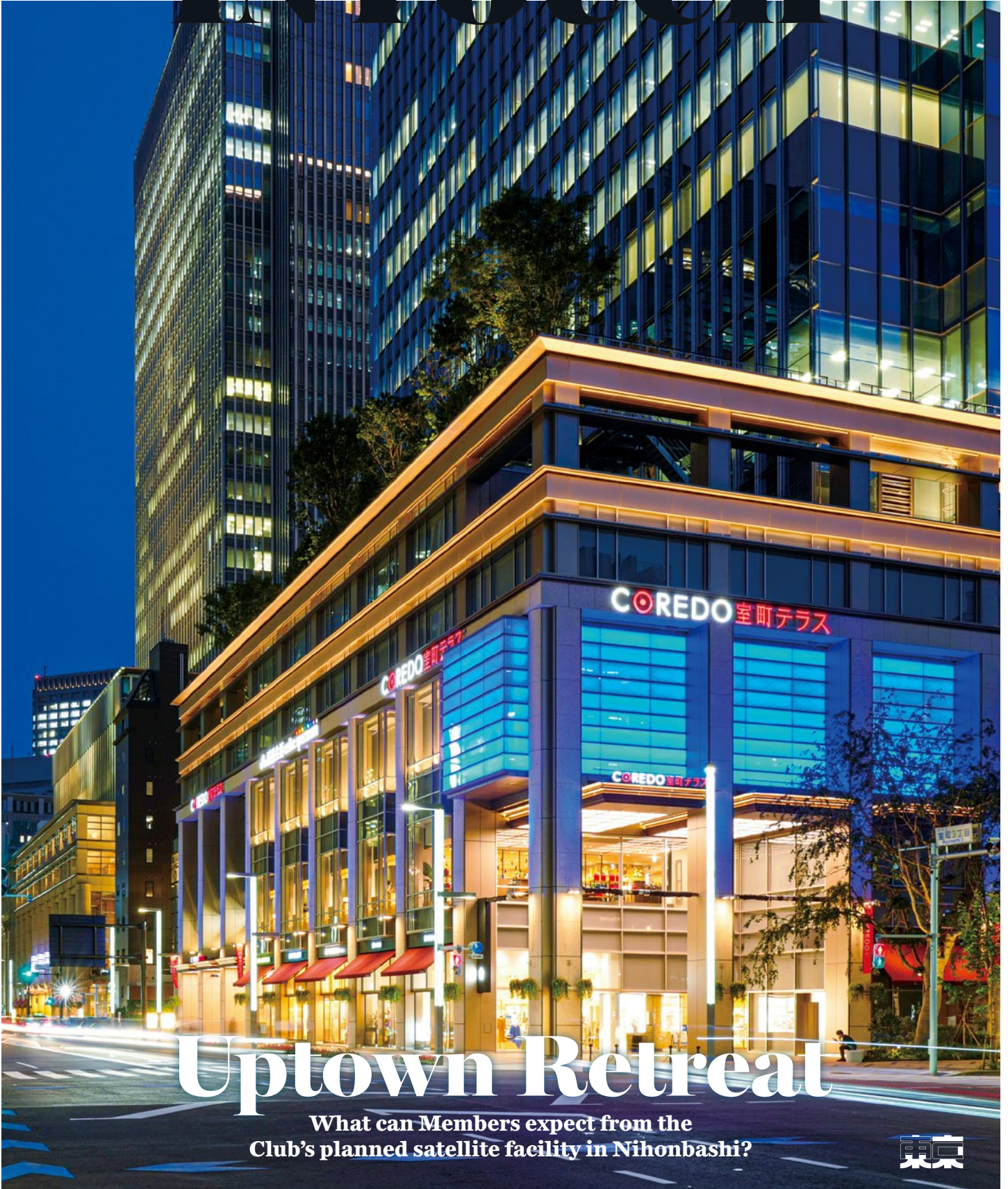


TOKYO AMERICAN CLUB

SEPTEMBER 2020

INTOUCH



Uptown Retreat

What can Members expect from the Club's planned satellite facility in Nishinbashi?



TRANSPACIFIC TIES + OWNING THE ROOM + VIKING VIBES

N I H O N



YUUKI IIDE

B A S H I



With the Club set to unveil its first satellite facility next year, what can Members expect from this second home away from home?

WORDS OWEN ZIEGLER

Is there such a thing as a heart to a city of 14 million? When Tokyo was still Edo, there was.

By the early 17th century, the Tokugawa family had finally reined in the dozens of warring clans and reestablished control from a fishing village in an eastern backwater of Japan. Construction began on a sprawling castle complex where Tokyo's Imperial Palace now stands.

The second Tokugawa shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu, further tightened his grip on power by requiring every feudal lord across the country to travel every other year to the new eastern capital. For more than 200 years, their journeys ended at Nihonbashi.

The population center of Tokyo has since shifted westward, but the scores of samurai and merchant families who clustered around the shogun's castle helped build the foundation of the world's largest city.

Like Tokyo, the Club has transformed over its 92-year history. In the next step in its evolution, it will open its first-ever satellite facility in 2021—in an area that is undergoing a metamorphosis of its own.

“Nihonbashi is an exciting historical heart of Tokyo,” says Member Ginger Griggs. “And we wanted that to be incorporated into the concept of the new Club.”

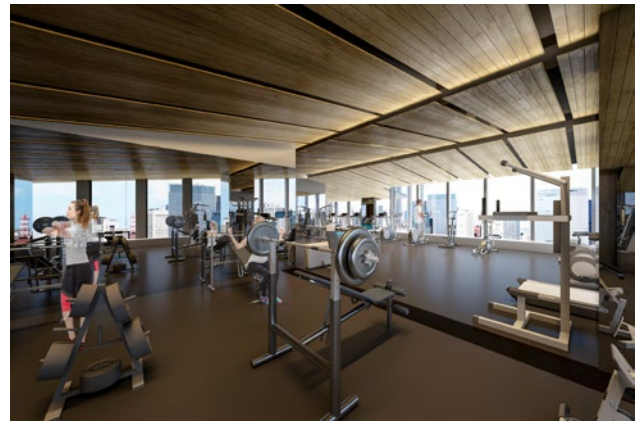
As chair of the TAC Nihonbashi Task Force, Griggs, together with vice chair Alok Rakyan and a wider team of volunteer Members, has been quietly laying the groundwork for this bold undertaking. Set to welcome Members in early spring, the Nihonbashi Club will concentrate everything the main Azabudai Club does best into a package of distilled refinement perfect for the business-focused neighborhood it will call home.

H

O

M

E



Nihonbashi Club architectural renderings (clockwise from top left): entrance leading to lobby; fitness center; bar

Located on the sixth floor of Nihonbashi Muromachi Mitsui Tower, the Club will feature a fully equipped fitness center (about half the size of the Azabudai Club’s dedicated space), with all the necessary machines and amenities for a cardio workout and weight and cross training.

An eye-catching square bar, contemporary-styled restaurant and private dining room will also overlook the bustle of Chuo Avenue, the thoroughfare that links Nihonbashi with eastern Tokyo neighborhoods like Hibiya and Ginza.

Come spring, the Club will be a welcoming weekday oasis for adult Members of the Azabudai Club, as well as those Members who exclusively join the Nihonbashi Club.

“It was a matter of practicality,” Griggs says of the facility’s adult-centric vibe. “The Members that we would draw from that part of town are all going to be there for business, so it will be perfect for singles, couples and parents who would want to have a little time-out away from the kids.”

“We will be continuing our long tradition of diversity when opening the new Club,” adds Rakyan, “and the Nihonbashi business area, which is quite different from Azabudai, will provide us with a natural opportunity to include young professionals—both women and men—as unique segments

of our target market.”

With a 15-year lease for the space signed by the Club and the building developer, Mitsui Fudosan, last month, the construction of the planned interior is all that remains before the Nihonbashi Club’s official spring unveiling.

Introduced by Member Rike Wooten, Mitsui Fudosan formally proposed the idea of establishing a clubhouse in Nihonbashi in 2017. Following months of meetings and negotiations, Members voted in favor of the proposal at the 2018 Annual General Meeting.

“This is a wonderful benefit to our Club Members,” says Griggs, “without any risk or any cost to us.”

The project sees Mitsui Fudosan cover all construction, staffing and other associated costs, along with a guaranteed ¥1 million monthly profit for the Club.

According to Rie Ishikawa, Mitsui Fudosan’s Nihonbashi Club project manager, it’s hoped that the Club’s brand can help to internationalize the fast-developing Tokyo neighborhood.

“Nihonbashi is the origin of Mitsui Fudosan,” says Ishikawa of the store first established by the Mitsui family in 1673. “[In the last 10 years,] Mitsui has built many offices and

restaurants and shopping centers to make it a much [more dynamic] area.”

The multiuse complex in which the Club will be housed is part of a much larger revitalization project for Nihonbashi. Mitsui Fudosan’s plans include the regeneration of riverside areas and an ambitious scheme to relocate underground a stretch of the expressway that passes directly over Nihonbashi’s iconic bridge.

“Mitsui Fudosan sees our Club as a draw for the international community as well as a draw for the globally minded Japanese community that we integrate,” says Griggs. “We have the reputation for bringing together all the diversity of the foreign and Japanese communities into one club.”

Daishi Yoshimoto was the man tasked with designing the Club’s first satellite space. The internationally educated and trained architect saw off the competition while winning over the task force with his vision for the intimate confines of the Nihonbashi Club.

“In a home, you have more wood,” says Yoshimoto of the Shibuya-based architectural firm UDS. “You have a cozier feel of a comfortable house where you can meet family and friends. I wanted this club to be more like that.”

Among the warm touches throughout the 1,500-square-meter Club are a stylish, dark-wood ceiling, a curated art gallery along the main hallway and carpeting whose subtle motifs evoke the area’s history of waterways. In addition, a dynamic lighting system adjusts the brightness and tone of the lighting according to the time of day and the environment. All these elements are designed to combine for an enticing ambience in which Members can unwind and socialize.

For Yoshimoto, who now visits the Nihonbashi site to oversee construction, the project has progressed with far fewer speedbumps than he expected.

“I think the project is moving very smoothly,” Yoshimoto says. “Everybody is in a cooperative mode to make a great club. We would usually have more problems [with a] project [of this scope], but I think it’s because of the quality of people involved [that we haven’t].”

There’s little doubt that Mitsui Fudosan’s prodigious efforts to revitalize a storied quarter of Tokyo—with the Club placed at the heart of it all—promise untold value for not only current Club Members but also generations of Members to come.

“Down the road, we are going to be at the center of this really great part of town that’s going to have really changed over time,” says Griggs. “Getting ourselves set up as part of that—especially under these terms that we have—is amazing.”

WALKING THROUGH CLUB HISTORY

Take a guided tour of the Club’s past locations and historical artifacts in Tokyo.

▸ September 5 ▸ 9am–12pm ▸ ¥1,500 ▸ Details on page 10

NIHONBASHI: TRADITION & MODERNITY

Experience Nihonbashi’s intriguing blend of Edo-era culture and modern-day Tokyo on this Connections-organized walking tour.

▸ December 14 ▸ Half-day tour ▸ Details online



YUUKI ITO

Urban Hub

For centuries, Nihonbashi has thrived as a center of commerce and culture.

1673

Year the Echigoya store (now known as Mitsukoshi) opened in Nihonbashi, marking the founding of Japan’s oldest department store.

MERCHANT TOWN

Original name of Nihonbashi, referring to the collection of shops and peddlers around the gates of Edo Castle (present-day Imperial Palace).

KILOMETER ZERO

The marker at the center of Nihonbashi Bridge from which all distances to and from Tokyo are measured.

3,700

Number of companies listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange’s Nihonbashi trading floor, combining for a market capitalization of more than \$5.6 trillion.

140

Kilometers from Nihonbashi to Mount Fuji, which should be visible from the area when the pending construction to move the existing expressway underground is completed.