



## Planning & Development Division Chairman's Message



*Sr Raymond Chan PDD Council Chairman*

I wrote an article for Wen Wei Po, which was published on 17 July 2012. I pointed out that the government's housing and planning policy should catch up with the pace of the changes taking place in society, and that it should pay more attention to the impacts of these changes so it could adjust its long-term housing and planning strategies. I am particularly concerned about the housing needs of single person households and the elderly.

Over the years, our mode of living has changed a lot in Hong Kong. There has been an increasing trend of working adults moving away from their immediate families and living close to their workplaces. According to the figures from the government's Census and Statistics Department, the number of households with four persons or more has decreased drastically over the past ten years, while the number of single person households has increased from 13.4% to 16.4%. In general, single households in developed countries constitute at least 30% of all households, and Hong Kong is expected to follow this trend.

Although there are a number of individuals who are eligible to apply for public housing, the government has given priority

to family households and the elderly. It is very common for a single applicant to wait ten years for a flat. The government should consider providing more small flats for singles to meet the increasing demand.

Apart from single person households, the government should also review the housing situation for the elderly. Life expectancy in Hong Kong is getting longer, and the population of those 60 years old and above now comprises 18.2% of the total population, compared to 14.8% ten years ago. Therefore, housing for the elderly will need to increase in line with the aging population. As for housing designs, there should be the provision of proper medical amenities and open spaces, just to name two examples, to meet the needs of the elderly. A study in the US indicated that retired people owned 70% of all private assets in that country. This could imply that the elderly in many developed countries have substantial purchasing power – a factor that the property developers in Hong Kong should not ignore. The government, therefore, can provide incentives for developers to encourage them to incorporate more elderly-friendly designs and amenities into their projects. ■

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