

The coming age

An ageing population and ageing building stock are twin problems Hong Kong is being forced to grapple with. The surveying sector is taking a proactive approach, as the theme at this year's HKIS annual conference attested.

Prudence Lui



Photo: HKIS

“Our elderly populace of tomorrow will be different from the elderly of recent decades – they will, in general, be better educated and represent a social capital that should be better utilised.”

After decades of economic growth and development, Hong Kong is facing two highly serious problems of ageing, that of its population and also of the buildings in which we live and work, many of which are approaching the end of their period of safe usage. With this critical situation in mind, the HKIS' theme for its 2017 Annual Conference was “Golden Opportunities in the Ageing Community and Built Environment”. The conference was held at the JW Marriott Hotel on 9 September, drawing an attendance of some 300 professionals.

Secretary for Development Mr Michael Wong Wai-lun delivered the opening speech and warned that we all must prepare for double ageing. “Our population is ageing rapidly,” he said. “Our median age grew from 20 in 1966 to 43 in 2016, and will rise to 50 by 2034. By the same year almost 30 per cent of the population will be over 65. Meanwhile our buildings are also ageing at an alarming rate. There are over 40,000 private buildings in Hong Kong and about 7,000 of them are over 50 years old. This will rise to 17,000 by 2034.”

Mr Wong also highlighted the efforts and initiatives of the Planning Department, Buildings Department and Urban Renewal Authority (URA) for ageing stocks. “Under HK 2030+, we set out the vision for Hong Kong to become a liveable, competitive and sustainable World City, with many of those now present taking part in the consultation process. On the building front, old buildings need proper maintenance or they will pose a threat to people, so the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme (MBIS) and Mandatory Window Inspection Scheme (MWIS) were introduced in 2012 whereas URA has provided various schemes and the appropriate financial and technical support to owners to fulfill their responsibilities.”

Director of Planning Mr Raymond Lee said ageing was not all negative and asked the audience to look at double ageing from new perspectives i.e., a single-malt whisky or balsamic vinegar which grows in value as it ages. “Our elderly populace of tomorrow will be different from the elderly of recent decades,” Mr Lee said. “They will, in general, be better educated and represent a social capital that should be better utilised. It’s more likely they will play an active role, even in their golden age. Plus they will have greater scope to reskill, retrain and participate in the labour market or apply their knowledge to voluntary service.”

Mr Lee estimated that in 2015 there were only 1,100 private housing units aged 70 years or more but this figure is estimated to rise to 326,000 by 2046. “This problem will become acute in the years ahead as the current pace of urban renewal is left far behind,” he said. “Between 2011 and 2015, on average, only 2,100 private units were demolished for redevelopment per year. We also estimate that over 70 per cent of these ageing private units were located in five districts. Compounding this double-ageing problem, districts like Sham Shui Po, Yau Ma Tei, Tsim Sha Tsui and Mong Kok have an above-average proportion of elderly residents. Many elderly owners are also less able to deal with the lengthy and costly procedure of maintenance or redevelopment.”

Regarding ageing buildings, Mr Lee said the strategic direction was rejuvenation and retrofit, boosting the quality of maintenance and management to prolong the life of buildings. Other proposals include redevelopment, rehabilitation, revitalisation and preservation as well as to investigate “retrofitting”, both for buildings and neighbourhoods lacking public amenities.

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

“We encourage the elderly to leave their flats and go downstairs and do exercise, as well as visiting relatives and friends or becoming volunteers.”

Director of Buildings Dr Cheung Tin-cheung touched on care for aged building and stressed that the Buildings Department’s vision is to make built environments safe and healthy for all. “Prevention is better than cure and the ageing building issue can’t just be handled by government,” Dr Cheung said. “Owners must take responsibility as well.”

As of June 2017, the progress of MBIS/MWIS was not promising. For instance, the Buildings Department issued a total of 51,000 and 440,000 notices respectively for MBIS and MWIS but the compliance rates were 35 per cent and 84 per cent. Compliance rates for the common parts are even lower – 11 per cent for MBIS and 50 per cent for MWIS.

Dr Cheung attributed the cause to limited resources and intensive workload. “Our resources are stretched to the limit and there is a large number of backlog notices. It’s a heavy workload so we have adjusted downward to 400 target buildings in 2017. Other challenges are RIs who are unfamiliar with the requirements, high risk business of aged buildings and prosecutions.

“Out of a total of 490 RIs, only 150 carried out work regularly and about 200 served only once. Therefore, it’s a huge opportunity for surveyors to take up the role. There is a total of 5,300 buildings aged 50 years or more, with inspection and supervision costs estimated to be \$1-2 billion.”

According to Dr Lam Ching-choi, Non-official Member, Executive Council, Chairman of the Elderly Commission and Chief Executive Officer of the Haven of Hope Christian Service, there will be a significant increase in our elderly population. At present there are six working adults to support one elderly person but by 2034 this ratio will be only two to one.

“Therefore,” Dr Lam said, “we need to change our physical landscape to cater for the future needs of the elderly. I have two new concepts for town planners and surveyors. The Build-for-Health concept strives to keep the elderly alive through healthy practices, i.e., exercise, which is largely affected by physical environment.”

“Another recommendation is an estate-based approach in site provision for elderly services. As our elderly are evenly distributed across 18 districts, we really need to make sure that in every district’s estates the relevant elderly services are provided. While the Housing Authority and Housing Society provide universal design solutions to the elderly, what more can private developers provide for the coming elderly population?”

Dr Lam praised the government for the facilities already provided on its estates, i.e., walkways, lifts, escalators and some additional seating. “Transport is also crucial,” he added. “We encourage the elderly to leave their flats and go downstairs and do exercise, as well as visiting relatives and friends or becoming volunteers. I would like to give full credit to the government for its \$2 public transport fare concession scheme, which is used every day by more than one million elderly people.

In conclusion, Dr Lam reiterated that good planning is essential for the elderly of the near future. We should plan ahead as the lead time is very long to build an institution here, i.e., it can take 10-15 years to construct an age home. We should also do as much as possible to work for inclusive intergenerational support and also build for health, build with technology and all this should be part of cross-sector efforts.

The article is published courtesy of Classified Post.

「與現時的長者人口相比，香港未來的長者人口教育水平較高，是另一種社會資本，應該加以善用。」

人口和樓宇 雙老化

香港正面對人口老化與樓宇老化兩大問題，測量界已積極探討應對方法，香港測量師學會更以此作為本年度周年研討會的主題。

呂麗娟

在享受多年來的經濟增長和發展成果後，香港正面對非常嚴重的人口老化及樓宇老化問題，不少建築物的安全使用期已屆尾聲。形勢嚴峻，香港測量師學會於9月9日假 JW 萬豪酒店舉行 2017 年周年研討會，會議主題是「測劃老齡社區與建築，築緊黃金新機遇」，吸引約 300 位專業人士出席。

發展局局長黃偉綸先生為大會致開幕辭，提醒社會需要為雙老化作好準備。他表示：「香港人口正在急速老化。我們的年齡中位數由 1966 年的 20 歲上升至 2016 年的 43 歲，估計到了 2034 年將上升至 50 歲。屆時 65 歲或以上人士將佔三成人口。與此同時，本港樓宇亦急劇老化。香港目前有超過四萬幢私人大廈，其中約有 7,000 幢樓齡超過 50 年；預期待到了 2034 年將增加至 17,000 幢。」

黃偉綸先生提及規畫署、屋宇署和市區重建局就老化樓宇所制定的應對計劃及工作。「《香港 2030+》計劃將香港打造成宜居、具競爭力及可持續發展的國際都會，部分發展計劃已進入諮詢程序。在樓宇方面，需要適當地維修舊樓，以免威脅市民的人生安全。有關當局於 2012 年分別引入強制驗樓計劃和強制驗窗計劃，而市建局則為業主提供各種計劃和財務及技術支援，幫助他們履行對樓宇的責任。」

規畫署署長李啟榮先生認為老化並非一樣完全負面的事情，建議公眾以另一個角度看待雙老化問題，像麥芽威士忌和意大利陳醋，年代越久遠，價值越高昂。李啟榮先生表示：「與現時的長者人口相比，香港未來的長者人口教育水平較高，是另一種社會資本，應該加以善用。這些長者退而不休，仍有可能在各崗位擔任活躍角色。他們將可學習更多新技能、接受再培訓和投身勞動市場，或參與義務工作發揮所長。」

李啟榮先生估計，2015 年全港只有 1,100 個私人住宅單位樓齡超過 70 年，但到了 2046 年將攀升至 326,000。他表示：「現時社區重建速度遠遠落後，有關問題在未來數年將相當嚴峻。在 2011 至 2015 年間，每年平均只有 2,100 個私人單位被清拆重建。我們估計這些老化的私人單位有超過七成都集中於五個區域。深水埗、油麻地、尖沙咀和旺

角等地區的長者居民比例高於全港平均數字。很多長者業主無法處理耗時和耗費的維修或重建程序。」

李啟榮先生指有關當局集中翻新和改造老化的樓宇，這是政策的大方向。目的是提升維修和管理的質素，延長樓宇壽命。其他建議包括重建、修復、活化和保育，以及研究「改造」缺乏公用設施的樓宇和社區的可行性。

屋宇署署長張天祥博士談及保養老化樓宇，強調屋宇署希望確保公眾可以安全、健康地享用環境。張天祥博士表示：「預防勝於治療，樓宇老化問題不能單靠政府處理。業主也必須承擔責任。」

截至 2017 年 6 月，強制驗樓計劃和強制驗窗計劃的進度未如理想。屋宇署就以上兩個計劃分別發出 51,000 份及 440,000 份通知，但參與率只有 35% 和 84%。公用地方的情況更惡劣，兩個計劃的參與率分別只有 11% 和 50%。

張天祥博士表示，資源有限和工作量大都是問題癥結所在。「我們已用盡所有資源，但目前仍有大量積壓通告未能處理。鑑於工作量繁重，我們把 2017 年的目標向下調整至 400 幢樓宇。另外，註冊檢驗人員不熟悉要求、老化樓宇潛在風險和檢控困難均拖慢了計劃進度。」

「在全數 490 名註冊檢驗人員中，只有 150 名定期工作，200 名只工作了一次。測量師大可把握機會，填補這方面的龐大空缺。現時樓齡超過 50 年的樓宇共有 5,300 幢，檢查和監察的成本估計高達 10 至 20 億。」

行政會議非官守議員、安老事務委員會主席及基督教靈實協會行政總裁林正財醫生表示，本港的長者人口有增加趨勢。現時每一名長者由六名在職成年人供養，但到了 2034 年，比例將降至二比一。

林正財醫生表示：「因此，我們需要改變香港的樓宇環境，回應長者的未來需要。我向城市規劃師和測量師提供兩個建議。」為健康而興建樓宇。這種建築概念旨在鼓勵長者多做運動保持身心健康，但要實踐概念需考慮周邊的樓宇環境。」

「另一項建議是以屋苑為本，提供就近的長者服務。由於長者平均分佈在全港 18 區，我們必須確保各區的屋苑均有提供相關長者服務。在香港房屋委員會和香港房屋協會為長者提供通用設計方案的同時，私人發展商又可以為未來的長者人口提供什麼額外設施？」

林正財醫生歡迎政府在屋邨提供的各項現有設施，例如行人通道、升降機、扶手電梯和加設座位。他補充指：「交通同樣是重中之重。我們鼓勵長者多到住所樓下走動、做運動，探訪親友和擔任義工。我特別支持政府推出公共交通票價優惠計劃，目前每天都有超過 100 萬名長者在享用兩元的優惠票價。」

總括而言，林正財醫生重申良好規劃對應付未來的長者人口非常重要。由於要在香港興建一間院舍需時甚長（興建一家老人院需用上 10 至 15 年時間），所以我們應該盡早規劃，努力建設一個包容的跨代支援社會，促進居民健康，並善用科技加速建設。以上種種必須依賴不同界別支持。

本文由《Classified Post》撰文。

「我們鼓勵長者多到住所樓下走動、做運動，探訪親友和擔任義工。」