

Elderly-friendly Housing

It is estimated that Hong Kong's elderly population with age 60 or above will constitute 34% of the city's population by 2034 according to the Census and Statistics Department of the Government. While Hong Kong has one of the highest rates of elderly staying at institutional elderly nursing homes, many baby boomers prefer "ageing in place" at home. In this issue, we will explore the opportunities and challenges regarding "ageing in place", and the role for surveyors in elderly-friendly housing.

Kit M Yip



Sr Marco Wu
Chairman of the Hong Kong Housing Society and Past President of the HKIS



Sr Edgar Li
Vice-Chairman of HKIS Guangzhou Forum and former Vice-Chairman of HKIS Housing Policy Panel



Prof Francis Wong
Professor, Department of Building and Real Estate at Hong Kong Polytechnic University



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1. New housing blocks catering for the elderly such as these at Cheerful Court in Jordan Valley, Ngau Tau Kok are among the measures taken to meet the challenge of a rising aged population. (Photo: SCMP/Dustin Shum)
2. Proposed built elderly friendly housing by the HKIS Housing Policy Panel using BIM/VR technology. Scan the QR code to better understand the 3D effect.



“For every HK\$1 invested, the AIP scheme generated HK\$4.5 of social value in return. Residents with targeted intervention have reported increase in well-being, in terms of physical health, social support, and maintenance of cognition, as well as reduced falls and less depression.” The elderly become more confident in staying in their community rather than seeking institutional care.

As its aged population increases and the size of households falls, the proportion of elderly-only households in Hong Kong will increase significantly from 12.9% in 2011 to 20.4% in 2024. Hong Kong has an elderly institutionalisation rate much higher than those of many Asian and Western countries, despite the fact that 85% of persons aged 50 and above have considered ageing at home. There is imminent need for elderly-friendly housing.

According to the World Health Organisation, age-friendly cities have eight particular features: housing, transportation, outdoor space and buildings, community and health services, communication and information, civic participation and employment, respect and social inclusion, as well as social participation.

“Hong Kong lags behind some of the developed countries in the world in this respect,” says Sr Marco Wu, Chairman of the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) and Past President of the HKIS. “In Singapore, there is a Minister for Health and Minister in-charge of Ageing Issues who looks after elderly-related matters encompassing all features of age-friendly cities. In Hong Kong, however, there is no such a Bureau Director nor is there an integrated, elderly-specific housing and healthcare policy. We think elderly initiatives need totality rather than compartmentalisation with its attendant silo effect.”

There is also a lack of government standards for the provision of facilities catering to an elderly population. “The government’s Planning Standards and Guidelines make provisions for facilities ranging from nurseries to secondary schools according to youth population. However, there are few provision standards for elderly flats, elderly community and day-care centres or residential care homes,” Wu continues. “In many cases, elderly services can thus only be provided as retrospective provisions.”

Often called a “housing laboratory”, the HKHS has been trying out pilot schemes with various models for the government, public and private developers to consider, one of them being Ageing-In-Place (AIP) Scheme for lower-income elderly people. The HKHS has been providing more than 900 elderly flats in nine rental estates since the early 1970s. Also, in all of its 20 rental housing estates, there is now home modification, health assessment and services, psychosocial and neighbourhood support, as well as active ageing activities through the AIP Scheme.

“According to a Social Return on Investment (SROI) study conducted by the Hong Kong Institute of Social Impact Analysts commissioned by the HKHS in 2014-2016, for every HK\$1 invested, the AIP scheme generated HK\$4.5 of social value in return,” says Wu. “Residents with targeted intervention have reported increase in well-being, in terms of physical health, social support, and maintenance of cognition, as well as reduced falls and less depression.” The elderly become more confident in staying in their community rather than seeking institutional care.

The HKHS also has purpose-built elderly-friendly housing with units for life-long (from age 60 on) lease on upper floors, accompanied by residential care homes and elderly facilities on lower floors. There are two types: the Senior Citizen Residences Scheme (SEN) for middle-income groups, which are means-tested and subsidised by the HKHS further to government exemption of land premiums (i.e. Jolly Place in Tseung Kwan O and Cheerful Court in Ngau Tau Kok), and the Joyous Living Project for non-means tested, higher-aspiration groups which operates on a self-financing model as the HKHS paid land premiums at full market value (i.e. The Tanner Hill in North Point).

It is worth noting that according to a survey undertaken by the University of Hong Kong in 2014, over 90% of the younger generation are willing to live close to their parents in separate units within the same building or neighbourhood despite only 25% of them choose to live with their elderly parents. The HKHS thus has a Mixed Housing Model to encourage the younger generation to purchase residential flats on upper floors and the elderly to live in rental flats on lower floors (i.e. Harmony Place in Shau Kei Wan).

“There are urgent needs for all models across all sectors,” says Wu, who wishes to encourage more mixed development models in future. He also hopes that the private sector can render support even in less distinct ways such as increasing elderly-friendly facilities within their developments.

As for existing private housing blocks, the HKHS recently completed the four-year pilot Elderly Safe Living Scheme (ESLS) in selected districts to provide professional advice to elderly home owners and dwellers to improve domestic environments based on elderly needs. There is also the Building Maintenance Grant Scheme for Elderly Owners

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(BMGS) with a grant of up to HK\$40,000 for building repairs, maintenance and improvement of building safety.

Prof Francis Wong of the Department of Building and Real Estate at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University says that in spite of the government scheme to purchase places from elderly nursing homes, the state of some homes have led to concerns about quality, affordability and the emotional well-being of the elderly.

Ageing in place, coupled with an elderly-friendly community, is a better alternative for the “young old” and those who are not yet in constant need of professional care. “The need remains pressing despite the fact that the Housing Authority and the Housing Society being the largest suppliers of elderly-friendly housing. The previous practice, for instance, of housing two elderly people who did not know one another in the same unit, ran into trouble due to personal conflicts. Purpose-built elderly-friendly housing is a viable measure, though the quantity remains limited thus far.”

Wong acknowledges that most existing blocks did not take elderly-friendliness into consideration when they were being built. Those built by the Housing Authority and the HKHS, with social responsibility in mind, have better chances of being enhanced such as having lifts installed. Old private buildings however have issues due to divided ownership and the developer no longer being in the market.

“Although urban renewal is a way to rebuild the area with universal access, it may also lead to the elderly being displaced elsewhere as property prices surge after renewal,” Wong notes. “Developers need incentives, and there are concerns that provisions for the elderly may affect property price.”

Sr Edgar Li, the HKIS' Vice-Chairman of Guangzhou Forum and former Vice-Chairman of Housing Policy Panel, suggests incentives for developers. To encourage hotel development in the 1980s, hotels were allowed to be treated as non-domestic buildings for site coverage and plot ratio purposes so that certain supporting facilities could be exempted from GFA calculations. Similar to the hotel concession, an elderly housing concession for public or private elderly-friendly housing can be introduced as an incentive measures to increase the maximum plot ratio of Class C sites from 10 to 15, and from 8 to 15 for Class-A sites. These buildings in extremely high demand in the society have to meet the specific criteria and the required standard of provision in space and facility.

Laws and regulations should be in place to ensure that such housing will be managed by elderly-related NGOs or other licensed operators, and that changes of use are prohibited unless approved by the Buildings Department. The endorsement of the Social Welfare Department should also be needed. Surveyors, on the other hand, will play important roles in building control, planning or leasing strategy and facility management.

An elderly-friendly building should have as part of its common areas with wider corridors and lift lobbies, bigger lifts, and a temporary refuge space for wheelchair users during emergencies. A bed-bound elderly person may be transferred to medical facilities within the same building using a lift designed for beds and through a corridor wide enough for beds to turn. There should also be allowance made in the units for wheelchairs to manoeuvre and to be parked in all rooms.

Li goes on to suggest that GFA exemption be granted to other buildings whose lower-floor common areas can be converted for GIC purposes into more elderly caring facilities and venues for activities. As long as fire safety, structural regulations and other legal measures are respected, the option of partial-conversion is highly feasible. “We can take reference from recent conversion projects in mainland China, which are often more advanced in providing incentive measures,” Li pointed out.

As for urban renewal, Li thinks it involves not only the replacement of pre-war buildings by newer buildings with lifts, but also the formulation of facilitation measures for the rejuvenation of older buildings and/or even conversion to target use or industry buildings with exemption of plot ratio and site coverage for adding lift to facilitate the circulation of an elderly person from the street to the upper floors, adding link bridge if required and communal elderly caring facilities which can then be turned into elderly-friendly community district.

“Once the direction is determined, technical issues can be solved by planning and coordination. For instance, concerns over frequent ambulance visits can be solved by planned routes with less interference to the public. In our ageing society, those opposed or indifferent to elderly-friendly housing today might become users of it in a few decades; public sentiment will become more positive. An Elderly Bureau should first of all be set up to provide incentives, encourage professional input and coordinate efforts among departments,” Li reiterates.

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「投放於『樂得耆所』計劃的每一港元，均可帶來 4.5 港元的社會價值回報。計劃下的受惠長者住戶，其身心健康、社交支援和認知能力等方面均有所改善，而跌倒受傷和抑鬱的情況亦有所減少，以至更有信心繼續留在社區生活而毋須入住安老院舍。」

居家安老

根據政府統計處推算，於 2034 年香港 60 歲或以上長者人口將佔本港人口 34%。儘管與世界其他地方比較，香港長者入住安老院舍的比率偏高，事實上「居家安老」卻是很多長者的願望。本期內容將探討「居家安老」帶來的機遇和挑戰，以及測量師在長者友善房屋這個課題上所扮演的角色。

Kit M Yip

隨著人口老化，加上跨代共住的家庭住戶人數下降，純長者家庭住戶的比例將由 2011 年的 12.9% 大幅增加至 2024 年的 20.4%。比較許多亞洲及西方城市，香港的長者入住院舍比率一直偏高，另一方面，本港 85% 的 50 歲及以上人士希望能在家中安老。此正好反映了香港市民對長者友善房屋的迫切需求。

根據世界衛生組織的定義，「長者友善城市」須具備八個特徵指標，包括：房屋、交通、戶外空間和建築、社區支援與健康服務、資訊交流、公民參與和就業、尊重和社會包容、以及社會參與。

香港房屋協會（房協）主席、香港測量師學會前會長鄺滿海測量師認為：「香港在這方面的發展落後於一些發達國家。以新加坡為例，他們設有專責長者事務的部長，負責統籌所有與長者相關事務，並涵蓋發展長者友善城市的各項指標範疇。但香港既無相關政策局長，亦未有制訂綜合的長者房屋及醫療政策。我們認為要成功落實安老策略，必須有完整而統一的政策，而非部門之間各自為政。」

鄺滿海又指出，香港政府未有訂定針對老年人口所需的配套設施標準，他說：「政府的《規劃標準與準則》主要配合年青人口的需要，提供幼兒園以至中學等設施；但對於長者住屋、日間護理中心或安老院舍等，卻經常未被納入於《規劃標準與準則》之中。」

房協一直擔當「房屋實驗室」的角色，嘗試不同的房屋試驗計劃，以供政府、公營機構和私人發展商作借鏡參考，其中一項是專為基層長者而設的「樂得耆所」計劃。房協自 1970 年代初開始在九個出租屋邨提供超過 900 個長者單位。現時，房協透過「樂得耆所」計劃於轄下全數 20 個出租屋邨為長者住戶提供家居裝修、健康評估及照顧服務、社交活動和鄰社支援，並不時為長者舉辦各類活動，讓他們在屋邨享受活潑晚年。

鄺滿海表示：「由房協委託香港社會效益分析師學會於 2014 至 2016 年進行的社會投資回報研究顯示，投放於『樂得耆所』計劃的每一港元，均可帶來 4.5 港元的社會價值回報。受惠於此計劃的長者住戶，其身心健康、鄰社支援和認知能力等方面均有所改善，而跌倒受傷和抑鬱的情況亦有所減少。」這些長者更有信心繼續留在社區生活而毋須入住安老院舍。

此外，房協亦提供特別設計的長者友善房屋，長者可終身（自 60 歲起）租用位於較高樓層的長者單位，而低層則為長者院舍及各類長者設施。房協的長者友善房屋可分為兩大類：其一是專為中產長者而設的「長者安居樂」住屋計劃的屋苑。這類屋苑獲政府豁免地價，故屬資助性質的長者房屋，住戶必須通過經濟審查（例如將軍澳的樂頤居和牛頭角的彩頤居）；另一類則是「雋逸生活」項目，專為對退休生活有較高要求的人士而設，毋須入息審查。原因是有關項目為非資助性質，房協須向政府繳付市值地價（例如北角的雋悅）。

值得一提的是根據香港大學於 2014 年進行的一項調查顯示，超過 90% 的年輕人願意與父母居住在同一幢大廈的不同單位或鄰近父母住處的居所，但只有 25% 受訪者表示願意與年長父母住在同一單位。有見及此，房協特別推出混合式房屋項目，其中高層單位供較年青的人士購買，低層單位則設置為「長者屋」供長者租住（例如筲箕灣的樂融軒）。

鄺滿海指出：「市民對各種模式的住屋需求殷切。」他期望將來可以推出更多混合式發展項目，亦希望私人發展商能夠盡量支持多元化的房屋發展，例如在發展項目中增設長者友善設施。

針對現有的私人屋苑大廈，房協最近完成了為期四年的「長者住安心」先導計劃。計劃以個別地區為試點，為長者業主及居民提供專業意見，在配合長者需要的情況下提升家居安全。另外，「長者維修自住物業津貼計劃」則為合資格長者提供最高港幣四萬元的津貼，供其用於維修保養物業及改善樓宇安全。

香港理工大學建築及房地產學系黃君華教授指出，雖然政府已實施長者院舍單位計劃，但某些院舍的不良營運手法已引起市民對院舍整體質素、長者負擔能力和情緒健康等問題的關注。

對「初老」人士及尚未需要長期專業照顧的長者而言，留在社區「居家安老」是更好的選擇。「雖然房屋委員會（房委會）和房協是長者友善房屋的最主要供應者，但市民對長者友善房屋的需求仍然迫切。過往我們嘗試把兩個互不認識的長者安排在同一單位居住，由此引發的個人衝突往往衍生出更嚴重問題。因此，建設長者友善房屋以便更多長者可居家安老是一種可行的選擇，雖然有關供應目前仍然有限。」

黃君華承認，目前大部分大廈在建築過程中並未考慮長者宜居的因素。房委會和房協致力履行社會責任，一般較能夠考慮長者需要，為轄下屋苑提供基本的便利設施（例如在大廈安裝電梯）。相比之下，舊樓由於業權分散及有關單位已不涉及發展商，要落實加裝長者友善設施往往十分困難。

黃君華指出：「雖然市區重建能夠重整區內配套，但重建後樓價急升，卻往往令長者無法於原區安居。我們或需為發展商提供誘因令其提供適合長者居住的設施。另外，不少發展商憂慮涉及長者的樓宇規定會影響樓價。」

香港測量師學會廣州議會副主席兼房屋政策小組上副主席李國華測量師就為發展商提供誘因提出建議。為推動酒店業發展，政府在 1980 年代允許酒店在計算上蓋面積和地積比率時，可被視作非住用建築物，使得部分配套設施毋須納入總樓面面積計算範圍。當局可參考有關做法，放寬發展公營或私人長者友善房屋的限制作為鼓勵，將丙類地盤的最高地積比率由 10 提高至 15、甲類地盤由 8 提高至 15，當中這類社會上有極大需求的房屋建築須符合空間和設施所需的特定要求及標準。

政府亦須訂立相應的法律和規則，確保此類房屋由相關的非政府機構或其他持牌營運者管理，改變樓宇用途必須得到屋宇署批准及社會福利署認可。另一方面，測量師在建築監控、規劃或租賃策略和設施管理上將肩負重要角色。

長者友善房屋的公共空間應設有較寬闊的走廊及電梯大堂、大型電梯，以及在緊急情況下停放輪椅的臨時位置。為方便移送長期臥床的長者去使用大廈內的醫療設施，大廈應設有床用電梯，而且走廊亦必需有足夠的寬度，確保病床能夠順利通過。此外，單位的設計應方便輪椅移動，而每個房間亦應設有足夠停放輪椅的空間。

李國華建議向樓宇提供總樓面面積寬免，鼓勵樓宇將低層公共空間改作「政府、機構或社區」用途，並用於提供更多長者護理設施及活動場所。只要符合消防安全、樓宇結構規例及其他法例規定，這種局部改建方法實際可行。他指出：「我們亦可參考最近在中國內地推行的同類改建計劃，有關計劃提供的鼓勵措施更為進取。」

市區重建方面，李國華認為只等待設有電梯的新型樓宇取代戰前樓宇並不足夠，當局可支援翻新較舊樓宇及 / 或將樓宇改建為指定鼓勵用途 / 行業樓宇（配合地積比率及上蓋面積寬免措施），推動在舊樓加裝電梯，讓長者能夠搭乘電梯直達地面及大廈各層；另可按需要增設天橋和社區長者護理設施，把空間改造成方便長者居住的社區。

李國華重申：「只要訂立明確方向，可規劃和協調解決技術上的問題。以救護車經常進出屋苑為例，只需改善通道規劃，便可減少有關情況對公眾的影響。在我們這個日益老化的社會，今天對長者友善房屋政策持冷淡或不持正面意見的人，數十年後或會成為對這些單位有需求的使用者；我相信社情民意會漸趨正面。當務之急是設立安老事務局，以統籌各項長者相關政策，包括提供誘因、鼓勵專業參與和協調不同部門等工作。」

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