

# Homes Fit For Hongkongers

*The HKIS broadly welcomes moves to provide more affordable housing but with key caveats.*

Kit M Yip



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HKIS Immediate Past President,  
Chairman of HKIS' Land Policy Panel



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HKIS Past President,  
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To tackle Hong Kong's housing crisis, the HKIS says, the government must offer developers incentives to provide land for proposed affordable Starter Homes.

Photo: SCMP / Sam Tsang

The 2017 Policy Address attaches great importance to housing, especially home ownership for people from different income brackets, and transitional housing for the inadequately housed and those awaiting public housing. In this issue, surveyors comment on their rationale and feasibility.

### **Starter Homes and New Housing Ladder**

One of the proposals attracting wide public attention is the introduction of affordable Starter Homes for middle-class families, leading to a new housing ladder consisting of Public Rental Housing (PRH), the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS), Starter Homes and private housing. Surveyors welcome the Starter Homes scheme, which is basically consistent with HKIS' recommendations to the government though details remain to be sorted out.

Sr Vincent Ho, Chairman of HKIS' Building Policy Panel, notes, "Starter Homes, affordable housing based on affordability among the target group, are distinguished from HOS by way of the target buyer sector and pricing approach. The pricing of HOS is basically linked to market value though a discount factor is applied to the final sale price considering affordability of the buyer. A diversified housing ladder with such affordable housing helps young people and small families become property owners."

Responding to the proposal that land leases require developers to pursue mixed developments by offering a specified number of Starter Homes and private ones, surveyors think careful planning is needed to avoid disputes. To ensure consistency, Sr Ho agrees that the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) could be central coordinator. Sr CK Chan, Chairman of HKIS' Housing Policy Panel, says the government could ask private developers to carry out development and construction only and hand those flats back to government on completion.

Sr Chan suggests that due to diversified interests between owners of starter homes and private housing, common facilities should be avoided, with differential management and maintenance fees. Starter Homes' alienation restrictions should require that owners resell a used property only to the Hong Kong Housing Authority, while such restrictions should not be relaxed by paying a premium to government.

Sr Lau Chun Kong, Chairman of HKIS' Land Policy

Panel, thinks that if certain members of the public consider Starter Homes the solution to their housing problems, the government could adapt its land policy to meet demand. Since Starter Homes are not supposed to affect public housing supply, and may interfere with private housing land supply, Lau says the ultimate solution is to seek societal consensus and increase total land supply.

Sr Ho agrees that society's green light is crucial, since Starter Homes are tied to the issue of land supply. If they are built on sites owned by private developers or bought from the government, many will involve converting agricultural and Green Belt land in the New Territories, and hence payment of land premiums. While the government cannot give private developers unfair advantages, it must provide incentives for them to sacrifice land resources for Starter Homes.

The surveyors think it is worth encouraging public rental housing (PRH) residents to pursue the Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Pilot Scheme (GSH), despite reservations about the time needed and how many residents are capable of, and interested in, moving up the ladder. If more GSH homes are built, they hope there are figures to support the initiative, but express concerns about shortening the public housing queue.

"During economic downturns or due to an ageing population, there are fewer incentives to move up the housing ladder," said Sr Ho. Sr Chan is disappointed that the issue of elderly housing is not addressed despite HKIS recommendations.

### **Transitional Housing**

The Policy Address proposes short-term community initiatives on transitional housing by 1) optimising idle government premises for rental housing; 2) supporting the Hong Kong Council on Social Services' (HKCSS) Community Housing Movement, and encouraging the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) to offer units in old buildings; 3) facilitating the HKHS in allowing subsidised housing owners to rent out flats with premiums unpaid at below-market rentals; 4) exploring wholesale conversion of industrial buildings into transitional housing with a waiver of premium; 5) supporting non-profit-making organisations in exploring prefabricated modular housing on idle sites.

Sr Ho welcomes shared housing initiatives like Light Housing, which he calls a social movement motivated by goodwill. He praises the initiative of HKCSS for facilitating occupancy within months. However, due to costly renovations and a lack of subsidies, he foresees future supplies may not be maintained in quality.

“Community housing is dwarfed when compared with subdivided units provided by private landlords, as the latter are the largest and continual suppliers,” says Sr Ho. “Goodwill community housing should serve as pilots to demonstrate the good quality of subdivided units or shared housing, so that private landlords take note and enhance their own rental units. A new model of better-quality subdivided units may then become a longer term solution.”

Sr Chan is generally positive but finds some proposals self-contradictory. “If old buildings are awaiting URA redevelopment, this means they are not in good condition for habitation. Idle HKHS units should be returned to the Society for reallocation; if residents are allowed to rent out part of their HKHS flats, many may be reluctant due to privacy concerns.”

The surveyors say that although prefabricated modular housing is a relatively quick solution, modular housing involves infrastructural support which takes time to build.

“To be effective, they should be 10 to 15 storeys high, which take 18 months to build. To justify the construction period, they should have a life cycle of 8 to 10 years. However, it is difficult to find urban land idle for 10 years,” Sr Ho notes. But Sr Chan thinks modular housing can be built on temporary outdoor parking lots that are under Short Term Tenancy from government.

Sr Chan suggests that NGOs could lease industrial buildings from owners and rent out converted housing units to PRH applicants. When the lease ends, the units can either be reconverted for industrial use, or be redeveloped for commercial use with concessions on premium, giving owners incentives to participate.

## Land Supply and Building Maintenance

Sr Lau is encouraged by the proposal to convert industrial buildings for various community uses and non-industrial use, to increase land supply.

“Currently, most jobs are to be found in the urban areas, forcing lower-income families to stay in urban subdivided flats close to their workplace,” he says. “If more industrial buildings become commercial sites, and generate jobs in the New Territories, people will be more willing to relocate. This will indirectly help solve the urban housing problem.”

To Sr Ho, the prerequisite for non-industrial use of industrial buildings is enhancement of design and safety standards to meet a wide spectrum of usages. When such integrated standards are met, there are grounds for revitalisation or diversified usages.

As a member of the Task Force on Land Supply, Sr Lau looks forward to public engagement and proposals concerning land supply priorities.

The Address proposes a \$3 billion Operation Building Bright 2.0 to provide targeted assistance to owners-occupiers of aged buildings for inspections and repair under the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme, and a \$2 billion subsidy regarding the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance.

Sr Ho says, “The Scheme has already created a maintenance culture. With further enhancement and fire safety provisions, we hope more 50-year-old buildings, whose number is on the rise, will be maintained to help improve public safety.”

He thinks that if combined with community housing, the initiatives can provide better-quality smaller household units, and thus a longer-term solution. “This presents sound goals and directions for maintenance: from mandatory enhancement of specific units, we may move towards full-scale maintenance to help solve the housing problem.” To ensure regulatory requirements are met, he reiterates that the proposed Building Repair and Maintenance Authority must be pursued in long run.

*The article is published courtesy of Classified Post.*



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# 為港人而建的居所

香港測量師學會歡迎政府推出措施，為港人提供可負擔的住屋，同時亦不忘建言獻策。

葉潔明

房屋是 2017 年施政報告的一大重點，其中不同收入組別人士的置業問題，以及針對居住環境欠佳和正在輪候公屋人士興建的過渡性房屋，更是外界關注的焦點。本期封面故事訪問了多位測量師，探討有關措施的理念和可行性。

## 上車盤與新住屋階梯

其中一項引起公眾注意的建議，是為中產家庭推出可負擔上車盤，建立一條新住屋階梯，當中包括公共租赁住房（「公屋」）、居者有其屋計劃（「居屋」）、首置上車盤與私營房屋。受訪的測量師歡迎上車盤計劃，認為計劃基本上符合香港測量師學會早前向政府提議的內容；惟箇中細節仍有待處理。

香港測量師學會建築政策小組主席何鉅業測量師指出：「針對目標買家和定價兩方面，上車盤、以目標買家負擔能力為基礎的可負擔住屋有別於居屋。居屋價格原則上與市值掛鉤，但最終售價會以一定的折扣釐訂，以保證配合居屋買家的負擔能力。住屋階梯包括此類可負擔住屋，有助年輕人與小家庭成為業主。」

對於有建議提出透過地契條款要求發展商作混合發展，除興建私人房屋單位外，亦須興建指定數目的上車盤，受訪的測量師認為政府須謹慎規劃，以免引起爭執。為確保政策一致，何鉅業測量師同意由香港房屋協會（「房協」）擔任中央統籌。香港測量師學會房屋政策小組主席陳昌傑測量師表示，政府可以要求私人發展商負責發展及建造，並在項目落成後把單位交回政府。

陳昌傑測量師建議，由於上車盤與私營房屋業主有不同的需要，樓宇設計上應避免共用設施，而管理及維修費也應有所分別。上車盤的轉讓限制應規定業主只能把二手物業售予房委會。

香港測量師學會土地政策小組主席劉振江測量師表示，假如部分公眾人士認為上車盤能夠解決其住屋問題，政府可適度調整土地政策，以滿足有關需求。上車盤理應不影響公營房屋供應，卻有可能干擾私營房屋土地供應，劉振江測量師認為最終解決方案離不開尋求社會共識和增加整體土地供應。

何鉅業測量師認同凝聚社會共識十分重要，因為上車盤與土地供應問題息息相關。如果只在屬於私人發展商的land興建上車盤，很多項目都會涉及改劃新界農地和綠化地帶土地，亦即需要補地價。雖然政府不能讓私人發展商享有特殊優惠，但如沒有誘因，發展商難願意放棄部份土地去興建上車盤。

一眾受訪測量師鼓勵公共租赁住房（「公屋」）住戶參與綠表置居先導計劃（「綠置居」），但他們對計劃所需的時間，以及有多少住戶有能力和有興趣參與計劃有所保留。若政府要興建更多綠置居單位，他們希望有數字支持有關計劃；但測量師們對於能否縮短公營房屋的輪候時間表示憂慮。

何鉅業測量師指出：「假如面對經濟下滑或人口老化，市民在住屋階梯向上移動的誘因較少。」陳昌傑測量師對於香港測量師學會已就長者住屋提出建議，但施政報告未有提及而感到失望。

## 過渡性房屋

施政報告提出短期過渡性房屋社區計劃，措施包括 1) 善用政府閒置建築物，以用作租住單位；2) 支持香港社會服務聯會（「社聯」）推行的「社會房屋共享計劃」，鼓勵市區重建局（「市建局」）提供舊樓單位；3) 促成房協讓轄下

資助房屋業主以低於市值租金出租未補價的單位；4) 研究讓整幢工廈免補地價改為過渡性房屋；5) 協助非牟利機構研究在閒置土地興建預製組合屋。

何鉅業測量師歡迎「光房」一類的共享房屋計劃，形容計劃為良心社會運動。他讚賞社聯推出計劃後短短數月便可以提供入住單位。然而，由於裝修及維修成本高而且缺乏足夠津貼，他預期這類單位的未來供應數量也是有限。

何鉅業測量師表示：「社區房屋很難與私人分間單位相比，私人業主為現時最大規模的單位供應商，而且單位供應持續。良心社會共享房屋計劃應擔當先導角色，提供具品質的分間單位和共享房屋，從而誘導私人業主改善他們的出租單位。屆時，更優質的分間單位便可成為更長遠的解決方案。」

陳昌傑測量師對建議基本上持正面態度，但認為部份建議自相矛盾。「如果市建局計劃重建舊樓，便意味這些舊樓狀態不佳、不適合居住。閒置的房協單位應交回社會以作重新分配；如果容許住戶出租單位的一部分，很多人都會因為私隱問題而不願意這樣做。」

一眾測量師表示，預製組合屋能相對較快地提供居住單位，但當中需要基建設施配合，而基建配套則需要時間興建。

何鉅業測量師指出：「計劃要取得成效及有經濟效益，這類樓宇應有 10 至 15 層高，預計需要 18 個月時間來建造。考慮到基本建築期的時間，樓宇落成後更需要有八至十年的使用期，整個計劃才算合理。然而，要在市區尋找閒置十年的土地相當困難。」陳昌傑測量師則認為，可以利用現時用作露天停車場的短期租約政府土地興建組合屋。

陳昌傑測量師建議當局容許非政府機構向業主包租工業大廈，然後改裝作住宅單位出租。包租租約期滿時，業主可選擇要非政府機構還原物業作工業用途，又或補付較低地價以重建作商業用途，如此一來可增加業主參與計劃的意欲。

## 土地供應與大廈維修保養

對於改變工業大廈作不同社區用途與非工業用途，藉以增加土地供應的建議，劉振江測量師表示支持。

他表示：「目前就業機會集中在市區，低收入家庭因此被迫居於鄰近工作地點的市區分間單位。如果更多工業大廈轉為商業用地，並在新界地區創造更多就業機會，市民便會更樂意搬遷，間接幫助解決市區房屋問題。」

何鉅業測量師認為，工業大廈用作非工業用途的先決條件是改善樓宇設計和安全標準，以滿足不同的使用需要。符合這些綜合標準後，便有條件進行活化或擴闊用途。

身為土地供應專責小組成員，劉振江測量師期望公眾積極參與討論，就土地供應優先次序提供建議。

施政報告提出斥資 30 億元推行「樓宇更新大行動 2.0」，為舊樓業主和住戶提供針對性援助，鼓勵他們參與強制驗樓計劃，對樓宇進行驗樓和維修；報告並提出動用 20 億元資助舊樓履行《消防安全（建築物）條例》下的相關要求。

何鉅業測量師表示：「計劃衍生了一種維修文化。在進一步改善和提升消防安全後，我們希望有更多樓齡達 50 年的樓宇能得到妥善維修保養，改善公眾安全。目前這類樓宇數目正不斷增加。」

他認為以上計劃結合社會共享房屋，可以提供較佳的小型單位，是較長遠的解決方案。「合理的維修目標與方向是：由強制改善個別單位開始，再邁向全面的樓宇維修保養，從而幫助解決房屋問題。」他重申，為確保符合監管規定，長遠計須成立「樓宇維修工程監管局」。

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