

Press Release
For immediate release
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The HKIS's 4 Key Suggestions on the Elderly Housing Policy

The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors (hereafter the HKIS) made 4 key suggestions on the Elderly Housing Policy at a press conference today.

Ageing population has been a major concern for Hong Kong. According to the latest population projections by the Census and Statistics Department, the government estimates that the Hong Kong's elderly population will reach almost 2.61 million by 2047. By that time, that means nearly one in three Hong Kongers will be elderly. There are currently relevant policies on residential care, medical care and social services, but, regrettably, none related to elderly housing. In order to achieve the goal of "ageing-in-place", an elderly housing policy should be formulated.

Sr Thomas HO, President of the HKIS, commented that prompt action is needed to formulate an effective elderly housing policy which could be made based on the "Three NOT's Principle": NOT affecting the current housing supply target; NOT requiring extra land allocation and NOT creating extra financial burden.

Sr C K CHAN, Chairman of the HKIS's Housing Policy Panel, briefly introduced the proposal for the Elderly Housing Policy and outlined 4 key suggestions. "The purpose of the ageing-in-place is to provide a suitable housing environment and appropriate care services for the elderly, enabling them to remain home whilst maintaining their quality of life, and pushing back their time of moving into elderly homes".

1. Promote "Elderly Housing Scheme"

Sr Patrick TSANG, Committee Member of the HKIS's Housing Policy Panel explained in detail the suggestions on the "Elderly Housing Scheme" idea. "This scheme, which is advocated by the HKIS, works under a rent-only mechanism. Elderly aged 60 or above are eligible to apply for renting the Scheme flats ranging from 25 to 41 square meters."

According to the HKIS, "Elderly Housing Scheme" should have 2 key elements. The Scheme should be "financially sustainable" and the rent should be "affordable and attractive". The government should formulate relevant land grant policies such as land premium concession or waiver, land premium installment, tax concessions etc. Explicit examples can be found in the existing land grant policy for non-profit organizations. These examples can be used as a basis for further policy development.

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The HKIS also proposes that medical and residential care facilities should be included in the senior citizens housing. Furthermore, the life-long rental fee should be set at about 50% or less of the private housing price. When an elderly person vacates the apartment, the organisation that manages it should repurchase the tenancy agreement at a favorable ratio of the original sum, which can be used to subsidize the person the cost of staying in an elderly home. If the elderly tenant passed away, his/her descendants could receive that amount.

2. Encourage Elderly-friendly Designs

Sr Edgar LI, Immediate Past Vice-Chairman of the HKIS's Housing Policy Panel, introduced the suggested standard of an "Elderly-friendly Design" home. It can be categorized into three main types: 1. Design within the flat; 2. Design outside the flat; and 3. Flexible design. Meanwhile, the HKIS proposed that the government incorporate the requirement that "a certain percentage of the gross floor area of a development must adhere to a specific design standard" in the land sale conditions. The HKIS also suggested that redevelopment projects should be encouraged to adopt elderly-friendly design and assistance be provided for adaptation of existing buildings.

3. Include the Land Use of Elderly Housing and the Provision Standard for Elderly Facilities in the Planning Standard and Guidelines

Sr C K CHAN said that the HKIS recommends that guidelines on the proportion of "elderly housing flats" should be set at the district planning level, and the land use of "Elderly Housing" should be categorized in the Column 1 of "G / IC" zone, which means the use would always be permitted and no application to the Town Planning Board would be required.

In addition, the Institute suggests that the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines should include a chapter on "Elderly Service Facilities", which, according to a district's population, lists the provision standards for various facilities, such as elderly activity centers and nursing (physical and psychological) outreach centers, so that nearby elderly residents can enjoy the facilities and the services they need.

4. Establish an Elderly Affairs Committee and In the long run a Policy Bureau

Sr C K CHAN further commented: "The Institute believes the government should, in the short term, set up an "Elderly Affairs Committee", which is similar to the Commission on Poverty under the leadership of the Chief Secretary so that work can commence immediately using administrative measures. However, since the formulation of elderly policies is a huge project involving many departments, the government should eventually set up an "Elderly Affairs Bureau" to deal with the affairs of the elderly in the long run."

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About the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors

Established in 1984, the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors (HKIS) is the only surveying professional body incorporated by ordinance in Hong Kong. As of 8 December 2017, the number of members reached 9,937 of which 6,404 were corporate members, 78 were associate members and 3,455 were probationers and students. HKIS work includes setting standards for professional services and performance, establishing codes of ethics, determining requirements for admission as professional surveyors, and encouraging members to upgrade skills through continuing professional development.

HKIS has an important consultative role in government policy making and on issues affecting the profession. We have advised the government on issues such as unauthorized building works, building safety campaign, problems of property management, town planning and development strategies, construction quality and housing problems.

For more details, please refer to HKIS website: <http://www.hkis.org.hk>.
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