



SEN - Senior Citizen Residences Scheme

長者安居樂住屋計劃

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Background

SEN is an initiative of the Hong Kong Housing Society, with policy support from the HKSAR Government. It is aimed at Seniors currently served neither by the Private Sector, nor by Public Sector programmes. We initiated SEN with little more than a perception of need, beginning a process hard for any other organisation in Hong Kong to initiate.

The proportion of the population over 60 is rising and the percentage of elderly living alone is rising much faster, from 2% in 1986 to 13% in 1996. Assistance exists for the independent but there is a gap between public housing without services and elderly homes with a high level of care, at high cost.

Institutional care is not necessarily the answer. The new elderly are healthier, wealthier and able to look after themselves for longer. Many occupy family flats which are expensive and inconvenient for them. With alternatives in terms of size and facilities, they could realize capital for needs such as medical and care services. There is much that can be done to promote wellbeing with low intrusion, low subsidy and care at home.

The Housing Society formulated the SEN programme to promote Aging in Place and Healthy Aging. Our target audience comprises people with some capital, often in good health, who seek the security of housing and integrated services appropriate to their future physical needs, however long they may live.

Research and Feasibility

In 1995 we commissioned "Market and Marketing Research for Senior Citizen Residences". Over 2,000 interviews provided input from potential users.

The market was estimated at 320,000 persons, of whom about 70,000 were identified as likely to be very interested in SEN.

It was suggested that management of facilities might be sub-contracted to specialist care and service providers.

Research indicated that the capital contribution acceptable to respondents was below the cost of commercial development. Government support through reduced land grant premium consequently became necessary to the viability of the programme.

Policy Support and Identification of Sites

Subsequently, discussions took place with the Planning Department and various Non-Governmental Organisations.

A report was submitted to the Lands and Works Policy Group.

Sites at Tseung Kwan O and Jordan Valley were identified by Government for the purpose of the pilot study.

An undertaking appeared in the 1996 Policy Address to consider an Elderly Citizens Housing Scheme with the Housing Society, to build small flats in urban areas for sale or lease to the elderly.

In 1997, applications were made to the Town Planning Board to develop the two sites. The Lands and Works Policy Group approved Lease for Life as a means of disposal.

In 1998 a decision was made by the Chief Executive in Council to Introduce the Senior Citizen Residence Scheme, after which an invitation was received from the Housing Bureau to proceed with the pilot projects.

Land grant conditions were agreed with Government in 2000 covering nominal premiums, restrictions on target customers, operation and alienation.