

LCQ15: Redevelopment and renewal of old buildings

Following is a question by the Hon Starry Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (May 25):

Question:

It is learnt that Hong Kong's buildings are ageing rapidly: the number of private buildings aged 50 years or above has surged from 3 900 to 8 600 over the past decade, the proportion of public housing flats aged over 35 years soared from six per cent in 2009 to 24 per cent in 2019, and more than 5 000 "three-nil" buildings across the territory are dilapidated. Some members of the public have strongly requested the Government to erect higher-density buildings through redevelopment projects, so as to increase the supply of public housing flats in the long run and improve the living environment of residents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective current numbers of private buildings aged 30 years, 40 years, 50 years, and 60 years or above in Hong Kong, with a breakdown by geographical constituencies for the 2021 Legislative Council General Election;

(2) whether it will consider allocating additional resources to assist "three-nil" buildings in improving building repair and maintenance, and continuously implementing the Operation Building Bright, so as to support owner-occupiers of eligible buildings to carry out prescribed inspection and repair works under the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that in the Urban Renewal Plan for Kowloon City submitted to the Secretary for Development on January 29, 2014, the authorities put forward a number of proposals, including prioritising the redevelopment of "5 Streets" and "13 Streets" Area in To Kwa Wan and enhancing waterfront and district connectivity, of the timetables and progress of these two projects and other proposed projects;

(4) of the current number of public housing estates (PHEs) in Hong Kong which have an average age of over 50 years, and set out, by the name of such PHEs, their average building age and the number of flats involved; and

(5) given that the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) identified in 2013 a total of 22 non-divested aged PHEs under its management as having build-back potential, but so far only a few of these PHEs have specific timetables for redevelopment, whether the Government will consider (i) requesting HA to commence a new round of assessment on the feasibility and effectiveness of

redeveloping other aged PHEs, and (ii) resorting more to the means of redevelopment to increase the supply of public housing flats and improve the living environment of residents; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Regarding the Hon Starry Lee's question, I would like to reply as follows:

(1) As of end 2021, the distribution of all types of private buildings (including residential, composite, commercial and industrial) of different age groups from 30 years and above as broken down by geographical constituency in respect of the 2021 Legislative Council election is set out below:

Geographical constituency in respect of the 2021 Legislative Council election	Building age (years)				Total
	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 or above	
Hong Kong Island East	925	938	931	654	3 448
Hong Kong Island West	2 151	1 786	1 138	708	5 783
Kowloon East	254	292	303	15	864
Kowloon West	690	1 068	1 648	1 011	4 417
Kowloon Central	572	710	837	937	3 056
New Territories South East	1 010	695	118	5	1 828
New Territories North	1 592	383	200	74	2 249
New Territories North West	741	486	65	68	1 360
New Territories South West	468	459	271	56	1 254
New Territories North East	1 905	743	106	17	2 771
Total	10 308	7 560	5 617	3 545	27 030

(2) Timely and proper building maintenance is the primary responsibility of property owners. That said, some owners may lack the ability in, for instance, affording or organising such works to fulfil the responsibility. Therefore, apart from taking enforcement action to ensure that owners discharge their statutory responsibilities under relevant statutes, the current term Government has allocated over \$19 billion and, in partnership with the Urban Renewal Authority (URA), rolled out various subsidy schemes relating to building safety and rehabilitation (Note 1) to assist needy owners to maintain their properties.

In addition, we recognise that some owners, in particular those residing in "three-nil" buildings (Note 2), which are typical amongst old and dilapidated buildings, may lack ability to organise repair works at common parts of the buildings. Therefore, the Buildings Department (BD), under the Operation Building Bright 2.0 (OBB 2.0) and the Building Drainage System Repair Subsidy Scheme launched in 2021, proactively selects buildings on risk basis and exercises its statutory power to carry out the requisite works in default of owners, and seeks to recover the cost from owners concerned afterwards. Eligible owners may claim subsidies under the relevant schemes to cover all or part of such costs.

The OBB 2.0 is dedicated to provide technical and financial support to eligible building owners to assist them in carrying out the requisite inspection and repair works under the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme for the common parts of their buildings. The OBB 2.0 involves \$6 billion and is expected to benefit 5 000 aged and dilapidated buildings. As of April 2022, the URA received applications from about 1 200 eligible buildings to join the OBB 2.0; over the same period, the BD selected about 1 000 buildings on risk basis to join the OBB 2.0. Depending on the implementation progress of the OBB 2.0, the URA will accept a new round of applications in due course. The BD will also continue to select buildings on risk basis under the OBB 2.0 to carry out the requisite works in default of owners.

(3) The URA undertakes, encourages, promotes and facilitates urban renewal of Hong Kong, with a view to addressing the problem of urban decay and improving the living conditions of residents in old districts. Since the announcement of the Urban Renewal Plan for Kowloon City (the Plan) in 2014, the URA, owners of private land and different government departments have been implementing the relevant recommendations in phases. Of which, the URA commenced a total of nine redevelopment projects in the area covered by the Plan (Note 3). Some of the recommendations have also been putting in place through the development projects of various government departments. For example, works for the Hoi Sham Park Extension are in progress; the harbourfront site adjacent to the Kowloon City Ferry Pier will be enhanced through the development project of the Central Kowloon Route; and the waterfront section of the To Kwa Wan Preliminary Treatment Works will be developed into a harbourfront promenade through minor works by the Drainage Services Department. Due to market sensitivity, it is not appropriate for the Government to comment at this stage on the timing to redevelop "5 Streets" and "13 Streets" in To Kwa Wan. Moreover, the URA must observe confidentiality for its business plan for redevelopment and would only promulgate through publication in the Gazette etc. the details of a redevelopment project, including its location and boundary, upon commencement of the project. As for waterfront development and district connectivity of redevelopment projects, the URA and government departments will give careful consideration at the preparatory stage and consult the Harbourfront Commission in due course.

(4) As advised by the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB), according to the information of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA), there are nine Public Rental Housing (PRH) estates under the HA with building age reaching 50 years

old or above. The estate names, completion dates and number of domestic flats are as follows:

	Estate name	Completion date (Year)	Number of domestic flats
1	Model Housing Estate (Note 4)	1954 – 1979	667
2	Sai Wan Estate	1958 – 1959	636
3	Choi Hung Estate	1962 – 1964	7 435
4	Ma Tau Wai Estate	1962 – 1965	2 075
5	Wo Lok Estate	1962 – 1966	1 938
6	Fuk Loi Estate	1963 – 1967	3 129
7	Wah Fu (I) Estate	1967 – 1969	4 801
8	Wah Fu (II) Estate (Note 5)	1970 – 1978	4 347
9	Ping Shek Estate	1970 – 1971	4 581

(5) The THB advised that the list of 22 aged PRH estates mentioned in the question is originated from a study conducted by the HA in 2013, and is not the list of PRH estates which the HA decides to redevelop. The THB added that redevelopment of PRH estates may increase the supply of PRH in the long run, but, in the short term, redevelopment will reduce the number of PRH units available for allocation. In view of the prevailing strong demand for PRH, large-scale redevelopments will result in freezing a large number of PRH units, which may otherwise be allocated to those on the waiting list with more pressing housing needs (such as households living in subdivided units), and will have negative impacts on households waiting for PRH allocation. The HA will, where feasible, consider redeveloping individual PRH estates in an orderly manner. The HA has all along been considering the actual circumstances in a prudent manner in accordance with the four basic principles, namely structural conditions of buildings, cost-effectiveness of repair works, availability of suitable rehousing resources in the vicinity of the estates to be redeveloped, and build-back potential upon redevelopment, when deciding whether to redevelop a PRH estate.

The THB indicated that the HA has completed 10 redevelopment projects of aged PRH estates in the past 10 years. The HA is currently proceeding with a total of eight redevelopment projects.ã€€Given the availability of suitable rehousing resources for Sai Wan Estate and Ma Tau Wai Estate and their build-back potential of providing more housing units upon redevelopment, the HA is conducting a study on the redevelopment of these two estates and will include the adjacent areas into the redevelopment sites as far as possible to enlarge the site area.

The THB pointed out that the aged PRH estates with no redevelopment plan are structurally sound and have no imminent urgency for redevelopment. The HA will continue to implement various programmes and measures to upkeep and improve the building conditions of the aged estates, and provide residents with a safe and comfortable living environment. These include the Comprehensive Structural Investigation Programme, the Estate Improvement Programme, the Total Maintenance Scheme, the Responsive In-flat Maintenance

Services, and the replacement and addition of lifts, etc.

Note 1: Subsidy schemes includes OBB 2.0 (\$6 billion), Fire Safety Improvement Works Subsidy Scheme (\$5.5 billion), Lift Modernisation Subsidy Scheme (\$4.5 billion), Building Maintenance Grant Scheme for Needy Owners (\$2 billion) and Building Drainage System Repair Subsidy Scheme (\$1 billion), etc.

Note 2: Viz. buildings which do not have an owners' corporation or residents' organisations, or having engaged any property management company.

Note 3: Excluding the two pilot projects to redevelop the sites of Civil Servants' Co-operative Building Society Scheme in Kowloon City commenced by the URA in May 2020 in relation to the recommendation announced by the Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address.

Note 4: Model Housing Estate comprises seven domestic blocks. Five of them (with 245 flats in total) were completed in 1954, while the remaining two high blocks were completed in 1979.

Note 5: Wah Fu (II) Estate comprises six domestic blocks. Four of them were completed between 1970 and 1971 (with 2 913 flats in total), while the other two blocks were completed in 1978.