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Age-friendly housing and neighbourhoods: opportunities and constraints in compact Hong Kong

Hong Kong is renowned for its well managed high-density and high-rise built environment. With a rapidly ageing population, it is increasingly important to (re)develop an elderly friendly living environment. Based on the findings from territory-wide surveys and focus group meetings, this presentation discusses the opportunities and constraints that Hong Kong's compact environment offers to its elderly inhabitants. In particular, it looks into the influence of the neighbourhood environment on the mental and social wellbeing of residents living in large high-rise housing estates. It concludes that compactness needs to be acknowledged as a critical factor to enable the less mobile senior citizens to have easy access to community facilities and services, and easy communication and integration with their local communities. While purpose-design vertical retirement projects provide a continuum of care and enables ageing in place fulfilling the daily and social needs of the elderly, accessibility to neighbourhood facilities and services and hence the location of these housing projects are important. Thus, a compact living environment, if well planned, designed and managed, provides unique opportunities not only to meet the daily needs of the senior citizens, but also to sustain their psychological and mental health, enabling active and happy ageing.