

Mrs Josephine Kan, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Pok Oi Hospital: This is the site of former Sing Ping School at Ping Che Road, Ta Kwu Ling. It has a total area of 110 000 square feet and will be used for constructing 711 transitional housing units.

Nowadays, housing problem is critical in Hong Kong. Grassroots families need to wait for a long time for an allocation of public rental housing unit. All along, Pok Oi Hospital has been serving the community with the spirit of “We Love, We Care, We Serve”. For this reason, we feel obliged to reach out and help the general public to live a more pleasant life. That is why we accepted the invitation from the Transport and Housing Bureau to assist in constructing this transitional housing development and its future operation.

This project is a completely new trial for all of us. It is a field that we have never touched on before. We lacked the professional knowledge required and needed to take a long time to learn more about this task through professionals from different sectors.

As a charitable organisation, we only have limited financial capacity to undertake this project, in particular to complete it within a tight time frame of two years and prepare for residents to move in.

Fortunately, we have had the assistance from the Urban Renewal Authority (URA), which helped us with the planning stage of work and the application process free of charge. The URA offered us voluntary assistance in commissioning professional consultants to conduct technical assessment on issues of trees, environmental protection, drainage, etc. We have also had the URA to help us, at no cost, with all the procedures of applying for a short-term tenancy for this Government site. We are fortunate to have the URA’s help; otherwise our project would not have proceeded so smoothly.

Mr Anderson Leung, Director (Works & Contracts) of the URA: In the Chief Executive's 2019 Policy Address, some initiatives on transitional housing were mentioned and the URA was invited to lend technical support to some social welfare organisations. In this regard, we highly welcome these initiatives. Early this year, our board of directors approved the provision of technical support to some social welfare organisations and the engagement of a planning team to conduct technical assessments for the Ping Che and Hung Shui Kiu projects to study feasibility of developing these sites.

I notice that while many social welfare organisations have rich operating experience, they are relatively unfamiliar with construction project development, which involve such facets as project management, work stages, statutory regulations and other details like site safety management, quality control of construction materials and general site management.

To study the feasibility of a project, we need to conduct an overall technical assessment of the infrastructure of the site, including its water supply and transport facilities, and environmental issues, to determine if it is adequate to support our planned number of units in the projects. All these require professional assessments and we need to submit reports to the Planning Department and the Town Planning Board for approval.

Managing a transitional housing project is no different from managing an ordinary development project. The proponent needs to manage a consultant team comprising architect, structural engineer, building services engineer, landscape architect and quantity surveyor. I believe not many social welfare organisations have sufficient internal resources to look after all these aspects of a construction project. In this regard, the URA is pleased to provide assistance and support.

The URA does not have a fixed target on the number of transitional housing projects to deliver. I think the determining factor lies with the Government, the social demand for

transitional housing, as well as the available internal resources of the URA. The URA will try its best to help.