

Video on Public Housing Development in Hong Kong (Children Version)

Brother:

Hurray! We're moving to a new home!

Mom:

Don't just play around! Help me pack!

Brother/sister:

Yes, Mum!

Brother:

Wow! So many toys!

Robbie I:

Hello, I am Robbie I!

Sister:

Why do you look so old?

Robbie I:

Because I'm a gift from your Grandpa to your Daddy.

Brother:

Then you must've been living in our home for a long time!

Robbie I:

Yes! We first lived in a resettlement block.

Sister:

What's a resettlement block?

Robbie I:

You'll find out if you follow me to see the old Hong Kong!

Robbie I:

Long time ago, many people came to Hong Kong from China. They were homeless, so they built makeshift huts on hillsides, called squatter huts.

Bother:

Wow! So many out there!

Robbie I:

Fire was always a risk. In 1953, a huge fire destroyed the whole squatter area in Shek Kip Mei. Your Grandpa was about your age at the time.

Robbie I:

The fire was so terrible that 53 000 people were left homeless. Your Grandpa's family had to sleep on the street.

Sister:

How many is "53 000" people?

Robbie I:

Well, imagine 6 football fields full of people – that's 53 000.

Sister:

Ooh !

Robbie I:

After the fire, the government built two-storey bungalows to provide temporary shelters.

Robbie I:

Then, it built taller and better buildings, called resettlement blocks, to accommodate the victims. Your Grandpa's family was allocated a unit.

Sister:

The blocks look like the letter 'H'!

Robbie I:

Do you want to see for yourselves?

Brother, sister:

Sure!

Robbie I:

Let's time travel back to the resettlement estates in Shek Kip Mei!

Brother, sister:

Yes!

Brother, sister:

Wow!

Robbie I:

These rental estates built by the government for people in need were generally called public rental housing.

Sister:

Were they playing cooking games?

Robbie I:

The units were very small, with neither living rooms and bedrooms, nor kitchens and bathrooms. People had to cook in the corridors and they shared water taps for laundry as well as bathrooms and toilets with their neighbours. It might sound tough but then people were relieved to have a safe place to stay!

Robbie I:

One more unusual thing -- schools were on rooftops!

Sister:

Wow, so many students!

Robbie I:

When Hong Kong's population grew rapidly, public housing blocks also started to grow taller – usually ten-storey high. The buildings looked like tall rectangular boxes.

Robbie I:

The design of these taller buildings improved with a toilet for each unit, and a balcony for laundry and cooking.

Robbie I:

Since then, public housing design has become better and better.

Brother:

This looks like the place where Grandma lives!

Robbie I:

This is Wah Fu Estate. These square-shaped buildings are called “Twin Tower Blocks” and there are lifts on every floor.

Robbie I:

Wah Fu Estate is unique. It's the first public housing designed under the “Comprehensive Planning” concept.

Brother:

What does that mean?

Robbie I:

Comprehensive Planning is to build housing estates as communities – with residential flats, schools, shopping centres, wet markets, bus termini and other public facilities for the residents!

Wah Fu Estate has become a design model for future public housing!

Brother:

Are all public housing estates built by the Housing Authority?

Robbie I:

You've heard of the Housing Authority, such a smart boy!

Robbie I:

Indeed, the Housing Authority was set up in 1973 to oversee public housing programmes. It determines how many flats are needed in Hong Kong and where they're needed. It is like a human brain!

Their plans are then sent to the Housing Department for carrying out the building works and daily management. They are like our hands.

Brother :

Carrying out the commands from the brain!

Robbie I:

Smart boy!

Robbie I:

Apart from providing public rental housing for people in need, the Housing Authority also offers Home Ownership Scheme flats for people to buy at a price lower than the market.

Robbie I:

Today, over 3 million people in Hong Kong live in public housing – that's about 4 out of every 10 people.

Sister:

Amazing!

Brother :

Robbie, please tell us more about the public housing design!

Robbie I:

Alright. With the formation of the Housing Authority, more and more public housing estates were built, and the Y-shaped buildings were the most common design at that time. The flat could be partitioned into living room and bedroom as the tenants wished.

Robbie I:

The design of new public housing estates also puts an emphasis on providing public spaces and facilities like covered walkways, courtyards, gardens, playgrounds and so on.

Robbie I:

As technology developed, prefabricated concrete façades that could be stacked easily were widely used. This made the construction process cleaner, safer and quicker, and the quality was better too. By this time, public housing blocks reached 40 storeys high.

Sister:

Are we moving to this kind of public housing estate?

Robbie I:

You'll be moving to a new estate. Let me take you there!

Brother and sister:

Let's go!

Robbie I:

Nowadays, public housing estates are beautifully designed with many recreational facilities for children and older people alike.

Sister:

Look! Many elderly people are exercising there!

Robbie I:

Yes! The newer estates cater for everyone, including elderly people, children, and people with disabilities. Designs include ramps, handrails, and tactile paths; and even light switches and lift control buttons are placed within reach by children and wheelchair users, all aims to ensure the tenants feel comfortable in the community.

Brother:

Look at all the flowers and plants!

Robbie I:

To provide a better living environment in public housing estates, the Housing Authority also promotes green living as well as waste reduction.

Robbie I:

Apart from the recycling bins, there are many other green features in the estates.

Robbie I:

One example is the solar power systems which power part of the public facilities, such as corridor lights.

Brother:

I know. They save much electricity!

Robbie I:

Bingo!

Sister:

Some lights are off, why?

Robbie I:

This is another energy-saver. Basic lighting is provided 24 hours a day in common areas like lift lobbies, corridors and stairs, but people can brighten up the lighting by pressing a button.

Sister:

Wow! Amazing! I really love the new estates!

Robbie I:

Me too! They're beautiful and well-equipped. We must treasure the beautiful living environment and keep it that way. Don't throw rubbish around or vandalise these public facilities!

Brother/sister:

Yes sir!

Brother:

Let's return home and help pack! I want to move as soon as we can!

Robbie I/sister (hands up):

Sure! Wow!

Robbie I:

Let's hurry and pack!