

DEVELOPMENT WATCH

Small May Be About To Get Even Smaller

Tuesday, July 10, 2012, by Philip Ferrato



[Photo credit: [Apartment Therapy](#)]

This afternoon, ever-tinier legal living spaces are up for a vote at the Board of Supervisors meeting. A [modification to the building code](#) sponsored by Supervisor Wiener (flying solo) would **reduce the legal square footage for new construction rental units to 220 square feet**, measured to the inside perimeter of the outer walls, and include a full bath, a closet, and a kitchen with at least 30 inches of counter space. No mention of a dishwasher or in-unit laundry, and presumably you get to live/sleep/eat/work/sex in whatever's left—which the new code would define as a minimum 150 square feet of the 220—about the size of a parking space.

The same thing was proposed this week in New York City, another town where rental units are both hard to find and expensive—a proposal similar to Weiner's except there's no closet and the minimum size is at least 55 square feet larger. In both places the current minimum is 450 square feet. The rationale, both civic and commercial, is to provide housing for young, transient tech employees who, as an alternative tend to band together and rent family-sized apartments, thus shrinking the pool of rentals available for actual families. or what one housing advocate calls "cannibalization."

The wording of the amendment has been altered substantially [since the article in the SF Public Press](#), with expansion of the space from 150 plus facilities to 220 square feet including facilities. [We had a look](#) at developer Patrick Kennedy's 160 square foot prototype apartment inspired vacations in an 78-square-foot Airstream trailer:



Unfortunately, accommodating only young tech workers is fundamentally discriminatory. Looking at a wider spectrum of tenants, small affordable spaces would allow single seniors to live alone— or even actual adults— in new housing and free up older units. Landlords expected to rejoice.

- [Amendment to Building Code](#) [.pdf/BoS Agenda]
- [Efficiencies Wanted, Emphasis on Efficiency](#) [NYTimes]
- [Developers Seek To Legalize Tiny Apartments](#) [SF Public Press]
- [California's Smallest \(Legal\) Apartment Is Here In SF](#) [Curbed SF]

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