Micro-Apartments in the Big City: A Trend Builds

By Charles Ferguson

Image: A typical micro-apartment

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A growing number of 30- to 50-square-foot apartments that still manage to have everything you need. The bedrooms roll into the void, and a brand new trend emerges from the back of the bedroom into a lofted area. Instead of dustbins, built-in shelving is usually necessary._EOF

Micro-apartments, in some cases smaller than college dorm rooms, are springing up in urban areas as urban planners experiment with new types of housing to accommodate growing populations._single-family homeowners, students, and the elderly. Single-person households make up 42 percent of the nation's housing stock and are growing in 73 percent, according to Census Bureau data. In cities, the proportion is even higher: In New York City, for example, 33 percent of households are just one person. The idea is to be more efficient and eventually to offer cheaper rents.

To foster innovation, several municipalities are waiving zoning regulations to allow developers to build developments of multiple dwellings on single sites. In Sacramento, San Francisco, and other cities, regulations encouraging mixed-use developments, like loft units and retail, have been lifted. But the trend appears to be more widespread. In Vancouver, for example, one company is planning a 900-unit micro-apartment complex.

A new type of housing called "micro-living" is being introduced in a number of cities. These apartments are designed to accommodate singles, couples, and small families. They range in size from 50 to 100 square feet. Some are as small as 35 square feet. Others are as large as 100 square feet. In San Francisco, for example, a 100-square-foot apartment is going for $1,200 a month.

In New York City, a 50-square-foot apartment is going for $1,000 a month. In Chicago, a 50-square-foot apartment is going for $900 a month. In Los Angeles, a 50-square-foot apartment is going for $800 a month. In San Francisco, a 50-square-foot apartment is going for $1,200 a month.

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