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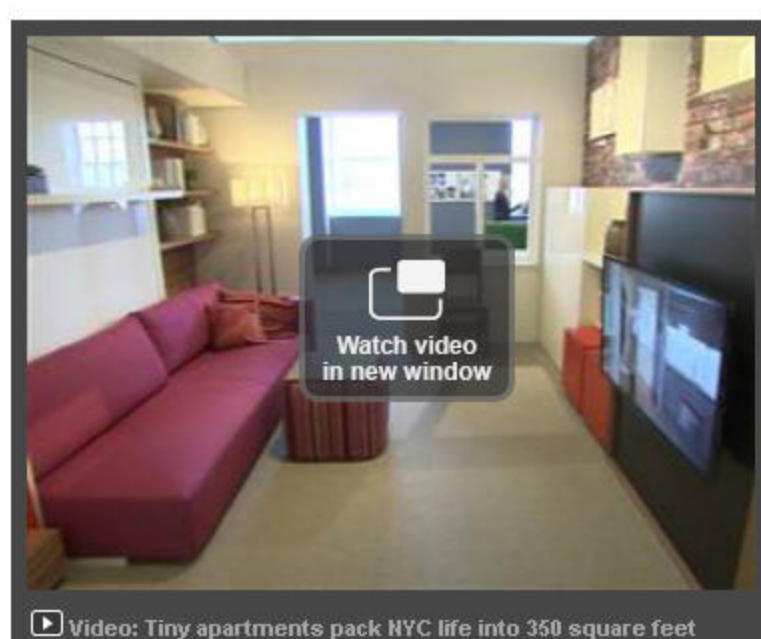
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Next big thing in real estate: 300-square-foot apartments



In response to skyrocketing rents in New York City, Mayor Michael Bloomberg proposed a challenge to the city's best architects: to design a space no bigger than 350 square feet into a comfortable and affordable micro-apartment. NBC's Stephanie Gosk reports.

By Ben Popken, TODAY contributor

New Yorkers are famous for their teeny apartments, but a new trend in dwelling seeks to transform those tiny spaces into big assets. They're called "micro apartments," and they make a few hundred square feet feel like over a thousand.

Fold-away beds, moveable walls, and coffee tables that expand to seat 10 for dinner are just a few of the clever touches that transform these shoe boxes into veritable mini-mansions.

"The main idea is to get double, triple, quadruple use from every space," Graham Hill, founder of the sustainable living site TreeHugger.com and the design company Life Edited, told Fair [Companies in a video interview](#).

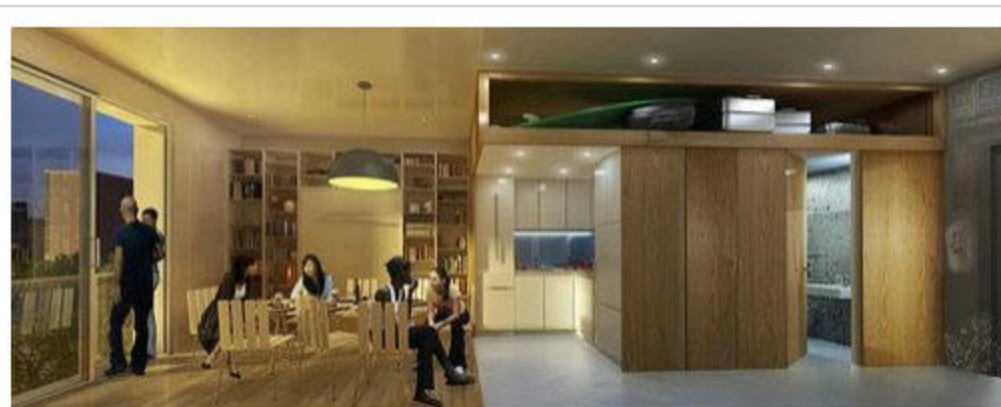
With rising costs of living and a desire to limit one's environmental impact at top of mind, living simpler, and smaller, has taken off in cities around the world, especially ones known for their high rents. San Francisco recently passed an ordinance allowing for apartments to be built to 220 square feet. And "micro units" have also long been a Tokyo and Hong Kong mainstay.

For his part, Hill bought a 420-square-foot studio in Manhattan's SoHo neighborhood and renovated it into a concept lab for tiny living, with boutique hotel style appointments, a home theater, and a pair of drop-down bunk beds for guests.

Feeling more like 1,000+ square feet, it boasts a kitchen with top-loading fridge, freezer and dishwasher. The stove top is three induction burners stacked in a drawer. To boil a pot of water for pasta, for example, you pull the burners out and plug them in, then stow them away after the linguine is served.

Hill's design was one of 34 submitted to New York Mayor Bloomberg's adAPT NYC contest, which tasked teams with coming up with plans for 250-370 square foot apartments designed for 1-2 person households.

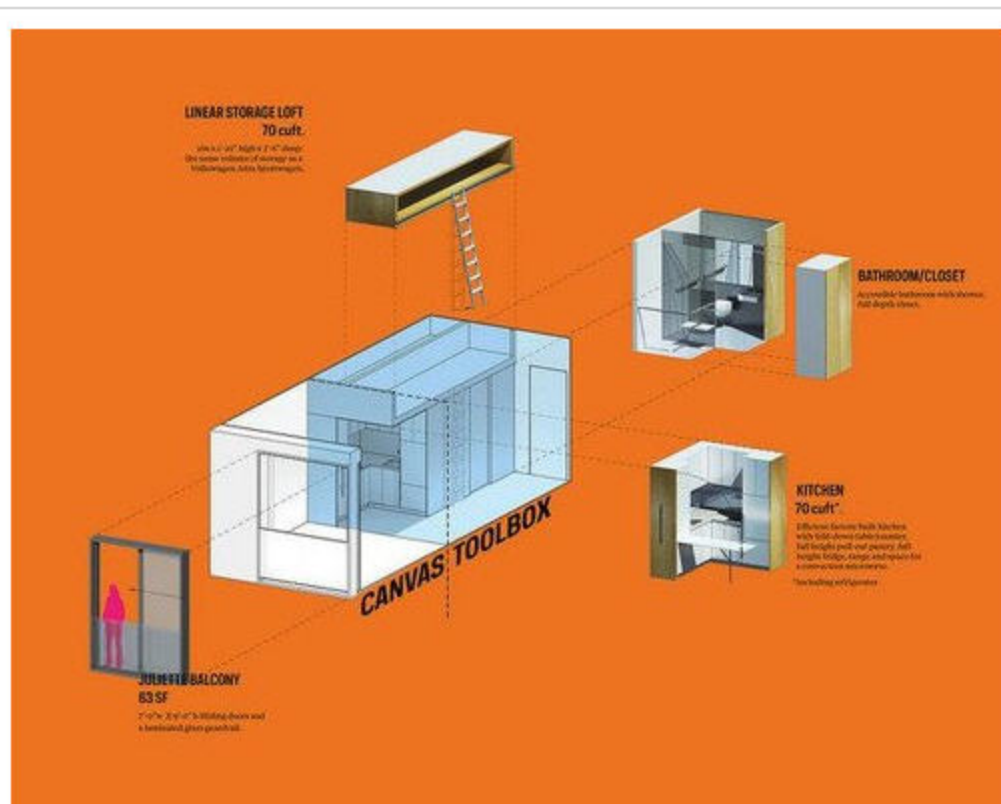
The young professionals who constitute the city's lifeblood often find themselves priced out of New York City altogether or living in an outer-borough garret. One-third of the city's households comprise of just one individual, a number projected to rise to 46 percent in Manhattan, where one-bedrooms routinely rent for north of \$2,700 a month.



New York City Mayor's Office

A rendering of the "micro unit" apartment design that won New York Mayor Bloomberg's adAPT NYC contest Tuesday.

The winning design, announced Tuesday, will form the basis for a new apartment complex built in Kip's Bay at East 27th and 1st Avenue in Manhattan with 55 of the micro units. The apartments will be built prefabricated, and then stacked on top of each other and connected - structure, plumbing, electrical, and all - like LEGOs.



New York City Mayor's Office

The design is split up into a "toolbox" and "canvas" area, with essential living amenities in the first area, and a customizable living room/bedroom slot in the second.

Called "My Micro NY," the apartment's bedroom converts into the primary living space, and the hip, 10-foot ceiling design includes a 16-foot-long overhead loft space, Juliette balconies, a full-depth closet, full-height pull-out pantry, fridge and range.

The complex will include a garden, porch with picnic tables, lounge, laundry room, storage, bike room, and a small gym. Rents will be about \$2,000 a month. Eleven of the 55 units will be reserved for households with incomes no greater than 80 percent of the area median income.

Undoubtedly there will be a waiting list to become one of the first to live in the tiny, mod apartments. If you want to see what one looks like right away though, you can [visit the Museum of New York City](#) where a model micro-apartment is currently on display in the exhibit, "Making Room: New Models for Housing New Yorkers." You can walk around inside the unit and even try your hand at folding up and down the various pieces of hide-away furniture.

New York Mayor Bloomberg said Friday on WOR radio that he lived in an apartment for 10 years as small as the micro-units the city plans to build. His bed was a [convertible](#) couch, and he recalled it was a "pain" removing the pillows and making the bed, and not nearly as convenient as the sleek Murphy bed used in the design for the new units.

"New York's ability to adapt with changing times is what made us the world's greatest city - and it's going to be what keeps us strong in the 21st Century," said Mayor Bloomberg in a press release.

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The AP contributed to this report.