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## Would you live in a micro-apartment? (And for how much?)

Posted by Joanna Weiss June 25, 2013 08:18 AM

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When it comes to living space, how minimalist would you go? Boston is one of many cities poised to join the micro-apartment bandwagon: the city has authorized 190 "innovation units" in the Seaport District, as small as 350 square feet, with access to common work and living spaces. But some want to see even more, smaller homes. A Globe editorial last weekend [urged](#) the city to lift its restrictions on micro-apartments, building up tiny units in neighborhoods like Forest Hills and Longwood -- as a way to appeal to young workers, ease market pressures, and open up larger apartments to middle-class families.

But are micro-apartments the answer to the city's housing woes? The Seaport District units, after all, will rent for as much as \$1,500 a month, which is hardly a bargain for fruit-fly-caliber space. Would you live in 300 or 400 square feet? What would you be willing to pay? Do you trust the market to keep rents low? Below are some thoughts on micro-apartments in Boston. Add yours to the comments, or tweet at the hashtag #microapartments.

### What more will people sacrifice?



One of the driving assumptions behind the push for micro-apartments in Boston has been that the younger professionals they're geared toward will be fine with sharing lots of space. That is, they will have their functional 450-square-foot pod for their own private use and then share so much else, including perhaps even things like kitchens. Truly? That doesn't seem any less magical thinking than the assumption that these micro-apartments will be any more affordable than traditional ones (spoiler: they won't). Young city dwellers already pay a premium for living in the urban core -- in sacrificing green space or physical exclusivity or quietude. Why assume that city dwellers will be O.K. with even higher premiums in the form of less personal space?

**Tom Acitelli**, [@tomacitelli](#)  
Editor, [Curbed Boston](#)

### It's not the rent; it's the density



The real impact of micro-apartments isn't felt in any one resident's monthly rent check, but in the concentration of bodies and disposable income in neighborhoods that need street life. The tiny units can double the number of residents a typical apartment building would accommodate, enabling neighborhoods to achieve density without towering height. They're a means to an end, a way of flooding dead zones with vitality. And they only work when they're placed with this end in mind.

**Paul McMorrow**, [@paul\\_mcmorrow](#)  
Commonwealth Magazine editor, [Globe columnist](#)

### Alternate uses?

[@bostondotcom](#) [@joannaweiss](#) sounds like a solitary confinement cell

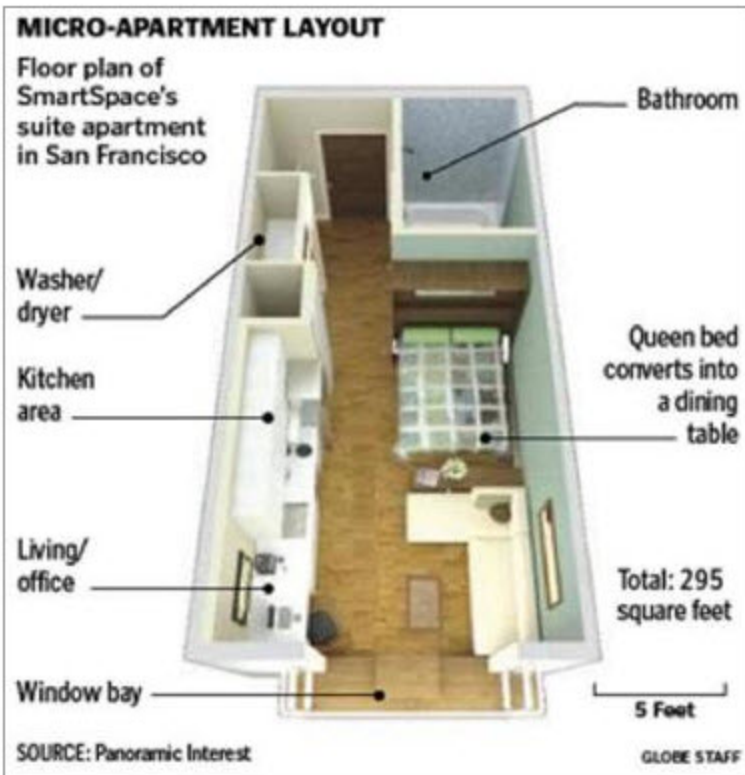
— Alain Duchemin ([@aduchemin44](#)) [May 21, 2013](#)

### What about Boston's other housing needs?

It took me five years to get approved for public housing. It now takes over ten and most lists are closed. I cannot approach the idea of these micro-apartments independent of this reality. As Menino and the city of Boston preach about innovation, I wonder about how innovative these apartments seem to the underhoused working class families already living in our community. Those of us who have been relegated to long-forgotton lists do not have the privilege to be mobile or to have neighborhoods tailored to our needs. I want to see innovative communities as much as the next person, but I didn't realize that innovation actually meant more of the same.

**Nicole Sullivan**  
Housing advocate

### Life in a micro-unit



### An end to overcrowding?

This dilemma is too easily dismissed as a ritual of 20-something life in Greater Boston, a problem seemingly less pressing than the travails of working families and the elderly. Yet the difficulty that recent graduates face in establishing themselves here worries employers, such as Vertex Pharmaceuticals, that depend on an influx of new talent — and raises the pressure on working families, too. When grad students or young professionals room together instead of living on their own, they can outbid many families for units in brownstones or triple-deckers. Boston's failure to allow the construction of smaller housing units only aggravates the problem that traditional affordable-housing programs are trying desperately to solve.

**Boston Globe editorial**  
[June 23, 2013](#)

### Even young entrepreneurs aren't convinced



In theory, micro-apartments are a great fit for entrepreneurs. They're working all the time and, particularly early on, may be tight on cash. But in practice, I'm not convinced the proposed units will work at the price points we've seen — \$1,700/month is too much for most young entrepreneurs. These units will also need to compete with new housing models, like CrashPad, which combines cheap housing with some of the perks of the typical startup incubator. At this price, micro-apartments seem more tailored to West Coast venture capitalists who want a place to crash when they're in Boston than to young entrepreneurs trying to make their mark in the city.

**Walt Frick**, [@WFrick](#)  
Business Editor, [BostInno.com](#)