



Micro to the max: Could you live in 300 s/f?

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The city's new micro-unit housing competition, adapt N.Y.C. was announced at the Center for Architecture on Monday, July 9, by mayor Michael Bloomberg, accompanied by City Planning Commission chair Amanda Burden, Hon. AIANY, and Housing Preservation & Development commissioner Mathew Wambua.

To demonstrate the potential of a change in the minimum housing unit size, a 300 s/f apartment was delineated by bright yellow tape on the floor of the Center for Architecture's Tafel Hall. Colorful furniture, fixtures, and fittings designed in-house by municipal architects led by Alexandros Washburn, AIA, were added in to give a sense of scale to the demonstration.

The discussion to date has centered, in part, on how a smaller apartment might attract and retain recent graduates and those just entering the city's job market. The AIANY's Committee on Design for Aging has also suggested the value of micro-units to an aging population for which the micro-unit may be right-sized. Whether for the young or less-young, the advantages of smaller units in a growing, high-density city were reflected in the many articles and blog entries appearing after the announcement. And students attending the Center for Architecture Foundation's summer design camp also got into the mix, pondering design interventions while sitting at tables ringed this most adaptable apartment.

On July 31, HPD hosted a technical session at the Center to answer questions about the new initiative and the accompanying Request for Proposals. Over 300 people attended the event and almost 600 more tuned in to watch via a live video stream. Answers to questions received in person and through email have been made available on the HDP adAPT website.

The capacity crowd - composed of architects, planners, developers, and other professionals - illustrated with clarity the tremendous interest in this project. Why so much interest? Surely, people can use the work, but this project also has the potential to set a new standard for small unit apartment buildings. Only through good design could this idea even be tenable, and our AIANY members are up to the challenge.

Could you live in 300 s/f? Do you already? Come see the unit's yellow outline still on view at the Center, and check it out for yourself.

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