



Microunits

Microunits are a small, affordable housing type, typically developed in high-demand areas in centers or near transit. Also known as small efficiency dwelling units (SEDUs), residential suites, micro-apartments, or apodments, microunits are generally between 125 and 450 square feet in size. In areas where the cost per square foot is particularly high, these types of small units can provide practical living options for some renters.

BACKGROUND

There are two basic formats of microunits:

- **Congregate housing**, where renters have private bathrooms and kitchenettes in their units, alongside shared kitchens and other common amenities for the whole building. The size of private rooms in congregate housing is typically in the range of 125 to 200 square feet.
- **Small efficiency units**, with complete kitchen, bathroom and closet space in each unit. The size per unit typically ranges can range from 200 – 450 square feet per unit, and are often around 300 sq. ft.

Microunits can provide a safe and affordable rental housing option in today’s market. Unlike the historical image of crowded, unsafe, or unhealthy boarding rooms or single room occupancy hotels, building and fire code standards have significantly improved over the last decades, and microunits can provide a useful and important tool for local governments looking to expand their stock of affordable housing.



TOOL PROFILE

Objectives

[Housing in Centers and Near Transit](#)

[Housing Options in Expensive Markets](#)

[Mitigate Residential Displacement](#)

Type of Tool

Development types

Project Type

Multifamily

Rental

Affordability Level

Market-rate incentives and tools

Most effective for units <80% AMI



When developing a microunit ordinance, jurisdictions should consider:

- Where microunit projects should be permitted
- Minimum square footage for individual units and common spaces
- Required amenities like common spaces, parking, and bike parking
- Expectations for design review
- How microunit projects interact with other incentives, like the [Multifamily Property Tax Exemption](#)

Engagement with developers can also provide important feedback on the feasibility of microunit development under the ordinance.

RESOURCES

City of Seattle: [Small Efficiency Dwelling Units \(2020\)](#), [Multifamily Property Tax Exemption Program \(2020\)](#)

MRSC: [Micro-Units: Another Tool in your Adorable Housing Toolbelt \(2019\)](#)

Urban Land Institute: [The Macro View on Micro Units \(2014\)](#)

