



**REAL ESTATE**

# What micro housing? The size of an NYC apartment keeps getting bigger

By **Shivani Vora**

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Slowly but surely, New Yorkers are living larger — and we mean literally.

Data collected from 765 residential Manhattan buildings shows that their apartments grew from 950 square feet to 975 square feet on average over the last five years — roughly a 5% increase, according to the research firm Urban Digs.

Okay, that doesn't sound like a lot, but get this: The average size of an apartment citywide has increased each year since 2000 — from 756 square feet to more than 820 square feet, data from Axiometrics shows.

While NYC is world famous for its micro-apartments and cramped shared housing, the trend is clear — the square footage of the city's housing stock is growing.

And that puts NYC at odds with the national trend. The size of a single-family home in the US is slowly decreasing from its bloated peak of 2,467 square feet in 2015 to 2,261 square feet by 2020, according to Statista.

So what gives? Despite much-hyped tiny housing trends, the vast majority of new development in the city over the last 20 years has been in the "luxury" sector (i.e., larger than average). Meanwhile, each year, unit combinations enlarge the average square footage of individual apartments, while shrinking the city's housing stock.

"Historically, developers have made their units as space-efficient as possible," said Gary Malin, COO of the Corcoran Group. "The thought was that if you built apartments that were too big,

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then prices would be too high, and people wouldn't be able to afford them. [Now] developers are realizing that it's smarter to build bigger and are planning future projects with roomier units. It's what people want, and it's a mentality that's likely here to stay."

The pandemic has also played a role in the "big is beautiful" movement in urban living. "Working from home, either full-time or on a hybrid schedule, is a permanent lifestyle change for many people, and in New York, that means for those who can afford it, there's a demand for more living space," said Kelly Mangold, a principal at the real estate consulting firm RCLCO. When developers convert buildings from rentals to condominiums, it also typically results in fewer units but larger floorplates.

For instance, at 212 W. 72nd St. on the Upper West Side, a building formerly dubbed "the Corner," is currently being transformed from a 196-apartment rental building to a 126-unit condo.

"We wanted to condense apartments and make each one more spacious because we saw an extraordinary interest for larger units," said the Corner's managing partner John Tashjian.

The building's new configuration has several three- to five-bedroom residences ranging from 1,425 to 4,683 square feet (prices range from \$2.7 million to \$19.15 million), and Tashjian says that the first few condos the Corner sold were four-bedrooms with outdoor space.

The Solaire in Battery Park City is also converting from a rental — in this case to a co-op with condo rules — and has preapproved multiple sets of adjoining smaller units for combinations. It's a strategy that's worked to attract buyers seeking bigger living spaces, and sales director Aaron Goed says that the building currently has four signed contracts for combinations and an additional five that are pending.

Nitin Mittal, 42, a consultant, and his wife, Amita, 37, a therapist (plus their shih-poo, Ollie, and mini goldendoodle, Noodle), are among the buyers who are combining at the Solaire. The couple, renters in the neighborhood for the last several years, bought a one- and two-bedroom unit for a total of 1,800 square feet that they are transforming into their dream four-bedroom home.

"We'll both be working remotely and needed something much bigger than the two-bedroom we lived in," said Amita. "When we saw that we had the option to combine two units without too much hassle, we knew we had to jump on the opportunity."

But most new buildings in the city are simply built bigger.

At 40 East End Ave., a 28-unit building, homes start at 1,472 square feet and span to more than 6,000 square feet. Designed by the renowned architecture practice Deborah Berke Partners, the property has seen 10 deals in the last three months for three-bedroom homes that are an

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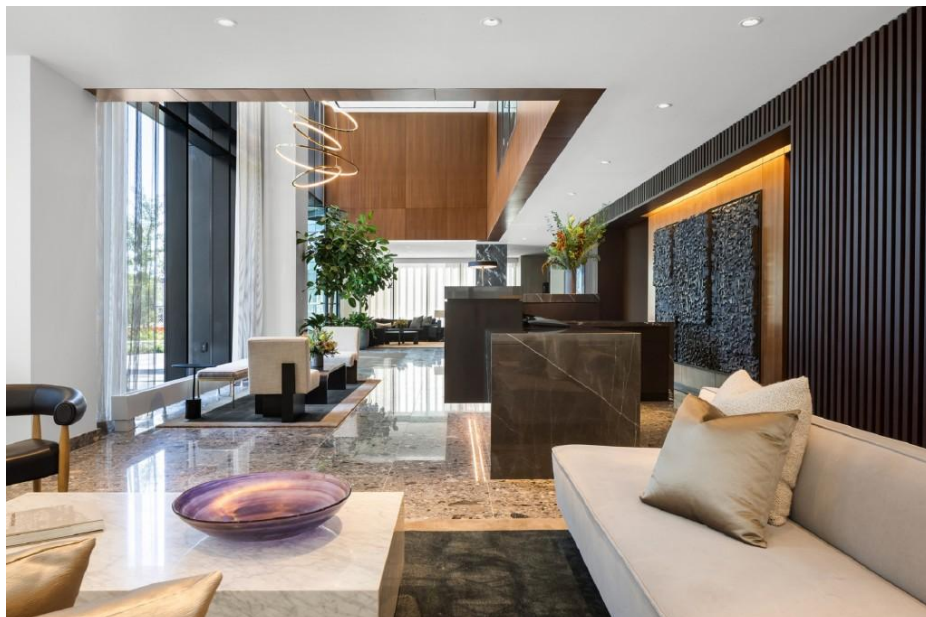
average of 2,300 square feet, says Scott Avram, a senior vice president for the property's developer Lightstone.

One of these buyers, an accountant in his 50s who only wanted to be identified by Mr. Miller, paid \$5 million for his apartment and says that he and his wife desired a spacious residence because they are committed to living in New York. "We rented for years in Sutton Place but wanted to establish roots in the city," he said. "A big apartment that feels like a real home is a way to do that."

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Quay Tower is configured to allow buyers to create larger floor plans.  
Evan Joseph Images

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Quay Tower, on Brooklyn Bridge Park, is another example of a newer development that was designed with combinations in mind. Developer Robert Levine, the founder of RAL Properties, says the building's mechanicals were mapped out to allow for minimal Sheetrock so buyers could create larger floor plans with two or more apartments.

Bill Caleo, 45, the co-owner of the Brooklyn Home Company, bought two apartments at Quay Tower to accommodate his large family which includes four children. Their new home is 4,500 square feet and, according to Caleo, the process to combine was seamless.

"We love everything about the space," he said.

<https://nypost.com/2022/03/03/why-the-size-of-an-nyc-apartment-gets-bigger-every-year/>