



Micro apartments: New housing solution?

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Staten Island Advance

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On July 9 at the American Institute of Architects Center for Architecture, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, accompanied by Commissioners Amanda Burden of City Planning, Mathew M. Wambua of Housing Preservation and Development and Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Robert K. Steel, announced a design competition titled "adAPT NYC." Its aim is to develop a new housing model for the City's growing small-household population.



Associated Press Photos

The Solar Roofpod was designed by Team NY for the 2011 U.S. Department of Energy Solar Decathlon. As the Team described their entry: "It posits a new idea for urbanity, to take place on the rooftops of our cities. Taking advantage of our most under-utilized spaces, the Roofpod fuses sustainable solutions directly, tackling urban issues such as heat island effect, storm water management and growing electricity demands." □□

The City is running out of affordable housing for the young work force arriving from all over the world, as well as for the number of people who live alone or with just one other person. The available larger and traditional housing is financially out of reach, not to mention unnecessary, for those in such situations.

This competition represents a major action on the part of this city's administration to face a housing crisis head-on and actively pursue solutions to the problem.

The "adAPT NYC" competition asks entrants to design modern dwelling units under 300 square feet (micro apartments), employing a copious amount of natural light and sustainable features. For these unit types to become a reality, the city of New York eventually will have to change its zoning regulations.

Winning entries will be built in a City-owned building at 335 East 27th St. in the Kips Bay section of Manhattan to test the market for this new housing concept, with currently prohibitive zoning being waived. If successful, the pilot program will spread to other parts of the city — possibly to Staten Island, along the railway, where these prototypes are favored. Staten Island has similar demographic demands as the rest of the city, although on a reduced scale. □

CONFRONTING SOCIAL CHANGES

□Architects have confronted population growth and social changes before.

In the late 1950s, a small group of young Japanese architects and designers joined forces under the title "Metabolism." Their vision for cities of the future inhabited by a mass society were characterized by large-scale, flexible and expandable structures that evoked the processes of organic growth. These visions have remained in the theoretical field but not out of consciousness.



Team NY's Solar Roofpod is a very small dwelling unit, similar in size to that being sought in the adAPT NYC design competition recently launched by Mayor Michael Bloomberg. In addition, these units are equipped with energy collecting devices, water saving systems and food production areas. Sustainability is an integral component of the design.

A similar project that takes lessons from the Japanese Metabolism period, introducing the concept of micro units as in the "adAPT NY" competition, was honored this past January by the Staten Island Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

The project was an entry by Team NY of City College schools of Architecture and Engineering to a "Solar Decathlon" design competition sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy.

Architectural student and Staten Island resident Farah Ahmad explained how the design entry featured a micro-modular design dwelling unit using lightweight, durable, and renewable materials, smartly incorporating photovoltaic technologies and sustainable systems of food production and stormwater harvesting. Its adaptability allows it to be reconfigured to meet the needs of various market

segments. The prototype also addressed the challenges outlined by New York City's 2030 sustainability agenda, PlaNYC.

While Team NY did not win the "Solar Decathlon," its entry indicates the type of research needed to address not just the newly-announced adAPT NYC competition, but the direction of New York City housing needs.

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