



## **Building Better Homes and Communities**

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*Affordability and Choice Today*

# **ACT Solutions**

## **Introducing Micro-suites for Seniors SuiteLiving 360, Oakville, Ontario**

### **Issue**

As the Canadian population ages, seniors will be searching for alternatives to the single-family dwelling, the condo, or the retirement home. One solution is micro-suites — small, self-contained units in large converted single-family houses with access to common areas such as a garden, kitchen, dining room, living room, laundry and gym. Although the design of the units can vary, key elements include small bathrooms, kitchenettes, and living and sleeping areas. Micro-suites are small enough to allow three to five units in a large, remodeled single-family house.

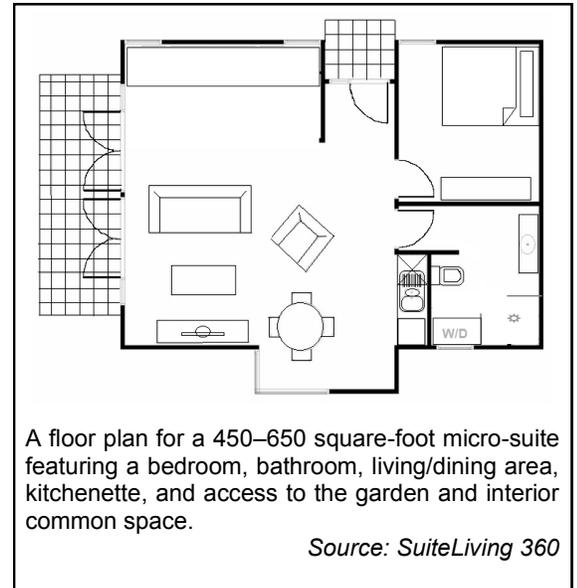
The availability of single-family dwellings is expected to increase, particularly in suburban areas, as baby boomers become empty nesters and move to smaller units that are closer to services. Micro-suites present a unique way for municipalities to encourage densification and to use the existing building stock more effectively.

There are some regulatory barriers to overcome. Municipal zoning by-laws may not permit very small residential units and may require an excessive number of parking spaces. Other challenges include NIMBYism, with neighbors who may be concerned about increased density, parking, and the management of supportive housing. Additional issues to explore include the type of management, tenure and affordability of micro-suites.

With the help of an ACT grant, SuiteLiving 360 of Oakville set out to research how the concept of micro-suites could be implemented locally.

### **Activities**

SuiteLiving 360 held 12 sessions involving the community as well as the private, non-profit, and public sectors to gauge the level of support for micro-suites and explore ways to implement the concept. It developed tools such as a whitepa-



A floor plan for a 450–650 square-foot micro-suite featuring a bedroom, bathroom, living/dining area, kitchenette, and access to the garden and interior common space.

*Source: SuiteLiving 360*

per on the micro-suite model and its viability, concept drawings, a brochure, and a rich media presentation.

### **Results**

The whitepaper clearly outlines the benefits of micro-suites, as well as potential layouts and management models.

Program Partners:

**FCM**



Canadian Home Builders' Association  
Association canadienne des constructeurs d'habitations



Micro-suites are adaptable and can be used in different settings to increase the supply of affordable ownership or low-income rental housing for residents in need of support, such as seniors, students and persons with disabilities.

Smaller in size, micro-suites offer privacy for independent living, while ready access to common areas provides a sense of community and support by encouraging social gatherings.

A typical two-storey home is ideal for renovation. These houses can be found in just about every neighbourhood across Canada, and usually include multiple bathrooms, a walk-out basement, a den and a large en suite master bedroom. The size of the micro-suites and common areas will differ depending on the configuration of the house being renovated.

For example, a 3,000-square-foot house can accommodate several independent suites of 450 to 650 square feet, and a large home of 3,800 square feet or more can be converted to accommodate three independent suites of approximately 1,000 square feet each. If space allows, a common guest bedroom could be included for overnight visitors.

Most micro-suite units would be accessible and, over time, the houses could be modified to accommodate a live-in nurse practitioner and an elevator. Parking concerns could be resolved by offering a couple of shared vehicles that fit easily in an existing garage.

Micro-suites lend themselves to various management frameworks, such as a non-profit corporation, a co-operative, or through private funds. Common spaces could be managed by an outside provider, and private spaces by each occupant.

SuiteLiving 360 is currently exploring opportunities to work with funding partner(s) on a micro-suite pilot project for financially vulnerable women over 55 years of age. Some municipal regulatory barriers, such as parking requirements and minimum unit size, may have to be overcome. Other issues to investigate include the type of management, tenure and affordability of micro-suites.

### **Related reports**

Rich media presentation  
<http://tinyurl.com/microhousing>

CMHC Research Highlight, Clover Place, Saanich, B.C.  
Former office building converted into micro-suites for the homeless  
<http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/afhoce/prpr/upload/Clover-Place-EN.pdf>

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Got a housing regulatory issue? ACT may already have a solution! Find out about ACT regulatory reform projects carried out across Canada:

[www.actprogram.com](http://www.actprogram.com)

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*The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements recognizes ACT as a top global best practice for improving the living environment.*

*ACT is sponsored by CMHC.*

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***It could work for you!***

**Potential allocation of space for micro suites in a typical two storey single-family house**

Source: SuiteLiving 360

