

These 160-square-foot micro-apartments could help end San Francisco's homelessness crisis

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A real estate developer wants to help end the street-living epidemic in San Francisco by converting shipping container-like modules into sleek new micro-apartments where the homeless can live.

There are some 6,500 homeless people living in San Francisco, which has the second highest homeless population in the US. Some surveys suggest that figure should be doubled.

The city has long run out of beds to house them — a reality that cued Panoramic Interests, which specializes in high-density apartments and student housing, to get into housing for the homeless. The developer wants to get people off the streets and into buildings that offer 160-square-foot, move-in-ready containers stacked on top of each other.



*The MicroPad arrives almost completely move-in-ready
Melia Robinson/Business Insider*



It stretches eight feet wide and 20 feet deep. Panoramic Interests

Business Insider recently toured a prototype module, called a MicroPad, outside the developer's San Francisco office. It was small, but contained all the basic necessities.

A full kitchen includes a food prep area, fridge, stovetop, and microwave oven. The storage bed and armoire provide ample space for stashing belongings during the day, while the desk features shelves for personal goods. Wall outlets run aplenty.



Melia Robinson/Business Insider

The Bay Area is home to dozens of shelters, but most of them lack private bathrooms.

Patrick Kennedy, owner of Panoramic Interests, explains that the close quarters found in the average homeless shelter creates tension between residents. The micro-apartments, in contrast, may prevent conflict by offering a modicum of privacy.



*Private bathrooms are a luxury most shelters cannot afford.
Melia Robinson/Business Insider*

Kennedy says that the apartment's aren't actual shipping containers, though they arrive in the Port of Oakland atop a container ship. The MicroPads are taller, include steel reinforcements around the openings, and have a sealing that prevents pests and water from getting in.

For its first building, the company has its sights set on a parking lot where it wants to build a four-story residence. The installation process may take between four and eight months, which is about a year less than conventionally built apartment construction would take.

But it needs a buyer first. Kennedy hopes to lease the micro-apartments to the city for \$1,000 each. Alternatively, a private group might want to develop the residence as housing for the homeless. Whoever buys will pick tenants and decide how long they can stay.

Panoramic Interests aims to shelter 10,000 homeless Californians over the next three years.