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Innovative changes ahead in short-term hotel stays and affordable housing

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Accommodations are changing rapidly. While for centuries lodging houses and room rentals have been common, Airbnb, through technology, has provided a platform for such rental arrangements to become more pervasive.

Space is becoming a service and the lines are blurring between apartments and hotels. Many innovators are addressing flexible, short-term accommodations while others are seeking to solve the housing crisis. Here are a few promising startups in both markets.

Sleepbox, founded in Boston, is anticipated to launch by October a 16-room Sleepbox Nap Lounge beyond security at Dulles Airport in D.C. Sleepbox provides the ability to darken the windows, set the temperatures, charge your smartphones, work or sleep and, through technology, will remember your preferences. You can rent a Sleepbox for short periods of less than an hour or overnight if there is a flight cancellation.

Peter Chambers, one of the founders, foresees a future where this flexible hospitality model can be launched in city centers as limited amenities hotels. Sleepbox is looking at a market niche between a traditional hotel and an Airbnb and hostel.

Chambers said, "The development time is cut from three years to six months and the cost of newly-created Sleepboxes is 1/10th of the traditional buildout costs of a traditional hotel."



Recharge is another company looking at the short-term, niche market. Recharge is focused on the business traveler who needs a short time to nap, take a shower or use other hotel amenities. The company has been able to gain a foothold in some hotels in San Francisco, renting out rooms currently at 66 cents per minute or \$40 an hour.

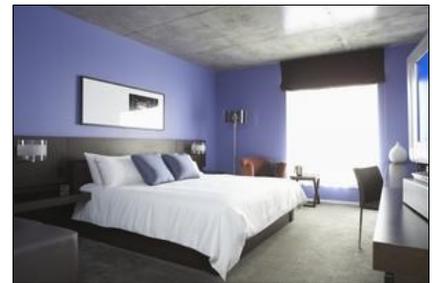
While there is some concern on the hotel side that the guests might want to use the services for disreputable activities, the limited data indicates that is not the case. Hotels see an opportunity for additional revenue by use of rooms during down times at minimal cost to clean the rooms after short-term guest visits.

New Story, a nonprofit, joined forces with ICON, a 3-D printer technology company, that envisions fast-tracking the building of homes to address the current housing crisis globally. ICON has built a home of less than 400 square feet that met local Texas housing code requirements.

Its next project is to build more than 100 homes in El Salvador at less than \$4,000 per structure in a fraction of the time it would take to build a traditional home. Targeting the same market, the Chinese company Winsun built 10 homes in 24 hours using 3-D

printer technology.

In Hong Kong, James Law Cybertecture is intending to use stackable sections of concrete tubes to build mini homes of 100 square feet. The company signed its first contract in China and believes that these inexpensive, efficient, micro-apartments will be adopted to address housing shortages.



GETTY IMAGEDS (ROB MELNYCHUK)
Many innovators are addressing flexible, short-term accommodations.

We do not know if any of these companies will gain traction and funding to scale up and become a stable company. But we do know that solutions are required to meet niche market demands and the global housing crisis, and innovators will continue to creatively meet those challenges.

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