

R304.1

Minimum Habitable Room Area

CHANGE TYPE: Modification

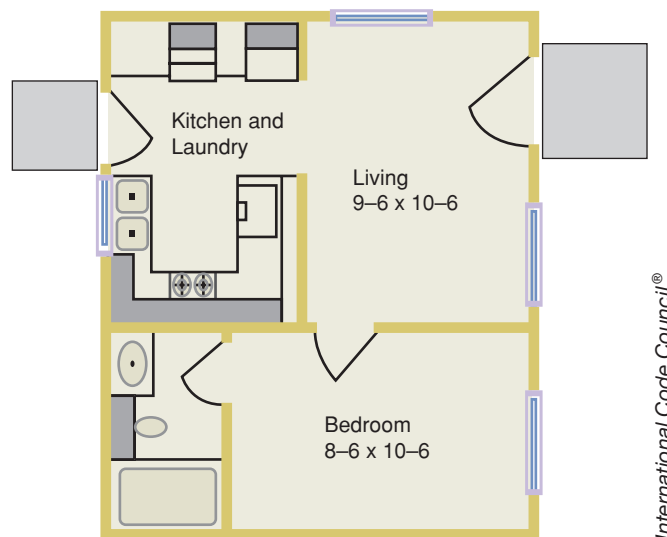
CHANGE SUMMARY: The requirement for one habitable room with a minimum floor area of 120 square feet has been removed from the code.

2015 CODE: R304.1 Minimum Area. ~~Every dwelling unit shall have at least one habitable room that shall have not less than 120 square feet (11 m²) of gross floor area.~~

R304.2 Other Rooms. ~~Other Habitable rooms shall have a floor area of not less than 70 square feet (6.5 m²).~~

Exception: Kitchens.

CHANGE SIGNIFICANCE: The IRC sets minimum requirements for a healthy interior living environment, including provisions for room size, ceiling height, light, ventilation, and heating. The code has long provided a minimum room area of 120 square feet for at least one habitable room with all other habitable rooms having a floor area not less than 70 square feet. Most modern homes have rooms that exceed those dimensions, but the intent has been to at least provide a small 12-foot by 10-foot living room with one or more bedrooms measuring approximately 7 feet by 10 feet. The requirement for one habitable room with a minimum floor area of 120 square feet has been removed from the code. The 70-square-foot minimum area now applies to all habitable rooms as the smallest acceptable size for occupants to move about and use the habitable space as intended. The minimum area of 120 square feet was not based on scientific analysis or on identified safety hazards but was generally accepted by code users and in the marketplace. Recently, however, proponents of minimalist living have advocated smaller dwellings to reduce environmental impact and provide for lower living costs through reduced mortgage and maintenance expenses. These dwellings are intended to allow for a minimalist lifestyle that doesn't demand large volumes of living space. Extreme examples of



Small dwelling complying with minimum area requirements

these minimalist dwellings are often termed “tiny houses.” Proponents of this change reasoned that consumers make a purposeful and informed decision as to the appropriateness of the housing they choose to live in and that the code should not place arbitrary restrictions on room size that have no demonstrable life-safety benefit. Although the change will not impact typical residential construction, it will accommodate alternatives for very small dwellings that would previously not be allowed under the IRC. It may also encourage greater acceptance of and compliance with the residential code by those pursuing a minimalist lifestyle.