

As Apartments Shrink, the Furniture Industry Faces a Sizing Problem

BEVERLY HILLS, CA, UNITED STATES, August 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The American living room is getting smaller, and the furniture industry has been slow to notice. Industry analyses of new multifamily construction have documented a multi-year decline in average apartment sizes across major U.S. metros, driven by land costs, a construction shift toward studios and one-bedrooms, and developer economics that favor unit count over unit size. Yet the furniture sold to fill those units remains built around dimensional standards set decades ago for larger suburban rooms. DreamSofa, a direct-to-consumer custom furniture manufacturer, says the mismatch has made [small-space](#) buyers — urban renters, condo owners, and owners of older homes with irregular rooms — one of its fastest-growing customer segments.

The problem, the company says, is rarely that no sofa fits a small room. It

is that the sofas that fit are almost always compromises in some other dimension: apartment-scale furniture lines typically shrink every measurement at once, producing pieces with shallow seats, low backs, and lightweight construction, as if a smaller room implied a smaller occupant. "A person living in a 550-square-foot apartment is the same height as a person living in a 3,000-square-foot house," said a DreamSofa spokesperson. "They don't need a smaller seat. They need a sofa whose footprint fits the room while the seat itself stays full-scale. That's a dimensional problem, and mass production is structurally bad at solving dimensional problems."



Dreamsofa's Custom Sectional Couches are Trending

Why Standard Sizing Fails Small Spaces

Mass-produced furniture is built to a handful of fixed sizes because tooling, warehousing, and freight all reward standardization. A typical three-seat sofa runs 84 to 96 inches wide; the step down is usually a loveseat at 58 to 72 inches, with little available between or below. For a buyer whose wall measures 76 inches, the choice is a loveseat that wastes usable space or a sofa that does not fit — and that arithmetic repeats across depth, where a standard 38- to 40-inch-deep sofa can consume an unworkable share of a narrow room's floor, and across height, where windowsills, radiators, and wall-mounted features constrain back and arm heights in ways no standard size anticipates.

DreamSofa's FlexForm sizing system builds each piece to the customer's stated dimensions rather than to a size chart, which the company says changes the small-space calculation entirely: a buyer can hold seat depth and cushion comfort at full scale while trimming overall width to the exact wall, reduce arm width from a bulky roll to a slim track to recover six or more inches of seating within the same footprint, or lower the back height to sit beneath a window line. The company says arm design alone is among the most underrated variables in small-space furnishing, since traditional rolled arms can consume ten or more inches of a sofa's total width without adding seating.

The Doorway Problem

Small-space furnishing fails at the threshold as often as it fails in the room. Older urban buildings — prewar walkups, narrow stairwells, tight elevator cabs, sharp corridor turns — routinely make standard one-piece sofas physically undeliverable, a problem familiar to anyone who has watched a delivery crew measure a stairwell and shake their heads. DreamSofa says modular construction addresses delivery and layout with the same mechanism: pieces that arrive as individual sections pass through spaces an assembled frame cannot, then connect inside the room. The company says it routinely builds for customers whose previous furniture purchase was returned not because it didn't fit the room, but because it never reached it.

Small Space Does Not Mean Single Function

The company also notes that small homes ask more of each piece, not less. In a studio or one-bedroom, the sofa is frequently the guest bed, the home office seating, and the primary storage opportunity at once. DreamSofa says demand for its sleeper configurations and integrated storage options skews measurably toward smaller-dwelling buyers, and that the same made-to-measure approach applies: a sleeper built to a custom width keeps its mattress proportions correct rather than dropping a fixed mechanism into a variable shell, and storage compartments positioned within the frame add capacity without raising seat height beyond standard comfort ranges.

Renters Are Buying Differently Than Expected

Conventional industry wisdom held that renters buy disposable furniture because they move often. DreamSofa says its data suggests the opposite logic is taking hold among a growing share of renters: precisely because they move often, they want furniture that can adapt to unknown future floor plans rather than furniture cheap enough to abandon. Modular systems serve that preference directly — a configuration that fits one apartment as an L-shaped sectional can be rearranged as a sofa-plus-chair arrangement in the next — and the company says renter and first-time-buyer inquiries about modularity have grown alongside its documented shift away from fixed sectionals, as reported in its 2026 Mid-Year Consumer Insights Report. "The old model said renters buy furniture for the apartment," the spokesperson said. "What we're seeing is renters buying furniture for the next three apartments."

Measuring Is the New Browsing

DreamSofa says the practical shift shows up in how small-space customers shop: they arrive with measurements, photographs, and floor plans rather than style preferences alone, and increasingly use the company's DreamStudio visualization tools to check a proposed piece against their actual room before ordering. The company encourages every buyer — small-space or not — to measure the room, the doorways, and the delivery path before purchase, and says it supports customers through that process because a made-to-order model only works when the order is right. For an industry that has historically sold furniture first and discovered fit problems at delivery, the company argues, dimension-first buying is less a niche behavior than a preview of where the whole category is heading.

Zones, Not Rooms

Small-space design increasingly treats a single room as several zones — sleeping, working, living — and DreamSofa says seating has become the primary tool for drawing those boundaries without walls. A modular sofa placed with its back to a bed area creates a visual room divide; a compact sectional oriented toward a window desk separates the workday from the evening; an armless section doubles as occasional dining seating at a small table. Because the company builds arm styles, back heights, and section types to order, buyers can specify pieces that function as furniture on one side and as architecture on the other — a low, finished back that reads as a partition, for example, at a height that preserves sightlines and light in a space that cannot spare either.

Measure Twice, Order Once

For buyers starting the process, DreamSofa publishes a measuring sequence it asks every small-space customer to complete: the destination wall's width and any obstructions along it; the room's walking clearances, with roughly 30 to 36 inches recommended for primary pathways; window sill and radiator heights along the sofa wall; and the full delivery path — entry door, hallway turns, stairwell width, and elevator cab dimensions if applicable. The company says the

exercise takes fifteen minutes and eliminates the two most common custom-order errors: a piece sized to the wall but not to the room's circulation, and a piece sized to the room but not to the building it must pass through.

About DreamSofa

DreamSofa is a direct-to-consumer custom furniture manufacturer specializing in made-to-order sofas, sectionals, modular seating systems, and sleeper sofas built on kiln-dried hardwood frames. Its FlexForm sizing system builds every piece to the customer's exact stated dimensions, and every piece is backed by a lifetime frame warranty and a 100-day home trial. More information is available at www.DreamSofa.com.

Apartment-size trends referenced above reflect publicly reported analyses of U.S. multifamily construction. This press release otherwise describes DreamSofa's own products, sizing system, and customer observations.

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