



## Dead Trees Make Good Homes: The L41 Proves Less Can Be More

by TOBIN HACK

Speaking of [green prefab](#) houses, how many square feet, exactly, do you require before you'll call it home? What about 220? I realize that, as a recently apartment-searching New Yorker wrung through the NYC rental market – where brokers use the term “bedroom” to describe a closet into which a bed can be jammed – my perspective may be a bit skewed. But I actually think this [teensy home](#) looks perfectly cozy. So did its creator and architect Michael Katz, and artist Janet Corne.

The L41 (“home for all”), is, according to the [company's website](#), designed with “the millions of people who otherwise could not afford to buy a house” in mind. They imagine it will fill a housing gap and serve (their list, not mine): first-time buyers, students, seniors, hotels, special-needs folks, the homeless, the military, and towns in need of emergency housing, among other groups.

[Treehugger](#) says the L41 is also partly a product of Vancouver's decision to allow “back lane” building (here's an [explanation](#) of the term), or homes in previously designated vacant lots. At a tidy, boxlike 220 square feet, sure, it could probably fit in any back lane – but I can also see the L41 standing alone in lots of rural settings. Who wouldn't like to escape to one of these open, breezy, compact units in some coniferous forest somewhere?

My favorite green detail about the L41 is that it's made of “[beetle-killed, cross-laminated timber](#),” which means that only dead trees are used in construction. Building a home of deceased trees sounds about as wise as taking a page out of the first little piggie's book and building with straw (people are doing that, too), but actually, the stuff is “so strong, earthquake and fire-proof that it can be used as a substitute for Concrete in medium-rise buildings.”

The tree-assassin in this case is the pine beetle; it's already killed enough trees in British Columbia alone that L41 could build 100 million units before running out of sustainable timber. And if no one finds a way to use all this perfectly good (albeit dead) timber, it'll rot within the next 10-15 years. What a waste that would be.

🕒 OVER 4 YEARS AGO

