

Proposed Housing Standard for Shared Housing Utilizing Vacant and Abandoned Houses

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1. Introduction

In the Housing Life Master Plan (National Plan) (approved by the Cabinet on March 28, 2016), one of the objectives (Objective No. 3) is to ensure the provision of stable accommodation for people who require special assistance in securing housing (hereinafter referred to as “People Requiring Special Assistance in Securing Housing”), and one of the basic policies is to enhance the function of the housing safety net, including building a new mechanism for promoting the utilization of vacant and abandoned houses, as well as the utilization of private sector rental housing. As one of the measures to achieve this, it would be effective to promote, through polices, the supply of shared housing¹ by utilizing private sector vacant and abandoned houses, including an increasing number of single-family houses, as a social safety net that enables low-income people to live at relatively low rates.

Given these circumstances, as part of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism’s (MLIT) general technology development project entitled “Development of Technology for Strategic Management of Safe and Secure Life Functions in Community” (from FY 2015 to FY 2017), we studied the housing standard of shared housing and proposed draft technical standards for future policy deployment in FY 2016.

2. Method for Studying Housing Standard of Shared Housing

Shared housing is an arrangement in which two or more unrelated people (households) share a house or an apartment. In view of this, we studied the housing standard requirements from technical standpoint by taking the following procedures from (1) to (5): (1) Divide the required housing functions (such as sleeping, get-together, cooking, dining, excretion, brushing teeth and washing the hands and face, taking a bath, and dressing) into functions that should be provided for private rooms and those for common living spaces; (2) study the basic unit of area required for each function from an ergonomic standpoint; (3) study the area required for private rooms; (4) study the required area and number of each of the facilities that should be provided for common living spaces according to the number of dwellers; and (5) based on the above, study the levels of total dwelling floor area for shared housing. From a social validity standpoint, we reviewed the preliminary draft housing standard for shared housing developed through the above technical studies, by conducting a case survey of existing shared houses and hearings from home-sharing operators, and making an investigation into the levels of living rooms, etc., in vacant and abandoned houses, among other things, and then we developed the final draft housing standard for shared housing.

3. Proposed Housing Standard for Shared Housing

The proposed housing standard for shared housing

utilizing vacant and abandoned houses is shown in the table below. Our proposal has been developed by dividing households living in shared housing into two categories: a single-person household and a single-parent household.²

Table: Proposed Housing Standard for Shared Housing

	Single-person household	Single-parent household
Dwelling floor area standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dwelling floor area standard shall be established as follows according to the number of dwellers: Dwelling floor area standard (m²) = 15 m² × N ※ + 10 m² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dwelling floor area standard shall be established as follows according to the number of dwellers: Dwelling floor area standard (m²) = 17 m² × N ※ + 10 m²
Private room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One room for each dweller with the room size of 9 m² or more (including storage space) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One room for each household with the room size of 10 m² or more (including storage space)
Common living spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A kitchen, dining room and get-together room shall be provided (a dining room can be doubled as a get-together room) One bathroom, bath (can be a shower room), undressing room, washroom and laundry room shall be provided for every five dwellers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A kitchen, dining room, get-together room and study room shall be provided (a dining room can be doubled as a get-together room). One bathroom, washroom and laundry room shall be provided for every four dwellers with one bath and undressing room, for every five dwellers.

*N: Number of dwellers. Single-person household: N=2 or more.
Single-parent household: N=4 or more.

4. Reflection of Research Results

The Proposed Act on Partial Revision of Act on Promotion of Offering of Rental Housing to Persons Requiring Special Assistance in Securing Housing was approved by the Cabinet on February 3, 2017. In line with this proposed act, a system will be established for registering rental housing utilizing vacant and abandoned houses, where People Requiring Special Assistance in Securing Housing are accepted without refusal.

Based on this proposal, MLIT’s Housing Bureau is in the process of developing standards for the registration of shared housing as rental housing where People Requiring Special Assistance in Securing Housing are accepted without refusal. Notes:

- Shared housing is an arrangement in which two or more occupants share a house or an apartment. Each occupant has his/her own private room but share the rest of the house, such as kitchen, living room, bathroom, and bath with other occupants.
- It is assumed that the number of children in a single parent household is one child who is younger than the elementary school age.