

Cypress

Environmental and Land Use Planning

P. O. Box 1844 Aptos CA
(831) 685-1007 www.cypressenv.com

Kim Tschantz, MSP, CEP



Summer Newsletter

July 2015

Wishing you a happy summer where I hope you can enjoy much of the environment we protect in our national parks, public beaches, hiking and bike trails and, of course, the Pacific Ocean.

In this edition of the newsletter

Quick Links:

[My Website](#)

[My Facebook
Page](#)

[My LinkedIn Page](#)

[Like this](#)

- [**Cypress Hired as Planner for 85-Lot Sunshine Garden Subdivision in Watsonville**](#)

Cypress owner, Kim Tschantz, was hired by Pacific Sunshine Development in May as the land use planner for their 85-lot subdivision in Watsonville. This will be the city's first residential development in 10 years. This will also be the development firm's first project in California. The firm is from China. The project offers some different opportunities for city residents. Find out why below.



[newsletter?](#)
Then "like me"
on Facebook.

-
Problem viewing
this page?
Scroll down just
below end
of newsletter to
"Click to View
in Browser".

- [Missing "Middle Housing" Needs to Become Part of Our Housing Mix](#)

Changing demographics and personal choices are fostering a need for "middle housing" throughout U.S. towns and cities; but it's missing from most home building today. Just what is "middle housing" and why will achieving more of its construction require re-thinking most local zoning ordinances?



- [A New Solution to the Drought? - Making Water out of Thin Air!](#)

While we're having fun in the sun this summer, California's 4-year drought is getting worse. But maybe we need to think of new "outside the box" ideas to solve our water crisis. This 1.5-minute video explores one very innovative idea.



Cypress Mission Statement:

Creating project solutions for you while enhancing our environment.



Cypress is certified as a sustainable practices business by the Monterey Bay Area Green Business Council.

Cypress has been a member of the Santa Cruz Construction Guild since 2010.



Newsletter continues on next page

Cypress Hired as Planner for 85-Lot Sunshine Garden Subdivision in Watsonville



Kim Tschantz, owner of Cypress, was hired this past May as the land use planner for proposed residential subdivision in Watsonville. Cypress is very selective in accepting subdivision projects. Because Sunshine Garden is different than most typical residential subdivisions, Kim joined the project team. The project includes a mix of housing types, including detached single-family dwellings, townhouses, duplexes and apartments. Some dwellings will provide low-income/moderate-income housing while others will be designed as "middle housing". (See next article.)

The project site is within a Specific Plan area that designates the 7.2-acre site for residential development. Since it is planned for development, it is important that it be done "right". The site borders a wetland named Watsonville Slough. A hiking trail will be constructed along the edge of this wetland and connect with the City's existing wetland trail system. Otherwise, the slough habitat will be preserved. This aspect of the project has evolved substantially since May when my client proposed removing much of the habitat so future residents of the project could get better views of the wetland from their homes! Sometimes the role of a land use planner is education.

One of the design features of the project will be to orient the front of many of the homes towards pedestrian walkways, as shown in the image below. Garages will be oriented towards the rear of these homes with vehicle access by rear alleys. This type of design typically promotes more social interaction among future residents.



Watsonville, the second largest city in Santa Cruz County, California, has a population of 51,000 and an economy based on agriculture. It is located in the productive cropland of the Pajaro Valley known nationwide for its strawberries, bush berries and lettuce varieties. Local residents include farmworkers and others involved in crop farming. While the city has experienced a rise in new middle-class income residents, the median income in Watsonville is lower than the remainder of Santa Cruz County. Affordable housing is a constant issue. Sunshine Garden will help meet a dire housing shortage for various income groups.

.....

Newsletter continues on next page

Missing "Middle Housing" Needs to Become Part of Our Housing Mix



Mansion apartment in Norfolk, VA in a neighborhood previously zoned exclusively for single-family residential

The recession is over and home building is back. Construction of both large single-family dwellings and lower income units is starting up again, but what's missing in the new housing mix is "middle housing". Middle housing types, such as duplexes, fourplexes, bungalow courts, mansion apartments, and live/work units, are a critical part of the solution and should be a part of every architect's, planner's and developer's residential plan over the next few years. I'm not talking about more 3-bedroom suburban homes. Rather, there is a growing demand for moderately-sized dwellings within walking distance to urban commercial areas that are affordable to rent and to buy by young adults with smaller families. "Middle housing" is also appealing to single person households, which today is nearly 30% of all households in the nation!

Well-designed simple "middle housing" achieves medium-density development and provides high-quality, marketable options between the scales of traditional single-family homes

and small apartments. They are designed to meet the specific needs of our changing demographics and the new market demand, and are a key component towards creating a diverse neighborhood. "Middle housing" is characterized as "missing" because very few of these housing types have been built since the early 1940's due to zoning constraints, the focus on auto-dependent patterns of development, and the social and political incentivization of traditional single-family home ownership.

What Makes "Middle Housing" Different?

A key component of "Middle Housing" is that Middle housing types are spread throughout the block and stand side-by-side with single-family detached homes, with which they are very compatible in scale. This blended pattern of single-family homes and middle housing types, with densities up to 35 dwelling units per acre, is only possible because the building forms of these types are never larger than a large house. *Achieving this will require re-thinking most local zoning ordinances which segregate single-family homes from other types of dwellings.*

Some defining characteristics of Missing Middle housing are:

Medium density but lower perceived densities. These building types typically range in density from 16 dwelling units per acre (du/ac.) to up to 35 du/ac., depending on the building type and lot size. However, due to the small footprint of the buildings and the fact that they are usually mixed with a variety of other building types, the perceived density is usually much lower—they do not look like dense buildings.

Small footprint and blended densities. The largest type of "middle housing" is the mansion apartment or the side-by-side duplex. Both may have a typical total building width of about 40 to 50 feet, which is very comparable to a moderate estate home. However, the building depth may accommodate additional units that aren't visible from the street. This makes them ideal for urban infill, even in older neighborhoods that were originally developed as single-family but have been designated to evolve with slightly higher development densities. Since these housing types can be close in scale to traditional single-family dwellings, they can be designed to blend well with existing housing in a neighborhood.

A walkable environment. One of the most important characteristics of “middle housing” of today is the need to be built within an existing or newly created walkable urban context. Buyers or renters of these housing types are choosing to trade larger suburban housing for less space, no yard to maintain, and proximity to services and amenities such as restaurants, bars, markets, and often work.

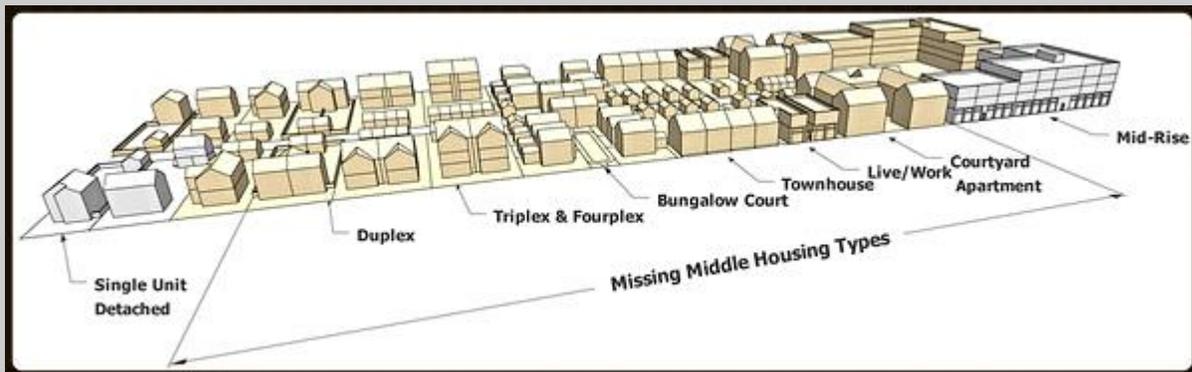
Creating Community. “Middle housing” creates community through the integration of shared community spaces that are common with courtyard housing or bungalow courts, or simply from the proximity they provide to the walkable neighborhood. this aspect fosters more social interaction in neighborhoods, more reminiscent of the 1940's and 1950's.



A duplex dwelling in a predominantly single-family dwelling neighborhood in Vancouver, Canada

And Now a Design Competition for Middle Housing

The first ever design competition for innovative "middle housing" ideas was held this spring at Michigan State University. Five top winning contestants were selected on June 23 and the 1st place winner was announced last week. Finland architect Niko Tiula of Tiula Architects earned the \$10,000 grand prize. He combined a courtyard apartment with live/work units to locate along a main street, putting all of the parking at the rear of the property, accessible by a small service road. The result is an economic group of 2-story buildings with retail and craft studios on the main floor with livable space above. These units are mixed with townhouses and courtyard apartments. According to Mr. Tiula, this type of housing is common in Finland. I invite you to [read more](#) about his design and that of the other top 4 contestants.



This diagram shows the various forms of middle housing and how they can be integrated into existing neighborhoods.

.....

Newsletter continues on next page

A New Idea to Solve Our Water Crisis?

An engineer in Barcelona, Spain, Xavier Dolo, is promoting his solution to global drought conditions - making water out of the air! His Hydromatch system creates water by condensing water vapor contained in air. Currently, it can produce 500,000 liters of water/hour. This 1.5--minute captivating [video](#) explains the process.

.....

Please visit [my website](#) to better understand our various land use planning and environmental planning services that can help you and your project.

Kim Tschantz, MSP, CEP
Environmental Planning and Analysis, Permitting and Project Management