

# Cypress

## Environmental and Land Use Planning

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## Autumn Newsletter

### October 2014



*This has been an active and destructive wildfire season both in drought-stricken California and in more rainfall abundant areas of the West. The recent fires from Yosemite to Washington's Carlton Complex fire make it clear that water conservation and fire safe measures are the new normal priorities in land management and development design.*

In this edition of the newsletter:

- [Cypress Returns to Scotts Valley](#)

Cypress Environmental has just been re-hired by the City of Scotts Valley as the consultant to manage the application processing and environmental analysis of a new townhouse project, The Terraces, proposed by Apple Homes, Inc.



- [Urbanization is on the Rise. Is Micro-housing One Good Answer?](#)

U. S. population demographics are changing in many ways, including smaller families and more singles living alone than before in history. In addition, more of our population is living in urban areas. How can people be housed in an affordable manner? Some professionals and community leaders think micro-housing is the answer. What do you think?



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- [\*\*The Big Burn: An Excellent Chronicle on Wildfires and the Birth of the Conservation Movement in the US\*\*](#)

This is an account of the largest wildland fire in U.S. history as well as an energetic explanation of the birth of the conservation movement in America. The Big Burn Fire occurred in 1910 when the poorly funded U.S. Forest Service was only 5 years old. But it was how the Forest Service responded that grabbed the hearts and minds of most Americans. President Teddy Roosevelt's founding of the agency and his expansion of national parks were difficult tasks opposed by many in his own party. Today's land managers and conservationists can learn a lot from reading this book..



***Cypress Mission Statement:***

*Creating project solutions for you while enhancing our environment.*

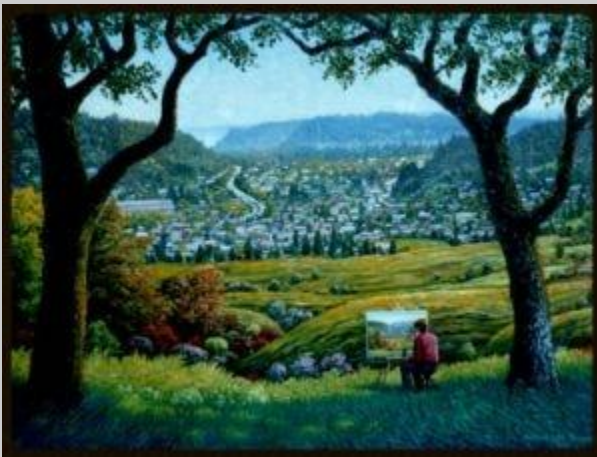


Cypress is certified as a sustainable practices business by the Monterey Bay Area Green Business Council.



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

## Cypress Returns to Scotts Valley



The City of Scotts Valley has hired Kim Tschantz and Cypress Environmental to manage the processing of a new townhouse project proposed on 2.3 acres near the city center. The named The Terrace and proposed by Apple Homes, Inc., would construct 20 three-story attached dwellings on sloping terrain. Cypress' work will include analyzing the project for potential environmental impacts, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act, and recommending mitigations for any identified impacts. Environmental issues include an endangered species inhabiting the site and the proposed removal of 71 trees, several of which qualify as "City Protected" trees. Cypress will also provide analytical presentations to the City's Planning Commission and City Council in separate public hearings.

Cypress has provided consulting services to the municipality previously. Kim was hired by the City as a consultant to manage several other proposed projects in 2008--09 when the City was experiencing a spike in development applications. Most cities, like Scotts Valley, have their own Planning staff; but sometimes the work load or expertise needs exceeds that of agency staff. Hiring a private consultant, who is familiar with public sector planning, for a limited time period, can solve work load or expertise needs of agencies during more challenging times. Cypress has provided this type of service for other

public agencies including the City of Capitola and LAFCO of Monterey County.

[Scotts Valley](#), located in northern Santa Cruz County, was incorporated in 1959 and was developed primarily as suburban density single-family dwelling community. In recent years, the City has adopted policies that promote the concepts of New Urbanism including a mixture of housing types and higher residential densities. The Terrace is an example of the more recent development trend.

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## Urbanization is on the Rise. Is Micro-Housing One Good Answer?



## USA is Getting Even More Urban, and Urban Demographics are Changing

This past August, the Santa Cruz Sentinel reported that the rural population of Santa Cruz County *declined* by 20,000 people over the past two decades. This was accompanied by a moderate rise in the urban population of 32,600 persons. What's happening? According to several studies, the Santa Cruz County trend is reflected nationwide as *the United States becomes an even more urban nation than in past decades*. International urbanization studies conducted by the United

Nations show that more than half of the world's population now reside in cities and a whopping 81% of Americans now live in urban areas. Demographics of the U.S. population has changed too during the past 20 years, including an increased trend towards smaller families and single person households. "More people are living alone than at any time in the history of our species," says Eric Klinenberg, professor of sociology at NYU and author of [Going Solo](#). This creates both a new opportunity and dilemma for the real estate industry. The problem is that real estate has become so expensive in many central urban areas that many people are priced out of both the buyer and rental market. Compounding the simple imbalance of supply and demand, there is a mismatch across the U.S. between the type of housing desired and the type of housing available. The population of singles and couples far exceeds the number of studios and one bedrooms. In many cities, the available housing is 50--70 years-old on average, and thus designed for a different era when families were typically larger. As more people move to urban areas, cities need to provide an array of varied housing opportunities for their changing population. One possible solution is micro-housing. It's a small, usually very small unit, designed as a rental or purchase home for a single person.

### Micro-housing: Is it for You?

Micro-housing comes in various forms: modular housing, apartments and small detached dwellings. A floor area of 800 sq. ft. is typical for these units. Therefore, micro-housing typically has even smaller floor areas than most accessory dwelling units (ADUs) or "granny units" as they are sometimes called. In New York, [MyMicro Project](#), launched by then mayor Michael Bloomberg, has constructed several micro-homes in New York. Several have been constructed by Caspys, Inc. which specialize in constructing moderate priced high-rise apartments by stacking rectangular pre-fabricated units. (See the image above at right.) Alternatively, these units can provide movable temporary dwellings when placed directly on the ground as individual units. Much of the interior space is convertible. The kitchen island folds down from the wall and the bed will be either a Murphy bed or a convertible sofa. This housing may not appeal to everyone, but for young adults who spend most of their waking hours in public plaza's, coffee shops and university campuses of a large city, the home doesn't need to provide too much more than a space where you store food, shower and sleep.



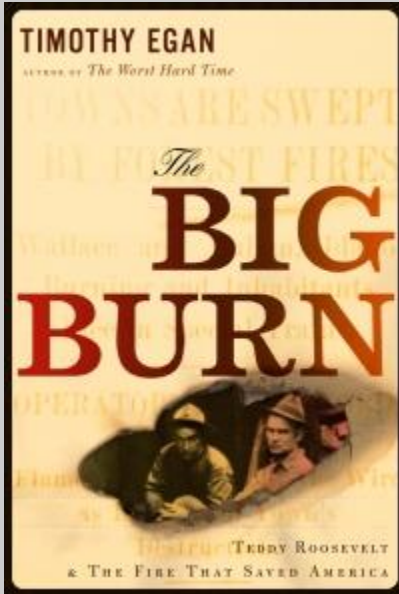
Pre-fab micro-dwelling being constructed at Caspy's in New York. The construction uses steel framing with either metal or wood exterior sheathing. The construction is similar to that of a shipping container before doors and windows are framed in. This unit has a flat roof so it can be stacked to create an apartment building as shown in the image at right above. The moderate construction cost allows the rental and/or purchase price to be affordable to lower and moderate income people, including students, recent foreign immigrants and younger people just entering the job market.

Much of the micro-housing in other cities, like Seattle, have taken the form of small detached cottages on their own very small lot or behind a main dwelling similar to an ADU. Some residents who live where micro-housing is proposed worry about parking problems and similar issues created by a sudden increase in population density that can come from the construction of this type of housing. Therefore, along with constructing quality and workable dwellings, comes the necessity of good land use planning to provide adequate off-street parking and outdoor recreational space for a more densely developed neighborhood.

Regardless of the form of micro-housing, one of its primary attractions is low cost, whether it's the rent or purchase price. As rents skyrocket in some of our most desirable cities, like San Francisco, more innovative ways to create affordable housing are important. Micro-housing may be one answer.

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## The Big Burn: An Excellent Chronicle on Wildfires and the Birth of the Conservation Movement in the USA



I just completed one of the most informative and interesting books on American history and environmental protection I've read to date. The [Big Burn](#), authored by Timothy Egan, describes the creation of the National Forests and U. S. Forest Service during the nascent days of the American conservation movement during the Teddy Roosevelt administration. Written like a novel, Egan's prose makes you feel like you're in the same room with Roosevelt as he strategizes how to create a public-owned forest reserve system with his conversation genius, Gifford Pinchot, in the face of congressional opposition. While Roosevelt succeeding in creating this reserve system, designating other lands for national parks and funding employees to manage and protect the new public lands, Egan describes how difficult a task it was. Many in Roosevelt's own Republican Party and big business opposed the idea of public ownership of natural resources.

Reading the *Big Burn* also seems to transport you to the forest with young USFS rangers as they attempt to fight the largest wildfire ever seen in the U.S. The Big Burn Fire (AKA St. Joe Fire) of 1910 destroyed an area in the northern Rockies the size of Connecticut. While Americans had never experienced a conflagration of this magnitude, the Big Burn Fire made heroes out of the employees of the 5-year old USFS, for preventing a larger disaster and saving 100's of lives with very meager resources. As Egan explains, it became the fire that saved the idea of conservation in America. For people interested in

how the current idea of resource protection began in the USA, the *Big Burn* is a must read. It also provides an in-depth understanding of this era of political change when American society was emerging from a semi-feudal economy of the "robber baron" days and moving towards a more modern society referred to then as the "Progressive Era".

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*Environmental Planning and Analysis, Permitting and Project Management*