

Book Review

January 2016

Community Character, Principles for Design and Planning

Lane H. Kendig with Bret C. Keast, Island Press, Washington, 187 pages, 2010.

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Summary

Community Character is an important book presenting an alternative way to think about community design and planning; with the intent of creating cities and towns with character. He concludes with the idea he develops throughout the book...“Community character [using his methodology] is superior to the current reliance on density and land use, and should replace them as the basis for community panning.” [p167]

Lane gives us a language, a logic and specific tools for “preserving small town character.” “The community character system has four major elements-state, scale, class and type of character, and community form-each of which provides the tools for planners to plan a development, neighborhood, or municipality.” [p1]

He include social and economic attributes in his system with a focus on how the physical setting can support social and economic objectives. He describes their attributes by discussing social and economic *function, economic role, workforce, encounter level measures, site of social contact, privacy, child play, opportunities for relaxation and safety from crime.* [pp76-80]

Lane Kendig’s planning approach is innovative and logic-riven; falling in line with some of the best thinking on the character and life of America’s cities and towns:

- Lawrence Halprin’s ideas in **Cities**: “Finally, the city comes alive through movement and its rhythmic structure.”
- Mr. Lynch in **The Image of the City** gives us his list of the elements of the city along with a concise definition of each. The list includes: paths, edges,



Lane Kendig,
Strategic Advisor, founded Lane Kendig, inc. (now KKC) in 1982 as an interdisciplinary firm that provided planning, plan implementation, and design consulting services to regional agencies, communities, county and local governments, and developers. Lane has experience in land use planning, growth management, housing, environmental planning, zoning and land use controls, site and land design, and impact and feasibility analyses. His projects include comprehensive plans and implementing regulations; zoning, subdivision, and land development regulations; and impact and management systems. After 41 years of practice, Lane retired as president of KKC, but remains active as a strategic advisor available for specific projects. He continues to write and is working on an updated Performance Zoning book to illustrate the changes in its 35 years of use.

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districts, nodes, and landmarks.

- Ed Bacon follows in ***Design with Cities: Revised Edition*** with:
“In the little-known town of Wuk-Bij-Duurstede the principles of design exemplified in Culemborg and Zaltbommel are carried farther in a design structure of great simplicity. The three facets of town life: spiritual force, temporal power and economic energy, are given symbolic expression in three buildings.” [p167]

Like Halperin, Lynch, Bacon and Peter Katz [see following YouTube reference], Kendig insists that community planning and design is not about individual projects but how the entirety of the community works with projects fitting into the community rather than the reverse. Whether one accepts and adopts Kendig’s “community character system” *in toto* or not, his book is instructive and thought-provoking; it challenges conventional and convenient thinking with an analytical perspective based on fundamental ideas and specific tools.

YouTube/Webinar: In addition to the reviews cited below, check out:

While neither of the following discussions are directly on-point, the Walkability webinar lets you hear from Lane directly and appreciate his contrarian approach to urban analysis; likewise with the Katz YouTube, he offers a new metric for evaluating communities and their character.

- [Walkability: Fact or Myth? - American Planning Association](https://www.planning.org/tuesdaysatapa/...)
<https://www.planning.org/tuesdaysatapa/...>
 American Planning Association
 Jun 17, 2014 - Tuesdays at APA—Chicago — June 2014 ... “In this program, **Lane Kendig**, from Kendig Keast Collaborative, explored how the concept of ...”
- [The Missing Metric: Strategies for the New Normal – A Presentation for 1000 Friends of Florida](#)
 1000 Friends of Florida, Published on Jun 1, 2013
 “Peter Katz discusses the economics of sustainable development in this hour-long presentation.”

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- [Book Review: Community Character: Principles for Design ...](#)
jpe.sagepub.com/content/early/.../0739456X15576991
 Sage Publications by TL Birch - 2015 - [Related articles](#)
 Mar 18, 2015 – “**Lane Kendig** has produced a practical volume based on the premise that improved sensitivity to **community character** through more thoughtful ...”
- [Community Character: Principles for Design and Planning](#)
<https://books.google.com/books?isbn=1597269700>
[Lane H. Kendig, Bret C. Keast](#) - 2012 - Architecture
 “Principles for Design and Planning **Lane H. Kendig**, **Bret C. Keast** ... argued that **community character** was a powerful but unused planning tool.”

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REVIEWER: Bill Kercher, AICP, LEED®AP, Editor, CharacterTowns.org, bill.kercher@wckplanning.com