Recodify Cashiers

Workshop on Community Character

5.9.23

OVERVIEW

1. **Community Character**
   Defined
2. **Exercise 1: Mapping**
   Locations that illustrate community character
3. **Exercise 2: Images**
   Buildings and features
4. **Exercise 3: Terms**
   What words fit?
5. **Table Reports**
   Report on key discussion

+/- 8 weeks

PROJECT STATUS

- 3rd Cashiers CPC Meeting
- Webpage operational
- Stakeholder interviews complete
- 2 public forums completed
- Community character exploration

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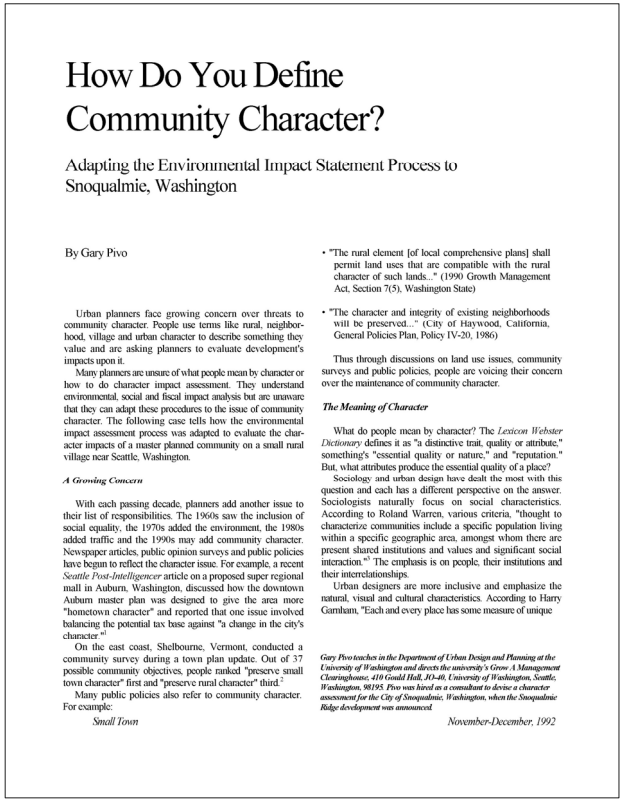
COMMUNITY CHARACTER

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Community character is “the distinctive identity of a particular place that results from the interaction of many factors—built form, landscape, history, people and their activities.”

—New Zealand Ministry for the Environment



How Do You Define Community Character?

Adapting the Environmental Impact Statement Process to Snoqualmie, Washington

By Gary Pivo

Urban planners face growing concern over threats to community character. People use terms like rural, neighborhood, village and urban character to describe something they value and are asking planners to evaluate development's impacts upon it.

Many planners are unsure of what people mean by character or how to do character impact assessment. They understand environmental, social and fiscal impact analysis but are unaware that they can adapt these procedures to the issue of community character. The following case tells how the environmental impact assessment process was adapted to evaluate the character impacts of a master planned community on a small rural village near Seattle, Washington.

A Growing Concern

With each passing decade, planners add another issue to their list of responsibilities. The 1960s saw the inclusion of social equality, the 1970s added the environment, the 1980s added traffic and the 1990s may add community character. Newspaper articles, public opinion surveys and public policies have begun to reflect the character issue. For example, a recent *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* article on a proposed super regional mall in Auburn, Washington, discussed how the downtown Auburn master plan was designed to give the area more "hometown character" and reported that one issue involved balancing the potential tax base against "a change in the city's character."[1]

On the east coast, Shelbourne, Vermont, conducted a community survey during a town plan update. Out of 37 possible community objectives, people ranked "preserve small town character" first and "preserve rural character" third.[2]

Many public policies also refer to community character. For example:

- "The rural element [of local comprehensive plans] shall permit land uses that are compatible with the rural character of such lands..." (1990 Growth Management Act, Section 7(5), Washington State)
- "The character and integrity of existing neighborhoods will be preserved..." (City of Haywood, California, General Policies Plan, Policy IV-20, 1986)

Thus through discussions on land use issues, community surveys and public policies, people are voicing their concern over the maintenance of community character.

The Meaning of Character

What do people mean by character? The *Lexicon Webster Dictionary* defines it as "a distinctive trait, quality or attribute," something's "essential quality or nature," and "reputation." But, what attributes produce the essential quality of a place?

Sociology and urban design have dealt the most with this question and each has a different perspective on the answer. Sociologists naturally focus on social characteristics. According to Roland Warren, various criteria, "thought to characterize communities include a specific population living within a specific geographic area, amongst whom there are present shared institutions and values and significant social interaction."[3] The emphasis is on people, their institutions and their interrelationships.

Urban designers are more inclusive and emphasize the natural, visual and cultural characteristics. According to Harry Garnham, "Each and every place has some measure of unique

Gary Pivo teaches in the Department of Urban Design and Planning at the University of Washington and directs the university's Grow A Management Clearinghouse, 410 Gould Hall, JO-40, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, 98195. Pivo was hired as a consultant to devise a character assessment for the City of Snoqualmie, Washington, when the Snoqualmie Ridge development was announced.

Community Character is Often Based on:

- Socio-cultural characteristics
  - People (attitudes, governance, demographics)
  - History
- Physical characteristics
  - Location
  - Size (small town, village)
  - Appearance (beauty, design)
- Economic characteristics
  - Types of occupations
  - Relative wealth
  - Land value
- Landmarks
  - Unique places and features

THIS IS OUR FOCUS

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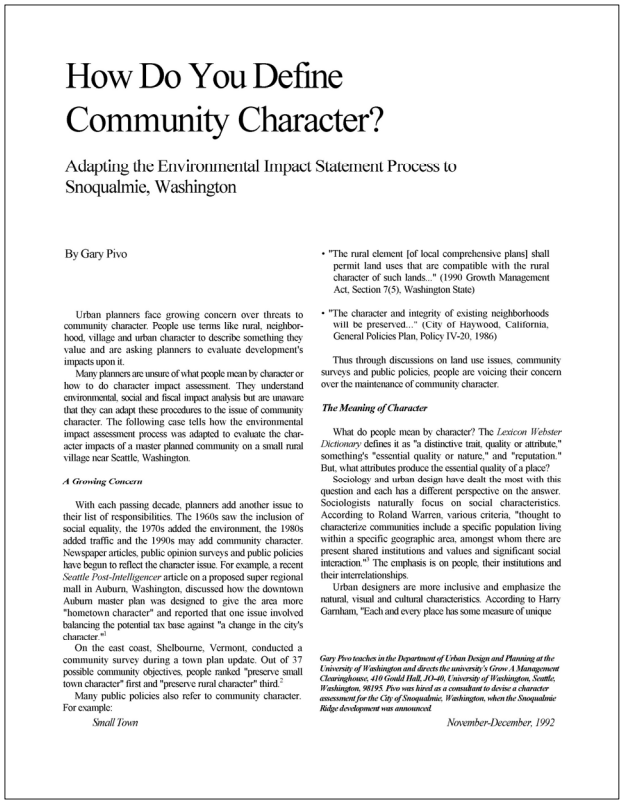
Community character results from a blend of regulatory and non-regulatory aspects

Regulations influence community character at the:

- Macro scale – community wide
- Micro scale – individual development sites

Regulations have some impact on macro-scale issues and considerable impact at the micro-scale



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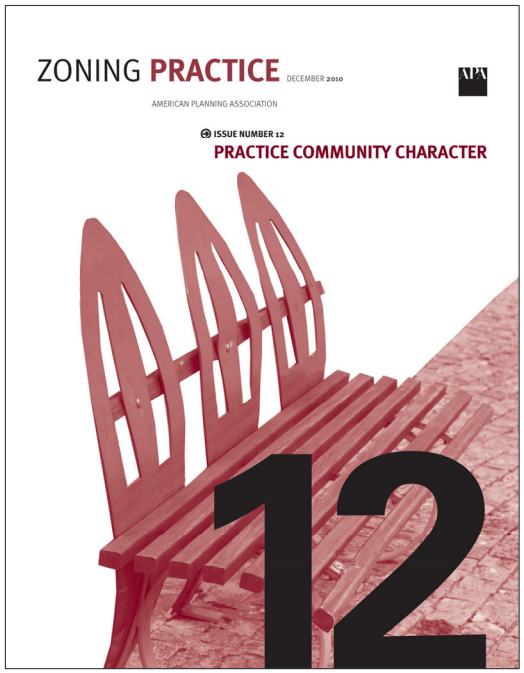
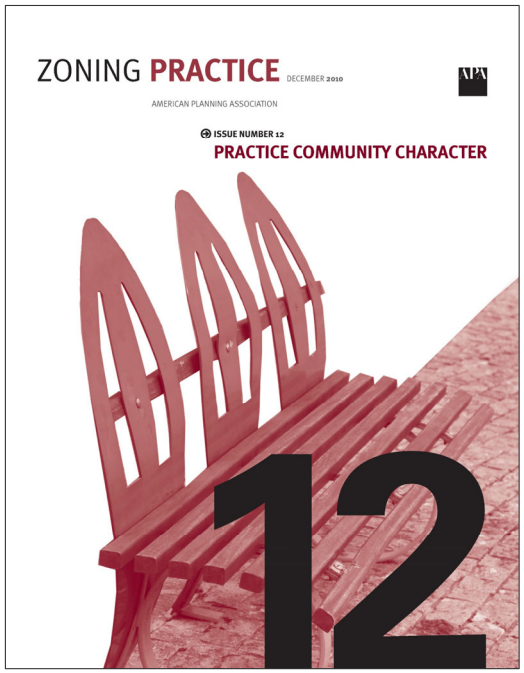
Small Town *November-December, 1992*



Macro-level Community Character Features that can be influenced by Regulations:

- Sense of enclosure
- Views to the horizon
- Visibility of structures from public realm
- Presence/absence of plants
- Level of reliance on natural drainage



Regulations that can affect Community Character at the Micro-Scale:

- Lot size and width, side yard setbacks
- Front yard depth
- Building separation distances
- Amount of landscaping, “green mass”
- On- or off-street parking
- Off-street parking location front/side/rear
- Percentage of open space
- Signage

COMMUNITY CHARACTER FOCUS AREAS

Land Use

- Permitted
- Prohibited
- Conditional

Lotting Patterns

- Lot Size
- Lot Width
- Setbacks
- Impervious cover

Street Design

- Width
- Spacing
- Paving/Surface
- Pedestrian Network

COMMUNITY CHARACTER FOCUS AREAS

Open Space

- Amount
- Arrangement
- Function
- Ownership

Buildings

- Size/mass
- Density
- Spacing
- Placement Uniformity
- Orientation
- Height
- Façade Appearance

Site Features

- Parking
  Placement, % of Site, Surface
- Landscaping
  Degree of Obscurity
- Signage
  Size, height, illumination

OUR OBJECTIVE:

- Define the Cashiers Community Character in words and with images
- Include the words and images in the new development regulations as criteria
- Review new development for consistency against the community character criteria

GOALS FOR TONIGHT
work with your neighbors to:

- Share your perspectives on locations in the area that are good examples of Cashiers Community Character and those that are not
- Review some images from around the village and tell us – are they consistent with the community character or not
- Review some words and phrases about community character – which ones apply to Cashiers

Step 1:

Pick a Table Leader – they will report back the findings from your table to the group

EXERCISE 1: THE MAP

Work with your table to identify areas that are or are not consistent with your idea about community character

EXERCISE 2: THE IMAGES

Work with your table to rank how well each image fits with current community character

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Exercise 2: Community Character Consistency
Please examine each image. Place a 1, 2, or 3 on the line beneath the image.
1 means the feature, building, or use depicted is **inconsistent** with your idea of Cashiers community character.
2 means the feature, building, or use depicted is **somewhat** consistent with your idea of Cashiers community character.
3 means the feature, building or use depicted is **very** consistent with your idea of community character.
Leave the line blank if you are not sure.
Try not to assign a number value based on the quality of the image, or personal feelings. Objectively, is the image consistent with your idea of community character? How consistent? 1, 2, or 3?

Sheet 1: Shopping Centers

Image 1 _____

Image 2 _____

Image 3 _____

Image 4 _____

Image 5 _____

Image 6 _____

Image 7 _____

Image 8 _____

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Exercise 3: Describing Community Character

Please examine the following random words or phrases. These words are often used as the basis for definitions of community character. Please circle the ones that you think apply to Cashiers and cross out the ones that you think don't apply to Cashiers. You can take a poll of your table if there is disagreement about a particular word and record the votes for or against.

There is space on the second sheet for you to write any additional terms or phrases that you think should be included in our list.

Sheet 1 Terms

ARTIFICIAL	COMMUNITY FOR RESIDENTS	ECLECTIC	GREAT VIEWS
ATTRACTIVE	CONFUSING	EXCLUSIVE	HARD TO WALK AROUND
BUSY	CROWDED	EXPENSIVE	HOME
CHARMING	DEEPLY-ROOTED HERITAGE	FABRICATED	LOST
COLORLESS	DISCONNECTED	FULL-SERVICE	MEDIOCRE
COMMERCIAL CHARACTER	EASY TO NAVIGATE	GLAMPING	MEETS DAILY NEEDS

EXERCISE 3: The Words

Work with your table to select the words that best describe current community character

TABLE REPORTS

NEXT STEPS…

- Coffee Talk
  Wednesday @ 8A Bucks
- Share Your Thoughts
  Wednesday 2-5 @ Green Market
- Community Character Defined Presentation
  Thursday @ 6P Library

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