

CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER (1936–2022)

Christopher Alexander was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1936, and grew up in Oxford, England. He studied mathematics, physics, and chemistry at Cambridge University, and completed a degree in architecture, although he felt that it lost sight of the central objective of the discipline: “to create beautiful buildings.” Later, at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design, he received the university’s first Ph.D. in architecture. In 1964, he took up a teaching position at the University of California, Berkeley, and in 1967, he founded the Center for Environmental Structure with several of his colleagues. His early theories, which combined architectural design methods with computer systems, earned him a reputation among design technologists and anti-modernist architects. His writings established him as one of the most influential and controversial voices of 20th-century urban and architectural thinking. Notable works include *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* (1964), “The City Is Not a Tree” (1965), *A Pattern Language* (1977), and *The Timeless Way of Building* (1979). In his built works, including the master plan for the University of Oregon, his contributions to the Experimental Housing Program (PREVI) in Lima, Peru, the Mexicali Experimental Project, and the Julian Street Inn homeless shelter in San Jose, California, he put many of his early theoretical and conceptual explorations into practice.