

OPEN SOURCE URBANISM: Prototype > Replicate > Adopt

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In a time in which city-wide planning strategies are failing due to a lack of city governance, bottom-up models present themselves as an alternative approach to balancing public-private partnerships governed by corporate bodies. Bottom-up approaches do possess a potentiality for rapid change, and this potentiality can be actualized if adequate notations and design frameworks are set in place that can capitalize on open source participation while simultaneously regulating the large-scale outcome. In fall 2012, the Gray Area Foundation in San Francisco initiated an Urban Prototyping event that precisely tried to benefit from the development of open-source accessible design also addressing large-scale transformations. The initiators of this process developed an approach that consisted of 3 steps: prototyping, replication and adoption.

URBANecology// THE 10 MILE GARDEN

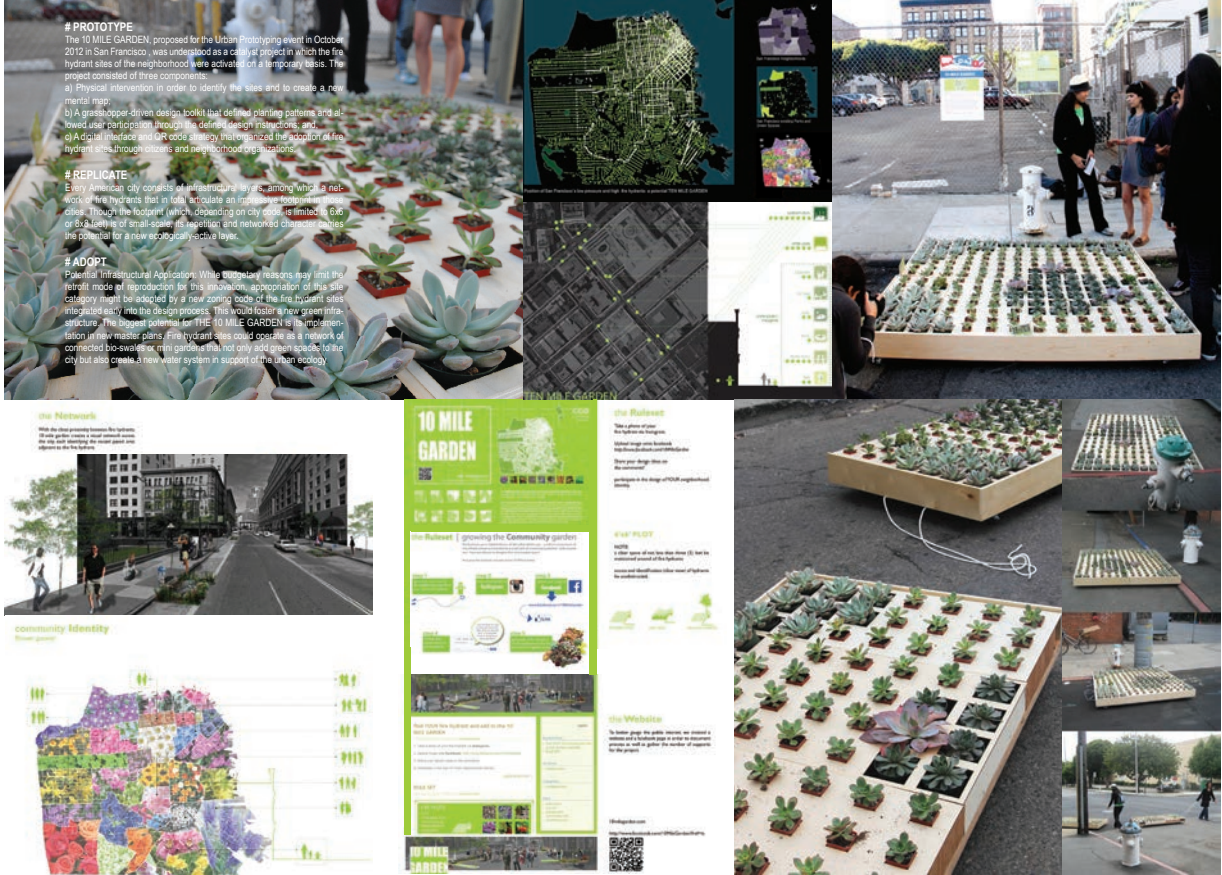
In 2009, the San Francisco Planning Department started to initiate tactics to create a new set of public spaces under the "Pavement to Parks Program". A new site category identified as a potential new site was suggested for the UP event and consisted of a proposal regarding the network of fire hydrants, which spreads throughout American cities at an average maximum spacing of 500 feet. At the scale of the City of San Francisco, the network of more than 9000 fire hydrants has the potential to create an additional ecological green footprint of 10 miles: programmed and implemented in small plots at the community and neighborhood level, without violating fire department regulations. Every square foot of this territory could be a bio-swale, a public pocket space, or a low planting bed. On a citywide level, this could initiate a new Flower-Power movement in which resistance is understood as a productive re-interpretation of existing [unnecessary] codes in support of the urban ecology.

URBANplay// The INSTANT[play]GROUND

The INSTANT[play]GROUND is a portable tool and catalytic agent in which a series of forgotten, unused or misused sites could be activated by the instant deployment of the urban game. The game takes no longer than an hour to install and users can start playing and after several games, IpG is placed back into the suitcase and can travel to another site. The area is instantly transformed into a play-zone. Within the context of the Urban Prototyping event in San Francisco in 2012, a series of sites were identified (corridor areas, alleys and residual spaces between buildings); the traveling project was tested as an instant activator to engage the players and the public audience. The project has a great potential to be used by a wide range of user groups, be mass-produced therefore globally replicated, and to be a portable urban catalyst to instigate and support civic engagement and participation.

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