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The Productive (Narrow) Lot

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GLOBALIZING ARCHITECTURE / FLOWS AND DISRUPTIONS

102ND ACSA ANNUAL MEETING

John Stuart + Mabel Wilson

PROJECT PROCEEDINGS

The Productive (Narrow) Lot

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In the face of climate change and resource scarcity, humans are seeking new ways to produce energy, food and materials, to repair our ecosystems, and to nurture community ties. A paradigm shift---from parasitic residence to productive urban occupation---demands that new programs be appliqued onto the current town fabric by appropriating underused spaces, reimagining building surfaces, and inserting new programming onto the existing framework of traditional dwelling models. From the scale of the neighborhood to the scale of the detail, productive architectural accretions could position the single-family house as a catalyst for change. Thus, this design proposal looks not to the design of individual high-density urban dwellings, but rather to their (Narrow) Lots, as the sites of greatest transformative potential.

Urban planners and architects typically design high-density urban dwellings focusing on the needs of human end-users including program synergies, energy efficiency, thermal comfort, social connection, and aesthetic delight.

While this approach ensures that humans will thrive in such a domicile, it fails to engage in the holistic visioning required to strategically position architecture as a change agent in addressing climate change. As Americans look for ways to repair the disconnect between farm and table, between humans and non-humans, between buildings and the natural world, the Productive (Narrow) Lot explores a more inclusive and interconnected, yet radical design approach.

This project proposes a “kit of parts” that transforms ordinary architectural elements into a productive tectonic language. With simple insertions and accretions -- design interventions that can be deployed over time and as needed -- the architecture of a conventional urban house can be put to work for more productive ends.

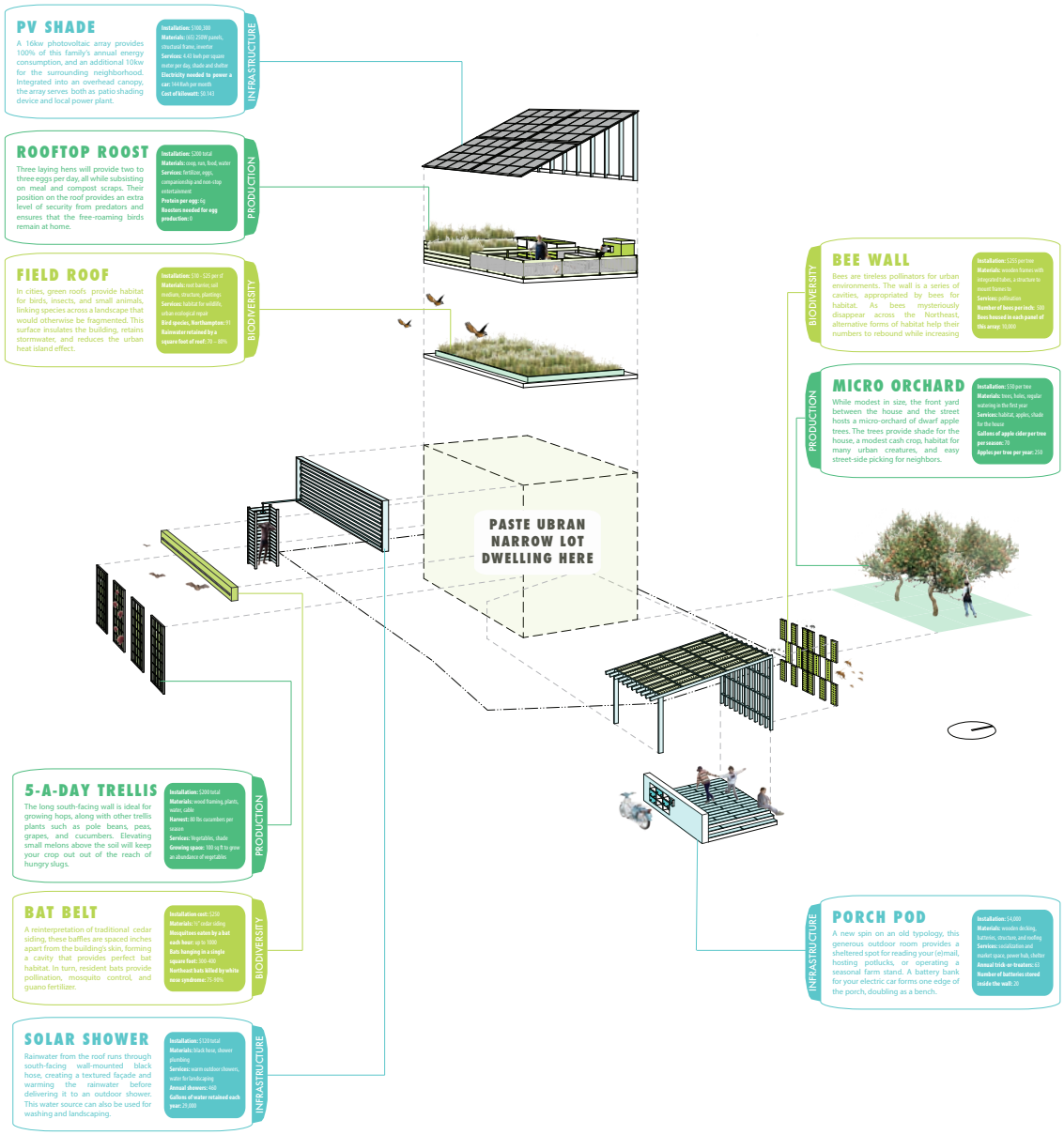
The Productive (Narrow) Lot proposal layers three new categories of design thinking onto the envelope of a typical single-family urban residence:

BIODIVERSITY: Design features that provide enhanced animal habitat and ecological services, improve soil and water conditions, or help to minimize the negative effects of climate change.

PRODUCTION: Surfaces that are reconsidered as spaces for animal husbandry, food cultivation, or the generation of new resources, such as fuel.

INFRASTRUCTURE: New systems that help to produce, protect, or preserve limited resources and energy reserves.

This menu of options can be mixed and matched in a variety of synergistic combinations. They can be assembled on any type of dwelling, irregardless of vintage or aesthetics. The productive potential implicit in many Urban Narrow Lots can, in aggregate, engender greater beneficial impact on their environment than their modest footprints suggest. It seems appropriately American, that a vision for the Productive Future City could begin at home.



the Productive [Narrow] Lot

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