

THE YARDWORKS PROJECT: DEVELOPING URBAN ECOLOGICAL DESIGN STRATEGIES FOR RESIDENTIAL PRIVATE PROPERTY

CERRA, JOSHUA F.

Cornell University, jfc299@cornell.edu

ABSTRACT

Private residential property already plays a significant role in urban ecosystems, yet considerable potential remains for improving the ecological performance of private gardens and landscapes. Urban ecological innovations on residential property however are only valuable if they are compatible with private landowner interests and needs- otherwise they may never be constructed. Landscape architects would benefit from more comprehensive guidance describing urban ecological design interventions that best fit within residential settings.

This paper describes the results of the first two years of studio research to develop urban ecological design strategies that are compatible with the programmatic and aesthetic goals of residential landowners. Each YardWorks Project began with a collaborative visioning and goal setting process at the neighborhood-level with community members. The design team then dropped down in scale to develop a set of site-level urban ecological design strategies that met these stewardship goals. Finally, the team tested these strategies by incorporating them into site-by-site designs while working directly with individual landowners during the process.

By year two the project developed residential landscape designs for over 35 properties, each incorporating urban ecological benefits compatible with the interests and needs of the owner. The results are organized into a series of emerging urban ecological design strategies for improving the landscape performance of private property in cities. These include strategies for landscape connectivity, vegetative structure, plant diversity, avian forage resource support, pollinator support, stormwater management, and others. Potential metrics for measuring the benefits of proposed project designs are also discussed.

Keywords

urban ecological design, urban habitat, residential design