The cityLAB Operating System is a model for a much-needed, new kind of practice. Particularly in the United States, the declining role of the public sector has left urban design with a weaker hand: urban problems do not have specific "clients" per se, and the thorniest problems in cities today are rarely site-specific. Yet as architects, our work is typically constrained by site and guided by clients. For cityLAB, these constraints are turned to an advantage: in contrast to a design firm, cityLAB makes its home in an academic institution, UCLA, so that it can seek out and initiate projects, rather than wait to be sought after. In initiating our own work, part of each undertaking is to construct our clients as we invent solutions. Likewise, no project at cityLAB exists in isolation, but rather is part of a family of undertakings that are applicable to cities at large. For us, every project must operate as both a specific solution and an urban exemplar. The lab’s priorities are guided by its five initiatives: rethinking green, postsuburbanism, spatial justice, new infrastructure, and urban sensing. Most projects address multiple initiatives. Like all good research, cityLAB’s demonstrations continue to fuel new iterations of each idea, in a kind of continuous incubation process. The continuous cycle spits out increasingly coherent conjectures about urban and architectural innovations that address current issues. When a prototype eventually goes to market, that is, when a demonstration is made public, it comes equipped with its own ecology of policy recommendations, implementation strategies, data support, and political momentum. cityLAB remains integral to that ecology, as we undertake related problems and develop new strategies.
Prop X [2006]
Prop X is an experiment to test new strategies for transforming the city through two distinct means: agile planning and constructive collaboration. We must model new policy—Prop X—to be responsive to existing conditions, flexible enough to change with the times, and mindful of an emergent urban order.

O-Z.LA [2006]
The current atmosphere of LA’s urbanism consists of defined O-Zones distributed across a residual field of holes delimited by policies of exclusion and disinvestment. The proliferation of diverse new O-Zones will disrupt older urban categories by producing new audiences that cut across those social and spatial statics, undermining previous models of identity politics and special interest.

Backyard Homes [2008-2012]
Backyard Homes proposes innovative, flexible, environmentally sensitive, and affordable architectural models for infilling Southern California’s iconic single-family residential fabric. This radical step has the potential to restructure sprawl in an intrinsically responsive manner: homeowners, and neighborhoods can incrementally make their own homes more flexible and more affordable.

Fast Forward Urbanism: Rethinking Architecture’s Engagement with the City [2007-11]
In the wake of recent failures in America’s urban infrastructure, an emerging group of activist designers are calling on architects to rethink their relationship to the city. ...they favor working with the realities of urban space, finding hidden opportunities in what already exists in our cities; they eschew monolithic, top-down approaches.
Superficial Superglow [2008-09]
Focusing on the condensation of multiple technologies into building enclosures, this research explores schemes that demonstrate the ability to provoke interaction, map interactions and reveal these flows through the integration of illumination, sensors and projectors within a full scale storefront system.

WPA 2.0 [2008-12]
WPA 2.0: Working Public Architecture began as an open design competition seeking innovative, implementable proposals that place infrastructure at the heart of rebuilding our cities during this next era of metropolitan recovery. It provides global access to the range of new ideas and resources gathered throughout the competition, workshop, and symposium.

Chia Mesa [2008-09]
CHIA MESA transforms the strip mall into a prototype and a recovery strategy for Phoenix. Rapid urbanization of the metro area—its unbridled horizontal expansion into the outlying landscape—has destroyed not only its potential agricultural productivity, but its civic identity as well.

Parking Day LA [2008]
The road is America’s largest public space. there are 3,981,512 miles of public road in the US, roughly 69 feet (.0132 miles) for each person in the country. Yet, we rarely treat the road as a public space. In celebration of Park(ing) Day 2008, the ‘drive-by, walk-in’ capitalized on this untapped social infrastructure, linking the public space of the road with the public space of the sidewalk.
cityLAB DESIGN/RESEARCH PORTFOLIO
2006-2016

Duck-and-Cover [2009-10]
*Duck-and-Cover: Thinking Out of the Big Box,* exploits the desire of retailers to build their brand, membership, or following through lifestyle and experience. By selecting levers of ecology, economy, technology, and identity, Duck-and-Cover gathers the political support necessary to reshape the big box as a metropolitan building type.

**postsurburban city**

Playa Rosa [2009-10]
Playa Rosa grew out of cityLAB’s WPA 2.0 ideas competitions and symposium in 2009. Located next to a major transit node, on the site of a failing commercial center in South Los Angeles, the Playa Rosa project works to define a new model of community revitalization for the post-sprawl era in the form of a hyper-consolidated public service hub.

**new infrastructure, spatial justice**

Tracks of Change [2009-11]
This multidisciplinary study conducts three interrelated investigations: 1) to determine the types of urban development that have emerged around high-speed stations elsewhere through the Delphi method, 2) to identify the likely effects of high-speed rail stations on the Southern California communities adjacent to them, and 3) to delineate the best policy and planning practices to bring about urban development aligned with the state’s larger environmental, land use, and transportation goals.

**new infrastructure, postsurburban city**

Westwood Village Vision [2010-11]
Westwood Village vision is a cityLAB research initiative that investigates the highly complex urban and political forces contributing to the current state of Westwood Village culminating with specific recommendations to revitalize Westwood Village as an attractive, economically vibrant, and sustainable area.

**new infrastructure, postsurburban city**
Westwood Blows Up! [2012-13]
The central theme revolves around the complex relationships among entertainment, performance, consumption, and technology as well as among spectacles, places, and communities. Through a diverse program of installation, theater, sound, video, games and the Internet, it focuses on the affects of entertainment and technology on arts and performance practices.

Digital Blue Sky [2011]
The Digital Blue Sky workshop considered two primary ways that spatial computing can enhance the residential environment: improving environmental performance and enriching social, community life. A fundamental issue: how can the digital infrastructure of hardware and software be designed so that it anticipates inevitable changes and evolves over time?

Up in the Air [2011-12]
This research project documents the various obstacles elevated rail stations face in leveraging light rail transit investments for transit-oriented development; develops a typology of urban design strategies for better integration of the stations to their surroundings; develops a set of performance and functional measures for these different urban design solutions; and test their application to a proposed and an existing Southern California Light Rail Transit highway median station.

Future of Work [2012-15]
In a multi-year effort, cityLAB and UCLA graduate students in Architecture and Urban Design collaborated with Gensler Los Angeles, UCLA I.S. Associates, and the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory to explore the Future of Work.
Divining Providencia [2012-14]
The project for Providencia envisions the new port city as a material and ethnographic analogue of the Amazon: an aggregation of differing yet interdependent artisanal trade associations and products. Anchored by both local industry as well as research institutions, the plan leverages the opportunities presented by the through-put of resources there to become a new model of transshipment zone.

rethinking green, spatial justice

OP CITY: Figuring the Urban Future [2012-13]
OP CITY brought together collaborative teams of architects and media artists and explored how the urban future may be extrapolated or “produced” by observing the city in new ways that these technologies afford—from mapping and diagrams to graphic narrative, gaming/motion graphics and digitally-manipulated photography.

postsuburban city, rethinking green, new infrastructure

Ambient Informatics [2012-15]
Ambient Informatics project brings aesthetics, technology, and innovative design together to create a new public experience in Westwood Village Los Angeles. It advances research into the use of “ambient informatics,” a type of pervasive computing that communicates information in everyday environments without the use of language, numbers, visual icons, or screens.

urban sensing, new infrastructure

Mayors’ Institute on City Design [2013]
The design of many American cities is frequently plagued by a disconnect between political constraints and design opportunities. In an effort to close this gap, cityLAB convened mayors from seven western cities with a team of architecture, design, real estate, and city planning professionals to discuss design approaches to specific issues in each city. These ranged from waterfront development challenges to "town-and-gown" linkages.

postsuburban city, spatial justice, new infrastructure
Backyard BIHOME [2015-2016]
Developed as an extension of cityLAB’s Backyard Homes study, the Backyard BIHOME is an ultra-modern, lightweight accessory dwelling unit that has the potential to meet the current demand for 100,000 additional housing units in Los Angeles while also serving as a biome by providing habitats for other species, too.

rethinking green, postsuburban city

Housing in the RiverCity: Rethinking Place and Process [2015]
The RiverCity Gothenburg Vision is built upon ideals intended to guide the city’s growth over the coming decades. This research looked at the future of the RiverCity through an architectural lens: How can the next housing districts be better designed to encourage neighborhoods that are better integrated with their contexts, more sustainable, and more socioeconomically diverse?

rethinking green, spatial justice

JPL Deep Think [2015-16]
cityLAB’s 18-month collaboration with JPL leads to a series of design schemes that incorporate innovative architectural and technological strategies for deep think and collaboration.

urban sensing

California Assembly Bill 2299 [2016-17]
With Assemblyman Richard Bloom’s office, cityLAB wrote a new state bill, signed by Governor Brown in September 2016 that became law January 1, 2017. The new law ensures that accessory dwelling units, or backyard homes, can be built on more single-family lots throughout California, increasing neighborhood environmental benefits, stability, and affordability.

postsuburban city