

Game Design Document: [Isletopia GDD](#)

Itch game publish page: <https://mdddr.itch.io/isletopia>

Rulebook: [Click here to access shared file](#)

Isletopia

Introduction

Isletopia is a competitive city-building board game set across a charming archipelago of islands. Each player assumes the role of a specialized agency tasked with developing a thriving urban district. From housing and education to transportation and food services, every role brings unique strategies and abilities that affect how land is claimed and expanded.

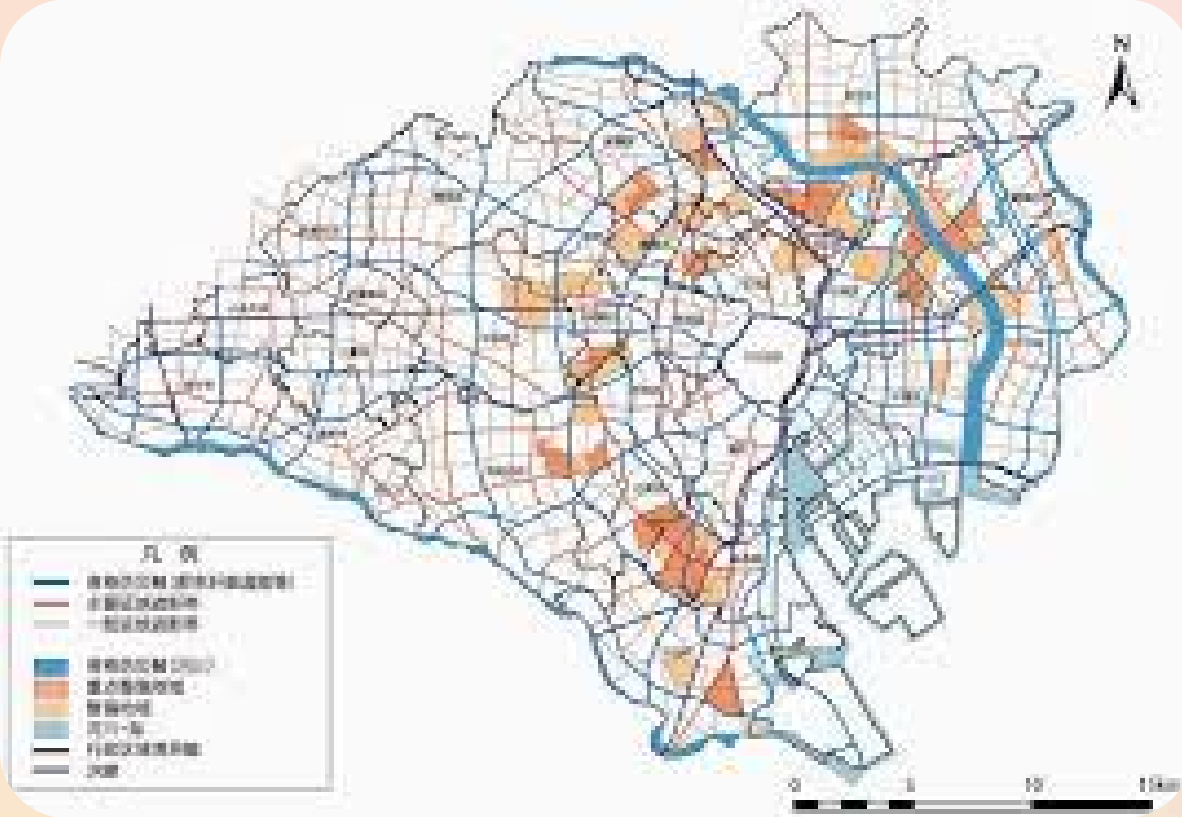
Through careful planning, negotiation, and strategic expansion, players aim to build the most prosperous, well-connected, and influential city. Isletopia blends luck, strategy, and urban creativity, offering a playful and engaging experience for 3 to 6 players.

Individual Project



Inspiration

New York exemplifies a grid-based planning logic that organizes development into uniform parcels. This structure allowed both organic growth and large-scale redevelopment projects like Times Square, Battery Park City, and Hudson Yards. The combination of strict zoning, massive subway coverage, and intense land pressure makes it one of the most vertically developed cities in the world.



Tokyo is characterized by extremely fine-grain, hyperdense neighborhood development where small plots, narrow streets, and mixed uses exist side by side. Flexible zoning allows residential, commercial, and small industry buildings to coexist, resulting in organic, constantly changing urban fabric. Public transit stations form major nodes that drive local activity and property values.

Conclusion

Urban planning approaches vary widely across regions, shaped by history, land availability, governance, and cultural priorities. Around the world, regions grow and organize themselves in dramatically different ways. These contrasting approaches reveal how urban form is shaped by history, policy, culture, and resource availability. Some cities prioritize public services as anchors of growth, while others rely on transportation networks or housing demand to drive expansion.

Research



Game Rule



Isletopia

Isletopia is a competitive–cooperative strategy game where players take on specialized city-building roles and work together to develop a functional archipelago. Each player expands territory, constructs buildings, triggers adjacency bonuses, and navigates events to maximize their district’s revenue.

Players begin with limited land on one island and must expand each round by rolling dice. Once a player controls enough connected land, they may construct buildings unique to their role. Although each role has its own objectives, collaboration often creates higher rewards.

The goal is to accumulate the highest revenue by the end of the game.

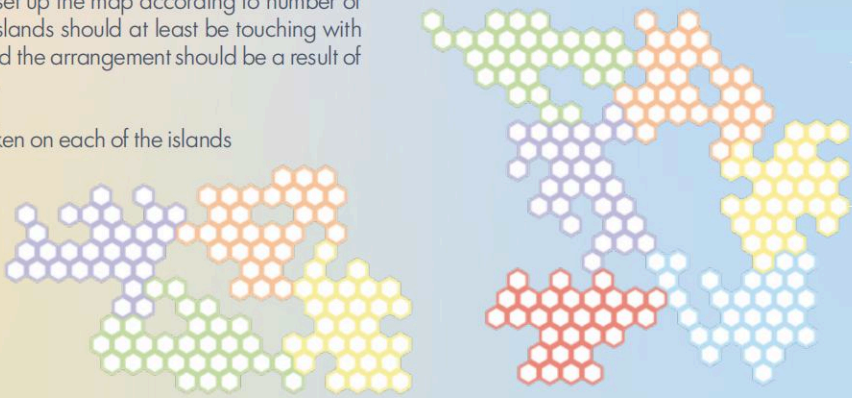
Components

- 6 Island boards
- Land Tokens
- Building Tokens
- Role Cards
- Event Cards
- Currency notes
- 1 Standard D6
- Rulebook

Set-up

Players together set up the map according to number of participants. All islands should at least be touching with another island and the arrangement should be a result of everyone agrees.

Place a starter token on each of the islands

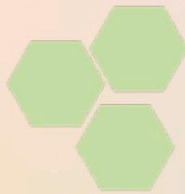


Role Packages

Role Card

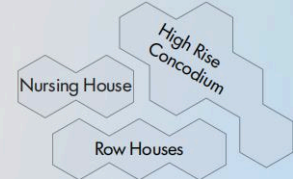
Each Player should draw one role card and play this role during the game. Every role stands for an important aspect to consider during the city planning of Isletopia. Your role determines the three types of buildings you can construct and grants you a unique special skill that affects land expansion or placement rules. Be sure to read your role carefully before the game begins. Your abilities can shape your strategy, influence how you expand across the islands, and unlock powerful advantages throughout the game.

Land Tokens



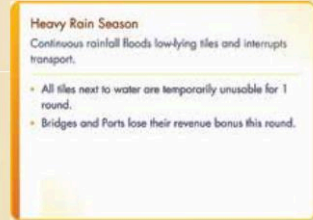
This is the tokens used when occupying the land. Put one token on the land you want to occupy.

Building Tokens



To build a building, pay the cost of establishment and put this token onto the land tokens. Remember each building have differnet bonus renewes, check the appended table.

Event Cards



At the beginning of every round, players draw one Event Card to reveal an island-wide occurrence taking place in Isletopia. These events reflect the dynamic cultural life of the archipelago and can temporarily alter economic activity or introduce new strategic opportunities. Some celebrations boost revenue for certain building types, while others may restrict land expansion or adjust operating costs. Events only last for the current round, encouraging players to adapt their strategies and take advantage of short-term benefits.

More Details



Isletopia’s game play is mainly divided into two stages: land expansion and building establishment. Once players acquire a decent number of land, they can chose or build buildings on the top of it. Also lands are a nice property for negotiation and communication among players.

Game Flow

Each round in Isletopia follows a consistent sequence. All players complete the round before moving to the next one.

At the beginning of each round, draw one Event Card and read it aloud. The event applies immediately and remains active for the entire round unless otherwise specified.

Player turns: Each player takes their turn individually and here are the steps to follow.

1. Roll a dice to determine your action point this round.
2. you need to choose one of the following actions:
 - A. Expand Land
 - You may claim a number of land blocks equal to your dice result.
 - All new land must be adjacent to territory you already control (unless your role’s ability allows exceptions).
 - If your role has a special expansion skill (ex. Transportation Authority can expand across water edges), apply it here.
 - B. Construct a Building
 - You may construct one building if both conditions are met:
 - Your dice roll matches the building’s size
 - Example: To build a Nursing Home (size 2), you must roll a 2.
 - You already control enough land blocks equal to its size.
 - If you meet the requirements:
 - i. Pay the cost of establishment to the Bank
 - ii. Place the building token on your controlled land
 - C. Take down lands
 - You can chose to retrieve a number of land blocks equal to your dice result.
 - if there is a building on the land, pay a deconstruct fee equal to the coverage x 200 to the bank and construction workers will take down your building.
 - D. Pass this round
 - If you cannot do anything above, you skip your turn.

Revenue Collection
After all players have taken their turns, the group enters the Revenue Phase.

- Calculate the base revenue from every building they own
- Apply bonus or penalty effects from building adjacency
- Apply any temporary effects from the Event Card
- Collect the total amount from the Bank

This income becomes the player’s starting money for the next round.

Winning Conditions

The game ends when any player runs out of Land Tokens. Finish the current round, including Revenue Collection.

Then each player counts their total coins.

Winner: The player with the highest total money becomes the most successful developer of Isletopia.

Bonus Win

In addition to the standard victory, players may achieve a special shared accomplishment:

Collective Success

All players win together if:

- All Land Tokens from all players have been placed on the map,
- At least one building of each Building Type exists on the board.

If this happens at any point, all players are considered to have jointly completed the development of Isletopia.

This is a bonus win state and does not replace the standard scoring. Players may celebrate the collaborative success in addition to determining the top individual revenue winner if they choose.



Play Time: 40–90 minutes
Players: 3–6

Build boldly. Compete cleverly. Thrive together.

Designed by: Guene Mao
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Table of Buildings

Role	Building Size	Building Name	cost of establishment	basic revenue per round	bonus and effectors	restriction
Coffy House Developer	2	Nursing home	500	100	if next to hospital, +400	
	3	Row houses	900	200	if next to K12 or grocery , +200	
	5	High-Rise Condominium	2200	500	if next to any transportation, +100 by count	
Transportation Authority	1	tier	500	100	if next to factory, +200	only next to water
	2	Bridge	900	200	if all island are connected, +200 per bridge	only between two islands
	6	Airport	2700	600	if next to stadium, +400, if next to residential building, -100	
LIONS (Public Utility Bureau)	2	Library	900	200	if next to fire station, -200 per round	
	3	Hospital	1800	400	if next to residential building, +200	
	5	Stadium	2200	500	if next to airport, +400, if next to tier +200, +500 max	cannot be on adjacent two islands
BrightFuture Education Group	2	Culinary School	900	200	if next to food factory / grocery, +200	
	3	K12 Schools	1400	300	if next to airport, -200	
	5	University	2700	600	if next to hospital or stadium, +300 per round	cannot be on adjacent two islands
TASTY Food Company	1	Fast Food Chain	500	100	if next to transport, +100	
	2	Grocery Store	900	200	if next to more than 2 residential housing, +300	
	4	Food Factory	1800	400	if next to transportation, +300, if next to housing, -200	
Community of Wellbeing	2	fire Station	900	200	if next to more than 2 residential housing, +300	
	3	Park	1200	200	if next to factory, +200	
	5	Waste Monagement Center	1800	400	if next to housing institute, -100 per round	

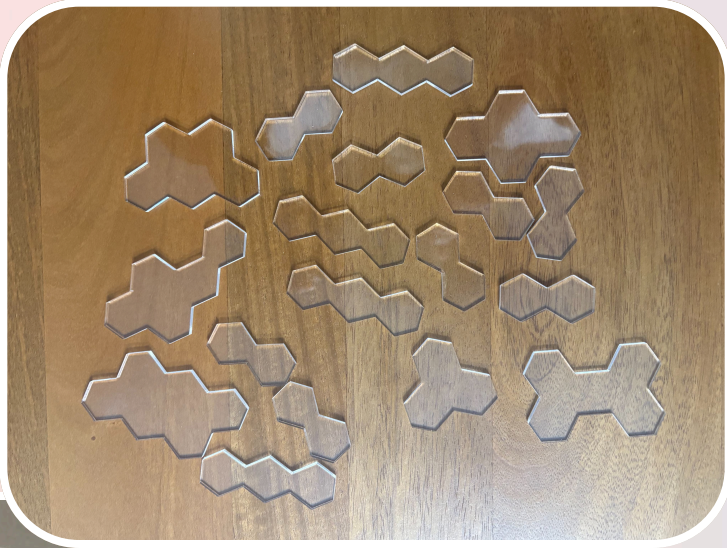
Prototype

Map Testing



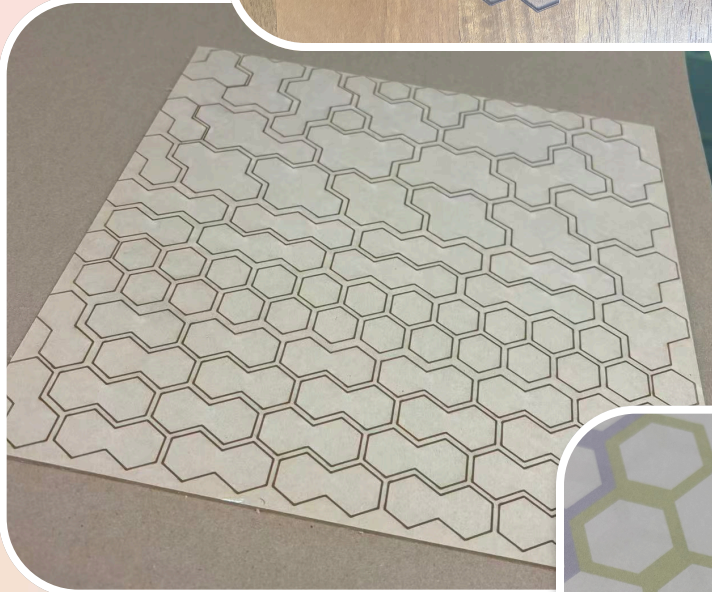
Map

Larger map base are printed using plotter. In this version the



Land Tokens

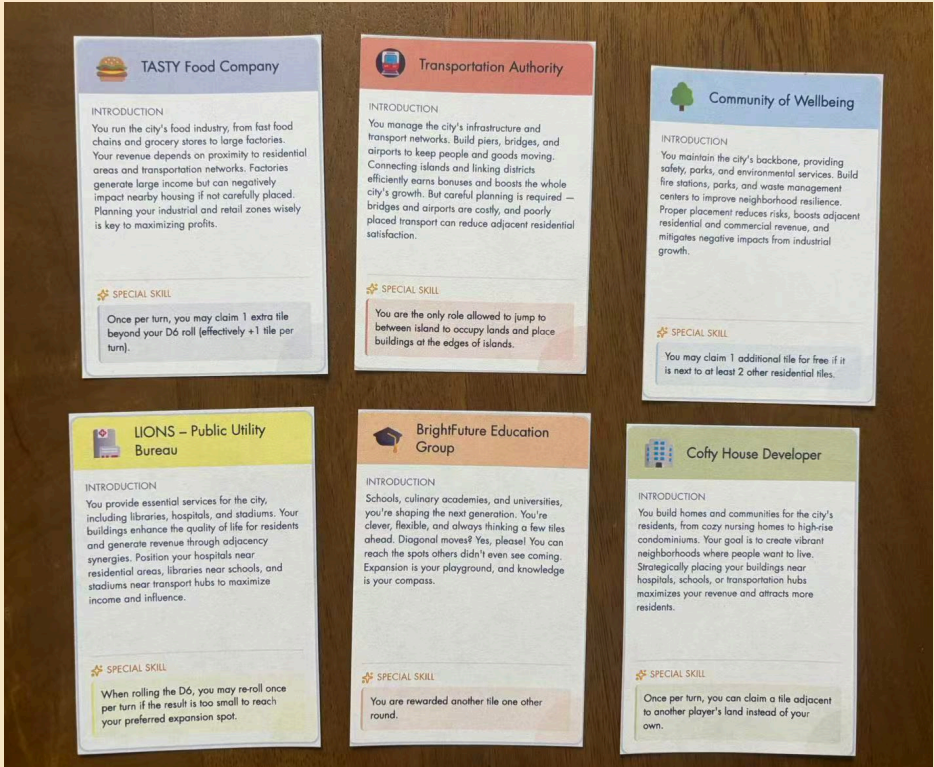
Land tokens are made using laser cutters in dFab lab. It was using chip board and later hand stick with different colored prints.



Buidling Tokens
Building tokens are lasercutted with acrylic.



Card Testing



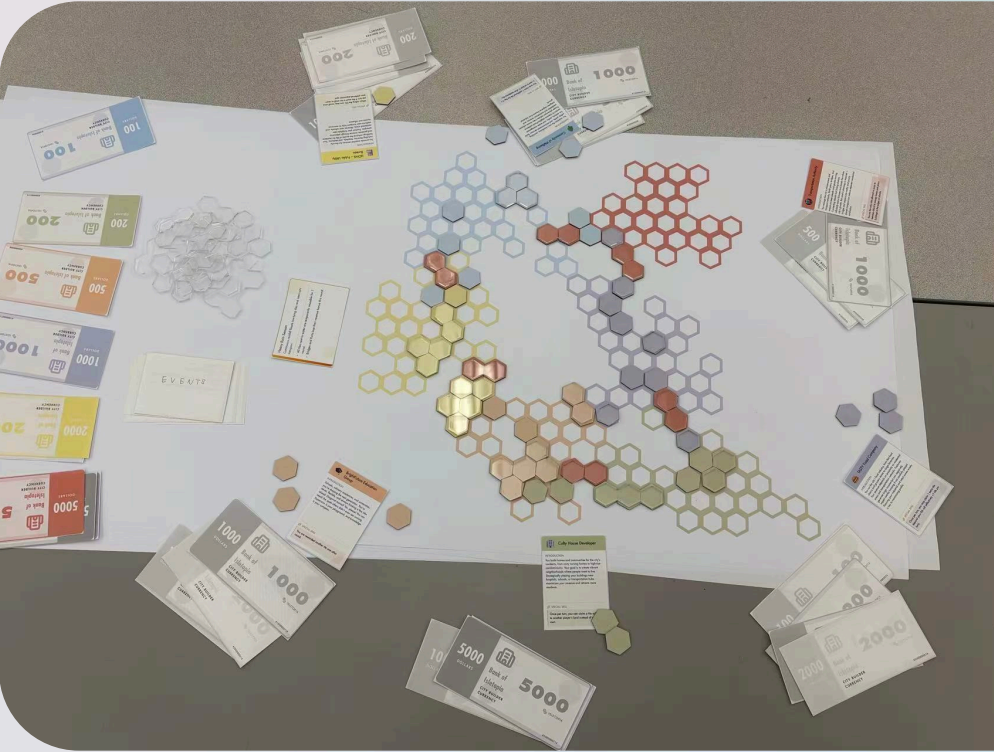
Card used in prototypes are evolved from text only to additions of small UI elements. It turns out that the minimal of decoration elements added is cohesive with overall aesthetic.



All printable materials in prototyping are colored printouts only.

Play test

First Test



The first play-test was short and mainly focusing on the game play of land talking and event systems. Modifications upon the first playtest include variation of the building and assign the buildings to roles, and adding different ways of map composition.

Final Test



Final play-test introduce more game-play with buildings and the bank. The players subjectively tried to collaborate by trading building blocks and try to make full use of the bonus systems with negotiation and maximize the communal revenue.

Feedback & Interview



Ellen, 19 years old

"The event cards add nice unpredictability, though a few feel too punishing compared to the benefits."



Ellen, Urban Planning

"I love how district specialization emerges naturally, but the dice sometimes limit long-term planning."



Steve, Board game enthusiasts

"The adjacency bonuses feel rewarding, some buildings like stadium still feel hard to place strategically."

Card Design

**Cofy House Developer**

INTRODUCTION

You build homes and communities for the city's residents, from cozy nursing homes to high-rise condominiums. Your goal is to create vibrant neighborhoods where people want to live. Strategically placing your buildings near hospitals, schools, or transportation hubs maximizes your revenue and attracts more residents.

SPECIAL SKILL

Once per turn, you can claim a tile adjacent to another player's land instead of your own.

**Transportation Authority**

INTRODUCTION

You manage the city's infrastructure and transport networks. Build piers, bridges, and airports to keep people and goods moving. Connecting islands and linking districts efficiently earns bonuses and boosts the whole city's growth. But careful planning is required — bridges and airports are costly, and poorly placed transport can reduce adjacent residential satisfaction.

SPECIAL SKILL

You are the only role allowed to jump to between island to occupy lands and place buildings at the edges of islands.

**LIONS – Public Utility Bureau**

INTRODUCTION

You provide essential services for the city, including libraries, hospitals, and stadiums. Your buildings enhance the quality of life for residents and generate revenue through adjacency synergies. Position your hospitals near residential areas, libraries near schools, and stadiums near transport hubs to maximize income and influence.

SPECIAL SKILL

When rolling the D6, you may re-roll once per turn if the result is too small to reach your preferred expansion spot.

**BrightFuture Education Group**

INTRODUCTION

Schools, culinary academies, and universities, you're shaping the next generation. You're clever, flexible, and always thinking a few tiles ahead. Diagonal moves? Yes, please! You can reach the spots others didn't even see coming. Expansion is your playground, and knowledge is your compass.

SPECIAL SKILL

You are rewarded another tile one other round.

**TASTY Food Company**

INTRODUCTION

You run the city's food industry, from fast food chains and grocery stores to large factories. Your revenue depends on proximity to residential areas and transportation networks. Factories generate large income but can negatively impact nearby housing if not carefully placed. Planning your industrial and retail zones wisely is key to maximizing profits.

SPECIAL SKILL

Once per turn, you may claim 1 extra tile beyond your D6 roll (effectively +1 tile per turn).

**Community of Wellbeing**

INTRODUCTION

You maintain the city's backbone, providing safety, parks, and environmental services. Build fire stations, parks, and waste management centers to improve neighborhood resilience. Proper placement reduces risks, boosts adjacent residential and commercial revenue, and mitigates negative impacts from industrial growth.

SPECIAL SKILL

You may claim 1 additional tile for free if it is next to at least 2 other residential tiles.

The role cards are drawn at the start of the game. It determines the three types of buildings players construct and grants a special skill that affects land expansion. The roles are designed according to the various type of buildings and usage of the site within a matured neighborhood during the research phases. These are considered essential in urban planning in real life as it simulate the tension and collaboration of different land use between different occupiers of the land. The same strategies are borrowed in this game by assigning players different abilities but try to balance agencies between the six roles.

Heavy Rain Season 4.2.1

Continuous rainfall floods low-lying tiles and interrupts transport.

- All tiles next to water are temporarily unusable for 1 round.
- Bridges and Ports lose their revenue bonus this round.

City Anniversary Festival 4.2.2

The whole city celebrates! People spend more, businesses thrive.

- All buildings gain +200 revenue this round.
- Restaurants (Fast Food Chains, Grocery Stores) earn +100 extra bonus.

**Isletoptopia**
EVENT CARD

**Isletoptopia**
ROLE CARD

Tax Reform 4.2.3

The city introduces new property taxation rules.

- Residential and Public Utility buildings now yield -100 revenue.
- Factories and Ports gain 100 more revenue (industrial tax breaks).

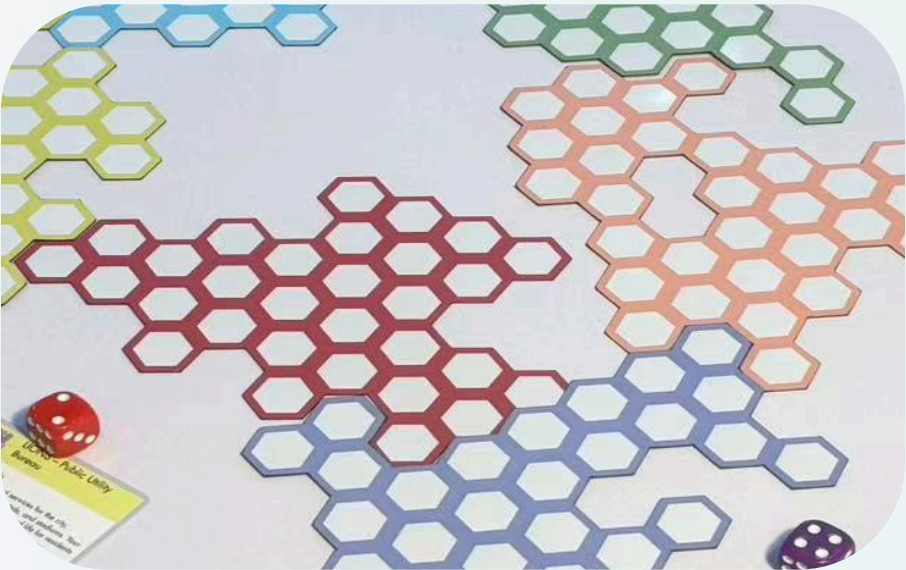
Graduation Season 4.2.4

The education sector thrives; parents donate to schools.

- K12 Schools and Universities gain +300 each.
- Libraries next to them gain +200 each.

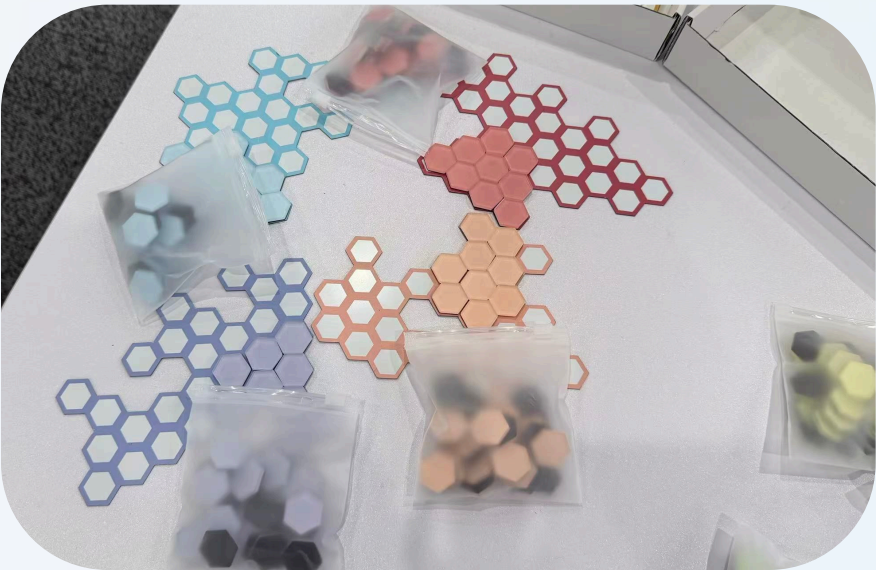
In order to add more fun to the game, events systems are added to make the game more interesting and engaging. The system mimics the incidences of real life that are not controllable by urban planners and merchants. In game play, this largely generate randomness in the game and relates the game to real life.

Other Elements



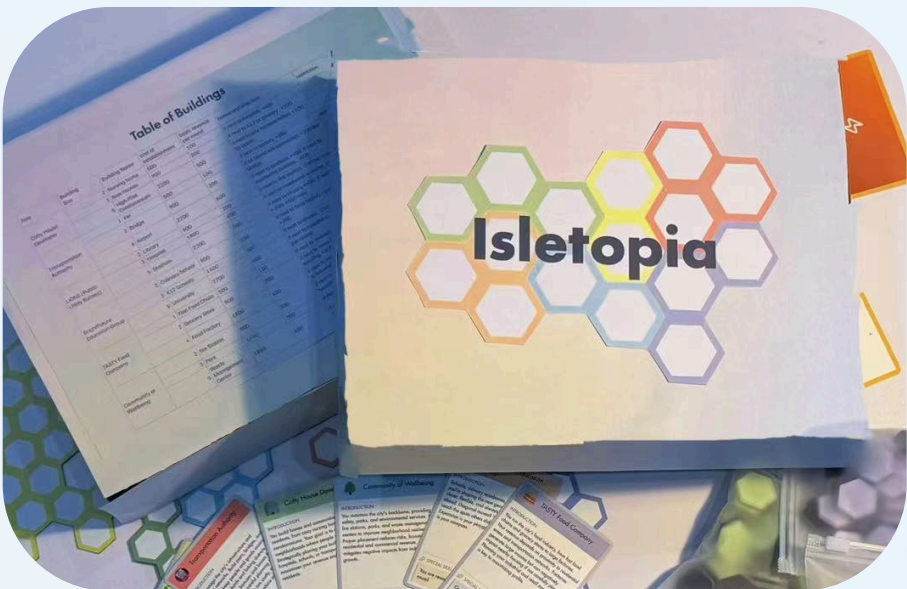
Island Board
The island board are printed metal boards customized in factories. They are designed to be in 6 different pieces so that players can create and compose their own map. The metal board makes the pieces easily attached to the island board base, making the whole thing steady on table.

Tokens
All tokens are printed or etched acrylics. The land tokens have the magnetic layers at their back so that they can easily attached to the base boards. Building tokens are etched with names with minimal aesthetic. The etches are hard to tell so more colors are added manually afterwards.



Cards
Cards are printed with 3.5 * 2.5 inch standard American playing card size and material.

Rule book
The rule book is printed in local printing workshop. The rule books is printed in pamphlet format so that information is most handy for players.



Final Outcome

