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4 Ways to Reimagine Boring Old Scaffolding

It's taking over a city near you—but it doesn't need to be a bore.

[AARIAN MARSHALL](#)

Construction sheds—what most regular city folks [call scaffolding](#)—cover some 200 miles of New York City sidewalk, infecting the metropolis with dark green boards and unnerving shadows. For the most part, construction sheds are both monotonous and everywhere, which is why the New York Building Congress [launched a competition last summer](#) to redesign them completely.

And the results are in! A committee of real estate, architecture, and construction specialists, including [a top official](#) in the city's Department of Design and Construction, have reviewed 33 construction shed proposals and selected four winners. The designs will be evaluated by the New York City Department of Buildings for code compliance, according to Commissioner Rick Chandler, and could be used by city developers in the future.

Wider and airier



(New York Building Congress)

G-Shed, the winning design from Gensler, features modular, adjustable posts that create wider, brighter, more spacious arcades. They also don't get in the way of store signage in the way that current construction sheds do, allowing local businesses more opportunities to advertise.

On the wings of a construction shed



(New York Building Congress)

SCAFFOLDWING, the design from Gannett Fleming Engineers and Architects, P.C., is based on, yes, wings. These overhead appendages stretch out and up to provide the street and its walkers with natural light. The design's upper decking is made of translucent polycarbonate panels, which keep "the structure feeling light," as the New York Building Congress notes in its write-up of the winner.

Bright fabric



(New York Building Congress)

Side+Ways+Shed, the winning proposal from Francis Cauffman, avoids the myriad metal posts that tend to darken city streets. Instead, this shed opts for bright LED lights, powered by the sun, as well as structural components wrapped in colorful fabric to enliven the street even as it's getting a tune-up.

Inspired by nature



(New York Building Congress)

UrbanArbor, the final winning design from PBDW Architects and Anastos Engineering Associates, features colorful, Y-shaped posts that provide structural integrity—fewer poles to dodge!—and imitate the branches of trees. It's also complete with LED lights, solar panels, and translucent parapets that allow in more sun.

UrbanArbor got a special shoutout from city design and construction head Feniosky Peña-Mora—a good sign that this colorful design may appear on actual streets in the future.

“The 'Urban Arbor' proposal is poetic, evoking a tree-lined boulevard, but also pragmatic, using less material more efficiently,” Peña-Mora said in a statement, calling the design the shed of the “21st century.” The future is as glamorous as we had always hoped.