CONSTRUCTING A SIDEWALK LABORATORY

As part of NYC’s Urban Shed design competition, MPA proposed a flexible and multifunctional urban infrastructure that learns from innovation to support both construction activities and public space.

Permanently temporary, the sidewalk shed is continuously recombined by individual contractors to meet thousands of unique site conditions. PerformanceSHED takes inventory of this inventiveness to leverage it across the system. By studying existing sheds and creating a platform for knowledge sharing, the Inventory informs a kit of parts which in turn can be used and tested city-wide.

PerformanceSHED simplifies the elements of the existing scaffold system, employing larger spans and fewer members, while adding a toolbox of recombinable components. These elements enable the basic shed to meet complex site conditions and to support a robust and site-specific public space. Water elements manage stormwater and care for street trees; light elements direct daylight and illumination to animate the underside; urban streetscape elements provide program like bicycle storage, benches, and exercise equipment.

Using this system of parts, the new SHED supports construction activities above and urban life below. Learning from the Inventory to continuously adapt, the Shed becomes a laboratory of human-based urban infrastructures and a locus of opportunity for city, community, and arts agencies. Contractors are shedPARTNERS, contributing knowledge and experience to a system that responds to their needs.

RECOGNITION

NYC Urban Shed Design Competition, Exhibited Entry, 2009