South Broadway in Yonkers is the kind of street that is part of almost every city, but has largely been forgotten. A mile-long strip of neighborhood-oriented shops and auto-related businesses, it is also a route for trucks and buses leading to New York. The street is lined with low-rise buildings, parking lots, and a park.

Two years ago Yonkers sought proposals for reconstructing South Broadway. Our concept addressed the way pedestrians and drivers would experience moving along the street. Many of the following design elements, unfortunately, were left out during construction.

We gave the street a strong visual rhythm, pacing it with six evenly spaced, specially treated activity areas. Each corresponded to a functional element, such as a city gateway or municipal parking lot and bus stops. We lined the street with trees, but varied the species in the various segments between the activity areas. The tree spacing fluctuated, with the densest planting in areas of highest pedestrian activity. Lighting and signage established visual rhythms at night.

The activity areas were given special treatment. The city gateway consisted of a series of tall signs on both sides of the street, then a series of business, with duplicating activities that occur along the street. Their spacing tightened as mountains proceeded into the city to create a dynamic of densification.

The five other areas are also gateways—parking lots and bus stops where people leave vehicles and become pedestrians. They were left free of trees and marked by lines of dense, low, cool lighting (10-foot poles, mercury vapor lamps), which contrasted with the high, warm lights (30-foot poles, high-pressure sodium vapor lamps, cola bottle fixtures capped with blue tops) that march down the street in pairs every 100 feet. In front of each parking lot the pedestrian space was widened by six feet to accommodate amenities such as seating and lighting and signage that would lead pedestrians into adjacent commercial areas.

We emphasized the use of quoinessential materials and equipment for street furniture and signage to ensure low and cost-effective maintenance. Poles, fences, and trash receptacles were badged aluminum and hot-dipped galvanized steel. Gateway, bus stops, and parking lot signs consisted of reflective stainless steel signs on aluminum sheets, like those typically used for highway signage. We also highlighted the six specially treated areas with horizontal markers—sandblasted text in the concrete sidewalk to mark the parking lots, reflective delineators, and curbs of giant letters (reflective material, like that used for highway striping, affixed to the sidewalk) spelling out “South Broadway” for arriving pedestrians and motorists.
South Broadway Streetscape Program

Signage and lighting are scaled and horizontal bands that respond to the varying speeds of movement of pedestrians and vehicles. Informational signage is located at bus stops and parking lots, where people begin their pedestrian journeys along the streets.