The Phoenix Public Art Department has agreed to curate an “urban art gallery” using these panels. This will change every six to twelve months, providing display space for local artists, school art programs, and local cultural groups. Additional vertical panels are deployed as vine supports that support a 92-180 foot long box. A standard urban unit, the parking space, provided the basis for the lateral dimensions of the Lampshade, while its height (12 feet clear to grade) was based on the need for a garbage truck to pass beneath. In the chaotic environment of the strip, the Lampshade’s standard vertical dimensions will establish an important new design datum. By being able to combine covered parking, pedestrian lighting, and signage into one flexible unit the Lampshade does in one move what typically requires three. During the day it can provide shade for a multitude of activities, while at night it can provide illumination for pedestrian safety and evening events. In the demonstration project, the vertical faces of the Lampshade are adorned with an enlarged image of an Evergreen Elm branch—the species planted nearby. But merchants will also be able to purchase the Lampshade to replace less effective signage (as well as provide shaded parking).

Single LampShades can be adapted to accommodate photovoltaic cells and battery storage for off-grid use. They can also be multiplied in a variety of configurations, depending on the conditions of a site. Bus stops, parking areas, commercial display, and outdoor eating are among the uses they could complement. In 2004, the Phoenix Department of Street Transportation established the LampShade as one of its standard details. In addition to the new amenity infrastructures, other tactics were employed to help the merchants along 7th Avenue. A consultant was employed to establish a common color palette they can refer to when repainting their building exteriors. Graphic designers created a new letterform and logo for the district—now called “Melrose on Seventh Avenue” after the surrounding Melrose Neighborhood. Others collaborated on signage and graphic elements for the LampShades.

Such identity-creating measures—now reproduced on letterhead, banners, business cards, and T-shirts—are helping the Merchants Association create a new vitality for their district within the Phoenix metro area.

Notes
2. This section of 7th Avenue lies within the 85013 zip code. The 2000 U.S. Census found this to contain 21,642 people, with a median age of 36 and a median household income of $41,170 (median family income of $46,947). The median value of a single-family, owner-occupied home was $190,910.
3. The design of these prototypes is the result of a unique partnership among Arizona State University’s School of Architecture, the 7th Avenue Merchants Association, the Melrose Neighborhood, and the Department of Streets and Transportation, Neighborhood Services, Public Art, Planning, Community and Economic Development, and Development Services of the City of Phoenix.
5. Subsequently, an additional $75,000 was granted for Phase 2 of the project, which will be completed in August 2005.
6. In his book Points + Lines: Diagonals and Project for the City, Stan Allan gives an appropriate definition of infrastructure. He states that the primary modes of operation for infrastructures are the division, allocation and construction of surfaces; the provision of services to support future programs; and the establishment of networks for movement, communication and exchange. In the 7th Avenue context, urban amenity infrastructures could be considered any public or private modification to existing right-of-ways, alleys, utility easements, setbacks, and retention areas peripheral to the street that help create a connective tissue of experience.
7. The following collaborators and consultants were hired to provide specific expertise for the project: Jane Waldo, Landscape Architect, of Waldo and Associates, collaborated on the hardscape design. Cola Comer, of Comer Design, provided the color palette. Prof. Jennifer Brungart collaborated on the graphic design for the canopies. Prof. Andy Wood collaborated on the graphic design for the Melrose on Seventh Avenue identity package. Prof. Matthew James collaborated on the structural design for the LampShades. The evaluation of this project is indebted to Lisa Hobson, Neighborhood Specialist, City of Phoenix; Tom Simplot, Councilman, District 4; and Phil Gordon, Mayor of the City of Phoenix.

When Suburbia Awakens
Lars Lerup

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