

THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER BLOG

NY Designers Nicing, Icing Stalled Sites

East | 7.15.10 | Matt Chaban



An Art-Bridge installation in Chelsea.

Construction may not be expected to [pick up](#) until next year, but the city is already prepping for it with [the UrbanCanvas program](#), for which registration closes Monday. The Department of Buildings and Department of Cultural Affairs are seeking out designers and artists to create new scaffolding, fencing, and other otherwise unsightly construction protections, of which there are nearly 1 million linear feet. If that's not enough, [ArtBridge](#), a Chelsea non-profit, is pursuing a similar program, albeit just with the overhead scaffolding—which are also [due for a redesign](#)—though ArtBridge submissions are due tomorrow, so get cracking. And should you be not a designer but a building, or more accurately empty lot, owner looking an alternative way to dress up your site, consider Woods Bagot's Icebergs. As the firm describes them:

The design uses a modular and reusable steel frame, wrapped in translucent polycarbonate panels at grade and topped by inflated pillows of super-lightweight ETFE (ethylene tetrafluoroethylene). One-tenth the weight of a conventional taxpayer building and able to be erected and dismantled in days, Icebergs deliver speed to market, reduce labor costs, and minimize future development hurdles. Icebergs achieve these economies by optimizing two of earth's most affordable materials: air and light. The translucent roof is made of self-cleaning polymer sheets, one percent the weight of glass, and air-filled to form rigid "pillows". These pillows are supported by "air beams"—used in airplane emergency slides and lightweight tents—to create the iconic pyramid forms that shed rain and snow.

The Icebergs could transform hundreds of vacant sites here and around the world into events spaces. It's a great idea. Until the buildings comes back. Which [can't come soon enough](#).

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