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**SAA** SCAFFOLD & ACCESS  
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

# PROJECT OF THE YEAR:

## Supported scaffolding

### REVIEW

Committee Week

### WORKFORCE

Generations and  
communication

### COLUMN

David Glabe's  
scaffold test





# CHALLENGES CLIMBED, HISTORY RESTORED

Sunbelt Rentals Scaffolding recently completed work on Miami's Freedom Tower, and saw its efforts bring home a coveted industry award. **Scaffold & Access** reports.

**T**he Freedom Tower in Miami is a historic landmark with a rich and diverse history. Built in 1925, it originally served as the headquarters and printing facility for The Miami News, one of the city's major newspapers. Designed by the architectural firm Schultze and Weaver, the tower's design is inspired by the Giralda Tower in Seville, Spain, embodying a Mediterranean Revival style that adds to its iconic presence in the Miami skyline.

In the 1960s, the Freedom Tower became the Cuban Assistance Center, offering essential services to Cuban refugees fleeing Fidel Castro's regime. Nearly 100 years of age necessitated extensive exterior restoration of the Freedom Tower. Sunbelt Rentals Scaffolding provided the access needed to complete this project. Thornton Construction was commissioned to undertake comprehensive rehabilitation and repairs of the building envelope. The scope of work included concrete and steel maintenance, repair of steel lintels at existing openings, masonry upkeep, and cement plaster (stucco) repairs. Additional tasks involved the replacement of joint sealants, flashing, and copper roofing maintenance, as well as the reinforcement of exterior walls at new louver

locations. The project also included repainting and related work to ensure the building's structural integrity and aesthetic appeal.

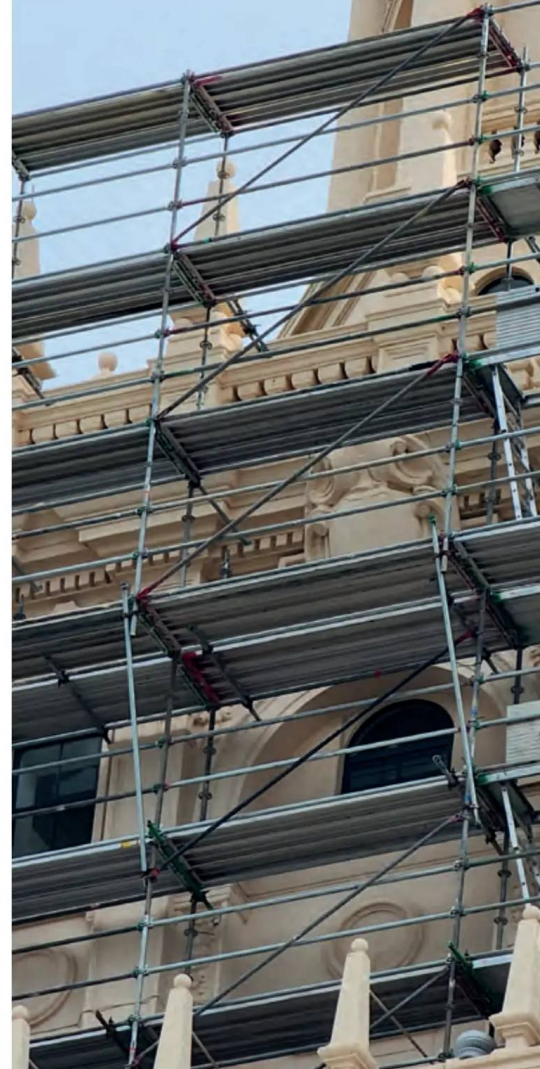
## SPACIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sunbelt Rentals Scaffolding was tasked with providing access for the extensive exterior restoration of the nearly 100-year-old Freedom Tower. To achieve this, we erected

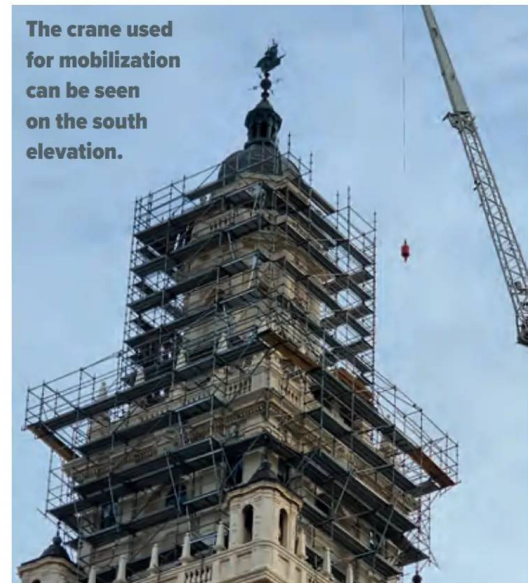
**The southwest corner nearly halfway up.**



**View of the west elevation.**



**The crane used for mobilization can be seen on the south elevation.**



ALL PHOTOS ATTRIBUTED TO SUNBELT RENTALS



## SUPPORTED SCAFFOLD PROJECT OF THE YEAR

Sunbelt Rentals Scaffolding was awarded the Scaffold and Access Industry Association's Supported Scaffold Project of the Year Award for its work on Miami's Freedom Tower. The company was tasked with providing full access for the exterior restoration of the nearly 100-year-old structure. The historic landmark required a complex and multifaceted scaffold design to meet stringent safety and access requirements for restoration.

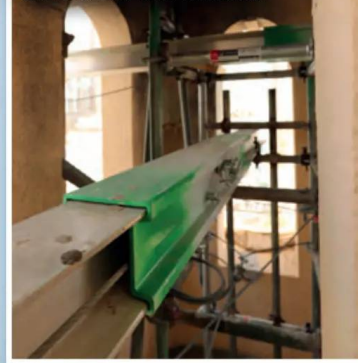
The Scaffold & Access Industry Association's Supported Scaffold Project of the Year is awarded to a member company where supported scaffolding was utilized to:

- raise the overall level of safety on a project,
- contribute to the overall success of the project, or
- complete a dynamic installation in a new or innovative way.

To learn more about the SAIA Project of the Year Awards, and to enter for 2025's honors, visit [www.saiaonline.org/awards](http://www.saiaonline.org/awards).



There was little room in the turrets, so beams had to be crossed over each other on all four corners.



100 feet of supported scaffolding from the 14th floor to the top of the cupola, covering 40 feet in length on each elevation. Due to limited space on the jobsite, a special crane was required to lift materials only on the south elevation, as the building's tiny, unreliable elevators made this the only viable option. Consequently, the south elevation had to progress behind the rest to allow for material transport.

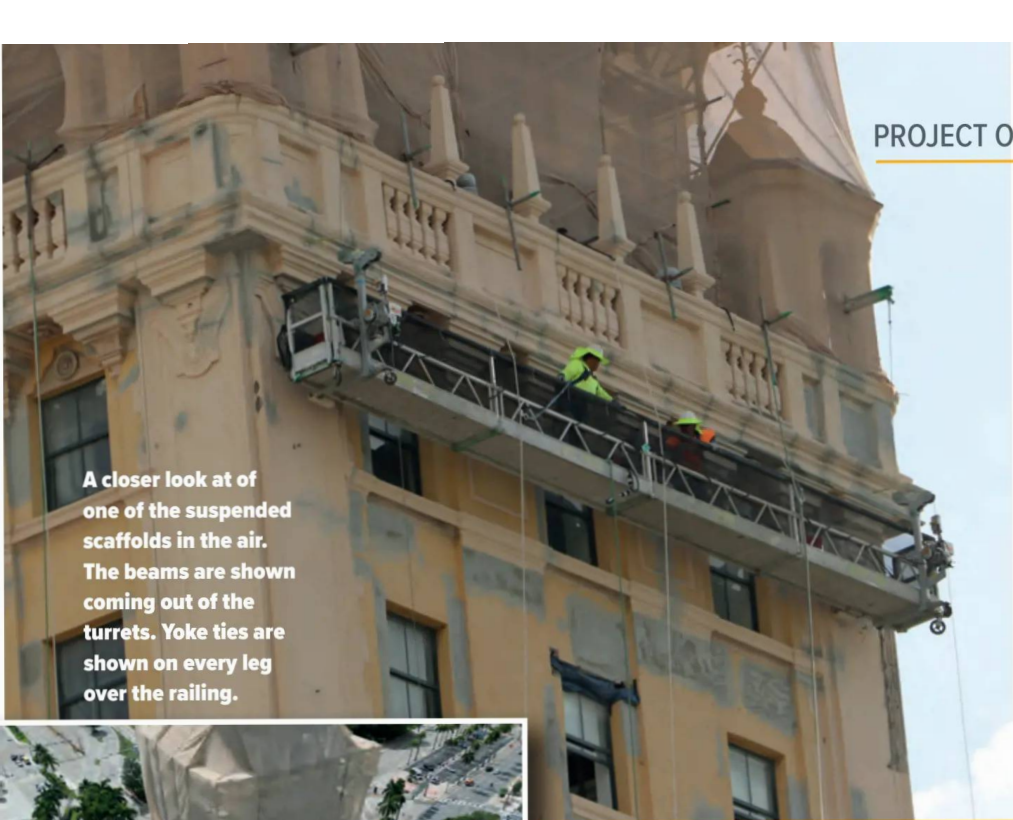
The soft terracotta exterior and the spacing of the columns and slabs necessitated reengineering from slab ties and wall ties into long threaded rod through-bolt ties and numerous yoke ties. A lack of tie locations at the top of the cupola led to the creation of a complex clamping system within a very narrow crawl space at the structure's peak.

The companies had to get creative to install a tie at the top of the cupola, seen here.

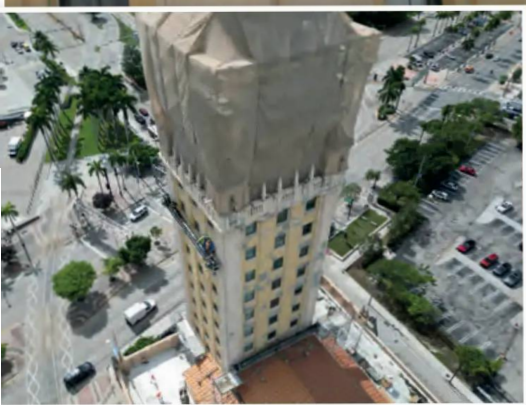
A view from a neighboring building showing the west elevation.







A closer look at of one of the suspended scaffolds in the air. The beams are shown coming out of the turrets. Yoke ties are shown on every leg over the railing.



Looking down on the northwest corner. The west suspended scaffold was flown into place by crane to avoid placing legs on the center of the metal roof.

DH Charles Engineering designed, and Sunbelt Rentals Scaffolding installed, a double cantilevered system to provide access above the four turrets on each corner of the building, with the scaffolding continuing upward from these cantilevers. As the building narrowed at each level, constant adjustments were required, especially when the old blueprints didn't match field conditions and architectural features obstructed the build. Some sections of the building proved too unstable to support scaffolding legs, adding to the challenge.

### **MULTIPLE EQUIPMENT TYPES**

Installing the rigging for the swing stages proved even more complex. Two-foot, one-inch-wide rigging towers were fitted between the two-foot-ten-inch-wide supported scaffold bays. The front fulcrum point rigging towers were tucked inside each turret, with beams extending through the curved window openings. Each fulcrum tower supported two rigging beams going in different directions.

Supported scaffold landing platforms were installed at the base of all four elevations to support the suspended scaffold stages. Additional shoring was provided by the general contractor to allow the simultaneous erection of supported scaffolding and the

suspended scaffold rigging. Bee Access played a crucial role in the project by providing essential support and expert product knowledge throughout the entire suspended scaffold phase.

Despite numerous challenges, including space constraints, structural instability, and the need for constant adaptation, Sunbelt Rentals Scaffolding successfully completed the project, ensuring safe and comprehensive access for the restoration of this historic landmark.

## **THE CHALLENGES ARE IN THE DETAILS**

Sunbelt Rentals Scaffolding was entrusted with the significant task of providing full access to the exterior of the historic Freedom Tower for restoration purposes, spanning from the 3rd floor to the top of the cupola. This complex project required a multifaceted approach, utilizing supported scaffolding from the 14th floor upwards, based on a meticulous design by DH Charles Engineering. Due to weight constraints, the section of the tower between the 3rd and 14th floors necessitated access with suspended scaffolding provided by Bee Access.

Throughout the project, Sunbelt encountered numerous challenges that required innovative solutions and adaptability. The condition of the walls and the available tie points forced Sunbelt to continually adjust the tie methods to ensure stability and safety. The discrepancies between the nearly 100-year-old architectural drawings and the actual field measurements meant Sunbelt had to constantly reassess the vertical progress. DH Charles made 3 trips from Colorado to Florida to review many of these obstacles.

Limited space on the job site posed another significant challenge, complicating the logistics of transporting materials to the work area. Additionally, unpredictable weather conditions, including wind and rain, caused multiple delays during the construction process. To adhere to the project timeline, Sunbelt had to synchronize the installation of both supported and suspended scaffolds. This intricate process involved interweaving the swing stage rigging and the base of the scaffolding on the very narrow 14th floor catwalk.

The initial proposals for this project were submitted as early as 2022, with Thornton Construction awarding the \$350,000 contract to Sunbelt Rentals in June 2023. Sunbelt began the scaffolding portion of the project in October 2023 and completed it by December 2023.

"We are incredibly honored to receive this recognition from SAIA," said Jacco Kappers, senior vice president of Scaffold Services at Sunbelt Rentals. "The Freedom Tower project exemplifies the expertise, precision and dedication Sunbelt Rentals brings to every project it supports. We are proud of the safe and efficient solution we provided that contributed to the restoration of this historic landmark."



Seen here is the supported scaffold at full height with three suspended scaffolds.