Best of

2004

Times Square Tower Commercial Signage

Award of Merit - Retail

Designing and building 24,000 sq. ft. of signage on the new 5 Times Square tower had a high and glitzy standard to meet. The jury liked what it saw.

"It has truly enhanced the global sense of place that is Times Square," one judge said.

The 49-story tower bounded by 41st and 42nd streets and by Broadway and 7th Avenue won its own honors last year as a project of the year for office towers. The submitting firm on the signage portion, Schmerykowsky Consulting Engineers, withheld the cost of the project.

Both the design and size of the signage had to meet stringent criteria of the 42nd Street Development Corp., as well as the needs of the building owners and signage clients. The project aimed to produce maximum visibility to vehicular and pedestrian traffic, as well as the ability to accommodate both "spectacular" and "flex-face" signage.

One of the necessary elements for better visual effect was extending and cantilevering the signage structure over the street, which required the engineer to create a custom-designed assembly procedure.

The independent signage structures are a series of vertical steel trusses, which provide the primary support for the sign faces. The trusses interconnect with additional bracing on both the horizontal and vertical planes of the sign structure. Each independent signage structure then attaches to a series of structural steel tubes known as the primary steel. The primary steel mounts to structural steel stubs that penetrate the building's façade and connect to the structural frame.

The signs at the two northern corners required double cantilevers that could work independently from each other. The southern face, which had no primary steel tube, required the team to support the signage structure directly through building stub-outs.

All of that design work occurred on a fast-track deadline, because the building owner already had an agreement with a signage client. Also impacting the construction schedule was corresponding work on the office tower itself. Even as the project team was erecting the signage trusses, crews on the tower portion were still adding the building's curtain wall, storefronts, and entrances.

Another fundamental task for the project team was ensuring the structural stability of the signs. In addition to meeting New York City building code requirements for wind loads, the team compared current codes to results from wind tunnel tests performed on the building. These tests accounted for the "canyon" effect caused by building structures in the Times Square area.

The project team also followed strict regulations in the city building code regarding work in areas with heavy pedestrian and vehicular traffic. <<

Key Players

Owner: Boston Properties

Structural Engineers: Shmerykowsky Consulting Engineers

Sign Contractor: North Shore Neon Sign

Sign Broker: Van Wagner Communications, LLC