



Project overview

For nearly a decade, Vertical Access has assisted with the ongoing maintenance and investigation of the New York State Pavilion Observation Towers. Closed to the public for over 50 years, the towers are undergoing assessment for long-term preservation and rehabilitation.

Structure description

The New York State Pavilion structures were designed by Philip Johnson with Richard Foster and Lev Zetlin. Commissioned by the state of New York for the 1964 World's Fair in New York City (Queens), the Pavilion included the New York State Theater, Tent of Tomorrow and Observation Towers.

Perhaps the most impressive structures in the Pavilion, and the most recognizable, are the three observation towers measuring 60, 150 and 226 feet tall. Built using two cutting-edge technologies, slip-formed concrete and post-tensioned concrete reinforcement, the towers were the tallest structures at the Fair. Capsule elevators were used to reach the three observation decks.

Scope of work

- Conducted emergency replacement of light bulbs in FAA beacon followed by replacement of fixture.
- Conducted complete access consultation to make recommendations about future maintenance of the beacon.
- Performed hands-on investigation of steel decks and concrete columns.
- Took core samples as part of investigation.
- Characterized structural members.
- Provided access consultation during inspection of the observation decks by others.
- Characterized plumbing system components and documented their condition using a helmet-mounted digital video camera.

Structure owner

The City of New York Department of Parks and Recreation

In collaboration with

- The Sparks Electric Company (2006)
- Arcadis; RTKL New York Architecture and Engineering; Atkinson-Noland & Associates (2011)
- Silman; Jan Hird Pokorny Associates; Jacob Feinberg Katz & Michaeli Consulting Group (2015)

Photos by Vertical Access