

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the National Endowment for the Humanities' Section 106 Review of The Next Century at Miami's Freedom Tower

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has offered Miami Dade College, in Miami Florida, a Challenge Infrastructure and Capacity Building grant (CHA-290080) to update the elevators, accessibility, and overall safety at the Freedom Tower.

NEH is an independent grant-making agency of the United States government dedicated to supporting research, education, preservation, and public programs in the humanities. This public notice is issued as part of NEH's responsibilities under 36 C.F.R. Part 800, the regulations which implement Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, 54 U.S.C. 306108. NEH, a funding agency, is required by regulation to identify and assess the effects of any proposed actions on historic properties. If any proposed action will have an adverse effect on historic resources, NEH works with the appropriate parties to seek ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects. Additionally, the Section 106 regulations require NEH to consider the views of the public on preservation issues when making final decisions that affect historic properties.

The Freedom Tower is located at 600 Biscayne Blvd, Miami, FL 33132. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP #79000665) and is a National Historic Landmark. It was designed by architects Leonard Schultze and S. Fullerton Weaver, it is designed in a Mediterranean Revival style with a decorative cupola inspired by the popular style in Seville, Spain. The building was completed in 1925, the Freedom Tower obtains its significance from two distinct uses:

- From 1925 to 1957, the building served- as the offices and production facility for the Miami Daily News and Metropolis—Miami's oldest newspaper.
- From 1962 to 1974, it functioned as the Cuban Refugee Emergency Center. It is considered the "Ellis Island of the South" for its role in offering nationally sanctioned relief to the Cuban refugees who sought political asylum from the regime of Fidel Castro. During this time the name "Freedom Tower" became associated with it.

The proposed undertaking, which NEH is in part funding, involves repairs, renovations, remodeling, and restoration of designated portions of the existing historic high[1]rise public educational facility including but not limited to:

- I. Historic restoration and preservation of existing historic elements, including but not limited to:
 - i. Restoration of the Main Entry Lobby, including refinishing of existing floor, cleaning, and repair of stone wall artwork above the elevators, and repainting of the walls to match historic original.
 - ii. Existing walls and columns within the 1st Floor Freedom Hall to be painted, and existing carpet to be replaced with a new floor finish.
 - iii. Removal and conservation of the "New World 1513" mural
 - iv. New hand painted Spanish ceramic tile wainscot to be installed beneath the "New World 1513" mural to match historic original.
 - v. New downlights to illuminate stone wall artwork in the Main Entry Lobby and "New World 1513" mural in Freedom Hall.

- vi. New uplights at every column in Freedom Hall.
- II. Life safety repairs and renovations, including but not limited to:
 - i. Means of egress improvements:
 - a. Reconstruction of the existing exit passageway connecting existing Stair 3 to the building exterior exit discharge.
 - ii. Addition of a new AOR two-way communication system serving occupied floors above the level of exit discharge (per requirements of NFPA 101(F.L) Sections 7.2.12.1.1. (1) and 7.5.4.4).
- III. Accessibility and barrier removals and alterations, including but not limited to:
 - i. Renovation of existing restrooms in accordance with current FBC-A and ADA Standards.
- IV. Conveying equipment repairs and renovations, including but not limited to:
 - i. Modernization (rehabilitation) of existing Elevators 1 and 2.
 - ii. New elevator cabs 1 and 2 interiors to match the historic interiors.
- V. Interior finishes repair and renovations, including but not limited to:
 - i. Replacement of floor, wall, and ceiling finishes.
 - ii. Replacement of bathroom accessories, light fixtures, and plumbing fixtures, including the replacement of piping.
- VI. Structural repairs, renovations, enhancements, and new work, including but not limited to:
 - i. Repair of existing horizontal, overhead, and vertical reinforced concrete elements.
 - ii. Column and foundation enhancements.
 - iii. New masonry and concrete walls, including reinforced concrete shear walls.
 - iv. Replacement of concrete slabs on grade.
 - v. Repair of east façade wind bracing.
 - vi. Repair of steel structural members damaged by corrosion.
 - vii. Replacement of the guy wires bracing smoke evacuation fans on the 3rd Floor roof level.
 - viii. New exit access stairway (Stair No. 6), including alterations at 2nd, 3rd and 4th Floors.
- VII. Civil engineering repairs, renovations, and new work, including but not limited to:
 - i. Remove/abandon existing grease traps on west side of building.
 - ii. New sidewalk between west side of building and west property line.
 - iii. New storm drainage well at southeast corner of site.
- VIII. MEP/FP repairs and renovations, including but not limited to:
 - i. Replacement of the fan coils and HVAC controls, light fixture led upgrades as required.
 - ii. Construction of new FPL vault, generator room, fuel storage room, electrical room, and pump rooms, and relocation of equipment.
 - iii. Replacement of fire pump system and associated controls.
 - iv. Renovation/replacement of sanitary and water piping in areas designated for renovation/remodeling (e.g., tower restrooms) or where structural repairs are required.
 - v. Provision for a new irrigation system with new backflow preventer; and replacement of the existing water pump and water heater.
 - vi. Addition of a new drainage well and connection to storm drainage system.
 - vii. Removal of existing grease traps and existing gas lines.
 - viii. Renovation/remodeling of the fire alarm, smoke evacuation system, and fans.
 - a. All fans are scheduled to be replaced.
 - b. Smoke exhaust fans and pressurization fans on the 3rd Floor Roof to be replaced.
 - c. 10th Floor fans to be replaced.
 - d. Due to the addition of the new Elevator No. 5 and remodeling at Kislak Gallery (1st Floor), the work will include:

- i. Deletion of two pre-action wet sprinkler heads from the pre-action system and adding two heads to the regular area wet sprinkler system.
 - ii. Deletion of one FM 200 discharge nozzle and cutting back the discharge pipe.
 - iii. Recertification of the clean agent system.
 - e. Alterations to the existing fire alarm system in areas where other work (e.g., repairs, renovation, or remodeling) will affect said fire alarm components.
- IX. Miscellaneous maintenance, repairs and renovations, including but not limited to:
 - i. Water leaks and interior finishes damaged by water intrusion to be repaired, including structural repairs and renovations of interior finishes and MEP/FP systems as required to allow for structural repairs.
 - ii. Renovation of interior finishes to provide cool white shell within areas designated for future build-out per Local Projects design.
 - iii. Renovation of access to levels above the 16th Floor (for maintenance of unoccupied floors).
- X. Other repairs and renovations as indicated on the drawings and specifications.

On January 8, 2024, Kelly L. Chase, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, on behalf of Alissa Slade Lotane, State Historic Preservation Officer, with the Florida Division of Historic Resources, provided a conditional finding of No Adverse Effect. The letter stated that the, “proposed rehabilitative work including the installation of the southeast lawn drainage well, southeast and southwest ADA entrances, and lifts station should have no adverse effects on Freedom Tower.” However, the “installation of lights into the coffered ceiling of the lobby would have an adverse effect on Freedom Tower.”

After reviewing Section 106 documentation and SHPO finding, NEH issues a determination of a conditional No Adverse Effect. Miami Dade College must continue consultation with NEH and the Florida Division of Historic Resources to evaluate alternatives lighting plans that are more historically compatible to avoid or minimize adverse effects from the proposed lighting plan (with the exception of the “downlighting in the mural room which would not have an adverse effect on Freedom Tower”).

As required by Section 106, NEH is providing the public with information about this project, as well as an opportunity to comment on any knowledge of, or concerns with, historic properties in the proposed project area, and issues relating to the project’s potential effects on historic properties. Comments may be submitted to the NEH by e-mail to FPO@neh.gov. The deadline for submitting comments is February 21, 2024.