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PUBLISHED BY THE GENERAL BUILDING CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION



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NOTHING'S EASY - SCAFFOLDING ST. PATRICK'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, PA

BY ERIK HIGHLAND, MARKETING DIRECTOR | SUPERIOR SCAFFOLD SERVICES, INC.

This one is hard to miss. If you are a regular in the Rittenhouse Square area – or were just passing through, St. Patrick's Church has been a fixture here since 1839. When one of Philadelphia's esteemed historic buildings needed major renovation, we were called in to help.

Superior Scaffold was proud to have been chosen to provide the scaffolding and access work on this historic landmark. Our extensive experience with historic and delicate structures made us a natural fit when Turner Construction took on the project.



Like any project this size, it involved a mountain of moving parts. Access issues, street closures, and adapting to the changes on how best to approach this giant endeavor were some of the challenges that were a part of the project.

If you were just walking through Rittenhouse Square and saw this, you'd probably think, "wow, that's a lot of scaffolding for a renovation, but nothing special." And that's where you would be wrong.

Scaffolding this intricate and a delicate project was a big challenge.



These older structures require a special touch, so that everything remains as it was 150 years ago. That means using every bit of skill and knowledge we have to not to touch the building or leave a mark of any kind on this historic church. As you can imagine, erecting scaffolding in and around all of the geometric shapes and areas, like stained glass windows, columns, decorative cornices, roof lines, etc., was a huge challenge.

Our scaffold engulfed three sides of the old church. We used containment wrap around the entire structure to keep debris from slipping out.

One of the best examples of the detail and care we took in erecting thousands of steel and aluminum parts around sensitive materials can be seen in the main entrance around the columns and around the stained-glass windows. We had to get close enough for crews to be able to clean and repair everything. Our system scaffold works best for just this type of application. It allows us to erect scaffolding at odd angles enabling us to get to hard-to-reach areas while still providing the strength and stability needed for renovation workers' safety.

We had a canopy, or overhead protection, around the entire perimeter and rectory to protect pedestrians while also

allowing the church to remain open for regular service during the entire renovation. This was very important for St. Patrick's to remain open throughout the renovation process.

We had several 2,000lb material hoists on the South side and a Maxial hoist on the inside to help lift material. There were also multiple stair towers for access to every floor, and each level was decked in, so crews had full access to every inch of this restoration.

We needed to install shoring posts beneath the parking lot for support in the underground utility to help carry the added weight our scaffold was putting onto the area. We don't have photos of that but it's there.

Finally, we had scaffold on the roof area to access those hard-to-reach areas and the beautiful cross at the top.

Of course, there are always challenges on a job like this and we worked closely with everyone at Turner to make sure there were as few wrinkles as possible.

For instance, the Rittenhouse Square St. side of the church where our scaffold runs the entire length of the building, needed the city to shut down a portion of the street. Easy peasy, you say? As you can imagine, shutting down even a portion of a busy street can be difficult.

With this in mind, we worked with Turner Construction Company and the Department of Streets, to submit drawings, right of way detour plans and changes to get Streets and L&I what they needed to close off the entire lane on the South side of the church.

In the end, we had crews completely around 3 sides of this massive structure to do the repair and renovation work and boy does it look fantastic!

We would like to give a shout out to everyone who made this project a success, particularly our crew, Turner Construction, who brought us along for the ride, The Philadelphia Streets Department and L&I. It's not often those last two get any thanks. So, if you are in the area, walk on by and see the newly renovated St. Patrick's Church – you won't be disappointed.

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