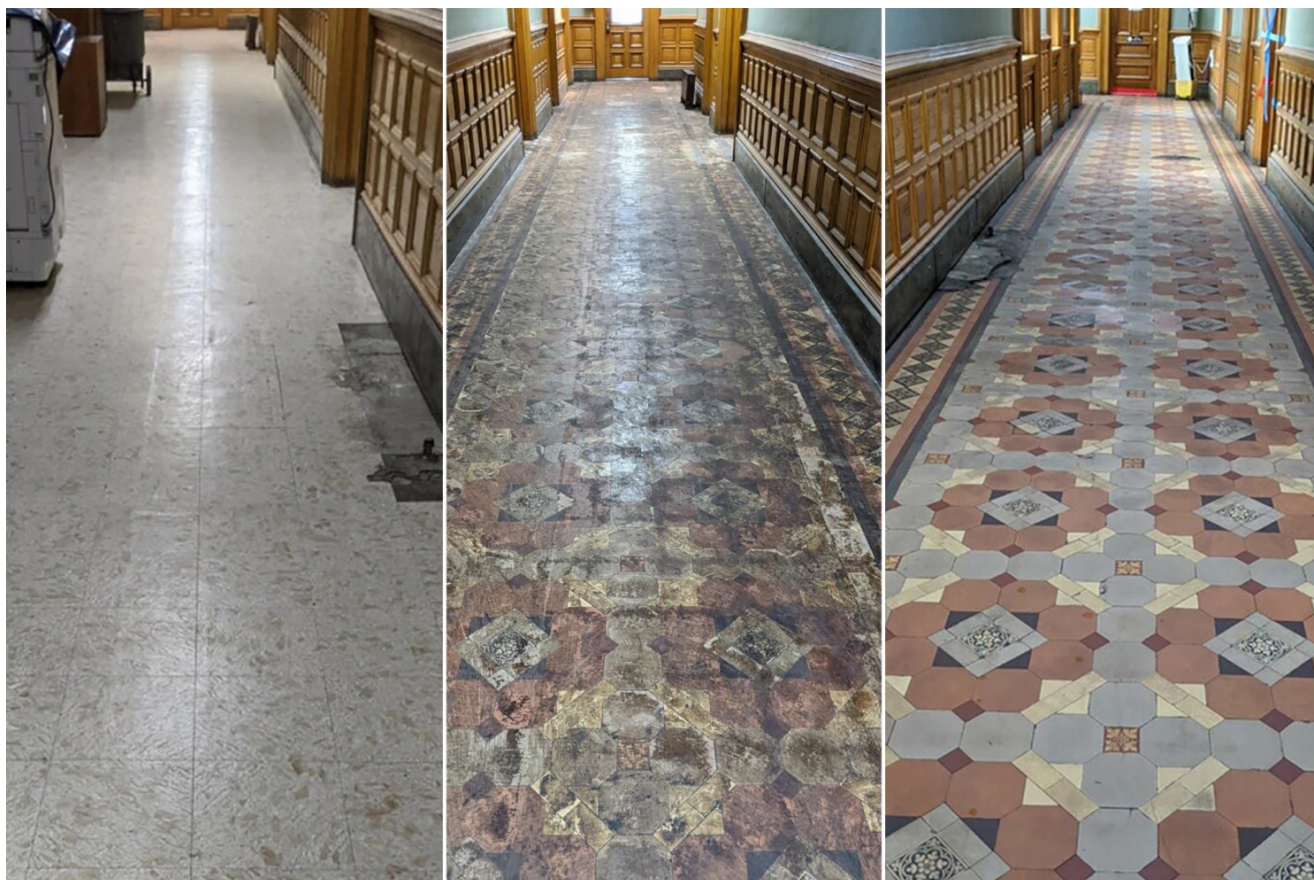


# Coronavirus construction work uncovers 124-year-old tile floor

 [nypost.com/2020/05/14/original-tile-floor-of-jersey-citys-city-hall-uncovered-during-construction](https://nypost.com/2020/05/14/original-tile-floor-of-jersey-citys-city-hall-uncovered-during-construction)

By Hana R. Alberts

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When the coronavirus hit Jersey City, Mayor Steven Fulop tried to find a tiny silver lining in the lockdown.

A project to restore City Hall, built in 1896, was in the pipeline to kick off this year anyway. If employees were logging on from home and most of the building was going to be empty, he reasoned, minor construction could begin without disrupting as many people.

Among other tasks, construction workers started pulling up vinyl flooring installed in the 1960s, only to discover a pattern peeking out from underneath. As more and more squares were removed, an intricate design was revealed.

Fulop was shocked.

“Our initial plan was to rip up the floor, find nothing, and work with historians to put in something that was original to the building,” he tells The Post. “We didn’t think we would find anything. We thought it would all be destroyed.”

Turns out the '60s-era vinyl “upgrades” were covering up slates of encaustic tile with a geometric pattern — original to the building. Initially, Fulop says, coated in grime and asbestos, they seemed unsalvageable.

But after careful remediation and cleaning over three weeks, City Halls is now home to some gleaming new floors — sourced from England and installed more than 120 years ago.

Fulop tweeted the astounding before-and-after photos of a workaday hallway transformed, and was floored by the positive response.

“Normally, I’ll tweet something and it’ll get 200 or 300 likes or retweets,” Fulop says. “But I went to sleep late, and the next morning, when I got up, I had at that point 60,000 likes. And now it’s like 150,000!”

Also unearthed during these initial phases of restoration were parquet floors in Fulop’s office, previously obscured by “old blue wall-to-wall carpet.”

Because City Hall is deemed “essential infrastructure,” the project was allowed to proceed even during New Jersey’s stay-at-home order. Workers wore masks and practiced social distancing, according to Fulop.



The parquet floor unearthed from under wall-to-wall carpeting in Fulop’s office — another surprise — also dates back to City Hall’s earliest days. Steven Fulop

Now that the resurrected floors are spiffed up — in shimmering style — next up is to power wash the facade and replace the windows. The interior will be painted, and two floors rendered unusable by a 1970s fire will be brought back to functionality.

Because Jersey City residents can pay taxes, procure marriage licenses or visit the clerk at City Hall, Fulop says the new decor will benefit more than just municipal employees

“The building is kind of the public’s home,” he says, “and so it’s nice that everybody can enjoy it.”

He’s still amazed at how good the tiles and hardwood look after a thorough scrub.

“You try to leave things a bit better than what you found,” he says. “It’ll last long past me, that’s for sure.”