



ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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Fitzgerald Announces Completion of Courthouse Roof, Tower Project

PITTSBURGH – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald announced today that the work on the county's now 132-year-old courthouse roof has been completed. The \$22 million project was the first part of a master restoration plan to improve the courthouse's infrastructure while also preserving its unique, historical features. The county aims to protect its significant investment for future generations to use and appreciate.

"I couldn't be prouder of the work that was done on the Courthouse. The improvement of the facility and investment in this wonderful, historic, beautiful building was a project done for all of our residents," said Fitzgerald. "The work done by this team was truly remarkable, particularly considering the many challenges that the building itself posed. It's hard to believe that this extensive project has been completed."

The first phase of the master roof restoration plan, which also included masonry repointing of the building's three towers, was completed in 2019. The second phase, replacing the interior-facing roof, was completed a few months ago. Once scaffolding was removed, county staff refreshed the courtyard, including repainting of the fountain, repair and re-staining of the benches and tables, and replanting of the flower beds.

The roof project included the removal and replacement of approximately 454,000 original terra cotta clay roof tiles. The original roof tiles were replicated by Ludowici Tile of New Lexington, Ohio using the same material and the exact standards of quality and sizing of the originals. They were installed according to the National Park Service's Historic Preservation Standards and Guidelines.

"I consider it an honor to have been part of this project and to see all of the work and planning come to fruition has been extremely rewarding," said William D. McKain CPA, County Manager. "Each time I walk into the building, or past the windows facing the courtyard, and see employees and others enjoying the finished product, I'm proud of the work that was done."

Replacing the courthouse roof was a challenging endeavor. The building has a height of 100 feet from the ground to the gutter and another 60 feet from the gutter to the peak of the roof, which slopes at a 60-degree angle. The project also included installation of new ¾-inch plywood and a continuous waterproofing membrane as well as fabrication and installation of new copper gutters, downspouts, valleys, and flashing. Additionally, modern lightning protection was added to the roof assembly to further protect the National Historic Landmark building.

Massaro Corporation was awarded the construction project management contract. Deputy Facilities Management Director Kevin Halaja served as project manager for the county. Masonry contractor Franco Associates was charged with the repair and repointing of the three towers, as well as the lightning protection system. The 326' tower includes unique roofs made of granite slabs. Repointing of the stone was performed off of hanging scaffolding with workers repelling from the top with safety harnesses.

Cuddy Roofing, a woman-owned union roofing company headquartered in Pittsburgh, completed the roof work. The company removed the existing tiles and inspected the steel framing and supports before installing plywood, ice and water shields, felt paper, and lightning protection. Due to the access and

steepness of the slope of the roof, workers commented that it was more like working on a wall rather than a roof. With no storage area for materials, Cuddy had to coordinate the removal and delivery of materials each week with a crane.

“Throughout the past 130 years, this region has seen tremendous growth, discouraging decline, years filled with championships and generations of loss, all with the weather-beaten strength of the courthouse at its center,” said Chaz McNulty, President of Cuddy Roofing. “Much like the region and the people within her, this building stands as a shining beacon of rejuvenation and hope with an unshakeable granite foundation – ready to conquer the next thirteen decades.”

The project design was completed by Perfido Weiskopf Wagstaff Goettel Architects.

As part of its commitment to sustainability, Allegheny County entered into a partnership with Wendell August Forge to salvage the original roof files and repurpose them as wall hangings, calendars, beer and wine flight trays, and more. The collector’s items are being sold through the Wendell August Forge website with county proceeds going to the Allegheny County Parks Foundation to support projects throughout the county’s nine-park, 12,000-acre park system. To date, over 1,400 roof tiles have been sold with over \$26,000 given to the Parks Foundation.

For a look back at the work, take a look at this January 2018 time-lapse video showing the scaffolding going up around the building, and this June 2018 video with County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and now-retired Facilities Management Director Jim Reardon talking about the work that was underway: <https://youtu.be/olQ8-0pNluE>.

The courthouse, the first building of note on Grant Street, was originally designed in 1883 by Boston architect Henry Hobson Richardson and was built between 1884-1888. Its features the classic symmetry of Renaissance-style architecture, including Syrian arches, Byzantine capitals, late French Gothic dormer windows, and the French Renaissance roof that is being replaced.

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