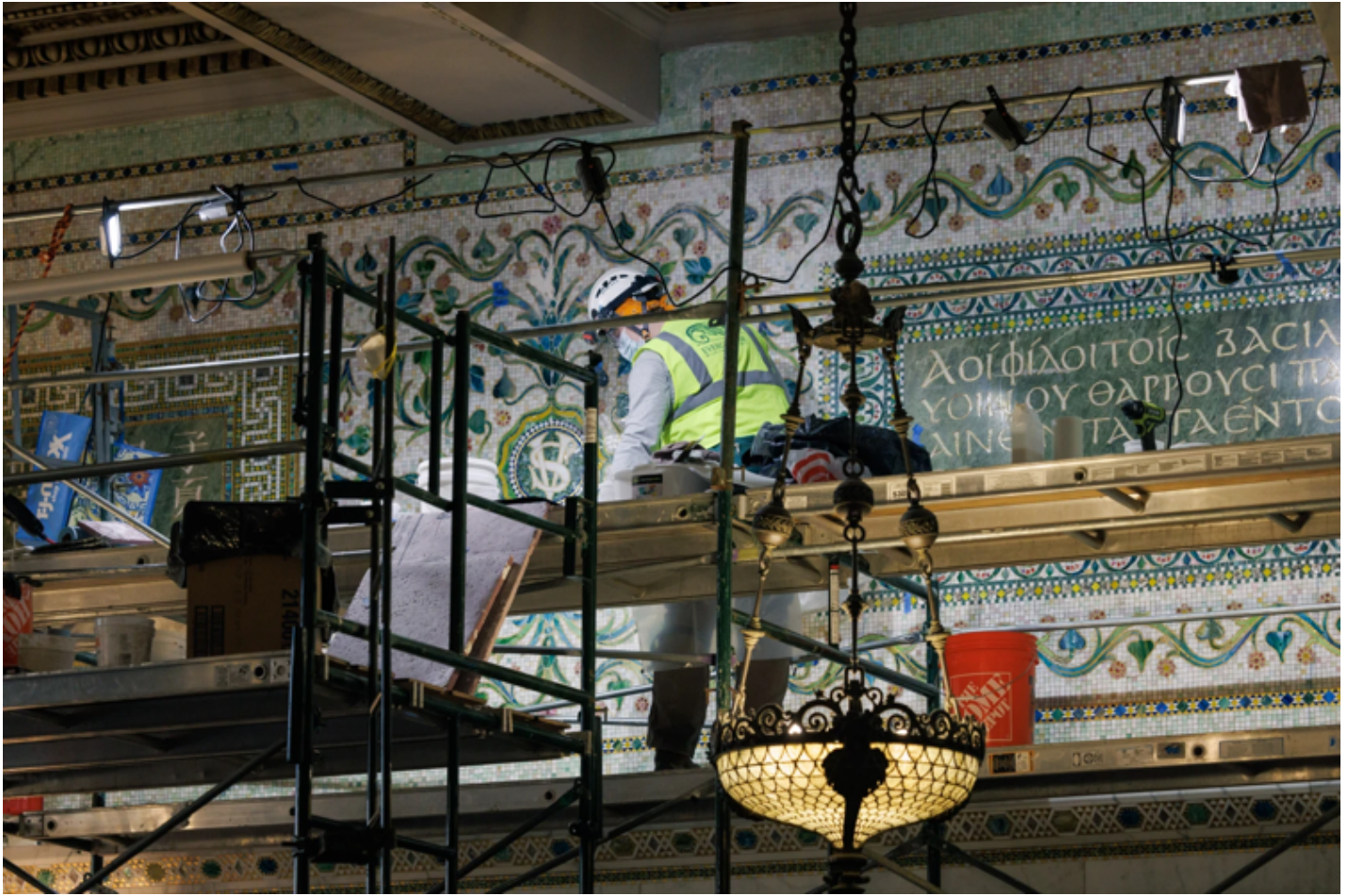




ENTERTAINMENT AND CULTURE CHICAGO ART

# Chicago Cultural Center launches major mosaics renovation project in Preston Bradley Hall

For the first time since the building's opening in 1897, the Tiffany glass mosaics in Preston Bradley Hall will be renovated. Visitors can see a completed portion of the work after April 1.  
By Erica Thompson | Jan 29, 2025, 4:17pm CST



Conservator Samantha Van Kollenburg stands on the scaffolding to begin restoration work on mosaic tiles near the Preston Bradley Hall Tiffany Dome in the Chicago Cultural Center at 78 E. Washington St. in the Loop. The project will address and fix the various cracked lines on the walls featuring the ornate tile. | Anthony Vazquez/Sun-Times

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Anyone visiting the Chicago Cultural Center can tell you the **Tiffany Dome** is a sight to behold.

In fact, staffers say the 1,000-square-foot glass masterpiece has inspired more than one person to lie down on the floor and take it all in.

While the dome may be the center of attention in Preston Bradley Hall, there are other treasures deserving of lingering gazes. About **10,000 square feet of Tiffany glass and mother of pearl mosaics** adorn the marble walls in the form of scrolls,

rosettes and flowers. They also border inscriptions in multiple languages. The passages promote the virtues of learning, a fitting message for a building that once housed the first Chicago Public Library.

And for the first time since the building's opening in 1897, the mosaics will be renovated.



Conservator Katharine George test fits a tile near the Preston Bradley Hall Tiffany Dome at the Chicago Cultural Center. | Anthony Vazquez/Sun-Times

With grant funding from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the city's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) commissioned EverGreene Architectural Arts to evaluate the condition of the mosaics. Specialists are currently repairing cracks in the tiles in the east wing, which has been closed since Jan. 2.

Visitors can still access the Tiffany Dome. After April 1, they will be able to re-enter the east wing and view a portion of the restored mosaics on the southeast wall. Next, DCASE will raise money to restore the rest of the mosaics in the hall and on the staircase. The project is the latest effort to bring the building back to its original glory; it follows the [restoration of the Grand Army of the Republic Memorial Hall and Rotunda](#) in 2022.

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### [Chicago Cultural Center reopens amid restoration of G.A.R. hall, rotunda](#)

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“As with any building, be it municipal, be it someone’s beautiful home, be it a barn, if it’s 130 years old, it’s going to need some kind of repair,” said Zhen Heinemann, DCASE program director, visitor experience and public engagement. “So what we are doing here is a care-taking and maintenance effort for an absolutely stunning architectural gem, so that it can survive and continue to be a gift to everyone that gets to come here.”



Zhen Heinemann, program director, visitor experience and public engagement at the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, shows off the renovation work being done in Preston Bradley Hall at the Chicago Cultural Center in the Loop. | Anthony Vazquez/Sun-Times

The Oak Park-based EverGreene Architectural Arts also worked on the **award-winning** G.A.R. Hall and Rotunda project, which was **funded with a \$15 million grant** from an anonymous donor. DCASE did not share the amount of the grant for the Preston Bradley Hall renovation, but said the venture entailed similar work. As part of both projects, researchers sought out archival photos and historical documents to determine the original appearance of the rooms.

EverGreene Architectural Arts workers are investigating the structure of the walls behind the mosaics. They've found that the mosaics were laid directly into plaster, which has cracked over time. During the repair process, they cover the tiles with conservation adhesive glue and Japanese tissue, remove them, fill cracks with plaster-based materials and return the tiles to the wall. In the future,

the walls will also be repainted; workers are currently chipping away layers to unearth their original color.



Cracked tile and other damage on the wall will be repaired near the Preston Bradley Hall Tiffany Dome at the Chicago Cultural Center. | Anthony Vazquez/Sun-Times



Conservator Samantha Van Kollenburg scrapes away some of the tile backing near the Preston Bradley Hall Tiffany Dome at the Chicago Cultural Center. | Anthony Vazquez/Sun-Times

Foot traffic from the Chicago Cultural Center’s 800,000 visitors per year can cause considerable wear and tear on the flooring. For the first time since 2011, the 7,500 square feet of carpet in Preston Bradley Hall will be replaced. The new pattern will mimic the design of the green tile underneath, which features the word “veritas” — the Latin term for “truth” — inscribed in the center. Chicago-based Harboe Architects and Berglund Construction will oversee the job.

A similar update was made to G.A.R. Hall and Rotunda; upon entering, visitors may not immediately realize they are walking on carpet.

Some of the recovered tiles that will be used in the renovation of the tile work near the Preston Bradley Hall Tiffany Dome at the Chicago Cultural Center. | Anthony Vazquez/Sun-Times

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Heinemann said the center is committed to sustaining the beauty of the building, as well as its cultural programming, for Chicagoans to enjoy.

“This stunning space is not just for your private event or only to snap a picture of and leave,” Heinemann said. “We want it to be a home for people.”

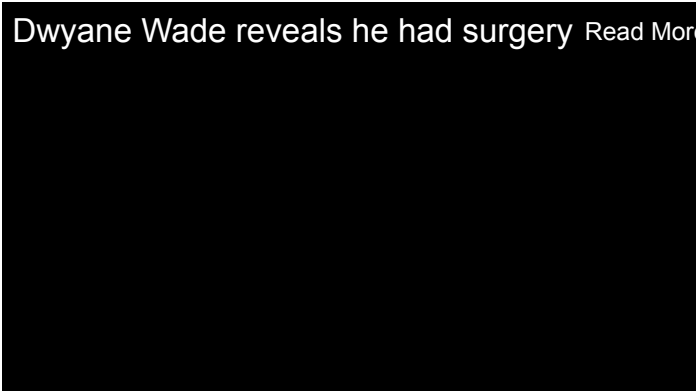


A rendering of the new carpet design for Preston Bradley Hall in the Chicago Cultural Center. The installation will be completed by April 1. | Courtesy DCASE

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A large black rectangular redaction box covering the main content of the article.

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Skating Club of Boston CEO Doug Zeghibe said Thursday that skaters Jinna Han and Spencer Lane were among those killed, along with 1994 pairs world champions Evgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov. In all, 14 of the victims were coming back from a national development camp following the U.S. Championships in Wichita, Kansas.

By **AP** | Jan 30, 2025, 3:09pm CST

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## Previewing and predicting this weekend's top high school basketball games

A look at some of the best games this weekend.

By **Joe Henricksen** | Jan 30, 2025, 3:06pm CST

## BEARS

### **Declan Doyle eager for Bears role as Ben Johnson's 'table-setter'**

As offensive coordinator, Doyle's job will be to make Johnson's job easier. "I have to do that work that he's not gonna have time to do, and he's going to have to be able to trust me that I'm gonna give him the correct information he needs."

By **Mark Potash** | Jan 30, 2025, 2:44pm CST

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## EDUCATION

### **CPS CEO says he can't 'imagine a need for a strike' — despite unresolved disputes with CTU**

While Martinez touted tentative agreements for lower class sizes in the youngest grades and more planning time for special education teachers, teachers union officials said there have been no new agreements since Dec. 24.

By **Nader Issa** | Jan 30, 2025, 2:44pm CST

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## CASINOS AND GAMBLING

### **White activists sue Bally's over Chicago casino IPO limited to women, minorities**

Bally's announced a \$250 million public offering last month for shares of their massive Chicago casino project, but only to women or people of color. That's according to terms of the company's agreement with the city — which opponents call an illegal "race-based stock offering."

By **Mitchell Armentrout** | Jan 30, 2025, 2:32pm CST

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