



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

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City of Milwaukee files lawsuit over City Hall terra cotta

The City of Milwaukee today filed a lawsuit in Milwaukee County Circuit Court for damages related to terra cotta that was installed on the exterior of City Hall during the historic building's extensive restoration between 2006 and 2008.

The lawsuit, filed by City Attorney Grant F. Langley, names the professional engineering firm of Simpson Gumpertz & Heger, Inc., the architect of record, Engberg Anderson, Inc., and the engineering firm of Bloom Companies, LLC, for negligence and breach of contract, and the general contractor, J. P. Cullen & Sons, Inc. for breach of contract and warranty.

On February 17, 2011, a portion of a recently replaced terra cotta urn on the City Hall clock tower dislodged from the building and fell to the street. The urn was one of more than 4,000 terra cotta units that had been replaced during the restoration of the exterior façade of City Hall between 2006 and 2008. Those terra cotta units had been fully filled with grout, in accordance with the plans and specifications.

In its investigation, the City has discovered, among other problems, that the fully grouted terra cotta units have been cracking and deteriorating since the project was completed in 2008 because the grout has been expanding and contracting during the freeze-thaw cycles that occur during Wisconsin winters. The lawsuit states that the investigation found that the distressed terra cotta units contain more free water in the grout than had been specified in the contract.

The City is in the process of concluding its inspections to determine the current extent of the problem and to formulate a repair plan and determine the extent of damages. The lawsuit was filed today to preserve all of the city's legal claims.

Although the suit is now filed, Mr. Langley said the City will continue to work cooperatively with the responsible parties toward a satisfactory resolution of the matter.