



**Project:**  
New Orleans Public Library

**Location:**  
New Orleans, Louisiana

**Management:**  
Capital Projects  
Administration,  
City of New Orleans

**Flooring  
Sub-Contractor:**  
TCC Enterprises, Inc.

**Armstrong Flooring:**  
Duo™ with Diamond 10  
Technology

**Featured skus:**  
ST931, ST2PR

# New Orleans Public Library, an Inspiring Hub for the Community

## Renovation Turns Dated Spaces into Vibrant, Creative Learning Area for the Public

A modern day library no longer operates with the same function of its predecessor decades ago, and certainly not from the 1950s. Gone are the days of a library solely serving as a book bunker. Today, libraries host community events, house computer labs, and are public places for the community to learn, grow, and inspire creativity — and New Orleans's Public Library's Main Library is no exception. While the library staff made significant enhancements to its programs and material collections throughout the years, the interior design remained essentially untouched in the storied building since it opened in the 1950s. The dedicated library staff was determined to change that.

The Main Library is located in the Central Business District near the French Quarter – the heart of New Orleans. It is visited, by local residents, archive researchers, downtown office workers and curious tourists. Offering far more than books alone, computer tutoring, adult literacy classes, and community arts workshops are just a few of the many services provided to the public. The library was inviting the community to come through its doors, but what

visitors found once they entered was a space that was less inspirational than modern day counterparts. So, Michel Thompson, Capital Projects Manager for the library, put capital funds to work with updates to the building's first and second floor furniture, layout and flooring.

To work through the library's reinvigoration, Thompson collaborated with The Library Interiors Group, an organization dedicated to library design, and Ellen M. Waguespack, IIDA, Project Manager for Capital Projects Administration of the City of New Orleans. Waguespack, who is a Professional Member of the International Interior Design Association, relied on her background as an interior designer to guide the library through its aesthetic and space planning updates.

"Our Main Library's classic mid-20th century modern design is timeless and we all wanted to honor that history rather than rewrite it," Waguespack said. "However, refreshing the interior finishes and interior layout had been a long time coming."



### Restoring Vibrancy to a Community's Creative Space

Thompson outlined the work that would be done to the library's first two floors, envisioning the benefits and beauty of a modern day library. Shelves would be lowered to create better sightlines and allow more natural light into the building. The second floor became a dedicated youth services area, featuring a computer lab provided through a grant from Best Buy® stores.

"These two floors were going to be the hub of the library and see a lot of foot traffic," Thompson said. "New flooring would allow us to open up the space and have a dedicated area for teens to create."

The design goals focused on two primary requirements for the flooring — ensuring it could handle the weight of the shelves and finding a low maintenance product that didn't require polishing. Waguespack's local sales rep immediately guided her to [Duo](#) Luxury Flooring (LVT) with Diamond 10® Technology, which met and exceeded requirements. The innovative and patent-pending Duo with Diamond 10 Technology offered indent resistance to handle the weight of the bookshelves, and the perfect combination of durability and low maintenance to make it the ideal choice ahead of rubber as the flooring option.

"There's a lot of foot traffic in this library, as well as dirt and sand that makes its way in," Waguespack said. "Those combinations can easily result in scratches and scuff marks, and create a lot of maintenance work. Duo with Diamond 10 Technology offered a perfect solution for our application."

Added assurance came when Waguespack and Thompson learned that a local grocery store chain standardized the same type of flooring for all of its new stores.

"When I learned that such a busy grocery store relied on Duo with Diamond 10 Technology, it sealed the deal for me," Thompson said. "If it could meet their demands for foot traffic, shelving and refrigeration, we felt that it would work for us. We knew this is what we wanted."

The library installed Spettro Caspian Sand (ST931) and Spettro English Grey with Blue Hawaiian and Blue Lagoon accents (ST2PR) from the Duo Collection to create a timeless visual of sand and grey colors.

**"We've gotten nothing but compliments," Thompson said. "This library is a community hub, it's an urban space. There are so many things going on in a library now. Libraries are essentially community centers, and now we have flooring that's functional, beautiful and will serve the community for a long time."**

- Michel Thompson, Capital Projects Manager at  
New Orleans's Public Library



### Recognition for a Job Well Done

All of the construction was completed in time to be on display for the American Library Association's convention in June 2018, where the beautiful new library space received recognition and an overwhelmingly positive response. If that wasn't enough, the New Orleans Public Library renovation was honored by the Downtown Development District of New Orleans for the "exceptional contributions to the progress of Downtown New Orleans" at the annual Downtown NOLA Awards.

The award is icing on the cake, and affirmation of a public service project that was so many years in the making.

"We're proud of what this space has become for this community," Thompson said. "The library staff has received so many positive comments from our patrons. They truly appreciate the updated space and can feel a difference as soon as they walk in. I want to share our experience and help other agencies in New Orleans undergoing similar renovations. I would proudly pass on this Armstrong Flooring solution to others."



### Duo™ with Diamond 10® Technology

- The most scratch, stain and scuff resistant luxury flooring in the industry
- Easy maintenance and installation – less cleaning time and disruption
- Ability to create unique designs and patterns through broad palette of coordinated colors
- 20-Year Limited Commercial Warranty





### Hurricane Katrina's Impact on the Public Library

New Orleans is a tourism town heavily reliant on visitors, and especially conventions. The flooding following Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, destroyed much of the city's infrastructure, including 6 public libraries, and convention business plummeted when many organizations canceled or relocated their scheduled conventions. However, the American Library Association (ALA) maintained its commitment to host their 2006 convention in New Orleans, which was the first major convention held post-Katrina. Many of its attendees volunteered substantial time and effort at worksites during the 2006 convention to help reopen some of the New Orleans Public Library branches. That became the early stages of a relationship between the Public Library and ALA that would ultimately inspire the timing of completion for the 2018 renovation.

#### HURRICANE KATRINA

After Hurricane Katrina decimated the city in August 2005, convention business plummeted because many organizations backed out of their scheduled conventions in the city.

#### ALA IS BACK IN TOWN

The ALA convention stopped in New Orleans again in 2011, and while the city and the library had come a long way since the devastation of 2005, there was still much work that needed to be done, especially to the Main Library.

#### A SPACE TO IMPRESS

With freshly laid Duo Luxury Flooring with Diamond 10 Technology, the Main Library unveiled the bright and beautiful creative spaces in time for the ALA convention.

