

Revamp project excites

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Stage two of the White Hart refurbishment is nearing completion.

The *Daily News* was recently given a tour of the category one listed historic building by co-owner Harvey Dunlop.

Most of the structural renovation has been completed and the building was 100 per cent seismological sound, Mr Dunlop said.

The courtyard, emporium entrance and new toilet facilities are finished.

In a month or so, more than 300 square metres of commercial space will be available for lease – two retail sites downstairs and an office upstairs.

“We’ve come a long way,” Mr Dunlop said.

The owners were toying with the idea of making the White Hart’s distinctive wide veranda an office space enclosed with glass, he said.

Renaissance Holdings Ltd had owned the White Hart for about 10 years and until recently it was not an overly rewarding building, Mr Dunlop said.

“We’ve got a few buildings in town and this has been the toughest one to crack.”

When work began nearly a year ago the former hotel was gutted and the interior was stripped back to the facade.

The work has been carried out in accordance with preservation requirements. Native timber has been salvaged and reused in other parts of the building.

“The next stage is trying to get a tenant in here,” he said.

The 125-year-old building was



proving extremely versatile and the owners were enjoying the renovation process, he said.

“The project has been hugely satisfying to get to this point and

preserve the White Hart for the next 50 years.”

The spaces for lease could suit a range of businesses from retail to hospitality to offices, he said.

“We’ll fit it out to the requirement of the tenant but we’re conscious that we need to get the right mix of tenants.”

The space had been designed to

get people flowing through the emporium, he said.

A lot of money had been spent on strengthening the veranda and roofing, which was compulsory

Come on in: White Hart refurbishment project manager Harvey Dunlop in the newly renovated emporium entrance. Glass will be placed over the exposed cobblestones which are part of the original design. Photo: ANDY JACKSON/FAIRFAX NZ

under preservation requirements. The project had kept close to budget which was pleasing, he said.

Mr Dunlop estimated a third of the full redevelopment had been completed.

“All of the heritage protection work is completed so the next stage is an internal refurbishment.”

How quickly that happened depended on how soon the White Hart found tenants, he said.

A concrete building on the eastern side of the courtyard was yet to be renovated but certain parties had already expressed interest, he said.

One possibility was to add another level to the concrete building which used to house The Blue Room and the old White Hart public bar, he said.

“We’ve got our architects doing some design work at the moment.”

At the end of the project an archaeologist would provide a report on the renovation process and all the historical discoveries would likely be put on display, he said.

New Zealand Historic Places Trust chair Shonagh Kenderine said she was awe-struck by the refurbishment.

“The restoration for it is, without doubt, a truly great example of Taranaki heritage.”