



**IMPORTANT ELEMENT:** This Bracken St villa will be maintained with the help of a grant from the New Plymouth District Council. Photo: MARK DWYER

# Maintenance money for heritage buildings

By JUDITH LACY

A CITY doctor has been granted more than \$2500 from the New Plymouth District Council's heritage fund to repaint his house.

Peter and Jocelyn Rich were granted \$2650 towards exterior repairs and painting of their Bracken St three-storey turreted villa, at a recent meeting of the council's environment committee.

The owners of the East End Building, on the corner of Devon and Eliot Sts, also received \$2000 towards repainting the 1925 commercial building.

Lynn Publitz was the only committee member who voted against the grants. He later said he had consistently objected to council funds being used to subsidise the maintenance of historic buildings in private ownership.

Council planning manager Ron Kratz said many buildings that received heritage funding had features that were more expensive to maintain than buildings designed with modern materials for easy maintenance.

"Buildings like this are not produced any more, so they add a certain amount of character to the district."

It was important building owners paid their fair share as, in most cases,

they were the direct beneficiaries.

"Funding was always a shared agreement," he said.

Applicants' income was considered, but if the building provided a public benefit, that should be recognised regardless of the need or otherwise of the owners'.

The Bracken St property is described in the council's heritage inventory as an important element in the community's consciousness and a physical landmark with exceptional architectural merit.

The house was one of about 50 buildings in the inventory listed as category A, said Mr Kratz.

East End Building owners Kajole Group and J.M. Leuthart, in their application, said vacant shops in the CBD meant they had to reduce rentals to remain competitive. They had insufficient funds to maintain the building to an acceptable standard.

The owners applied for \$18,500 but a council report recommended they be granted only a "modest level of assistance", based on assessment criteria and the building's category B heritage listing.

The heritage fund had \$50,000 a year to allocate and received about 10 applications a year, Mr Kratz said. Funding was also available for waahi tapu sites, bush and wetlands.