

Zeal moves into Mayfair building

Community

Stephanie Ockhuysen

A historic central New Plymouth building is getting a new, younger, lease of life after its last tenant went into liquidation.

Bar and restaurant The Mayfair, on Devon St West, has been sitting empty since closing its doors in October 2019.

But from August it will be opening as Zeal – a space for youth events.

“This cropped up in lockdown and we spoke with the landlord and he loved what we did,” Zeal Taranaki manager Luke Galley said.

“It’s in the centre of town and perfect for young people straight after school.”

Zeal, previously based in Marfell, will feature regular gigs, training courses, vocal coaching, hip hop classes, mentoring, Gateway courses for local schools with subjects such as barista skills, and other creative programmes.

“The young people come up with the ideas and the concepts and make it happen,” Galley said.

“We coach them in that, and they run their own events for their mates.

“A lot of young people don’t have the opportunity to express their talent or tap into their creative side.”

Zeal has been running nationwide for 25 years and in Taranaki for two.

It was contracted by New Plymouth District Council (NPDC) to bring a range of youth-led events to the city.

In a statement NPDC community partnerships lead Callum Williamson said the council contracted Zeal to respond to the needs of young people.

“This partnership is carried out

Jayden Hall, 17, left, Luke Galley and Hannah-Leigh Collinson, 17, at Zeal’s new headquarters in the old Mayfair building.

SIMON O’CONNOR/STUFF



through Zeal’s services for young people across the district, including training and free activities.

“NPDC has also helped Zeal’s move to the Mayfair through a one-off grant of \$65,000 from the Covid Relief Fund.”

The Mayfair Theatre was transformed into a multi-purpose venue around 2012. The art deco building was built in 1916 and started life as Everybody’s Picture Theatre.

In February, Zeal moved to a premises on Powderham St to have more of a presence in the city but found it didn’t have enough room for what they wanted to run.

So when The Mayfair came up, owned by the same landlord, Galley said it seemed like a “no brainer”.

Galley, who moved from England six years ago after running a similar space on a council estate there, said Zeal will launch on August 14 and 15 and be open Tuesday to Friday from 3-6pm as well as for any events and gigs on Friday and Saturday nights.

“Anyone can come, any idea is welcome, and we’ll try to make them come to life,” 17-year-old Jayden Hall, one of Zeal’s youth leaders, said.

Hannah-Leigh Collinson, also 17, would be running vocal coaching and wanted to start a choir.

“It’s a really good spot for people to come if they’re feeling unwelcome anywhere else.

“They’re always going to be welcome here no matter what.”