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ROYAL REVEALS

Taranaki's oldest licensed premises is getting a new look.

Publican John O'Sullivan (Sully) and partners, the Mayne Corporation, are spending more than \$500,000 to revamp the Royal Hotel, New Plymouth, to create two new bars and two new retail areas.

"We're starting on the downstairs first and then we'll look at doing something upstairs," says Sully.

The Royal has been closed this week and reopens today, Friday August 27, with a new Sportsman's Bar in the old tracing TAB bar.

John says they're aiming to provide people with a comfortable atmosphere, serving both alcohol and non-alcoholic drinks such as coffee, and will cater for sports enthusiasts with video and TV screens. The redevelopment will be completed in

stages, with the new back bar scheduled to open in late October.

It will be completely redesigned to feature views of Pukeariki Landing and the seafront, and incorporate a glassed area overlooking the Huatoki Stream. Another special feature will be an outdoor area with a large palm. The back bar will have a heavy emphasis on live bands, aimed at "anyone and everyone who enjoys live entertainment," says John.

A new kitchen is also being installed to cater for lunches and dinners, while on certain days of the week the back bar will be available for private hire.

John says the decor throughout the new premises will centre on earthy, contemporary tones.

Each bar will have its own entrance, one from Gill Street opposite Centre City and the other near the old access from Brougham Street.

Negotiations are under way with interested parties to tenant the two new retail shops in what used to be the public bar and they will incorporate glass feature walls.

Asked what attracted the partners to the Royal, John replied, "It was one of the more untidy premises still left in the centre of town and we could see good potential to upgrade the site."

The partnership bought the freehold to the Royal from Dominion Breweries after negotiations lasting a year, on and off.

John has been in the hotel industry nine years and says he's looking forward to being back in the central city after a few years

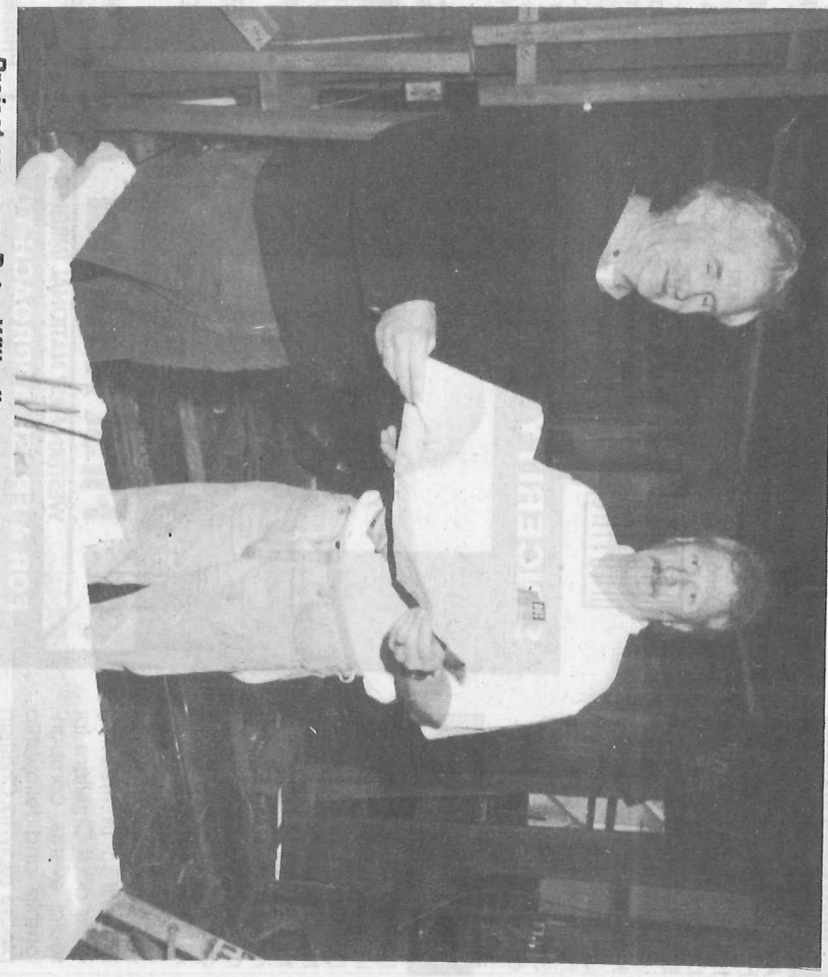
absence.

The fact there are six licensed premises now, all within easy walking distance, in the centre of town doesn't faze him.

"At the end of the day the public decide where they want to be," he says.

The Royal will probably be renamed but no decision has been made on what to call it. The hotel has a 24 hour tracing licence and will open to 3am most nights.

Originally called the Taranaki Hotel, the Royal is not only the oldest licensed premises in Taranaki, it is rumoured to be licence No 3 in New Zealand. The original licence is dated 1850.



Project overseer Peter Wills discusses plans with publican John O'Sullivan

Hotel to undergo major renovations

By JANE WYNWARD

NEW PLYMOUTH'S Royal Hotel is to receive a major facelift after being sold to a joint venture company.

The company, which recently bought the building from Dominion Breweries for an undisclosed price, plans to redevelop the former hotel into a modern complex comprising two new up-market bars and two retail shops.

The hotel's new bars, which will be run by local publican John O'Sullivan, will feature a garden bar. The company, set up by Mr O'Sullivan and Mayne Corporation, is negotiating with retailers considering relocating to the new complex.

The existing bars at the Royal Hotel will operate until the redevelopment dictates their closure, while the public bar will remain closed.

The chief executive of Mayne Corporation, Paul Bublitz, described his company's involvement in the project as showing further confidence in the city.

Mayne Corporation was involved in the purchase of the former Chief Post Office and also owned other commercial properties on Devon St.

"The redevelopment of the former Royal Hotel of what is presently an ugly structure, will add value to the immediate area, enhancing the bottom end of Brougham St," said Mr Bublitz.

The remaining of the complex and opening of the new bars is scheduled for mid-October while leasing of the retail shops will be put to the market

CAWTRUD HOTEL/REST

Revamped pub expects to be top of the glass

PUB - GOERS at New Plymouth's revamped Royal Hotel should be careful not to throw stones.

The \$1.2 million development's main design emphasis is on glass, with one of the building's two bars being named The Glasshouse, which opens today.

It took eight weeks to transform the site, on the corner of Gill and Brougham Sts, which has been renamed Richmond Corner after the historic Richmond Cottage - just a stone's throw away.

The building's other bar, called The Bench, will be more casual than the upmarket Glasshouse, which includes an outdoor area, food bar, stage and dance floor. There is also retail space on the ground floor and office space upstairs.

The Richmond Corner development is a joint venture between New Plymouth company Mayne Corporation and publican John O'Sullivan. They bought the property from Dominion Breweries two

months ago, after a year of negotiations.

Mr Bublitz said the hotel's upgrade was more than just a boost for the central New Plymouth pub scene.

"It also improves this corner. It's going to help the area to do up what was a pretty disgusting end of town."

Mayne Corporation is also involved in another major development up the street. The company owns Currie St's NZ Post building, where the World Gym will open tomorrow.

Mr Bublitz said while the company, which has group assets of \$25 million, was looking for more property in New Plymouth, there were not many bargains left in the central city.

"The commercial property market here in New Plymouth has tightened up considerably," he said. "It would appear there's going to be quite a lot of growth in the commercial property market in the next few years."