

# Tenpin venue bowls on with \$1.5m extension



## New Plymouth

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Taranaki's tenpin bowling venue is planning a million-dollar extension as it recovers from weeks of closure during the Covid-19 lockdown.

A mezzanine floor to house a new laser tag game will be built above the bowling lanes at New Plymouth's Bowlarama, according to owner Shelly Szedlak, whose parents started the business 30 years ago.

The extension will cost between \$1.5 million and \$2m.

Laser tag, for up to 40 players at a time, would add an extra option to Bowlarama's tenpin bowling, arcade games and mini putt course.

"You'll be able to come and do all three. On a winter's day you could spend a good three hours here," she said.

Applications for resource and planning consents are being processed by the New Plymouth District Council.

During the building stage, half the lanes would be closed at a time to allow the work overhead to be done. The start date for building depended on how long the council consent process took, but Szedlak was hopeful it could open in January.

"It's very, very exciting. It has been a long time in the planning."

Business since they reopened last week had been quiet, but she was not surprised.

"We will be way down in what we would normally be after a weekend. People are still a bit scared to come out or don't have money in their pockets."

Bowling and golf balls, mini putt clubs and surfaces are being sanitised in line with the Ministry of Health guidelines.

All the staff had been kept on through the closure, and Szedlak was optimistic things would get busier as customers returned.

"We definitely need that support. We have been in New Ply-



Malise Thompson bowls during a family trip to Bowlarama in New Plymouth for her daughter Annabelle's ninth birthday on Saturday

PHOTOS GLENN JEFFREY/STUFF



Annabelle Thompson celebrates her ninth birthday at Bowlarama.

mouth for 30 years and that public support is there for us. If we didn't have that, we wouldn't have anything."

### Cinema options limited

While tenpin bowling is back, going to the movies could be a while off because there are no blockbusters being released at present due to the pandemic.

"We are like KFC without the chicken," Hāwera Cinemas manager Kirsty Bourke said.

There were no really good movies in the booking schedule until about September, she said.

However, the cinema will open at Queen's Birthday Weekend and will screen older movies to test the demand.

"We will screen what we can, what is available and see what happens, week by week. That's pretty much what everyone in the industry is doing."

Kings Theatre in Stratford would reopen with a limited school holiday programme in the first week of June, but a return to regular screenings would not happen for a few months, Theatre Trust committee chairman Jason Kowalewski said.

"We are going to do a kids' movie every Saturday to give kids and parents something to do, if we get enough people interested," he said.

Event Cinemas in New Plymouth is currently closed, but the company did not respond to requests for comment.

The first weekend that mini putt was back under level 2 was very slow at the Hillsborough Holden Museum near New Plymouth, owner Steve Fabish said.

"It was an absolute waste of time on Saturday. We had nine people through, while Sunday was a bit better, with 29, but it's only early days."

The museum will also be open this coming weekend, and he was hopeful more visitors would head out for a game or a visit.