

Matakana pub a pivotal part of village life

5:00 AM Monday November 2, 2015 Colin Taylor



The historic Matakana Village pub and restaurant north of Auckland.

An historic hotel in the heart of popular Matakana Village 67 kms north of Auckland is for sale after receiving an award-winning makeover three years ago.

The Matakana Village pub and restaurant, formerly known as Matakana House, is among over 100 commercial and industrial properties included in Bayleys' latest *Total Property* portfolio which was launched yesterday.

“The hotel has been a local landmark and a pivotal part of village life in Matakana for over a century,” says Steve Orr of Bayleys Warkworth, who is marketing the property, by tender closing Thursday December 3.

“It has undergone a significant rejuvenation and been completely transformed under new ownership,” Orr says. “It is a profitable and well managed business that still has plenty of future upside.”

Orr says tenders are being accepted for the Matakana Village pub and restaurant as a property with its freehold going concern business; or alternatively, just for the business only.



Aerial view depicting the Matakana Village pub and restaurant with property boundaries outlined in orange border and depicting unused land at rear of the property.

Located on a 1718 sq m site at 11 Matakana Valley Rd, the hotel comes with a large amount of underused land at the rear of the property which presents a new owner with the future option of expanding the business on the big large block of land.

Orr says the two-level building was built in 1903 by the village postmaster, reputedly from the timber of a single kauri tree. After his death, it became a boarding house for workers employed at the nearby Matakana Co-Operative Dairy Company factory which operated until the early 1960s. It had a variety of subsequent uses including hosting a fine dining restaurant run by a French restaurateur in the 1980s and as a Speights Ale House prior to being sold in 2012.

It was then purchased by Duncan and Hannah Anderson and a syndicate of other couples who employed award-winning architect Peter Were to redesign the interior of the building.

“We could see the property had huge potential and we managed to get a group of friends excited about the vision we had for the place,” says Hannah Anderson. “We wanted to lift the quality of the hotel to a similar standard to the Matakana Village development across the road – which has helped make the township such a popular visitor destination – and make it more family friendly.”

The pub was closed for four months while the rebuilding took place. Outside, the astroturf in front of the entranceway was ripped up and replaced with a new garden bar with different pockets of seating and a coffee bar in one corner. Angled parking alongside one side of the building was relocated and replaced with a giant outdoor fireplace and veranda which has become a popular all-year-around gathering place for customers.

Inside, the 142 sq m ground floor was gutted and reconfigured to make it lighter and more functional. Local builder Warkworth Construction oversaw the renovations which included removing internal walls and widening doors. The bathrooms were given a complete overhaul and modernised, with a feature of these being strikingly patterned wallpaper on the ceilings.

The kitchen area was doubled in size – and has subsequently been increased again – with new food and beverage chillers installed along with a Montague gas-fired char-grill, commonly seen in American steakhouses but one of a few in New Zealand.

A focal point of the downstairs area is a new horseshoe-shaped bar with an American white oak bar top and an expanded restaurant area to the side of this. Where possible, anything that was taken out was re-used elsewhere including cornices, kauri doors and skirtings.

“Our aim was to modernise the hotel, without compromising its original character and charm,” Duncan Anderson says. “We wanted to create a friendly and relaxed village pub and restaurant where visitors could bring their families; locals could enjoy a refreshing ale at the end of the day; and the community could gather and connect. I think we succeeded with those aims.”

The refurbishment won architect Peter Were the commercial interior award at the Auckland and Northland 2015 ADNZ Resene Architectural Design Awards. It is also a contender for the national award. The judge commented that the renovation exhibited a “very strong sense of what it is to be a pub both in this community, and as a destination, through a bold and unusual combination of materials”.

The Matakana was also the winner of the 2013 Hospitality NZ Award for New Zealand’s best new bar and restaurant. Foodtruck TV chef Mike Van de Elzen assisted with setting up the kitchen, as well as designing the menu.

“We’ve focused on providing good quality food, but not too fancy or expensive, using fresh local produce, such as Matakana oysters, Whangaripo buffalo and Hoteo whitebait as well as promoting craft beers and wines from the region,” says Duncan Anderson.



The restaurant within the Matakana Village pub and restaurant.

A craft beer club has been established and the Sawmill Brewing Company brews The Matakana's own Red Bulldozer IPA (India Pale Ale) with other local craft beer producers such as 8-Wired, Liberty and Hallertau occupying guest taps on a rolling basis. The pub has recently completed the terms of its brewery supply contract and is now a free house.

Duncan Anderson says this gives the new owners complete flexibility to negotiate new beverage supply arrangements and potentially brew their own beer onsite..

Orr says the revamped hotel and restaurant has struck a chord with both locals and out-of-town visitors, reflected in the fact that it was awarded a prestigious Trip Advisor's Certificate of Excellence this year which recognises businesses that consistently earn top Trip Advisor ratings from customers.

He says while the Andersons oversee the marketing and administration of The Matakana, the hotel is run on a day-to-day basis by an experienced management team whose services would be available to a new owner. Orr says the syndicate of owners has made a decision to sell the hotel while there is still good growth potential left in the business.

“The upstairs floor and balcony, which has many character features such as timber panelling, ornate lighting with pressed ceilings and sash windows, has yet to be fully refurbished. It still has a number of rooms that could be upgraded to provide good quality boutique or perhaps backpackers' accommodation. Alternatively, it could be opened up like downstairs and refurbished as a large area for private or corporate functions.”



The outdoor seating area with fireplace and entrance to Oyster Bar in the Matakana Village pub and restaurant.

Orr says a grassed area and garaging and storerooms at the back of the hotel could be further developed - perhaps as a children's play area or for more seating. More use could also be made of the premises' off licence and the coffee house on the street frontage which is currently only open at weekends.

“However, perhaps of most interest to someone buying the property as well as the business, is the large area of underused land at the rear of the site which is used for parking. While the council does require some on-site parking to be provided, this could be incorporated into a possible future development of this part of the site which could have visitor or residential accommodation above.”

The property currently has a Mixed Use zoning, which permits a wide range of commercial and residential uses, and is zoned Local Centre under the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan (PAUP). This applies to a large number of small population centres around Auckland and is zoned to provide for the convenience needs of surrounding residents. Buildings of up to four storeys are permitted with residential dwellings allowed on the upper floors.

Orr says large blocks of land around Warkworth have been zoned Future Urban for possible development under the PAUP. “Matakana Village is already a popular destination for Aucklanders, being less than an hour’s drive from the Auckland Harbour Bridge, as well as people who own holiday homes or permanent residences in the surrounding beach settlements. This is only going to intensify as a result of the huge growth projected for the area.”