



Sales and marketing director Tom O'Gorman, left, and general manager Tom Petot show off some of the reconstruction work at the landmark Exeter Inn that will transform the old restaurant and bar into a two-level, state-of-the-art facility.
Diana Paquet photo

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Exeter Inn's 'exciting' makeover to be complete soon

Inn makeover should be done in May

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EXETER — Hold on to your hard hats. The Exeter Inn has a \$4 million dollar renovation going on aimed at turning an old, dark and maybe slightly stuffy hotel into a fresh, lighted and inviting environment.

The largest changes to the inn will be an enlarged restaurant/bar area, completely updated bathrooms and the addition of modern technology in the guest rooms.

Hay Creek Hospitality, which owns the Centennial Hotel in Concord, bought The Exeter Inn in 2007 and, with the architectural and interior design help of Charlotte Thompson Associates of Dallas, should have the landmark hotel fully renovated by mid-May.

The removal of a supporting wall on the entrance level of the inn will allow for the bar and cocktail area on an upper level that will look down into the restaurant area. The bar

will have a 40-inch, flat-panel TV for sporting events, but the sound will be off and music will be on. The idea is, people can come in and enjoy their sports, or engage in conversation around the U-shaped bar.

The bar and restaurant will be named The Epoch, meaning "a beginning of a new era."

"Again, something we did very successfully up at Centennial, we will create (a bar and restaurant with) its own identity, and create the feeling of a free-standing restaurant and lounge on its own, so you don't even realize that there are also guest rooms up above you," said general manager Tom Petot.

Petot said that years ago, The Exeter Inn's restaurant and bar was the social hub of the community. Part of the new owner's desire is to bring the locals back in again.

"We'd be overjoyed if we could assume that type of mantel again," said Petot. "We think we are creating a space that is appealing enough, exciting enough, interesting enough, that it will work to that end."

And for those visiting the inn for a romantic getaway, or a Phillips Exeter Academy event, there are brand new bathrooms, with all new tiling, fixtures and lighting.

The new glass shower doors have a little hole carved in them so you can put your hand into the shower and adjust the heat, while still standing warm and dry in the bathroom. The guestrooms will have new carpeting, tables and lamps, plush new bedding, and more.

"The biggest change is the modernization of high-speed Internet, flat-screen TVs, docking stations for your iPods — things of that nature — which everyone is used to in their travels," said director of sales and marketing Tom O'Gorman.

While the inn will see a lot of changes, much will stay the same.

The Exeter Inn will remain Georgian and New England style in its interior design, but all the heavy, dark wallpaper and furniture fabric will be replaced by lighter — and sometimes vibrant — colors and fabrics.

"The designer says if you had to put a name on it, it is a Ralph Lauren and Polo-sort of clubby kind of feel to it," said O'Gorman. "A little bit more elevated than it was in the past, but a bit more air and tradition."

One thing that will still remain the same is all the dramatic woodwork that is found throughout The Exeter Inn.

"What we loved about the building when we came into it, was the beauty of all this natural wood," said Petot. "We will be mimicking it and adding to it as well."

The heating and cooling systems will be updated, and there will be compact fluorescent lighting, cutting the wattage of the bulb by about 75 percent.

All the plumbing will conform to the new standards of water conservation, while still providing an enjoyable shower.

Throughout the renovations The Exeter Inn has been open for guests, and it looks forward to seeing a full house after the completion of the work. When the work is done this will be a luxury style inn.

"We will have room service, turn down service, this will be a full service hotel, restaurant/bar, and all the services you expect from a hotel," said O'Gorman.

The Exeter Inn

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