

\$4 million upgrade of Town Basin gets green light

A \$4 million upgrade of the Town Basin will go ahead — but not everyone is happy about the details of the development.

The spruce-up is designed to be finished in time for next year's Rugby World Cup.

Last week, Whangarei District Council voted to approve the spending, which includes \$1.24 million to transform the former Hubands building into two galleries, a visitor information centre, upgraded toilets, a café and a coach terminal.

It is the plans to move Whangarei Art Gallery from the Rose Gardens to a more visible site in the Hubands building that is of concern to some councillors.

Councillor Merv Williams says it was always planned that the gallery would move into the Hundertwasser museum, should that go ahead.

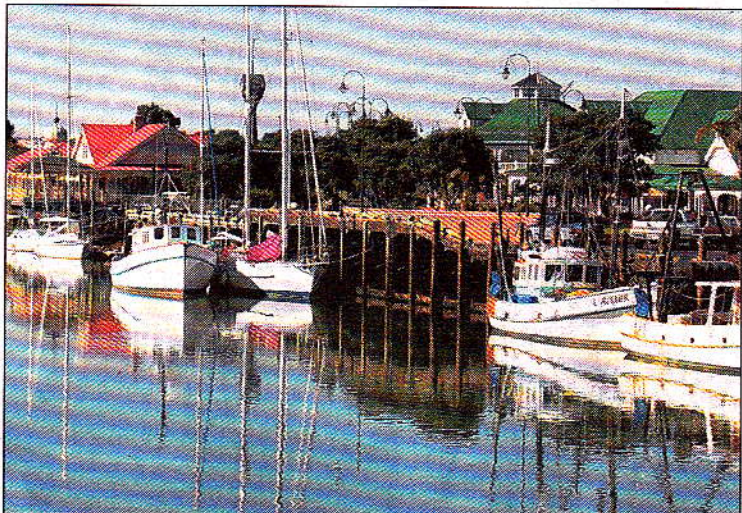
"I think we've rushed this and we're going the wrong way. We don't need to rush this work in time for the Rugby World Cup."

Councillor Brian McLachlan added: "We need to know if Hundertwasser is in or out."

But mayor Morris Cutforth replied that patience was needed on that issue.

Councillor Kahu Sutherland was unhappy with the inclusion of a bus terminal, saying traffic at the Town Basin was already congested without adding buses into the roading system.

The upgrade will also see \$1.7 million spent improving walkways, creating a sculpture walkway, a heritage trail, more playgrounds and a covered



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FACE LIFT: Whangarei District Council is to spend \$4 million sprucing up the Town Basin.

artisan market.

A further \$1 million has been budgeted for improving entranceways — designed to lead visitors from Tarewa Rd to the Town Basin with plantings, paving, roading alignment and flags. Capturing visitors who otherwise bypass Whangarei in favour of the Bay of Islands is a key part of the concept.

Councillor Jeroen Jongejans unsuccessfully tried to get \$150,000 set aside for upgrading the Tarewa Park visitors' i-Site centre as visitors' first port of call to the district.

Chief executive Mark Simpson says the upgrade is being paid for by operational savings over a two-

year period. Council's budget is set to increase by CPI or 3 per cent to cover inflation, which equates to a \$2.8 million increase in budgets per year.

Councillors also voted to request a review of inner city parking and investigate charging for all-day parking at the Town Basin. This was a motion put forward by Cr McLachlan, who also put forward a successful motion asking for a staff report on the merits of a cycleway between the Town Basin and Whangarei Falls.

The \$4 million Town Basin funding was approved with only Crs Williams and McLachlan voting against it.