



ERIC CONOVER/Staff Photographer

Each floor of the Traders Bank building in downtown Hazleton has been gutted. On this floor, new restrooms will be located at left. The ceiling will be dropped only where necessary to hide the ductwork; the rest of the ceiling will be replastered and restored.

Starting from scratch

Only the outer walls and floors left intact as downtown skyscraper is redone for new role

By **JIM DINO**
Staff Writer

George Leitner was standing inside a gutted office building, wearing a hardhat and explaining how the building was being renovated from top to bottom.

Sound familiar?

A decade earlier, Leitner was doing the same thing inside the historic Markle building in downtown Hazleton.

Thursday, he was inside the former Traders Bank, across South Wyoming Street from the Markle.

DeAngelo Brothers Inc. (DBi) purchased the Traders and former Hazleton National Bank buildings and are renovating them into Class A office space, like Leitner supervised for George Hayden, president of the Hazleton Development Co.

The former Traders Bank, built in 1923 on the southeast

corner of Broad and Wyoming streets, is being renovated into the new world headquarters of DBi, a worldwide infrastructure and maintenance company.

The renovations are being commissioned by Downtown Hazleton Development, or DHD, the last initials of the three partners — Hayden and Neal and Paul DeAngelo.



The Traders Bank building will become the new headquarters of DBi.

See **TRADERS**, A8

Traders

(Continued from A1)

Is it easier the second time around? Leitner said yes, not so much as because he's been through it before, but because this time, he knows who his tenant will be and knows exactly what they want.

"It's much easier this time, because I have a client in hand," Leitner said. "When we did the Markle, we did the infrastructure work and then the office fit-out one floor, or 10,000 square feet, at a time. We learned a lot. With this project, we can do (finish) the office fit-out."

When Hazleton Development Co. bought the Markle, it had been vacant for some time. That was not the case with the Traders building.

"Both buildings have historic characteristics, but this building was in much better shape," Leitner said. "We had tenants right up to when we started construction."

Because Leitner knows who will be in the building, what took him a decade with the Markle will take about a year with Traders.

"We have been very aggressive and saying it will be finished in September, but I think it will be more toward the end of the year" when the building will be finished, said Neal DeAngelo III.

Like the Markle, Leitner said as much of the historic character of the Traders building is being preserved as possible. But all new elec-

trical, plumbing, heating, ventilation and air conditioning is being installed to not only bring the building up to present building codes, but also to create Class A office space.

"The historic aspects of the building are beautiful," Neal DeAngelo III said. "We are trying to save as much of the original building as we can. We are opening up the skylight (on the first floor) again."

One of those characteristics is the limestone on the outside of the building. Leitner said the facade is being repointed by cutting old mortar out with a saw and replacing it with new mortar.

The work

The first floor — the area where the bank operated — will become a reception area. Two trucks will be displayed there: a 1971 Ford F-250 four-wheel-drive pickup, bought by brothers Neal and Paul DeAngelo with a \$2,000 loan from their father to start the business in 1977, and their 1,000th truck, a 2009 Ford F-250 purchased in 2009 to signify DBI's 30th anniversary. The mezzanine of the original building will be expanded and become a dining area. There will also be a small conference room and waiting areas.

Each floor has been gutted, and new restrooms are being installed. A utility room is being built adjacent

to the restrooms. About 30 percent of the ceiling will be dropped just to hide the new duct work. The rest of the ceiling will be replastered and restored.

There will be 11 conference rooms and some offices throughout, but most of the floors will be open, with cubicles separating employees.

Aside from new infrastructure, walls and ceilings, Leitner said the building is getting new windows "probably for the first time since it was built."

There are two working elevators in the building, but they, too, will be replaced.

Joe Herlihy, manager of the demolition portion of the project, estimated workers have removed 70 Dumpsters worth of material, "about 10 a floor," as the seven-story structure has been gutted. Some of the material, brick and block, has been recycled as clean fill, and metal has been recycled.

Two of the tenants in the Markle are participating in the Traders project. JRA, Joseph Rominski Architecture, is the architectural firm overseeing the project, and Spec Restoration is cleaning, sealing and repointing the brick on the exterior of the structure.

Hazleton Development Co. — the name of the firm that led the Markle project — is also overseeing this project, Leitner said.

Quandel is the general contractor; George J. Hayden is the electrical contractor and Bognet Inc. is the plumbing contractor.

Two Lackawanna County firms are among the subcontractors: Sprink, Taylor, sprinklers, and Eastern Roofing Systems, Jessup, roofing.

Other subcontractors are Vercusky Painting, West Hazleton, interior painting, Port Elevators, Williamsport, elevators; PCS, Harrisburg (and formerly of Jim Thorpe), demolition, and Dual Temp, Allentown, HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning).

of two bridges — one that will span South Wyoming Street and connect the Traders and Markle buildings, and the other that will cross over Mine Street from the Markle to the city's parking garage, which also is being renovated.

"We've tried to keep all of the work as local as possible," Leitner said.

Work on the bridges will begin soon.

Hazleton Mayor Joe Yannuzzi said bids will be going out "in the next couple of weeks" to repair the parking garage, which was built in the mid 1970s.

The mayor said the project will be done "well before" the end of the year.

Yannuzzi said about \$1.3 million of the city's Local Share Account grant from state gaming funds was transferred from the project to build a new parking garage at West Broad and Laurel streets to rehabilitate the existing parking garage, so that the 100-plus employees of DBI who will occupy the Traders building will have a place to park.

Leitner said construction on the former Hazleton National building at West Broad and Laurel streets will not begin until the Traders project is finished.

"That project won't start until 2015," Leitner said.

Unlike the Traders project — in which a few tenants remaining were relocated, and construction crews are working on the entire building at one time — HNB has a significant number of tenants and will be done a floor or two at a time.

Leitner said tenants will be moved around to free up entire floors.

"I've signed three new tenants for that building in the last three months," he said. "We will work with the tenants to keep them, and move them into new space once it is renovated. One of the elevators was just modernized, so we only have the other one (to work on)."

REGISTER NOW

The Anthracite Region Center for Independent Living Presents:
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Basics
With Susan Kennedy as the Presenter

On Tuesday, April 8, 2014 from 10am – 2pm

Lehigh Rec Center
243 S. 8th Street
Lehigh, PA 18235

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED

Contact Susan at
1-800-777-9906 ext. 23
& Jennifer ext. 19
To Reserve Your Seat

