

## **New life for local landmark**

**By BOB KOSLOW**

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### **DAYTONA BEACH**

Shortly after Jack and Kelly White took over managing the historic Kress Building in downtown Daytona Beach early last year a major tenant moved out leaving them with a 2,500-square-foot space to fill.

The Whites, who also became part owners in the four-story building at 140 S. Beach St., proceeded with plans to renovate it any way.

Today, after considerable improvements to the ground floor including restoring some of the original Art Deco features, the 17,000-square-foot building is roughly 80 percent leased, up from 60 percent a year ago.

New tenants include Shade Takeoffs and Aflac Insurance. Anthem Motorsports, which publishes souvenir programs for NASCAR and International Speedway Corp., is set to move in this summer, taking a 1,000-square-foot space on the ground floor.

"We did some renovations and have slowly built it back up," Jack White said.

The building opened in 1932 as a Kress "five-and-dime" department store. After the Kress store closed in January 1974, the building was divided into spaces for multiple tenants and today is primarily used as offices. Known for its Art Deco architecture, the building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

The building's majority owner is Mac Smith of Ormond Beach, who initially purchased the property in 1991, sold it in 2007, but took it back three years later. He decided last year to take on the Whites, owners of the Jack White Land Co., as minority partners. Jack White is also a partner in White Challis Redevelopment.

"This is a good market for us," said Jack White, whose wife Kelly is a Daytona Beach city commissioner in addition to being a real estate broker. The couple have been active in efforts to revitalize historic urban areas including downtown Daytona Beach where they live.

"We like working with small businesses. Downtown is like an incubator with lots of small businesses and we tend to cater to those type businesses," White said.

The Whites also own the WhiteRobbin, Warren Harding and W.H Gardiner office buildings in downtown Daytona Beach.

Anthem President Tom Porkorny said he decided to move to the Kress Building because he wanted “a more collaborative space that fosters creativity” for him and his staff. The company employs five workers locally.

“The Kress offers a unique, interesting, historic building in an area that is really transforming into a vibrant community with a lot going on,” Porkorny said.

Those are much the same reasons Darren Nash relocated his business, Shade Takeoffs, to the Kress Building from Seabreeze Boulevard six months ago. He has two employees.

“I love the passion that Jack has for bringing these old buildings back to life,” Nash said. “We can work from home, but there is just something special about coming together as a team, that synergy. This whole ground floor has that energy. There is a lot of interaction.”

The renovations included ripping up the carpet on the ground floor and polishing the original terrazzo floor. Period lighting was also added along with tin panels to the drop-down ceilings. The interior walls and woodwork on the ground floor were repainted using traditional Art Deco colors of lighter tones of reds, blues and greens.

“The downtown could use some more offices,” White said. “These old buildings are crying out for updates. The first year or two, it’s about getting them back to a stable level, and once you do that, the expectations are more consistent and it’s easier to attract tenants.”

The Kress Building at 140 S. Beach St. in Daytona Beach, right, is included on the National Register of Historic Places.

News-Journal photos/ **DAVIDTUCKER**

Jack White shows off the newly polished terrazzo floor and paint on the ground floor of the historic Kress Building.

