

## Beautification of Berala

There has been a lot of talk about the beautification of Berala in recent months. Included in this discussion is whether or not Auburn Council is able to influence what shops come into a shopping centre.

Council certainly is actively pursuing the relocation of banking 'choice' to Berala, particularly. However, while Auburn Council facilitated the discussion, it has now stepped back and is leaving this to the Community, as the rules for Community Banking are that the general community must support it to make it viable.

There is a further difficulty in attracting shops to Berala, as nearly half of the shopping centre is up for sale. Remember that the shops are privately owned...the land is not owned by the Council. The shopping centre on the eastern side of Woodburn Rd. apparently, has been plagued by high rents and, added to this, is the uncertainty for prospective tenants that their premise may soon be sold. I would be reluctant to spend many thousand of dollars establishing a new shop if my future was not secure.

As far as beautifying Berala, there are certainly plans to improve all the shopping centres, Berala included. Every area can be visually improved if the community pulls together. Woodburn Rd is plagued by rubbish outside flats. Council could spend millions of dollars putting in fancy planter boxes and nice seats, street lights and garbage bins, but until people take pride in where they live, and the irresponsible dumping of rubbish stops, we can never return the area to its former glory.

Berala still has a lot going for it. It still has a village-like atmosphere, which is something that many people love about the place. Even though it is not heavily populated, it used to have a vibrant shopping strip, and this is still achievable without increases in the population.

There is a proposal currently before Council to allow 4 storey development in Berala and Regents Park. Council currently allows 3 storeys in the shopping centre. This proposal, if supported, would allow 1 level of shops in the shopping centre, with 3 storey walk-up flats above. Are more flats the answer for Berala? Is this your vision for your area? Is this how you would like your shopping centre to look? Remember that Berala was a vibrant shopping centre BEFORE all the flats were built near the shopping centre. The school has over 1,000 students. Can Berala really sustain additional dense development?

***We, as a community, need to seriously think about these issues, and then make our feelings known to the Councillors, who will make the final decision.***