

Artarmon

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Edition 66

June 2014

GAZETTE

supporting the Artarmon community spirit

Welcome to *ARTARMON VILLAGE*

by Hanna Schenkel and Barry Thompson

Arrangements to keep the shopping/eating experience along Hampden Road and Wilkes Avenue vibrant and attractive are proceeding apace.

A steering committee has been formed to oversee the creation of *ARTARMON VILLAGE*, a representative body for Artarmon business owners and landlords. Under this umbrella, a number of activity groups will pursue various agreed upon agendas. Activities to be promoted include: streetscape rejuvenation; use of social media; and community activities. Other aims will be to find common ground between landlords and business owners and to re-establish a dialogue with Council and other statutory bodies.

A representative body such as *ARTARMON VILLAGE* can negotiate with Council and achieve outcomes that are otherwise available only to the largest individual stakeholders. That representative voice can also help to ensure that outcomes from activities such as the promised railway station upgrades do not have unintended consequences for the amenity of shops and service providers. There is lots that can and needs to be done to enhance the vitality of the area.

The steering committee favours an informal structure so that precious time and expense is not consumed by organisational matters. So, where necessary, the new grouping will be auspiced by the Artarmon Progress Association. There is a move afoot to provide some paid administrative support for both groups. A small annual levy will be requested from all potential beneficiaries to support the endeavours.

Meanwhile life goes on along Hampden Road. The fruit shop fit-out has started. The proposal for a second

liquor store has been dropped - but there are indications that a food operator is negotiating to move in to what was the Marriott Lane agency (can't we just have back the original 'La Statione' restaurant?). The La Statione Pizzeria opposite the Post Office has closed and another pizza maker is rumoured to be moving in. An article on P9 gives more information about the Tattoo Parlour which has been approved by Council. The second DA for the shop-top studio apartments opposite the station entrance has been withdrawn. The developer of that site has declined to discuss his future plans for the site with the *Gazette*.

The Hampden Road precinct stands as a Heritage Area in Willoughby Council's Development Control Plan. The plan places limits on the way businesses and landlords can change the commercial streetscape, just as has been done in the residential area east side of the railway line, where the Artarmon Conservation Area has been declared with the purpose of maintaining the streetscape in its original Federation and Californian Bungalow styles.

The *Gazette* has sought comment on these commercial controls from local resident and Heritage architect David Logan: "Most of the shopfronts are over 100 years old. Their historic character and atmosphere are assets which, with appropriate protection and management, could establish Artarmon as a shopping precinct with a difference, with a competitive edge. Many retail shopping strips in other



WCC's DCP suggests that all above-awning facades be painted in consistent colours and carry no advertising material. /BThompson

suburbs and beyond have reinvented themselves successfully, often with the support of their local Council. Church Street Parramatta and the main streets of Leura and Katoomba are prominent examples."

Council's Heritage Architect indicates that "the most significant heritage element is generally...the facade above the awning level". The condition of the facades in Hampden Road suggest that business owners and landlords either lack knowledge or sympathy for these controls. Or perhaps there is another simpler answer - that no systems have been put in place to maintain and enhance the strip's appearance.

An early task for a streetscape taskforce then might be to find agreement on policies for maintenance and improvement of the streetscape, starting with graffiti removal on the facades and establishment of live specimens in the planter pots. Then comes the need to establish responsibilities.

For example, Council installed the planter pots some years ago. Should they have responsibility for their maintenance?

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ARTARMON VILLAGE

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Or should it be left to the business closest to each pot? Another alternative might be for the 'village' to employ a contractor with the cost shared by members. Landlords would probably respond that Council should provide these services, funded by the commercial rates that they pay.

These are some of the many issues which will be addressed by the members of *ARTARMON VILLAGE*. The Gazette plans to run an *ARTARMON VILLAGE* page each issue to report progress and give a voice to stakeholders. Businesses that have expressed an interest in joining the *ARTARMON VILLAGE* effort are listed overpage. The Steering Committee hopes others will follow.

Already an application for a WCC Community Grant has been made to assist in the reestablishment of a regular night market in the Wilkes Avenue/Hampden Road area, in the style of past popular APA night markets...another way to attract patrons to the area and its eateries. Again success depends on the degree of involvement and participation.

A movement has started. May it be a mass movement, worthy of massive support by residents, with a result eventually comparable to the activation that has occurred in night-time Chatswood in recent years. ■