

City living beats more than traffic

by Dyani Baggenstos

Things are still hot in the city according to the latest figures on apartment construction in Auckland's CBD.

Brenna Waghorn, the principal adviser for Auckland Regional Council's regional development, says figures have shown inner city living is popular, despite bad publicity concerning the design of many new apartments.

More than 4000 multi-units have been under construction since May last year. In the CBD alone there are now more than 10,000 multi-unit houses.

"I don't have a specific number of residents," she says, "but the figures show that this is an increasingly important form of development and lifestyle option."

Mark Bins, chief executive of building company Fletcher Construction, says demand has been strong for all types of buildings within Auckland's CBD.

"We've mainly built a lot of infrastructure-type buildings for places like the Auckland University of Technology. Most buildings are in keeping with their surroundings."

Auckland's outer suburbs continued to grow during the 1990s, but figures show 50 per cent of residential consents during this time increased urban density.

Mathew Twose, senior planner for the CBD from Auckland City Council, says the council has limited control over building designs — but that's not necessarily a bad thing.

"You've got a complex mix of buildings and apartments in one small area of land, and that's what makes it exciting," he says. "You have to balance the fact that the CBD is a 24-hour place, and a lot of people like that fact."

Twose says height consent is not usually an issue as long as buildings are constructed within the requirements.

In the core of the CBD, height is tied to the provision of sunlight into public places, like parks.

"The city has a genuine interest in good urban design, not so much aesthetics," he says.

"This relates to the building's approximate scale and immediate surroundings."

A recent Auckland Regional Council report says the potential for social problems through high-density housing in the central city is minimised if buildings are well constructed, designed in terms of internal and external living spaces, and responsive to local context.

Twose is positive about the continual development of inner city construction.

"I think we have to acknowledge the fact that many people do enjoy living in the city, it's a lifestyle choice," he says.

"There are a number of benefits of central living, and not having to commute is one of them."

"Not everyone wants to live in a three bedroom house on the outskirts of the city."

Learning quarter for CBD



PHOTO: QIANE CORFIELD

CHANGING: This view of Auckland's learning quarter is set to change, but details are under wraps.

by Qiane Corfield

Auckland City wants to revamp the CBD's student areas into a pedestrian-friendly "learning quarter".

However the three parties involved are keeping quiet about the details.

The council aims to transform the CBD into a "dynamic business and cultural centre" by creating designated, themed areas, or quarters.

According to its website, there will be a Britomart Quarter,

Aotea Quarter, Victoria Quarter and Learning Quarter.

But details for the planned learning quarter have been kept under wraps, with the council and university spokespeople refusing to release any detailed information or plans.

The learning quarter will consist of AUT University, the University of Auckland, Albert Park and the student accommodation buildings on Symonds St. There are also a number of private education providers in the vicinity. The project is a partner-

ship between the council and both universities.

According to the council's website, the quarter will be a "world class centre of excellence for education, research and development". It will have an improved travel scheme and provide better pedestrian access between the universities and the CBD.

A council spokesperson could not confirm whether pedestrian access meant closing off some roads, however she did say "it could be a possibility".

The universities are not com-

menting. The city council spokesperson said an agreement allowing parties to speak to the media had yet to be signed.

About 70 per cent of the region's tertiary students study in the central business district.

Ruby Rawlins, a student at the University of Auckland, said she hadn't heard of the learning quarter idea before but believed the plans were "way overdue".

"Places like Hamilton and Dunedin are so student-friendly. It's about time Auckland did something for its students."

Fairer coffee coming to UoA

by Justin Latif



PHOTO: HELEN TWOSE

The University of Auckland is about to become the first "fair trade" university in Australasia.

Lucy Mitchell, a developmental studies honours student, has led the campaign to see all the university's cafes and food outlets selling Fairtrade certified products.

The 20-year-old went to an Oxfam meeting and caught the vision of helping the Third World through changing the drinking habits of her campus colleagues.

Her campaign group now has 45 people on its mailing list and 20 people usually come to its weekly meeting.

Their first goal has been achieved with the students' association about to pass a resolution committing the university to being fair trade.

The next step is to have all the cafes, bars and departments make fair-trade products available.

Robert Harris runs a large number of these outlets and it has agreed to start offering a fair trade option.

Relax café, located next to the university quad, changed over to selling Fairtrade certified coffee halfway through the year.

Ellen Chuang, manager of the café, has experienced no negative responses to the change.

"The students didn't even know we'd changed," she says.

Mitchell adds: "University students are discerning coffee drinkers and they haven't complained at all about the difference."

"It's a concept which is really taking off."

The real price of coffee — page 11

GOOD TASTE: Auckland students can sip coffee on campus with a clear conscience.