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■ Artscape hopes to transform site into vibrant art and living community

Wychwood Barns project clears hurdle

By CARRIE BRUNET
Staff Writer

The final report for a project on the site now known as the Wychwood Barns was recently passed at Toronto East York community council.

A formerly contentious development, the site was well received by most members of council.

"At the end of the day we will get a strong community asset here," said Ward 21 Councillor Joe Mihevc (St. Paul's).

The project, which will see the former TTC streetcar repair barns (originally built sometime around

1912) rebuilt and used as live/work spaces for artists, is being subsidized by Artscape.

Artscape is a non-profit organization engaged in real estate and program development for the arts and creative sector. Other projects by the group include live/work spaces on Queen Street West, the Parkdale Arts and Cultural Centre and Artscape Studios in the Distillery District.

ENJOYS SUPPORT

And while Mihevc contended the project "enjoys broad community support," that wasn't always the case.

Former councillor for the area and local resident Howard Levine charged the final report before council was "blatantly incomplete."

He said the report "ignores the intense planning activities carried out between the community and the planning staff for at least two years up until October 2000."

Councillors questioned Levine's intentions.

"Are you saying you honestly believe this is a bad project," asked Ward 32 Councillor Sandra Bussin (Beaches-East York), adding she would "give (her) eye teeth" for a similar project in her ward.

While there are elements of the project that Levine admired, he argued the city should have capitalized on the financial opportunity and sold the land to a developer who could pay to revitalize the green space on the land.

LOST REVENUE

"The city is forsaking much needed revenue," Levine said.

The architect on the project, Joe Lobko, said the community has been cooperative in their consultations with Artscape.

"We think the (plan) strikes an appropriate balance," said Lobko.

Community council approved the final report, is to go forward to city council next week.

