

## The Big Reveal

Toronto's newest multi-use space, the Artscape Wychwood Barns, has just opened. But what are we supposed to do with it?

**Vanessa Farquharson**

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Almost every Torontonians seems to agree that restoring our heritage buildings, making them sustainable and opening them up to the public is a great thing to do. But with projects such as the Don Valley Brickworks conversion and Artscape's renovation of the Wychwood Barns, a lot of words like "community" and "integration" are thrown around, along with concepts such as "the flourishing of ideas" and "fostering a strong sense of belonging and inclusiveness," which makes it hard to figure out what, exactly, these places are going to offer.

It all sounds good, of course, but it also sounds incredibly vague, at least to the average person who doesn't work in public policy or the non-profit sector.

Yet, on a recent tour of the Barns -- which just opened to the public on Thursday and are located south of St. Clair West between Wychwood Avenue and Christie Street -- things became somewhat more concrete.

Speaking of concrete, this material is a common sight in all of the buildings, which were originally constructed between 1913 and 1921 but became derelict by the 1980s. There's also lots of brick, plenty of glass, soaring ceilings and light, light, light.

First impressions upon walking into the main entranceway in Barn 2 are of a space that's clean yet filled with history. This hallway will most likely get a lot of use as a common area and event room (so start booking those summer weddings now).

Moving next door to Barn 3, most of this unit is reserved for non-profit offices, such as LEAF (Local Enhancement ... Appreciation of Forests), as well as various cultural organizations. However, parents with young children might want to take a peek at the daycare upstairs, the walls of which are covered not in alphabet letters or nursery rhymes but enormous Burtynsky photographs of the barns in their pre-restored state.

The most impressive part of Wychwood, though, is the Green Barn, designed and operated by the managers of The Stop Community Food Centre.



CREDIT: Brett Gundlock/National Post

The Covered Street Barn will be home to community events, exhibitions and festivals.

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