

# Green Barn Market Opens

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It's an early Saturday morning in November and it feels like I'm in an urban village, albeit one that is covered, jam-packed and well-heeled. It's the launch of the [Green Barn Market](#) at the [Artscape Wychwood Barns](#), a new community centre uniting environmental, cultural and arts space and affordable housing for artists. Under the Covered Barn, one of 4 converted TTC streetcar barns onsite, excited local residents are chatting over stone ground, fair trade hot chocolate while shopping from over forty year-round market stalls.

A selection of teas, fruit preserves, smoked fish, even candles and wool, help shoppers beat the chill of late Fall. There's birch syrup and dried mushrooms from **Forbe's Wild Foods** and a selection of meat from **Stoddart Farm and Naturally Raised Beef**. For those lucky enough to snag a seat at one of the tiny, coveted tables, there's food hot off the grill like polenta cakes with local leeks, mushrooms and cheese from **Chez Vous** and sweet potato, corn and sage empanadas from **Surkls**. Others have gone straight for the Paradiso sheep milk's cheese at **Monteforte Dairy**, the addictive cinnamon buns and potato-rosemary bread from **Alli's Bread**, or the seasonal, organic produce from **Ted Thorpe** and **Plan B**.



Many shoppers have left their cars at home (limited onsite parking was intentionally planned), and come by foot or bike to shop here. This market demand for farm fresh food is good news for [The Stop Community Food Centre](#), the nonprofit junior developer of the site, whose programming in the Green Barn, including the market, greenhouse, organic garden and compost demonstration site, is intended to connect people to local, healthy food. Unlike the city's large-scale civic markets, the Green Barn market, like the Dufferin Grove and Riverdale markets, is community-based and so characterized by an emphasis on sustainable, often organic, food and the strong social space that surrounds it. Though the market feels like a harmonious and inclusive urban village, Rhonda Teitel-Payne, urban agriculture manager at The Stop, admits that it is currently inaccessible to people with low incomes. Residents of the nearby public housing or even the artists' rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units onsite may not be able to afford to shop here.

The redevelopment of the Barns is the latest in the transformation of the neighbourhood from a rural, wealthy refuge to a working class, industrial neighbourhood to one filled with commercial, retail, residential and now revitalized, post-industrial space. Ironically, the City is now welcoming artists, who they once kicked out of illegal live/work space in abandoned industrial space, back into such a space to spur an economy fuelled by creativity and the arts. The artists will be accommodated in the Barns live/work rent-gearred-to-income units developed by Artscape, the nonprofit developer originally formed in the 1980's to address City closures of artists' illegal housing and the general disappearance of affordable artists' housing in the downtown. As with many of the culture-driven redevelopments by Artscape, the Barns effect on the neighbourhood will likely include increased rents, retail sales, and businesses capital improvements. These changes eventually push out low rent, affordable stores and amenities and the more vulnerable residents that rely on them.



The Stop is working within the Barns but against these changes to ensure the site reflects and supports the neighbourhood's diversity. They are considering recruiting youth living in nearby public housing to the Green Barn's after-school programming and opening the farmers' market to people with low incomes through a subsidized coupon system or a shuttle bus connecting the market to The Stop's central site at Davenport and Dufferin which serves a low-income population. The Stop's work demonstrates the connection between food, community building and poverty. Teitel Payne states, "We would prefer that people have adequate incomes. We would rather see our community able to afford whatever food they wanted and that it's a free choice to come and buy local healthy produce. That's our ultimate goal."

The Stop's Green Barn Market runs year-round on Saturdays from 9am-12pm in the Covered Street Barn at the Artscape Wychwood Barns - 76 Wychwood Avenue, off Christie Street, just south of St. Clair Avenue West.

*Top photo by Magda Olszanowski, used with permission.*