

## Art finds a new home

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### *Artscape Wychwood Barns open with a gala celebration of community's efforts*

By [Brian Baker](#)

For almost a decade Councillor Joe Mihevc has been working on getting the Artscape Wychwood Barns beautified, and the results are worth the wait.

“It’s great,” Mihevc said a day before a Nov. 15 fundraising gala. “We have been waiting for and working hard to get this project together.”

The Barns were originally home to a TTC streetcar garage built in 1913 for the Toronto Civic Railway.

Now, under the stewardship of the Green Arts Barns Community Association, the 5,600 sq. m. lot has been converted to an arts and environmental centre.

Included in the redesign are 15 artist studios, 26 artist live-work spaces, a community gallery, rehearsal spaces, tree nursery, organic produce greenhouses and a daycare.

It is also the first heritage project with a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Canada certification.

“We did it with relying on so many different groups from environmental to arts to neighbourhood groups,” Mihevc said. “This has been a real community building effort.”

And both his and residents’ efforts have not gone unnoticed, as elbowroom was in short supply at the gala opening of the Barns.

But Mihevc would not say it was the end of the Wychwood Barns story, merely the end of a chapter. And the eclectic mix of people moving into the heritage site encourages him.

“In this one site we have a little bit of heritage, a little bit of arts, culture, recreation and environment,” he said. “We have so many crossovers that the kind of interactions there will be extremely creative.

“I think it will become a benchmark,” he added. “We’ve seen it happen in the past with places like Yorkville, and now we see this is the kind of neighbourhood hub that makes people feel proud about their neighbourhood and encourages involvement and that’s going to spill over.”

Hosting the gala were CBC personalities Evan Solomon and Garvia Bailey, and the fete also included St. Paul’s MP Carolyn Bennett and Mayor David Miller, who praised the project.

“We had the privilege of opening the AGO and today here at Wychwood,” he told the hundreds of



HOLD THAT POSE: Artist John Coburn and his photographer friend Brian turned out to share the joy at the gala opening of the Artscape Wychwood Barns.

revelers. “That shows what we are capable of in Toronto, because we are immensely creative.

“We’re a creative city, we’re an extraordinary city.”

**This article also found in:**

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