



ARTSCAPE WYCHWOOD BARNNS

**CASE
STUDY**



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CASE STUDY: ARTSCAPE WYCHWOOD BARN

601 Christie Street, Toronto, ON

Artscape Wychwood Barns is a community cultural hub where a dynamic mix of arts, culture, food security, urban agriculture, environmental and other community activities and initiatives came together to provide a new lease on life for a century-old former streetcar repair facility. It is owned by the City of Toronto and operated by Artscape under a 50-year lease. This multi-faceted complex is home to 26 artist live/work spaces, programming and administrative facilities for 10 not-for-profit organizations, 14 artists studios, indoor and outdoor growing areas, a community-run gallery and an 8,000-square-foot Covered Street used for farmer's and art markets, conferences and events.

The vision for The Barns was developed from the ground up in the local community and was guided by a Community Advisory Committee. In the beginning, there were a few ideas but no money. Through the tireless efforts of City Councillor Joe Mihevc, architect Joe Lobko, community activists, City staff and Artscape, a compelling shared vision for the project emerged and a groundswell of friends, supporters, donors and funders was engaged. It took five years to develop the vision and secure City of Toronto approval, and three more to raise the required \$23 million in capital support and redevelop the property. Artscape Wychwood Barns opened in November 2008 and has quickly become the social heart of the neighbourhood.

THE PLACE

Artscape Wychwood Barns is situated in Wychwood Park, one of Toronto's most architecturally and geographically unique neighbourhoods. Located at the top of a hill that marks the ancient shoreline of Lake Ontario, Wychwood Park is one of Toronto's earliest planned communities. The oldest section of Wychwood was conceived of as an artist community in the 1870s by Marmaduke Matthews and Alexander Jardin, and the neighbourhood's Arts and Crafts houses and garden-like atmosphere is reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's Oak Park in suburban Chicago. Many of the houses were constructed more than 100 years ago, including some by the prominent Canadian architect Eden Smith. The historic neighbourhood has become one of the most desirable in the city because of its architecture, privacy and location.

In the newer sections of Wychwood Park, the houses represent more diverse architectural styles. The area's main commercial street, St. Clair Avenue, is a wide two-

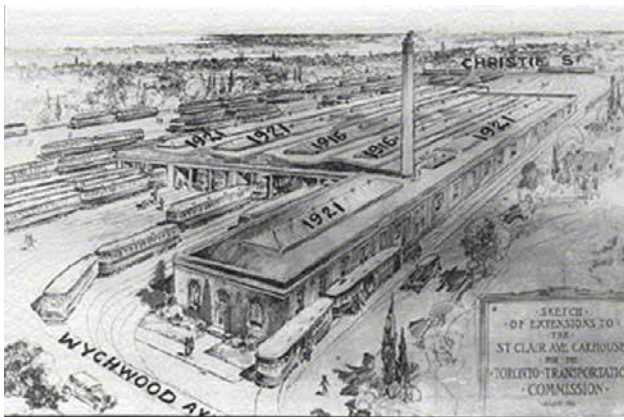


storey lined boulevard with a streetcar right-of-way running at its centre. As the area was developing in the early 20th century, Toronto developed transit lines to integrate Wychwood with the rest of the city. These streetcar lines would spur new development in the area, and eventually, the creation of the Toronto Civic Railway's Wychwood repair barns facility.

THE SPACE

The Wychwood Barns is a complex of five streetcar sheds, the first of which was constructed in 1913 as a repair and housing facility for the Toronto Civic Railway (TCR). The TCR was a municipally-run service, operating in newly annexed areas where private companies refused to operate. One of the main functions of TCR was to provide a connection between the city's five privately-run railways. By 1921, the City dramatically expanded its interest in transit by expropriating the private railways and creating what we now know as the Toronto Transit Commission.

Initially built as a single 200-foot shed, the facility was expanded as the network of streetcar lines extended further and became more interconnected. At the site's busiest point, there were five barns which could house 50



Initial sketch of TTC streetcar barns

streetcars, with spaces for an additional 110 cars in the five acres surrounding the facility.

The structure was built with utilitarianism in mind and is considered to be a prime example of the classic revival industrial style. Encompassing 53,000 square feet, the complex was built in three stages, in 1913, 1916 and 1921. While each period of construction has slightly different characteristics and structural materials, all share high ceilings, peaked roofs and massive doors to accommodate the passage of streetcars through the buildings.

During the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, the Wychwood Barns was one of the most important transit facilities in the city. When the Toronto Transit Commission took over the space in 1954, however, its future was in doubt: the TTC was considering phasing out the use of streetcars. As the transit lines that used the barns were eliminated or scaled back, the structures were repurposed as a storage facility rather than an active repair depot. In 1978, the Wychwood Barns were decommissioned. Although used briefly as a testing and development facility, the barns ultimately began to fall into disrepair.

THE SITUATION

In 1996, the barns were scheduled to be demolished and the land sold. Fearful of what might be constructed on the site, and recognizing the site for its heritage value, local Councillor Joe Mihevc and neighbourhood residents began to mobilize to form an alternate plan. Local residents created the Taddlewood Heritage Association to advocate for the site's re-use. The TTC, not willing to pay to have the facility renovated to meet safe building standards, handed it back to the City of Toronto in 1998.

By 1998, the city was ready to issue a contract to demolish the structures, but Councillor Mihevc argued that a heritage study should be undertaken first. Heritage architect and local resident Phillip Goldsmith was engaged to complete a heritage study of the barns that concluded the structures were a significant example of early century industrial architecture. With a growing chorus of community members interested in saving the buildings, the City and the community now faced the problem of what to do with a large site of contaminated land and the awkwardly shaped complex. In 2000, three proposals were presented by the city's planning department, each including varying degrees of housing and parkland, and all recommending demolishing the barns. Mihevc and local residents argued that none of the site should become private housing. Following an environmental assessment and an architectural inspection, it was discovered that the land required some remediation, but the structures themselves could be repurposed.



Archive photo of the skating rink outside the streetcar barns.

The following year, Councillor Mihevc and community members commissioned Artscape to conduct a feasibility study examining how the barns could be saved. During the course of this study, community consultations revealed a significant divide in the neighbourhood between those that favoured the inclusion of artists and arts organizations in the plan, and those who wished to see the entire site become parkland. A group advocating for retention of the structures and their re-use as a multi-use community space, Friends of a New Park, supported Artscape's involvement. Opponents of the project cited concerns about parking, traffic and noise; the affordable housing



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Click here to watch Toronto City Councillor Joe Mihevc, Ward 21 St. Paul's discuss building a community's vision for Artscape Wychwood Barns.

component; and were sceptical about the project's viability. The issue was so hotly contested that Mihevc has asserted, "the 2003 election (in ward 21) was fought on the issue of how many barns should be saved."

During the many debates over the future of the barns, Councillor Mihevc and other concerned residents gave as many tours of the site as possible, believing that those who saw the majesty of the structures from the inside would join the fight to save them. Mihevc acted as the project's champion, becoming the public face of the redevelopment at City Hall. Throughout the development of the Artscape Wychwood Barns, a project management team of politicians, city staff, Artscape staff, and local residents propelled the project forward.

THE VISION

The vision for Artscape Wychwood Barns was not simply about re-using a building or co-locating a group of tenants within a re-purposed structure; it was also about building a community within and beyond the walls of the project. It was envisioned as a place that could help heal the differences in the community and become a meeting place for area residents.

The vision for the project was developed by a five-member Community Advisory Council created in 2001 by Artscape. The group's mandate was to act as stewards of the consultation process, provide guidance on issues ranging from design to tenant selection and make ongoing recommendations. The Community Advisory Council, along



Overhead view of the site pre-construction

with Artscape, hosted open houses and design charrettes to explore the potential of the barns with local residents. Advisory council members also attended meetings with local community organizations to discuss the plans as they developed. Through this transparent and collaborative process, it was hoped that those who opposed the project might come on board.

Friends of the New Park played a central role in advocating for the project within the local community and at City Hall. The Wychwood Barns project is notable for the energy and commitment of local community members in supporting the project, and in their commitment to animating the derelict site over the many years before construction finally began. Activities on the site included a community skating rink during the winter months, and a community pizza oven in the summer.

Artscape and the community envisioned the adaptive re-use of the structures, which would allow for a mix of office spaces, artists studios, affordable live/work accommodation for artists and their families, and

community space. At its core, the Artscape Wychwood Barns was imagined as a multifaceted community centre where arts and culture, environmental leadership, heritage preservation, urban agriculture and affordable housing were brought together to foster a strong sense of community. The project would seek excellence in environmental design and recognition through the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System. The open land on the site would incorporate park elements such as a dog run, playground and skating rink.



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Click here to read more about how community helped to shape the vision for the project.

Finally, the project vision was based on the idea that a diversity of uses always makes for a more animated and successful facility. By mixing a wide array of tenants from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines,

Artscape Wychwood Barns was designed as a platform for collaboration where an organic mix of people and ideas would come together in unexpected ways to build a better community and city.



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Click here to watch Cookie Roscoe Handford, Community Activist and Market Manager, The Stop's Farmers' Market, discuss the community's role in the creation of the Artscape Wychwood Barns.



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Click here to watch architect Joe Lobko, OAA, FRAIC, LEED® AP, Principal, du Toit Allsopp Hillier du Toit Architects Limited discuss how the vision for the redevelopment of the barns was developed.

THE PLAN

In 2004, the City of Toronto chose Artscape as the preferred proponent for the redevelopment of the abandoned barns through a request for proposal process. Artscape was the only respondent to the City's RFP

that sought to re-use the site as a community cultural hub. Artscape's bid recognized the value of retaining and reusing the existing buildings and keeping the site entirely public. Artscape issued a request for expressions of interest (REOI) to stimulate and assess interest in the project and to help build a compelling project vision; the submissions were reviewed by Artscape and the Community Advisory Council. As a result of this REOI, the Stop Community Food Centre was brought on board as a development partner and anchor tenant as the project stakeholders embraced environmental sustainability as a central theme for the project.

The project then faced two important challenges – engaging with local residents to achieve consensus, and creating a feasible and environmentally friendly design that would save as much of the heritage buildings as possible. Artscape engaged in a long process of community consultation, hoping to involve local residents as much as possible in the creation of the Artscape Wychwood Barns. Design charrettes, a community advisory group and community meetings gave residents the opportunity to get involved in the decision making process at different stages. This engagement process enabled Artscape to speak with hundreds of local residents, many of whom initially opposed the project. Concerns about parking, traffic and noise were studied and addressed, and gradually opposition to the affordable artist live/work units diminished. The project grew stronger through this engagement process and many of the design and space allocation decisions were a direct result of the input received at these meetings.

Experts selected to guide the project's development included Joe Lobko and Du Toit Architects who were



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Click here to watch Tim Jones, Artscape President and CEO, explain how a strong shared vision for Artscape Wychwood Barns was developed.

retained to develop a feasible and environmentally friendly design for the Artscape Wychwood Barns, working with a team of sub consultants focused on structural, mechanical, electrical heritage and sustainability. Dalton Professional Building Services Toronto was engaged as construction manager and eventually served as general contractor for the project. The design process of repurposing this 100-year-old heritage project was full of surprises, fraught with challenges and required an incredible amount of creativity and problem-solving from virtually every member of the design, consultant, management and construction team.



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Click here to watch Tim Jones, Artscape President and CEO, discuss the importance of a strong project team.

A series of calls for proposals were circulated to identify arts groups, environmental organizations and individual artists who wished to contribute to the project vision and become a tenant in the project's studios, live/work accommodation or organizational space.

The compelling and diverse vision for the building meant that an equally diverse group of funders could be approached for support. Government and private groups with interests ranging from housing, arts, culture and environment could each see their interests reflected in the project. The Stop's proposal to create a green barn to educate local residents, particularly children, about food cultivation and preparation was awarded a \$500,000 grant from the Metcalf Foundation. This early contribution played a critical role in generating momentum and confidence in the project.

The second major financial contribution to the project came in the form of \$1 million in Section 37 funds resulting from the construction of a condo tower at Bathurst St. and St. Clair Ave. In addition to directing Section 37 funds in support of the project, The City of Toronto agreed to remediate the contaminated soil, reducing construction costs dramatically. The rent-geared-to-income housing component allowed the project to access funds from the provincial and federal governments to help construct the units. Grants from Cultural Spaces Canada (Canadian Heritage) and Federation of Canadian Municipalities were also essential.



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Click here to read more about how the Artscape Wychwood Barns project team came together.

Complete list of funders:

- █ City of Toronto
- █ Canadian Heritage – Cultural Spaces Canada
- █ Canada Ontario Affordable Housing Program
- █ Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport
- █ George Cedric Metcalf Foundation
- █ Hamilton Community Foundation – The Young Fund
- █ TD Bank Financial Group
- █ City of Toronto – Culture Division
- █ Federation of Canadian Municipalities’ Green Municipal Fund
- █ Ontario Trillium Foundation
- █ McCarthy Tétrault
- █ The McLean Foundation
- █ Toronto Atmospheric Fund
- █ Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
- █ ING Direct
- █ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- █ Toronto Hydro Corporation
- █ Charles H. Ivey Foundation
- █ Dalton Professional Building Services Toronto

The fundraising campaign included major gifts and a number of special events culminating in a gala opening. One of the innovative methods of fundraising employed, included the sale of donated photographs of the dilapidated pre-renovation structures by prominent artists including: Edwards Burtynsky, Barbara Astman, Susan Dobson, Vid Ingelevics, Geoffrey James, Katherine Knight and Hugh Martin.



CLICK HERE
Click here to view the Gala Preview Catalogue of Photography and other project materials.



During construction of the Green Barn and Barn 5



CLICK HERE
Click here to watch an interview with Paul Smith, Second Site Manager of the Artscape Wychwood Barns.

DESIGN/BUILD


The design of the Artscape Wychwood Barns had several objectives: environmental sustainability, heritage preservation and community

interaction space. Joe Lobko, the chief architect of the project, saw these aims as complementary:

“As we become increasingly concerned with sustainability and building wisely, building for the long term, there is a natural link between sustainable design and heritage/adaptive re-use... Heritage means sustainability; we shouldn’t be tossing these buildings away. What’s key to the success of this project is first and foremost the community’s involvement. This is a community-led project. The community got frustrated with a brownfield site that was abandoned for so many years and just insisted on something of quality happening here.”

–JOE LOBKO, ARCHITECT, DU TOIT ALLSOPP HILLIER | DU TOIT ARCHITECTS LIMITED

The project drew inspiration from international adaptive re-use projects such as Zeche Zollverein in Germany and the Tate Modern Gallery in London, UK. The character and uniqueness of the barns were retained wherever possible, including their large entrances and long open spaces. In some cases the existing elements were not structurally sound and had to be replaced – for instance, the wooden roofs that had rotted over time were replaced with ones of a similar style, made of recycled metal. In other cases, the existing architectural elements were restored, such as the brick walls which were sandblasted to remove years of flaking paint.



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Click here to watch to architect Joe Lobko discuss the design of the Artscape Wychwood Barns.

Looking at the unique structure and the diversity of uses that were being suggested, Joe Lobko saw an opportunity to let the buildings speak for themselves:

“The structure of the barns ought to inform the programming. Rather than shoe-horning things in, if you’ve got five barns of a certain dimension, let the program accommodate itself to the structure. And so the notion of the studio barn, the covered street, the community barn, the green barn and fifth barn (garden barn) emerged.”

–JOE LOBKO, ARCHITECT, DU TOIT ALLSOPP HILLIER | DU TOIT ARCHITECTS LIMITED

A heritage easement agreement was entered into by the city and Artscape that spelled out exactly which features of the buildings were protected. ERA Architects Inc., a leader in architectural preservation and restoration, was hired as a heritage consultant on the project. Jeff Hayes, an architect with ERA, explains:

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Click here to read more about the design, construction and operational features that focus on making the Artscape Wychwood Barns as environmentally sustainable as possible.

“A heritage easement agreement is a legally-binding tool used to ensure a building’s preservation and to control demolition. It is an agreement that was entered into between Artscape and the City and registered on title. The heritage easement agreement for the TTC Wychwood car barns identifies elements of the barns which are to be retained in perpetuity and also sets out permitted alterations and development. [Alterations] to the buildings have been reviewed and approved by the City’s Heritage Preservation Services department, which continues to review the progress of the work and retention of important elements on a regular basis.”

—JEFF HAYES, ERA ARCHITECTS INC.



The five barns at Artscape Wychwood Barns

Artscape Wychwood Barns comprises five programmed components: the Studio Barn, the Covered Street Barn, the Community Barn, The Stop Community Food Centre’s Green Barn and the 5th Barn.

The **STUDIO BARN** provides 26 live/work studios and 14 work-only studios to professional artists, as well as a Community Gallery. The Studio Barn provides an alternative to traditional housing and creates a sense of community where artists can live, work and interconnect with their neighbourhood. The Community Gallery features

the work of artists living and working in the barns and artists from the local community as well as international artists.

The **COVERED STREET BARN** provides affordable community space, including year-round access for community events, exhibitions, festivals, etc. The Covered Street Barn provides an area for vendors to create a hub of economic activity in the neighbourhood. The artist studios and community groups in the adjacent barns have their entrances open onto this space.

The **COMMUNITY BARN** provides affordable programming, rehearsal, office and meeting space to not-for-profit community arts and environmental organizations. Access to affordable, long-term and appropriate space is a key capacity issue for not-for-profit organizations. The Community Barn enhances the capacity of not-for-profit arts and environmental organizations.

 **CLICK HERE**

Click here to watch Paul Smith discuss the environmental aspects of the site.

The **STOP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE’S GREEN BARN** is operated by The Stop Community Food

Centre and houses a year-round temperate greenhouse, sustainable food education centre, sheltered garden, outdoor bake oven and compost demonstration site.

The roof of the **5TH BARN** was demolished and the remaining structure was integrated as an architectural feature in the surrounding park. The Stop now manages gardens within the 5th barn that feature native plant species from different regions of the world.

The Artscape Wychwood Barns project embraces environmentally sustainable design by responding imaginatively to the issues of brownfield redevelopment, water/energy conservation and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It is also the first designated heritage site in Canada to seek LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Canada certification. Some of the Artscape Wychwood Barns’ LEED features include

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Click here to download a fully illustrated guide of its LEED elements.

geo-thermal heating, ventilation and air conditioning system with ground source heat pumps, a stormwater harvesting and re-use system, energy-efficient lighting and appliances and water-conserving plumbing fixtures.



Drilling for the geothermal pipefield

In 2007, Artscape issued a request for qualifications to find a firm that could create a unified way-finding system for the Artscape Wychwood Barns project. Gottschalk + Ash International won the competition with its simple and intuitive designs.

OPERATE

The Artscape Wychwood Barns officially opened in November 2008. The event was attended by then-Mayor of Toronto, David Miller, Councillor Mihevc and hundreds of community members, many of whom had helped ensure the project's success.



Artscape developed and continues to operate the Artscape Wychwood Barns. It holds the sole lease with the City of Toronto for 50 years less a day, at \$1 a year. Artscape is financially and legally responsible for the operations, subleases and license agreements with all tenants.

Artscape is also responsible for all property management and base building operations, including tenant selection, maintenance, and capital repairs such as finances, insurance, fire safety plans, taxes and utilities.

Upon completion of the project, Artscape transferred the residential component of the project (including all costs, related grants and debt financing) to Artscape Non Profit Homes Inc (ANPHI). ANPHI was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation in July 1994, and was created by Artscape specifically to develop and manage Artscape projects intended to meet the affordable housing and live/work studio needs of low and middle-income artists of all disciplines. As a not-for-profit housing provider, ANPHI

administers the residential component of the studio barn as part of its arrangement with the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing program and the Affordable Housing Office of the City of Toronto.

The community continues to play a major role in stewarding the future of the Wychwood Barns. In 2008, the Wychwood Barns Community Association (WBCA) was created, following a call for board members circulated in the local neighbourhood. It is responsible for curating the community gallery, which features the work of artists living and working in the facility, as well as artists from the local community. In addition, the WBCA is mandated to:

- Engage the community in activities and events in the Barns
- Enhance the wider community's participation in and knowledge of the arts, culture, the environment and the history of the St. Clair area
- Provide and mobilize resources and people through partnerships by utilizing volunteers to create opportunities for special events
- Support a vibrant arts community that includes the tenants at the Barns and community artists
- Help bring a diverse range of residents, tourists and others to the Artscape Wychwood Barns as a public gathering place

Cookie Roscoe Handford, a leading community activist and a key player in the community's involvement with the project, was elected to the Toronto Artscape Inc. board of directors to ensure ongoing and effective community stewardship of the project at every level. In addition, both artist and organizational tenants of the barns play a significant role in project governance. The Tenant Liaison



The Stop's Farmer's Market at Artscape Wychwood Barns

Committee (TLC) consists of eight Artscape tenants – two from each barn – as well as the Artscape Tenant Services and Properties department staff. The TLC meets bi-monthly and was established to bridge the communication gap between Artscape and our tenants at the Artscape Wychwood Barns and to advise on operational issues. It provides a forum for tenants to maintain an ongoing dialogue with Artscape and encourages tenant involvement in the decision-making process.

An All Tenant Programming Committee meets bi-monthly to discuss shared programming plans and opportunities at the Barns, including events such as Nuit Blanche and the Barns Art Market. The Stop Community Food Centre, which operates the green barn and holds educational classes for children about food production and preparation, also organizes an extremely successful farmers’ market every Saturday throughout the year in the Covered Street Barn and outside in the summer months.

The Covered Street Barn has become an event space managed by Artscape that generates revenue for Wychwood Barns. The space has been used for numerous weddings, corporate events, fundraisers and private events.

The Artscape Wychwood Barns has become the social heart of the neighbourhood, a dream that had seemed inconceivable eight years earlier when Artscape and the community developed a powerful shared vision but had little money to take the project forward.

“I think that Wychwood Barns has become the heart and soul of the community. Go there on a Saturday for the farmers market...It’s a vital, active, mind-blowing space.”

– TORONTO CITY COUNCILLOR JOE MIHEVC,
WARD 21 ST. PAUL’S

LESSONS

The development of the Artscape Wychwood Barns illustrates that if the vision for a project is compelling enough it is possible to overcome seemingly impossible challenges and attract the interest and investment to make it happen. The key in this case was to develop a strong, shared vision from the ground up that reflected the dreams and aspirations of the local community.

People often underestimate the power and capacity of local communities and small non-profits to lead

large projects and stimulate transformational change. Individually, the stakeholders who came together to make the barns happen may not have had a lot of financial or organizational capacity, but when a critical mass come together they can be a powerful force. What communities often need to leverage this potential is a creative intermediary like Artscape to work through the competing and conflicting interests, build a compelling vision and put together a plan and team to make it happen.

AWARDS

Finalist: 2011 Zerofootprint Re-Skinning Award: Institutional. The Zerofootprint Re-Skinning Awards showcase excellence in holistic retrofitting projects from around the world. These are projects that update older buildings to bring their carbon, energy, and water performance to sustainable levels, improve their aesthetics, and make them “smarter.” [Read more](#)

Winner: 2010 Federation of Canadian Municipalities Brownfields Award

Finalist: 2009 Green Toronto Awards for Green Design

Winner: Ontario Association of Architects 2009 Award for Design Excellence and Best in Show Award

Winner: Congress for New Urbanism 2009 Charter Award for walkable, neighborhood-based development

Winner: Sustainable Architecture and Building Magazine’s 2009 Canadian Green Building Awards. [View the award winners](#)

Winner: Canadian Urban Institute’s 2008 Brownie Award for Excellence in Project Development: Neighbourhood Scale



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