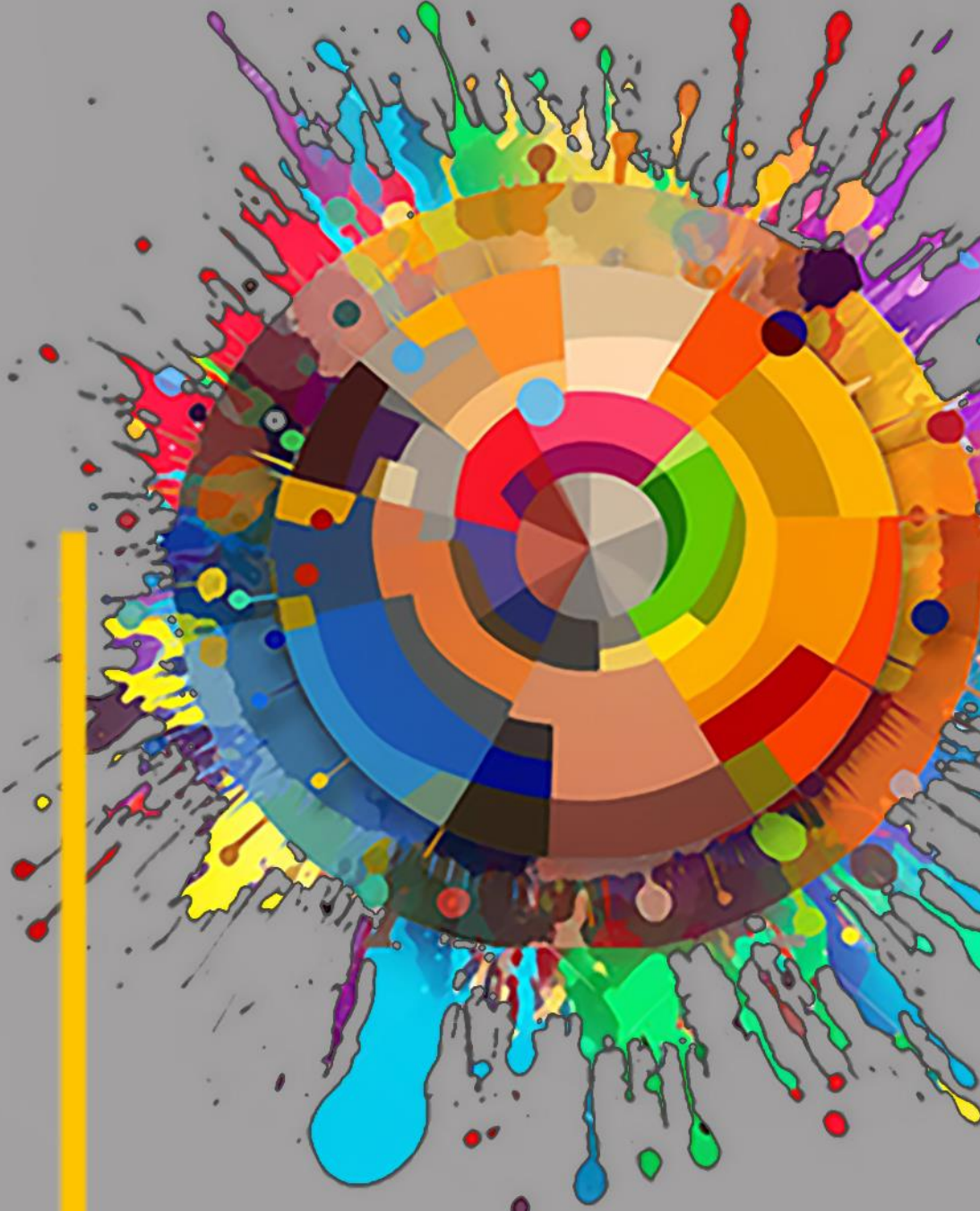


COMMUNITY ARTSPACE



GUELPH CENTRE FOR VISUAL ART

EMPOWERING SUSTAINABLE
ARTISTIC PRACTICE

ENDORSEMENTS

Expression of Interest for Drill Hall Reuse, 23-086

PREPARED BY
MIKE SALISBURY - CHAIR
Guelph Centre for Visual Art

Land Acknowledgement

Located in Guelph, the Drill Hall is situated on the ancestral homelands of Attiwonderonk and the Haudenosaunee. This land is held as the treaty lands territory within the bounds of the Between the Lakes Treaty, No. 3 with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and lies directly adjacent to the disputed Haldimand Tract, part of a long-established traditional hunting ground for the Six Nations of the Grand River.

By recognizing the land, we emphasize our responsibility to weave reconciliation into the core of our proposal. As a community led organization, we vow to align with the principles set forth by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Specifically, we are committed to implementing the guidelines outlined in Call to Action 92 as applicable to our organization's development and programming.

Creative incubators hold a pivotal role in Canada's ongoing journey of reconciliation and healing. The arts not only remind us of our common human experience but also highlight the significance of reckoning with our past as we work towards creating a more unified and inclusive future for everyone.

We aim to establish a Community Artspace that welcomes individuals from all backgrounds, celebrating our common ties and nurturing a sense of community. Our acknowledgment of the land is not just a gesture, but part of an ongoing commitment to fostering a space of true collaboration and respect.

Voices of the Community

In the spirit of collaboration our proposal for an Artspace in Guelph has garnered strong support across the full spectrum of the demographic landscape. From new artists keen to find their voice, to established professionals with a significant body of work who are willing to mentor and guide, the Community Artspace promises to be a hive of creativity.

Students, graduates, and educators see the immense educational and developmental value such a space would offer. From emerging artists and MFA graduates who blend academic rigor with artistic vision, to underrepresented groups who enrich our art scene with diverse cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic perspectives, our vision for this arts hub is to serve as a catalyst for empowerment, creativity, and socio-economic growth.

The following endorsements offer a multi-faceted view of the positive impact the Community Artspace is expected to have on Guelph's artistic and general population. They reflect the broader community's acknowledgment of art as a potent tool for economic vitality, cultural enrichment, and social cohesion. These voices echo the shared aspiration for a space where art is not just seen but experienced, where diversity isn't just acknowledged but celebrated.

As you read through these testimonials, you'll find a common thread—a strong community desire for an inspiring, inclusive, visual arts incubator that elevates Guelph's status as a cultural destination while addressing the unique needs of its diverse residents.

We are truly proud and humbled to present the following support for our proposal.

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September 18, 2023

Re: Guelph Centre For Visual Arts

I am writing this letter on behalf of myself, Executive Director of the Guelph Arts Council, and on behalf of our Board of Directors.

As we move out of the post-lockdown era, we at the Guelph Art Council find that few industries and sectors were as severely impacted as the creative and artistic sectors. In particular, the need for space to create and present work has become paramount, as traditional venues for the presentation of artistic works have suffered just as greatly as the artists themselves. Couple this with rapidly rising housing and real estate costs, and artists - who are foundational to the health of a vibrant community, are in increasingly dire need of space - space to create, space to present and space to build community.

With this in mind, we wholeheartedly lend our support and belief in the **Community Artspace Proposal** to create a Guelph Centre for Visual Arts.

It is a dynamic, forward thinking and badly needed project, and we unreservedly support them in their campaign/proposal. Spaces like this have shown time and time again to be successful and to become cornerstones of a healthy community - helping artists to not just survive, but to thrive - and the greater community along with it.

The Guelph Arts Council will lend its support in any way we are able, as we would love to see this repurposing of Drill Hall property serve the needs of the artists that Guelph has become known for, and are tied to Guelph's identity as a whole. We believe in the project, we believe the project is necessary, and we believe in the strength of the vision presented. It is a unique solution to the pressing problem of space. Our mandate at GAC is to *make space* and the Guelph Centre for Visual Arts addresses this need in the most practical and direct of ways, and as such has our unreserved support.

For further discussion I may be reached at executivedirector@quelpharts.ca or by telephone at 416-836-3280.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Damian Weston', is written above the typed name.

Damian Weston
Executive Director
Guelph Arts Council



37 Quebec St. (Upper Level) N1H 2T1



September 2023

Dear City of Guelph, community members and prospective collaborators,

With this letter, we would like to express our enthusiasm and support for the Guelph Centre for Visual Art and their proposal to reanimate the Drill Hall as an active community artspace and arts incubator. This project offers a vibrant antidote to revalue this downtown location (that has been dormant for over a decade) as social purpose real-estate. 10C was pleased to see the City of Guelph issue this Expression of Interest.

Guelph IS an ARTS community and over the past 27 years of my time here as an artist, active citizen, business owner, non-profit leader and taxpayer, I have seen a consistent underfunding and undervaluing of the arts community. This puts disproportionate pressure on individual artists and grassroots groups to build, do and create. The arts sector brings multiple levels of value to our community. Artists activate programming, create enterprises and provide meaningful engagement activities for all of those who work, live and visit Guelph.

The 2000s and the 2010s saw a decline of available, safe and affordable studio spaces both in the downtown and across the city, as commercial and residential properties were renovated for 'higher and best uses'. In this context, new and established artists are left with few options of arts-based studio working spaces, or spaces to convene and collaborate. This puts the local arts-sector – particularly our ability to retain young, creative, entrepreneurial artists – at dire risk.

By way of their proposal, the Guelph Centre for Visual Art is making a promise to empower sustainability and artistic practice. To cultivate a creative and innovative city, I would add that we must invest in an adequate supply of community-level arts spaces. The Guelph Centre for Visual Art is demonstrating the willingness to embark on this journey, by investing in this very challenging (and if successful, ultimately transformative) community arts infrastructure. I congratulate them for taking this first step.

By way of background, 10C is the hub for community changemakers in Guelph-Wellington. We are a not-for-profit social enterprise working to create platforms (physical, virtual, networks and financial) for those working across sectors and engaging in collaborative social and environmental work to improve our community. 10C uses placemaking, social enterprise, social finance, social innovation – and food – to create new ways to connect, collaborate and share resources. Operating from a 15,000 sf headquarters in downtown Guelph (and now the Guelph Farmers' Market), 10C is



host to 200+ members working across all social change sectors, and 25,000+ participants on site in a typical year. While 10C hosts many arts and community events, we are not able to offer dedicated studio space and specialized equipment.

Expanded supply of arts-appropriate spaces has been on a community needs list for decades, going back to early feasibility studies in the 2000s undertaken with the Guelph Arts Council, Guelph Arts Platform, and others. Since that time, Silence, Necessary Arts, Art Not Shame, 10C and other entrepreneurial organizations rose from this context, and through their proposal, the Guelph Centre for Visual Arts will address further demand for other and additional kinds of spaces dedicated to the arts.

10C can see how the Drill Hall property with its central location, once redeveloped (as the current state offers nothing more than a stabilized shell of a building) can support several arts uses, and bring added community activities necessary for the rebuilding of in-person community life as part of strengthening our civic fabric, creativity and collective wellness.

The work ahead of the Guelph Centre for Visual Arts is not to be understated. Their process thus far has engaged and inspired a number of individuals and organizations, and much more work will be required should they be offered an opportunity to proceed to next steps of feasibility and planning. Should the Guelph Centre for Visual Arts be awarded an opportunity to move forward with detailed project planning and organizational development, and are able to developing a committed collaborative relationship with the City of Guelph, I'm confident that this group will collaborate across community and find the required pathways to move the project forward, and will further demonstrate the value that the arts provides to us all.

10C looks forward to all of the next steps on this future Guelph success story and is happy to offer our support along the way.

In community,

Julia Grady, Executive Director
10C Shared Space / 42 Carden Shared Space
julia@10carden.ca

City of Guelph
September 11, 2023

6 Dublin Street South
Guelph ON N1H 4L5
+1 519 546 7851
www.musagetes.ca
www.artseverywhere.ca

Re: Letter of Support to establish a visual arts centre in the Drill Hall

Dear City Councillors,

On behalf of Musagetes Foundation, I would like to express my support for the community initiative to create a visual arts centre in the Drill Hall. As an organization that has been bringing Canadian and international artists to the Guelph community for 15 years, and working with many local artists, Musagetes has witnessed the need for greater infrastructure and facilities for art production and exhibition. In particular, Guelph lacks space for visual artists to experiment with techniques, materials, scales, and processes that are not typically possible within the confines of private studios or that require equipment that is too expensive to own individually.

Musagetes sees a particular need for a community visual arts centre that would offer space for both artistic creation & craft guilds, such as weaving/textiles, pottery/ceramics, the bookmaking arts, light metalwork (e.g. silversmithing and jewellery arts), and similar practices. These forms of creation have many applications within fine visual arts practices as well as fine craft practices. When working side by side, these two often-separate modes of creation can make for an incredibly rich, sustainable, inspiring, and innovative artistic life in a community. One excellent example of such a facility is CASA in Lethbridge, Alberta. CASA was established over 20 years ago and has been a flourishing cultural facility in that city ever since. Fine art and craft thrive there side by side. Regular workshops make artistic creativity available to people who otherwise wouldn't know where to begin!

Musagetes also encourages this initiative as a way to better support SOFAM students who wish to stay in the Guelph community after finishing their fine arts degrees.

We hope that the City of Guelph will see the value that a visual arts centre and guild hall at the Drill Hall would bring to our community.

Sincerely,



Shawn Van Sluys
Executive Director



Ariel Haines
Program Manager
Community of Hearts Lifelong Learning Centre
programmanager@communityofhearts.ca
519-826-9056

My name is Ariel Haines and I am the Program Manager at the charity Community of Hearts Lifelong Learning Centre located in downtown Guelph. Community of Hearts is a learning center which supports adults with developmental disabilities to develop their life skills, build self confidence, promote self advocacy skills and become more integrated in the Guelph community.

I wanted to share our utmost support as an organization for The Guelph Centre for Visual Arts in the adaptive reuse of the downtown Drill Hall. Community of Hearts as an organization and the demographic we support would largely benefit from an inclusive center for visual arts. Access to art based activities are so important for overall wellness, confidence and creative expression. The people we support would benefit greatly from downtown access to open inclusive space for art creation, opportunities to learn from other local artists, and to attend accessible seminars/workshops focused on creating art, gaining skills as an artist and even how to profit off of your art effectively (which is huge for disabled artists).

Community of Hearts can imagine such exciting collaborations for art shows celebrating disabled artists and other great opportunities that would really focus on enhancing the lives of adults with developmental disabilities. Having safe inclusive spaces for adults with developmental disabilities in our city is extremely important. And having access to these greatly improves quality of life for a group of people who are often marginalized and segregated in society.

This would be a wonderful space that our organization would love to actively be involved in, it would strongly benefit the people we support, supply meaningful opportunities to them, and it would also help the City of Guelph continue growing into being an even more inclusive space.

Sincerely,

Ariel Haines

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Guelph-Wellington

September 8, 2023.

Dear Janine,

Immigrant Services Guelph Wellington is pleased to provide a letter of recommendation to support your application to renovate the Drill Hall and transform it into a wonderful arts space for our community.

Over the years we have had the opportunity to meet many talented newcomer artists. Their lived experience often lends itself well to artistic expression. Whether it is through colorful splashes of paint, pottery or intriguing photography newcomers living in Guelph are yearning for a place to gather with like minded people to share, explore, discuss, and connect thru the beauty of art.

The benefits of renovating the Drill Hall building are far reaching and we are grateful that your proposal considers diversity and inclusion. These values have clearly been weaved into other City of Guelph initiatives and will serve the project well in years to come. We know you will find newcomers that will embrace the opportunity to use an arts purposed space. Furthermore, as more refugees come to our community, we also know there is room for art to play a role in mental health and healing. Only good can come from such an initiative and we are grateful to be considered as a valuable community member who will use and promote the space to others.

ISGW wishes you all the best with your proposal. If you have any questions, feel free to connect with me directly at scocco@is-gw.ca We look forward to the grand opening!

Sincerely,



Sandra Cocco, M.A
Chief Executive Officer
Immigrant Services Guelph Wellington

September 25 2023

Re: Community Artspace Proposal

Good morning,

Although the Guelph Chamber of Commerce and business advisory ecosystem partners plan to respond with our own interest in the Drill Hall RFP, I'd like to also extend my support behind the Guelph Centre for Visual Arts initiative.

I believe that your proposal is sound and if it came to fruition, the offering would be a valued experience and opportunity for creatives, 'artpreneurs' and the community at large.

I look forward to working with you and other peers and stakeholders no matter the direction provided by the City as we proceed, on developing a welcoming and impactful space for Guelph.

Sincerely,



Shakiba Shayani
President & CEO
Guelph Chamber of Commerce

Amber Eveleigh

I am a local art photographer in Guelph and am currently looking for places to display my art. I feel it is important to have a place to do this that is secure and also accessible to everyone. It's so important for the world to be able to see the beauty in life as well as to be able to share the beauty we see. It helps with mental health, emotions and so many other things. Art means so much to so many and to have a permanent place to show and see local artists work is vital to our community. I feel that having this place will help Guelphites learn about their town and the artists that live here.

Andrew Goss (Goss Design Studio)

I support the idea for a Guelph Centre for Visual Art in the building known as the Drill Hall in downtown Guelph. The first important reason I support this is collaboration and community. As a professional craftsman for 50 years, I know how isolating it can be, working in your own studio with little contact with others. But working in a community of other craftspeople and artists, there would be daily opportunities to meet with others, to share stimulating ideas and discussions. This sort of cross pollination would benefit everyone, but it would be of particular benefit to younger artists or others starting out in a new career in the arts. Where do you get your supplies? How do you get that effect? What's that new gallery like? There are so many questions that a community of artists could answer.

The next reason I support this is both a financial one for individual artists, and a cultural one, keeping Guelph a cultural hub into the future. Guelph is an extremely expensive city to live in. If we want to attract artists to this city and keep them here, they need reasonably priced studio space. Housing of course is the big expense for everyone, and most houses do not have space for studios and workshops. Looking for studio space in the for-profit rental market is simply too expensive now for most artists. A community artspace would be the ideal solution.

The third reason is what it would do for downtown Guelph. Artists working in that location both during the day and evenings would add a vital component to the downtown. It would become a destination for visitors. A visitor might go there to see one artist to buy their work and discover others. Special events could be held such as a pre-Christmas sale with everyone in the building, and that would draw people in. A gallery or two could be part of the community. The artists would be in the area, buying lunch or shopping, contributing to the vitality of the downtown.

So, collaboration, community, affordable space, and downtown vitality, these are all reasons why I am supporting the community artspace.

Ann Cavanaugh

You wouldn't think that this past summer's strike of Hollywood's writers and actors would have a whole lot to do with establishing a community art space in Guelph, but I think it's the most pressing issue of the strike that actually does link the two: artificial intelligence, or 'AI.' All art shares at its fundamental purpose, one central cause: the yearning for connection. The artist 'births' a work of art into the world, to produce a physical connection to an idea or emotions they have been feeling, and then may decide to share that manifested work with the world because they think there are others out there who may share their ideas and feelings, and yearn for that connection too.

The yearning for connection between humans is so important, that the artist Michaelangelo chose to represent it on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel. In 'The Creation of Adam,' he paints the figures of God and Adam reaching out to touch each other. I always thought it was interesting that he didn't paint them actually touching each other, but rather reaching out toward each other. He didn't paint connection -- which would have been the denouement -- he painted the much stronger emotion; the YEARNING for connection.

The 'yearning' space is the most fertile one. It's where all creations and inventions begin. Someone sees a need and yearns to fill it, and that happens in every area of life and all around the world. And in the process of filling it, we turn to others for help. This is the sole reason communities exist -- to help each other. To seek and find support whether to discuss issues, celebrate events or solve problems.

While artificial intelligence can help foster collaboration, red flags have already been raised by some of the very folks who developed the technology. They are warning us about the dangers of AI distilling and synthesizing ideas (the way Netflix and Spotify algorithms are selecting our entertainment, based on previous selections, and thereby limiting the randomness of new discovery and, consequently, the ability to consider new ideas). And they warn about AI isolating individuals from group activity and affecting the ability of artists to earn a living. These last two have shown up as the chief concerns of the actor's union who are protesting the recent demands of studios that actors submit to electronic scanning and storing of images of their bodies for later use in other productions -- for which they will not be consulted or paid.

This use of AI is already spreading well beyond Hollywood and the entertainment industry, and can directly lead to further isolation and discouragement of individuals from forming communities, and earning a living from art. We now have a generation of experience in seeing the harm that too much computer use and screen time is doing to our kids, and to adults as well. We need 'tools' to start bringing us back into physical connection and community, because that's where growth and problem solving, of all kinds, is nurtured.

Guelph has become a wonderful place in which communities of all sorts thrive. We have a music centre to foster the instruction and performance of music. We have dance schools throughout the city, and organizations like 'Silence,' which bring people together to experiment with and learn from the experience of sound. But we have no community home where people of all ages can come to create and experience visual art. Adult art is segregated mostly at the university and senior's groups, while there is only a smallish space for children's art making downtown. I don't know of anything for teens?

So the one thing I'd love to see, if this community art space goes ahead, is for more intergenerational opportunities to create art. Our music and dance classes are also fairly age-segregated, but I think visual arts and crafts could be more open to an intergenerational experience, so that kids and adults can benefit from the wisdom of their respective ages. To quote George Bernard Shaw, "We don't stop playing when we grow old. We grow old because we stop playing." Covid showed (and will continue to show) us all the damage that is done to the human psyche/spirit by isolation. Having a community art space in the centre of Guelph, close to the bus and train stations -- for our out of town visitors -- is a wonderful way to strengthen the opportunities for community building, as well as help redress the growing imbalance of

downtown Guelph as a centre for cafes, bars and restaurants only! I don't think Guelph needs another high-rise condo, in that area at this point. I don't think such a project would suit that particular location. I also think that whole area, wherein the Drill Hall lies, between Gordon Street, Wyndham Street, and the railroad tracks/river, is ripe for substantial redevelopment over the next few decades, and careful consideration has to be given to keeping centres for community gathering and collaboration, actually in the centre of the community!

Audrey Kloepfer (Kloepfer Art Gallery)

As a Gallery Owner in the city I think another space for Arts and Artists to show, work and share their artistic talents is a wonderful idea. We have so many talented people in our city and not enough space for them to show their art. This new space would be a perfect fit for studios, classes and workshops. Guelph can definitely use another Gallery space and I know from dealing with many artists there is always a demand for more studio space. We at Kloepfer Gallery do shows on a monthly basis and there is always a waiting list for local artists. Space to show is always in demand... This building has a lot of potential and character and I think when given the chance this space could be turned into an amazing arts building.

Bella S Krieger (Red Brick Café)

As the founder and owner of Red Brick Cafe and the curator of our in-house gallery since 2006, I'm strongly in support of the proposed Arts Centre in the Drill Hall. Here is my experience of visual arts in Guelph and the benefits a new centre would bring to the city and downtown.

For a downtown to flourish economically, culturally and be a draw for all citizens, it needs to be safe, vibrant and beautiful. Though there are many fabulous pockets in our downtown, there are also many dead spots, of which the Drill Hall is one of them. An artist's centre could definitely turn this drab, unfriendly corner into a colourful, and lively area, as long as serious thought is also put into streetscaping and bridging the inside and outdoor spaces.

Many successful urban areas grew by being a hotspot for artists, from Yorkville and Queen Street in Toronto to Brooklyn, NY, to smaller centres like Elora and Stratford. Guelph could follow suit. To grow local artists, you must have studio spaces and Guelph has very few. Most spaces, such as the Trafalgar building have rare openings, as once an artist finds a great space, they sensibly hang onto it. One possibility, is to offer studio spaces for a maximum of a few years, so there can be turn over and growth.

Another issue in Guelph is the limited interaction between emerging, mid level and well established artists. This type of mix invigorates older artists with new ideas and provides newer artists with mentorship. A successful centre could host workshops, masterclasses, and events to foster these connections.

Potentially, an Artspace could act as a bridge between the university and city, which is often only represented by student nightlife. I have rarely seen UG's talented and energetic music and art students enabled to share their talents beyond the campus. It would be fabulous to see the university host

courses, lectures, and events in the downtown, emulating cities where the town and gown connection is alive and well.

This is wonderful opportunity for the City of Guelph, and when there is an enthusiastic and dedicated group of volunteers around an idea, the City should do everything it can to support and harness such proactive energy.

Catherine Chan

I am writing to support the Guelph Centre for Visual Arts in their proposal to transform the downtown Drill Hall into a welcoming community artspace for the City of Guelph's community members. As a current MFA (Studio Art) student at the University of Guelph, I intend to continue living in Guelph after graduating from the program and am keen to be an active member of this City's arts community.

Many of the graduates of the MFA (Studio Art) program at Guelph move onto larger cities to continue their artistic practices where there are more studio spaces and galleries or artist-run centres to support their growth, as well as a greater number of visitors to these spaces to support exhibition programming.

Although the City of Guelph has public and private galleries, some studio spaces to rent, and community spaces to rent at recreation centres, a Centre for Visual Arts would fill a current gap. For those wanting to stay and live in Guelph, there are several ways in which a sustainable community artspace is important:

- Providing affordable studio spaces
- Providing non-commercial gallery spaces in which to exhibit work—particularly work that is not commercially-driven in its intent
- Offering larger workshop spaces in a dedicated visual arts facility that can address operational requirements for specific media, such as increased ventilation, natural light, industrial sinks, and drying racks, for example.
- Fostering interaction and dialogue amongst artists and with members of the City's community
- Having a known, welcoming visual arts destination within the City for visitors
- Encouraging sustainable artistic practice through

I am also excited about the potential of transforming the existing heritage building into a retrofitted space with environmental awareness in mind, both in the design and materials used in building construction and in adopting sustainable exhibition design practices outlined in existing resources that have been developed by like-minded organizations. This would help the City achieve its strategic goals of reducing the City's energy footprint, and lean into the strategic goals of the City of Guelph's Climate Action Plan.

I am in full support of the Guelph Centre for Visual Arts' proposal and hope that City Council will also support this exciting and welcome endeavour.

Dana McCool

I am writing this letter with great enthusiasm to endorse and wholeheartedly support the bid submitted by the local “Guelph Center for Visual Arts” Initiative for the acquisition of the “Drill Hall” building, located right next door to the city hall, in our beloved city of Guelph. As a member of this community, a professional artist and a strong advocate for the arts, I am deeply convinced that such an endeavor would be of immeasurable value to our city and its residents.

The “Guelph Center for Visual Arts” planning committee has consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to fostering artistic expression, cultural diversity, and community engagement. Guelph, known for its vibrant arts, heritage sites and culture, is in dire need of dedicated spaces that facilitate creativity, collaboration, and personal growth. The acquisition of the “Drill Hall” building by GCVA would undoubtedly bridge this gap and further enrich our community.

Art communities and spaces play an integral role in the social, economic, and cultural development of any city. They provide a platform for artists to showcase their talents, encourage cross-disciplinary interactions, and nurture the creative spirit that resides within each of us. Such spaces have been proven to invigorate neighborhoods, attract tourism, and contribute to a sense of identity and pride among residents. By creating a hub for artistic endeavors, GCVA will not only elevate Guelph's cultural landscape but also inspire the next generation of artists, innovators, and thinkers. Furthermore, the vacant building under consideration presents a unique opportunity for transformation. Repurposing this space into an art center would breathe new life into a dormant structure, revitalizing the surrounding area and serving as a symbol of community rejuvenation. The economic benefits that would accompany such a project, from job creation to increased foot traffic in local businesses, cannot be overlooked. This venture aligns perfectly with Guelph's aspirations to be a dynamic and forward-thinking city that fosters creativity and inclusivity.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly endorse the bid submitted by the “Guelph Center for Visual Arts” Initiative for the acquisition of the vacant “Drill Hall” building. The potential of this initiative to contribute to Guelph's cultural legacy, community cohesiveness, and economic vitality is immeasurable. I strongly urge you to consider the transformative power that art spaces can have on a city and its residents when making your decision.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to reach out to me if you require any further information or insights regarding this remarkable initiative.

Denise De La Franier

I'm a local potter, and I love being a working artist here in Guelph. People really do come out and support the arts community, and are wonderfully vocal with their encouragement and support. I support the development of a Community Artspace in Guelph because it is very hard to find suitable workspaces here, especially with a large piece of specialized equipment like a kiln. Most professional potters have an at-home studio, but because I am a renter, I don't have that luxury.

Thus far I've relied on donated space to work and use my kiln, but because they are at two different locations across town from one another, my productivity is not as streamlined as I'd like it to be. Because of this I'm having a hard time growing my business.

I've sought out several commercial spaces but am not prepared to pay the minimum \$2000/month + fees and tax that many of these spaces demand; since I am already negatively affected by our dysfunctional housing system, I am not in a position to pay high rents just to do my work. My hope is that a new community space can offer artists creative solutions regarding space use, affordability, and accessibility.

Gabriella Vegvari

I'm writing to express my support for your proposal to create a centre in Guelph for the visual arts. Guelph as an artistically rich community already boasts a performing arts centre and music centre. And yes, we do have venues in our city which present the "visual arts side of things" (e.g., Art Gallery of Guelph, Wyndham Arts' 3rd Floor Gallery, and more.) But while it's easy to respond that you can never have enough of a good thing (which is true), I would argue that the centre you envision would add a much-needed boost to not only Guelph's arts community, but it could also serve as a gateway into our city's downtown area.

The Downtown Guelph Business Association defines itself as "an association of commercial property owners and tenants within a defined area who work in partnership with the City to create thriving, competitive, and safe business areas that attract shoppers, diners, tourists, and new businesses." Imagine an active and vibrant visual arts centre, with artists creating in their studios, art instructors sharing their skills through workshops, galleries for viewing. A hub that's always open and always accessible to visitors looking for ways to spend a day exploring Guelph's downtown area. With restaurants and other historic sites within walking distance, this centre can only enhance our reputation as a must-see cultural destination.

In terms of its mandate as a centre for visual arts, in addition to studios and galleries, active guilds could be invited to rent space where they could set up the tools of their trade – to create, to teach, to demonstrate during Culture Days, to hold guild meetings or provincial conventions. (The Guelph Handweavers and Spinners Guild comes immediately to mind.) The site could potentially host art conferences. Perhaps a new partnership agreement with the University of Guelph's College of Arts.

Maybe a hub for an annual Guelph Festival of the Visual Arts, bringing together all art venues in the city – not just studios, not just galleries, not just stores – but all of them. The possibilities are endless. Artists aren't looking to be coddled, but they do appreciate encouragement and that's something that our city can do, by helping to nurture the creation of a centre for the visual arts -- to support the creative work of our city's visual artists today, and for generations to come.

Thank you for your vision and your work towards making this a reality.

Irene Szabo

Many cities the size of Guelph have an art space to encourage artists to create, share and show their art. It is a deficit that a city the size of Guelph doesn't have a dedicated space. We have many amazing artists

who are unable to find space to create and display that allows them to contribute to making the world a more beautiful place. Art is not only for the artists, it makes life more manageable, tolerable and enjoyable for all. In a challenging world after covid we need to bring people out of their homes with some brightness.

Jay S. Rosenberg (Coming Full Circle)

My name is Jay S. Rosenberg Lefler and I support this proposal to collaborate with the City of Guelph to repurpose the old Drill Hall and turn it into a vibrant community arts hub in the downtown core of Guelph.

It has been a long-time desire to have a center like this in Guelph going back some thirteen years when a group gathered to discuss this possibility. I was part of it then and wish to be a part now. I am the co-founder of Spark of Brilliance an initiative that fosters healing and recovery through the arts, now in its twenty-third plus year of operation, now under CMHAWW Self Help – Peer Support. S of B raised over 1 million dollars in funding and touched hundreds of lives and continues to this day.

I am also the founder of COMING FULL CIRCLE, Creative Peer Initiative, a program offering Peer Support/Facilitation + Creativity ,1:1 and in groups to those most vulnerable in our society established in 2017. We have raised over \$5,000 to date in public and private donations and online campaigns. Art and all its forms are integral in the sustainability and growth of an expanding city like Guelph. We are primed and ready for a new center to represent Guelph not only locally but on the international stage.

Jean Godinho

My name is Jean and i'm inspired by your ambitious project. I'm currently a studio arts major at the university in Guelph and I think this space would be an incredible way to create opportunities for the artists of Guelph. I was wondering about some ways I could support the project?
Thanks so much!

Jessica Simmons (Lucent Glass)

We are writing this letter in support of The Guelph Centre for Visual Arts restoring the drill hall into a community art space. The group interested in the space clearly has a passion for this project. The limits of an inspired mind are infinite. I can say with confidence that Guelph Artists would greatly benefit by having space to host income generating events and these events will enrich the lives of those who attend. Each time someone walks through those doors it will be an experience to remember. We will be proud that those memories were made in our city!

Wishing Guelph CVA great success.

John Kissick (Professor of Art, School of Fine Art and Music, University of Guelph)

I would like to extend my support to the Guelph Centre for Visual Arts for its acquisition and operation of Drill Hall in downtown Guelph. This proposal comes at a crucial time in the development of the downtown core and is desperately needed to attract and, more

importantly retain the creative talent that makes this community unique among small Canadian cities.

As an artist, previous Director of the School of Fine Art and Music for ten years, and a professor of Studio Art at the University of Guelph for the last twenty years, I have heard endless accounts of young artists who have been forced to leave the city due to a dearth of adequate studio spaces and very high rental fees. This seems particularly tragic given the University's national reputation as one of the country's top art schools (particularly at the MFA level,) and the fact that a significant percentage of our graduates would clearly choose to stay in the community if access to safe and cost-effective working space were available. There is significant innovative talent being lost because of the current situation and the result is the diminution of the city's reputation and cultural/economic potential.

The proposal, if successful, will go some way towards addressing this chronic problem of space, community, and mentorship for emerging and established artists. In the process, the Guelph Centre for Visual Arts can be a catalyst for revitalizing the downtown core and provide a tangible model for retaining the city's most important cultural capital—artists.

Judy McMullan (Canadian Embroiderers' Guild Guelph)

The Canadian Embroiderers' Guild Guelph has been watching, with interest, the proposal for an art space in the downtown Drill Hall in Guelph.

Our group would certainly find this a useful space for exhibitions of our work. We would also be interested in renting such a space for one- or two-day workshops that we have from time to time.

Please keep us apprised of your progress. We wish you all the best.

Kathy Lawrence (Guelph Creative Arts Association)

The Guelph Creative Arts Association, with a membership of 70 plus members currently has to use 4- 6 different venues to hold 2 to 3 exhibitions a year, monthly meetings of Executive, and 2 open studio days per month.

GCAA celebrated 75 years in 2023. In 1948, The group began trying to get monies together and the support of City for a stand-alone building for artists, makers, artisans to work, teach and involve the community. Sadly, after many years of raising funds and a valuable collection of art (including Ken Danby *Carousel*) the reality of achieving a building to call "home", was not happening. GCAA then donated thousands of dollars and the extensive art collection to the fledgling Macdonald Stewart Art gallery, thousands later to the Evergreen Center and lastly thousands to the River Run Theatre.

Our GCAA members would like to have access to studio, exhibition and meeting space. Artisans working in ceramics, mosaics, wood turning, sculpture, pottery, clay, stained glass and painting in all media. Ventilation, lighting, durable flooring, would be most important, and an appropriate number of "slop sinks" and accessible at perhaps odd hours of day / night.

I am also a member of Royal City Calligraphy Guild. This guild has been active approximately 40 years, serving Guelph, and with members from KW, Cambridge, Hamilton and London. This guild meets

monthly and every second year provides a 1-2 Day workshop "Inklinks"...At one time the guild was able to do a full day workshop once a month. Alas it is a struggle to find affordable venues. Ideally a space where our Library (on wheels approximately 4 feet high by 40 inches wide and 14 inches deep) could be stored between meetings.

I cannot tell you how wonderful it would be, to be able to share with artist friends in Owen Sound, Lions Head, Cambridge, KW, Brampton, Burlington that city Guelph also values and supports their artists, too.

Kayla-Jane Barrie

I'm reaching out to add some words of support to the arts centre. My name is Kayla-Jane Barrie, I'm a poet and artist living in Arthur, Ontario. You can learn more on my website.

Why we need this space:

The opportunity for Guelph Centre for Visual Art can truly support and transform the creative expression in the area. As a poet and abstract artist, I also believe this space will be a vibrant offer to bring a wide range of workshops to the surrounding area. I host workshops and would love the opportunity to connect with creatives and big thinkers to bring positive change to the world. It will give people the opportunity to try new artists' mediums, to collaborate with like-minded people, and to have the freedom to experiment with their visions.

After travelling to France this summer for a residency at Chateau Orquevaux, I realized how much of an impact a safe, and encouraging space to make art can change the trajectory of one's life. Having a local destination for creativity and connection is exactly what Guelph needs and having a historical building makes the reality even more beautiful.

Leah Jay

Hi there - just sending a note to share my support of the proposal for turning the old Drill Hall building into an arts space. What an amazing opportunity to transform that space into someplace where people in the community can connect. Super exciting!

I'm a part of Guelph's pottery community and would love to have another space to connect with and see other ceramic artists creating in the city.

If you're familiar with 401 Richmond in Toronto, it would be great to see something similar here in Guelph. Galleries that are accessible to the public, studio space for artists, a shop showcasing local work and space for workshops/events would all be so welcome.

Being so central to downtown, it seems like such a perfect initiative to reimagine that space and give it a new life and purpose. Best of luck during this initial phase in gathering support. I'd love to get involved in/when any opportunities arise.

Lionel (Street Artist)

Art, in all its rawness and candid truth, has the power to reshape landscapes, minds, and societies. The street art installations I've chosen over the years were not merely public 'art', but a call to action, a plea for introspection, and often a jolt to the collective conscience.

It's with this philosophy that I've learned of the proposed adaptation of the Drill Hall into an artist-run centre by GuelphCVA, backed by the City of Guelph. Such endeavors, which aim to give art a space where it can breathe, where artists can find a voice, and where communities can converge and converse, have my deepest admiration.

Restoring and revitalizing spaces like the Drill Hall are not just about preserving history, but about writing the future. An artist-run centre promises a hub of creativity, a space for unfiltered expressions, and a sanctuary for artistic souls to find themselves.

Guelph has a unique opportunity to not only champion its local talents but also to invite the global art community to participate and share. Spaces like these become epicenters of cultural dialogue, breeding innovation and inspiration. I urge everyone involved to embrace this vision and give the Drill Hall a new lease on life.

I believe the Drill Hall's transformation will not just illuminate its own walls, but also the myriad dreams and aspirations of artists who will grace its halls.

Martin Pearce (Director of the School of Fine Art and Music)

As Director of the School of Fine Art and Music, I know that additional flexible exhibition space would be useful to us. I hear from students leaving our program that the scarcity of affordable studio space is problematic for them. All comments are made with practically no knowledge of funding models for the acquisition and operation of the Drill Hall.

The location and size of the Drill Hall, and my evaluation of the needs of visual artists in this community, lead me to propose to you that the best use of this space is the creation of an artists' run centre. There are many things that the Art Gallery of Guelph does well. However, the gallery does not fill a practical role in serving the needs and aspirations of makers of art and craft in the city or region. Nor does the Art Gallery of Guelph comprehensively serve as a "bridge site" between the city and the arts at the University of Guelph. There is a "structural gap" here and an artists' run centre at the Drill Hall has the potential to fill it.

What would that mean?

- Board-run
- A funded coordinator position
- A budget for contracted part time help in operations
- Flexible space, for exhibitions, for performance, for instructional and participatory workshops

Ideally, a printing press, sewing machines and 3D printers with computers and the appropriate software

This combines traditional gallery space with access to equipment. The mission for the gallery programming would be completely distinct from that of the AGG, or from university spaces. The equipment could expand and extend access beyond that currently at the "Maker Space" at the corner of College and Gordon. The success of such publicly accessible space can be seen by the popularity of that installed in the Cambridge Library.

My view is that this proposal is not compatible with the creation of artists' studios. I am not aware of a model that delivers cheap studio accommodation to students just out of school anywhere regionally, and that's the need identified to me by alumni. I'm certainly in favour of developing that, but not in a free-standing central building that can have a more transformative effect on the visual arts in this city if another path is taken.

Mary Karavos

My name is Mary Karavos. I am a visual artist practising for over 30 years. I exhibit locally, regionally and internationally.

I would like to express my support for the proposal before city council to create a Guelph Centre for Visual Arts. (GCVA). I feel strongly a GCVA would benefit our creative individuals and the whole community of Guelph. A creative hub would nurture ideas, friendships, a sense of community that unites us and fosters a sense of collaboration.

Having a centre for artists with studio space would support artists to practise their craft, engage with fellow artists, teach and sell their work. The existence of such a space would be an invitation for our community and visitors to Guelph to witness and support our talents. In fact, Guelph would become an arts destination for local tourism as well. I travel outside of Guelph to exhibit and sell my work. I have witnessed personally when I open my studio for the Guelph Studio Tour and Art On The Street people come from afar to visit.

A Guelph Centre For Visual Arts would be a wonderful addition to the Guelph Community, there is no doubt. To offer such a space would help creatives flourish and our community flourish.

Michelle Miller (Guelph Studio Tour)

I have been an artist living in Guelph for 30 years. I have headed the board for the Contemporary Dance Festival and currently I am chairing the board for the Guelph Studio Tour.

I live in Guelph because I love that it is full of artists of all kinds. The culture is amazing for such a small city. We sell our city on our amazing festivals and artists but the support for all these artists is not at all where it should be. Artists are constantly in search of studio space, workshop space, a place where artists can get together and share and collaborate.

I have spoken to a few people wanting to start the new CVA's (Center of Visual Arts) proposal to convert the Drill Hall into a Visual Arts Space. This would be a VERY welcomed center for so many artists here. The need for this kind of space is great. It is desperately needed. I'm sure this space could be a bustling active spot. I can imagine it becoming a magical center where people are working along other artists,

where artists talks can take place, workshops, perhaps even a gallery space. There are so many possibilities.

How can we call this city a cultural hub without supporting those that make it so. The time is now to support this project. The space is there and it's downtown! Perfect!

I fully support this project and hope the city gets behind it.

Mikhal Ferr

Hello, my name is Mikhal Ferr (AKA. Myelz Strange) and I would like to voice why reusing the abandoned drill hall as a visual art centre would be an asset for Guelph:

I moved to this city because of the art community. It is why I currently stay, even with the unaffordable housing and rising food prices. I am continuously astounded by how generous and proactive every artist here is. Everyone is so delighted to learn of each other's work and so encouraging, even about fields outside their usual practice! It warmed my heart then and it warms it still. This city does not lack talented, inspired, creative people. What it does lack is space for them: whether it be to create or to present, it lacks all of it. That drill hall is a gaping hole waiting to be filled, and this is the best purpose for it. Because the worst thing for an artist (especially of the visual sort), is to feel cut off, unnoticed, unwanted and uninvited.

A visual art centre would not only give us a place to work and present, but it would allow us to create a sense of community: to encourage and be encouraged, to inspire and collaborate or even know about other artists and their projects. This could be the hub we've been waiting for, to wake up Guelph and remember why her artistic presence matters. It could be a beacon of hope, right by the train, to welcome people as they come and go, reminding everyone that Guelph is a proud supporter of the arts! And art saves more lives than most know. If I wasn't defying the odds to become a multidisciplinary artist now; following in the steps of those that inspired me to keep trying, I wouldn't have made it. Art is not only what I live for, it is why I am living. This art space matters. And I know I am not alone when I say that.

Nancy Myslik / Vallance

I am a self-taught local artist. Over the past 23 years I've been learning, and creating, selling and sharing my artwork both locally and internationally. About 10 years ago I started teaching art to kids and adults and mentoring other adults to inspiring them to create. I have always thought Guelph needed a hub that offered studio spaces (rentals) a workshop area a gallery space and shop where the community feels welcome.

I know there are smaller places within the city that offer a bit of this and a bit of that but not everything under one roof. I fully support this initiative and would love to help support this.

I have always just taught from my home or rented a space and dreamed of having an art studio that isn't in my basement. The rental rates in Guelph are far to high to consider it. I am not the only one that feels this way.

Nicole Hogg (Atmosphere Cafe)

My name is Nicole, owner and operator of Atmosphere cafe + etc. located on 24 Carden Street in downtown Guelph. I am a University of Guelph alumni with a degree in biological sciences. I came to appreciate Guelph during my time at the university. Over these years, this appreciation grew into an enthusiasm and fondness for the city. The decision was simple that Guelph would be a fine place to buy my first home and to open a business.

For the past 19 years, Atmosphere has been a popular destination in Guelph's Market Square. We offer gourmet fare in a chic comfortable setting. A leader in green initiatives, we were one of the first restaurants in Guelph to take steps to reduce its environmental impact by eliminating single-use plastics, instead opting for metal straws, eco-friendly packaging, natural birchwood takeout utensils and glass-only water bottles, winning us the Green Award in 2021. Since 2004 Atmosphere has collaborated with and hosted numerous local talents working in all types of visual media. We provide a rotating art space on our unique stone walls. Our interior walls create a dramatic backdrop to showcase Guelph's very talented visual arts community. We have successfully hosted many Art Openings, and events and have been an active liaison between artists and the city, embodying the trademark mix of collaboration and artistry.

The Community Artspace proposal for the Drill Hall Reuse Request would be a welcome addition to continuing the collaboration in the Guelph core. Within this project, Atmosphere would have the ability to provide joint cross-promotion opportunities with events like "A Night of Dinner & Art". Visitors would be drawn not only to the Community Artspace, but we could help create an all encompassing "Visitor Experience" (parking, dining, culture). Patrons in turn could be informed of other exciting events in the city. We could expect increased foot traffic along Carden Street with the Market Parkade becoming progressively utilised. The area will be more populated with visitors and draw people into the local shops and restaurants. It would definitely be an economic boost for our downtown businesses!

We align with the goals of GuelphCVA in continuing to welcome and grow the potential of an established cultural hub for the region and support their endeavours.

Patricia Flood (Assoc. Professor (Ret.)- School of English and Theatre Studies, UofG)

Repurposing the former drill hall in the centre of Guelph as an Arts Centre is one of the best ideas I have heard in some time. Not only would it provide much needed space for artists to create and exhibit their work; it would be an essential addition to downtown Guelph that would attract visitors and residents alike.

I am an artist, designer and retired Professor from the University, School of English and Theatre Studies and am excited about this proposal in so many ways. Since my arrival in Guelph in 2005, I have heard many people from different parts of the community talk about the importance of an Arts Centre in Guelph. The obvious need is for a space where emerging and established artists can show their work. Aside from cafes and a small space at 10C, there is no space to exhibit artwork here in Guelph unless

you're an established artist. We need a space for emerging and mid-level artists of all kinds to show their work, to create and exchange ideas and welcome performing artists and teachers.

One of the great things that visitors often mention to me about Guelph, is the lively and thriving town centre. We're still recovering from the devastation done to this by Covid but it's a known fact that people want to live in a city with a vibrant centre. An arts space downtown would be a thriving hub for all forms of arts education and production that would include so many people working across disciplines. We have many visitors to the city every year and an art space would attract people to the town centre. Not only would the converted drill hall attract people for classes, exhibitions and lectures, it would also bring them downtown. Businesses would inevitably benefit from this. I don't think the commercial value of an enterprise like this can be underestimated.

Guelph has an excellent reputation as a centre for music, but we also have a very strong visual arts community that isn't served nearly as well. A centre where people in the visual arts could learn and create has the potential to expand to a hub for cross disciplinary work as well, incorporating dance, performance art and film. This is a great idea for an underused area of the city. With the new housing development to the east, the drill hall is ideally situated to open this area up and further enhance the attractiveness of Guelph as a place to live and work. I strongly support this exciting proposal.

Ron Shuebrook (Professor Emeritus and Former President OCAD)

I am delighted to offer my enthusiastic support for the Working Group's proposal to secure and to renovate the now empty Drill Hall into a much-needed Centre for Visual Arts. It is my understanding that the City of Guelph owns this surviving example of our 19th Century architectural heritage, has recently invested significantly in stabilizing its structure, and is preparing to consider appropriate proposals from community-based groups to repurpose the existing building.

As a senior professional visual artist, Professor Emeritus, and former President of the Ontario College of Art and Design University, as well as a long-term resident of Guelph, I am well-informed about the needs, challenges, and implications of pursuing a life and career in the visual arts in Canada. Moreover, as a former Chair and Professor of Fine Art at the University of Guelph from the late eighties through the late nineties, I have personally observed the rapid growth of the city's diverse population and the steady growth and increased prominence of certain sectors of our creative communities. While these positive developments have largely enhanced the economic opportunities for many residents in the city, it has also contributed to other initiatives that have recognized valuable opportunities to renovate and reuse existing, underutilized industrial buildings for office space and, in limited instances, for relatively expensive housing. However, in the last two decades, the repurposing of these buildings has increasingly made many of these properties unavailable and unaffordable as studios for local visual artists who often require large rough spaces to pursue their professional careers. This discouraging studio situation is now approaching crisis proportions, and may, in fact, cause the most adventurous, often most financially vulnerable, artists to relocate to more encouraging and supportive environments.

For years it has been well understood by many that the presence of accomplished cultural workers, including visual artists, as well as pertinent institutions and services, contribute significantly to the overall quality of life; the general awareness of our social, political, and natural heritage; and our

collective and individual identities. Moreover, it is widely understood that various imaginative pursuits and cultural industries greatly contribute to our economies with comparatively limited financial investment.

In 2005-06, I had the privilege of serving on the Leadership Team of the Creative Cities Project that was directed by Dr. Meric Gertler of the Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, and supported by the Ministry of Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Culture, Province of Ontario, as well as by the City of Toronto. This appointed team of professional experts from government, education, non-profits, and the arts and creative industries collaborated for more than eighteen months in the research and development of strategic policy recommendations that would recognize and stimulate the creative economies of Toronto and the entire Province. This research identified and evaluated the key factors used internationally to nurture creative activity for economic and social benefits and to analyze the data and develop strategies to stimulate and support creative activity in Toronto and “thus improve the city economically and socially”. Fundamental to these findings and strategies for nurturing the creative arts and industries was the essential provision of “affordable live-work” accommodations, and that ‘affordable’ had to be defined by the fiscal realities and income of professional artists in Toronto and the extended region. Given the recent dramatic increases of the cost of real estate in the GTA, including rentals of studio space in Guelph, the possibility of renovating the Drill Hall into a center for visual arts that would provide “realistically affordable” studio space (if not living accommodations) for serious working professionals is deeply encouraging. The existence of such a concentrated, critical mass of committed visual artists, perhaps including design and craft disciplines, would likely serve as a crucial catalyst for an even higher level of professional ambition, creative exchange, and complementary economic opportunities for its participants, attracting broader societal interest and contributing to the economic activity of the city in general, but especially in the downtown core.

Finally, I am optimistic that the City of Guelph will recognize the long-term cultural, social, and economic benefits of the establishment of this proposed Centre for Visual Arts, and that it will consider ways that it could reasonably support and invest further in this worthy initiative. Of course, the political, financial, accessibility, and architectural challenges of renovating and repurposing the existing Drill Hall structure are daunting, particularly with an impractically short deadline. I well realize that further informed planning, technical expertise, substantial fundraising efforts, and greater investment by the private and public sectors will be required if this project is to come to successful fruition. Nevertheless, I strongly urge the city to support and approve this admirable, exciting proposal.

Roseanne Morris

Some time has passed since I first heard of a plan of the City of Guelph to receive proposals from the community regarding the future use of The Drill Hall. I support wholeheartedly the proposal to transform the building into a dynamic community centre for visual arts.

Let me tell you why.

1. The GCVA will be a much needed and celebrated space for artists to gather, work and collaborate. There is very little available studio space in the city, and that which is available is terribly expensive. The model proposed will provide not only affordable space for artists to work,

but space for artists to share, learn, incubate and grow. There is no such space currently in Guelph.

2. Looking at current existing models of successful art collectives in Ontario (Alton Mills, Glen Williams, Wychwood Barns to name just three) I believe the GCVA can be a dynamic community centre supporting and sustaining working artists in Guelph.
3. The GCVA will be a magnet for tourism in Guelph. It will bring people from across the province and beyond to experience great local art; to see artists at work; to interact with artists and hear their stories; to purchase art; to even perhaps engage in artist run workshops or seminars.
4. The GCVA will help revitalize the downtown core. Imagine: arriving in Guelph on a Saturday summer morning from Toronto by GO Train; planning a visit to the 10 C Farmers Market; shopping stall to stall at the GCVA looking to purchase local art to take home; stopping for a beer on Wyndham at Brothers Brewery; a walk along pedestrian only streets, passing restaurant patios to visit the new library; and maybe even taking a stroll by the river, ice cream in hand from The Boathouse, while waiting for a canoe paddle on The Speed River!

What a happy vision of what is possible for Guelph.

The GCVA will help Guelph flourish, bringing artists and the community together. The GCVA will add rich value to the city and will enhance the vision of the city and its future growth. I look forward to the ribbon cutting ceremony of the GCVA. It cannot happen too soon!

Sarah Sabo

I wanted to take the opportunity to express my interest and support of the Drill Hall Reuse project. As both an artist and member of the Guelph community I know how spaces and projects that foster art and artistic expression can allow a community to grow more vibrant.

Many of us are now working from home and/or in smaller spaces, finding ourselves isolated from other community members and other creatives. Having access to spaces within the community to work and meet with others is so essential when it comes to cultivating a strong art scene that in turn benefits the entire city.

I myself - an artist, photographer, business owner and mother - am living in one of many Guelph condos. I love living in Guelph but my smaller space does limit my ability to work on studio projects in my home, and so finding outside studio opportunities is really key. In addition, as a community member I would love to see this under-utilized space take on a new life in such a positive way. Hoping to see this project take root, and looking forward to hearing about next steps and ways to get involved.

Scott McGovern (former Executive Director Ed-Video, Kazoo! Fest)

I'm writing as I've been tangentially aware of this project for some time, and it has been popping into my mind more recently as it begins to gain momentum with the efforts of your group.

I guess I would briefly offer my input as I've done some similar work for nearly two decades in Guelph at Ed Video, Kazoo! Fest, in partnerships with many other local groups, and as an arts/culture/events organizer for the City of Waterloo.

I decided to just take a bit to write out a few of my thoughts in case it is useful:

- Be strategic about how it is set up as an entity, especially in regards to who makes decisions.
- Make it capture attention/respect/love/involvement from the community and the greater art community/general public... to make it an amazing art centre for locals and visitors who hear of it elsewhere.
- Overall, I would likely try to avoid piecemealing/renting out the space to other orgs. If possible, instead aim to make all spaces useful, flexible, and temporarily accessible to all of Guelph's orgs to use for their own purposes in the downtown location. 10C is great and fills a need obviously but I would not use it as a model as it already exists. Avoid dedicating too much space to arts admin, although it is a necessary and real thing and deserving of some nice space to do that! Although it entails a strong and justifiable organizational/funding structure for a new organization that controls the building, it would be best to dedicate space for public use as much as possible.
- I can envision layouts to try to offer a good balance of what I perceive as the need from the public and from my experience in Guelph = gallery, studio, event space, workshop, flexible use, etc. A major frustration to imagine around are all the support columns.
- The main division of space could be:
 - Ground Floor - entrance/foyer, large gallery/event space, private studio spaces with a variety of arrangements for short/long term rentals
 - Second Floor - public studios, walled and open format, large area as basic shop/wide open area for workshops, meetings, rehearsals, etc., smaller more open format/community use gallery space.
 - Third floor - intimate venue for live music, performances, dining/cafe/bar, etc., maintaining original wooden walls/fixtures as much as possible.

I know there's a lot more to consider architecturally, accessibility, etc. but this is just overall visioning. My thinking is that it is guided to balance of usefulness out of that building for what is both actually needed, and what Guelphites/people 'think' they need too - like it could also be incredible as just one massive gallery, or a sorta Guelphy 2025 anarchist-lite Rochdale college revival, or whatever.

I imagine the main challenges you might face are structure of the organization/relationship to partners, pitching its vision/tone/vibe as a needed and exciting building to get buy-in, and making it seem feasible as a good investment with a long-term plan. I know the arts community is developed yet siloed enough that a building like this can succeed with the right vision.

Overall, I've observed that the best technique for an arts space is to constantly mix together established and emerging artists as they have a good parasitic relationship. I'm willing to offer ideas or guidance if you think my input is useful, as I really hope your plan for this building succeeds for Guelph.

Seth (Cartoonist)

I am very thrilled to see this project coming together. It is exactly what our city needs. A large, practical and adaptable space for art creation. Guelph fancies itself an arts community but it is sorely lacking in spaces for artists to work and show and collaborate.

I cannot express strongly enough how important spaces like this are in creating an environment where creative things happen. Artists often work in isolation but it is not always by choice. Art spaces are strong pollinators for ideas and co-creating. Especially for young artists who need to come together and find out who they are and what their work will be about. It doesn't happen overnight and a project like this could be just what is needed for a new generation of creative people.

As a bonus, this is a great usage for a building that seemed to simply be mouldering away. How wonderful to see it serve a new purpose. Often these old structures are more ideal as creative spaces than prissy perfectly new (yet unadaptable) buildings. I wish the project all the luck in the world.

Sharyn Seibert (Artworks Gallery Guelph)

On behalf of Artworks Gallery Guelph, I would like to register our support of the Guelph Centre for Visual Arts to be housed in the Drill Hall. Our Gallery is on York Road, a major thoroughfare to and from the city. Frequently, we receive visitors from out of town who are looking for cultural venues to enrich their visits. How wonderful it would be if we could direct them to a vibrant art centre. Many of our feature artists are from Toronto, Oakville and Mississauga who take the train here and then proceed to our gallery to set up their shows. They often inquire about other places to visit where they can see more art and also eat at local cafes and restaurants. Not only is an arts centre a benefit for the artists themselves, it would be an economic asset to the downtown with its exhibition space and open studios. Visitors could discuss first-hand with the artists who have created the work in the gallery. The Distillery District is an example of this arrangement where artists have open studios where they can teach and sell their work. It's an educational opportunity to explain their process to buyers. At the present time, we have nothing like this in Guelph.

Studio spaces are rare in Guelph. Unlike Hamilton and Kitchener, we do not have empty factories and warehouses where artists can pay reasonable rent for their work places. Many artists are being driven out of Guelph to towns where they can more easily acquire studios. It is a loss for our city when creative people have to leave because of lack of affordable space. This is especially true for younger artists living in small apartments and not having space to work. In the last year there has been an exodus out of the city.

Those artists who are still able to work in their small living quarters don't have room for bulky art equipment. The Visual Arts Centre is proposing an art equipment library where artists can borrow equipment. This is a brilliant idea for artists to have access to Cricut machines, photography equipment, 3-D printers, silkscreen equipment and books. They would also have access to donated, free supplies. Jerry Saltz, the New York Times art critic says the most important advice he can give for artists to improve their practice is for them to talk to each other about their work. A visual art centre would have gathering spaces for artists to communicate and collaborate with each other. This cross-pollination would result in innovative and ground-breaking results. 44 Gaukel Street in Kitchener is an artist centre where artists have their studios, teaching spaces and gathering hubs. It is supported by the City of Kitchener and has resulted in a lively art district. Other examples are the Albion Centre of the Arts in Gravenhurst and the Elora Centre of the Arts. The creation of the visual arts centre would be a boon to the city and would showcase Guelph's dynamic art scene.

The City of Guelph has a rare opportunity to help artists flourish and contribute to the economic and social fabric of our community. We heartily encourage it to support this initiative.

Sharyn Seibert

I have already written a letter of support on behalf of Artworks Gallery Guelph to register our support of the Guelph Centre for Visual Arts to be housed in the Drill Hall. However, I would also like to have input from a personal point of view. Of course, I would like to see studio spaces, an artist equipment library, meeting spaces and teaching areas but my plea for this building is also from an educator's perspective. As well as being a practising artist, I taught art at the Guelph Collegiate and Vocational Institute for 23 years. Over that period of time, I have seen art education almost eliminated in Guelph's elementary schools and severely diminished in high schools.

Studies have shown that creativity fostered in children can have lasting effects in terms of problem-solving, flexibility, empathy, interest in other cultures and expressiveness. Our tax dollars are supporting numerous sports fields, ice rinks and an arena but there is less support for young people who have an interest in art activities. A Centre for Visual Arts would be within walking distance for several downtown schools. I can envision field trips for students to see artists at work, participate in workshops and spend time viewing exhibitions in the proposed gallery. Students would be introduced to careers in the arts like curating, art management, illustrating, digital art, animation, and other interest areas. There would also be opportunities for students in the co-op program, which is one of the best ways to prepare for future employment. The exhibition space could potentially showcase work from all the schools, celebrating the lively creative talent of our young people.

The City of Guelph has a rare opportunity to help established and emerging artists flourish and contribute to the economic and social fabric of our community and also provide a vibrant hub for young people to visit. I heartily encourage this initiative.

Taras Lachowsky

Does Guelph see itself as this bastion of free thought and self expression? Well? What better way to foster and encourage these attributes than by offering a space that is affordable for visual arts to thrive. The secondary businesses that would be attracted to the downtown core as a result of a thriving arts hub is momentous. Economically speaking the Arts bring in people and with people comes commerce. Commerce then fosters continual development. A thriving arts hub would be crucial to being a focal point in the developing of a vision for downtown Guelph.

Taras Lachowsky

Thoreau Bakker (DIYODE Maker Space)

I am writing on behalf of Diyode Maker Space to express our support for the Community Artspace project being proposed for the old Drill Hall location in downtown Guelph. The idea of creating an inclusive, and sustainable cultural hub is aligned with our own organization's values of creative community building and accessibility.

We are impressed by the project's focus on inclusivity, environmental sustainability, and its potential for economic revitalization. The planning and alignment with Guelph's Strategic Plan points to the thoughtfulness behind the initiative, and I have confidence in the team behind it.

On a personal note, I owe a great deal to the nurturing environment provided by Guelph's arts organizations, which have been instrumental in shaping my own career trajectory and academic pursuits. I am currently advancing my studies in a creative Practice-Based PhD program at Toronto Metropolitan University in Toronto (formerly known as Ryerson University), an achievement made possible through the foundational support I received from Guelph's vibrant arts community. I firmly believe that the Community Artspace at the Drill Hall has the potential to not only uplift Guelph's cultural landscape but also to serve as a testament to the province and the nation of our community's deep commitment to fostering creativity.

While we are still exploring how the Diyode Maker Space might engage with the Community Artspace, we wholeheartedly support the concept and its objectives. We believe that such an initiative could significantly benefit Guelph, and we hope that the city will consider investing in this promising venture. We look forward to seeing how the Community Artspace project evolves and are excited about the positive impact it could have on our community.

Tom and Marion Reidel

The arts can take so many forms. Twenty-five years ago, the Elora Centre for the Arts opened. One of its first tenants was the Centre Wellington Children's Drama Club. It is still going strong today.

I was a writer and director for this organization for six years. The hope for this organization was to give children the strength to not necessarily become famous actors, but to give them the confidence to speak in front of others. So many have gone on to careers that require that confidence to lead others.

This new space can be for people of all ages, as it is in Elora. I trust that the people who make the decisions will choose wisely.

Zoey Ross (Editor-in-chief, Exhibitionist Magazine)

I am writing in support the proposed plan for the Drill Hall property put forth by the Guelph Centre for Visual Art (GCVA).

From the beginning, GCVA had sought out community opinion and collected feedback about the transformation of the Drill Hall. While the specifics are still being drafted for public presentation, the process which I have witnessed has been encompassing and efficient with an eye toward inclusion and needs based rationale. The vision proposed, which includes early thoughts on aesthetic, programming, and societal value is an important seed that is being nurtured by the GVCA with vast community input funneled into action.

This vision of the Drill Hall addresses the great need for improved infrastructure for artists and creators in Guelph. GCVA has struck a balance between the creation of a display space for the public and a workshop for professional and amateur artists. Artists are also entrepreneurs and the plan outline I have seen is conscious of the business education, and retail needs of artists who will practice in the Drill Hall.

The Drill Hall also has the capacity to be a gem in the community - a place to hold secure public art that builds on and showcases the story of Guelph through art. Finally, there could be an opportunity to showcase Guelph's alternative history and its radical nature from inception to contrast the modernist view of Guelph a centre for agriculture.

This great work is celebrated by Exhibitionist and we look forward to developments on this project and wish the team strength as they complete this great work for artists and the citizens of Guelph.



Guelph Centre for Visual Art

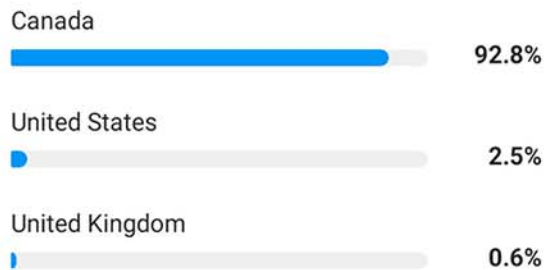
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Followers

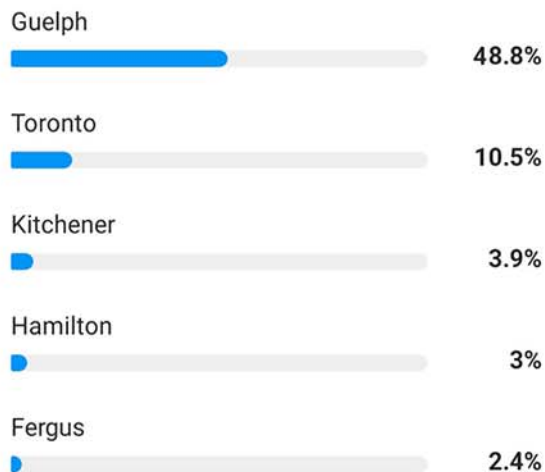
Jun14 - Sep 24

Top Locations

Countries



Cities



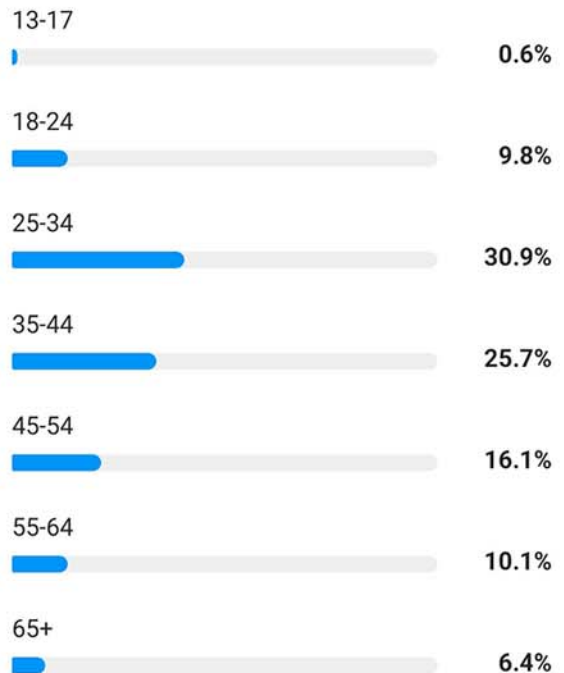
Gender

70.3%
Women



29.6%
Men

Age Range



Social Media Comments

Alison Ray - How do we help. I'm an emerging artist and would love to have a space where I can observe, play, create and share with others!

Andrea L. Jacobson - Oh wow!

Ann Boyle-Croft - A place artists can connect! Where artists (of all skill levels) can find mentorship and encouragement. A place where like-minded people can connect, share ideas, information and resources.

Anyck Alvarez Kerloch - Great project. Wish I had one where I live.

Art Consulting I Canada - I have worked so hard at dispelling the myth of the starving artist for so long! I am waiting with great anticipation for something concrete to work out for a collective community space where artists can feel safe, creative and enjoy the networking opportunities that will spawn from this space!

Barbara Kuras - Art community needs a space to connect, work, create and inspire each other..... to talk about art, life, challenges and uplift the energy of our city....

Barbara McKell Art - So many reasons to support an arts center in this city. We have a talented and thriving arts community that needs support in terms of gallery space, studio space and workshop space. There are some small venues around town but not nearly enough to put Guelph on the map as a note worthy arts community. The building and land for a visual art center is already owned by the city and could be put to good cultural use by allowing a non-profit community-oriented group to bring their vision to fruition and honour a heritage site with creativity, inclusion and diversity.

Brenda LaRose - This is awesome!

Carol Ann Michaelson - Very exciting endeavour. I'm excited to see how it comes through. Good luck. Oh I wish I lived in Guelph so that I could be involved. What great potential. I went on the Guelph studio tour last year and I was depressed to see the lack of good studios and how expensive the ones that are around, cost. For a small city, there is indeed a lack of quality places for artists to work and thrive and without that, what happens to the arts in Guelph?

Cathy Goudie – Great idea. How can I help?

Darlene Watson - This is great. Love this idea for Guelph.

Jane Elizabeth Mills-Baran - Yes! Yes! YES!! Guelph needs this art space!

Jane Thornton - Guelph needs a community visual arts centre that offers studio space for local artists.

Jason Inglis - Turn it into an art school of Guelph. Workspaces are cool and great. But there needs to be a place for people to go to learn. I know Wyndham kills it with their school but maybe it can be bigger than that.

Kemriyus - Small art businesses need representation!!! Guelph is a huge art hub for many creatives in the GTA and it's a great way to figure out what kind of art is for you !

Kevin Hogg - yes Guelph needs spaces for artists to work at a REASONABLE rent rate....not the inflated rental and purchasing costs Guelph and the rest of the country is experiencing right now....investing in arts and culture is a healthy direction for a sustainable future of society.

Laura Garcia – I love this! I will definitely check out your website!

Laura Garcia - This is awesome!

Margopuhachenko - I really want joint performative projects and studios where you can rent a place, with a loom, for example. I organized an exhibition FREEDOM, but very few local artists responded. I would like more communication and help in writing grant applications.

Marianne Gibson - What a great space. Lots of potential.

MD Stephens - Guelph has needed this for sooooo long! Amazing that you are taking it on. Perfect location too.

Nancy Jane Myslik - I have dreamed of a space like this in Guelph for artists. With studio space for those who need it, a community space to run workshops and gallery area to share and promote the incredible artists this city has!!!

Nathan Lawr - It would be so awesome to have an arts centre that was for all kinds of art.

Nathan Rossi - I think the Art scene around Guelph is gaining traction! A supported artspace would show the local art community that we believe in the arts and its opportunities. It will show people that we believe in trying to display meaningful community spaces where people can work on a project, alone or collaborative, that this can be a safe space to do that and express themselves through a plethora of mediums. I think an artspace would be amazing and Guelph as a city should believe in it too!

Nessa - I'm excited for this, what I read so far sounds wonderful. A large barrier for disabled artists on ODSP is paying monthly fees to join collectives and studios. I approached the Guelph arts Council to ask if there's funding available for disabled artists on ODSP to join art studios and collectives and I'm still waiting on an answer. I'd love to be a part of something like this.

Nicole Gagnon - This area with its natural light for photo shoots for artisan works.

Rescue Bears - Place for artists and artisans to have work space and if feasible a lending library of tools, supplies, books etc dedicated to arts trade.

Sheena Thompson/owner of The Wheel - Let me know if there is anything I can do to help!!

Susan Gibson Clift - Providing art for a community and a community for artists is a cultural “win win”

Suzanne Wakefield - Great idea

Sweet Art – Sounds Wonderful!

Tapac Ik - Gallery exhibit space, and a full open platform.

Terrance Herron - My kitchen needs to be a kitchen, not an art space, no local studios are available for rent , yet if they are , the rent / lease is way to expensive . An true Art Pace is needed for artists like myself

Twylla Clark - Yes please! Very few people have a space in their home that they can create art, it would be wonderful to have not only somewhere to create, but to meet and help others create! Watching people on social media create while we sit and comment is one thing, but being able to have a space to interact would be beautiful

Ukrainian artist in Canada - I really want joint performative projects and studios where you can rent a place, with a loom, for example. I organized an exhibition FREEDOM, but very few local artists responded. I would like more communication and help in writing grant applications

Vivien Fleisher - Can't wait to see the exterior of this building jazzed up!

Wild Love Vintage - Please please please include a portion of this as a rentable space! It's just so cool for events!! Guelph used to be the home of so many creative people.. 2005 was boomin compared to Kitchener. I was so jealous. But it looks like things have changed, which I guess is expected because that wasn't just yesterday lol. BUT creative people are still out there. They just need a cool space to bring it out again!! Art Events! Workshops! Popup markets!! Omg I could totally go on. I've seen it work before (here in kw) where the spaces appear, artists grow.