

## **Guelph Arts Council delegation for Oct 25, 2021 City Council Meeting**

GAC representative: Patti Broughton, Executive Director

Good evening Mayor Guthrie & Councillors -

Guelph Arts Council is a resource for artists, arts groups, residents, and visitors. Since it was founded, GAC has worked to build the cultural heart of Guelph by helping new cultural initiatives take flight, and by collaborating to create a great creative city. We support Guelph's creative community, engage Guelph's residents and visitors with the arts, and promote the benefits of the arts for individuals and communities.

Guelph is an artistically vibrant city well known for its creative community and arts groups, events, and festivals. Arts and culture boost local economies by attracting visitors, businesses, and new residents; creating jobs; and developing talent. Cities that are creative are more resilient, innovative, and socially just, have a distinct sense of place, and are more effective in promoting wellbeing and a sense of belonging for all residents.

Despite the asset that Guelph has in its creative community, affordable space to create, rehearse, exhibit, and perform remains inadequate, putting at risk the ability of local artists to continue to work and live here. Through surveys, convenings, and one-on-one conversations - including a culture sector meeting convened by the City in March 2019 - we know that artists and arts groups are struggling. The impact of the pandemic on artists and arts organizations was immediate and massive, with livelihoods for artists and arts workers - often already precarious and with incomes typically low - severely threatened. Yet artists continued to create, and to help us all weather isolation and hardship, and making an essential contribution to our resilience, well-being, and recovery. Now more than ever, the cultural sector needs investment.

GAC proposes, in partnership with the City of Guelph and other groups, that the Drill Hall be developed as a multi-use creative hub. Located in the civic core of Guelph, its location would highlight the value that the creative community delivers for the community. The space would engage residents and visitors; provide an incubator space for new creative projects and collaborations; offer much-needed affordable and accessible creation, education, and presentation space for local artists and arts groups; support partners' goals for equity, diversity, and inclusion; and deliver benefits for vulnerable communities through arts programming.

This initiative is squarely aligned with the City's strategic plan - Guelph Future Ready. It will Power our Future by contributing to a sustainable, creative, and smart local economy that is connected to regional and global markets and supports shared prosperity for everyone. It will also Build our Future by making strategic investments that nurture social well-being, provide landmark beauty, and offer a safe place where everyone belongs.

GAC has a long history of community engagement and learning around creative spaces. Since 1975, GAC has been supporting the creation and ongoing development of cultural facilities in Guelph, including the Civic Museum, Art Gallery of Guelph, River Run Centre, and Boarding House Arts. A multi-purpose community arts centre is a long-held goal of GAC and the arts community. From 2012-14 GAC completed, with support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, arts community needs assessment and property research related to this goal. The needs assessment indicated exhibition, performance, artists' studio, teaching, and workshop space as the top five needs of artists and arts groups. These are the types of uses that GAC would

propose for the Drill Hall, subject to a renewed needs assessment. Artists and arts groups currently indicating an interest need space for administration; multi-arts exhibitions and screenings; readings, meetings and performances; music and dance rehearsals; visual arts studios; music and instrument storage; recording, editing, and shooting space for photography, film, and music; and programming space for group and individual arts-based peer support and for arts workshops that support both artists' learning and wellness for all residents, including vulnerable populations.

Given the renown of Guelph as a culturally vibrant city, developing an inspiring, accessible arts space like Toronto's [401 Richmond](#), [SKETCH Working Arts](#), [Wychwood Barns](#), and [Riverdale Hub](#); Oakville's [Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre](#); Kingston's [Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning](#) or, closer to home, the [Cambridge Centre for the Arts](#), [Elora Centre for the Arts](#), and Waterloo's [Button Factory Arts](#), would serve the needs of artists and arts groups, enrich the lives of residents and visitors, and celebrate Guelph as a creative city. Hamilton's [Bridgeworks](#) and Toronto's just-announced [Wellington Destructor](#) project are inspiring examples of the creative reuse of municipal assets as creative hubs. This project would support Guelph artists' ability to continue to live and work locally, thereby sustaining Guelph's brand as a creative community.

GAC has a strong track record in securing Ontario Trillium Foundation support - a source of significant operating and capital funding the City of Guelph cannot access without a community partner. Furthermore, GAC's strong reputation and track record in securing grant funding from various sources can be leveraged to strengthen joint applications with the City for funding that favours Public-Private-Non-Profit partnerships.

I would also like to note Guelph Arts Council's strongly held belief in the value of cultural planning, which was backed up by the City's community planning process, in which the lack of a culture plan was noted as a significant gap for the sector. If Guelph had a strategic plan for culture, as many Canadian communities of comparable size do, the need for a multi-use arts hub and a strategy for its development would likely already have been identified.

Thank you.

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