

Dear Councillors,

My name is Jessica Imrie and I'm writing to express my **support** of the proposed updates to bylawSection 4.15 regarding Home Occupations that allows additional dwelling units and accessory buildings to be used for Home Occupations.

In 2021, I designed and built an accessory building on my property with the intention of using it as a multi-purpose space, including a home office for my photography business. It wasn't until September of 2022 that I was made aware that the privileges I have as a homeowner were not the same in my accessory building, as they were in my home. As you can imagine, this was disruptive to my business and personal life. However, through consultation with Patrick Sheehy in the planning department, I adjusted as needed to ensure I was compliant with the current by-law.

Councillors, today I am asking you extend the same privileges I currently have within my municipal address, to the additional building on my property, by supporting the updates to the by-law. It is a small change within the bylaw that will have an immense impact on not just my life, but countless other peoples lives. Here are two key benefits, I believe would impact the Guelph community with this change:

1. Increases opportunities to bring business (back) into the Guelph community.

- Since learning about the limitations of the current by-law (i.e., I am unable to run my business in the accessory building) I have moved operations to Dundas, ON as there wasn't a suitable space in Guelph for the type of work I do.
 - I have been a self employed portrait photographer for eight years and my primary goal with my accessory building was to create a safe space for my clients to come and have their photograph taken.
- In the 9 months I was able to use my space, I welcomed over 40 clients, some of whom had never been to Guelph or experienced our amazing community. I received endless positive feedback, not only about the space I created, but also about our city and the local businesses. Many of my clients came from the GTA and would go out to enjoy a meal, shop at our local stores or visit places like the arboretum with their families, after our work together was completed.
- The updated by-law would allow me to move my business back to Guelph and further support our amazing community, local businesses and attractions. It has always been important to me to share this community with other people.

2. Encourage creative solutions for self-employed business opportunities

- My need for a backyard studio stemmed from the COVID-19 pandemic. In March of 2020 I had just signed a lease for a commercial space at the Boarding House Arts building. Due to pandemic restrictions, I was unable

- to enter the building for months and it was difficult to support the rent without a stream of income.
- During this difficult time our family brainstormed different solutions and landed on building an accessory building to address many challenging issues. This solution provided me with the flexibility to be close to home for my family, run my photography business, and contribute financially to my family. I invested my savings into constructing this space, knowing that when I was no longer using it for work, it could be a place for my daughter or aging parents to stay. It also acted as a space for extended family to stay in, and at one point, a quarantine spot when our family caught Covid-19.

As you are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has expanded the possibilities and ways in which we can work. If I am able to do my work in the accessory building on my property, I can leave any stress or mess from the work day behind when I close the door, and enjoy the time I have with my young family. When my eleven-year old daughter is sick and needs to stay home, I can continue working with my clients, while still remaining close and available to support her through illness (which I am unable to do while I work out of town). This flexibility has the possibility to change my work life and for once in my career, I can see a beautiful balance between work and home.

Thank you for your time,

Jessica Imrie