

Dear City Councilor of Guelph,

I am writing to express my strong support for the establishment of a Community Artspace in the Drill Hall. As an immigrant artist from the Middle East, I have a deep understanding of the value and significance of such a space for myself, my community, and fellow artists.

First and foremost, the need for a Community Artspace stems from the lack of free, accessible venues for artists like myself to showcase our work, collaborate with others, and engage with the broader community. As a newcomer to Guelph (a resident since 2018), I have found it challenging to find affordable and inclusive spaces where I can create and exhibit my art. A dedicated Artspace would fill this gap and provide a welcoming environment for artists from diverse backgrounds to thrive.

Moreover, the establishment of a Community Artspace presents a unique opportunity to foster cultural exchange and understanding in our city. As a Middle Eastern artist, I believe that sharing our art and heritage with others is a powerful way to promote multiculturalism and celebrate diversity. By providing a platform for artists from different backgrounds to come together, we can bridge divides, challenge stereotypes, and cultivate a sense of unity and belonging within our community.

The benefits of a Community Artspace extend beyond the artistic community to the city as a whole. Studies have shown that vibrant arts and cultural sectors contribute to economic growth, tourism, and community well-being. By investing in the arts, Guelph can enhance its reputation as a dynamic and inclusive city, attracting visitors, businesses, and residents alike.

In conclusion, I urge the City Council to prioritize the establishment of a Community Artspace in Guelph. Such a space is not only important for individual artists like myself but also for the enrichment of our community and the promotion of multiculturalism and diversity. I am confident that with your support, we can create a vibrant hub for creativity, collaboration, and cultural exchange that will benefit us all.

Thank you for considering this important matter.

Sincerely,

Amir Al-Azraki, PhD, (he/him)

Program Coordinator, Studies in Islamic and Arab Cultures

Associate Professor, Culture and Language Studies

Renison University College, affiliated with the University of Waterloo