

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Members of the City of Guelph Council:

As a senior professional artist, former university/art college administrator, educator, and cultural advocate, I am writing to strongly support the current proposal by the aspiring Guelph Center for Visual Art to transform the disused, former Drill Hall into a purposefully renovated center for the visual arts. This admirable grass-roots group plans to develop this currently empty building into a much-needed facility focusing primarily on the creation, related discourse, and dissemination of professional and community-oriented visual art. In my judgment, the most essential aspect of this proposal is to provide affordable and accessible individual and collective studios that would facilitate the making of serious, ambitious, and culturally diverse visual art of high standards. As well, the inclusion of meeting rooms, a modest gallery, and limited office spaces would encourage the collaborative exchange of information and equipment and would contribute to the development of a critical mass of mutually supportive visual artists and related arts professionals. Such an essential centre of creative activity would provide a public focus on the actual making of the visual arts and would acknowledge that such fundamental practices are valuable components of the social, cultural, and economic "ecology" of a balanced, humane, and healthy community. In recent decades, it has been well understood by insightful urban planners, theorists, historians, arts professionals, certain elected officials, and other informed citizens that cities that are committed to integrating the "creative arts and related industries" into their socially responsible and aesthetically sensitive environments are likely to be vital, liveable, and economically flourishing communities. Such humane and beautiful places are also likely to have a distinctive cultural identity that encourages civic pride and reinforces a sense of social responsibility among its citizens--- while attracting and sustaining a viable balance of successful and innovative businesses and services.

I urge you to give the GCVA proposal your careful attention and to recognize its merits by actively supporting it.

If you would find it useful, I would make myself available to speak with you further about this proposal.

Sincerely,

Ron Shuebrook, B.Sc. Art Ed., M.Ed. Art Ed., M.F.A., Doctor of Fine Art,(Honoris Causa)

Professor Emeritus, OCAD University