

Dear Mr Mayor and Members of City Council,

I want to register my absolute support for the Guelph Centre for Visual Arts proposal to transform the Drill Hall into a very needed Arts Centre in Guelph, and vehemently disagreement with the City Staff recommendation to Council to reject that proposal.

I am a practising visionary artist having worked most of my life in the arts. I am a member of the Guelph Studio Tour and the Guelph Arts Council. I have lived in Guelph for over 30 years and am seeing a decline in political support for the arts and culture in general.

Many artist in the city are unable to secure sustainable studio space. Presently I have a large home based studio, but will be forced to move to apartment living in the next few years at that point I will have to end working as an Artist if I cannot find space that supports my art.

The visual arts community is strong and thriving at this point, but I doubt that it will be in the coming years if steps are not taken now. A large arts center would put Guelph on the map as an arts and cultural center that supports its artist and would attract more tourism, which seems to be a focus of City Hall.

In a time when Libraries are becoming obsolete this city is investing millions in a state of the art library that is over budget and still only a hole in the ground. It is my wish that Guelph support artist who have the vision and a plan to put a useless building and piece of land to good use. <https://guelphcva.org>

I have read the Staff Report to Council and find it deficient in that it does not mention Guelph's Culture Plan 2030 adopted by Council in October 2023 which this proposal for the Drill Hall would help to implement. As Council knows (and is to be commended for), the Culture Plan 2030 articulates a long-term municipal and community strategy to stabilize and advance arts, heritage, and creative industry in Guelph.

Specific points from the Culture Plan 2030 that relate to this proposal are:

- Increase access to affordable space to create, rehearse, perform and exhibit
- Identify and build capacity for culture at municipal properties, including upgrading of amenities as required
- Identify potential new culture spaces, including performance spaces for audiences of 100 to 600 people and rehearsal, studio, and exhibition spaces, and consider public-private partnerships for development opportunities.
- **Support culture uses for the Drill Hall and Ontario Reformatory**

By failing to consider the potential of this proposal to implement the objectives of the Culture Plan 2030, staff have not presented City Council with a complete analysis. If City Council wishes to realize the objectives of its Culture Plan in the timeline contemplated by the Plan, proposals such as this one must be taken seriously and

financial resources made available. By ignoring the Culture Plan staff are treating Council's adoption of it as a meaningless exercise.

Since there is no other viable commercial use for the Drill Hall, I am strongly advocating that Council supports the Guelph Center for Visual Art and pauses to take this request into serious consideration.

Sincerely,  
Barbara McKell