



November 14, 2025

Mayor Guthrie and Members of Guelph City Council
City of Guelph, 1 Carden Street, Guelph, ON N1H 3A1

Re: 2026 Budget Impacts on Arts & Culture and Downtown Accessibility

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Members of Council,

On behalf of 10C Shared Space and our community of members, partners, and program participants, we are writing to express our concern regarding two items in the revised 2026 draft City budget – the reductions to arts and culture programming, and the introduction of 24/7 paid parking in downtown lots. Both proposed changes have negative implications for community wellbeing, civic participation, and the local economy.

Arts and Culture Impacts

The scaling back of culture-related program initiatives – including the City’s role in Doors Open Guelph, Culture Days, the Artist in Residence Program, and Movies in the Park – represents a further setback to the City’s Culture Plan 2030 and to Guelph’s longstanding reputation as a creative, connected, and caring community. The City should be increasing its investment in arts and culture, not reducing it.

Municipal arts investments have uniquely outsized positive effects on the vitality of our city. They generate employment, strengthen community belonging, and attract tourism and investment. Last year, many organizations and residents advocated successfully for the restoration of arts and culture funding aligned with Culture Plan 2030. These renewed reductions now signal a directional shift – one that risks undoing years of progress and collaboration.

10C urges council to reaffirm its commitment to a thriving arts and culture sector as a driver of social and economic development, and to reconsider the culture program budget reductions.

As one of our members shared: “We are lucky enough to have many art events across the city, and these both buoy citizens’ spirits and create community.”

Another noted: “I’m disappointed in the City for dropping arts and culture events rather than investing in them. Without municipal support, Guelph’s artistic reputation will inevitably become diluted.”

Another member shared insights around inclusion and accessibility: “People who come to us report that



they moved to Guelph because it is known as a city that is inclusive, and has a strong commitment to arts and culture. It is one of the pivotal reasons we hear for people choosing to move here. The accessibility of various free art and cultural events are what build community and keep us connected which is becoming increasingly important in our current social climate. Investment in art and culture IS an investment in growing our city!"

Downtown Parking and Access

We are also concerned by the proposed introduction of 24/7 paid parking in downtown City lots, replacing the current model that allows free parking on evenings and Sundays. This change will directly impact downtown restaurants and retail businesses, community organizations, event attendance, and evening activity – and is particularly challenging as years of major infrastructure reconstruction (e.g., Wyndham and Macdonell Streets) will reduce accessibility, foot traffic and the desire to come downtown.

10C's position is that all City-owned parking lots should remain free in the evenings and on Sundays – at least through the first two years of the downtown reconstruction phase. Accessibility, affordability, and inclusion must remain central to the City's downtown strategy.

As one of our members shared: "Revitalizing the downtown as a place to enjoy food and entertainment can be encouraged by keeping parking free during evenings and on Sundays."

Another added: "If the city is going to limit parking, then we need to invest in alternative ways of connecting to downtown."

We recognize the difficult balancing act of the municipal budget process, however, we urge Council to consider the long-term impacts of these proposed changes. We encourage you to maintain core arts and culture programming and ensure that downtown remains accessible to all.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julia Grady', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Julia Grady
Executive Director, 10C Shared Space
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