



**PHC DEPUTATION LETTER
NORTH YORK ARTS**

Christina Giannelia
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Members of the Planning and Housing Committee
City Council and Gord Perks
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen St W
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Members of the Planning and Housing Committee,

I am writing in my capacity as the Executive Director of North York Arts to offer my strong endorsement for the plans submitted to revitalize and enrich the entire Downsview area and community.

For years, I have worked as a member of the community and through my association with North York Arts to support the cause of promoting and sharing the arts in our local area. Our goal as an organization is to uplift and expand the arts in North York, creating a vibrant and inclusive community for those who create art and those who love it. As part of this effort, we work closely with local business and other organizations to create partnerships and programs that help us extend the reach and impact of our work.

It is through this work that I came to know the Northcrest and CLC teams roughly three years ago. The Downsview community has a rich cultural and artistic heritage – much of which has been sadly overlooked by too many for too long. As part of their plan to revitalize and reimagine Downsview, Northcrest launched the XOXO initiative, which sought to platform and profile works of art and programming in and around the Downsview area.

Often, these works brought much-needed attention to stories and histories that had been overlooked – including Indigenous and BIPOC peoples whose contributions have been marginalized or even outright ignored over the years. Similarly, these works profiled a more diverse range of artists than are typically offered an opportunity to seize the spotlight.

It is no exaggeration to say that the artistic initiatives in Downsview is one of the most exciting new local artistic opportunities to have been launched in the city of Toronto in recent years. And it is indicative of the grassroots, bottom-up approach that the developers have adopted toward their work in this area. Impressed by this approach I joined the Community Resources Group (CRG) to further influence and affect their plans – and during that time I have been consistently excited about the extent of their willingness to listen and act based on local input.

Further, the City staff who have supported the development plans and been present at the CRG meetings have always been eager to listen to all angles and provide as much insight and background information as possible, which is greatly appreciated and does not go unnoticed!



Hopefully, committee members will also recognize that these are not just cultural and artistic initiatives. They are also a source of economic energy to the area and to the lives of these artists. The showcase of arts and programs launched through XOXO – and related undertakings – draw people to the area and create opportunities that multiply in terms of time and money spent in North York.

For the artists, the chance to earn from their talent is of immeasurable importance – and one that sparks a measure of regional equity. No longer must talented musicians and performers and illustrators venture deep into the downtown core to have their works enjoyed and shared. No longer are art installations and poetry readings and other programming assumed to be located elsewhere across the GTA. The developers' commitments and their plans for the future help propel our efforts to make North York – and Downsview in particular – as an active, growing place for the arts.

For a city such as ours, there can be no plan to move forward that does not demonstrate a clear commitment to housing. The shared vision for Downsview will not only supply badly needed homes for many, it will remake the importance of North York as a neighbourhood, bringing thousands of new residents to the area. That will, in turn, give us huge new opportunities to boost the artistic and cultural life of North York, anchored by a dedicated ongoing partner at Downsview.

The approval of the plan for Downsview will only help to confirm, concretize and catalyze these benefits. As the cultural and economic benefits of their plans are put into place and made permanent across this exciting new imagination of what the area and the neighbourhood can be. And we can trust that these artistic and cultural benefits will be realized because we've seen evidence of that commitment already. Not in the form of pledges but in the hard currency of practice.

For the arts to flourish in North York we need partners and people. We need growth and engagement. We need a plan for the future that serves our community and the artists who help to make it special. We believe Northcrest and CLC are committed to that sort of plan and we ask the committee to please provide its approval.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Christina Giannelia'.

Christina Giannelia