



DOWNTOWN CAMBRIDGE

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA

BIA SUPPORT FOR THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE EXPANSION

To Mayor McGarry and Council,

The BIA would like to express in the strongest possible terms our support for the expansion of the University of Waterloo's School of Architecture. The vision and foresight of the Mayor and City Council of fifteen years ago as well as that of a few courageous private citizens such as Val O'Donovan, Tom Watson and John Wright, in pushing this idea forward and carefully nurturing it to fruition cannot be commended enough. We believe that the current Mayor and Council possess the same courage and foresight to once again make a significant financial and political commitment to one of the most constructive components of our downtown core. Even the largest contribution by the City is a small price to pay for the many tangible and intangible benefits that the School brings to our community.

Just when downtown Cambridge was experiencing what many other North American cities were, the hollowing out of its downtown core, caused by big box and online retail, along came the School of Architecture to replace at least some of this lost economic input. We don't know what our downtown would be like without the School, but we can be sure that it would be far worse than it is today.

Over the twelve years that the School has existed in our City it has animated our core area, brought the energy of a large, youthful and energetic student population, strengthened of an art and design community, and created an international reputation as the location of one of the best undergraduate architecture programs in the world. And these are just the intangible benefits. The students, the School, the University as well as staff, faculty, visitors and suppliers of goods and services, has contributed an average of at least \$5M per year to the local economy in each of the past twelve years. Other than City Hall itself, and the offices of the Region of Waterloo, no other entity in the core area has contributed as much direct financial input to the City.

The membership of the Downtown Cambridge BIA has benefited most significantly and directly from this windfall. Building landlords, coffee shops, grocery and drug stores, restaurants, furniture and clothing shops have all enjoyed the direct benefit of the spending of hundreds of students, visitors, faculty and staff. A significant percentage of the downtown economy is dependent on the spending generated by the School of Architecture.

An expansion to the School of Architecture promises to increase this benefit to the City and particular to the downtown economy. A larger School will bring with it the potential to further enhance the range of goods and services available in the core, increase the attractiveness of the downtown, strengthen strong businesses and help those that are struggling.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our input for this very important initiative. We hope that our voices will be heard and that Council will vote to make a significant contribution to the expansion of the School of Architecture.

The Downtown Cambridge BIA Board