



**To:** Mayor and City Council  
**From:** Brian Phillips, Assistant City Manager  
**Date:** December 18, 2020  
**Subject:** Update Regarding Small Arts Grant Program

At the December 8, 2020 City Council meeting, the City Council directed staff to provide a report outlining what the Public Art Commission is doing with the Small Arts Grant Program.

### **BACKGROUND:**

This program was first outlined at the February 11, 2020, Budget Wrap-Up Meeting. The City Council's only motion recorded in the meeting minutes relating to the program was to include funding for it in the City Budget:

“Moved by Betcher, seconded by Beatty-Hansen, to add the Small Art Grant Pilot program for \$10,000 to the FY 2019/20 Adjusted Budget.”

According to the minutes, individual Council Members did express their personal thoughts regarding the concept, but the Council as a whole provided no further specific parameters for the use of the funds:

“Mr. Schainker stated that if this passes, the money would come out of the Council Contingency Fund. Staff had carried forward \$118,000 and the Council had obligated most of that balance, but there is \$38,471 still available, and as of July 1, 2020 another \$50,000 would be added to the Fund. He noted that if the Council was unable to accomplish the Small Art Grant Pilot program for the next fiscal year then the amount could be carried forward. Council Member Beatty-Hansen mentioned that the program would meet the Council's value of making Ames fun and vibrant. Ms. Betcher stated it is designed to support individual artists as opposed to art organizations that are covered by COTA. She recommended leaving the guidelines to the Public Art Commission to decide in the future.

Council Member Gartin explained that as much as he loves the idea of the program, he thinks it is going to be difficult on principle, and felt more money should be going to Auditorium relief. He was also apprehensive about the criteria.

Roll Call Vote: 5-1. Voting Aye: Beatty-Hansen, Betcher, Junck, Corrieri, Martin. Voting Nay: Gartin. Motion declared carried.”

### **STATUS:**

The Public Art Commission (PAC) and Commission on the Arts (COTA) each designated representatives to discuss potential uses for the funds. After discussion, the leading candidate for the use of the funds is an initiative proposed by the Octagon Center for the Arts, called the Third Floor Initiative. **It is important to note that PAC has not yet made a formal recommendation to proceed and intends to bring any proposal for the use of the funds to the City Council for approval.**

The Octagon’s proposal is to convert space on the third floor of its facility, which is currently underutilized, into co-working studio spaces and private studio spaces for artists, including tools, equipment, recording space, meeting space, office equipment, and other amenities for users. A document outlining the initial proposal is attached.

### **NEXT STEPS:**

The Public Art Commission is continuing to evaluate the proposal and consider alternatives before bringing a recommendation to the City Council. This evaluation has been occurring since summer. No further action by the Council is required to proceed. However, if the City Council is not satisfied with the direction or efforts of the Public Art Commission, the City Council could direct the Public Art Commission to discontinue work on this initiative and provide different direction regarding the Council’s wishes.

*Attachment*



# BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY

## THIRD FLOOR INITIATIVE

“A community is a group of people who share things in common, who work together towards a common purpose which they care about and who care deeply about each other. Creating the conditions for such a community to emerge should be a goal of any organization.”

-- David Gurteen, writer

## Octagon Center for the Arts

427 Douglas Ave.  
Ames, IA 50010

[www.octagonarts.org](http://www.octagonarts.org)

Hard & Soft  
July 20 to Sept 17 | Third Floor  
Athletics by April Katz & Bruce  
Expanded SO | Printmaking Community

Play of a

Surface Wear  
May 11 to July 21 | Third Floor  
Athletics by April Katz & Bruce

Twenty Years  
May 25 to August 17 | Third Floor  
Athletics by April Katz & Bruce  
Expanded SO | Printmaking Community

50  
1966-2016

OCTAGON  
CENTER FOR THE ARTS

HEROIC  
INK

HEROIC  
INK  
TATTOO AND  
PIERCING

OCTAGON  
GALLERY SHOP

417

Please enter through Gallery

7&C

7&C



# WHO WE ARE

The Octagon Center for the Arts is a non-profit community art center in the heart of downtown Ames, Iowa. A cornerstone of the cultural scene in Ames since 1966, the Octagon a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization funded in part through memberships, donations, and grants, including the City of Ames Commission on the Arts (COTA) and the Iowa Arts Council.

**Communities (real communities) matter. We yearn to belong, to feel connected. We need each other to manage our everyday lives and to chase our dreams. In the face of continuing pandemic conditions and societal unrest, community is more important ever – yet, it seems more difficult to grow.**

**It is time to rethink everything, to take a good close look at “what we’ve always done”. This is a time for clarity, innovation, creativity, and inclusion. This is a time to think about what we have to offer, what we can do for our community, and, even, how we can change the world. We want to listen, build, and chase some dreams.**



Inaugural Business of Art Conference, Octagon Main Gallery, 2019



Working at the pottery wheel

## **At the Octagon, our community includes:**

- fulltime and parttime artists across Iowa and the Midwest
- those who wish to buy or to experience art
- students of all ages and skill-levels who enjoy the process of making
- folks who are passionate about the value of art and culture in a city
- our business and residential neighbors in downtown Ames.

Hard work has already begun on inclusion, diversity, and equity in our organization; it is our goal to create a “longer table”, so that all feel truly welcome at the Octagon.



# WHAT OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS

In 2018, we sent a questionnaire to a large pool of artists that applied to show their work at the Octagon over the years. Last year, we invited independent artists to the Octagon for a focus group. We asked questions, listened to ideas, and discussed what artists in Ames need to thrive. The artists in both cases (questionnaire respondents and focus group participants) were consistent on several key points:

- **Exhibit space is very important.**The artists love to show their work in the Octagon's beautiful street-level Community Gallery. Conversely, the Octagon's largest gallery (Main Gallery) is not well liked due to its overly large space, high ceilings, relatively poor lighting, and third floor location. The space feels like a rental venue, rather than a gallery. Despite the Octagon's efforts to promote it, the public is often unaware of the third floor.
- **The Octagon has the potential to impact the community by fostering emerging artists as entrepreneurs via studio space and education.** Artists emphasized the need for space to work and connect with each other and potential customers.

In the time since these conversations, Ames has lost studio space due to the closure of ISU's Design on Main. Design on Main was a gallery space and studio space for College of Design graduate students and closed for financial reasons.

The loss of Design on Main is part of a troubling pattern. Ames has lost other spaces for creative work, such as DG's, The Space, Zeke's, and La Boheme (venues for music, theater, and/or spoken word). Ames has become more dependent on the Iowa State University for cultural events and venues, but ISU is not immune to budgetary cuts. The future of CY Stephens Auditorium appears to be in question. Other arts and culture organizations are in danger with the lasting effects of the pandemic.

Yet, data tells us that arts and culture impact quality of life:

**“Arts and culture help fuel our state's economy — it's that simple. Economic impact studies have proven time and time again that there's an inextricable link between the creative industries in a community and that community's economic development, job recruitment, and tourism... National and statewide research confirms the importance of the arts to economic development and revitalization. In 2010, Gallup and the Knight Foundation found 'empirical evidence that the drivers that create emotional bonds between people and their community are consistent in virtually every city and can be reduced to just a few categories. Interestingly, the usual suspects — jobs, the economy and safety — are not among the top drivers. Rather, people consistently give higher ratings for elements that relate directly to their daily quality of life. The arts are in the top five drivers attracting people to communities.”**

(Source: <https://www.mysanantonio.com/opinion/commentary/article/The-arts-and-culture-affect-community-s-quality-4407124.php>)



# THE SOLUTION: CREATIVE PLACEMAKING



“It’s always been ‘cool’ to have a charming, vibrant downtown. Now it’s necessary. That’s because a place attracts talent and talent attracts investment. This trend has been rising for a while, but the pandemic has underscored its validity. More and more, people can work from anywhere. Increasingly they will choose where they want to live, regardless of where their employer is located—and the communities that give them what they want will be the winners.”

(Source: <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2020/5/8/why-now-is-the-time-to-get-intentional-about-placemaking>)



Creative Placemaking recognizes the value of arts and culture in creating a vibrant place where people want to live, work, and visit. In creative placemaking, diverse partners work together to reshape a place and build a real community.

(Source: <https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/ROW-Creative-Placemaking-handout.doc.pdf>)



# WHAT WE CAN OFFER



**Mission:** The Octagon Staff and Board spent a year crafting a new mission statement and strategic plan. This new plan underscores the desire to: 1) support artists, especially emerging artists; 2) engage with a more diverse and inclusive pool of artists; 3) create a space that invites and welcomes all in the Ames community.

**Programming:** We have long demonstrated a strong commitment to serving and supporting artists and, in 2018, we took it a step further. We partnered with the Ames Community Arts Council to create the Business of Art Conference. This annual conference is meant to fill a gap often found in formally trained and self-taught creatives by providing a place to learn entrepreneurial skills and connect with each other. We have also offered free workshops to assist artists in applying for exhibitions, photographing artwork, and writing artist statements.

**Space:** The Octagon third floor (Main Gallery, Sweeney Gallery, Reading Room, kitchen, bathrooms, and closets) is underutilized. The large space has not been able to contribute significant revenue to the organization. Due to building layout, the use of the third floor as gallery space has necessitated extra staff, but it has not seen high traffic. Additionally, artists do not feel their work is enhanced by showing in Main Gallery.

**How could this large space better support the work of local artists and support our mission? We envision a large co-working space, coupled with smaller private studio and artist residency spaces. With relatively minimal financial investment, we could offer artists a place to work, gather, exhibit, and grow their businesses. The space could include needed amenities such as a kitchen, a meeting room, and spaces for product photography, mat cutting, recording (for podcasting or virtual teaching), WIFI, a printer, lockers for storage, and use of specialized studios (clay studio, print studio).**

**Community Engagement Emerging Artist in Residence:** One studio would be dedicated to hosting an emerging artist who focuses on community engagement as an artist in residence. A community engagement artist in residence (CEAIR) uses the Octagon as a catalyst to enrich their personal practice by creating great art. In turn, the artist uses and shares their art with the community around them to ask questions and to foster a sense of togetherness. The Octagon would host a CEAIR for a period of six months at a time, provide the artist with the space to do their work, help the artist with promotion of their work on the Octagon platform, and provide a stipend of \$3,000.



# THE DETAILS

## Co-Working Space for Creatives (Main Gallery)

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Available for up to 6 creatives during pandemic and up to 20 creatives after the pandemic

General Fees (contracts available by semester/summer session):+

- January-May (5 months) \$150
- June-July (2 months) \$60
- August-December (5 months) \$150

Additional Fees for Use of Ceramics or Printmaking Studio:+

- January-May (5 months) \$50
- June-July (2 months) \$20
- August-December (5 months) \$50

### Amenities

- Use of Co-Working Space for "clean work" (Main Gallery)
- Cleaning area (Mop sink, utility sinks, ventilation cleaning table)
- Kitchenette (Fridge, kitchen sink, microwave, coffee maker)
- Lighting studio (Basic photography lighting equipment, tripod, backdrops, projector)\*
- Small meeting room (For client meetings, virtual meetings, phone meetings)\*
- Virtual recording space (Recording equipment, tripods)\*
- Framing area (Mat cutter, Framing stapler, extra blades, hammer, pliers, microfiber rags, glass/plexi cleaner and rags), Tools available for checkout
- Gallery pin-up space (Hallway, Small Wall Gallery)
- Art book library and loungeStorage (For tools, paper, canvasses, etc.)
- Wifi internet
- Printer
- Cleaning for the bathroom, vacuuming
- Opportunity to participate in Octagon Gallery Nights

### Access:

- Monday-Friday, 10:00am - 5:00 pm
- Open Studio Nights, Wednesday and Friday, 5:00 - 9:00 pm
- Open Studio, Sunday, 12:00 - 6:00 pm

+Fees are subject to adjustment as more data about costs are collected.

\*by reservation

# Private Studios for Creatives (Sweeney Gallery)

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Available for up to 4 individuals. One of the four studios would be dedicated to the Artist in Residence.

## General Fees (contracts available by semester/summer session):+

- January-May (5 months) \$625
- June-July (2 months) \$250
- August-December (5 months) \$625

## Additional Fees for Use of Ceramics or Printmaking Studio: +

- January-May (5 months) \$50
- June-July (2 months) \$20
- August-December (5 months) \$50

## Amenities

- Private studio space (Sweeney Gallery)
- Cleaning area (Mop sink, utility sinks, ventilation cleaning table)
- Kitchenette (Fridge, kitchen sink, microwave, coffee maker)
- Lighting studio (Basic photography lighting equipment, tripod, backdrops, projector)\*
- Small meeting room (For client meetings, virtual meetings, phone meetings)\*
- Virtual recording space (Recording equipment, tripods)\*
- Framing area (Mat cutter, Framing stapler, extra blades, hammer, pliers, microfiber rags, glass/plexi cleaner and rags), Tools available for checkout
- Gallery pin-up space (Hallway, Small Wall Gallery)
- Art book library and lounge Storage (For tools, paper, canvasses, etc.)
- Wifi internet
- Printer
- Cleaning for the bathroom, vacuuming
- Opportunity to participate in Octagon Gallery Nights

## Access:

- Personal studio, 24/7 access
- Studio Space, Monday-Friday, 10:00am - 5:00 pm
- Open Studio Nights, Wednesday and Friday, 5:00 - 9:00 pm
- Open Studio, Sunday, 12:00 - 6:00 pm

## ARTIST IN RESIDENCE -- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 6 month residencies available by application
- AIR compensation: private studio and a stipend of \$500 per month
- AIR responsibilities: community engagement activities/events as agreed upon

+Fees are subject to adjustment as more data about costs are collected.

\*by reservation

## NEEDED RENOVATION/CHANGE

## ESTIMATED COST

## ESTIMATED TIMELINE

Artist in Residence Initial Stipend  
Artist in Residence Studio Space

\$3000  
Renovation is not necessary

January 2021

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Convert current 2 small bathrooms to one accessible bathroom

\$8000

1st priority:  
Jan. - April 2021

- Plumbing, water and return pipes
- Plaster/drywall repair
- Framing
- Flooring
- New door and frame, accessible size, door hardware
- Fixtures, sanitary napkin box, toilet paper holders, grab bars, mirror, hand dryer, infant changing table
- Lighting
- False ceiling

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Renovate kitchen & create cleaning room

To be determined

2nd priority:  
May - August 2021

- Plumbing
- Framing
- Flooring
- Lighting
- 2- Utility sinks
- Mop sink
- Ventilation
- Cabinetry
- Fixtures, coffee maker

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Renovate Main Gallery to create co-working space

To be determined

3rd priority:  
Sept- Dec 2021

- Add a lockable door at the bottom of the mezzanine
- Add electrical outlets
- Update lighting
- Improve WiFi, add hardwired internet area

Renovate Sweeney Gallery to create private studios

- Add electrical outlets
- Update lighting
- Framing

If sufficient funds can be raised, renovation can be started sooner. It would be ideal to complete renovation by Aug 2021 and ready for use for the Fall semester.



## NEEDED RENOVATION/CHANGE

## ESTIMATED COST

## ESTIMATED TIMELINE

Studio Equipment Needs

To be determined

4th Priority: 2022

### Ceramics Studio

- Kiln room
  1. Ventilation
  2. Electrical work
  3. Framing, drywall (fireproofing)
- Pug machine

### Printmaking Studio

- Ink slab areas
- Ventilation area, hood
- Cabinetry
- Tables, chairs
- Rollers, Large brayers, barens
- Drying racks
- Other types of printmaking

# THE IMPACT

Sustainability: Some progress on the Third Floor Initiative can be completed almost immediately, such as hiring the community engagement artist in residence. Grants, donations, and sponsorships will be needed to finance the renovations. The stepped approach will allow us to make progress in a manageable way.

Converting the space would result in loss of rental revenue (venue rental), however, the space is not being used at this time due to COVID. By carefully adding a limited number of people to the space, we hope to add over \$2000 to the budget. In the future, the third floor co-working and private studio spaces could host up to 30 artists. The goal is to make the spaces affordable to students and other emerging artists (those who need it most) and to cover all Octagon expenses. We will need to adjust fees as we collect more data in order to keep the project financially sustainable.

Another aspect of sustainability is the ability to maintain excitement and investment in the organization. Empty rooms do not engage the public -- vibrancy comes with a busy space. We believe that the re-imagined space will reinvigorate all of our programming and increase our relevancy to the Ames community.

Our Vision for the Future: By creating this inclusive vibrant space based on the input of artists, the Octagon is poised to impact the whole downtown. More artists downtown could translate into more activity – more people in coffee shops and businesses, more people attending downtown events, and more people actively creating the downtown they want. We imagine active partnerships with other nearby cultural organizations, like the Ames History Center and the Ames Public Library; retail businesses; and residents. We imagine a lively space that draws people in, a space where people feel they belong and want to stay, a real community.



## Contact Information:

Kristen Greteman: [exhibits@octagonarts.org](mailto:exhibits@octagonarts.org)

Rhonda Scott: [info@octagonarts.org](mailto:info@octagonarts.org)

Heather Johnson: [director@octagonarts.org](mailto:director@octagonarts.org)

January 5, 2021

**TO:** Whom it may concern  
**REGARDING:** Octagon Center for the Arts Third Floor Proposal

I have been active in the arts in Ames since my return to my hometown in 1978. **Ames has a very rich creative life.** You can be in the audience OR you can be the singer, actor, musician, writer, poet, dancer, gardener, historian, artist... and more by participating in local arts organizations.

Despite this activity, it is my opinion that this busy creative life exists largely **under the radar** for most people. Activities are dispersed throughout the community in spaces wherever they can be found.

The project proposed by the Octagon would be a strong step toward bringing this creativity **to the forefront** by creating a critical mass where **energy feeds energy**. We have seen this principle work **miracles** at the ISU Research Park. With its many other attributes, Ames could *also* be known as **an arts mecca!**

**What benefit would an emerging artist co-working space on the Octagon's third floor have for the community of Ames?**

We have a clue already here in Ames at C.A.S.A. (Creative Artist Studios of Ames) where studio space for professional artists is at a premium with most spaces **continuously rented** since the enterprise was launched. Encouraging younger creatives with affordable space is a way of giving them a chance to become established and a way to keep them in Ames.

Exciting examples exist nearby in Des Moines, Omaha and Cedar Rapids from which much can be learned.

In **Des Moines**, Mainframe Studios in a repurposed building have garnered overwhelming support – to the degree that there is talk of needing an additional building. The 90 artists hosted a monthly open house (pre-Covid) that became a hotly attended event. See what they are doing at <https://mainframestudios.org>

**Omaha** also has a substantial artist studio complex, Hot Shops, in a large old factory. While they focus on glass blowing, metal foundry, metal forging and ceramics – the building houses a host of additional artists using “non-hot” materials. See them at <https://www.hotshopsartcenter.com>

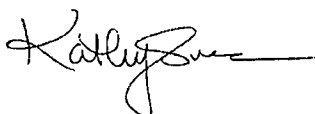
And in **Cedar Rapids**, the Cherry Building in the “New Bo” Czech Village neighborhood features a “creative environment with small businesses, non-profits and artist studios.” See what they are about at <http://www.thorlandcompany.com/commercialproperties/thecherrybuilding.html>

**The idea presented by the Octagon staff is not an unproven one.** Many cities are reaping the benefits of investing in arts facilities that have created a ripple effect of new businesses, housing and events.

I am attaching a portion of an article that appeared in the Des Moines Register on January 3, 2021. It showcased Steve Zumbach and his efforts to create stable support for arts organizations in Des Moines – all to create an enticing city that appeals to people of all ages looking for an interesting place to live. Those efforts have **truly** borne fruit!

**Please strongly consider the Octagon's request!**

Sincerely,



Kathy Svec, Ames

Artist; formerly the ISU Memorial Union's art programs manager; former member of Ames Community Arts Council Board, Ames Historical Society Board, Ames Public Art Commission, public art selection committees at ISU



**Focus on amenities is 'a game-changer'**

article  
about Steve  
Zumbach  
1/3/21

Leading the Partnership board in 2003, Zumbach urged the region to look at economic development in a new way. Economist Richard Florida had written the "Rise of the Creative Class," arguing that talented knowledge workers choose where they live based on the recreational and cultural amenities, rather than job opportunities.

Zumbach said Florida's ideas shifted the group's focus from using incentives to retain or attract businesses to building an attractive community. "If you're going to do well in a technology-driven economy, you're going to have to have a place where people want to live," he said.

The Des Moines metro lacked the ocean, mountains and mild year-round temperatures that many workers want, Zumbach said, but it did have a strong cultural and arts community. Those groups, however, were seeing their budgets being cut.

"We needed an independent source of money," Zumbach said, and economic development leaders asked local governments to agree to shift part of the existing local hotel-motel tax to provide it.

"He put together that agreement by going city by city, talking with mayors, city managers and councils about the importance of creating Bravo," said Jay Byers, CEO of the Greater Des Moines

Partnership.

Zumbach and other supporters gained local governments' approval to use \$2 of every \$7 raised through the hotel-motel tax to support regional arts and culture groups. "It's been a game-changer for us," Byers said. "Arts and culture are a huge driver in keeping and attracting talent."

"Over the last decade, we've outperformed larger metros — Kansas City, Omaha, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Chicago, Minneapolis-St. Paul — in terms of the percentage of population growth, and I think this area's strong investment in arts and culture has been a big part of that," he said.

Bravo Greater Des Moines gave arts groups a stable source of funding, said Jeff Chelesvig, CEO of Des Moines Performing Arts, the nonprofit group whose operations include the Des Moines Civic Center.

"It really allowed organizations to grow," Chelesvig said, adding that his group's funding also comes from private donations and ticket sales. Before the COVID-19 pandemic mostly stopped live events, Des Moines Performing Arts annually provided performances for 50,000 Iowa schoolchildren, among other initiatives. It still reaches 10,000 students through virtual classes and curriculum.

Zumbach said metro area city and county leaders deserve credit for investing in long-term initiatives such as Bravo when residents were asking tough questions about their ability to fill potholes and keep city street lights on.

"It took a lot of courage," he said.



To the review committee:

As founding President of Creative Artists' Studios of Ames, and as a former Board President for the Octagon, I am very aware of the needs of our community for space for artists to work and collaborate, and also of the opportunity provided by the large building that houses the Octagon Center for the Arts.

During my term as President of the Board for the Octagon Center for the Arts, I travelled around Iowa and Minnesota visiting art centers. It became obvious that the Octagon was supporting more exhibit space than any other organization with the same activity level and budget, and much more than any organization that did not have facilities for a permanent collection.

In addition, Ames is special because it has Iowa State University that provides additional opportunities to see and experience all forms of art. What the University does not provide, but the Octagon does, is opportunity for people to participate in art: taking classes, making art, building skills in art, and developing towards a career in art. One facility that provided some of what is needed has recently closed – Design on Main – creating an even greater need for co-working art space and studios.

Creative Artists' Studios of Ames (CASA) provides space for artists, and this has been very successful – it is operating at nearly 100% capacity even now 8 months into COVID19. What the Octagon proposes is something that will complement CASA's strengths, and thus not only increase the quantity of space available but also provide space that is different in what it can offer. It will serve a different demographic, with an emphasis on emerging artists in contrast with CASA's blend of early and mid-career, second career, and amateur artists of all ages.



Lee Anne Willson  
University Professor Emerita, Iowa State University  
Founding President, Creative Artists' Studios of Ames

I never truly realized how impactful and motivating it is to be part of a supportive and connected community until I met the incredibly caring, helpful, and encouraging staff at The Octagon Center for the Arts.

I'd consider myself an emerging artist whose relatively new to the Ames art community. I had my first introduction to The Octagon when I was selected to showcase in their annual art festival. It was the first time that I was participating in a show of that size. Even though it was pouring down rain, people still faithfully came out with their umbrellas to support their local artists. Many of them shared with me that it is a yearly family tradition. The connections that I made there went on to recommend and invite me to other community events in Ames and beyond.

After the murder of George Floyd left the world shocked, outraged, and in some cases fearful for themselves and their loved ones, I was left in a state of deep sadness and frustration at how so much hate for another person based on prejudice and race was continuing to divide and stir up such deep seated emotions around the world. The Octagon felt moved to reach the community, local businesses, and give local BIPOC artists a voice and outlet to heal and process current events through their "Outrage to Change" event. It connected local artists with Downtown Ames businesses where they could show their art in the shop windows. I found it comforting that the staff of the staff of The Octagon were both disturbed and were moved to action. This simple act spoke volumes as it showed me that they truly cared.

I've attended their artist meet-up meeting and their Art Walk events. I also attended their "Business of Art Conference" for the first time and learned a ton of immediately useful and practical business education from peers in our community and beyond. I met even more of their incredible staff and connected with other artists and art supporters ( i.e. Art Curators and Gallery Directors, etc.). I've had conversations about what it takes to sell my art in their store and even about other art related events and shows that I could apply to throughout the year.

It has been a year since I showcased my art in the Octagon Art Festival. I have felt so much love and support and have developed genuine relationships with several members of the Octagon staff. Without the work that they do in the community I truly believe that I would not have had the vast opportunities to experience and interact with such a rich art community and local businesses, bring in revenue to fuel my art and cover my art materials, and to learn and grow in my skillsets as an artist.

When I found out that The Octagon is looking to create co-working and private studios for creatives, I couldn't have felt more joy and elation for each of the future artists that they will guide, nurture, and help to grow and develop. I've personal seen how this type of experience comes together at Mainframe Studios in Des Moines and how it creates a truly magical environment in the community. Creative spaces breath life into communities. It gives artists a place to experiment and create among other creatives. For the community it gives individuals a place to unwind and experience art, find inspiration, and see the creative side of life. A place where artists, art supportors or enthusiasts can mix and mingle.

This year I'll be joining "The Business of Art Conference", but this time I'll be one of the speakers. It'll be another first time experience for me and I know that the staff of the Octagon will be right alongside me cheering me on and encouraging my development. I look forward to this new venture that they are looking to create and all that it will do for our community and local businesses.

Sincerely,

Juliana Jones  
Owner and Creator of Jewel Starz Light and Shadow Creations  
JewelStarz.com



Cotter/Orazem Letter:

We fully support the Octagon's renovation plan for engaging more on-site artists via individual and shared studio space.

Particularly exciting is the Artist in Residence program, which will bring the creative process "alive" for an audience. The program will invite people to move beyond viewing art to experiencing art as it unfolds. This has been one of our favorite aspects of the Octagon's Art Festival and Art Walk.

Providing recording and lighting spaces ties in well with the Octagon's emphasis on the business of the arts, especially as more commerce moves online.

We see a positive value to the community in providing a space where artists create because: it encourages interaction between artist and spectator/buyer; artists with rented space can advocate for Octagon programs in their social circles; and it can encourage more "buying local" in the post-pandemic retail environment.

Patti Cotter

Cell +1- 515-708-0212



*Smart Choice*

November 13, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great enthusiasm that I write in support of the Octagon Center for the Arts Third Floor Initiative. The organization has been a major force in the Ames community since 1966 and the impact it has on our community is positively immense. From artists of all skill levels to people like myself who simply enjoy the talents of others, the Octagon Center in downtown Ames is truly a treasure for the Ames, Story County, and beyond.

The Ames Chamber of Commerce can clearly see the positive impact. The arts, and in particular organizations like the Octagon, provide direct economic benefit to our community. From the annual festival to the numerous programs that bring people downtown the direct benefit that this organization provides is incredible.

Couple all of that with the fact that the Octagon Center for the Arts is also a catalyst for art and beautification around the community. Three unique murals have popped up around Downtown Ames in the last few months with more in the planning phases at this time. I credit the culture that the Octagon has created in our community for this sort of positive occurrence.

As I close, I hope that you will invest in the Octagon's proposal to create affordable studio spaces for artists. When we invest in our community's cultural amenities it creates such incredible vibrancy. Artists are entrepreneurs, and studio spaces serve as incubators and/or co-working spaces. More young and emerging artists may decide to remain in Ames after graduation if there is a place for them to be creative. The more artists that decide to work in downtown Ames the more opportunity to create more vibrant cultural events, exhibitions, and programming for our community, thereby increasing quality of life in Ames.

Thank you for your anticipated consideration!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Daniel A. Culhane'.

Daniel A. Culhane, CCE CEcD  
President & CEO  
Ames Chamber of Commerce

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

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October 28, 2020

Dear Commissioners,

It is with great pleasure and excitement that I write this letter of support for the Octagon Center for the Arts. Since 1966, the Octagon has demonstrated its commitment to our Ames' community and our artists. The annual Octagon Arts Festival attracts, on average, 92 artists from 11 states to showcase and sell their work. Each year, the Octagon hosts exhibitions of nationally recognized artists, as well as provides space for Ames area high school students to exhibit their artwork. The Octagon offers classes and workshops for children of all ages, as well as co-host the successful Business of Art Conference that has benefitted artists from across Iowa. In the wake of George Floyd's murder, the Octagon has demonstrated their commitment to inclusivity and social justice through their *Outrage to Change* community exhibition and programming.

It is only fitting that as the needs of our community change, our community anchors also change to meet those needs. Pre-pandemic, the Octagon spent time and effort inviting Ames' artists and creatives to share their opinions about how the Octagon can best support our community. Over and over, one need kept rising to the top – affordable studio space. Ames currently competes with both Mainframe Studios and the Fitch Building in Des Moines, both of which provide studios to several Iowa State art faculty and alum. This is a lost opportunity in our community, particularly since we have a nationally recognized College of Design on Iowa State's campus. With the closure of ISU Design on Main, downtown Ames lost the presence of graduate studios in both art and graphic design, and the energy that those students provided Ames Main Street. As it stands now, Reliable Street and CASA (Creative Artists' Studios of Ames) are the only affordable studio spaces in Ames that also provide artists with a sense of community. Both are located in west Ames, and both are nearly at capacity.

As an artist, the Community Arts Specialist for ISU Extension and Outreach, and an assistant professor of art & visual culture in the College of Design, I know firsthand the necessity and power of art for community betterment and economic development. In their 2018 financial report, the National Endowment for the Arts reported that for each dollar awarded by the NEA in direct grants to arts nonprofits leverages up to nine dollars in private and other public funds. In other words, artists create nine dollars from every one dollar they receive from a funder. That's a solid return on investment. Many communities have also created artist relocation programs to entice artists to move to their communities as they recognize the impacts that a thriving arts community has both on the local economy and also on quality of life.

By investing in the Octagon's proposal to create affordable studio spaces for Ames artists, you are also investing in our community's cultural and economic eco-system. Artists are entrepreneurs, and studio spaces serve as incubator or co-working spaces. More young and emerging artists may decide to remain in Ames after graduation. More artists may decide to work in downtown Ames, and in doing so, will create more vibrant cultural events, exhibitions, and programming for our community, thereby increasing quality of life in Ames.

Thank you for your consideration. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need anything.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Drinkwater

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