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Halifax arts non-profit likely getting \$225k to buy Gottingen Street building: 'We're under threat'

Halifax councillors supportive amidst a very difficult budget season, with a possible 10 per cent cut to arts funding



By [Jen Taplin](#)
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Cat Bluemke, artist and executive director of the Centre For Arts Tapes (CFAT), in front of 2199 Gottingen St., next to the Bus Stop Theatre in Halifax on Tuesday. CFAT is hoping to purchase and renovate the property for a permanent home for the non-profit. PHOTO BY RYAN TAPLIN /The Chronicle Herald

A Halifax arts non-profit has its eyes on a Gottingen Street fixer-upper that would be home to the city's first new media art gallery.

"I think it would be a huge win, not just for [CFAT \(Centre for Art Tapes\)](#) but also for the Halifax arts community," said [Cat Bluemke, artist and executive director of CFAT](#), in an interview Tuesday.

“We’ve seen a lot of closures or struggles with facilities in Halifax, specifically in downtown and in the north end — the pressure is on right now with the

Halifax regional council is considering a 10 per cent cut to arts funding in the next budget.

Mayor Andy Fillmore told reporters last week that the arts community is not alone in facing cuts.

“It’s every department across the board, from Discover Halifax to the Halifax Partnership to every single grant program that we have. So it’s just our financial reality,” Fillmore said. “We all need to tighten our belts.”

Added to that, in December council voted to deny a \$1.5-million arts funding request from the Turret Arts Space Society and to take back the Khyber Building on Barrington Street. Council decided in a closed-door meeting that they had concerns with the non-profit’s ability to carry out plans for redevelopment.



The Khyber Building on Barrington Street in Downtown Halifax in December 2025. PHOTO BY RYAN TAPLIN /The Chronicle Herald

'We're under threat'

On Tuesday, councillors on HRM's community planning committee voted to recommend that council approve a grant request for \$225,000 so CFAT can purchase 2199 Gottingen St.

CFAT, which has been around since 1979, is renting a space on Maitland Street. It is an artist-run charity focused on electronic media: video, audio and new media. It supports and rents equipment for all kinds of music, visual arts, gaming, film and other disciplines.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

"CFAT remains the region's only dedicated media arts production centre, a place where emerging and established artists can develop, produce, and present new work that reflects diverse perspectives and under-represented stories," staff wrote in their report.

The owner, a numbered company that bought the building in 2016, has agreed to sell it to CFAT below market price so the purchase and closing costs are

Add to that two phases of renovations and all the other associated costs, and the budget for the project is \$1.93 million.

“We’re under threat, and as renters, like anybody else in this city who’s been forced to deal with rising costs of living, everything is getting more expensive,” Bluemke said, adding that they’ve been actively pursuing a permanent home since 2019.

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Cat Bluemke, artist and executive director of the Centre For Art Tapes (CFAT), poses for a photo as Jacob Szutka works in the tape transfer lab at the non-profit's space on Maynard Street in Halifax on Tuesday. CFAT is hoping to purchase and renovate a property on Gottingen Street for

“Arts and culture is such a huge industry in Halifax, a very lucrative industry for tourism as well,” Bluemke said. “People move here as students or as young people for the culture and (it’s at) risk without supporting the longevity of places like Centre for Art Tapes, spaces where, like, art and culture is actively being produced and a space where people can come and appreciate it in a low-barrier form.”

Low-hanging fruit

Halifax is deep into very tough budget discussions where councillors have been working to find ways to bring down the projected 10.9 per cent increase to property tax bills. Coun. Patty Cuttell (Spryfield – Sambro Loop) said that despite this she’s supportive in the face of declining arts spaces in the city.

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“Our vibrant arts community is one of those things that I feel is very cherished and lends to our unique identity.”

Supporting CFAT is also about economic development, Cuttell said, as the film industry is important. CFAT has a lot of specialized equipment and is the only tape transfer studio east of Montreal.

Cuttell called it a modest ask and said that CFAT has a sustainable, proven financial model.

Staff pointed out that since they knew this request was coming, money was set aside and approved in the current budget. This would not be new money.

Coun. Jean St-Amand (Bedford – Wentworth) called it low-hanging fruit, and it would give CFAT stability it doesn’t have in the rental market.

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