

## Frank & Steve Voisin: Carving the Next Chapter

Written by Cory Bluhm | Photography by Joe Martz



It was sitting right there, under everyone's noses - the stunning back half of the former Goudies department store. Most people passed by without noticing it, hidden behind a wall of grey stucco. Numerous developers looked at it, but they too didn't see the beauty. It wasn't until brothers Frank and Steve Voisin walked through it that 8 Queen found a new purpose.

"The moment we saw the towering ceilings, wood floors, expansive floor plates and exposed beams," explains Steve, "we knew how great this space could be."

With a growing start-up scene and a shrinking supply of A-class, loft office space, the Voisins saw an opportunity to write the next chapter in downtown's renaissance. One of the more remarkable design features will be the third floor with its fusion of old and new. A soaring brick and beam space at the back of the building will flow into the new, glass encased addition. Shipping containers were craned in and will be used to form the walls of meeting rooms.

"There are plenty of cities with beautiful, vacant, old buildings," Frank says, "but Kitchener's startup ecosystem is what makes a project like this possible. The two have to coexist together at the same time."

In this case, the building will become the new home for Vidyard and its continually expanding workforce.

But what really excites Frank is the new glass entrance off of Goudie's Lane, and a potential restaurant use at the rear. Long considered "no-go" zones, downtown's back alleys are becoming opportunities for festivals and street parties. EightQueen will push this boundary even further by drawing building users to the laneway, which happens to be surrounded by unique architectural character rarely experienced by the general public.

"We wanted to show leadership in our design thinking," explains Frank, "we feel being the first to invigorate a laneway with day-to-day activity is one of our contributions to the evolution of downtown. We hope it motivates other building owners and architects to rethink and reframe how they might leverage the charm of these laneways."

Even with such a progressive view to the future, the cultural importance of the building is not lost on the Voisins.

"So many community members have shared their personal memories of Goudies department store with us," says Steve, "we know we need to find a progressive way to showcase these stories."



The front of the old boiler and former vault door are just two of the features that will be incorporated into the final design of the space.

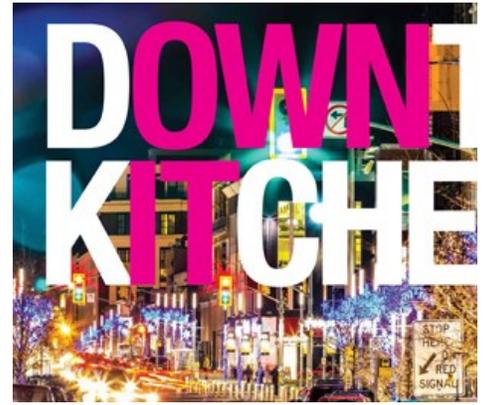
Respecting the design intentions of the previous owners was critical to maintaining the right ethos inside the building.

"From what we can decipher," Steve explains, "A.R. Goudie took a forward thinking, out-of-the-box approach to his original design. We're confident that the work we're doing now will continue this tradition."

**Did you know?**

In 1935, Goudies Department Store was the largest of its kind outside of Toronto and Ottawa, at 55,000 square feet. It was famous for its homemade sticky buns.

The building's previous owner, Bramante Studio, is a world-leading design studio for liturgical art, having adorned over 5,000 churches and institutions worldwide.



[want more?](#) Check out Issue #1 from the Fall of 2014 

[VoisinCapital.com](http://VoisinCapital.com) | [@FrankVoisin](https://twitter.com/FrankVoisin) | [8queen.com](http://8queen.com)

## 8 Queen Being Transformed:





---

If you need this information or any document contained on this page provided in another format, please contact our Corporate Contact Centre for assistance at 519-741-2345. Visit [kitchener.ca/support](https://www.kitchener.ca/support) to learn more about alternate formats and how they can be made available to you under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

© 2016 City of Kitchener