

Kitchener set to sell former Legion building for \$1.5 million

News Aug 04, 2017 by [Terry Pender \(/waterlooregion-author/terry-pender/f226a93d-8174-4742-88f1-756aeb58b351/\)](/waterlooregion-author/terry-pender/f226a93d-8174-4742-88f1-756aeb58b351/) [_ \(mailto:tpender@therecord.com\)](mailto:tpender@therecord.com) Waterloo Region Record



The City of Kitchener is recommending that the former Legion building at 48 Ontario St. N. be sold to a local developer for \$1.5 million. - Mathew McCarthy, Record staff file photo

KITCHENER — City councilors will vote next Friday on a staff recommendation to sell the former Legion building in downtown Kitchener to Voisin Capital Inc. for \$1.5 million.

"I don't want to get into what the meat of the proposal is until it has been ratified," Frank Voisin, president of the Kitchener-based development company, said Friday.

"It has been a long process, and I am thrilled that staff selected Voisin Capital's bid, is recommending it to council, and I look forward to the vote next Friday," he said.

City staff received five proposals from companies interested in redeveloping the heritage building at 48 Ontario St. N. by the submission deadline of April 3.

The building was constructed in 1923 by the Bell Telephone Co. Later, the Royal Canadian Legion had a branch there. And later still, it was the first place blues impresario Glenn Smith staged shows by legendary blues artists. It is known as the birthplace of the Kitchener's blues scene.

The City of Kitchener bought the building in July 2001 for \$425,000. At the time the city was assembling several properties on that block.

"It is a restoration of the existing building, and an intensification of the site that is multi-use," said Voisin of his plans for the property. "I think it is something the city and the downtown community will be proud of."

Voisin is a local developer who likes restoring and reusing old buildings. He restored 8 Queen St. N., which was part of the former Goudies Department Store and is now home to Vidyard, one of Kitchener's highest profile startups.

In the spring, he bought part of heritage property at 45 King St. W. that houses The Berlin restaurant.

Voisin also is one of the partners in the massive redevelopment of a former tire warehouse on Glasgow Street where a tech accelerator for hardware startups and companies will soon open. He also is the restoration of the Metal Works building in the Guelph.

"These are the kind of projects that I live for. So I am excited to be doing another one in downtown Kitchener," said Voisin. "All the details will come out next week, but I am thrilled to be doing this project."

Coun. Sarah Marsh, who represents that part of the downtown, said she supports the staff recommendation to sell the building and land to Voisin Capital.

"I want to see that building have new life breathed into it," said Marsh. "We had a couple of strong proposals, but through our council approved rating criteria it was the strongest."

The city's selection criteria included retaining the heritage features of the building, adding jobs and enhancing downtown vitality.

"A building permit must be obtained for the proposed development within 12 months after the agreement of purchase and sale is executed," says a city staff report. "The proposals were reviewed by the evaluation committee consisting of staff from economic development, planning, financial planning and supply services, who concur with the recommendation."

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