



The exterior of The Imperial in downtown New Hamburg has been refreshed, but maintains a similar grandeur as it once had. **RIGHT:** The 144-year-old building has lots of history and lots of stories. **OPPOSITE:** Tall windows are a feature in many of the suites. Kathie Jordan Design created and installed sheer curtains to accent the beautiful windows and let it in lots of light.

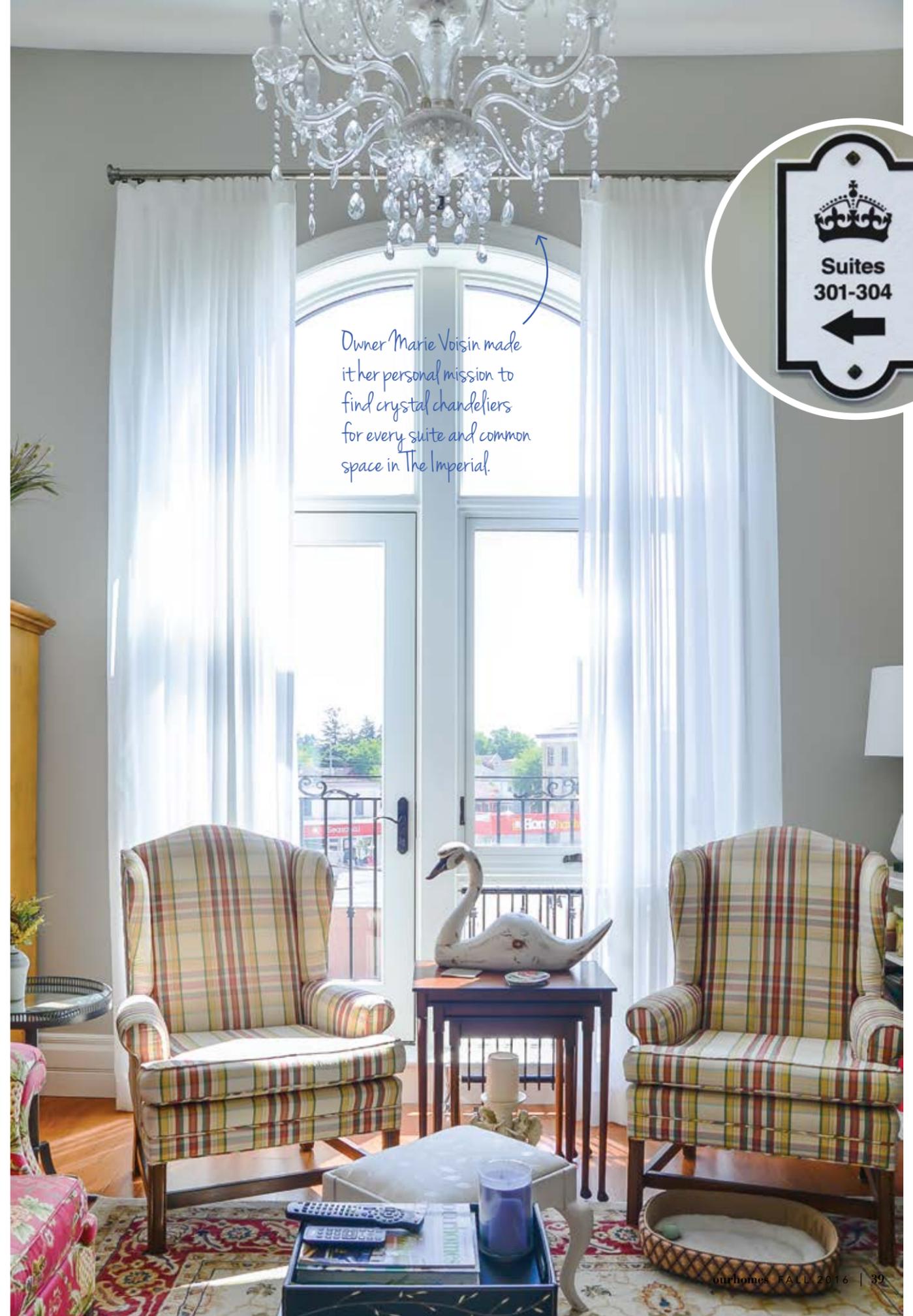
Walking into **The Imperial** in downtown New Hamburg, where flags wave proudly above the ornate marquee, it's hard to imagine this building was recently in complete disarray. Every surface, inside and out, has been cleaned, replaced or freshly painted and now the building is home to luxury apartments. It looks to be brand new, but is actually a building steeped in history.

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# Regal RESIDENCE

STORY **ADRIENNE BROWN**  
PHOTOGRAPHY **TARA WEST**



Owner Marie Voisin made it her personal mission to find crystal chandeliers for every suite and common space in The Imperial.





Many local artists have contributed paintings to line the halls.



Look up! Every light fixture in the building is unique and was hand-picked by Marie Voisin or Kathie Jordan.

First built in 1872, The Imperial Hotel was a two-storey yellow brick structure with an attached livery. By 1902, the hotel was on its sixth owner, who added a third floor to the hotel and, later, an addition to the rear of the first floor.

However, the third floor was not used for very long: prohibition in 1919 took a severe toll on the hotel industry and the top floor of The Imperial was closed off – it never had indoor plumbing or central heating installed.

Kathie Jordan picked beautiful fabrics for the antique furniture in the lobby.



Similarly, the second floor was used less often as time went on. Eventually, only the owners lived there until the late 1980s. Since 1990, no tenants have lived in the building at all. Only the tavern on the first floor was operational.

Until recently.

In May 2014, **Marie Voisin** purchased The Imperial Hotel and became its seventeenth owner. A history buff, Voisin had been writing a book about historical buildings in New Hamburg. She had planned on visiting The Imperial to simply talk with its owners, tell them what was original and talk to them about its history. She stayed for hours.

“I left the building and I thought, ‘this would be a perfect place for seniors apartments,’” says Voisin. Through her historical research, she had met so many seniors in too-big houses with too much maintenance who didn’t have many options for downsizing in downtown New Hamburg. She had been looking for a spot to create apartments central to grocery shopping, restaurants, hair stylists, banks, the library, the post office and more.

She knew right away The Imperial was the right fit. She went home immediately and told her husband she was going to buy it. “I could see the final product,” she says. On the more practical side, her engineer husband could see all the steps it would take to get there. *Continued on page 43*

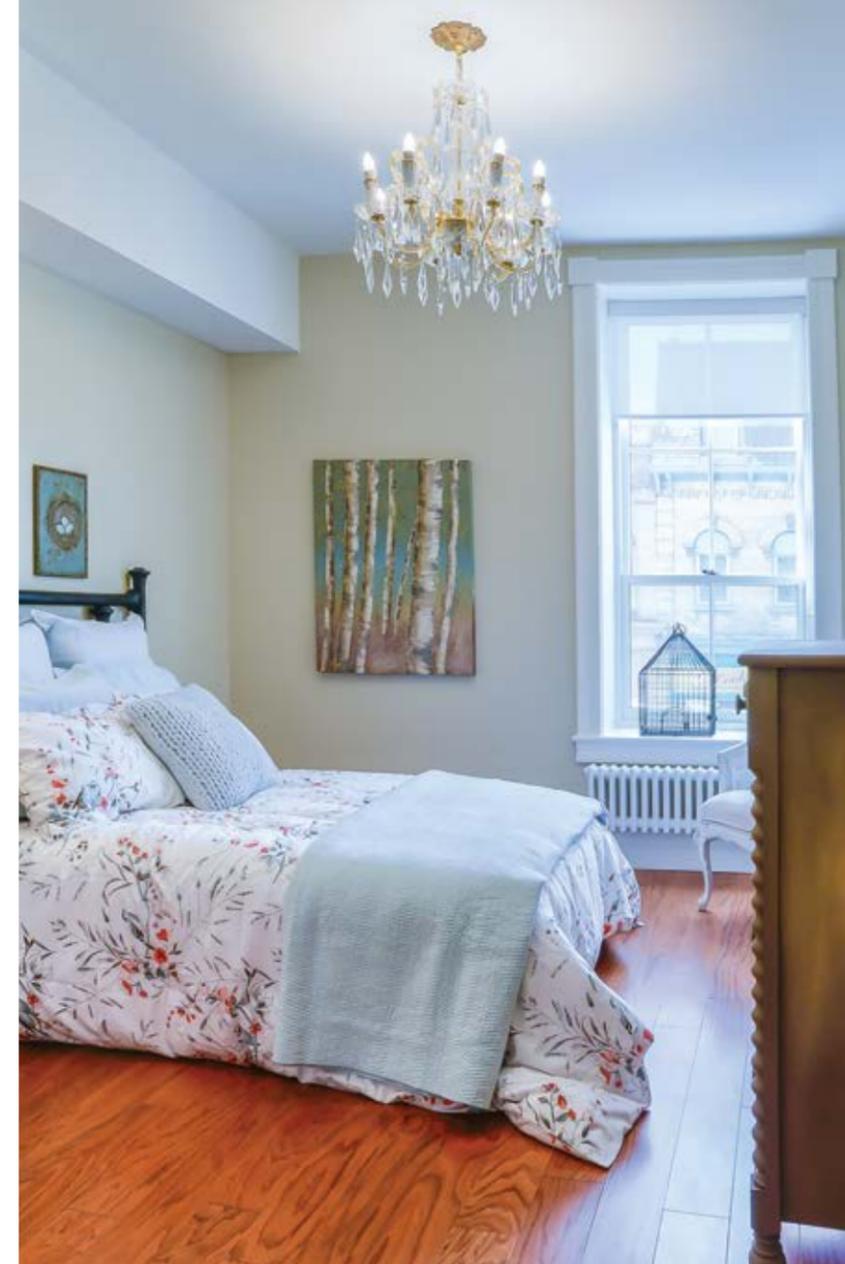
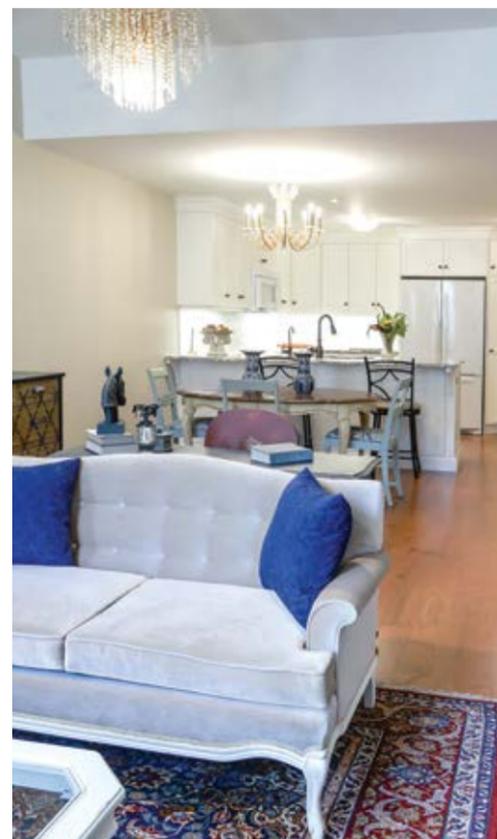
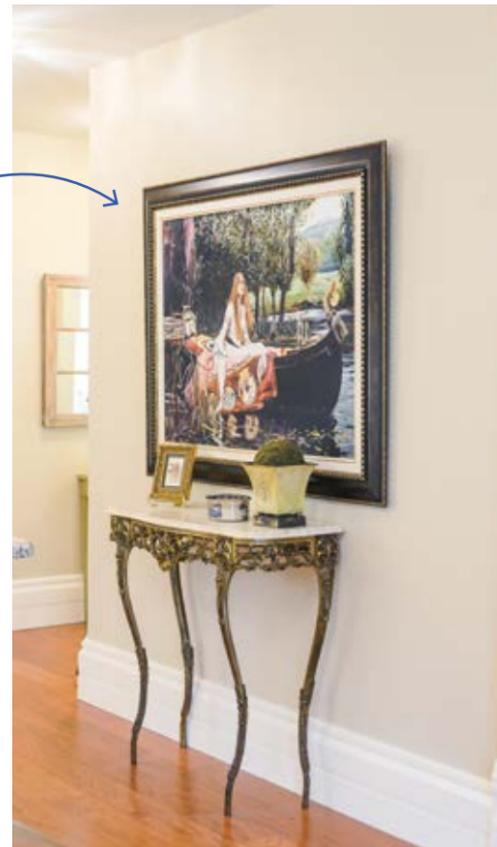


**LEFT:** The living space in a suite decorated by Kathie Jordan and her team. **ABOVE:** One of Jordan’s most recent painted pieces works well in the staged suite, which is still available. **OPPOSITE, TOP:** Voisin sourced ornate antique furniture, such as this piece in the lobby, from far and wide. **BOTTOM:** Kathie Jordan, owner of Kathie Jordan Design, and Marie Voisin, new owner of The Imperial, sit down to chat in the building’s refreshed lobby.



This painting by Mackenzie Jordan, Kathie's son, is just one of his pieces visitors might find.

A bright white kitchen in this particular suite is open to the dining and living spaces. **TOP RIGHT:** Just inside the foyer, Jordan added a small table. Behind this wall is the suite's laundry room. **RIGHT:** Upholstered and painted sofas suit the style and vibe.



**LEFT:** Tall ceilings and windows make this bedroom feel extra large and spacious. **BELOW:** The building may be old, but the fixtures and finishes are all brand new, including in this bathroom. **BOTTOM:** Kathie Jordan's charming décor style continues throughout this whole suite.



First, they had to take everything down to the shell and look at the basic structure. "It's amazing the hotel was still standing," says Voisin. It took about a year to build up the structure and make it sound again.

On the exterior, several layers of paint were removed from the original bricks and **Empire Restoration** helped bring the facade back to its original beauty. Over 10,000 bricks were replaced and all of them were repointed. Original wood windowsills were replaced with limestone and **Bavarian Window Works** installed new, high-quality aluminum-clad windows.

Once the bones were finished last April, Voisin was able to start work on finishing the building. In terms of the style, Voisin knew she was after an Edwardian feel – style inspired by

the hotel's heyday at the turn of the century.

Inside, the lobby is a replica of the original 1872 hotel lobby and Voisin has hunted across the world – literally – for furniture, lighting and accessories that fit her vision. She travelled to Buenos Aires to collect an ornate carved mantel for the common room and day-tripped around Ontario picking up 69 crystal chandeliers from a wide variety of sellers. The hallways are lined with artwork Voisin commissioned from a long list of local artists, all created to suit the building's style and tone.

Now, the decrepit spaces and tiny hotel rooms from the second and third floors are gone. They have been transformed into 12 luxury, one-bedroom apartments, seven of which are already occupied. They all feature wood floors, high ceilings, crystal

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chandeliers, large windows and original trim, and every floor plan is slightly different. Granite countertops for all of the kitchens and bathrooms were purchased through **Stonex Granite and Quartz** in Cambridge. Suites range from 730 to 1,029 square feet, although common spaces both indoors and out add to available living areas. There is a lounge and library as well as an outdoor terrace where residents can socialize, mingle and move around at their leisure.

For help, Voisin called **Kathie Jordan** from **Kathie Jordan Design**, just around the corner. The pair had worked together in the past to decorate Voisin's own home and they knew they worked really well together. Jordan has helped Voisin find antiques to fill common areas of The Imperial. She also staged one whole unit with painted furniture and accents to help potential residents envision how the space could be laid out.

Jordan could not be more impressed with The Imperial's transformation. "It's like a whole new building from the inside," says Jordan. "It's such a gift to New Hamburg to have this."

It's not just a gift for the lucky seniors who call it home: the ground-floor level of The Imperial is home to a bakery, a travel agency, a nano brewery and a space that's ready and waiting for a restaurant or bar.

It took many years, but The Imperial has been restored to its original glory. **OH**



**ABOVE:** There is a seating area at the elevator on every floor. Each wall is decorated with wood pulled right from the building itself. **RIGHT:** Residents have free use of this terrace, as well as a common room inside featuring a large fireplace and library.



*Voisin put her special touch on every detail, including this sign for the building's waste room.*

### SOURCE GUIDE

- A-1 Flags Inc.
- Bavarian Window Works
- Brody Enterprises Inc.
- Chervin Kitchen & Bath
- Conestogo Mechanical Inc.
- Delta Elevator Co. Ltd.
- Don's Upholstery Ltd.
- Electricomm Services
- Empire Restoration
- Foiled Again Stained Glass Studio
- H. A. Madill Drywalling
- Kathie Jordan Design
- Knell's
- Marion Hesse
- Stonex Granite & Quartz
- T.A. Appliances & Barbecues
- The Art Guy
- The Woodburner Leisure Living Centre
- Treen Graphics Inc.
- unLOCKEd Company



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