

## Enterprise

Gallery's new location  
completes the picture

By Rose Simone, Record staff

## KITCHENER

After nearly a decade of work and waiting, Gallery on the Grand is finally where it belongs and shaping up to become what owners Alison and David Burkett have dreamed it could be.

The 4,500-square-foot building housing their private art business opened this week at 580 Lancaster St. W., Kitchener, near Golf's Steak House in the Bridgeport area.

The Burketts bought the property in 1999 for their dream of starting a gallery-- one similar to galleries they saw in the world's great cities as they travelled in their careers as business consultants. But not long after they purchased the site, the technology bubble burst and the economy hit a stumbling block.

"By May 2001, I started to get nervous. The economy was not looking good. I suggested we hold off on building and start the gallery in a leased space instead," Alison Burkett recalls.

Her intuition was right. After they started the business, in leased space off King Street North near Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States resulted in even more economic turmoil.

So the Lancaster Street project was put on hold and for six years customers wondered why the business was called Gallery on the Grand when it wasn't even close to the river.

Last year, the Burketts -- she's 57 and he's 60 -- decided it was time to act, especially since the Region of Waterloo was moving ahead with repairs to the Bridge Street bridge over the Grand and plans for a roundabout near their site.

They still had a problem, however. Their property, which backs on to the river, was larger than they needed. And they couldn't easily sever a lot at the back because the only driveway access was at the front.

Their realtor, Dietmar Sommerfeld of CB Richard Ellis, suggested they partner with another business to create a vacant land condominium corporation. As it turned out, that was also a perfect arrangement for Enermodal Engineering,

a Kitchener-based engineering consulting firm that specializes in energy-friendly buildings. Enermodal wanted to build a "green" office building for its Kitchener staff and the riverfront was ideal. Under the agreement, Enermodal and Gallery on the Grand own their own buildings, but share landscaping features, a driveway, and fees for snow removal and other maintenance.

"It allows the two companies to each retain ownership of their buildings, but be part of a campus complex for the lot," David Burkett says.

Proceeds from the deal helped the Burketts build their gallery. The 3,200 square feet of floor space on the ground level holds the gallery and a workshop for framing art. The upper level holds an apartment that the Burketts will move into later this year.

"Our children are gone now and I was ready to downsize so we built the apartment," Alison Burkett says.

The gallery entrance has a 23-foot high ceiling, perfect for displaying large pieces of art. And the gallery itself has natural light from floor-to-ceiling windows. There is also a small courtyard, providing an interesting rental space for functions such as wine and cheese parties.

The old gallery in Waterloo closed around Christmas when the lease expired. But while waiting for the new gallery to be ready, the Burketts carried on their business in online art sales and corporate art rentals, as well as their consulting work.

Now that the new gallery is open, they are also displaying and selling works by a wide range of Canadian and international artists. It has been worth the wait.

"At this point, we have an established business," Alison Burkett says.

"It will enhance our business and our lifestyle to be by the river," she adds. "Art works well with good architecture and I think it works well with water."

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RECORD STAFF

Gallery on the Grand owners David and Alison Burkett have just moved their art business to 580 Lancaster St. W., Kitchener. They have two employees.