

ROADMAP 2021 HIGHLIGHTS 2017 - mid 2018

A Strategic Economic Plan for the City of St. John's



October 2018

INTRODUCTION

Roadmap 2021 is a long-term vision and action plan to guide the City of St. John's economic development. It articulates a bold vision, sets guiding principles, identifies strategic goals and outlines a series of priority actions to be undertaken by the City of St. John's and its various partners.

Roadmap 2021 is about embracing new directions, leveraging opportunities, building partnerships, developing linkages and taking new approaches to support the advancement of Newfoundland and Labrador's capital city. You can access [Roadmap 2021 on our website](#).



Moving Forward

Implementation of Roadmap 2021 continues and annual reports highlight activities and accomplishments. In 2015, as recommended in the Roadmap, a review was undertaken that resulted in additions to the plan, and reinforced the relevancy of the existing goals and actions. Read the [Year Three Review on our website](#).

In this publication you can learn about what has been accomplished since then as we describe the highlights from 2017 to mid-2018. Progress continues and there is still plenty to accomplish.

Roadmap 2021 set a ten-year direction for economic development in the City of St. John's, however we have chosen to embark on developing a new plan before the ten-year end date as many internal and external changes have occurred. The economic landscape, the rapid pace of adjustment, and other external factors have changed dramatically since the development of the initial plan.

Internally, new City Council leadership and City reorganization precipitated the need to revisit the plan. Externally, while the downturn in the oil industry, associated impacts, and a climate of fiscal restraint have negatively impacted the local economy, new opportunities such as the Ocean Supercluster and a growing startup entrepreneurial community offer growth potential. Given all these factors, the time is now for a renewed economic plan for the City of St. John's.

Economic Snapshot

From the launch of the Roadmap in December 2011 to about 2014, the St. John's economy performed exceptionally well. Large natural resource projects brought employment to the city, and significant investments were made by the private sector in office, hotel and retail developments. The unemployment rate decreased to its lowest level in at least 40 years hovering around six per cent and was one of the lowest metro rates of any Canadian city. The rate of economic activity surpassed annual forecasts in areas of housing starts and population growth.

Economic Indicators St. John's CMA			
	2011	2014	2017
Unemployment Rate	6.6%	6.0%	8.4%
Average Weekly Earnings	\$860	\$1,003	\$991
Retail Sales (\$M)	3,458	4,028	4,047
Housing Starts	1923	1230	763
Office Vacancy Rates	4.1%	4.6%	19.8%
Source: City of St. John's State of the Economy			

However, since 2014, the economy has contracted. Housing starts have decreased significantly, and the unemployment rate has increased, now among the highest of Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) in Canada. In 2016 household income exhibited the lowest rate of growth in nearly twenty years, and industrial and office vacancy rates have seen large increases. Overall economic activity is expected to remain subdued as several economic indicators are expected to remain weak. As major projects move to completion, capital investment is expected to decline.

VISION

St. John's is a vibrant city capitalizing on its energy, creativity and distinctiveness to embrace economic progress and enhance quality of life.

GOAL 1: A LOCATION OF CHOICE FOR BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT

Improving city processes, business relations, and research and information help create an environment that enables business to grow, diversify and flourish in a city that recognizes business and investment activity bring employment, opportunities and innovation.



DIALOGUE IN DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES

Downtown is the heart of the city and for centuries the downtown core has been the commercial heart of St. John's. To identify the reasons for businesses either moving into, out of, or within the downtown area, a survey was developed and implemented in 2017 and early 2018. The City along with stakeholders continue to deploy the survey and analyze results to address programs and policies.

IMPROVING CITY PROCESSES

Enhanced efficiencies and effectiveness can improve City processes, thus improving how we can provide services to citizens. The City has embarked on a Continuous Improvement program to enhance overall performance and make processes better.

One initiative is resulting in reduced turnaround time for permit approvals, which benefits builders, developers, homeowners and suppliers. Another project is improving the flow at the Robin Hood Bay Residential Drop-off Facility to better serve users. These are just a couple of the ways we can better serve citizens and businesses.

LAND INVENTORY

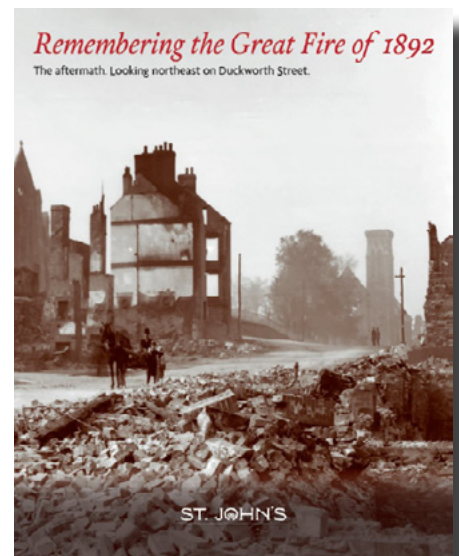
The City is working through a process of identifying potential parcels of vacant land which may have potential for in-fill housing. As the process of identifying lands and their ownership is quite involved, the City will be undertaking title searching to clarify land ownership.

SPACE ANIMATION

As a public art component of the 125th anniversary of the Great Fire of 1892, the City restored and enlarged archival photos of areas affected by the fire to display them in the street level windows of downtown properties. Photos were installed at 294 Water Street (former Canary Cycle location) and 348 Water Street (City of St. John's Visitor Centre). The City partnered with Downtown St. John's and Destination St. John's on this window animation project.

INVEST ATLANTIC

Business startups are important to our City. Invest Atlantic, a preeminent event in Atlantic Canada, brings together promising startups, entrepreneurs and private investors, and was held in St. John's in September 2017. Hosted by Memorial University's Genesis Centre, the conference showcased the great things happening in the local entrepreneurial landscape and highlighted local startups. St. John's City Manager, Kevin Breen, facilitated the session *Developing Entrepreneurial Communities* about how to better engage various stakeholders in fostering aspiring entrepreneurs and creating a St. John's startup ecosystem.



PITCH & PICK AT CITY HALL

Continuing to build on the momentum from the Invest Atlantic conference, the City was pleased to partner with the Genesis Centre to host Pitch & Pick, their mainstay event, in November 2017. Some of the strongest entrepreneurs who completed an eight-week intensive workshop at the Genesis Centre pitched their business idea to a room full of representatives from business, public and private funding agencies, and the local tech scene. The winning startup was HouseRef, and second and third places went to Peachy and Polyamyna Nanotech respectively. Hosting this Pitch & Pick competition was the perfect way to conclude Global Entrepreneurship Week in the City and an example of how vibrant the entrepreneurial ecosystem is in St. John's.



UPDATE!

Polyamyna Nanotech Inc. has been accepted into Genesis Enterprise program, received funding from the National Research Council's Industrial Research Assistance Program, and been awarded an Embryo grant by Hacking Health of NL and the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Technology Industries (NATI) for the development of healthcare innovations.

GOAL 2: A MAGNETIC AND DESIRABLE CITY FOR NEWCOMERS AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Fostering a vibrant community furthers our aim to nurture youth and young professionals, embrace diversity and promote St. John's as an ideal city in which to live and work. A qualified workforce is an essential ingredient for economic development and innovation.



REFUGEES PHOTO EXHIBIT

The City of St. John's strives to be a welcoming and inclusive city to newcomers and values the role of the multicultural community. In partnership with the Association for New Canadians (ANC), a photo exhibit marked World Refugee Day June 20, 2017. It showcased the work of young adult refugees living in St. John's and the exhibit, titled 'Home is Where the Heart Feels', was meaningful to the participants who were provided the opportunity to tell their story through photographs.

"I had a good time getting together with other young adults and learning about photography," said Hassan, photographer and client of ANC. "I had so much fun and learned a lot from Bojan, Jae, Meghan and Sarah. They gave us a lot. I became more confident to ask people if I could take their picture. This photography project helped me get out and get to know my city."

MULTICULTURALISM WEEK

Through the St. John's Local Immigration Partnership (LIP), the City partnered with several organizations to celebrate the cultural diversity present in our city during Multiculturalism Week, March 14-18, 2018. Activities included a Multiculturalism Week Reception at City Hall; the launch of the 'Tales from Afar' storytelling project with the Heritage Foundation of NL; photo exhibits; an Outdoor Family Fun Day at Bowring Park; afterschool activities in the City's youth programs; and a 'Welcome to my St. John's' video in partnership with Project Kindness.



CONTACT US

MY NEW ST. JOHN'S

My New St. John's is a newly launched online interactive service map that was developed by the St. John's LIP, with the support from the City of St. John's, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the Department of Advanced Education and Skills. This online services map is designed to help newcomers easily find and access existing programs and services in the city, and to facilitate successful settlement and integration by making it easier to navigate the range of programs and services available to them in several essential areas including healthcare, language training, housing, employment, recreation and others.

COMMUNITY MARKET OPENS

On July 21, 2018 the new St. John's Community Market opened its doors marking the completion of a key Roadmap initiative. This event culminated several years of work by the City and public and private sector partners in bringing together the vision of a community market. Venues that contribute to the vibrancy of a city and create spaces where people can gather are key to a multicultural community. Managed and operated by the **St. John's Farmers' Market**, it will offer weekly farmers' markets and community space to support community development, multiculturalism and foster entrepreneurship.

SMART CITIES CHALLENGE

Infrastructure and programming that support an active healthy lifestyle for residents fosters community attractiveness. In 2018 the City of St. John's and Happy City St. John's collaboratively entered the Canadian Smart Cities Challenge, an initiative of the federal government to encourage communities to seek smart, transformative solutions to big problems. The application focused on becoming a city of residents who, with the application of technologies, can better embrace and celebrate an active and healthy lifestyle, specifically through the development of a modern, Integrated Mobility Network. Although the proposal did not make it to the next step of the challenge, the collaboration and learning from this process will help inform future partnerships and opportunities.



GOAL 3: A GLOBAL LEADER IN OCEAN TECHNOLOGY AND A GLOBAL CENTRE FOR OFFSHORE ENERGY EXPERTISE

To promote and solidify St. John's position as a leader in ocean technology and as a centre for offshore energy expertise, niche opportunities have been pursued and local efforts supported.



CANADA'S OCEAN SUPERCLUSTER

After a Canada-wide competition to develop technology superclusters, public, private, education and research partners were successful in securing Canada's Ocean Supercluster in our region. This is a significant achievement for advancing the important ocean technology sector in the city and province and will help solidify St. John's as a leader in ocean technology.

The cluster will strengthen links among members to foster innovation and build capacity to address global challenges. This will result in additional economic activity by creating new opportunities for firms, employment growth, and increased investment in research and development.

OCEAN TECHNOLOGY SPEAKER SERIES

In cooperation with OceansAdvance, the City co-hosted an Ocean Technology Speaker Series, a networking event and information forum that encourages collaboration and business development. Murray Bainbridge of Scottish Development International provided an overview of how that organization can assist Canadian companies in the Scottish market.



GOAL 4: A DESTINATION OF CHOICE FOR PEOPLE SEEKING AUTHENTIC VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Tourism is an export industry that makes an important contribution to the local economy and offers visitors an intriguing blend of history, culture and natural experiences. In 2016, tourism expenditures in the province by both residents and non-residents totalled \$1.13 billion. Our aim is to ensure that St. John's has the infrastructure, amenities and products necessary to enhance the visitor experience and support the continued development of tourism.



WELCOME TO ST. JOHN'S

The City of St. John's Visitor Centre is located downtown at 348 Water Street. Visitor Centres are often a first stop for tourists, provide value-added service and a first impression that sets the tone for the visitor's experience. Housed in the same location as the City's Business Information Centre and the St. John's Local Immigration Partnership, the services offered there have recently been rebranded as a Welcome Centre. Along with the rebranding the space has undergone minor remodeling to be more visible and attractive, with the overall goal that the Welcome Centre become a well-known resource for visitors, newcomer residents, and businesses in St. John's.

LINKING VISITORS TO ATTRACTIONS

Transportation is a key element of tourism infrastructure. Launched for the 2018 season, the Link transportation service connects downtown, Signal Hill and newly added Quidi Vidi Village with stops at numerous attractions and hotels within the service area. Through an expanded private-public partnership, tourism stakeholders have been able to expand the hop-on, hop-off transit route formerly known as The Trolley Line. Enhancements offer extended service hours and more destinations to provide users with more options to visit the many attractions.



DOWNTOWN: A KEY ATTRACTION

Downtown is synonymous with the St. John's tourism product and is an iconic attraction for the region. The St. John's/North East Avalon Destination Development Plan (NEADDP) identifies the city of St. John's as an anchor tourism destination for the region and province and reinforces the importance of the downtown, with its many attractions and amenities at the core of a Northeast Avalon visitor experience. The NEADDP is a comprehensive product plan and involved tourism stakeholders and all levels of government in identifying the need to develop and enhance the downtown as a key tourism asset, reinforcing actions outlined in Roadmap 2021.

#LOVEDOWNTOWN

Downtown St. John's, in partnership with the City of St. John's, developed a 'Love Downtown Celebration'. This 2018 campaign involves many stakeholders in the downtown community that led to the creation of an event-focused website and promotional campaign to share all the exciting things happening downtown.



SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS AND HISTORIC COMMEMORATIONS

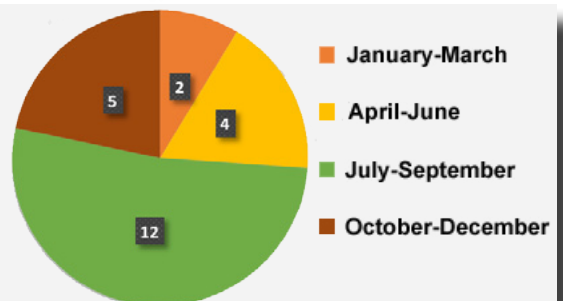
Canada 150 was celebrated in 2017 and St. John's was pleased to enhance the Canada Day festivities to host a variety of free family-friendly events from sunrise to sundown on July 1. Funded in part by the Government of Canada, over 15,000 people enjoyed free concerts, ceremonies, carnivals and fireworks.



The Great Fire of 1892 was commemorated in 2017 by a weekend of events at Bannerman Park, The Rooms and other locations throughout downtown. An archival photo exhibition; a song and story circle concert; a historical walk through the area affected by the fire; 'School of Industry' featuring spinning and weaving demonstrations inspired by the NL Government's retraining support to residents left unemployed by the fire; and other events told the story of this devastating event in the city's history and how it affected residents of the time.

2018 Special Events and Festivals

Special events and festivals enhance cultural experiences for both residents and visitors and can aid in extending the tourism season to garner additional economic opportunities. In 2018, \$100,000 was invested in 23 Special Events and Festivals organized by groups and organizations throughout the city.



2018 Special Events and Festivals by season

GOAL 5: A LEADING CANADIAN ARTISTIC METROPOLIS

The vibrancy, attractiveness and livability of the city is inherently tied to the arts. With an aim to support artistic endeavours, these initiatives illustrate our investments in the arts to further enrich our City.

NEW MURALS DEPICT HISTORICAL AND INDIGENOUS ART

Two new murals were completed in 2017 and 2018, as part of the City's Public Art and Murals Program. Located on McBride's Hill, a mural was designed and painted by St. John's artist Julie Lewis in 2017 and formed part of the City's commemoration of the Great Fire of 1892.

A partnership between the City and Eastern Edge Art Gallery resulted in a mural completed in April 2018. The painting was part of a local art festival called Identify: A Celebration of Indigenous Arts and Culture, which featured visiting artist Jordan Bennett, a Mi'kmaq artist and Newfoundlander. Jordan participated in several aspects of the festival, including the design and creation of the mural.



"It has been an amazing experience to create and complete such a large and vibrant work through Mi'kmaq and Beothuk visual culture for the Island of Ktaqmkuk in the City of St. John's," said Jordan Bennett. "I hope this piece will bring the public as much joy and energy it brought to me in creating it."

SUPPORTING ARTISTS

The City of St. John's continues to invest in artists, arts organizations, and festival and events through various grants programming to enhance the vibrancy and livability of the City. The annual grants programs, including Grants to Artists and Arts Organizations, Special Events and Festivals, Sports Groups, and Community Grants distributed over \$1.25 million in support in 2018.

Connect with us:

Economic, Development, Culture & Partnerships Division
Department of Community Services
348 Water Street

business@stjohns.ca
tourism@stjohns.ca
immigration@stjohns.ca



Twitter
@EconDevStJohns