

ST. JOHN'S



St. John's Municipal Plan Review 2012 BACKGROUND REPORT

February 15, 2012



Message from the Chair...

This report is the first step in the review of the St. John's Municipal Plan, 2003. The result will be a new Municipal Plan that will help shape our city for the next 10 years or more.

Our current Plan, which was approved by St. John's Municipal Council in 2003, will be reviewed in light of today's conditions. Our city has grown and our population is increasing. We need to look at where we should grow and how to create and maintain safe, pleasant neighbourhoods with shops, parks and services nearby, while fostering a productive business climate. The Municipal Plan will set out ways to reuse old buildings and develop new buildings in established neighbourhoods. We must look at how to make the best use of our heritage area and heritage buildings. Our review will also look at protecting land around lakes, rivers, and coastlines; how we can support farming and other rural land uses; and reserving land for present and future drinking-water supplies. The Municipal Plan also looks at how the layout of the city can help traffic move, while supporting walking, public transit, and cycling. There is much more to consider and there will be ample opportunities for public input into the process.

Overall, the Municipal Plan expresses Council's policies on land-use and development, based on the needs and desires of the city as a whole.

Councillor Tom Hann
Chair of the Planning and Housing Standing Committee

The City of St. John's coat of arms has the motto Avancez – Forward.
This is appropriate for our Municipal Plan, which looks forward, shaping the future city.

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Introduction

Land-use planning affects many aspects of life in St. John's. It helps determine where we live and where we go to work; where parks and recreational facilities should be; where our schools and hospitals are built; and where roads, sewers and other essential services are needed.

Land-use planning helps manage our land and resources responsibly. It helps St. John's set goals about how we will grow and develop while keeping important social, economic and environmental concerns in mind. It balances the interests of individual property owners with the objectives of the entire community. Good planning leads to orderly growth and the efficient provision of services. It helps us to have the kind of community we want.

A municipal plan is a legal document which sets out the municipality's vision, goals, objectives and policies for the long-term development of land and the provision of services and amenities.

The municipal plan expresses the values of the community, responding to changing circumstances over time. All municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador are required under the Province's Urban and Rural Planning Act to have a municipal plan.

The City of St. John's is now starting a review of our St. John's Municipal Plan, 2003, and the associated St. John's Land-Use Zoning and Subdivision Regulations (commonly called the St. John's Development Regulations). This Background Report has been prepared as a source document to be used by Council and the general public as a basis for dialogue and informed decision-making.

This report will summarize existing conditions in the City of St. John's and the St. John's Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) in a number of subject areas. Some of the issues which have emerged since the 2003 Municipal Plan was adopted will be discussed as well.



Background

The Urban and Rural Planning Act, 2000

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Urban and Rural Planning Act, 2000, gives municipalities the legal authority for land-use planning. Section 13 of the Act requires that a municipal plan contain:

- a. A statement of objectives;
- b. The policies to be implemented;
- c. All land classified into land-use districts;
- d. Proposals for land-use zoning regulations;
- e. Proposals for how to implement the plan;
- f. Treatment of non-conforming uses (these are land uses that do not conform to the plan but were in place before the plan came into effect); and
- g. A look ahead for development during a 10-year planning period.

Section 13 also lists subject areas that a municipality can include if the council believes it appropriate to do so:

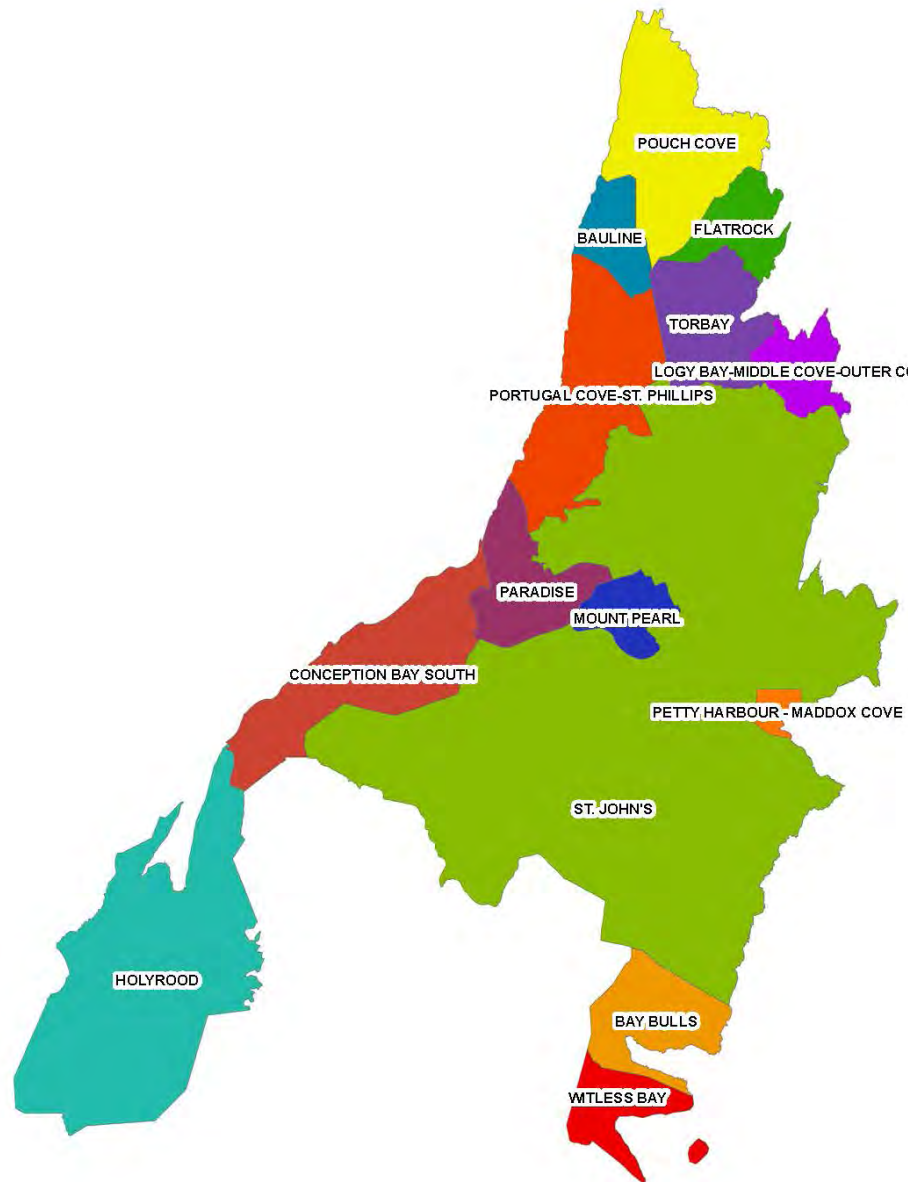
- a. Information on the physical, social and economic environment;
- b. Existing and proposed streets and transportation networks;
- c. Land areas for comprehensive development;
- d. A program of public works;
- e. Protection, use and development of environmentally sensitive lands;
- f. Stormwater control and erosion control;

- g. Protection and use of natural resources;
- h. Excavating, filling in, or reclaiming land;
- i. Protecting trees and vegetation, and other environmental matters;
- j. Building height and location for various types of development;
- k. Use and conservation of energy;
- l. Attracting, locating, and diversifying economic activity;
- m. Garden suites and back-lot development;
- n. Housing and other facilities for senior citizens; and
- o. Other proposals that are, in the opinion of the council, necessary.

Section 28 of the Act requires a council to review its municipal plan and development regulations every five (5) years, and revise them as necessary while looking ahead for the next 10 years.

The St. John's Municipal Plan is adopted and approved by the St. John's Municipal Council under authority of the Urban and Rural Planning Act. The Municipal Plan must conform to the province's St. John's Urban Region Regional Plan.

The St. John's Development Regulations, which set out land-use zones and development standards, are used on an ongoing basis to implement the policies of the St. John's Municipal Plan.



Background

St. John's Urban Region Regional Plan, 1976

The Regional Plan for the St. John's Urban Region is a provincial plan which applies to all municipalities on the Northeast Avalon Peninsula. The plan is currently under review. The new plan will be called the Northeast Avalon Regional (NEAR) Plan.

When completed, the NEAR Plan will guide provincial and municipal development activities, infrastructure, and land use for the

Northeast Avalon Region, which comprises 15 municipalities: St. John's, Mount Pearl, Conception Bay South, Paradise, Portugal Cove-St. Phillips, Torbay, Wabana, Holyrood, Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove, Pouch Cove, Flatrock, Witless Bay, Bay Bulls, Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove, and Bauline, as well as the Butter Pot-Witless Bay Line Environs Area. The review of the Regional Plan may continue to 2014.



Background

St. John's Municipal Plan, 2003

The present St. John's Municipal Plan was adopted by Council on June 9, 2003, and came into legal effect on December 5, 2003. The City of St. John's adopted its first municipal plan under the Urban and Rural Planning Act in 1984. Land-use regulations go back to the St. John's Zoning By-Law, 1955, which was adopted by Council under the City of St. John's Act.

The 2003 St. John's Municipal Plan is divided into four parts:

- Part I: Purpose and Scope: This provides background information on revisions to the previous Municipal Plan and describes the legal basis for the plan.
- Part II: Vision: This general statement sets out the framework for the Municipal Plan.
- Part III: City-Wide Objectives and Policies: These apply to the entire city, or to portions of it in particular land-use districts.
- Part IV: Planning-Area Development Plans: The City is divided into 21 planning areas; some of these have Development Plans which have more detail than the Municipal Plan. For example, the Goulds (Planning Area 16) has a Planning-Area Development Plan. They were originally called planning-area development schemes.

The Watershed District is the single largest land-use district, making up 27 per cent of all the land in St. John's. This reflects the presence of five separate watersheds to protect drinking water. The watersheds, and other Resource and Environmental lands (in the Agricultural, Restricted Development, and Forestry districts) occupy slightly more than half the total area of St. John's.

Rural lands, which are not intended to be provided with municipal water and sewer services, occupy a fifth of the city. Of the remaining land area, eight per cent is designated as Residential and eight per cent is for Parks and Recreation. Employment lands – those designated Commercial or Industrial – make up only 5.2 per cent of the city's land area.

On January 1, 1992, the land area of the City of St. John's increased dramatically, from 101 to 483 square kilometres. On that date, the Provincial Government amalgamated the City with the former towns of Goulds and Wedgewood Park, the unincorporated community of Blackhead, the lands on Incinerator Road outside Foxtrap in the Town of Conception Bay South, and rural areas that were administered by the former St. John's Metropolitan Area Board, including Southlands. On the same date, Metro Board was disbanded.



Background Municipal Plan Amendments

The Urban and Rural Planning Act makes provision for a municipality to amend its municipal plan and development regulations. This reflects the fact that conditions can change, or developments can be proposed that make good sense but were not foreseen when the plan was written. Any municipal plan is a living document.

Text amendments to the current St. John's Municipal Plan and Development Regulations include: the creation of an ecclesiastical district (centered on the main downtown churches, schools, and religious

buildings within the Heritage District; the introduction of design guidelines for the Battery neighbourhood and the lower parts of Signal Hill; the allowance of fully residential buildings in Commercial districts; allowing greater building bulk and height in parts of the Commercial Downtown District; changes to allow different types of farming to help farmers adapt their operations; and a change to allow multiple dwellings (with no more than six units) as a discretionary use in the Residential Medium Density (R2) Zone as a way of encouraging residential intensification.



Planning Issues in St. John's Population Growth and Recent In-Migration

The City of St. John's has a population of 106,172 (according to the newly released results of the 2011 Census of Canada). Its municipal boundary occupies 483 square kilometres that makes up about 60 per cent of the total area of the St. John's Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) and contains 54 per cent of its population.

The St. John's CMA has a population of 196,966 people, an increase of 8.8 per cent since 2006. The growth is due to a robust local economy associated with offshore

petroleum, other natural resources, and ancillary business. Part of it is due to the shift of population from smaller communities to the St. John's region as people move closer to jobs as well as services such as health care. Over the past decade the St. John's CMA labour market has performed well, with employment increasing at an annual rate of 1.7 per cent since 2000. The majority of this has been in full-time jobs. The unemployment rate fell to a record low of 6.9 per cent in December 2011.

Demographic Shift

For the decade 1991 to 2001 following the collapse of the Newfoundland commercial cod fishery, the population of the City of St. John's declined by 5.8 per cent, from 105,363 people to 99,182. In the years following, the City's population has been slowly growing and is now at 106,172. In a report prepared for the City in 2011 by the Economics and Statistics Branch of the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Finance, the population of St. John's was projected to increase by the year 2021 to a range between 104,453 and 109,027 people,

based on certain assumptions. The 2011 Census figures show that the City has already surpassed the low projection.

While the population has been growing, it has also been getting older on average, with the portion aged 65 years and older growing faster than other age groups. Household size is declining as the Baby Boomers age; their children mature and leave home, and the number of non-traditional and single-person households increases.



Planning Issues in St. John's Housing

The City's Department of Building and Property Management shows that an average of 550 single detached houses are being built in St. John's annually. Between 2000 and 2011, there were 6,042 single houses built; of these, 17 per cent (or 1,036 houses) contained subsidiary or basement apartments.

In 2006, there were 41,540 dwelling units (this includes single houses, semi-detached or double houses, row houses, and apartments) in the City.

The dominant housing form is the single detached house which constituted 42.5 per cent of the total housing stock. Units in apartment buildings were the least common, constituting 14.2 per cent of the stock. Almost one-half of all units were constructed before 1971, and a third of those (5,700 houses) were built before 1946.

Between 2002 and 2010, the average cost of all houses (newly built and old) in the St. John's CMA rose 108 per cent, from \$113,081 to \$235,241. This increase is greater than in other Atlantic Canadian cities (Halifax 70 per cent, Moncton 52 per cent, Saint John 65 per cent) and the Canadian

average (79 per cent).

The price of new housing has been steadily going up, increasing by 19.6 per cent in 2008, 11.5 per cent in 2009, and 15.5 per cent in 2010, which caused the average price of a new single-detached house in the St. John's CMA to reach \$325,436.

Everyone needs suitable, affordable housing, whether by rental or purchase. The City of St. John's Affordable Housing Charter and Action Plan 2011-2013 (located at: <http://www.stjohns.ca/cityhall/pdfs/affordablehousing.pdf>), states that:

"Housing prices and rental rates are rising sharply at many times the rate of inflation, and the rental vacancy rate has been among the lowest in Canada since 2008. In the housing market, the task of securing adequate, affordable housing is becoming extremely difficult for people across the income spectrum. The rapidly expanding economy has consequences that must be addressed so that growing prosperity produces benefits for the whole community. The experience of other communities shows that widespread housing instability has high social and economic costs."

Planning Issues in St. John's

City Infrastructure

In the past decade, vehicle traffic within the City has been improved by the Outer Ring Road providing a direct connection between the western and eastern limits of St. John's. The regional road system will be complete when the East-West Arterial (Team Gushue Highway Extension) links Kenmount Road to Brookfield Road at Commonwealth Avenue.

While the City's population increased by an estimated 3.3% over the past decade, the amount of roads for which the City is responsible increased in length by 21% (from 547 to 662 kilometres). The largest increase in street length at 29% was in residential roads (from 340 to 438 kilometres). This represents a 14% decrease in the number of city residents per kilometre of road, from 181 to 155. With more roads come increases in traffic volume prompting the City in 2011 to introduce a Traffic Calming policy which will result in changes to road layout in designing new subdivisions.

The population in the St. John's CMA is forecast to grow in the decades ahead. The St. John's Regional Water Supply Update (2007) concluded that the water supply system will meet the demands placed on it until at least 2056, using water conservation practices, and bringing Petty Harbour Long Pond back on line with a new treatment system (the previous system was closed some years ago).

Stormwater from rainfall and melting snow is managed through a system of storm sewers which collect water from roads, parking lots and other impermeable surfaces such as rooftops and direct it into rivers and streams. To accommodate the increased urbanization and higher frequency of heavy rainfalls and flash-flooding, the City has upgraded several systems, including storm sewers and road bridges over rivers. Where there is no capacity

to accommodate further stormwater runoff, new developments will require storm-sewer upgrading or ; alternatively, the developer can retain the stormwater on site, using an underground chamber or a surface pond, and then release the water slowly. This is a policy of zero net increase in run-off. Other ways to manage stormwater may include "green" infrastructure such as tree plantings, green roofs (rooftop gardens), and permeable pavement.

Over the past decade the City, with the neighbouring City of Mount Pearl and Town of Paradise, has implemented the St. John's Harbour Cleanup Project with provincial and federal funding support. Its major components were the construction of the Riverhead primary wastewater treatment plant on the Southside Road, upgrading the sewage pumping station on Harbour Drive at Beck's Cove, and the construction of a Harbour Interceptor Sewer from Temperance Street to the treatment plant. Prior to this, sanitary sewage flowed untreated into St. John's Harbour. This project was originally budgeted at \$94 million.

Between 2000 and 2011, the total amount budgeted for public services increased 113%, from \$105 to \$224 million per year. The amount for transportation services (streets, roads and sidewalks, snowclearing, traffic services, street lighting, public transit and para-transit) increased by 79%, from \$23.7 million to \$42.5 million per year. Environmental health services (water and sewer services, garbage and waste collection and disposal) increased by 240%, from \$15.8 million to \$53.9 million and the amount for recreational and cultural services increased 127%, from \$8.3 million to \$18.9 million per year. The increases reflect the growing population, rising cost of services, and increased responsibilities of the City.



Planning Issues in St. John's Transportation

St. John's has an extensive road system to allow people to travel to all parts of the city. Aside from private vehicles, people also use public transit, walking or bicycling to move around.

A study in 2007 for the St. John's Transportation Commission (Metrobus) identified some user dissatisfaction with transit route coverage, travel time, and frequency of service. The study (located at: <http://www.metrobus.com/PDF/5year.pdf>) recommended improvements for service standards such as route design, bus-stop spacing and bus shelters.

The study observed that land-use planning should be more supportive of public transit in terms of the location of subdivisions and the placement of roads and high-density development within subdivisions, and that the City's parking standards and parking-meter rates should be changed to make

public transit more attractive. A report released by the Commission in December 2011 (Metrobus Market Assessment and Strategic Directions Study) attributed low ridership levels and problems with traffic congestion and downtown parking to urban sprawl and suburbanization [www.metrobus.com/marketstudy]. Council's Planning and Housing Standing Committee was recently expanded to include a representative of the Commission.

St. John's Para-Transit is the City's transportation alternative for people who are unable to use Metrobus, the conventional transit service. Para-Transit, recently rebranded as GoBus Accessible Transit, began as a community-based service. The City assumed direct responsibility for it in 1997 and in 2012 contracted the delivery of service to MVT Canadian Bus Lines, who have upgraded service with a fleet of 18 new busses.



Planning Issues in St. John's Port of St. John's and St. John's International Airport

The Port of St. John's supports the offshore fishery, interprovincial and international shipping, the offshore oil industry, the military (Royal Canadian Navy and other navies), maritime training (HMCS Cabot and the Marine Institute), and tourism. Its level of economic activity has been growing over the past decade. However, there is little space for new industrial development around the harbour. The physical growth limits are mitigated by the highway system which provides good links from harbours in Bay Bulls and Conception Bay South.

The St. John's International Airport has been transformed over the past decade. A major redevelopment to expand the air terminal was completed in 2002. Passenger

movements have grown by more than 80 per cent since 1998, twice the national average.

The Airport Authority administers two large areas of vacant land: one off Portugal Cove Road, west of the present road entrance to the terminal building, which will become the new entrance in future; the other along the west side of Torbay Road, south of RCAF Road. In 2007 the City prepared a development plan for the Torbay Road North Commercial Area, which includes the airport land and other lands on both sides of Torbay Road. The plan sets out road and other improvements to accommodate commercial and light industrial uses on 160 hectares of land, north of the Clovelly big-box retail area.



Planning Issues in St. John's Recreation and Leisure

Residents of St. John's enjoy a variety of parks at the neighbourhood, city, and regional level. In addition to the historic Bannerman, Victoria, and Bowring Parks and Quidi Vidi Lake Park which are owned by the City, there is the provincial C. A. Pippy Park and federal facilities at Signal Hill and Cape Spear National Historic Sites. In addition, there is the Grand Concourse – a linear park system developed by the Johnson Family Foundation and maintained by the City and the Grand Concourse Authority – that connects different parts of St. John's and extends into Mount Pearl and Paradise.

In 2009 the City of St. John's Recreation and Parks Master Plan was adopted by Council (located at: http://www.stjohns.ca/pdfs/Recreation_And_Parks_Master_Plan.pdf). It takes into account long-term demographic and leisure trends and

the demands for open space, parks and recreation services and programming. Its 31 recommendations included redevelopment of Victoria and Bannerman Parks, rehabilitation or replacement of aging recreation centres, phasing out 'tot lots', and having an integrated approach to include neighbourhood parks and play areas in all new developments.

In 2008 the St. John's Cycling Master Plan was prepared and adopted (located at: http://www.stjohns.ca/csj/cycling/FinalReport_Revised_February_10_2009.pdf). It sets out a plan for developing 226 kilometres of cycling lanes and trails connecting all areas of the city. This will provide increased opportunities for alternative transportation, recreation, and reduction in the amount of greenhouse gases. The system will be built out over the next 20 years.



Development Trends

Continued Suburban Development

The City has provided major municipal infrastructure to accommodate the new housing near the edges of our municipal boundary. Substantial residential developments have been built and are continuing in the Southlands, the Southwest Expansion Area along Kenmount Road, Kilbride, Clovelly, and Airport Heights.

These new neighbourhoods are characterized by single detached houses on standard building lots (typically 15 metres by 30 metres). Since 2010, the former Sprung Greenhouse property off Commonwealth Avenue, Mount Pearl, has been redeveloped as the Brookfield Plains neighbourhood.

Growth in Residential Condominium Developments

St. John's has not seen a new rental apartment building in 30 years (other than one on Blackmarsh Road that burned and was rebuilt in the early 2000s), but a number of apartment-style buildings in condominium ownership have been built since 2003. As well, several existing rental buildings have been converted to condominium ownership. There has also been interest in developing condominiums in the form of single houses and rowhouse clusters.

Retirees and empty nesters are the target market for many of these projects. Others are geared towards affluent working professionals. With many suitable sites in older neighbourhoods already developed, condominium projects have started appearing in neighbourhoods that were originally developed in the 1960s and '70s for predominantly single houses.

Development Trends

The Environment

The natural setting of hills, ocean cliffs, rivers, lakes, and valleys is a defining feature of St. John's. The extensive coastline includes Cape Spear, Signal Hill and Quidi Vidi. Forested hills are visible in many places – the Southside Hills which overlook St. John's harbour; the White Hills from Quidi Vidi Village to Robin Hood Bay; and Kenmount Hill. St. John's harbour is sheltered from the Atlantic, and the city rises up in the bowl formed by it.

Newfoundland and Labrador has some of the oldest rocks in the world. This geology poses challenges when it comes to construction. The hilly terrain has shaped the street pattern and creates natural development limits.

Major rivers include the Waterford River, the Virginia River, Rennie's River, Manuels River, Kelligrews River, and the Outer Cove River systems. These are protected by the Municipal Plan, which prohibits most types of development and sets development buffers. The five drinking-water watersheds (Bay Bulls Big Pond, Windsor Lake, Broad Cove River, Petty Harbour Long Pond, and Thomas Pond for future supply) occupy more than a quarter of the total area of St. John's.

Parks and recreation lands – including municipal, provincial and federal lands – occupy 3,947 hectares, approximately 8 per cent of the area of the city. Productive agricultural land is protected by the Agricultural designation of the Municipal Plan and the provincially designated Agricultural Development Area (ADA). This land occupies 13 per cent of the total area of St. John's. Lands in the Forestry District and in the Mineral Working Zone occupy approximately 5 per cent of the area of the city.

In 2006 the City adopted the St. John's Urban Forest Management Master Plan.

This identified and inventoried almost 60,000 public trees (trees on City property, or on private property but overhanging City property such as sidewalks). Trees in non-municipal parks and in the city's watersheds were not included. The plan recognized the value which the urban forest adds to the quality of urban life, and how trees prevent erosion and absorb rainwater. It included recommendations on amendments to the Municipal Plan and Development Regulations to ensure the vitality of the urban forest.

Local weather patterns have seen changes in the frequency and intensity of major rain and wind storm events that have affected the City's developed areas, particularly those which are flood-prone. The St. John's region has been experiencing milder winters with less average snowfall. Climate change has produced a need for major investment in bridges and storm sewers that can handle more run-off.

It will be necessary to keep in mind the location of land uses in relation to:

- Protecting waterways, wetlands, natural areas, and forested lands that provide animal and plant habitats, foster healthy ecosystems, and control the volume of stormwater.
- Rising sea level and extreme weather events.
- Natural-resource extraction such as quarries and wood-cutting areas.

Like many cities, growth in St. John's since the mid-20th century has been away from the urban core, the result of low fuel costs and a good supply of cheap land. The costs of this pattern of development are becoming apparent as fuel prices rise and there is more traffic, longer travel times, and demand for new roads and infrastructure.

Development Trends

Brownfield Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse

“Greenfield areas” are lands where nothing has been built yet. “Brownfield areas” are lands where something was built in the past, such as old warehouses or closed schools or disused churches. Redeveloping brownfield sites has become more common in St. John's, like in many cities, where there are defunct or underutilized industrial, commercial, or institutional properties.

Some properties have seen new commercial use as retail stores and supermarkets – like the former Memorial Stadium property (now a Dominion supermarket) on Lake Avenue and King's Bridge Road, the former Newfoundland Margarine Company site on LeMarchant Road (now a Shoppers Drug Mart store), and the former Terra Nova Motors car dealership on Topsail Road (now a Lawtons drugstore). Other properties given new life as residential buildings include the former McKinlay Motors property on LeMarchant Road (now a range of townhouse and a multi-storey building), and the former St. Patrick's Hall School property on Bonaventure Avenue at Merrymeeting Road (now the Place Bonaventure buildings).

Some properties which are currently being developed include: the former Standard Manufacturing paint plant between Water Street East and Duckworth Street East (now The Narrows building and the building below it); the former Belvedere Orphanage and Convent property along Margaret's Place between Newtown Road and Bonaventure Avenue; the former Woolworth's Department Store site (now being developed as a multi-storey office building and parking garage called 351 Water; and the former Horwood Lumber Company site in the area of Springdale Street, Hamilton Avenue and

New Gower Street (being developed by Fortis Properties as a multi-storey office building).

Approval has been given to redevelop the former Power's Salvage premises at the corner of Temperance and Water Streets and the former CEI Club property on Hamilton Avenue at Shaw Street for residential use, but construction has not started. An application to redevelop the Star of the Sea Hall property on Henry Street for a condominium apartment building is under consideration by Council. There is also an application to redevelop two properties on opposite sides of Duckworth Street in the area of Ordinance Street and Hill o' Chips for residential and hotel use.

The conversion of the former St. Bride's College/ Littledale Complex on Waterford Bridge Road to The Tower corporate office complex for the offshore oil industry is nearly complete. Major properties awaiting commercial and/or residential redevelopment include the former CBC Radio Building site on Duckworth, Henry, and Bell Streets and adjoining properties; the former Avalon Telephone Company building on Duckworth Street at McBride's Hill; the Holloway School site on Long's Hill and Harvey Road; the Arcade Store site which has frontage on Water Street and Harbour Drive; the former Grace General Hospital property which overlooks the harbour from LeMarchant Road and Pleasant Street; a block of land which has frontage on Hamilton Avenue and Job Street; and another block with frontage on Springdale and New Gower Streets below Pleasant Street. The range of proposed uses for these properties includes office space, hotels, condominiums, and parking structures.



Development Trends

Parking Standards

Going back to the 1960s and '70s, the commercial area of the Downtown declined as some retail businesses closed their premises or relocated to shopping malls. This decline has been reversed in the past decade. In 2009, Council and Downtown St. John's (the Downtown Development Commission) engaged consultants to prepare a Downtown Parking Study with recommendations on an adequate supply of

parking spaces, including how to manage the existing spaces on-street and off-street, how to create new spaces, and how to reinforce public transit. The Downtown Parking Study is in the process of being implemented.

Elsewhere in St. John's, with the rising price of land, there have been occasional concerns expressed about the application of parking standards, and about traffic congestion.



Development Trends

Commercial Activity and Suburban Big-Box Stores (Power Centres)

During the life of the current Municipal Plan, significant commercial development has occurred with big-box retail stores in commercial “power centres” on the fringes of the city – at Stavanger Drive off Torbay Road (the Clovelly area) and Kelsey Drive off Kenmount Road. Rather than being at the centre of new residential development to serve the surrounding population, as happened when Churchill Square was developed in the 1950s and ‘60s, the big-box commercial areas remain separate, accessible mostly by private automobile rather than on foot.

Smaller supermarkets have been enlarged or closed as food retailers moved to the big-box concept. The closure of small supermarkets has seen some properties converted to other uses: the Summerville building on Elizabeth Avenue West was redeveloped to a mixed-use commercial and residential development, with additional floors added. A supermarket on Hamilton Avenue at Shaw Street that was used for furniture sales was recently redeveloped as an office building. At the neighbourhood level, the closure of smaller stores requires people to travel longer distances.

Hotel Development

The hospitality and tourism sector in Newfoundland and Labrador has been growing. Hotel development in St. John's since 2003 has seen a Marriott Courtyard hotel on Duckworth Street, a Steele hotel (the Capital) on Kenmount Road, and a Super 8 hotel on Higgins Line. Several hotel applications have been approved but are not yet started: one is on Stavanger Drive; one (an extension to the Marriott Courtyard) is on the corner of Duckworth and Cochrane

Streets; one is at 123-125 Water Street at the intersection with Harbour Drive opposite Prescott Street; one, a Steele hotel, is near the St. John's Convention Centre and Mile One Centre, bounded by Water, Princess, and Buchanan Streets and George Street West. There is an application to develop a hotel at the corner of New Gower and Springdale Streets. Lastly, there is the former Traveller's Inn motel on Kenmount Road which is being redeveloped for a hotel.

Development Trends

Government Investment and Developments

Public-sector development in St. John's by the municipal, provincial and federal governments has been extensive and significant over the past decade.

The City of St. John's and its partners (the Province, Mount Pearl, and Paradise) have redeveloped the Robin Hood Bay sanitary landfill as a regional facility, built the Riverhead regional wastewater treatment plant on the Southside Road, and made a major improvement to public transit with a new Metrobus garage and administration building off Kenmount Road. The City has contributed to revamping the LSPU Hall (the Resource Centre for the Arts theatre) on Victoria Street, and the Anna Templeton Centre for Craft, Art and Design in the historic Newfoundland Savings Bank property on Duckworth Street. Recently, the City committed to enlarge the St. John's Convention Centre on New Gower Street opposite the Mile One Centre.

Building construction at Memorial University's St. John's campus has been significant and ongoing as it continues to grow along the lines laid out in its 2007 Campus Master Plan. The Health Sciences Centre which is part of the university has been significantly enlarged following the addition of the Janeway Children's Hospital. Eastern Health has opened a large outpatient facility and a nearby ambulance depot on Major's Path off Torbay Road.

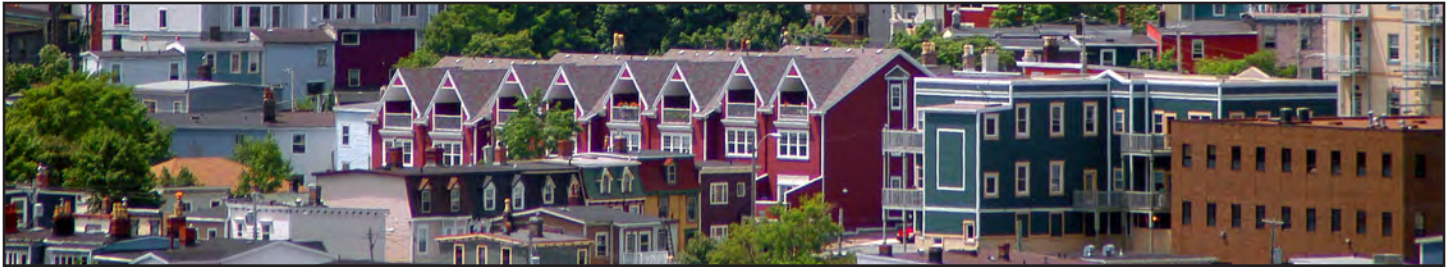
The Provincial Department of Education built l'École des Grands-Vents French-language school on Ridge Road, approved plans to redevelop or replace several schools in the city, and committed to a new high school in the West End which may start construction on Topsail Road in 2012.

The province began construction in 2011 of a seniors' long-term-care facility on part of the former Janeway Hospital grounds off Newfoundland Drive that will replace the Hoyles-Escasoni Seniors' Complex on Portugal Cove Road. The province has also developed The Rooms building which houses the Provincial Museum, Art Gallery and Archives; is enlarging the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary police headquarters at Fort Townshend off Parade Street; will restore the historic Colonial Building on Military Road; and is expected to decide soon on developing a new law court complex in St. John's.

The Federal Government divested most of its lands at Pleasantville off The Boulevard. The Canada Lands Company (CLC), a federal agency, prepared a comprehensive redevelopment plan for a mixed-use development of several hundred residential units in various building types, some commercial property, and ample green space with pedestrian links to Quidi Vidi Lake and the Virginia River.

At the same time, the Department of National Defence started the redevelopment of Canadian Forces Station (CFS) St. John's, a \$100 million+ project that will consolidate all military uses at Pleasantville. After extensive consultation, a plan for all the federal lands at Pleasantville, including extensive rezonings, was approved by Council.

Phased development is underway. In the early 2000s, the Federal Government purchased one of the two Cabot Place office towers on Barter's Hill near New Gower Street, bolstering the federal presence Downtown.



Development Trends

Arts, Culture and Heritage

St. John's has dynamic arts, culture and heritage. It is the oldest European settlement in North America (founded on June 24, 1497, and settled by the early 1500s), the capital of Newfoundland and Labrador, and a centre of business, education, and government. It has served as an international seaport, military outpost, and gateway to the New World. Its age is reflected in the narrow winding streets and the architecture of buildings Downtown. In 1977, St. John's was one of the first Canadian cities to designate a Heritage Area. St. John's was the Cultural Capital of Canada for 2006.

Some of the historic and cultural assets include Cabot Tower, the signature building of St. John's and of the province, atop Signal Hill; the Colonial Building, former seat of government; the LSPU Hall (home of the Resource Centre for the Arts theatre and art gallery); the Anna Templeton Centre for Craft, Art and Design; the St. John's Arts and Culture Centre; the Roman Catholic Basilica of St. John the Baptist (of Romanesque design); the Anglican Cathedral of St. John the Baptist (of Neo-Gothic design); St. Thomas' (the Old Garrison Church); the Murray Premises; Devon House (home of the Craft Council of Newfoundland and Labrador); and the Newfoundland National War Memorial.

The City supports the cultural community with its Art Procurement program and

Civic Art Collection; Arts Grants; Murals program; the honorary position of Poet Laureate; the Arts Advisory Committee; and the St. John's Municipal Arts Plan, adopted in 2010. That same year, the City spent over \$1 million in support of the arts.

The 2003 Municipal Plan seeks to conserve the character of heritage areas and protect heritage buildings. The City's Heritage Advisory Committee advises Council on heritage matters, including the designation of buildings as heritage buildings, proposed changes to the exterior of designated buildings, and new construction or redevelopment in heritage areas. The Development Regulations list 130 designated heritage buildings. City planning policies encourage the adaptive re-use of heritage properties so that they remain economically viable.

Complementing the Municipal Plan and Development Regulations are the Downtown St. John's Strategy for Economic Development and Heritage Preservation, 2001, an economic-development and preservation plan, the follow-up report on St. John's Heritage Areas, Heritage Buildings and Public Views in 2003, the Battery Development Guidelines Study, 2004, and the George Street Redevelopment Study, 2007. A recent report for the City recommends extending the Battery development guidelines for non-residential properties in that neighbourhood.

The Way Forward

Patterns of Development

The concluding sections discuss some of the future directions that the City can take over the coming 10 years.

Until the middle of the 20th century, St. John's was fairly compact. The older areas around the harbour and as far north as Empire Avenue were reasonably high density. The Downtown business district was within walking distance for many people.

After World War II and Confederation with Canada, St. John's began to see lower density growth in the new Churchill Park area (originally called the Northern Suburb) along the length of the new Elizabeth Avenue. Most new homes were single family houses, and travel to the Downtown was no longer within walking distance. The automobile began to dominate development. This lower density development responded to several factors, such as less expensive land and a preference for larger lots. There was little pressure for infill development (where left-over land in older neighbourhoods is built on).

The trend for large lots remains today, but there is a parallel trend toward somewhat higher densities, especially in older neighbourhoods. This is the result of increased land costs and changing household preferences. Lots are a bit smaller in some areas, and there are more multi-unit buildings. Interestingly, this resembles the way cities were built in the past.

Urban design refers to the physical look of the city. It considers street layouts (narrow or wide), housing density (single houses

or multi-storey buildings), sidewalks and public spaces, building setbacks (close to the street or set back further), parking areas (visible from the street or behind or beneath a building), footpaths (can a pedestrian take a shortcut to another neighbourhood without having to walk a long way around), and similar matters. Good urban design can help ensure that all neighbourhoods, even dense ones, are pleasant and welcoming.

Committing to a more compact city, with higher overall densities, has several implications:

- More housing Downtown and in older neighbourhoods elsewhere;
- More multi-unit buildings, often in condominium ownership;
- Infill development on left-over lands;
- More housing choices in new neighbourhoods;
- Increased viability of public transit and alternative forms of transportation;
- Potentially reduced cost of housing;
- More efficient provision of municipal services and utilities;
- Need for improvements for municipal services and utilities in older areas; and
- Increased traffic in some areas.

The overall density and form of a city are determined over time through a combination of land-use policy, consumer and market preferences, and consultation with local residents. One goal of the Municipal Plan review is to understand the direction that St. John's should take for residential densities.



The Way Forward

Development in Rural Areas

Rural land uses are an important part of St. John's, particularly for farming in the Goulds and elsewhere. The City's Agriculture District is the same as the Province's Agricultural Development Area (ADA), which protects and reserves farmland. Aside from farming, there are many people who live on large lots in rural areas, as well as some businesses that favour a rural location for their work.

The cost of providing municipal services such as roads, garbage collection and recycling, fire protection, water and sewer systems, and public transit is related to the pattern of development. The more spread-out the development pattern is, the higher the cost to deliver these services.

Many rural residential areas in St. John's were developed using on-site water (wells) and on-site sewage disposal (septic systems) prior to the 1992 amalgamation of the Goulds and other rural areas. To contain urban sprawl and deliver municipal services efficiently, the City has adopted rural policies to allow limited residential infill (new houses) as long as they are on existing roads.

From time to time over the past decade, the City has been asked to vary this policy and allow new roads in unserved rural areas. To date, the approach has been to channel new development into areas that are already serviced or can be serviced with municipal water and sewage, rather than allow new roads to be built in unserved areas.

The Way Forward

Development Potential Above the 190-Metre Contour

In St. John's and the surrounding region, the regional trunk sewers were designed in the 1970s to service land up to 190 metres above sea level. This included a wide area but excluded some of the highest hills. The regional water system was then designed to supply water to that elevation and no higher (in Airport Heights, the servicing limit is 185 metres, and in Kilbride it is 130 metres).

In 2007, Council's Planning and Housing Committee and Public Works and Environment Committee reviewed a report regarding potential municipal servicing above the 190-metre contour for the

Southlands area and for the Southwest Development Area between Kenmount and Thorburn Roads. A significant amount of land in these two areas could be developed with municipal water and sewage. These lands would need to be redesignated and rezoned for development. The Regional Plan for the St. John's Urban Region would also have to be amended.

In May 2011, Council wrote the Minister of Municipal Affairs to request a Regional Plan amendment to allow development above the 190-metre contour. The amendment is now under consideration for possible approval.

Goulds Infrastructure Improvements

When the former Town of the Goulds was amalgamated with the City of St. John's in 1992, there were major deficiencies in the municipal water and sewer systems. Repairs and new construction have been ongoing since that time. On each street where work was carried out to improve the underground infrastructure, the streets were also reconstructed at the same time.

In recent years, the City commissioned an update to a 2002 study for the major components of the water and sewage systems with a service area of 665.8

hectares. The update, completed in 2010, concluded that improvements would require a 2.2-kilometre-long extension to the Kilbride trunk sewer, a wastewater pump station and a 4.2-kilometre-long sewer main; a water reservoir and new water transmission mains; construction or replacement of several bridges; and the upgrading of several roads.

With the work being spread over seven consecutive years, the updated study estimated the work will cost of \$51.7 million. The report is still being studied.

Land-Use Choices and Fiscal Impacts

Growth is often the sign of a vibrant city, but there are limits to growth. For some types of development, the long-term costs may outweigh the benefits. The impacts of land-use decisions are significant and long-lasting.

The fiscal impacts of development depend

on the type of development and the ability of existing municipal infrastructure and services to accommodate it. Development that increases the tax base without increasing demands for services can have positive impacts. The key is to seek out those types of development.



Looking Forward to the Plan Review

A city is a home for people, not just a collection of streets and buildings. Its evolution reflects what people value. St. John's has evolved significantly over time.

With economic and demographic change, there have also been changes in land use in the City and the wider St. John's region. Roads, water mains, and sewer mains have been extended to open up fringe lands. Former farm land has been converted to urban use. And the regional road network and the number of cars on the roads have been growing. However, the era of inexpensive oil and low-cost land has passed.

There is an opportunity over the coming months to influence the way that St. John's should grow.

The new St. John's Municipal Plan aims to:

- Create vibrant urban places.
- Foster a strong economy.
- Strengthen the communities that make up the city.
- Enhance natural areas and the built heritage of St. John's.
- Ensure greater transportation choice.
- Re-use and re-energize vacant lands and buildings.
- Look forward to the future.

