

# QUALITY URBAN DESIGN

## Envision St. John's Municipal Plan

*Our goal is to improve quality of life through excellence in urban design of buildings, streets, neighbourhoods and public spaces throughout the City.*



Our citizens want greater comfort and walkability in the City, the preservation of natural areas, scenic views and other cultural features, and buildings designed to fit appropriately into the urban and rural landscape, including more mixed-use areas.

These issues speak to a desire for improved design in our Downtown, commercial areas and neighbourhoods, and indeed in all areas of the City. Good urban design is about making connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built environment. It is about place-making, incorporating environmental stewardship, social equity and economic viability into the creation of places with distinct beauty and identity.

While principles of good urban design can be applied throughout the City, it will be of particular importance in areas that are identified for future intensification. It is also needed in the Downtown, where there is a desire to preserve heritage values and assets as well as encouraging and accommodating new development.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES ON QUALITY URBAN DESIGN:

- Maintain the City's unique heritage and character, with a particular emphasis on downtown, by balancing preservation of existing heritage structures and streetscapes with new appropriate development.
- Incorporate a "complete streets" approach in the design and retrofit of city streets.
- Develop urban design guidelines for areas identified for intensification.
- Ensure a high quality of design in areas identified for future urban growth.
- Utilize green infrastructure to enhance the quality of public spaces throughout the City.
- Increase safety and security in the City by incorporating principles for crime prevention through environmental design into the development review and approval process.

*Envision proposes to develop policies that will make St. John's a more beautiful city with a commitment to excellence in urban design.*

- We will promote and recognize excellence, creativity, innovation and sustainability in architecture, landscape architecture, and site and neighbourhood design.
- Envision will include comprehensive urban design guidelines to guide new development, redevelopment, streetscape improvements, built form, height and massing of buildings, and parks and open spaces consistent with what our residents want for St. John's; for example:
  - ground and lower levels of buildings will contribute positively to the streetscape;
  - development must be integrated into the fabric of surrounding neighbourhoods; and
  - tall buildings are to be designed and sited to contribute positively to the skyline of the City, have a pedestrian scale, be integrated to adjacent areas for "stepping down" and take shadows into consideration.

## SECONDARY PLANNING

To develop urban design guidelines, this plan proposes a return to neighbourhood planning.

- During the consultation process, citizens told us they want more discussion about decisions that affect their neighbourhoods and more planning at the local level.
- Council will place greater emphasis on reviewing and preparing neighbourhood plans, especially in areas identified for intensification.
- Envision recommends focusing intensification efforts in transit-served locations along city arterials served by and at intersections where there are underutilized sites.

## THE DOWNTOWN, THE DEFINING FEATURE OF OUR CITY

- *The Downtown St. John's Strategy for Economic Development and Heritage Preservation*, prepared in 2001 set out a vision for the Downtown that, over a decade later, is still valid.
- This plan recognizes and protects established downtown residential neighbourhoods and supports moderate intensification in a form that respects the scale and character of the neighbourhood.
- We will develop detailed urban design guidelines specifically for the downtown and encourage the development of mixed-use buildings that contribute to the area as a "people place."
- Council will consider establishing an interdisciplinary Urban Design Review Panel.

## BUILDING HEIGHT

- While Envision does not make reference to any specific number of storeys or floor area ratios, it does lay out a lengthy policy on the City's intentions on building height.
- For the Downtown, the intent is to continue to have low to mid-rise buildings – the human scale of development east of Adelaide Street, but allowing for higher buildings to the west.
- The protection of views, as identified the *2003 St. John's Heritage Areas, Heritage Buildings and Public Views report*, is incorporated.

*A new policy on art is included to incorporate art into the public realm and to include public art into the design and construction of private developments.*