

City of St. John's Budget 2017 Engagement Process -What We Heard

The engagement process provided opportunities for you, our residents and other stakeholders, to share your views on what is important to you so that it can be considered by Council as the budget is prepared for 2017. This document outlines “what was heard” throughout the engagement process across all engagement activities. Much of the groundwork has already been laid in the City’s three-year operating budget plan but the upcoming budget can still be adjusted in accordance with the direction of Council. To date, the City has identified over \$13 million in potential savings through program review which will be considered as part of Budget 2017.

Engagement Timeline (July to December 2016)

Budget Consultation Launched	Online Budget Consultation	My City Days Ward Based Sessions	City Committees	Roundtables with Key Stakeholders	What We Heard	Budget
July 5	July 5 to Nov. 7	Oct. 18 to Nov. 3	Aug. 24 to Nov. 7	Nov. 2	Nov. 9	Dec. 12

Engagement Process

- EngageStJohns.ca on-line engagement tool, asked for public input: “What is the one thing you would like to see addressed through Budget 2017?” There were 1,420 visits to the page 78 responses to the question and 334 votes (like or dislike) on topics that were published
- The City’s committees were consulted and invited to provide input. There are currently six advisory committees, two working groups, two experts’ panels and one task force: Accessibility & Inclusion, Affordable Housing, Animal Care & Control, Arts & Culture, Downtown, Bike St. John’s, Built Heritage, Environmental, Paratransit, Seniors, Youth.
- An interactive budget table was set up at ward-based sessions which allowed people to vote for what was important to them.
- A budget focused session with the City-Business Roundtable probed perspectives from that community.
- A Budget Roundtable was organized with invited guests from a variety of sectors. Those who attended represented such groups as: arts, culture, tourism, downtown, community, disability, education, and social sectors and focused on what was heard to date and what was important to these sectors and the communities they represent.

Key Themes: A number of themes emerged throughout the process. These were the most common themes and topics across all engagement activities

Fiscal Responsibility & Smart Spending	<p>The need to be fiscally responsibility was evident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower taxes- both residential and business • Focus on essential services (although what this meant to people was different) • Reduce spending and find efficiencies internally • Find new sources of revenue • Consider other service providers/partnerships to deliver programs/build infrastructure and reduce spending • Be more innovative to streamline and save • Have an ongoing review and evaluation process that is core to the organization
Snow Clearing, Accessibility & Inclusion	<p>It was clear through all consultations that there is a desire to increase the livability and inclusiveness for residents throughout the year in St. John’s. Feedback included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve sidewalk clearing- balance needs of pedestrians and drivers • Find creative solutions – have property owners part of the solution • Safety and mobility are important all year round • Consider universal design to achieve accessibility in the city • Downtown as a destination needs to be walkable year round, i.e steps and laneways as access points to facilities and venues • Think of accessibility and ease of movement as an essential service in the city • Trails and connectivity are important year round • Consider newcomer needs and challenges in development of city programs and services re: access
Infrastructure, Transit & Active Transportation	<p>The importance of maintaining and strategically investing in infrastructure and having effective transportation in the City was important:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved public transit including better routes, schedules, bus stops (nearer schools and key locations), shelters and a desire for innovative solutions such as park & ride, parking alternatives, incentives, discounted rates to seniors at 60 • Road & sidewalk maintenance – capital investments • There is a need for more street rehabilitation and line painting early in the year • Strive to be a more cycling and pedestrian-friendly city • Improve bike infrastructure especially when new developments are proposed • Link investments to healthy lifestyle • Make active transportation a priority by adding it to the budget permanently and include projects for 2017 • Make taking the bus more attractive – more promotion • Find ways to incentivize more cycling, walking and public transit
Arts, Culture & Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider budget decisions and impact on morale of city and why people want to live here • Focus on creating a place for all • Focus on quality of life • Think about tourism as a destination and the experiences people want which are often tied to arts, culture, heritage • The City should be stewards of arts, culture and tourism • The tourism shoulder season has increased and cleanliness of the city is important all year round, start clean ups earlier • There is a demographic imperative; we need to keep young people here, sense of place is important to them. ▪ Increase the per capita investment in arts and culture ▪ Provide free/low cost space to the arts community

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Business Friendly and Downtown

There was a desire to see more effort placed on making the city more business friendly and in particular focusing on the downtown. Suggestions included:

- Have a two tiered tax system – one for smaller businesses
- Reduce property tax gap between residential and commercial property owners
- Put incentives in place for businesses to set up downtown – financial and otherwise
- Become small business friendly
- Think about what generates economic activity and the role for arts and culture in economic impact
- Look for opportunities to partner with downtown businesses to support vulnerable and at risk communities
- Reduce red tape

Affordability

Generally, the view was that the City needs to focus on being an affordable place to live. To do this we need to consider affordability in:

- Housing
- Programs and fees
- Taxes
- Consider impact of decisions on most vulnerable

Automated Garbage and Cleanliness

There was an overall view that the City should invest in initiatives that make the city a clean place to live:

- Automated garbage
- Clean ups
- Enforce bylaws
- Look at bringing in composting

Environment

Consider the development of a sustainability plan that considers such things as:

- Energy efficiency
- Retrofit of existing buildings
- Public transit
- Garbage, recycling and composting
- Putting a cap on the number of bags of garbage per week
- Create incentives to have fewer cars on the road
- Implement automated garbage
- Water metering
- Reduce waste overall

Undertake an update of the *City of St. John's Significant Wet Lands and Water Ways Study*

Other Topics

- Complete neighbourhoods as per Envision Municipal Plan that meet needs of all and limit sprawl
- Look at Goulds as an area that needs water and sewer and improved recreation
- Increase parking fees for downtown
- Traffic calming to improve safety
- Heritage preservation to ensure retention of heritage and create understanding of guidelines
- Continuation of Heritage Grants program introduced in 2016
- Consider development of a social enterprise strategy
- Incentives for youth to volunteer/become more involved in community development programming
- Use communications tools that reach youth
- Develop communications to reach seniors on emergency management, warming stations, etc..



ST. JOHN'S