

# Starting a Business in St. John's

This guide provides information about starting or growing a business in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. For more detailed information visit us online at [StJohns.ca/Business](https://StJohns.ca/Business)





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# Thinking of Starting your Business in St. John's?

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Whether you are an established company or starting a new business, the City of St. John's is here to help. We provide free assistance to help you identify which regulations can impact your business and we will help you find the information you need to navigate business start-up requirements



## Plan for your Business

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If you're **starting a business** in St. John's — contact us **first**:

- phone 709-576-8107
- email [Business@StJohns.ca](mailto:Business@StJohns.ca)
- visit us at 348 Water Street.

We can help you learn how to apply for permits, find the latest resources to prepare your business and marketing plans, define market trends, identify funding sources, provide site selection assistance and more.

A **business plan** is an essential part of creating any business. To simplify your business planning process, we provide business plan templates to help you present your business ideas in a structured manner. Visit [StJohns.ca/Business](http://StJohns.ca/Business) to view these resources.

Depending on the type of business you wish to operate, **other agencies** at the provincial or federal level, may be involved. Use [BizPal.ca](http://BizPal.ca) to determine whether any industry specific licences and/or regulations apply to your business.



# Municipal Requirements

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When operating a business, you should know about municipal regulations and processes.

In St. John's most businesses, including home-based businesses, pay \$50 for an **Occupancy Certificate/Permit** to operate. Additional fees are determined by the nature of your application.

Regulations are in place to ensure the safety of buildings and operations, particularly life safety issues.

Find out which applications you need to complete and the permits you require for your venture at [StJohns.ca](http://StJohns.ca) or telephone 709-576-8107.



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# Application Fees and Permit Costs

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There are various fees related to development and the application process. Information about the fee schedule can be found at: [StJohns.ca/DevelopmentFees](https://stjohns.ca/DevelopmentFees).

Permit fees and rates can be found at: [StJohns.ca/PermitFees](https://stjohns.ca/PermitFees).

## Application Process

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Anyone who wishes to operate a business in St. John's must first complete and submit either a **Planning and Development Application** or an **Application for a Building Permit**.

New construction projects and homebased businesses should complete the Planning and Development Application and the corresponding development checklist.

The Planning and Development Application and checklists can be found at [StJohns.ca/DevelopmentCheckList](https://stjohns.ca/DevelopmentCheckList).

For a new business or a change of use in an existing commercial building (referred to as a Change of Occupancy), a completed application for Building Permit is required. This activates the approval process for your business.

Note: if a Development Agreement (an application that requires approval from City Council) is required, that must be applied for and approved prior to issuing building permits. Further information can be found in the **St. John's Development Regulations** at [StJohns.ca/DevelopmentRegulations](https://stjohns.ca/DevelopmentRegulations).

Applicants should allow adequate time for the application process, particularly if other agencies and levels of government are involved. Remember to include supporting documents, for example a building floor plan, with your application.

If you need technical advice on building code regulations or what permits your business requires before opening, call the on-duty Building Inspector at 709-576-8049. Regulations are necessary to ensure public safety and fairness.

After applying for applicable building and development permits, but before you move in, you will need to request your final certificate of occupancy. Pending final approved inspection, you will be issued a certificate of occupancy.



## Mobile Vending

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Interested in selling goods or services outdoors on a public street or on private commercial property? The City of St. John's accepts applications for mobile vending. The application form is available at [StJohns.ca/BusinessLicenses](http://StJohns.ca/BusinessLicenses).

## Commercial Space

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**Check before you lease or buy commercial space for your business.** Contact us to make sure your business is an allowable land use under the **St. John's Development Regulations**. These regulations identify zoning requirements, permitted uses, parking requirements and any controls that apply to your property. If your proposed business is not in a permitted use zone, you may be required to go through a Discretionary Use process.

To learn more about allowable land uses and discretionary use call 709-576-8220 or email [Planning@StJohns.ca](mailto:Planning@StJohns.ca).



## Arrange a Meeting

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For those who have a major construction project but may not be ready to formally apply, the City's **Development Team** can help. The Development Team brings together staff from various departments to meet with you informally to provide specific site information and discuss City requirements for the proposed development. If you would like to arrange a meeting with the Development Team email [Planning@StJohns.ca](mailto:Planning@StJohns.ca).





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## Signage for New Businesses

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A permit is required for all exterior signage in St. John's. Use the Application for a Building Permit to apply, which can be found at [StJohns.ca/BuildingPermit](https://www.stjohns.ca/BuildingPermit).

## Home-Based Business

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If you will be opening a home-based business, you will need to apply for either a Home Office or Home Occupation. This may require an inspection of your residence. If you are in a rental property, you will want to check with the property owner first as they have to sign the application.

Most online businesses are considered a Home Office. The **Home Office checklist** must be submitted with the **Application for Building Permit** outlining details of the business.

Home-based businesses occupying less than 25% of the home do not pay Commercial Realty Tax and will pay 100% Residential Realty Tax. Learn more about starting or growing your business at [StJohns.ca/GrowYourBusiness](https://www.stjohns.ca/GrowYourBusiness).



# Municipal Taxation

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Owners of commercial property pay a flat property-based tax called Commercial Realty Tax. Commercial realty taxes are calculated as a percentage of the total assessed value of the property

In addition to Commercial Realty Tax certain businesses may be responsible for a downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) Levy and/or the Tourism Marketing Levy.

If you own a commercial property within the established downtown BIA a levy of 0.8 mills is added to the commercial property tax rate. The BIA Levy supports the organization Downtown St. John's and goes directly into the downtown core to enhance, beautify and promote the area.

If you operate an accommodation business licensed under the provincial Tourism Establishment Act, a 4% Accommodation Tax (known as the Tourism Marketing Levy) is applied to the daily room charge. A remittance form must be completed and submitted quarterly by hotels and bed and breakfasts within the city. Learn more at [StJohns.ca/AccommodationTax](https://stjohns.ca/AccommodationTax).

## **Is your building not fully occupied?**

There is a commercial vacancy allowance claim process which can reduce commercial realty taxes in some circumstances. To apply for the vacancy allowance commercial property owners must submit the Commercial Property Tax Allowance Claim form, found at [StJohns.ca/BusinessTax](https://stjohns.ca/BusinessTax).

For the latest taxation rates, visit [StJohns.ca/Taxation](https://stjohns.ca/Taxation).

# Built Heritage

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Is your property located in a Heritage Area? Is your building a designated heritage building?

Heritage conservation provides the community with many educational, economic and cultural benefits. Funding may also be available for work that conserves or restores the historic fabric of a heritage building.

Learn more about your buildings heritage status and financial supports, call 709-576-8220 or visit [StJohns.ca/Heritage](https://stjohns.ca/Heritage).

# Connect with the City

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## **Access St. John's**

10 New Gower Street  
Monday to Friday  
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Call anytime:  
311 or 709-754-CITY (2489)

## **Business Information Services**

### **348 Water Street**

Monday to Friday  
9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

709-576-8107  
[Business@StJohns.ca](mailto:Business@StJohns.ca)

## **Construction Permit Counter / Building Inspector on Duty**

City Hall Annex  
Monday to Friday  
9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

709-576-8049  
[Permits@StJohns.ca](mailto:Permits@StJohns.ca)

## **Planning Division**

Monday to Friday  
9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

709-576-8220  
[Planning@StJohns.ca](mailto:Planning@StJohns.ca)



# Other Business Resources

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**ACOA's Business Information Services** provides information on business registration and taxes, permits and regulations, intellectual property, business support and how to sell to government. Call toll free at 1-888-576-4444 or visit the website [www.canada.ca/en/atlantic-canada-opportunities/services/bis.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/atlantic-canada-opportunities/services/bis.html)

**Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)** The CRA business number account includes corporate income tax, import/export, payroll deductions and important information on Harmonized Sales Tax.

The Business Number is a numbering system that streamlines the way businesses deal with the Federal Government. Not all businesses require a number or account; check out the CRA website at [canada.ca/en/services/business/start.html](http://canada.ca/en/services/business/start.html) to learn more or call toll free at 1-800-959-5525.

**Service NL** offers a variety of services to businesses including incorporation, food establishment licences, building accessibility permits and more.  
709-729-3317 [www.servicnl.gov.nl.ca](http://www.servicnl.gov.nl.ca)

**Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation (NLC)** issues liquor licenses — [www.nliquor.com](http://www.nliquor.com). A division of the NLC, **ShopCannabisNL** provides information on how to become a cannabis retailer.

**Horizon Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador.** Horizon TNL (formerly RDÉE TNL), provides services and expertise in economic development in both French and English. [www.horizontnl.ca](http://www.horizontnl.ca)

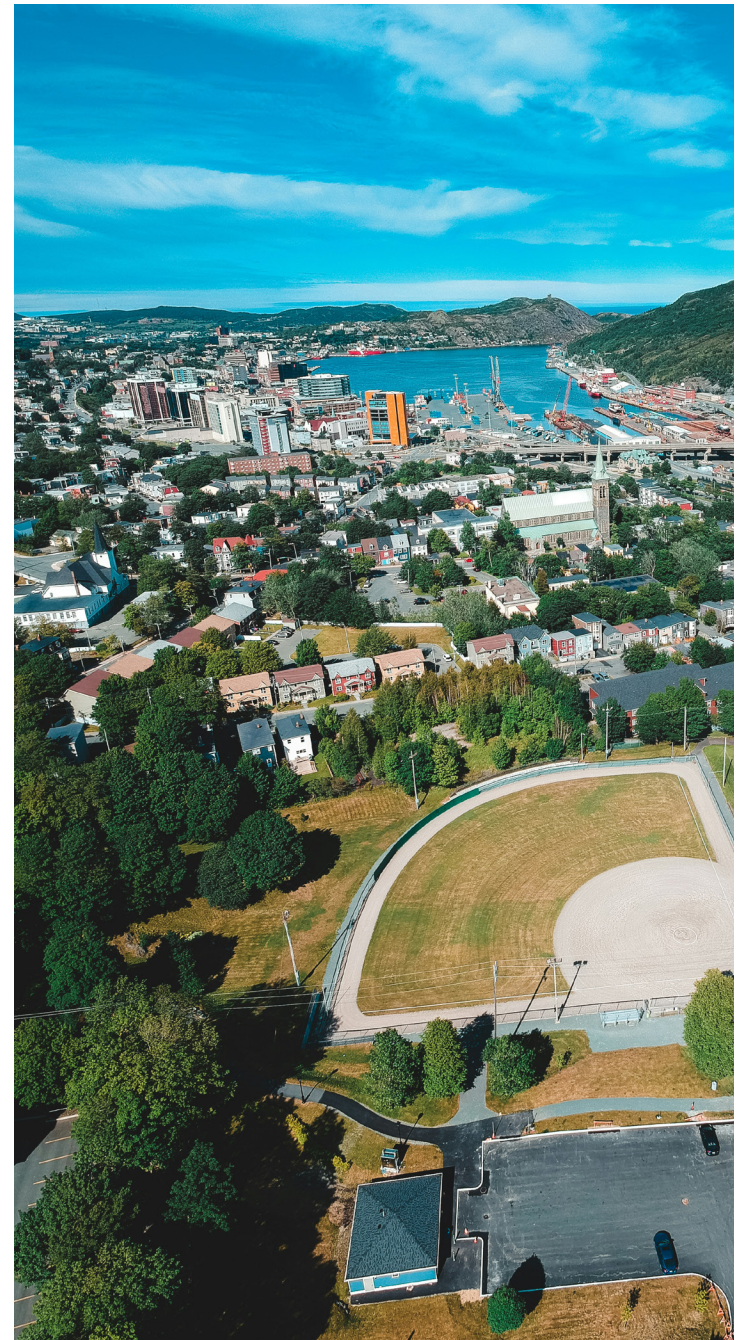




# Disclaimer

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This guide provides a general overview of the regulations, permits, processes, procedures and taxes as they apply to businesses in St. John's. The City of St. John's does not guarantee, warrant or make any representations that the information contained herein is the complete authority on regulations, permits, taxes and processes as they apply to business.







ST. JOHN'S