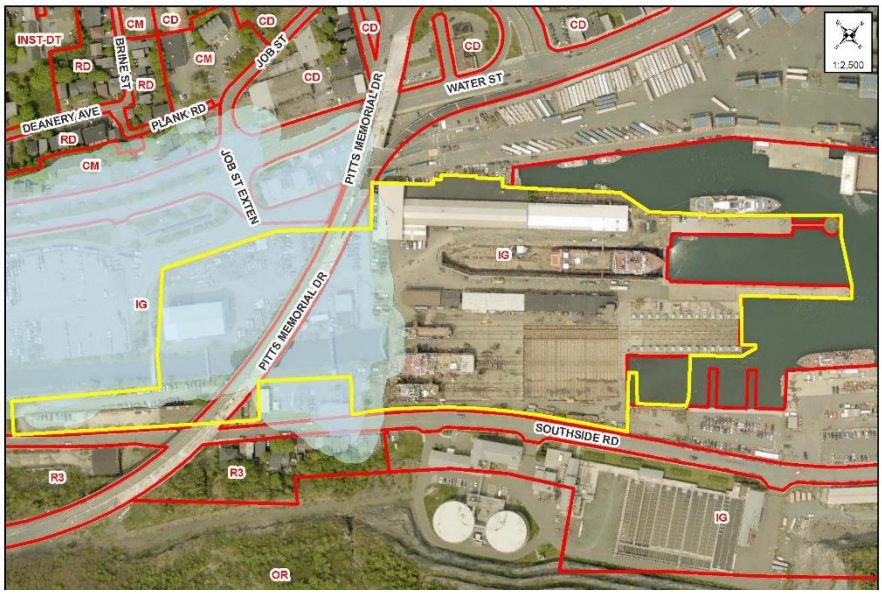
ST. JOHN'S

Decision Note

Title:	Text Amendment – Harbour Use in Floodplain and Floodplain Buffer
Date Prepared:	June 1, 2026
Report To:	Committee of the Whole
Councillor and Role:	Planning – Councillor Greg Noseworthy
Ward:	N/A

Decision/Direction Required:
To consider an amendment to the Envision St. John's Development Regulations to add a new definition of "Harbour Use", add "Harbour Use" to the Industrial General (IG) Zone, and allow "Harbour Use" within a floodplain and floodplain buffer.

Discussion – Background and Current Status:
Staff are proposing an amendment to the Development Regulations that will allow for the continued operation and future expansion of marine industrial uses around the St. John's Harbour that are within a floodplain or floodplain buffer. This amendment is prompted by the anticipated redevelopment of the St. John's Dockyard, which is partially located within the Waterford River floodplain and floodplain buffer (see map below).



The land surrounding the St. John's Harbour is within the Industrial General (IG) Zone and within the Industrial District of the Envision St. John's Municipal Plan. Under the current regulations, marine industrial uses such as the St. John's Dockyard are classified as an industrial use, and the development or expansion of an industrial use would not be permitted within a floodplain or floodplain buffer.

The proposed change is to add a definition of “Harbour Use”, add “Harbour Use” as a permitted use in the IG Zone, and add “Harbour Use” to the list of developments permitted within a floodplain or other waterbody and developments permitted in a buffer under sections 4.10(6) and (7) of the Development Regulations.

The proposed definition of “Harbour Use” is as follows:

> *HARBOUR USE means a use that is dependent upon access to or use of the St. John’s Harbour for a purpose related to marine transportation, shipbuilding, maintenance and repair of ships and shipping equipment, and other marine services, and includes ancillary uses to the foregoing.*

Alignment with the Envision St. John’s Municipal Plan

The Municipal Plan recognizes the important role of industrial lands around the St. John’s Harbour that support a range of marine uses, including transportation, marine industrial, shipping, and marine recreation uses. Policies 5.2.1 and 5.2.3 of the Municipal Plan emphasize the importance of the Port of St. John’s as a working port and marine industrial area and encourage land uses that contribute to a working harbour.

The proposed definition of “Harbour Use” is intended to capture those marine industrial uses around the St. John’s Harbour specifically. Adding “Harbour Use” as a permitted use to the IG Zone aligns with the Municipal Plan policies for the Industrial District.

Development within waterbodies, floodplains, and associated buffers is generally restricted to uses such as public utilities, public works and infrastructure, passive recreation, and docks and wharfs. Marine industrial operations (Harbour Uses) require direct access to the Harbour and therefore must be near water, sometimes within adjacent floodplains or floodplain buffers.

Public Consultation

Should Council decide to consider this amendment, staff recommend public notification (not a public meeting) in accordance with section 4.8 of the Development Regulations. This proposed amendment aligns with Municipal Plan policies and is intended to enable the redevelopment and expansion of existing marine industrial operations. The draft amendment is attached for Council’s review.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications: Not applicable.

2. Partners or Interested Parties: Property owners with land used for Harbour-related activities; St. John’s Port Authority.

3. Is this a New Plan, Master Plan, Strategy, Report, or Framework: No

4. Alignment with Strategic Directions:

   A Sustainable City: Plan for land use and preserve and enhance the natural and built environment where we live.

   A Sustainable City: Facilitate and create the conditions that drive the economy by being business and industry friendly; and being a location of choice for residents, businesses and visitors.

5. Alignment with Adopted Plans: Envision St. John's Municipal Plan and Development Regulations.

6. Accessibility and Inclusion: Not applicable.

7. Legal or Policy Implications: A text amendment to the Envision St. John's Development Regulations is required.

8. Privacy Implications: Not applicable.

9. Engagement and Communications Considerations: Public consultation (public notification) will be carried out in accordance with Section 4.8 of the Development Regulations.

10. Human Resource Implications: Not applicable.

11. Procurement Implications: Not applicable.

12. Information Technology Implications: Not applicable.

13. Information Management Implications: Not applicable.

14. Other Implications: Not applicable.

Recommendation:
That Council consider an amendment to the Envision St. John's Development Regulations to add a new definition of "Harbour Use", add "Harbour Use" to the Industrial General (IG) Zone, and add "Harbour Use" to the list of uses permitted within a body of water or floodplain and associated buffers.

Prepared by: Faith Ford, MCIP, Planner III
Approved by: Ken O'Brien, MCIP, Chief Municipal Planner

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Text Amendment – Harbour Use in Floodplain and Floodplain Buffers.docx
Attachments:	- DRAFT - DR Amend No. 79, 2026 - Harbour Use in Floodplains-TEXT (ff).pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jun 2, 2026

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Ken O'Brien - Jun 1, 2026 - 12:07 PM

No Signature - Task assigned to Jason Sinyard was completed by workflow administrator Theresa Walsh

Jason Sinyard - Jun 2, 2026 - 7:42 AM

City of St. John's Development Regulations, 2021

St. John's Development Regulations
Amendment Number 79, 2026

DRAFT

Harbour Use in Floodplains and Floodplain Buffers

May 2026

URBAN AND RURAL PLANNING ACT, 2000

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT

CITY OF ST. JOHN'S Development Regulations, 2021

Amendment Number 79, 2026

Under the authority of section 16 of the *Urban and Rural Planning Act, 2000*, the City Council of St. John's adopts the City of St. John's Development Regulations Amendment Number 79, 2026.

Adopted by the City Council of St. John's on the ____ day of 2026.

Signed and sealed this _____ day of _____.

Town Seal

Mayor: _____

Clerk: _____

Canadian Institute of Planners Certification

I certify that the attached City of St. John's Development Regulations Amendment Number 79, 2026 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Urban and Rural Planning Act, 2000.*

MCIP/FCIP: _____

MCIP/FCIP Stamp

Development Regulations/Amendment
REGISTERED
Number _____
Date _____
Signature _____

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CITY OF ST. JOHN'S

Development Regulations Amendment Number 79, 2026

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS
The City is considering an amendment to City of St. John's Development Regulations, 2021 to add a new definition of "Harbour Use" and add "Harbour Use" to the list of uses permitted within a body of water or floodplain and associated buffers.

The purpose of this amendment is to allow for the continued operation and future expansion of marine industrial uses around the St. John's Harbour that are within a floodplain or floodplain buffer. The amendment will enable the future redevelopment of the St. John's Dockyard, which is partially located within an existing floodplain and buffer.

The land surrounding the St. John's Harbour is within the Industrial General (IG) Zone and within the Industrial District of the Envision St. John's Municipal Plan. The proposed change is to add a definition of "Harbour Use", add "Harbour Use" as a permitted use in the IG Zone, and add "Harbour Use" to the list of developments permitted within a floodplain or other waterbody and developments permitted in a buffer under Sections 4.10(6) and (7) of the Development Regulations.

ANALYSIS
Section 8.6 of the Envision St. John's Municipal Plan sets out the policies for development within the Industrial Land Use District. The Industrial District enables light and general industry uses, as well as airport and harbour-related activities. Policy 8.6.7 references harbour development, recognizing that the industrial lands around the Port of St. John's will be used primarily for marine uses, including transportation, marine industrial, shipping, and marine recreation uses. Policy 5.2.1 of the Municipal Plan speaks specifically to the Port of St. John's, recognizing that the Port is a marine industrial area and working harbour environment.

Section 3.4 of the Municipal Plan outlines the policies for development within hazard areas, bodies of water, and flood hazard areas. Generally, development within waterbodies and floodplains and development within the floodplain buffer is limited to uses such as public utilities, public works and infrastructure, passive recreation uses, and docks and wharfs. The nature of marine industrial uses that are reliant on access to and use of the harbour (Harbour Uses) requires these developments to be located in or near salt water and within areas that fall within floodplains or floodplain buffers or may be impacted by climate change or future sea-level changes.

The proposed amendment to add a definition of "Harbour Use" and to allow this use within the IG Zone and within waterbodies and waterbody buffers aligns with the Municipal Plan policies to facilitate the continued operation and

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expansion of marine industrial activities such as shipbuilding, ship repair facilities, marine transportation, and other marine services.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION
To be completed after consultation.

ST. JOHN'S URBAN REGION REGIONAL PLAN
The proposed amendment is in line with the St. John's Urban Region Regional Plan. An amendment to the St. John's Urban Region Regional Plan would not be required for this amendment as the lands surrounding the St. John's Harbour are within the Industrial Regional Designation and "Harbour Use" and marine industrial uses are appropriate for this designation.

ST. JOHN'S DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS AMENDMENT NUMBER 79, 2026

The City of St. John's Development Regulations, 2021 is amended by:

1) Adding the following to Section 2 – Definitions:
   "HARBOUR USE means a use that is dependent upon access to or use of the St. John's Harbour for a purpose related to marine transportation, shipbuilding, maintenance and repair of ships and shipping equipment, and other marine services, and includes ancillary uses to the foregoing."

2) Adding "Harbour Use" as a Permitted use in the Industrial General (IG) Zone.

3) Adding Harbour Use to the uses listed in Section 4.10(6) respecting Development in a Buffer:
   "(n) Harbour Use"

4) Adding Harbour Use to the uses listed in Section 4.10(7) respecting Development in bodies of water:
   "(j) Harbour Use"

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