

THE CITY

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MOVING MOUNTAINS



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Troy Northrup will continue to play a major role in developing the east side of Saint John into a shopping destination for New Brunswick.

Development Troy Northrup is among the new breed of community leaders who will help shape city during a crucial period of growth

This is the last in a series of eight stories about individuals who we expect will shape the future of Greater Saint John in 2008 and beyond.

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TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

SAINT JOHN – Few people get to change the landscape of a city, but Troy Northrup has done it – figuratively and literally.

Eastmount mountain still looms over the east side, but soon the rocky outcrop will be replaced by a series of plateaus with gleaming retail outlets perched atop.

East Point Shopping is slowly becoming a focal point of the transformation of the McAllister district from a shopping centre to a shopping mecca. In short order, Northrup has been able to attract some of the largest retailers in the country including book-retailing giant Indigo, coffee icon Starbucks and restaurant chain Montana's Cookhouse.

The complex, which will eventually include 700,000 feet of retail space, has won Northrup a number of accolades including the Business Excellence Award at the Saint John Board of Trade's 2007 Outstanding Business Achievement Awards.

"Nobody is going to come in from away and solve a lot of the problems we have as a community," said Northrup. "We all need to invest, and I'm not just talking monetary."

Time and effort, he said, can be far more crucial to a community than just dollars.

"I think it's tremendous, some of the things that are pending for Saint John. I see them as opportunities for the community and what's important for the community is how we manage them. How we manage those opportunities is really what's going to set the foundation for the future of the community. The decisions we make today are going to have a very profound effect on the long-term future."

Proper planning, what things are built and where they are built are not the only considerations. The ramifications, he said, of where a proposed development is located, private or government driven, has on a particular portion of the

PLEASE SEE → NORTHROP, C2

PEOPLE TO WATCH

Tuesday Shelley Rinehart believes in taking responsibility for shaping the community she loves.

Wednesday Bob Manning is among the city's most visible movers and shakers.

Thursday Deputy Mayor Michelle Hooton refused to be silenced just because people accuse her of politicking.

Friday Southwest New Brunswick MP Greg Thompson isn't afraid of a little hard work.

Saturday There is no coasting in the life of Nathalie Godbout.

Monday Jack Keir's ascent in provincial politics began during a breakfast with Premier Shawn Graham at Reggie's Restaurant.

Tuesday Rookie MLA Mary Schryer's political star continues to rise.

Today Troy Northrup is moving mountains, both literally and figuratively.

We have to invest and we have to set the right examples: Northrup

NORTHRUP ← C1

city also has to be taken into account.

“The decisions we make are so important,” the 42-year-old developer said. “It’s really going to be the basis for the next few generations and the opportunities which are being presented. They’re opportunities I’ve never before seen in my lifetime and I don’t know if the city will see them again, so it’s just so important that we don’t make mistakes.”

Whether it be the possibility of a second oil refinery, a second nuclear reactor, retail shopping meccas or ongoing projects such as Canaport LNG, Northrup believes it’s up to the citizens of the city to grab hold of such opportunities and shape their city.

The city, he said, should look to what other communities have done to manage such unprecedented growth and learn from their successes and failures.

Some of the decisions Northrup has made include creating not just another grouping of stores. East Point Shopping has little touches that separate it from the run-of-the-mill development. Touches such as flying in people from Arizona to teach local workers how to apply a special sidewalk treatment that gives the complex a Tex-Mex feel and a massive 13-

metre welcome sign that is more of an icon than a sign welcoming shoppers, are what distinguish the complex. He’s also struck deals with retailers on how they identify their stores and things such as limiting outdoor wall signage and keeping most signs to markers that will be put in place by East Point on designated signs and not tacked to the sides of buildings.

Using a number of searchlights that

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beam through the night air, East Point has become a focal point.

“Usually you only hear the naysayers,” Northrup said about some critics, but he said he’s been overwhelmed by the positive comments from “people I don’t even know.”

The lights, he agreed, bring a sense of glitz to a city that has for so long been viewed as nothing more than a blue-collar town. Most people, he said, judge a community on nothing more than a drive through it.

“As a community, we’re the ones that have to fix that. We’re the ones that have to improve the image. Nobody is going to come from Vancouver, or Toronto or Chicago or some big city and say all of a sudden, ‘Look, we’re going to fix this up for you.’ I mean that’s not going to happen. It has to happen within the community. We have to do the right things. We have to invest and we have to set the right examples.”

And, he said, land is not the issue. He believes the city has zoned enough commercial land in the area to allow for 15 or 20 years of development.

The Canadian Tire, Wal-Mart and Kent developments are sprawling, but only accounts for a total of 350,000 square feet of retail space.

“It’s twice what’s down there,” he said of East Point.

East Point will develop over the same period of 10 or 15 years.

“Quite frankly, this market is only so big,” said Northrup, who lives with his wife, Andrea, in the heart of Rothesay,

not far from the home where he grew up.

He wonders if beyond retail, maybe more office space might begin popping up on the east side.

“Beyond that 10- to 15-year time frame, we have to revisit the market and have a look at how it’s transformed itself,” he said of using old retail sites for things such as office space. “As it evolves, the older developments will rise to the occasion or they’ll reinvent themselves as something else.”

But, he said, he’s not saying that retail development will come to a grinding halt in a decade or so.

“We’ll see where the market is.”

This spring, city residents will be asked to go to the polls and choose a municipal government. Northrup offered only one carefully chosen piece of advice.

“Leadership is always important,” Northrup said. “As a community, it’s important that we have proper municipal planning. It’s important that we understand the industry that we’re trying to attract and it’s important for us as a community to understand what it is we want. If we’re focused, we know what we want, we understand the industry and we provide the great environments, those are all things that build a successful community.”