

OPINION

Entrepreneurs deliver community growth

On May 27, the largest Costco store in Atlantic Canada will open in Saint John. At 142,000 square feet of retail space, it is expected to become an anchor point for further development, drawing shoppers from as far away as Maine and Nova Scotia.

The new Costco and its neighbours at East Point Shopping are a testament to southwestern New Brunswick's growing buying power. They're also a credit to real estate developer Troy Northrup, who has parlayed the public demand for more diverse shopping into a growing commercial centre. Far-sighted business people such as Mr. Northrup are moving the city and the province forward, by creating the anchors of a higher-grade commercial economy.

When workers began levelling off the forested bluff beside Westmorland Road to create East Point Shopping, some people questioned whether the venture would pay off. In just a few years, the site has attracted an appealing mix of

big-box stores and boutique retailers, from brand-name clothing and restaurants to an Indigo book store. Inns and hotels have joined the malls on Saint John's commercial east side and go hand-in-hand with a wave of complementary development in west Saint John.

Municipal leaders talk about the need to encourage growth, and public policies can have a big impact on how much development takes place, from the municipal level to provincial taxes and regulations. But without entrepreneurs who make a personal investment in New Brunswick communities and spend the time to sell national retailers on the value of locating in this place, such rapid economic development would not take place.

Troy Northrup made a statement of confidence in his community by investing in Saint John – and that confidence is affirmed by every new retailer that chooses to do business here.