



Agenda
Owen Sound City Council
Special Meeting

December 15, 2025

2:30 p.m.

City Hall - 808 2nd Avenue East - Council Chambers

The public can attend meetings in person. Meetings will be livestreamed to the City's [Council and Committees webpage](#). If there are technical issues with the livestream that cannot be fixed within 15 minutes, the meeting will continue, and a recording will be available later on the webpage or by contacting the [City Clerk](#).

	Pages
1. CALL TO ORDER	
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
3. MOTION TO MOVE COUNCIL INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE	
<u>COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE</u>	
4. REPORTS OF CITY STAFF	
4.a Report CS-25-123 from the Senior Planner Re: Proposed Changes to the Conservation Authorities Act	3
5. COUNCIL WORKING SESSION	
5.a Official Plan Amendment (OPA) No. 14 and Zoning By-law Amendment (ZBA) No. 57 - Led by MHBC Planning	49
This is a continuation of the Council Working Session held on November 24, 2025. The draft amendments, background studies, reports, and discussion papers can be found on the website at OurCity.OwenSound.ca/Planning .	
6. MOTION THAT COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE RISE AND REPORT	
<u>FORMAL SESSION</u>	
7. MOTION TO ADOPT PROCEEDINGS IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE	
8. BY-LAWS	

8.a By-law No. 2025-130

"A By-law to confirm the proceedings of the Special Meeting of the Council of The Corporation of the City of Owen Sound held on the 15th day of December, 2025"

9. ADJOURNMENT

Staff Report

Report To: City Council
Report From: Margaret Potter, Senior Planner
Meeting Date: December 15, 2025
Report Code: CS-25-123
Subject: Proposed Changes to the Conservation Authorities Act

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-25-123 respecting Proposed Changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act*, City Council directs staff to:

1. Send this resolution, report and its attachments to the Province of Ontario as the City's response to Bill 68 and the Environmental Registry of Ontario posting 025-1257; and
2. Forward this report to Paul Vickers, MPP for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Grey Sauble Conservation Authority Board of Directors, Conservation Ontario, and AMO.

Highlights:

- Bill 68 is in effect, establishing the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency to oversee Conservation Authorities and transition to a regional watershed-based framework.
- Conservation Authorities were established at the request of municipalities, yet municipalities were not consulted on this change.
- Owen Sound is proposed to be 1 of 80 municipalities within the jurisdiction of the Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority.
- The province is seeking input on the proposed boundaries, transition, budget, and governance. Staff have significant concerns about:
 - Maintaining voice as one of 80;

- Impact on budget;
- Erosion of relationship and responsiveness; and
- Loss of local knowledge.
- The province has not undertaken a cost-benefit analysis or provided proposed approaches for consideration.
- Municipalities currently provide approximately 44% of total Grey Sauble Conservation Authority funding, while the Province of Ontario provides approximately 7%.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: This report supports the delivery of Core Service.

It is also related to all of the themes of Vision 2050 as the provincial changes could impact Prosperous City (budget), Green & Resilient City (hazards), Celebrating & Embracing Culture (connection to water, input on master plans), City Building (development review), A City that Moves (infrastructure planning), Safe City (safe public spaces/conservation areas), and Fostering Mutually Beneficial & Respectful Relationships (partnerships to address complex issues and transparency in decision making).

Climate and Environmental Implications:

This supports the objectives of the City's Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan by considering climate adaptation in the development of the City's strategies, plans, and policies.

Previous Report/Authority:

[ERO No. 025-1257](#) Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities

[Supplemental document](#) regarding proposed boundaries

[Bill 68](#), *Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures)*, 2025 (No. 2) would establish the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency

[GSCA Board of Directors Agenda November 26, 2025](#) – Report 033-2025 (page 56) Bill 68 and Proposed Changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and Ontario's Conservation Authorities

[PDR-CW-70-25 Grey County Report](#) on Proposed Changes to Conservation Authorities in Ontario

Additional links to supporting documentation can be found in Schedule 'A'.

Background:

Conservation Authorities in Ontario

The *Conservation Authorities Act* was created in 1946. It provided for Conservation Authorities to be established at the request of municipalities in a common watershed where these municipalities agreed to work together with shared governance on local resource management, including flood and erosion issues. Conservation Authorities are accessible at the local level for service delivery, education, resource management, and engagement.

Two separate conservation authorities established in the late 1950s (North Grey Region and Sauble Valley) became the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA) in 1985. Some highlights of GSCA include:

- 28 full and part-time staff (plus seasonal staff);
- The watershed areas within GSCA jurisdiction spans 3,191 sq. km.;
- GSCA owns the most publicly accessible land in the watershed:
 - Approximately 117.5 sq. km (29,000 acres);
 - 172 km of trails; and
 - Island properties accessible only by boat; and
- 32 Conservation Areas within the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System (NEPOSS):
 - Majority connected by the Bruce Trail; and
 - Inglis Falls Conservation Area is one of the NEPOSS 9 nodal parks.

The lands in GSCA ownership were acquired, and many donated by families, for specific conservation purposes.

GSCA properties are accessible to the public with differing permitted uses and varying degrees of managed infrastructure associated with their purpose. Inglis Falls boasts over 100,000 visitors annually and is seamlessly connected by trails to Owen Sound's Harrison Park.

How is GSCA Governed?

Once established, a Conservation Authority (CA) is a distinct legal entity operating as a local public sector organization with a degree of autonomy from the individual municipalities and the province. Local decision making

and cost sharing provides flexibility to respond to matters affecting the local watershed using local expertise.

Conservation Authorities are governed by board members appointed from their member municipalities who decide the budget, programs, and policies for the CA within the legislated framework.

Because Conservation Authority jurisdiction follows watershed boundaries and not political boundaries, some municipalities fall within the jurisdiction of more than one Conservation Authority. The number of representatives that each municipality can appoint to the board is based on the population of the municipality within the Conservation Authority jurisdiction. Owen Sound is entirely within the jurisdiction of GSCA.

The makeup of the GSCA Board of Directors is as follows:

- Member Municipalities: 8
- Total board members: 11
- Owen Sound members: 2 (18%)

GSCA's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan is available online together with monthly Board agendas. GSCA minutes are included in City Council agenda packages for information.

GSCA has already undertaken significant modernization work aligned with provincial objectives, including Information Technology/Information Management, and leveraging technology to streamline planning and permit review processes processing 100% of major permits within the provincial timelines in 2024.

The Value of Natural Areas

A preliminary evaluation of GSCA's landholdings in 2018 determined that over \$86 million dollars (2024-dollar value) of ecosystem service benefits are provided annually to residents and visitors by the properties GSCA owns. These services include recreation, flood and drought mitigation, climate regulation, wildlife benefits, carbon sequestration and others. A copy of this report can be found on GSCA's website: [The Value of our Natural Areas](#).

Who Pays for GSCA Operations

The proposed draft 2026 operating budget of GSCA is just over \$4.2 million. The following table is excerpted from the GSCA 2026 Draft Budget as outlined in the [November 2026 Board of Directors Agenda Package](#).

DEPARTMENT & BUDGET REVENUES	Approved 2025 Budget	Proposed 2026 Budget	Proposed 2027 Budget	Proposed 2028 Budget
Total Operations Budget Funding				
Municipal Levy - Category 1 and General	1,675,839	1,730,554	1,804,119	1,877,057
Municipal Levy - Category 3	86,833	94,055	113,598	121,174
CAA S39	37,056	37,056	37,056	37,056
MECP (DWSP)	228,732	251,250	218,175	233,413
Agreements, MOUs and Grants	138,580	216,502	211,152	217,152
Services & Sales	1,658,642	1,751,550	1,728,007	1,755,334
Donations	22,500	15,000	5,000	5,000
Interest & Gains	26,000	19,200	19,200	19,200
From Reserves	51,022	131,147	112,429	100,611
From Surplus	24,916	-	-	-
From Deferred Revenue	31,736	-	-	-
Total Operating Budget	3,981,856	4,246,315	4,248,736	4,365,997

As outlined in the Budget Companion, **the total 2026 levy-based operating cost for all GSCA's programs equals approximately \$24.53 per resident per year or \$0.47 per week.**

The Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) does contribute to specific operations relating to Drinking Water Source Protection. For all other operations of GSCA, the transfer payment from the province is just over \$37,000 vs. over \$1.8 million from municipalities.

With limited provincial funding, CAs have to generate funds to pay for the services they provide. Applicant permitting and user fees are one way to do this.

Parking fees at GSCA properties go towards property and facility maintenance as well as municipal tax payments. GSCA currently does not charge a fee for general admittance or daily use. Some Conservation Authorities including [Saugeen Valley](#) do have a daily use fee.

Conservation Authority properties are not exempt from paying property taxes.

At one time CAs were funded approximately 50% by the province and 50% by municipal levy.

Looking back at the 2021 GSCA budget ([January 2021 Board Agenda](#)), the estimated provincial transfer payment was \$71,779 for 2019 whereas the actual was \$37,056, where it has remained.

Local municipalities currently provide approximately 44% of total GSCA funding while the Province of Ontario provides approximately 7%.

Relationships that Work

Owen Sound has a strong working relationship with GSCA. Many organizational roles are similar between a municipality and a CA and as we do in rural Ontario, our organizations lean on each other to share knowledge and work together to solve problems. We are both interested in providing the best service we can to our local ratepayers with limited provincial funding and strong ties to the communities we serve. We live, work and play here together. A member of the public can visit our offices and obtain service, whether applying for a permit or renting a pavilion.

Conservation Authorities carry out programs that serve provincial and municipal interests, including the following mandatory (under O.Reg. 686/21) programs:

- ✓ Natural Hazard Management:
 - Flood and Erosion Control
 - Dam management (including Mill Dam)
 - Infrastructure management (including erosion control in Owen Sound)
 - Parkview Estates
 - 9th Street and Sydenham River
 - Pottawatomi River and Alpha Street
 - Flood forecasting and warning
 - Drought/low water program
 - Advice to municipalities on natural hazard management and other matters (including land use policy and development review)
 - Regulating impacts of development and activities in hazardous land (such as floodplains, shorelines or wetlands) natural hazards and public safety through a permitting process
- ✓ Management of Conservation Authority Owned Land (e.g. West Rocks)

- ✓ Drinking Water Source Protection (under the *Clean Water Act*)
- ✓ Surface Water and Groundwater monitoring programs
 - Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Program (surface water)
 - Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network
- ✓ Operational Administration including:
 - Marketing and Engagement within the watershed
 - Information management and GIS resources that inform and engage municipalities, residents, and visitors
 - Governance support
 - Human resources and general administration
 - Asset management and financial management

Conservation Authorities can also provide additional services that further their purposes. Where these services require municipal funding or are provided on behalf of a municipality, an agreement is required to deliver these additional services. Where the CA undertakes these services to further its purposes and does not require municipal financing, no agreements are required.

GSCA provides additional programs and services including:

- ✓ Environmental Education and Community Outreach
 - Specialist High Skills Major in GIS
 - Day Camps
 - Curriculum development and delivery
- ✓ Forestry Service (including West Rocks Management Area)
- ✓ Watershed Report Cards (requiring additional watershed monitoring beyond provincial requirements)
- ✓ Watershed Stewardship and Restoration (securing external grant dollars to support landowners with projects that improve water quality, soil health, habitat restoration, invasive species management)
- ✓ Land Management programs such as:
 - Partnership building and support

- Stakeholders, committees, “friends of” groups, partnerships to provide value in delivery of programs and services
- Bruce Trail connectivity into Owen Sound would not be possible without GSCA properties
- Lease Agreement management, such as:
 - Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre
 - Public Health Grey Bruce
- Land Use Agreements
 - Everything from pavilion rentals to research to race events
- ✓ Managing Paid Parking
- ✓ Land Acquisition and Disposal
 - E.g. West Rocks Management Area has expanded over time
- ✓ Contracted services to manage Grey County Forests, forest trails, and CP Rail Trail
- ✓ Contracted services to oversee Grey County Forest Management By-law
- ✓ Drinking Water Source Protection Risk Management Services to 14 municipalities on a fee for service basis (including Owen Sound)

Owen Sound and other member municipalities benefit from all of the above. Community partnerships are integral to rural Ontario communities. Neither municipalities nor CAs could do all we do without support from organizations in our community with shared common goals.

These programs and services are provided across a jurisdiction of 3,191 sq. km, by a team of 28 staff (plus seasonal), for \$4.25 million. 49% of this budget is self-generated (not from levy or provincial funding).

More information on the costs of providing these services are included in GSCA’s 2026 Draft Budget. Attached as Schedule ‘C’ is a graphic comparing GSCA to other CAs in the province (source: GSCA 2018).

City of Owen Sound Zoning By-law 2010-078

The ridges and valleys that contribute to the beauty of Owen Sound also contribute to its hazards. In 2010, the Provincial Policy Statement (as does today's Provincial Planning Statement) directs development away from areas of natural hazards.

Under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, an authority shall provide programs and services related to the risk of natural hazards. For the purposes of accomplishing its objects, a Conservation Authority may collaborate and enter into agreements with ministries and agencies of government, municipal councils and local boards and other organizations and individuals. Through Memorandum of Agreement, GSCA provides *Planning Act* application review and technical clearance services to the City of Owen Sound.

Parts of the City that are by provincial definition "hazardous lands" are often also regulated by GSCA and we share the duty to direct development away from these hazards for the protection of people and property.

Zoning By-law 2010-078 has been amended over time but has not required a significant update to the Hazard Zone mapping in large part because of the significant work by GSCA.

At the outset of the process of creating the 2010 Comprehensive Zoning By-law, the idea was to create a more user-friendly Hazard Zone. GSCA provided revised Hazard Zone mapping based on technical guidance from the province relating to watercourses, steep slopes, and the shoreline. This mapping is based on orthorectified information and was completed in consultation with the City Engineering and Planning Divisions and the City's consultant. GSCA undertook numerous reviews and site visits to locations where the public/residents requested a more detailed assessment of the hazard land.

GSCA prepared a succinct overview of how provincial mapping guidelines were applied to the unique landscape of Owen Sound.

As general lot fabric is not geodetically referenced, staff recognized that the alignment of the hazard zone mapping would not perfectly translate on to available aerial photography. Wording was added to the Interpretation section of the by-law to provide for site specific interpretation:

"Where a Hazard (ZH) Zone boundary is left uncertain following a review of the Zoning Maps, the City may refer to Schedule "B" of this By-law, request confirmation of the boundary from the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority or

should further detail be required may request the owner have a survey prepared by an Ontario Land Surveyor.”

When a building permit application is submitted and there is hazard zoning on the property, City staff are able to articulate why based on the overview provided by GSCA. If the development is proposed near the hazard zone boundary, staff can confirm the hazard zone site specifically with GSCA. As the *Conservation Authorities Act* is “other applicable law” under the *Building Code Act*, at the same time GSCA staff can confirm whether a permit is required from their office.

If the development is proposed in a hazard area, then through pre-consultation GSCA helps City staff to determine the appropriate application processes and technical studies needed from the applicant to demonstrate that the development is safe and appropriate.

GSCA is considered a key external agency in the City’s Development Team approach to reviewing development applications.

Evolving Changes

Since 2022, Conservation Authorities have faced a rapidly changing legislative context.

In October of 2022, the province released the [*More Homes Built Faster Act \(Bill 23\)*](#) and it received Royal Assent on November 28, 2022. One of its key changes was to limit Conservation Authorities’ role in the planning and development review process and specifically remove their ability to provide review services for natural heritage on development applications or planning policy matters. Municipalities no longer had the option of choosing to allow CAs to undertake this work on their behalf through agreement, even though they had been undertaking it for years and this made sense because often areas of natural heritage align with areas of natural hazard. GSCA had been budgeting to hire one Planning Ecologist and revised their budget and fee schedule in December of 2022 as a result of Bill 23 ([GSCA report 035-2022](#)).

The Provincial Policy Statement and County and local Official Plans continued to require natural heritage review and the County of Grey stepped in to hire two Planning Ecologists whose main role is to review planning applications and contribute to policy updates to help protect natural heritage features for member municipalities.

Bill 23 also limited the right of conservation authorities to appeal decisions made under the *Planning Act* by restricting their role as a public body to those provisions related to natural hazard policies.

In December of 2022, GSCA received a letter from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (now MNR) placing a freeze on conservation authority fees for any work related to reviewing and commenting on planning and development related proposals, applications, or land use planning policies or for conservation authority permitting. This initial freeze was applicable for the entirety of 2023 and has been extended annually through 2025. The result is a loss in inflation based increases roughly equal to 1% levy apportionment (GSCA Reports [047-2023](#) and [007-2025](#)).

Provincial funding has remained stagnant since 2019, and the province has frozen fees for development review at 2022 levels.

Conservation Authorities are left to assume or pass on to municipalities a larger share of annual operating costs attributed to development.

In February of 2024, the Province approved Ontario Regulation 41/24: Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits. Upon passing this regulation, the province revoked the individual regulations that each Conservation Authority had to regulate development, interference with wetlands and alterations to shorelines and watercourses. Locally Council might recall O.Reg. 151/06 was the GSCA specific regulation which is now revoked.

Conservation Authorities were given from February 16, 2024, to April 1, 2024, to prepare for implementation of this regulatory change and associated amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act*. Applications received before April 1, 2024, remained subject to the older regulation.

GSCA staff prepared interim guidance and new permit application forms reflecting this change ready for Board of Directors approval before the end of March 2024 ([GSCA Report 007-2024](#)). Permits and Planning Applications reviewed by GSCA are regularly reported with timeframes to the Board of Directors.

The Current Proposal (Bill 68) Plan to Protect Ontario Act

On October 31, 2025, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks ([News Release](#)) announced the Government's intention to introduce legislation which, if passed, would amend the *Conservation Authorities Act* to create the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency – a provincial board-

governed agency – to provide centralized leadership, efficient governance, strategic direction, and oversight of Ontario’s conservation authorities.

Another key action announced by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Chief Conservation Executive is the plan to consolidate the province’s 36 conservation authorities into regional conservation authorities that continue to align with watershed boundaries.

Some of the reasons the province gives for making this change:

1. Each CA follows different policies;
2. Each CA follows different standards;
3. Each CA follows different fees; and
4. Each CA follows different staffing and technical capabilities.

The province suggests this has led to unpredictable and inconsistent turnaround times for approvals, uncertainty and delays for those seeking permits, and undermines CA’s ability to protect communities from floods and hazards.

On November 6, 2025, the province gave first reading to [Bill 68, Plan to Protect Ontario Act \(Budget Measures\), 2025 \(No. 2\)](#). This bill has since received Royal Assent on November 27, 2025.

Among other matters, Schedule 3 of the Bill amends the *Conservation Authorities Act* to establish the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency to oversee conservation authorities and the transition to a regional watershed-based framework for conservation authorities in Ontario.

The [Conservation Authorities Act](#) now includes PART VIII.1 THE AGENCY.

There was no Environmental Registry Posting or request for comment on this change. **The legislation was passed less than 30 days after the time of initial announcement.**

The impact of these changes on local representation and funding expectations has not been indicated.

The *Conservation Authorities Act* (historically) was not unlike the *Municipal Act* in how it provides a framework for how each of Ontario’s 444 municipalities have policies, standards, and local by-laws that reflect local circumstances.

Similarly, Conservation Ontario, like the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) provides support for municipalities to work together to achieve shared goals and meet common challenges.

AMO has not yet provided a full response to the province's posting on these changes but states on their website:

"The government is making changes but it is not providing any new, ongoing provincial funding to run conservation authorities effectively, while simultaneously creating a new provincial oversight agency and weakening local municipal leaders' control over conservation and environmental protections."

Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities [ERO No. 025-1257](#)

Through this ERO posting, the province is *"seeking feedback on the proposed boundaries and the criteria applied to inform the proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities. This feedback will help inform the development of further proposed changes to the Conservation Authorities Act that may be introduced at a later date."*

The criteria applied for determining the proposed boundaries for regional Conservation Authorities is indicated as:

- Maintaining watershed-based jurisdictions – aligning with natural hydrological boundaries to support effective flood and water management, consistent with drinking water Source Protection Areas and Regions.
- Relationships between conservation authorities and municipalities – reducing administrative duplication and overlap for municipalities and conservation authorities to simplify accountability and strengthen local partnerships.
- Balancing expertise and capacity across conservation authorities – enhancing technical skills and resources across conservation authorities to improve service and program delivery.
- Service continuity – ensuring uninterrupted delivery of local conservation authority programs – including flood forecasting and warning, permitting, and source water protection – through and after consolidation.

The ERO posting provides discussion questions relevant to the planning for the future state:

- What do you see as key factors to support a successful transition and outcome of regional conservation authority consolidation?
- What opportunities or benefits may come from a regional conservation authority framework?
- Do you have suggestions for how governance could be structured at the regional conservation authority level, including suggestions around board size, make-up and the municipal representative appointment process?
- Do you have suggestions on how to maintain a transparent and consultative budgeting process across member municipalities within a regional conservation authority?
- How can regional conservation authorities maintain and strengthen relationships with local communities and stakeholders?

GSCA is proposed to be consolidated into the proposed Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority including the former:

1. Grey Sauble Conservation Authority
2. [Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority](#)
3. [Maitland Valley Conservation Authority](#)
4. [Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority](#) (page 100)
5. [Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority](#)
6. Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority
7. [Lakehead Region Conservation Authority](#)

(Note: the above links are to available comments from that CA)

The makeup of the Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority would be as follows:

- Jurisdiction: 23,500 square kilometers
- Lakehead Conservation Authority includes Thunder Bay
- Member Municipalities: 80
- Total board members: unknown
- Owen Sound members: unknown

The general timeline for the changes is expected to be:

- Consultation process – winter of 2026.
- Conservation Authorities operate with present governance until after the 2026 Municipal election.
- Implementation of changes – January 1, 2027.

Analysis:

The changes proposed by the province are indicated to better align Conservation Authorities' services with provincial priorities on housing, the economy, infrastructure, and climate resilience.

In response to the reasons the Province gives for making this change:

1. Each CA follows different policies

All CAs now operate under the same O.Reg. 41/24. There are still activities which require permit to undertake within regulated areas. O.Reg. 41/24 prescribes that each authority shall develop and prescribe policy and procedure documents with respect to permit applications and reviews.

As this regulation is fairly new, many developers may not have even encountered it or know that there is now a common set of regulations in place.

The [Provincial Planning Statement Chapter 5](#) (PPS) deals with natural hazards to public health and safety. GSCA comments on natural hazards when reviewing proposals and provides information and expertise to help the municipality and developer meet provincial policy requirements for natural hazards.

Hazardous lands, hazardous sites, flooding and different types of hazards are defined in the PPS, and **these definitions apply across the province**. However, each municipality will not have the same types of hazards occurring in their jurisdiction. For example, an inland municipality will not have the types of hazards associated with shorelines of the Great Lakes.

The province has the authority to standardize policies and procedures for Conservation Authorities without creating an additional level of bureaucracy or consolidating boundaries.

2. Each CA follows different standards

O.Reg. 41/24 includes Schedule 1 which stipulates the applicable flood standards for each CA in the province.

Under this fairly new (2024) regulation, the province has stipulated different flood event standards to be applied to different Conservation Authorities.

It is interesting to note that the seven (7) CAs proposed to be consolidated into the Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority do not share a flood

event standard under this regulation. Even within the GSCA jurisdiction there are different standards applied for the different watersheds.

Different standards can be necessary to respond to different local contexts. Applying the same standards across Ontario would be like having a single zoning by-law, it would remove the ability to respond to local needs.

The reason that different watersheds have different standards applied should be seriously considered before making further changes in order to ensure the people and property of Ontario are protected from flooding for the long term.

The standards applied should be those that best serve to protect the health, safety and property of Ontarians in their individual watersheds.

3. Each CA follows different fees

Owen Sound has been calling on the province to provide more equitable, reliable, and sustainable means of funding Conservation Authorities since 2015. Instead, fees have been frozen limiting the ability of CAs to recover costs and allocate necessary resources to development review.

Fees are necessarily different in different regions, as the landscape and needs differ. Where fees are intended to recover costs associated with offering a service, the fee must be different if the cost to provide the service is different.

This is not unlike municipalities, where costs to deliver services such as parks, snow removal, building services, etc. are different, reflecting local needs and priorities.

Aerial photography provides a high level of information at a point in time, but nothing can replace expert eyes on the ground. Often, site visits result in better outcomes for everyone involved. They offer an opportunity for staff and property owners (or their consultants) to discuss the reason for policy and regulation in relation to the actual environment, the needs of the owner, and review pros and cons of different alternatives. This level of service builds understanding and trust and can lead to increased levels of future compliance. This level of service takes time and resources yet is absolutely invaluable to accurate assessment of hazards and to building relationships. The cost of conducting site visits will be different in a CA that covers less area simply due to the time and transportation costs to get to the site.

When developers are not paying appropriate fees for cost recovery of development review, local ratepayers are covering the costs of this important work.

The province has the authority to mandate fees without creating a new Agency or regional CAs.

Ensuring CAs have the necessary funding to undertake development review is a step the province could take immediately to speed up development review.

The creation of a new provincial agency will create another layer to development review. It is unclear how this agency can operate without adding to costs and complexity for Ontarians.

4. Each CA follows different staffing and technical capabilities.

It makes sense that staffing levels might be different for the same reason that fees might be different. Site visits across larger geographic areas take more time and therefore might necessitate more staff. Staff with different levels of experience might require more or less time to process applications depending on whether they are familiar with the specific type of development or property, and that necessitates more or less staff in total.

Similarly, different staffing levels and technical capabilities can be found amongst Ontario municipalities.

Variation in technical capabilities could be addressed by the province funding and providing for cost sharing among CAs to hire shared staff or consultants with necessary expertise.

Conservation Ontario already provides a network amongst CAs to share information, education, and best practices, and could be leveraged to provide networking in this regard.

Alternatively, the province could provide increased technical support through existing ministries where expertise already exists.

An entirely new overseeing agency and regional model is not necessary to overcome different staff and technical capabilities.

Considerations for Owen Sound

Conservation Authorities were created at the request of municipalities to respond to local conditions and have built long standing relationships with the communities they serve. They are substantially funded by the

communities served. Conservation Authorities play a critical role in protecting people and property in Ontario from the impacts of erosion or flooding.

Owen Sound relies on the expert local knowledge and ongoing relationships with GSCA staff to support many activities, including development review and permitting.

Conservation Authorities collectively own and manage thousands of hectares of land, much of which was donated or sold by local residents and entrusted to Conservation Authorities as a personal legacy for long-term protection, stewardship, and the public good, with the expectation that such lands would be cared for by locally governed Conservation Authorities.

Owen Sound residents benefit from GSCA lands within and close to the City and benefit from many programs and services they offer. The City has several properties owned jointly (e.g. West Rocks) and leased from GSCA (e.g. Bayshore).

Owen Sound and the other member municipalities have governed GSCA for decades, tailoring programs and services to local watershed needs, maintaining accountable service standards, and ensuring fair and predictable costs for ratepayers.

Bill 68 (Schedule 3) has legislated the creation of the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency whose objects include overseeing Conservation Authorities and the transition to a regional watershed-based framework for Conservation Authorities in Ontario with municipal cost contribution yet to be defined.

Under this proposal, the GSCA would be consolidated into a new “Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority” that is over 23,000 square kilometers in size and consists of 80 municipalities.

The City of Owen Sound has had a record year of residential building permits (553 new residential units as of September 2025).

Owen Sound has a strong working relationship with GSCA which has resulted in a defensible policy framework to protect people and property from natural hazards with shared responsibility for implementation. GSCA works closely with City staff to ensure these homes and other buildings are appropriately located for long term return on investment.

Despite ongoing changes to the legislative framework, downloading of responsibility, and continually reduced funding (or funding that does not

keep pace with inflation) both municipalities and Conservation Authorities strive to fulfill our legislated mandates and provide value added services to our ratepaying communities.

The province has proposed substantial changes to a system that has been working for decades without reasonable consultation with Conservation Authority Boards and municipalities that fund the system.

The province has provided no cost-benefit analysis to demonstrate how these changes will benefit municipalities and Ontario residents or achieve the stated intents. The province has not provided an estimate of the costs of the new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency or regional conservation authority structure, shared how local interests would be represented at the regional level or how input will be considered, nor demonstrated an openness to local input in recent legislative changes.

For Owen Sound, this could mean:

- Significant loss of representation.
- Limited control of budgets and levies.
- No guarantee that local levies or fees will be invested locally.
- Merging of assets including land and reserves to a regional authority.
- Potential revisiting of existing legal agreements (lease, maintenance, etc.).
- Updates to land use policy to address legislated and operational changes.
- Reduced prioritization of local issues and priorities.
- Potential substantial transition costs related to rebranding, human resources, IT, and financial merging.
- Longer wait times for review of development applications. Given the provincial emphasis on timely decision making this is a significant concern. Owen Sound and GSCA have a well-established system for timely review and commenting on planning applications.
- Higher costs for permits and technical review as GSCA fees are less than other CAs.
- The creation of regional Conservation Authorities will create uncertainty for developers, stakeholders, and community organizations. This could lead to hesitancy in investing in development, hesitancy to enter into shared maintenance and land use agreements, or hesitancy to donate to ongoing conservation programs or new properties.

- Owen Sound has been calling on the province to provide more equitable, reliable, and sustainable means of funding Conservation Authorities since 2015. Instead, fees have been frozen limiting the ability of CAs to respond to increased development applications with increased staff.

Recommendations:

Owen Sound calls on the Government of Ontario to maintain local, independent, municipally governed, watershed-based Conservation Authorities to ensure strong local representation in decisions related to municipal levies, community-focused service delivery, and the protection and management of conservation lands.

Owen Sound does not support the proposed "Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority" boundary configuration outlined in Environmental Registry Notice 025-1257 as the proposal lacks sufficient justification, would significantly diminish local governance, and fails to recognize the effectiveness and efficiencies already achieved within existing watershed-based models. The existing watershed-based boundaries should be maintained.

Owen Sound affirms that large-scale regional consolidation is unnecessary, would introduce substantial transition costs, and would divert resources away from frontline watershed programs. The Council further asserts that restructuring at this scale would erode local decision-making, weaken municipal accountability, and disrupt long-standing community partnerships that are central to delivering responsive watershed management.

While Owen Sound supports provincial goals for consistent permit approval processes, shared services, and digital modernization, imposing a new top-down approach structure without strong local accountability and governance risks creating unnecessary cost, red-tape, and bureaucracy, thereby undermining efficiency and responsiveness to local community needs.

Owen Sound urges the Province to strengthen centralized standards, resources, and tools rather than undertaking broad structural amalgamation and to provide sustainable, predictable provincial funding across Conservation Authorities to enable local CAs to advance ongoing digitization and systemization work that has already resulted in improved efficiency and consistency in recent years.

Owen Sound calls on the province to undertake a cost-benefit analysis (including a workforce and geographical analysis) of the current system of Conservation Authorities against the proposed Regional system. Regionalization should only proceed if there are known performance indicator outcomes (KPIs) that will be improved by such a system.

Owen Sound requests that the Ministry engage meaningfully and collaboratively with affected municipalities, Conservation Authorities, and local Indigenous leaders and agencies before advancing any consolidation, to ensure that any changes reflect both local needs and the practical realities of implementation. Local solutions to local problems, as was originally intended by the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

Owen Sound cautions the province on implementing a new permitting portal without significant consultation with municipalities and potential users. Not all residents of Ontario have access to broadband internet, and not all residents of Ontario use digital tools even where they are available. Existing ministerial portals do not satisfactorily follow phases of development process and have added to application processing times for municipal staff. Should a new online permitting portal be implemented, that work can be undertaken within the existing conservation authority framework without requiring structural amalgamation.

Owen Sound supports the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority's (LRCA) recommendation that would see LRCA remain a stand-alone Conservation Authority under any new regional model as they are the only Conservation Authority in northwestern Ontario.

With respect to speeding up development processes, Owen Sound reminds the province of the [Minister's message](#) respecting the *More Homes Built Faster Act*:

"In some areas with upper- and lower-tier municipalities (for example, the City of Mississauga which is a part of the Region of Peel), both levels of government have input into development approvals. We're proposing to focus responsibility for land use policies and approvals in the local, lower-tier municipality. This would give the public more influence over decisions, clarify responsibilities and improve efficiency."

Local communities should retain influence over decisions that impact them directly and that they are paying for.

Financial Implications:

Overall financial implications are unknown at this time.

Changes to the structure and operations of Conservation Authorities will impact all City departments and necessitate staff education and training.

Legal fees will be incurred if lease or maintenance agreements need revisiting.

The City's land use policies may require revision if a regional CA wishes to operate differently. Updating local policy documents in response to provincial changes requires significant financial and time investment.

Communication Strategy:

It is recommended that this report and its attachments be provided to the Province of Ontario as the City's response to Bill 68 and the Environmental Registry of Ontario posting 025-1257; and

Forward this report to Paul Vickers, MPP for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Grey Sauble Conservation Authority Board of Directors, Conservation Ontario, and AMO.

Consultation:

Staff regularly consult a range of professional sources to inform their analysis and recommendations. Links to resources are included throughout this report and in Schedule A.

Staff have reviewed and have shared considerations of impacts with Grey County as well as other lower tiers.

Staff have also attended a meeting where GSCA made a presentation on the proposed changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

Attachments:

Schedule 'A': Links to Supporting Documentation

Schedule 'B': Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities – Supplemental Document

Schedule 'C': Infographic – How GSCA Stacks Up Provincially

Recommended by:

Margaret Potter, BES, RPP, Senior Planner

Sabine Robart, M.SC. (PL), MCIP, RPP, Manager of Planning & Heritage

Pamela Coulter, BA, RPP, Director of Community Services

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Margaret Potter, Senior Planner at mpotter@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1250.

Links to Supporting Documentation:

[Ontario Planning Act](#)

[Provincial Planning Statement, 2024](#)

Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities ([ERO No. 025-1257](#))

[Supplemental document](#) regarding proposed boundaries

[Bill 68](#), *Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures)*, 2025 (No. 2) would establish the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency

[PDR-CW-70-25 Grey County Report](#) on Proposed Changes to Conservation Authorities in Ontario

[GSCA Board of Directors Agenda November 26, 2025](#)

- Report 033-2025 (page 56) *Bill 68 and Proposed Changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and Ontario's Conservation Authorities*
- Report 036-2025 (page 162) *Draft Budget – For Circulation*

[CS-15-113](#) *Comments on the 2015 Conservation Authorities Act Review*

[CS-22-149](#) *Bill 23 – More Homes Built Faster Act – Changes Proposed to the Ontario Planning Act and Ontario Heritage Act*

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/more-homes-built-faster> Minister's Message respecting More Homes Built Faster Act (2022)

[CS-22-013](#) Recent Amendments to the Planning Act under Bill 276, the Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act, 2021 & Bill 13, The Supporting People and Businesses Act, 2021

[CS-22-084](#) Bill 109 More Homes for Everyone Act

[CS-22-149](#) and [CS-23-078](#) Bill 23 – More Homes Built Faster Act

[CS-23-053](#) Bill 97, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, 2023

[CS-23-012](#) and [CS-23-080](#) Proposed Provincial Policy Statement 2023

[CS-23-122](#) Bill 139 Proposed Less Red Tape, More Common Sense Act, 2023

[CS-24-038](#) Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2023

[CS-24-078](#) Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

[CM-25-016](#) Bill 17, Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025

[CS-25-118](#) Bill 60, Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act

[GSCA Board of Directors Agenda February 26, 2025](#)

- Report 007-2025 (page 82) *Extension of Minister's direction for conservation authorities regarding fee changes associated with planning, development, and permitting fees*
- Report 008-2025 (Page 94) *Ontario Regulation 474/24: Minister's Reviews Under Section 28.1 and 28.1.2 of the Act and Minister's Orders Under Section 28.1.1 of the Act*
- Report 009-2025 (Page 101) *2024 Annual Permit Report*

[GSCA Board of Directors Agenda January 22, 2025](#)

- Report 001-2025 (page 65) *2025 Draft Budget – For Approval*
 - o Note page 66 chart demonstrating portion of operating budget revenue attributable to Provincial Transfer

[GSCA 2025 Budget Companion](#)

[GSCA Board of Directors Agenda March 27, 2024](#)

- Presentation (page 88) *Transition to O.Reg.41/24 Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits*
- Report 007-2024 (page 102) *Transition to O.Reg.41/24 Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits*

[GSCA Board of Directors Agenda December 19, 2023](#)

- Report 047-2023 (page 51) *Minister's Direction for Conservation Authorities Regarding Fee Charges Associated with Planning, Development and Permitting Fees*

[GSCA Board of Directors Agenda December 21, 2022](#)

- Letter from GSCA to Premier Ford RE: Bill 23 and ERO Posting 019-6141 (page 36)
- Report 035-2022 (page 130) *Environmental Plan Review and Permit 2023 Fee Schedules – Revision to Lower Fees in result of Bill 23*
- Report 036-2022 (page 140) *ERO Posting #019-2927 Proposed updates to the Regulation of Development for the Protection of People and Property from Natural Hazards in Ontario*

[Conservation Ontario Response to Bill 23](#)

[PDR-CW-10-23](#) Grey County report on Natural Heritage Options following Bill 23

[Ontario Bar Association Article](#) *One Conservation Authority to Rule them All*

[PSD Citywide Case Study](#) *Preserving the Integrity of Ontario Conservation Authorities*

PSD Citywide provides software and advisory services

[Association of Municipalities of Ontario](#) *Advocacy on Bill 60, Data Standards, Blue Box and Conservation Authority Consolidation*

Proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities – supplemental document

Posting closes December 22, 2025, at 11:59pm
Please submit comments via the ERO posting or by email to
ca.office@ontario.ca

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Summary of Proposal

This proposal seeks feedback on proposed boundaries and criteria for the regional consolidation of Ontario's 36 conservation authorities.

It is proposed that Ontario's 36 conservation authorities would be consolidated into the following 7 regional conservation authorities:

- Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority – covers southwestern Ontario watersheds draining into Lake Erie, including the Thames, Grand, and Sydenham systems, supporting agriculture, industry, and shoreline communities. Primarily based on the Northern Lake Erie Secondary Watershed
- Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority – includes watersheds along Lake Huron's northern shore and the Lake Superior basin, supporting conservation and flood management across vast northern watersheds. Primarily based on the Eastern Lake Huron and southern portion of Eastern Georgian Bay Secondary Watershed and in the north the central portion of Northwestern Lake Superior Secondary Watershed.
- Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority – extends along the western Lake Ontario shoreline from Niagara through Halton and Peel, encompassing urban and rural watersheds that support the Greater Toronto–Hamilton corridor. Primarily based on the western portion of the Northern Lake Ontario and Niagara River Secondary Watershed.
- Central Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority – covers the watersheds from north of Toronto, including parts of York Region, west through Peel Region, east through Durham, and into parts of the Kawarthas, balancing urban growth and agricultural lands while protecting key tributaries to Lake Ontario. Primarily based on the central portion of the Northern Lake Ontario and Niagara River Secondary Watershed.
- Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority – Includes watersheds draining to eastern Lake Ontario and the Bay of Quinte, including the Trent and Cataraqui systems, supporting a mix of agricultural, urban, and coastal communities. Primarily based on the eastern portion of the Northern Lake Ontario and Niagara River Secondary Watershed.
- St. Lawrence Regional Conservation Authority – Encompasses watersheds flowing into the St. Lawrence River, including the Raisin and South Nation areas, coordinating flood and water management across eastern Ontario. Primarily based on the Upper St. Lawrence, Lower Ottawa River, and southern portion of the Central Ottawa River Second Watersheds.
- Northeastern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority – brings together the conservation authorities in the northeast, maintaining coordination across large

watershed areas and shared northern infrastructure and ecosystems. Its work focuses on maintaining healthy waterways, protecting natural habitats, and promoting sustainable land and water use across major watershed areas that span parts of Northern Lake Huron, the Abitibi, Missinaibi, Mattagami, Wanipitai, French, and Upper Ottawa River systems.

No changes are proposed to the overall extent of conservation authority jurisdiction within the province, and under consolidation the new regional conservation authorities would remain independent organizations operating with municipal governance and oversight, in accordance with requirements under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, as administered by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

In addition, the important work that conservation authorities do to protect people and property from the risks of flooding and other natural hazards will not change. The regional conservation authorities would continue to fulfill provincially mandated programs such as drinking water source protection under the *Clean Water Act*, managing development and other activities in areas at risk of natural hazards like flooding and erosion (e.g., floodplains, shorelines, watercourse and wetlands), flood forecasting and warning, and managing their lands and recreational trails so that Ontarians have access to local natural areas and outdoor activities. Regional conservation authorities would continue to provide additional municipal and other watershed programs and services set out under the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

We welcome your feedback in response to the proposed boundaries and criteria applied to inform the proposed boundaries for the regional consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities. Comments may be submitted through the Environmental Registry posting or by email to ca.office@ontario.ca.

Boundary Criteria

Provided below are criteria applied for determining the proposed boundaries for regional conservation authorities:

- **Maintaining watershed-based jurisdictions** – Aligning with natural hydrological boundaries to support effective flood and water management, consistent with drinking water Source Protection Areas and Regions.
- **Relationships between conservation authorities and municipalities** – Reducing administrative duplication and overlap for municipalities and conservation authorities to simplify accountability and strengthen local partnerships.
- **Balancing expertise and capacity across conservation authorities** – Enhancing technical skills and resources across conservation authorities to improve service and program delivery.
- **Service Continuity** – Ensuring uninterrupted delivery of local conservation authority programs – including flood forecasting and warning, permitting, and source water protection – through and after consolidation.

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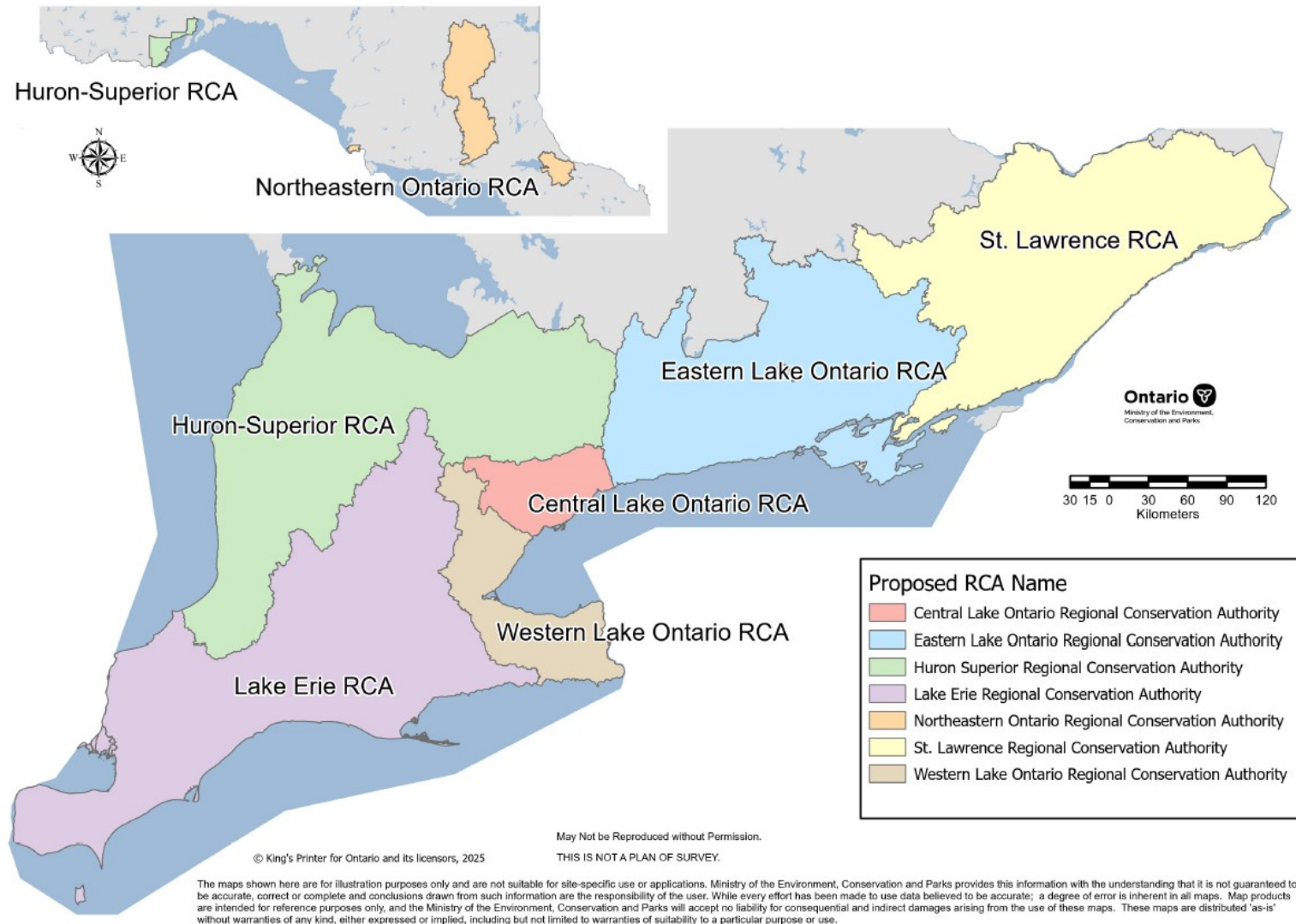
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Maps

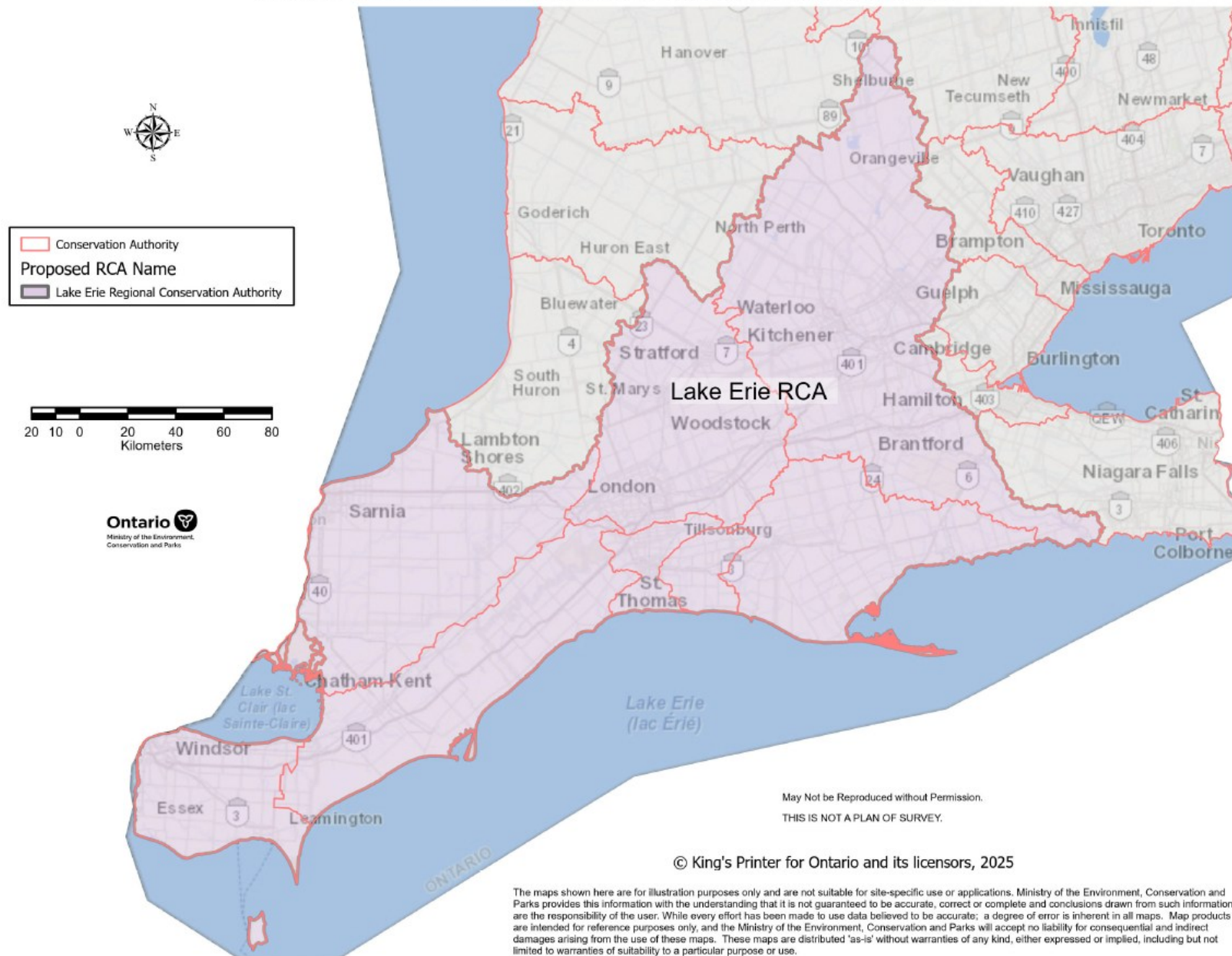
Map of Proposed Regional Conservation Authorities

PROPOSED 7 REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES (RCA)



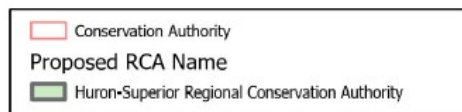
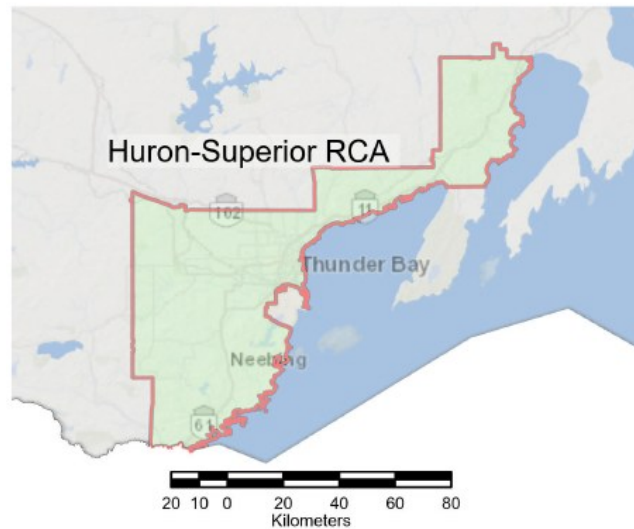
Map of Proposed Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority

LAKE ERIE REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



Map of Proposed Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority

HURON-SUPERIOR REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



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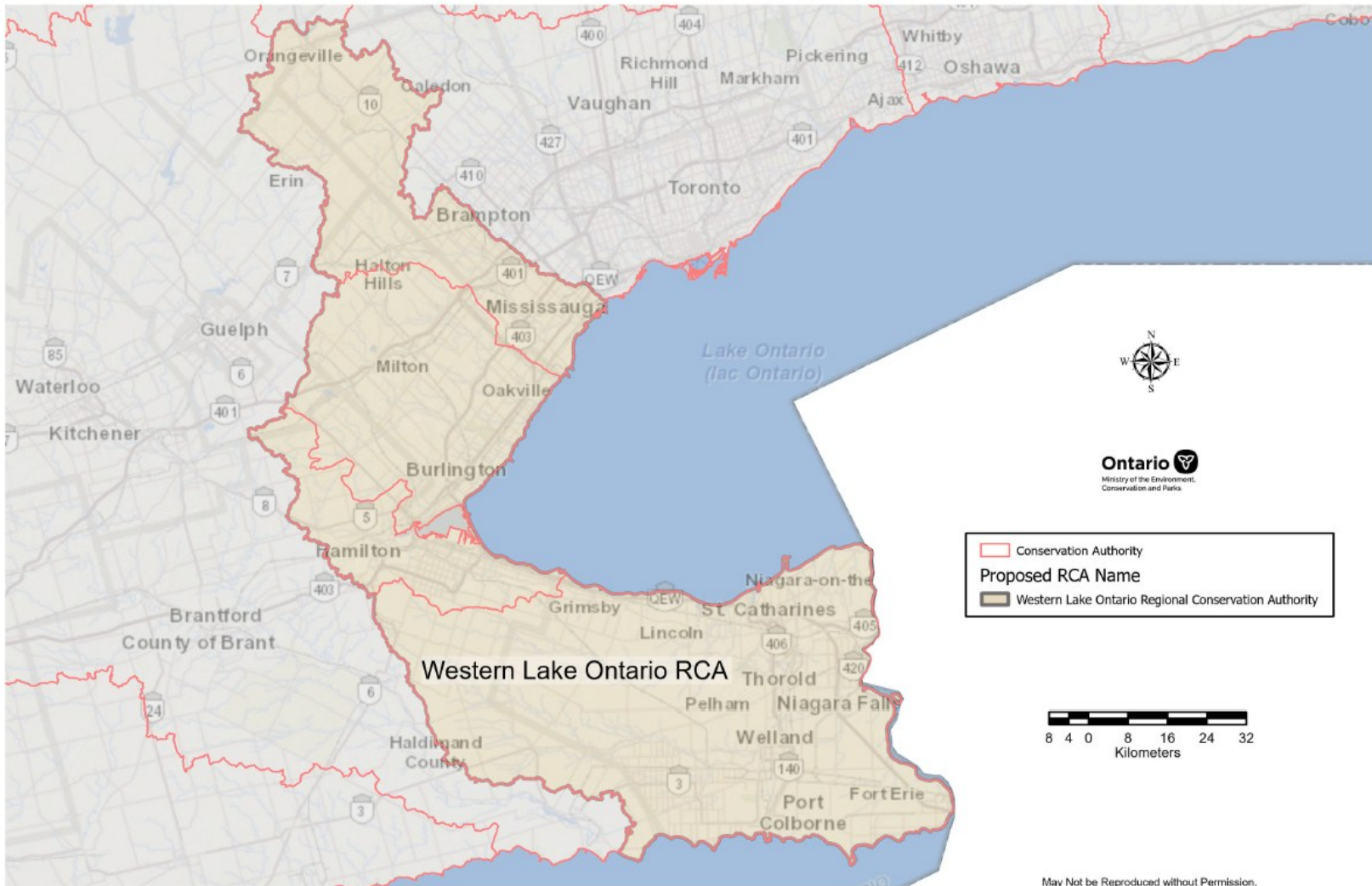


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Map of Proposed Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority

WESTERN LAKE ONTARIO REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



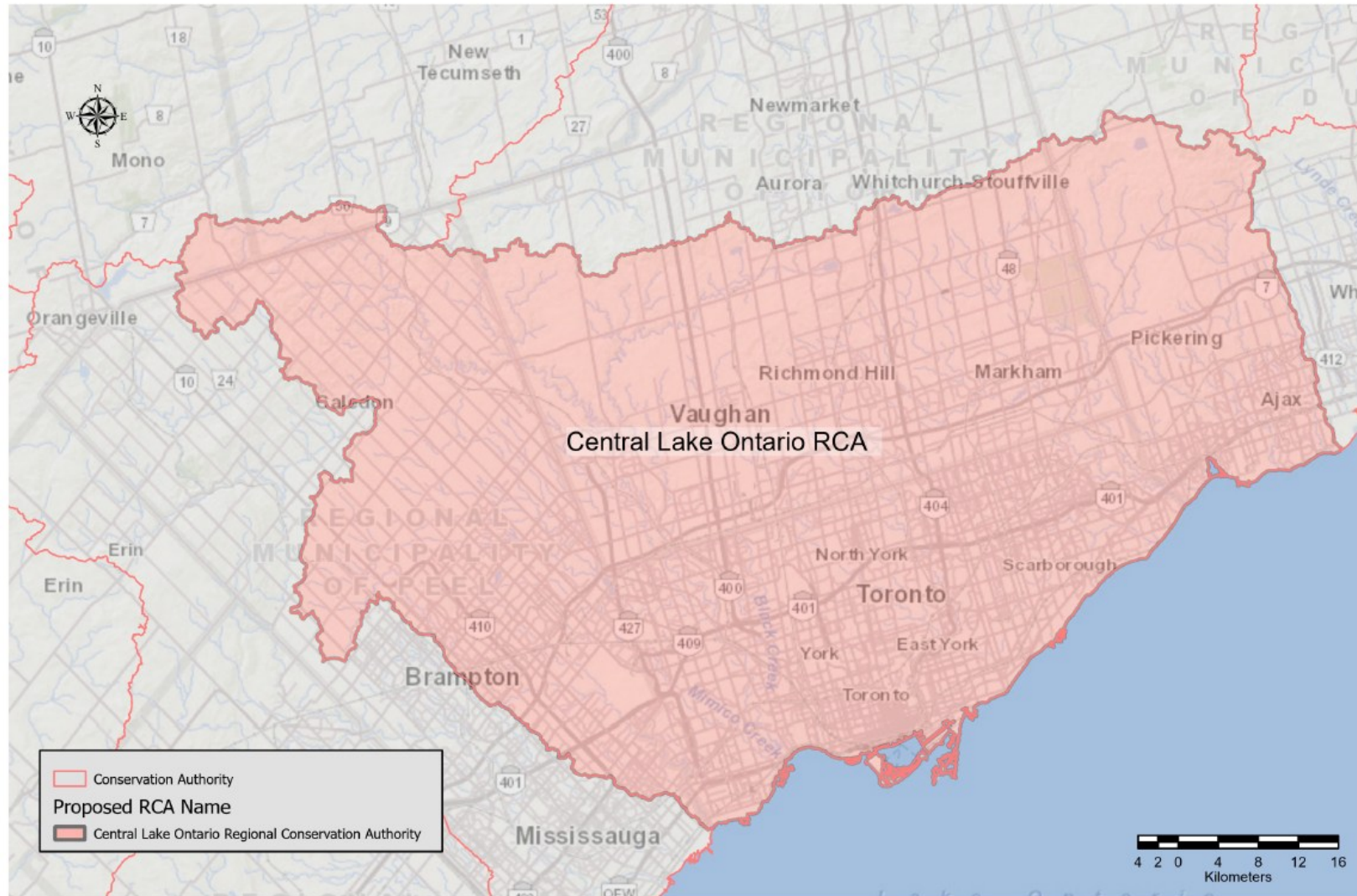
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Map of Proposed Central Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority

CENTRAL LAKE ONTARIO REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



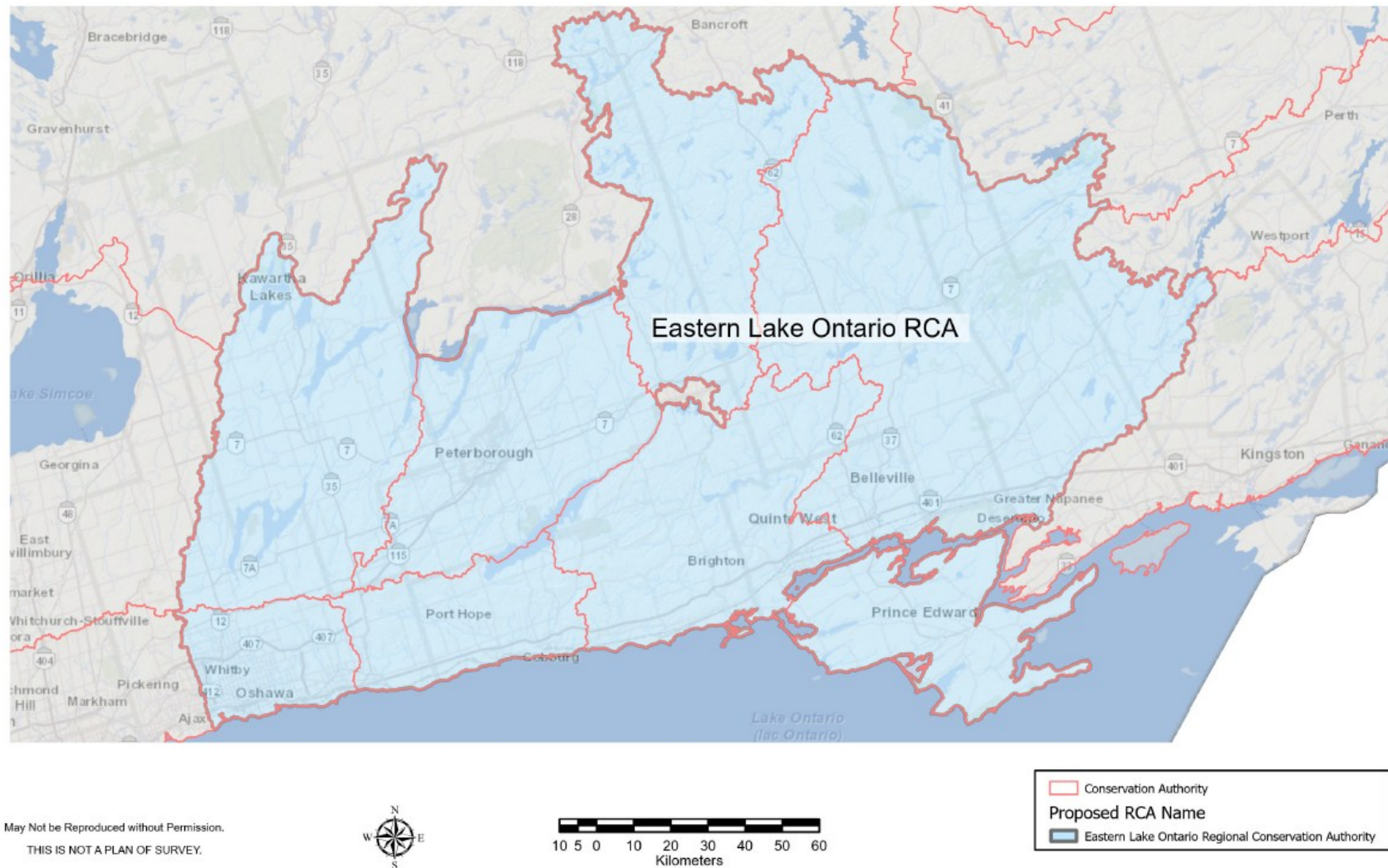
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Map of Proposed Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority

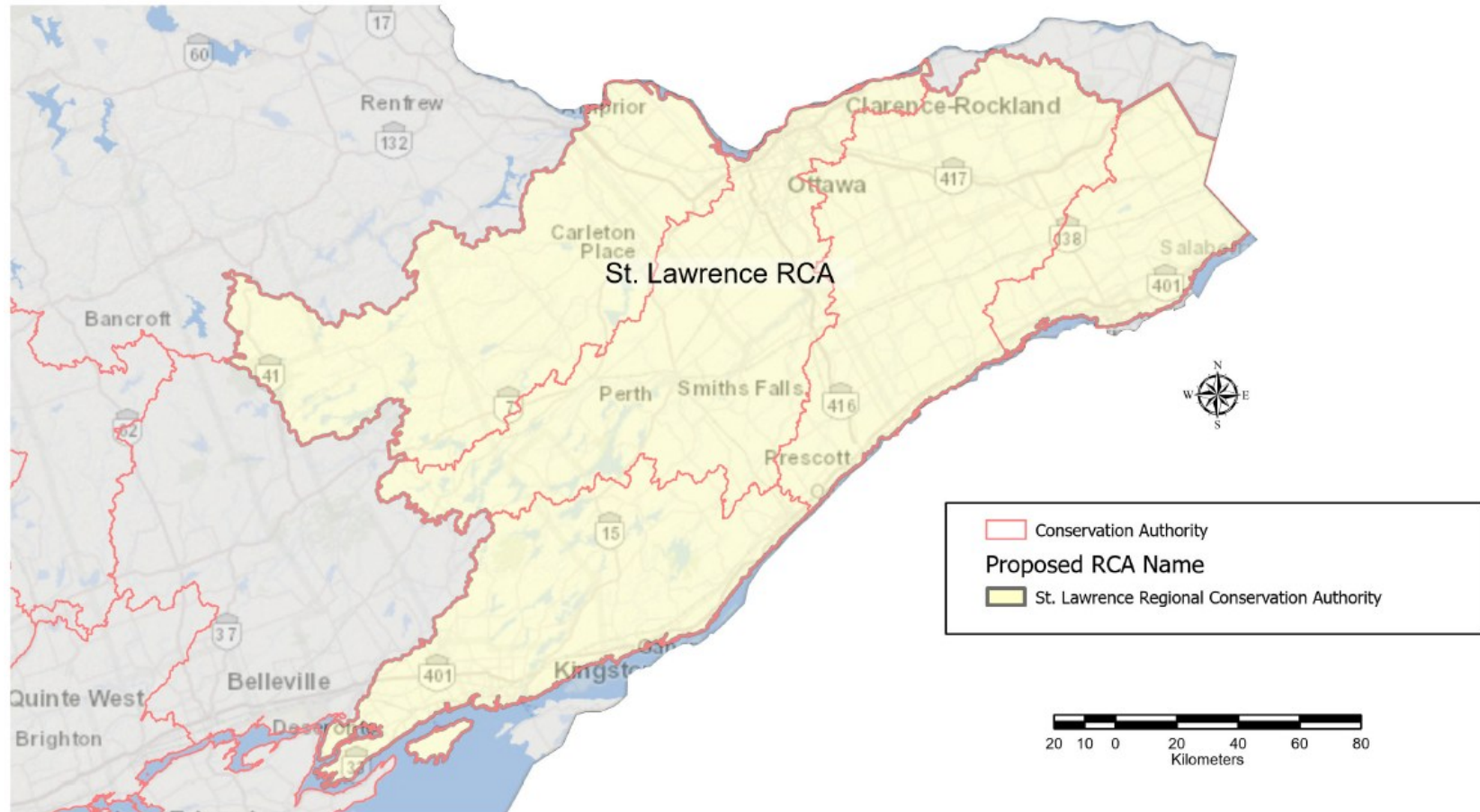
EASTERN LAKE ONTARIO REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



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Map of Proposed St. Lawrence Regional Conservation Authority

ST. LAWRENCE REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



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Ontario
Ministry of the Environment,
Conservation and Parks

Map of Proposed Northeastern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority

NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



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Listing of Municipalities and Conservation Authorities

Below are listings of the current conservation authorities that are proposed to be included with each regional conservation authority, and of the municipalities that would fall within each proposed regional conservation authority.

Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority

Current conservation authorities that would make up the proposed Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority include:

- Essex Region CA
- Lower Thames Valley CA
- St. Clair Region CA
- Upper Thames River CA
- Kettle Creek CA
- Catfish Creek CA
- Long Point Region CA
- Grand River CA

Municipalities that would fall within the proposed Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority include:

- City of Brantford
- City of Cambridge
- City of Guelph
- City of Hamilton
- City of Kitchener
- City of London
- City of Sarnia
- City of St. Thomas
- City of Stratford
- City of Waterloo
- City of Windsor
- City of Woodstock
- County of Brant
- Haldimand County
- Municipality of Bayham
- Municipality of Brooke-Alvinston
- Municipality of Central Elgin
- Municipality of Chatham-Kent
- Municipality of Dutton/Dunwich
- Municipality of Huron East
- Municipality of Lambton Shores
- Municipality of Leamington
- Municipality of Middlesex Centre
- Municipality of North Perth
- Municipality of South Huron
- Municipality of Southwest Middlesex
- Municipality of Thames Centre
- Municipality of West Elgin
- Municipality of West Perth
- Norfolk County
- Town of Amherstburg
- Town of Aylmer
- Town of Erin
- Town of Essex
- Town of Grand Valley
- Town of Halton Hills
- Town of Ingersoll
- Town of Kingsville
- Town of Lakeshore
- Town of Lasalle
- Town of Milton
- Town of Minto
- Town of Mono
- Town of Petrolia
- Town of Plympton-Wyoming
- Town of St. Marys
- Town of Tecumseh
- Town of Tillsonburg
- Township of Adelaide-Metcalf
- Township of Amaranth
- Township of Blandford-Blenheim
- Township of Centre Wellington
- Township of Dawn-Euphemia
- Township of East Garafraxa

- Township of East Zorra-Tavistock
- Township of Enniskillen
- Township of Guelph/Eramosa
- Township of Lucan Biddulph
- Township of Malahide
- Township of Mapleton
- Township of Melancthon
- Township of North Dumfries
- Township of Norwich
- Township of Pelee
- Township of Perth East
- Township of Perth South
- Township of Puslinch
- Township of Southgate
- Township of South-West Oxford
- Township of Southwold
- Township of St. Clair
- Township of Strathroy-Caradoc
- Township of Warwick
- Township of Wellesley
- Township of Wellington North
- Township of Wilmot
- Township of Woolwich
- Township of Zorra
- Village of Newbury
- Village of Oil Springs
- Village of Point Edward

Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority

Current conservation authorities that would make up the proposed Lake Huron Regional Conservation Authority include:

- Ausable Bayfield CA
- Maitland Valley CA
- Saugeen Valley CA
- Grey Sauble CA
- Nottawasaga Valley CA
- Lake Simcoe Region CA
- Lakehead Region CA

Municipalities that would fall within the proposed Huron-Superior Regional Conservation Authority include:

- City of Barrie
- City of Kawartha Lakes
- City of Orillia
- City of Owen Sound
- City of Thunder Bay
- Municipality of Arran-Elderslie
- Municipality of Bluewater
- Municipality of Brockton
- Municipality of Central Huron
- Municipality of Grey Highlands
- Municipality of Huron East
- Municipality of Kincardine
- Municipality of Lambton Shores
- Municipality of Meaford
- Municipality of Middlesex Centre
- Municipality of Morris-Turnberry
- Municipality of Neebing
- Municipality of North Middlesex
- Municipality of North Perth
- Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula
- Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge
- Municipality of Shuniah
- Municipality of South Bruce
- Municipality of South Huron
- Municipality of West Grey
- Municipality of West Perth
- Town of Aurora
- Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury
- Town of Caledon
- Town of Collingwood
- Town of East Gwillimbury
- Town of Georgina
- Town of Goderich
- Town of Hanover
- Town of Innisfil
- Town of Minto
- Town of Mono
- Town of New Tecumseth
- Town of Newmarket

- Town of Richmond Hill
- Town of Saugeen Shores
- Town of Shelburne
- Town of South Bruce Peninsula
- Town of The Blue Mountains
- Town of Wasaga Beach
- Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville
- Township of Adelaide Metcalfe
- Township of Adjala-Tosorontio
- Township of Amaranth
- Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh
- Township of Brock
- Township of Chatsworth
- Township of Clearview
- Township of Conmee
- Township of Dorion
- Township of Essa
- Township of Georgian Bluffs
- Township of Gillies
- Township of Howick
- Township of Huron-Kinloss
- Township of King
- Township of Lucan Biddulph
- Township of Mapleton
- Township of Melancthon
- Township of Mulmur
- Township of North Huron
- Township of O'Connor
- Township of Oro-Medonte
- Township of Perth East
- Township of Perth South
- Township of Ramara
- Township of Scugog
- Township of Severn
- Township of Southgate
- Township of Springwater
- Township of Tay
- Township of Tiny
- Township of Uxbridge
- Township of Warwick
- Township of Wellington North

Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority

Current conservation authorities that would make up the proposed Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority include:

- Niagara Peninsula CA
- Hamilton Region CA
- Halton Region CA
- Credit Valley CA

Municipalities that would fall within up the proposed Western Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority include:

- City of Brampton
- City of Burlington
- City of Hamilton
- City of Mississauga
- City of Niagara Falls
- City of Port Colborne
- City of St. Catharines
- City of Thorold
- City of Toronto
- City of Welland
- Haldimand County
- Town of Caledon
- Town of Erin
- Town of Fort Erie
- Town of Grimsby
- Town of Halton Hills
- Town of Lincoln
- Town of Milton
- Town of Mono
- Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake
- Town of Oakville
- Town of Orangeville
- Town of Pelham
- Township of Amaranth

- Township of East Garafraxa
- Township of Puslinch
- Township of Wainfleet
- Township of West Lincoln

Central Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority

Current conservation authorities that would make up the proposed Central Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority include:

- Toronto and Region CA

Municipalities that would fall within the proposed Central Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority include:

- City of Brampton
- City of Markham
- City of Mississauga
- City of Pickering
- City of Toronto
- City of Vaughan
- Town of Ajax
- Town of Aurora
- Town of Caledon
- Town of Mono
- Town of New Tecumseth
- Town of Richmond Hill
- Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville
- Township of Adjala-Tosorontio
- Township of King
- Township of Scugog
- Township of Uxbridge

Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority

Current conservation authorities that would make up the proposed Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority include:

- Central Lake Ontario CA
- Kawartha Region CA
- Otonabee Region CA
- Ganaraska Region CA
- Lower Trent Region CA
- Crowe Valley CA
- Quinte Region CA

Municipalities that would fall within the proposed Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority include:

- City of Belleville
- City of Kawartha Lakes
- City of Oshawa
- City of Peterborough
- City of Pickering
- City of Quinte West
- County of Prince Edward County
- Municipality of Brighton
- Municipality of Centre Hastings
- Municipality of Clarington
- Municipality of Hastings Highlands
- Municipality of highlands East
- Municipality of Marmora and Lake
- Municipality of Port Hope
- Municipality of Trent Hills

- Municipality of Trent Lakes
- Municipality of Tweed
- Town of Ajax
- Town of Cobourg
- Town of Deseronto
- Town of Greater Napanee
- Town of Whitby
- Township of Addington Highlands
- Township of Alnwick/Haldimand
- Township of Asphodel-Norwood
- Township of Brock
- Township of Cavan Monaghan
- Township of Central Frontenac
- Township of Cramahe
- Township of Douro-Dummer
- Township of Faraday
- Township of Hamilton
- Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen
- Township of Limerick
- Township of Loyalist
- Township of Madoc
- Township of North Frontenac
- Township of North Kawartha
- Township of Otonabee-South Monaghan
- Township of Scugog
- Township of Selwyn
- Township of South Frontenac
- Township of Stirling-Rawdon
- Township of Stone Mills
- Township of Tudor and Cashel
- Township of Tyendinaga
- Township of Uxbridge
- Township of Wollaston

St. Lawrence Regional Conservation Authority

Current conservation authorities that would make up the proposed St. Lawrence Regional Conservation Authority include:

- Cataraqui Region CA
- Rideau Valley CA
- Mississippi Valley CA
- South Nation River CA
- Raisin Region CA

Municipalities that would fall within the proposed St. Lawrence Regional Conservation Authority include:

- City of Brockville
- City of Clarence-Rockland
- City of Cornwall
- City of Kingston
- City of Ottawa
- Municipality of Mississippi Mills
- Municipality of North Grenville
- Municipality of South Dundas
- Municipality of The Nation
- Town of Carleton Place
- Town of Gananoque
- Town of Greater Napanee
- Town of Perth
- Town of Prescott
- Town of Smiths Falls
- Township of Addington Highlands
- Township of Alfred and Plantagenet
- Township of Athens
- Township of Augusta
- Township of Beckwith
- Township of Central Frontenac
- Township of Champlain
- Township of Drummond/North Elmsley
- Township of East Hawkesbury
- Township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal
- Township of Elizabethtown-Kitley
- Township of Front of Yonge
- Township of Greater Madawaska
- Township of Lanark Highlands
- Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands
- Township of Loyalist
- Township of Montague
- Township of North Dundas
- Township of North Frontenac
- Township of North Glengarry

- Township of North Stormont
- Township of Rideau Lakes
- Township of Russell
- Township of South Frontenac
- Township of South Glengarry
- Township of South Stormont
- Township of Stone Mills
- Township of Tay Valley
- Village of Casselman
- Village of Merrickville-Wolford
- Village of Westport

Northeastern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority

Current conservation authorities that would make up the proposed Northeastern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority include:

- Nickel District CA
- Sault Ste. Marie Region CA
- Mattagami Region CA
- North Bay-Mattawa CA

Municipalities that would fall within the proposed Northeastern Regional Conservation Authority include:

- City of Greater Sudbury
- City of North Bay
- City of Sault Ste. Marie
- City of Timmins
- Municipality of Callander
- Municipality of Powassan
- Municipality of East Ferris
- Town of Iroquois Falls
- Town of Mattawa
- Township of Black River-Matheson
- Township of Bonfield
- Township of Calvin
- Township of Chisholm
- Township of Matachewan
- Township of Mattawan
- Township of Nairn and Hyman
- Township of Nipissing
- Township of Papineau-Cameron
- Township of Prince

GSCA: A LOT FROM A LITTLE

How GSCA Stacks Up Provincially

0.6% 
Of Provincial Population

0.8% 
Of All Conservation Authority Staff

0.9% 
Of All Conservation Authority Revenue

2.9% 
Of All Conservation Authority Watershed Area

3.8% 
Of All Conservation Authority Owned Wetlands

7.8% 
Of All Conservation Authority Owned Lands

9.8% 
Of All Conservation Authority Owned ANSI's

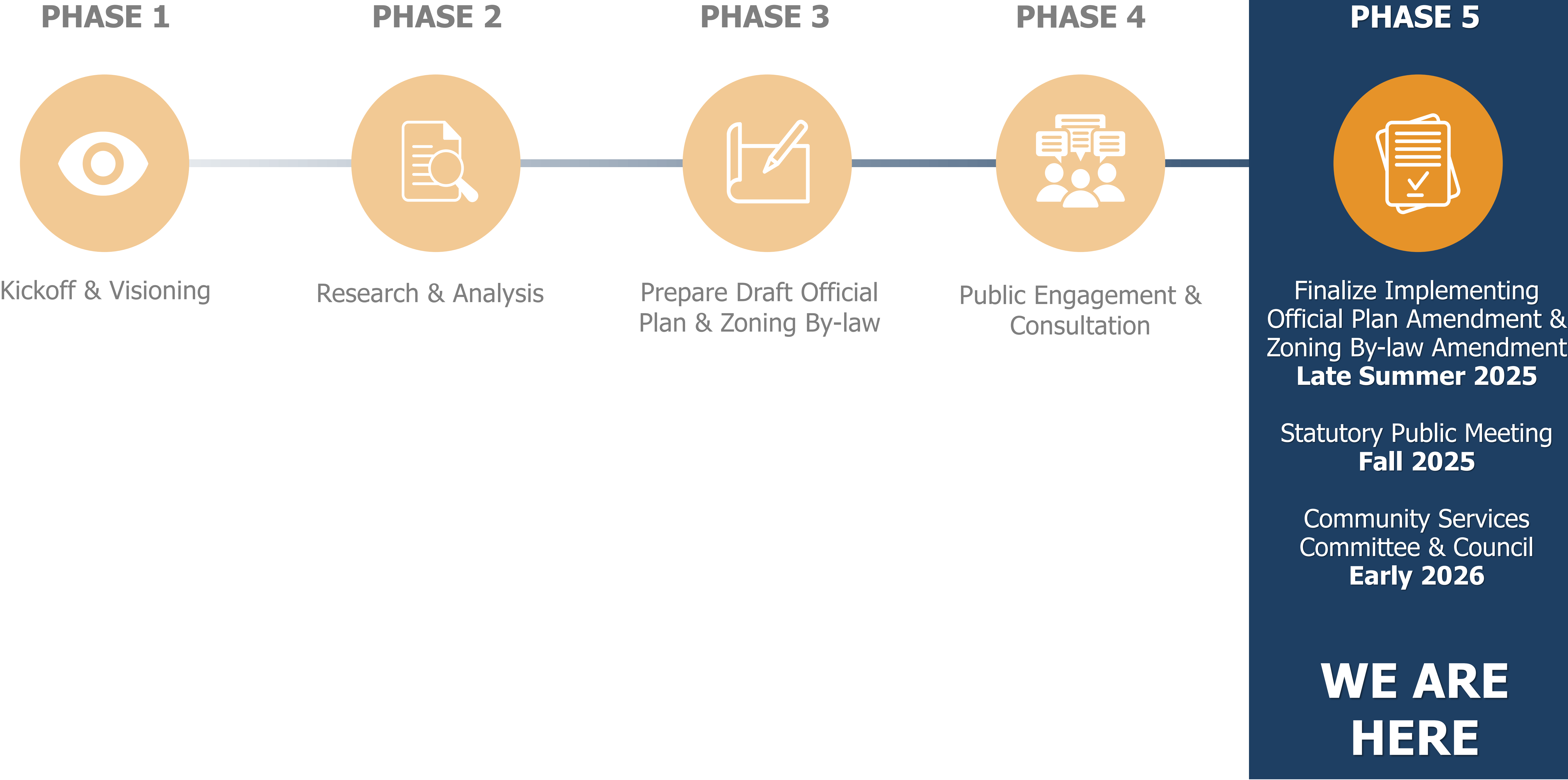
10.3% 
Of All Conservation Authority Owned Forests

City of Owen Sound

Official Plan Review & Zoning By-law Review

Council Working Session
November 24, 2025

Project Timeline



Approach to Working Session



Overview of Major Policy Changes



Comments



Q & A

City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

Purpose

Purpose of the Official Plan

The City’s Official Plan (OP) guides long-term decisions that relate to **land use planning and development**. The OP is an important tool that supports our City’s vision of a **vibrant and thriving community** that offers high-quality amenities surrounded by unique natural heritage features.

Purpose of the Official Plan Review

Under the Planning Act, Official Plans **must be updated every 5 years** after the last comprehensive amendment. Municipalities are also required to complete a Provincial Plan conformity exercise as provincial plans are updated.

The City’s Official Plan was reviewed and updated comprehensively in 2021, and the new Official Plan was approved in 2022.

- This review fulfils the 5-year update and Provincial conformity requirements following updates to:
- The Planning Act
 - The 2024 Provincial Planning Statement
 - The Grey County Official Plan

The Official Plan Amendments affect all lands within the City of Owen Sound.

A copy of the proposed Official Plan Amendment to implement the Official Plan Review is available for review on the project’s OurCity page.

City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

Proposed Updates

Official Plan policy updates include the following:

- ✓ Introduce a new Employment land use framework including the Employment 1 and Employment 2 designation.
- ✓ Update the Retail Market Study requirements in the East City Commercial designation
- ✓ Minor Policy Updates:
 - Update affordable housing policies in accordance with the Grey County Official Plan
 - Update the Environment Policies in accordance with the Grey County Official Plan
 - Update the servicing policies of the Sydenham Heights Planning Area
 - Allow schools and daycare centres in residential designations, revised pre-consultation requirements, revised site plan requirements, permit minor zoning by-laws, update cash-in-lieu of parkland requirements and references to the Provincial Planning Statement

City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

Employment Policy

- ✓ Introduce a new Employment land use framework including the Employment 1 and Employment 2 designation.

Employment 1 Permitted Uses :

- Manufacturing;
- Research and development in connection with manufacturing;
- Warehousing ;
- Goods Movement; and
- Ancillary uses associated with the primary uses listed above, including:
 - Retail; and
 - Office

City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

Employment Policy

Employment 2 Permitted Uses :

- Employment and business uses including but not limited to manufacturing, fabricating, packaging, and warehousing.
- Controlled outdoor storage, including contractor yards.
- Commercial self-storage facilities.
- Food and Beverage Production and Cannabis Production Facilities.
- Retail sales accessory to a manufacturing use.
- Utilities, technology and industrial innovation centres.
- Vehicle service stations, vehicle repair, auto body paint and repair, car washes, transportation depots.
- Commercial schools.
- Sports, health and fitness recreational centres.
- Adult entertainment and body rub parlours.
- An accessory sleeping quarters for a custodian or maintenance person.
- Open space.

City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

East City Commercial Policy

✓ Update the Retail Market Study requirements in the East City Commercial designation

3.5.2.5 For any application in the East City Commercial designation for the **retail and commercial** uses listed in Section 3.5.1.1 a) and b) that are less than 465 square metres and greater than 1,400 square metres, the City shall require the following information and studies acceptable to the City:

Note:

- 3.5.1.1 The following uses may be permitted within lands designated East City Commercial:
- a. Large format retail and service commercial uses such as garden centres, warehouse stores, vehicle services, furniture, hotel, and home-furnishing uses having significant needs for on-site storage and parking.

City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

East City Commercial Policy

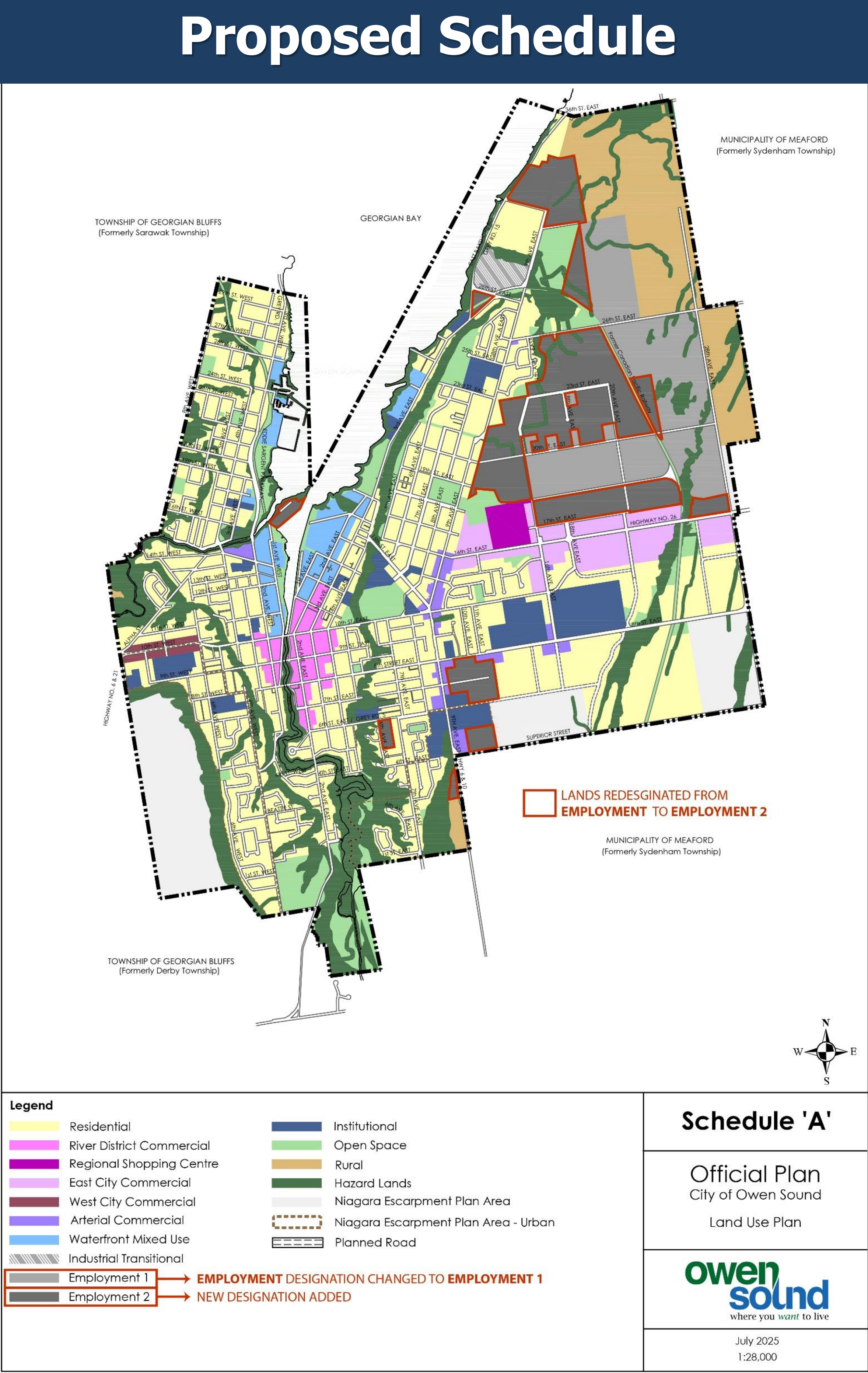
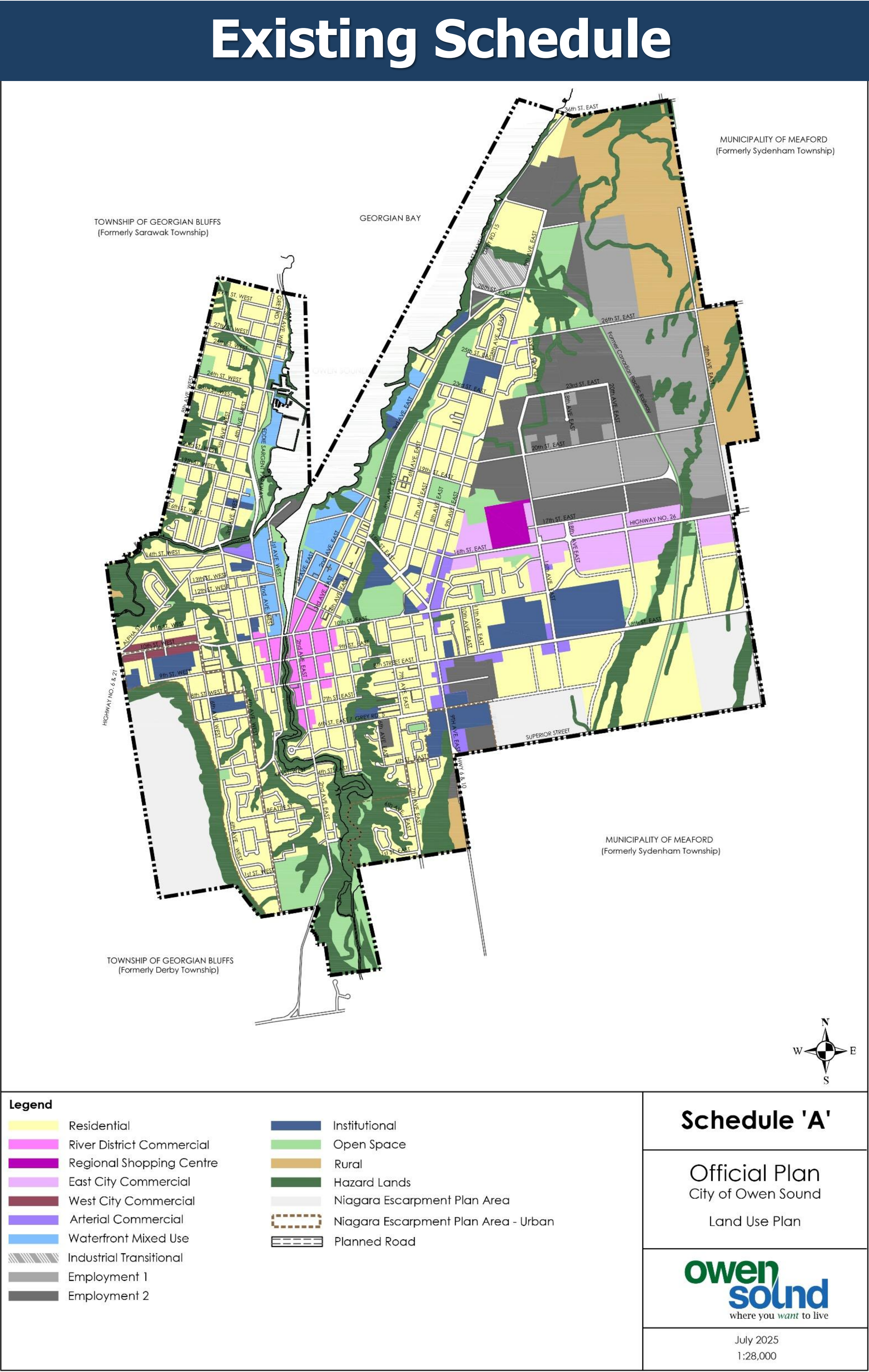


Update the Retail Market Study requirements in the East City Commercial designation

- 3.5.2.5 For any application in the East City Commercial designation for the **retail and commercial** uses listed in Section 3.5.1.1 a) and b) that are less than 465 square metres and greater than 1,400 square metres, the City shall require the following information and studies acceptable to the City:
- a. A retail market analysis of the need for the proposed development and the impact of the proposed use on the commercial structure of the City and the County. Such a study shall confirm that:
 - i. Designated commercial property, suitable for the intended scale and type of development is not available within the River District Commercial area.
 - ii. Available commercial property in the River District Commercial area is not economically viable for the intended scale and type of development.
 - iii. The proposed increase in commercial floor space will not be premature by increasing the amount of commercial floor space in the City beyond the 5 year market demand.
 - iv. The proposed development will not undermine the economic viability or planned function of a significant commercial component of the River District Commercial area or impair the function of a designated commercial district as identified in this Plan.
 - b. An assessment of the traffic, land use, ecological and servicing impacts of the proposed use, including recommended infrastructure improvements necessary to accommodate the proposed use.
 - c. Site development information to ensure high quality urban design, safe access for pedestrians and vehicles, on-site environmental controls, store size and function, and similar information necessary to assess the impact of the use on the area.
 - d. **The City may scope the study or waive the requirement for the above noted studies.**

City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

Proposed Schedule A



City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

Proposed Schedule A1

Existing Schedule



Legend

- Planning Area Boundary
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Institutional
- Arterial Commercial
- Industrial
- Open Space
- Hazard Land

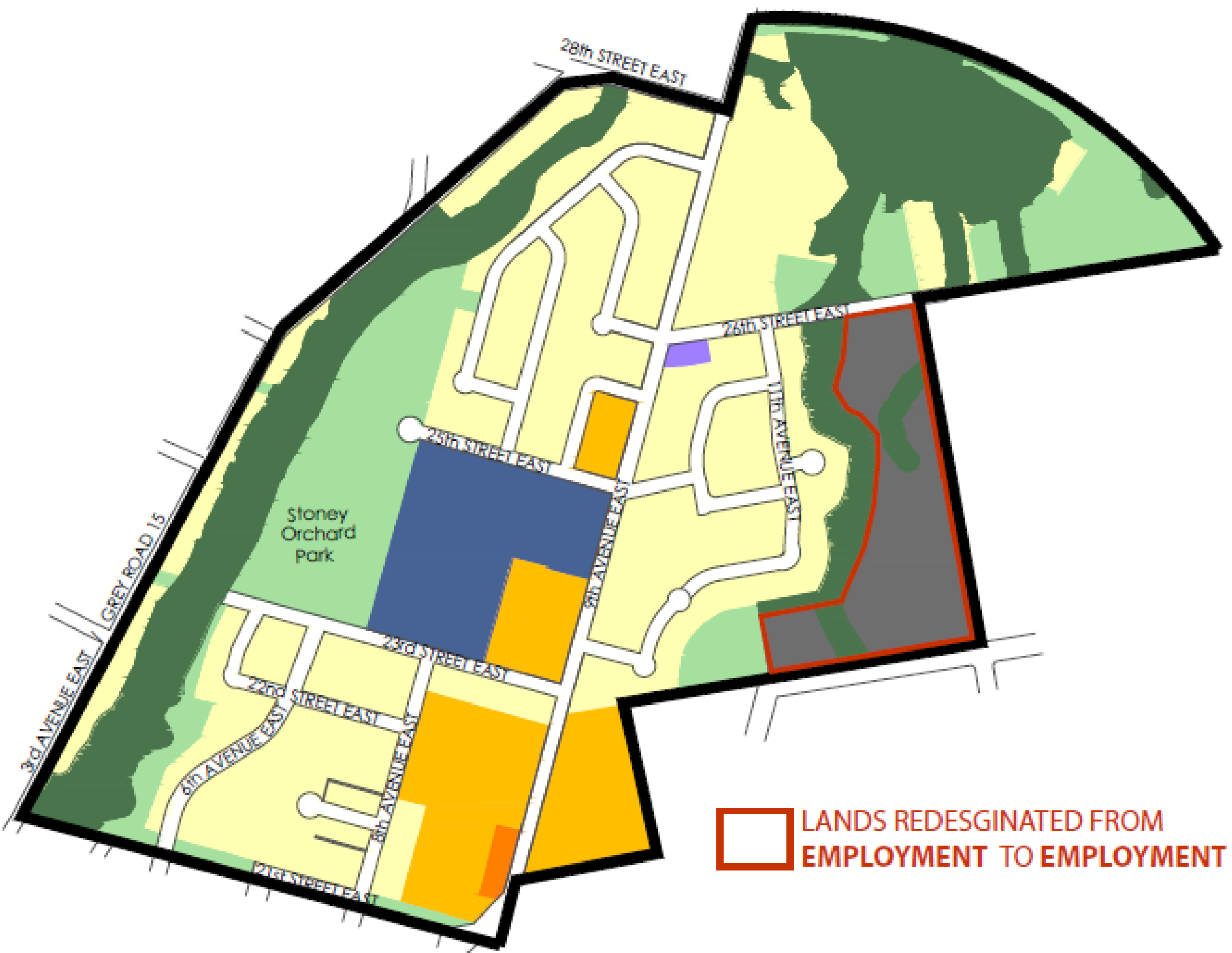
Schedule 'A1'

Official Plan
City of Owen Sound
East Bluffs Planning Area
Land Use Plan



May 2021
1:10,000

Proposed Schedule



LANDS REDESIGNATED FROM
EMPLOYMENT TO EMPLOYMENT 2

Legend

- Planning Area Boundary
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Institutional
- Arterial Commercial
- Employment 2
- Open Space
- Hazard Land

NEW DESIGNATION ADDED

Schedule 'A1'

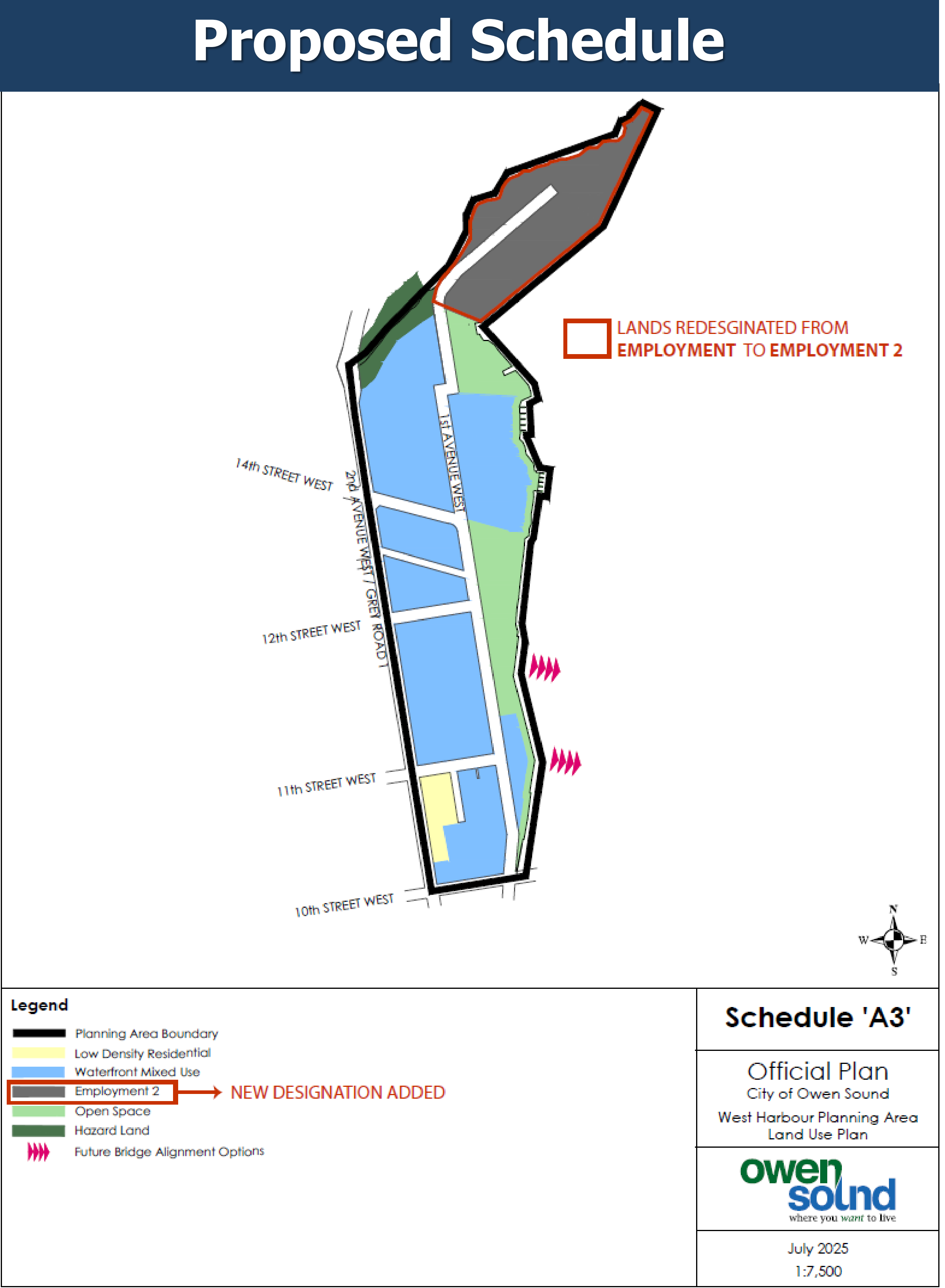
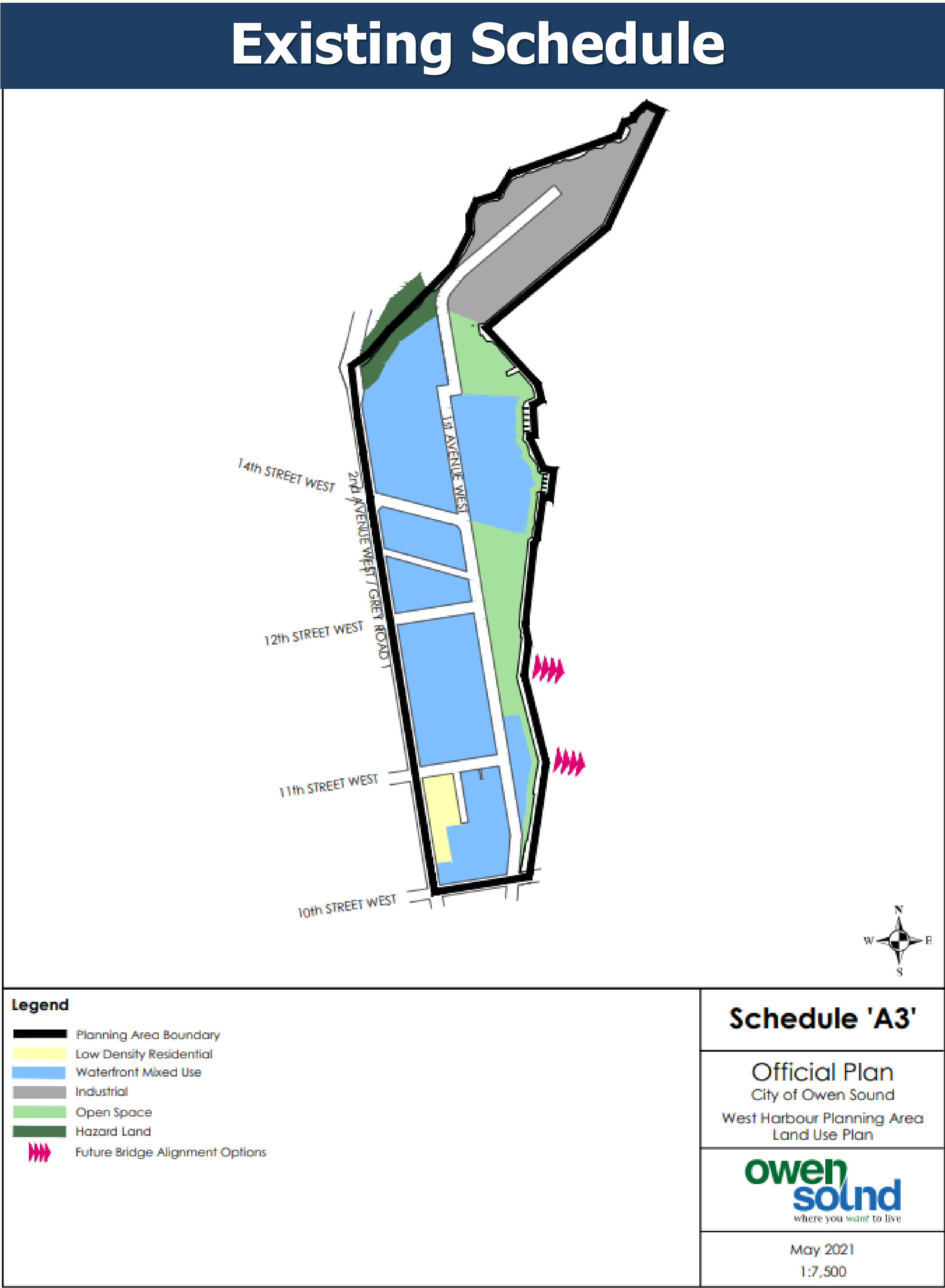
Official Plan
City of Owen Sound
East Bluffs Planning Area
Land Use Plan



July 2025
1:10,000

City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

Proposed Schedule A3



City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

Strategic Plan Alignment

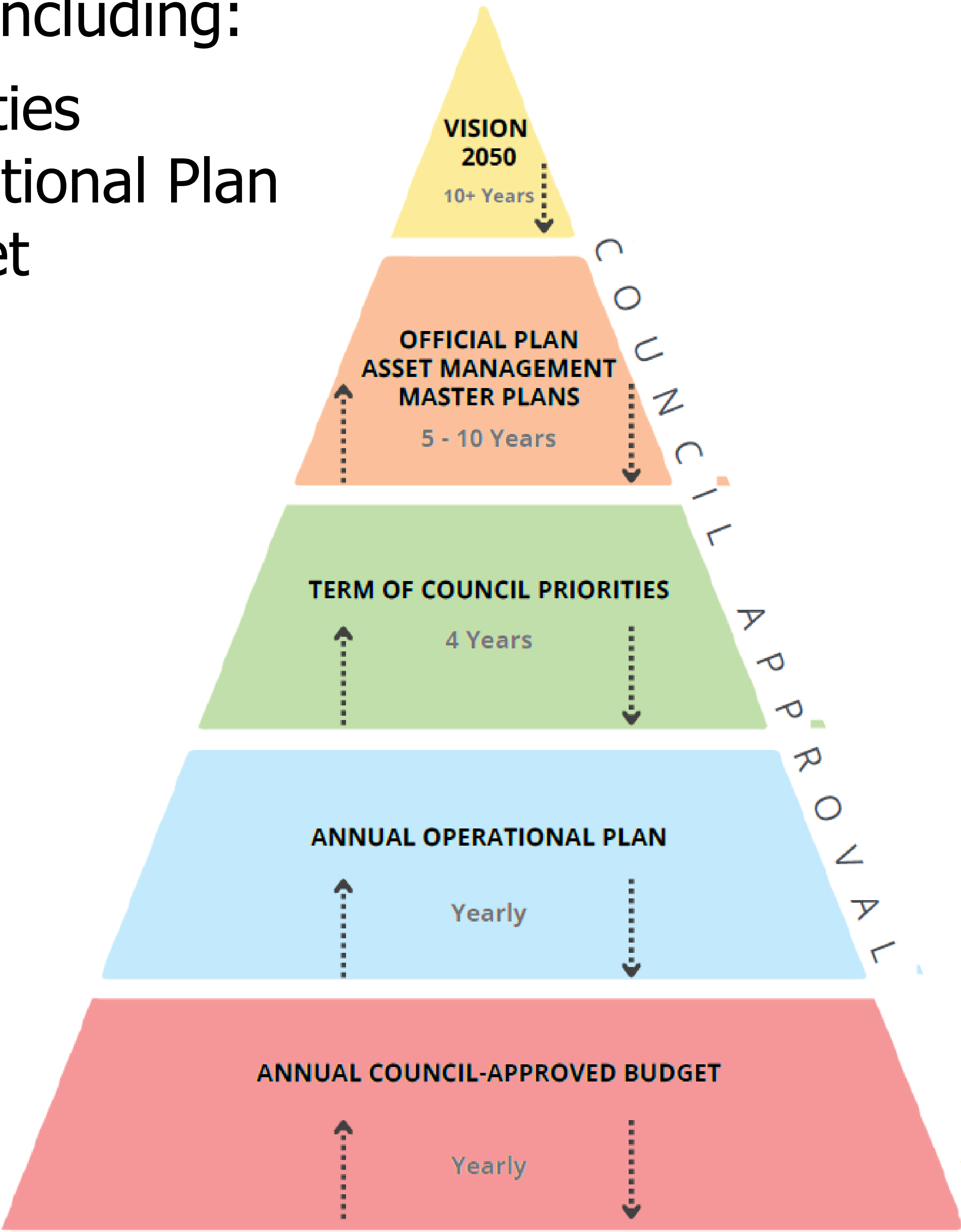
Purpose of Future Owen Sound Vision 2050

Future Owen Sound Vision 2050 is the City’s Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan guides decision-making and sets the City’s priorities. The Strategic Plan helps inform various City documents and processes including:

- Official Plan
- Asset Management Plan
- Master Plans
- Council Priorities
- Annual Operational Plan
- Annual Budget

Relationship between the Strategic Plan and the Official Plan

The Strategic Plan identifies the City’s priorities and vision, but it is not a legally binding document. The City’s Official Plan is a legally binding document, and the Planning Act requires that Official Plans are consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement and must conform to Provincial Plans and upper tier Official Plans. Although the City’s Strategic Plan informs the City’s Official Plan policy, the Official Plan is not required to conform to the Strategic Plan.



City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

Strategic Plan Alignment

The Strategic Plan includes seven (7) themes. All of these themes are reflected in the policies of the Official Plan. The Official Plan Review process does not propose any changes to the Strategic Plan.

How the Strategic
Plan Informs the
Official Plan



City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

Strategic Plan Alignment

How the Strategic Plan Informs the Official Plan

1. Prosperous City

- The Official Plan includes policies to protect employment lands by restricting conversion to other land uses.
- The Official Plan includes policies to support new businesses in the River District by allowing a variety of uses, permitting intensification and limiting commercial development outside of the River District.

2. Green & Resilient City

- The Official Plan requires protection of the Natural Heritage System.
- The Official Plan requires Electric Vehicle Parking in new developments.
- The Official Plan requires protection and replacement of mature trees.

City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

Strategic Plan Alignment

How the Strategic Plan Informs the Official Plan

3. Celebrating & Embracing Culture

- The Official Plan includes policies which protect cultural heritage resources.
- The Official Plan includes policies which support cultural events.

4. City Building

- The Official Plan includes policies which encourage cultural and recreational facilities throughout the community.
- The Official Plan includes policies which encourage recreational opportunities, attractive public spaces and high-quality built form in the River District (Downtown).

5. A City that Moves

- The Official Plan includes policies which support pedestrian walkability, active transportation and transit.
- The Official Plan includes policies which seek to facilitate a well-designed street network for various functions.
- The Official Plan includes policies to require appropriate parking in new development, including provisions for screening and off-street parking.

City of Owen Sound Official Plan Review

Strategic Plan Alignment

How the Strategic Plan Informs the Official Plan

6. Safe City

- The Official Plan includes policies which encourage accessible and age-friendly design in new developments.
- The Official Plan includes policies which seek to facilitate a safe and accessible pedestrian environment.
- The Official Plan requires the provision of an accessible transit system and encourages accessible parks and public service facilities.

7. Fostering Beneficial & Respectful Relationships

- The Official Plan encourages the involvement of residents and other stakeholders in the planning process and sets out minimum public notice requirements for planning applications.
- The Official Plan requires Indigenous consultation where development applications impact treaty rights or aboriginal interests.

City of Owen Sound Zoning By-law Review

Purpose

Purpose of the Zoning By-law

The Zoning By-law provides the **detailed land use framework and regulations** for the City. The Zoning By-law implements the policies of the Official Plan at a detailed level and regulates development in the City.

Purpose of the Zoning By-law Review

The City’s Zoning By-law was approved April 2010, and last updated in December 2022. **Updates are required to implement the City’s 2022 Official Plan and to address housekeeping items.**

- The Zoning By-law review includes the following assessments:
- Conformity with the City’s Official Plan
 - Conformity with the County of Grey Official Plan
 - Consistency with Provincial Policy and legislative changes
 - Review of historic approvals, minor variance trends and discussion with City staff

The Zoning By-law updates affect all lands within the City of Owen Sound

A redlined copy of the City’s Zoning By-law is available for review on the project’s OurCity page.

City of Owen Sound Zoning By-law Review

Proposed Updates

Zoning By-law updates include the following:

- ✓ Consolidate existing Residential Zones
- ✓ Introduction of the new M3 Zone
- ✓ Minor Policy Updates:
 - Allow schools and daycare centres in residential zones
 - Introduce regulations for Minor Zoning By-law Amendments
 - Introduce new definitions
 - Introduce electric vehicle parking provisions
 - Amend minimum parking rates and Queue space/Drive-thru provisions
 - Introduce general provisions for Derby Camping, Cluster Development and Height projections
 - Introduce new C2 zone provisions to implement the Official Plan
 - Permit Additional Residential Units in the Rural and Agricultural zones

City of Owen Sound Zoning By-law Review

Residential Zones

Consolidate existing Residential Zones

Notes:

* As existing on the date of this By-law coming into effect

** Located in a School

***Located on the ground floor of a residential building with a minimum of 25 residential units. The maximum combined GFA of all commercial uses shall be 150m2

Uses	Uses Permitted in Zone		
	R1	R2	MR
RESIDENTIAL			
Dwelling, Single Detached	●	●	●
Dwelling, Semi Detached	●	●	●
Dwelling, Duplex	●	●	●
Dwelling, Townhouse	●*	●	●
Dwelling, Converted (See Section 6.1.ii)	●*	●	●
Dwelling, Apartment		●	●
Dwelling Units in Combination with a Permitted Non-Residential Use			●
Group Home	●	●	●
Boarding or Lodging House		●	●
Additional residential Unit (See Section 5.27)	●	●	●
COMMERCIAL			
Clinics		●	●
Convenience Store		●***	●***
Personal Service Uses		●	●
Restaurants		●***	●***
INSTITUTIONAL			
Assisted Living Facility		●	●
Community Lifestyle Facility			●
Day Nursery	●**	●	●
Long Term Care Facility		●	●
Place of Worship	●	●	●
Public Parks (see Section 5.16.1)	●	●	●
Schools	●	●	●

City of Owen Sound Zoning By-law Review

Industrial Zones



Introduction of the M3 Zone

Uses	Permitted Uses			
	M1	M2	M3	MU
Animal Shelter	•	•		•
Automotive Rental Establishment	•			
Automotive Body/Repair Shop	•	•		•
Automotive Washing Establishment	•	•		
Cannabis Production Facility (See Sec. 5.16.4)	•	•	•	
Catering Services	•	•		•
Clinic				•
Commercial School	•			
Community Lifestyle Facilities	•			•
Contractors Yard		•		
Day Nursery	•			
Dwelling Unit (1) accessory to a permitted use for a custodian or maintenance employee	•	•		•
Financial Institution	•	•		•
Food/Beverage Production Facility (See Section 5.16.5)	•	•	•	•
Garden Centre, Accessory (See Section 5.7)	•	•		•
Hotel				•
Industrial Mall	•	•	•	
Kennels (see Section 5.16.2)		•		
Laboratory	•			
Marina				•
Monument Sales	•	•		

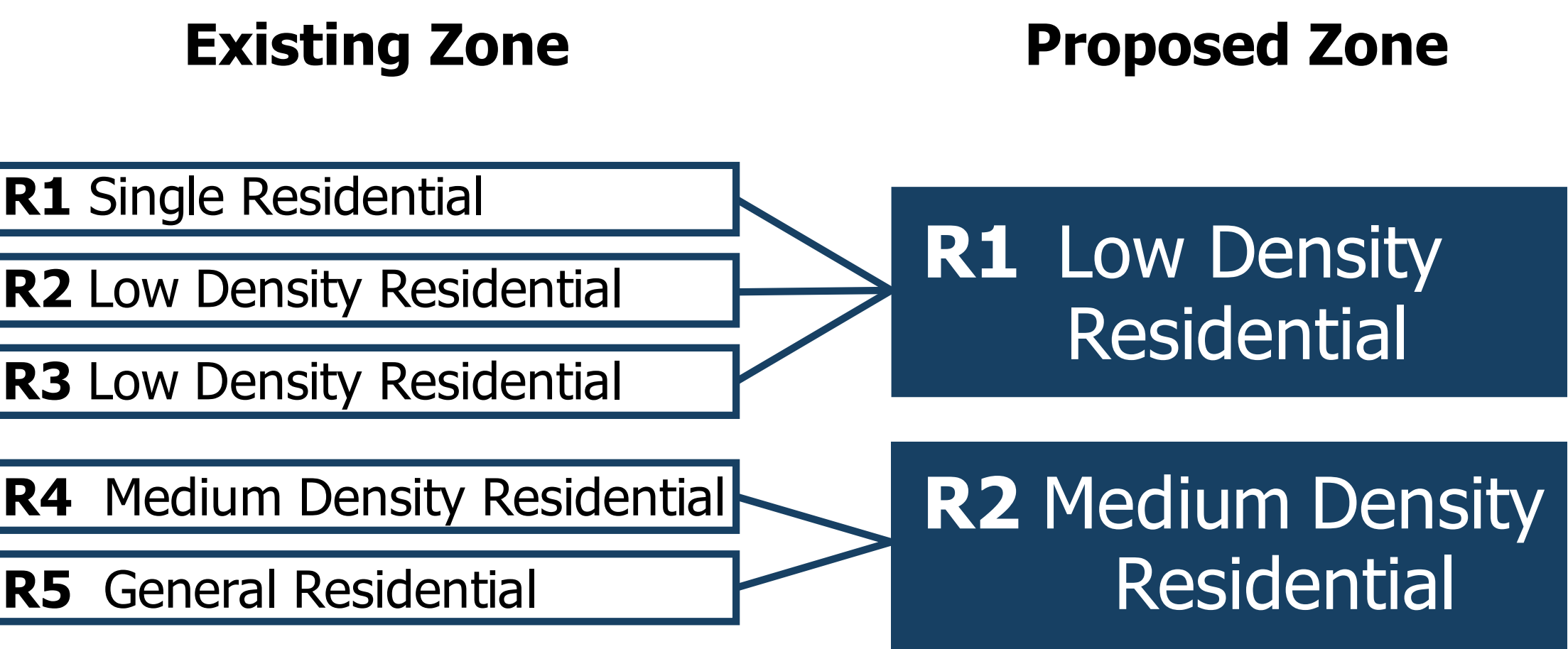
Uses	Permitted Uses			
	M1	M2	M3	MU
Museums/Galleries	•	•		•
Office	•	•	•*	•
Printing and Publishing Establishment	•	•	•	
Public Park (See Section 5.16.1)	•	•		•
Railway Marshalling Yard	•	•	•	•
Public Use	•	•		•
Rental Store, General	•	•		
Repair Store	•	•		•
Retail Store Accessory to a Permitted Use	•	•	•	•
Restaurant				•
Self Serve Use	•			
Service Use	•	•		•
Storage, Indoor	•	•	•*	•
Storage, Outdoor		•	•*	
Storage of Inflammable, explosive and other Liquids and Gases		•	•*	
Studio	•	•		•
Transportation Depot	•	•	•	•
Uses, Industrial		•	•	•
Uses, Light Industrial	•		•	•
Utility Service and Buildings	•	•		
Veterinarian Clinic	•	•		•
Warehouse	•	•	•	
Warehouse (within enclosed building)	•	•	•	
Wholesale Establishment	•	•		•

Notes:
* Accessory to a permitted use.

City of Owen Sound Zoning By-law Review

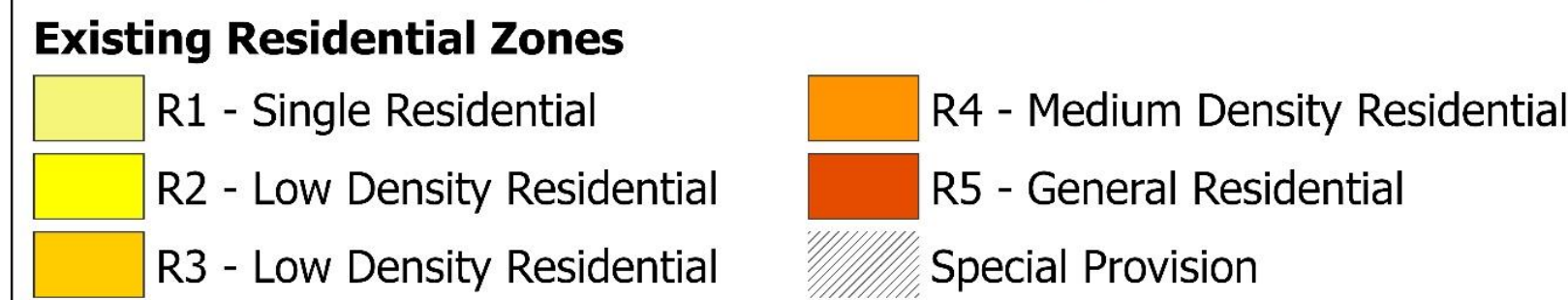
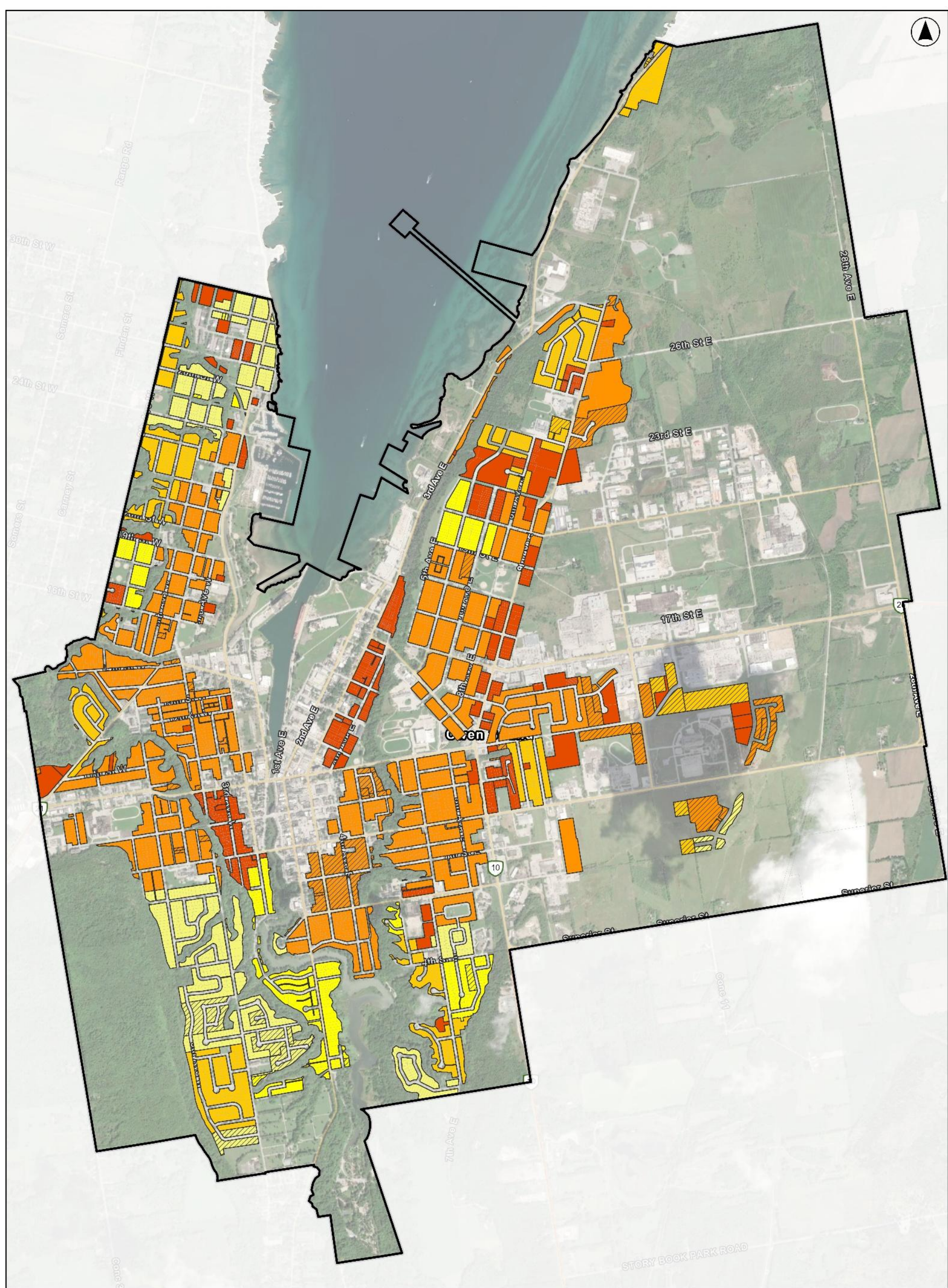
Proposed Updates

The existing Residential Zones are proposed to be consolidated from five zones to **two zones**:

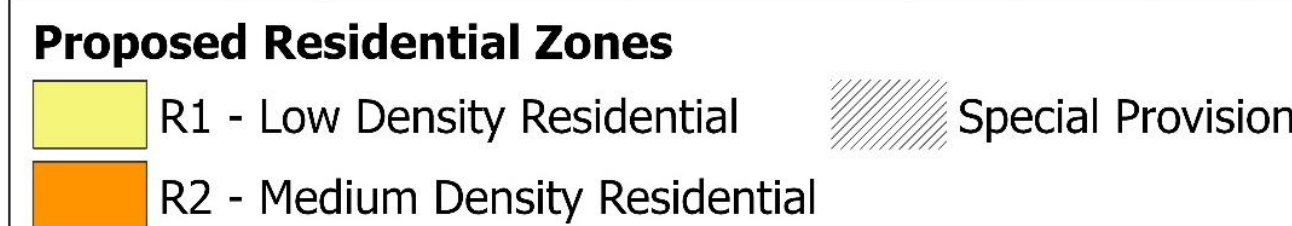
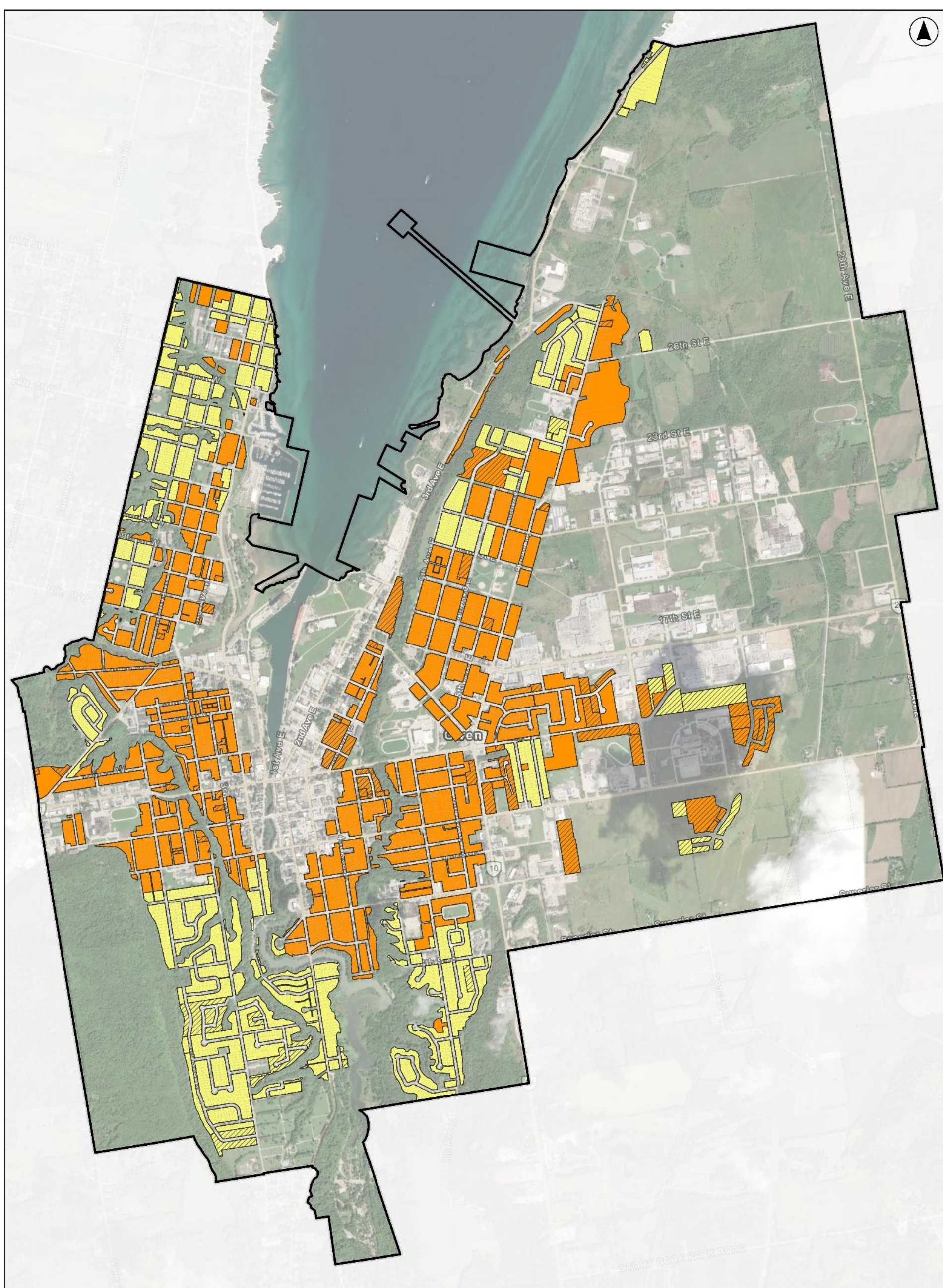


Special provisions have been reviewed and removed where the proposed zoning addresses the same intent.

Existing Zoning



Proposed Zoning



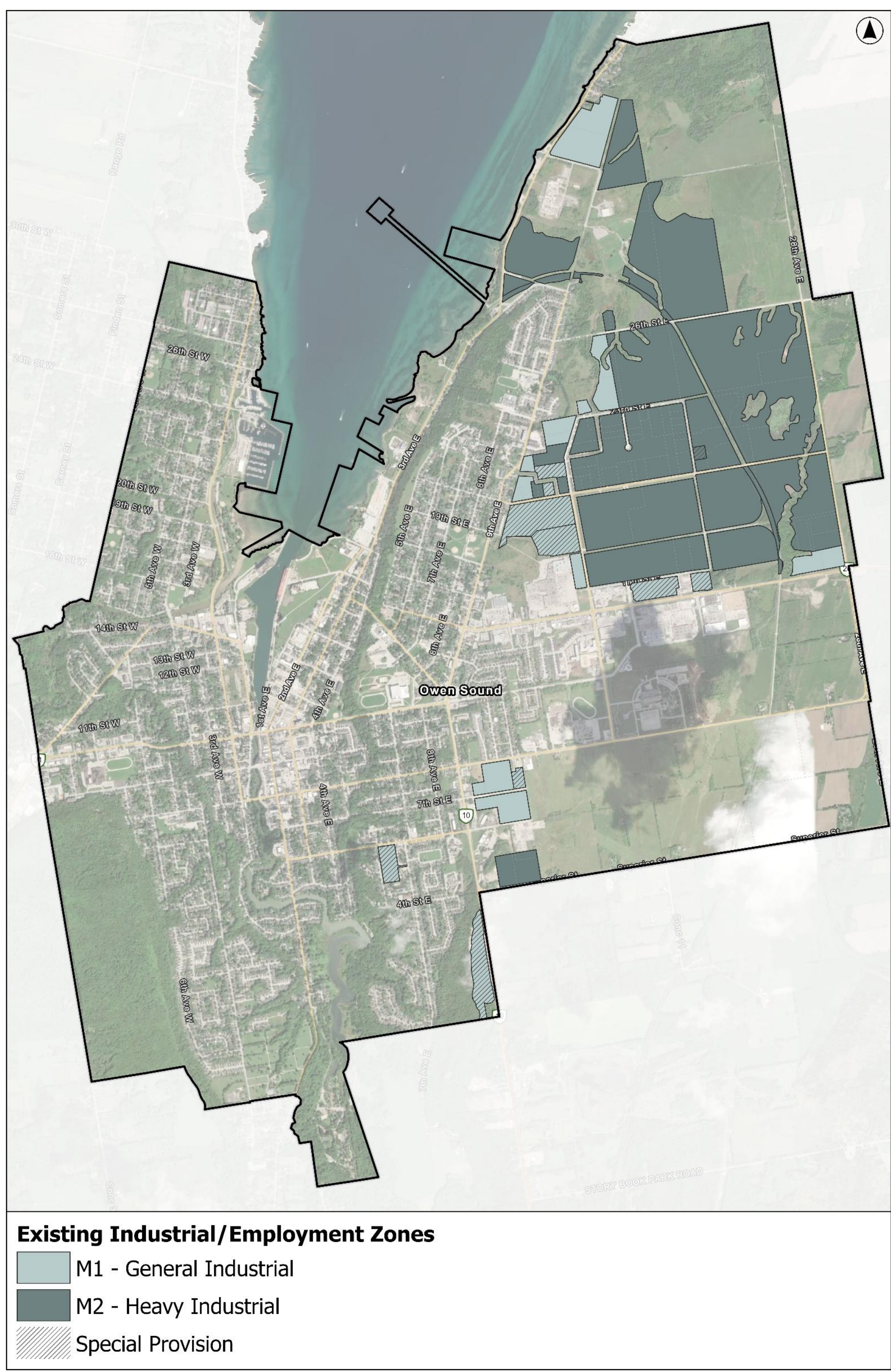
City of Owen Sound Zoning By-law Review

Proposed Updates

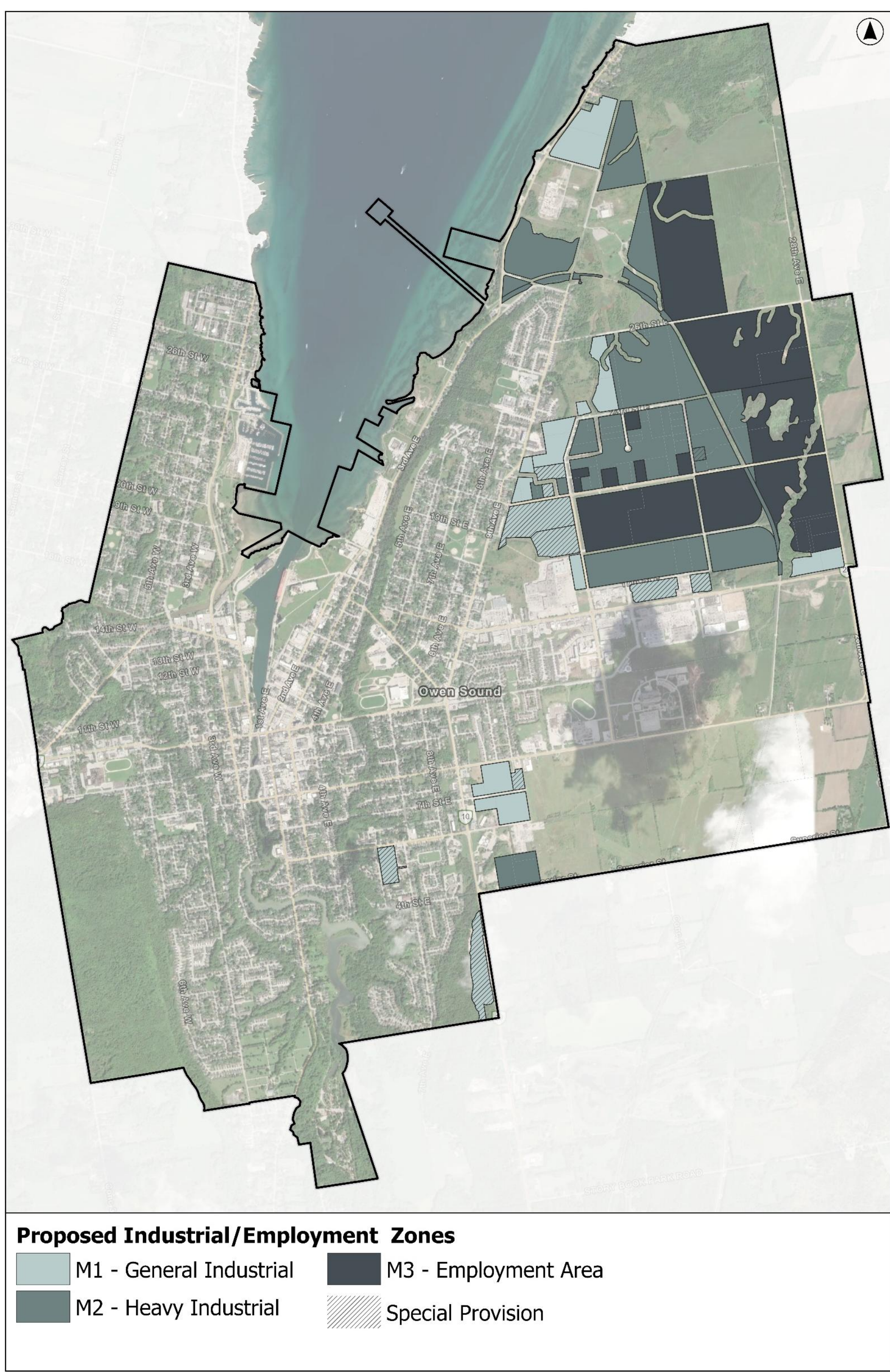
A new Industrial Zone, **M3 Employment Area** is proposed to reflect the new Employment 1 designation proposed through the Official Plan Review process.

To determine whether a change in zoning was appropriate, a review of the active uses on the employment lands was completed.

Existing Zoning



Proposed Zoning



Questions



Q & A

Thank you!

Additional Comments can be submitted to
bbloomfield@owensound.ca