



Community Improvement Plan

Bala & Port Carling



December, 2021



MDB Insight

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1 Introduction

What is a Community Improvement Plan

A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a planning tool to support strategic community investment priorities. A CIP provides a framework for public investment opportunities in the public realm and the provision of incentive programs to assist the private sector to stimulate redevelopment and to facilitate property improvements. The Township of Muskoka Lakes Community Improvement Plan applies to two areas: **Bala** and **Port Carling**.

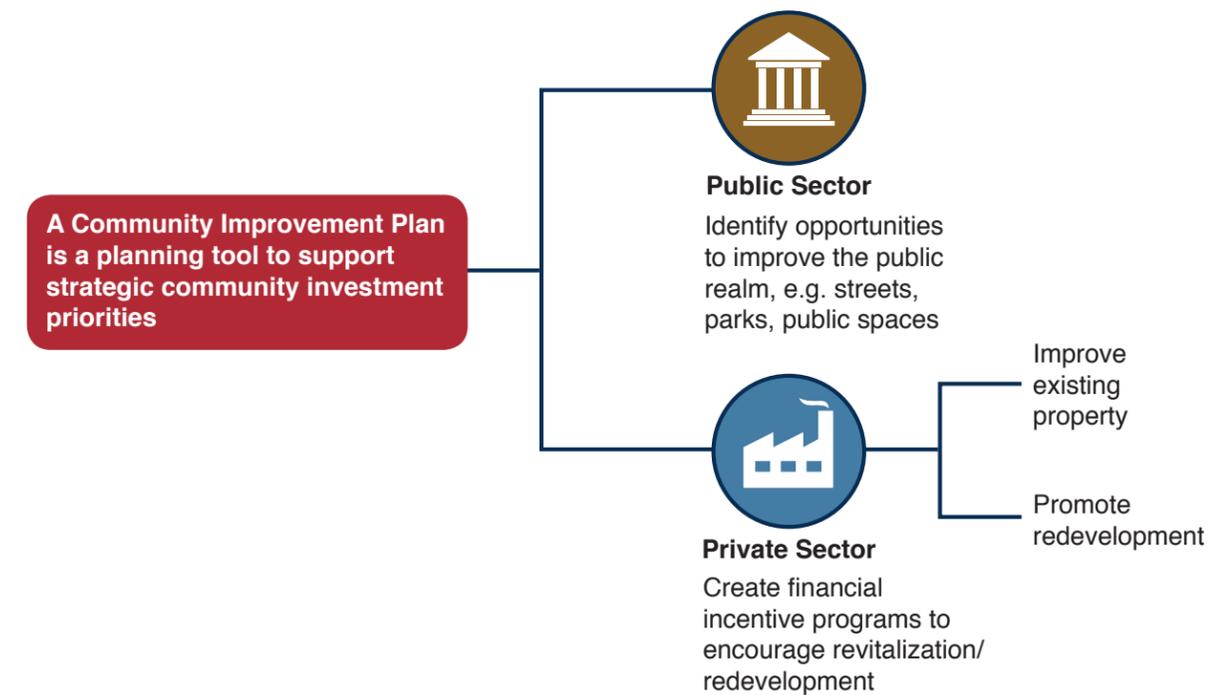
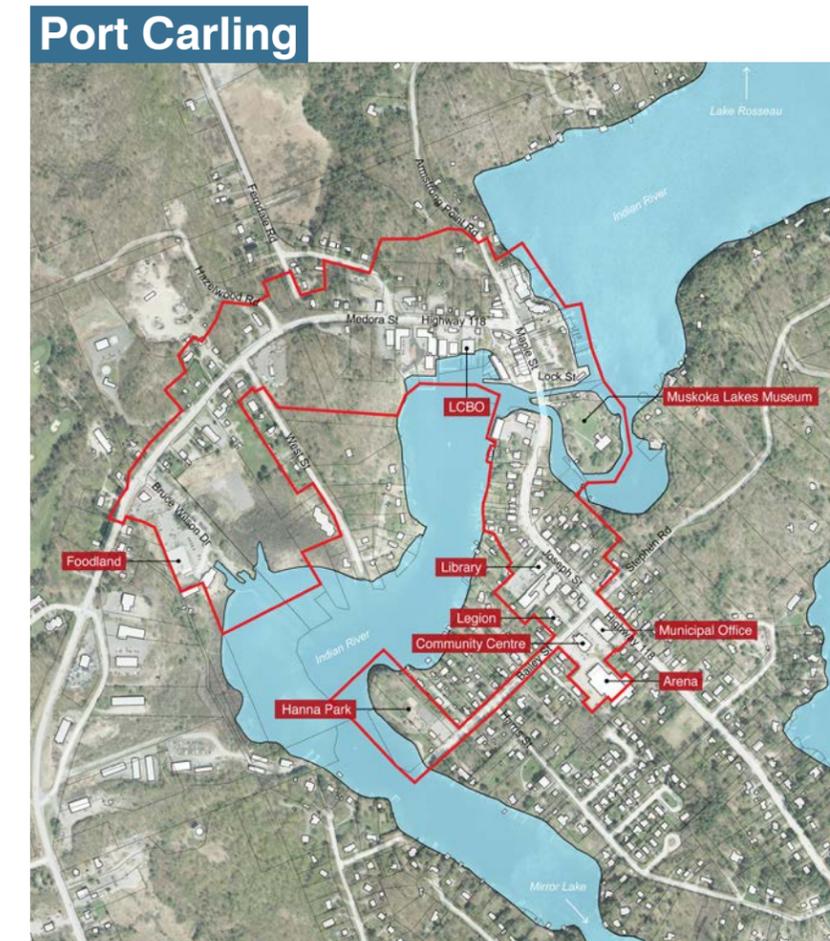


Diagram illustrating What Is a Community Improvement Plan?

Study Area

The study area for Bala and Port Carling is illustrated by the red line on the following maps. The Bala study area includes the Muskoka Lakes Sports Park on the north, south along Highway 169, includes the Library, Arena and Legion, to Jaspern Park, Windsor Park and terminates at Windsor Drive on the south.

The Port Carling study area extends from Foodland and Bruce Wilson Drive on the south, along Highway 118 to the Municipal Office and includes Bailey Street and Hanna Park.



The Project Areas for the Muskoka Lakes Community Improvement Plan

2 Community Engagement

Framework of the Official Plan

The Township's Official Plan is under review. A draft of the new Official Plan has been prepared and input is being received.

The current Official Plan (2009) provides general policy direction and a land use planning framework to guide the physical, social, economic and environmental management and growth of the Township. It has a number of goals with respect to the Urban Centres of Bala and Port Carling that provide direction for the overall framework and urban design guidelines of this Community Improvement Plan. Significant growth is anticipated in Port Carling and Bala with a variety of building types, densities, locations and opportunities for development. The exiting Official Plan's goals for the urban centres are to:

- direct and accommodate development in a way that will result in a compact,
- efficient community that complements and sustains the natural environment and the character of the community.
- ensure that the majority of growth is focused in the Urban Centres.
- identify opportunities for intensification, infill, and redevelopment within the existing boundaries.
- ensure there are opportunities for current and future residents to live in Urban Centres by providing a choice in alternative forms of housing.
- encourage public and private sector initiatives for affordable housing.
- promote economic growth in Urban Centres, particularly in the Downtown core areas.

The Official Plan defines character as:

Character is what distinguishes a community and makes it different from other places. Character provides a sense of identity. Character is built over time and is linked to physical features and natural setting, architectural form, and settlement history. For each Urban Centre, it is important to recognize its distinct character and ensure that future development is compatible with and enhances that established character.

The Official Plan recognizes that Urban Centres are not static, but will evolve. It recognizes that they provide a focus for each community and provide a range of commercial uses and housing and that there is a need to promote innovative development while protecting the essential character of each Urban Centre.

The Urban Centre designation in the new Draft Official Plan recognizes the importance of the Urban Centres and the supports compatible new development, an increase in density, mixed uses, new public space and a high standard of design. The new Official Plan supports excellence in community living with community facilities, safe streets, active transportation and attractive built form. It includes urban design policies for public buildings, streets, parking and commercial/mixed use buildings.

The new Official Plan includes a vision for Bala and Port Carling. Bala is envisioned as a focus for intensification and development. Bala's commercial core is generally from Bala Falls Road to Maple Street with infilling anticipated primarily on the east side of Highway 169 north of the LCBO. With upgrading of municipal water and sewer, a wider range of housing, including higher density, is encouraged. Port Carling is envisioned with a compact commercial core with growth anticipated between the locks and the Municipal building with improved access to the water's edge and dockage.

The Community Improvement Plan was prepared within the framework of engagement and consultation and included:

- one on one conversations with Councillors
- one on one conversations with members of the public
- one on one conversations with key landowners/business operators
- meetings with the Economic Development and Grants Committee and Planning Committee
- two public online workshops focused on Bala and one focused on Port Carling to discuss opportunities for change
- an online survey
- open house to present the draft final Community Improvement Plan
- council presentations
- emails
- information posted on the project webpage.

One on Ones

The one on one conversations were held as an early step in the process. The conversations revealed a number of common themes:

Branding/marketing

- Needs a branding for Bala and Port Carling, connectivity between the two, not competitive
- Opportunity presented by rail bridge in Bala for signage
- An element that can brand/identify the cores
- Element that is Instagram worthy – special feature that is an attraction for photos, spread the word on social media

Programming

- Opportunity for buskers/festivals

Information

- Brochure or handout
- Visitor information kiosk
- Parking ambassadors

Access

- Can't walk in winter – dangerous
- Walking loop needed in both Port Carling and Bala
- Sidewalks are missing
- High speed on both main streets, it's not safe to walk
- Need safe pedestrian crossings
- Traffic
- Have to live with trucks, no alternative route for trucks in either Bala or Port Carling

Parking

- Need to know where to park
- Not enough parking
- No desire to loose parking
- There's enough parking, needs better signage
- Nowhere to park is a good sign
- Expand parking on the edges of the core business area
- Share parking

Boating

- Boardwalk/docks to enable easy access to businesses

Snowmobiles

- Identify parking areas
- Ensure easy access to businesses
- Bridge in Bala

Business

- Interest in opening/expanding businesses
- Interest in new development that is compatible with the character
- Interest in temporary or pop up retail
- Interest in grants to enable improvements/expansion
- Business expansion is restricted because of parking requirements
- New mixed use development, incorporating residential, retail and pedestrian spaces
- Variety of businesses – number of real estate/interior design offices

Housing

- Concern about the lack of housing for staff
- Lack of affordable housing for all
- Interest in multi-unit housing
- Bala Bay Inn – concerned about existing and future use

Recreation/public use

- Pickleball courts
- Washrooms open year round
- More use of the Community Centre in Bala
- Create a pedestrian focused space behind buildings in Port Carling
- Focus on four season use
- Create small gathering spaces – e.g Muskoka chairs and fire pit, outdoor games tables, outdoor sport court, skating trail/rink
- Green space at dam in Bala

Cost

- No money to spend on anything
- Focus on by-law enforcement
- Interest in grants available to assist with improvements

Workshops

Two online public workshops were held for the Community Improvement Plans for Bala and Port Carling on March 9, 2021 using an online meeting format. Approximately 35 people attended the sessions. The workshops began with a presentation summarizing our understanding of existing conditions with respect to land use, zoning, parking, trails, community facilities, heritage, boat access and previous streetscape work. Following the presentation each workshop included a conversation were all those on the meeting shared ideas about opportunities for change.

The following are ideas that were discussed in both Bala and Port Carling:

- Enhanced information on what's where and how you get there
- Better accessibility
- Dark sky lighting
- More housing
- Grants to help businesses
- Identity of Bala versus Port Carling
- Year round outdoor hang out spaces, chairs, fire pit, outdoor games
- Locations for pop up retail

In the Bala workshop, ideas shared included:

- Incorporate an entrance feature using the railway bridge
- Fill in missing sidewalks
- Make a walking loop
- Provide dock and boat tie ups at Kee to Bala, Windsor Park, Town dock
- Snowmobile bridge
- Improve the blind corner at Bala Falls Road
- Add more recreation facilities in Jaspen and Sports Park
- Need guidelines/rules to deal with fencing

In the Port Carling workshop, ideas shared included:

- Interest and opportunity for mixed use development on the east side of Highway 118 north of Lock Street
- Provide a boardwalk and boat tie up in the bay to link the businesses
- Add a pavilion and enhance museum building (a Feasibility Study is currently underway)
- Pedestrian only space behind buildings on the west side of Highway 118 and Dukes
- South end of Highway 118 – safer to walk, places to cross
- Make a walking loop
- Additional recreational facilities in the Legion owned land on Ferndale

Public Open House

A public open house was held on October 20, 2021 using an on line meeting platform. Approximately 30 people participated in the session. The purpose was to present the draft recommendations for the Community Improvement Plan for Bala and Port Carling. The presentation provided an overview of the framework plan, the results of the on line survey seeking input on the draft recommendations, the private realm guidelines, public realm guidelines, the parking strategy and a summary of the programs, marketing and monitoring of the Plan.

The presentation was followed with an opportunity for all those participating to ask questions or to make comments. The following is a summary of the input received:

- make specific mention of Dark Sky Lighting in Private Realm Guidelines;
- add accessible parking in the Parking Strategy section for the urban cores; and,
- include recommended short term initiatives for implementation:
 - bike racks/bike stations;
 - signage and wayfinding;
 - Muskoka Moments (street furniture, planting);
- Begin discussions with parties on approvals for priority areas such as crosswalks, boardwalks and gateway signage in Bala; and,
- Begin discussions to convert James Bartleman Way as a pedestrian only space.

Statutory Public Meeting

The Statutory Public Meeting was held on November 11, 2021 during the Planning Committee meeting of the Township of Muskoka Lakes Council. The notice for the virtual meeting was posted on October 21, 2021.

The following is a summary of the input received during the Statutory Public Meeting:

- consider including power stations for electric vehicles;
- clarification on the timing of the implementation of the recommendations;
- clarify that crosswalks will be timed;
- consider adjusting the location of the crosswalk in Bala close to Don's Bakery;
- consider adding an streetscape view of Highway 169 in Bala close to the Windsor Drive; and,
- consider adding the opportunity to rent private driveways for parking in the Parking Strategy.

The draft report was presented to Muskoka Lakes Council on December 15, 2021.

Metroquest Survey

An online survey was launched using the Metroquest platform to seek input from the community on ideas to think about for Port Carling and Bala. The survey was promoted through the Township's project webpage, social media, traditional media and circulation through contact networks. The survey was available from May 24, 2021 to June 25 2021.

232 people responded to the survey. The following is a breakdown by age of survey respondents:

1% 18 and under

21% 19 and 44

35% 45 and 60

44% 61 and older

90%, live closer to Port Carling than Bala.

When asked how long they have lived in Muskoka Lakes, the majority of respondents (60%) indicated they have lived in Muskoka Lakes for more than 20 years.

13% less than 5 years

8% 6 to 10 years

19% 11 to 20 years

60% more than 20 years

When asked of their household structure, the majority of respondents (58%) indicated that they were empty nesters.

17% a family with young children

13% a family with teenagers

5% young couples

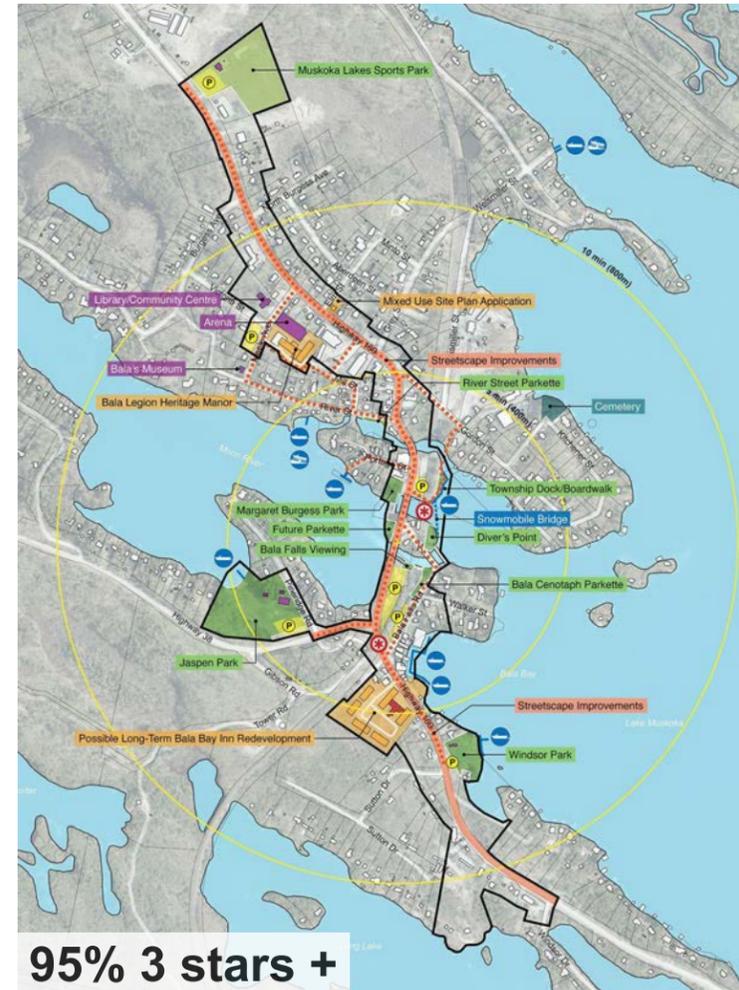
7% are single

58% are empty nesters

Of 47 respondents to this question regarding business ownership/operator, 98% indicated they owned a business in **Port Carling** and 2% indicated they owned a business in **Bala**.

Bala

Overall Framework Plan for Bala



95% 3 stars +

Overall Framework Plan for Bala

What's Most Important to you? (Ranking Results)

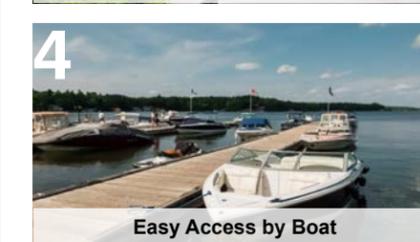
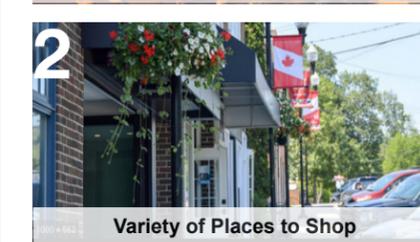


Image Rating for Ideas to Think About for Bala



Provide financial programs (loans and or grants) to assist private business owners with improvements to their buildings/properties

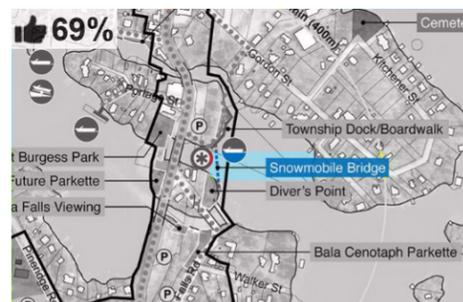
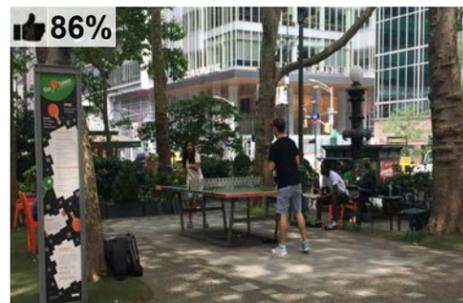
85%

Prepare design guidelines to provide direction on building renovations/new development to be compatible with the Muskoka character.

88%

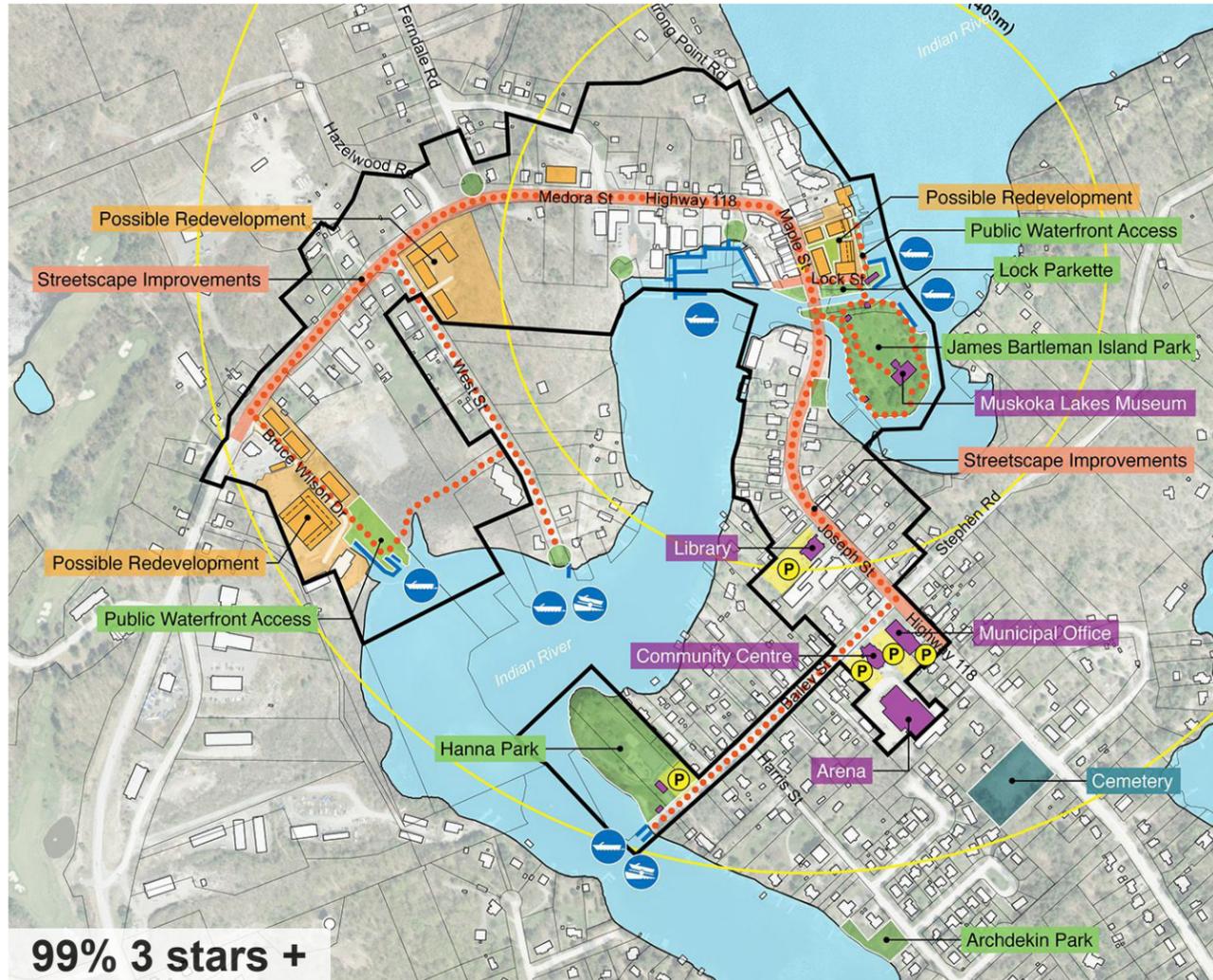
Prepare design guidelines to provide direction on improvements to public space and streets, focusing on greening

92%



Port Carling

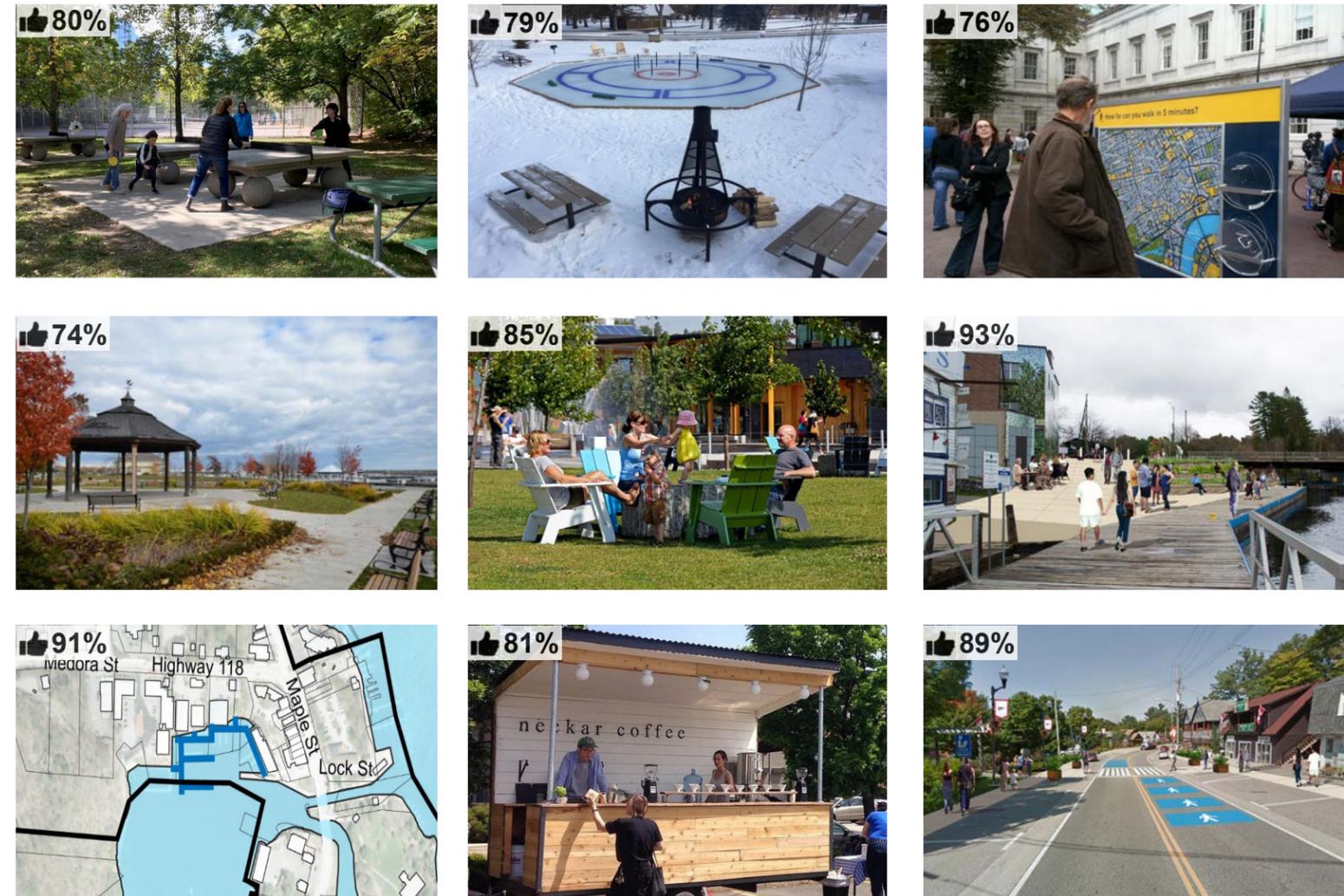
Overall Framework Plan for Port Carling



99% 3 stars +

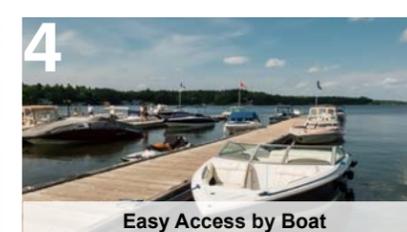
Overall Framework Plan for Port Carling

Image Rating for Ideas to Think About for Port Carling



What's Most Important to you? (Ranking Results)

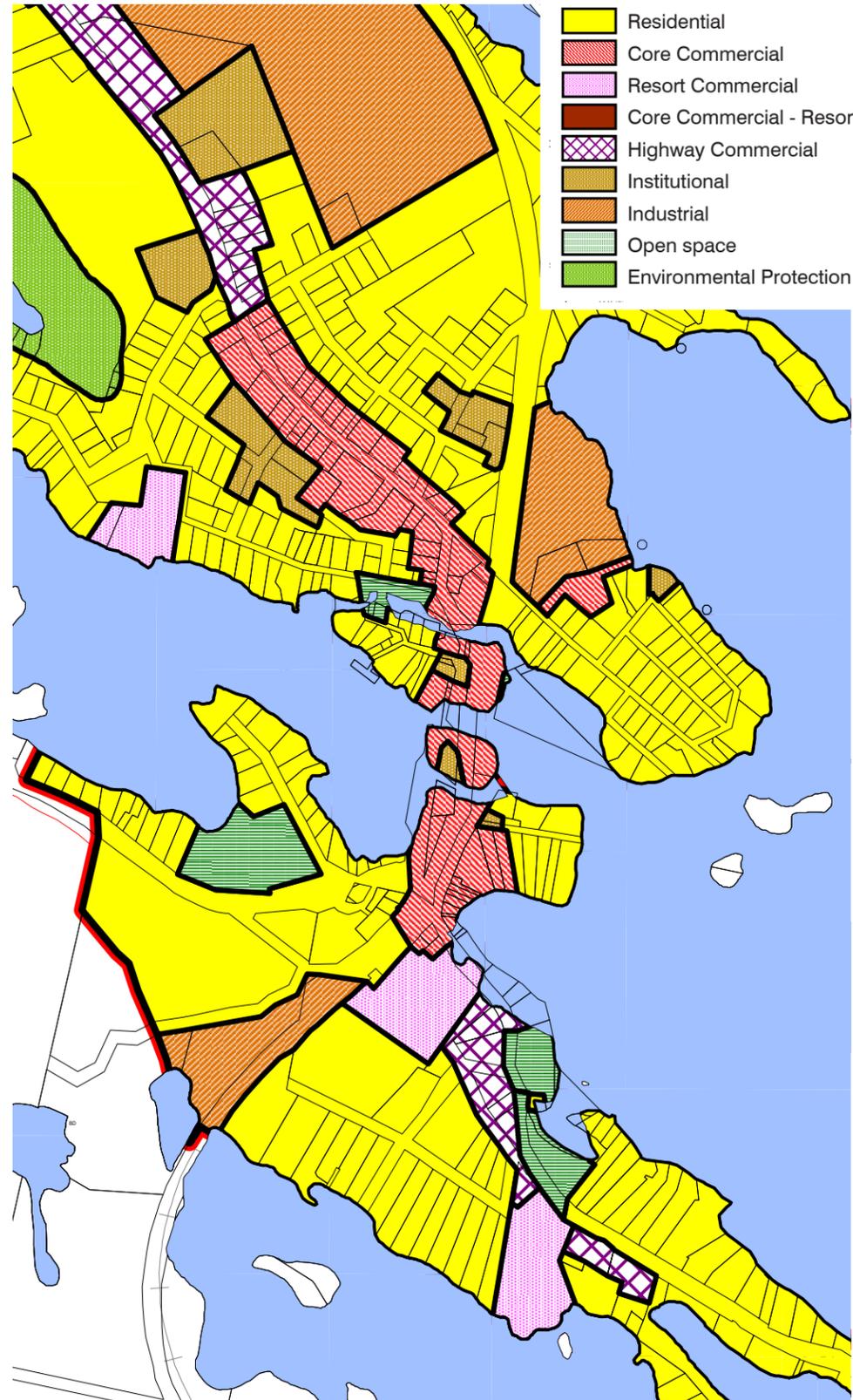
- Provide financial programs (loans and or grants) to assist private business owners with improvements to their buildings/properties **70%**
- Prepare design guidelines to provide direction on building renovations/new development to be compatible with the Muskoka character. **90%**
- Prepare design guidelines to provide direction on improvements to public space and streets, focusing on greening **94%**



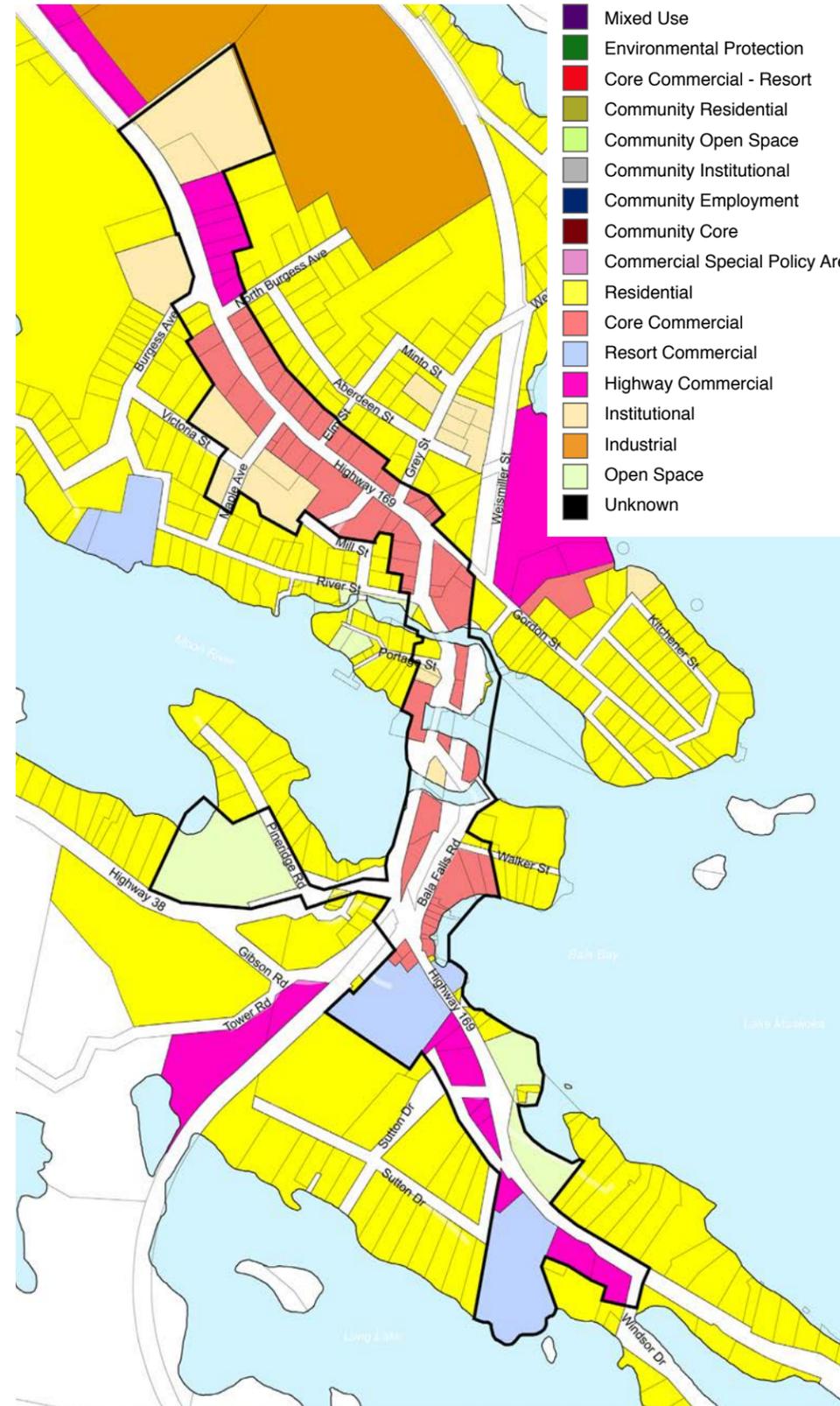
3 Inventory

This chapter provides a summary of various features and conditions in Bala and Port Carling that provide context for the Community Improvement Plan.

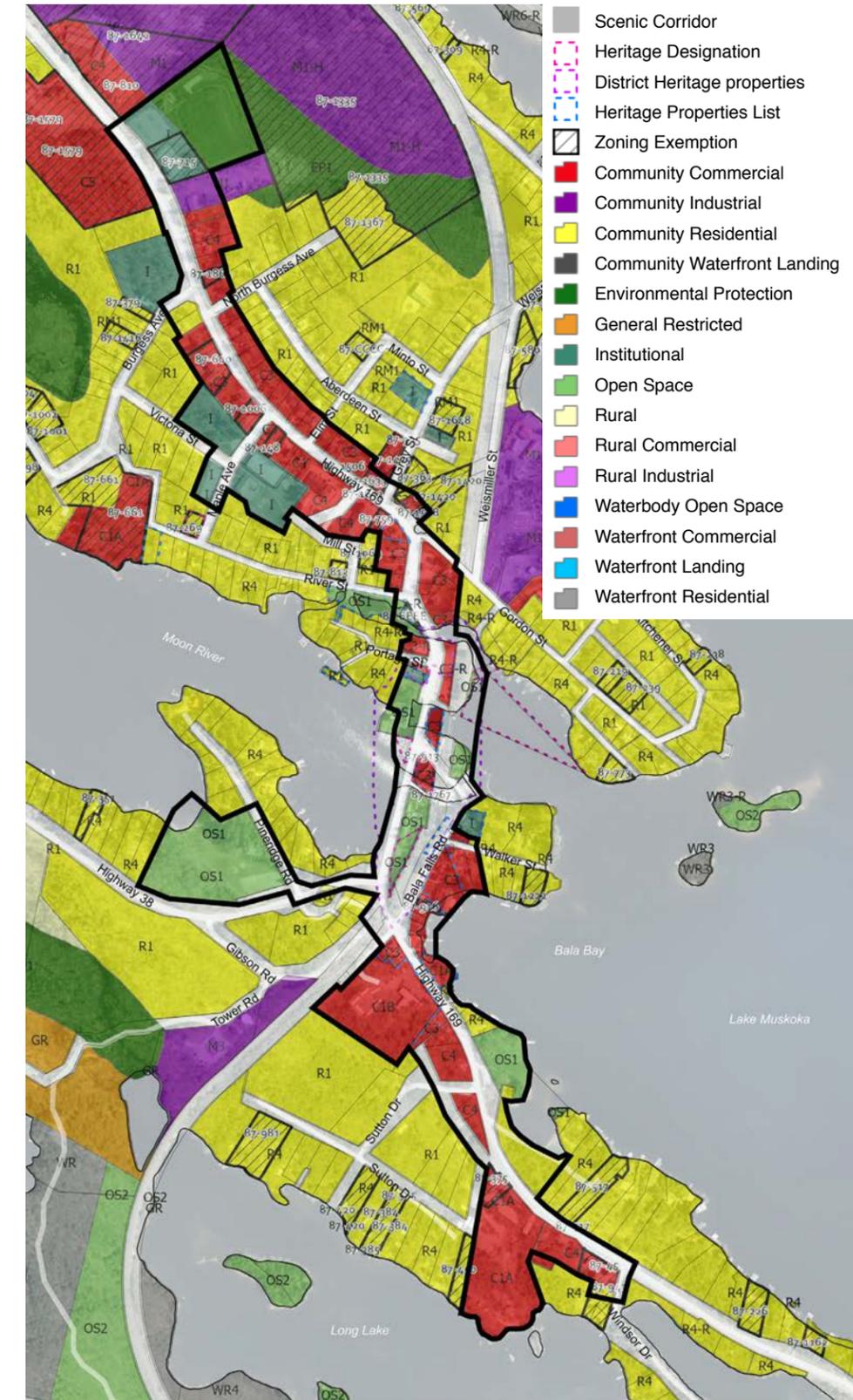
Bala Existing Official Plan Land Use



Draft New Official Plan Land Use



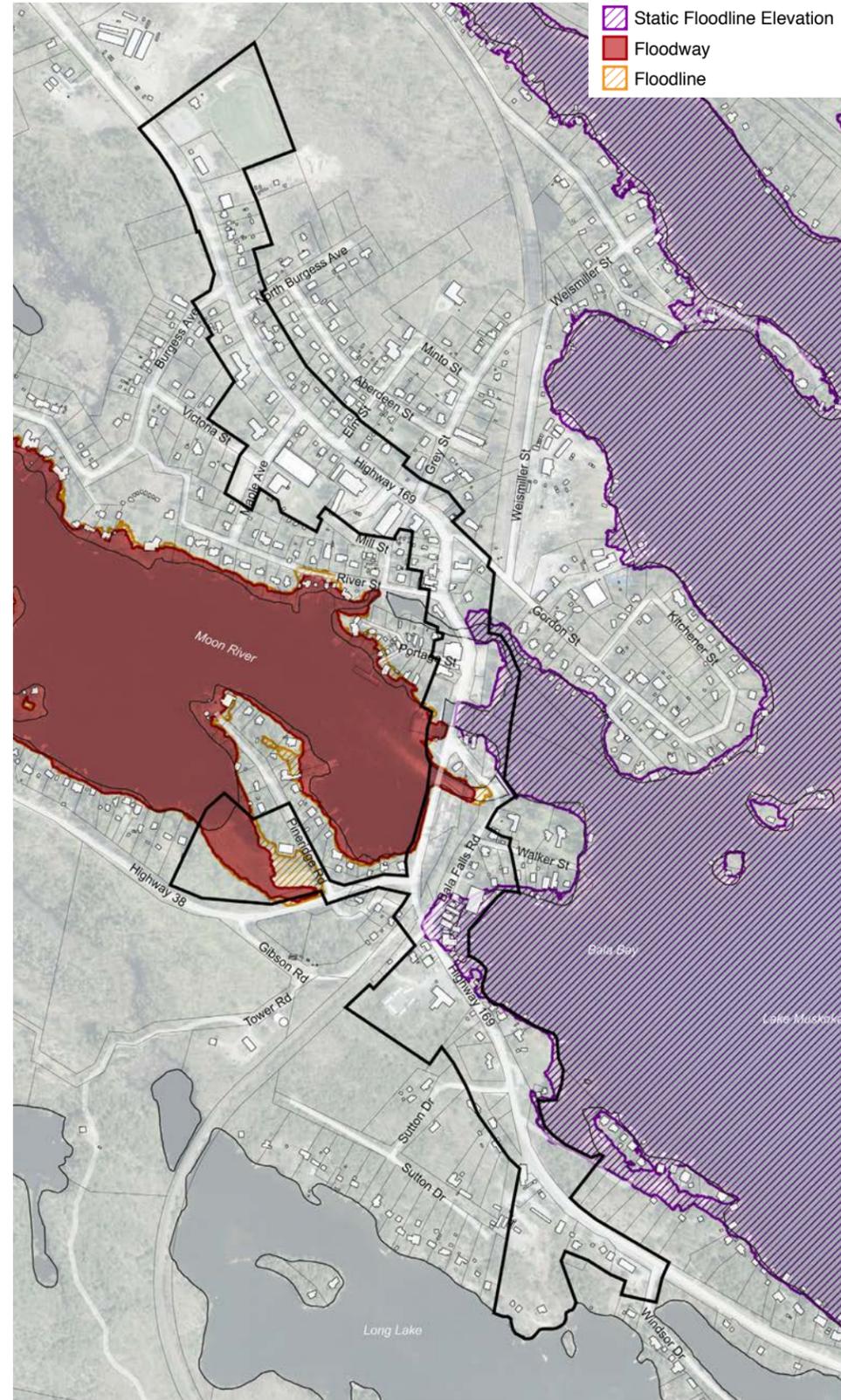
Existing Zoning



Heritage



Flooding & Hazards



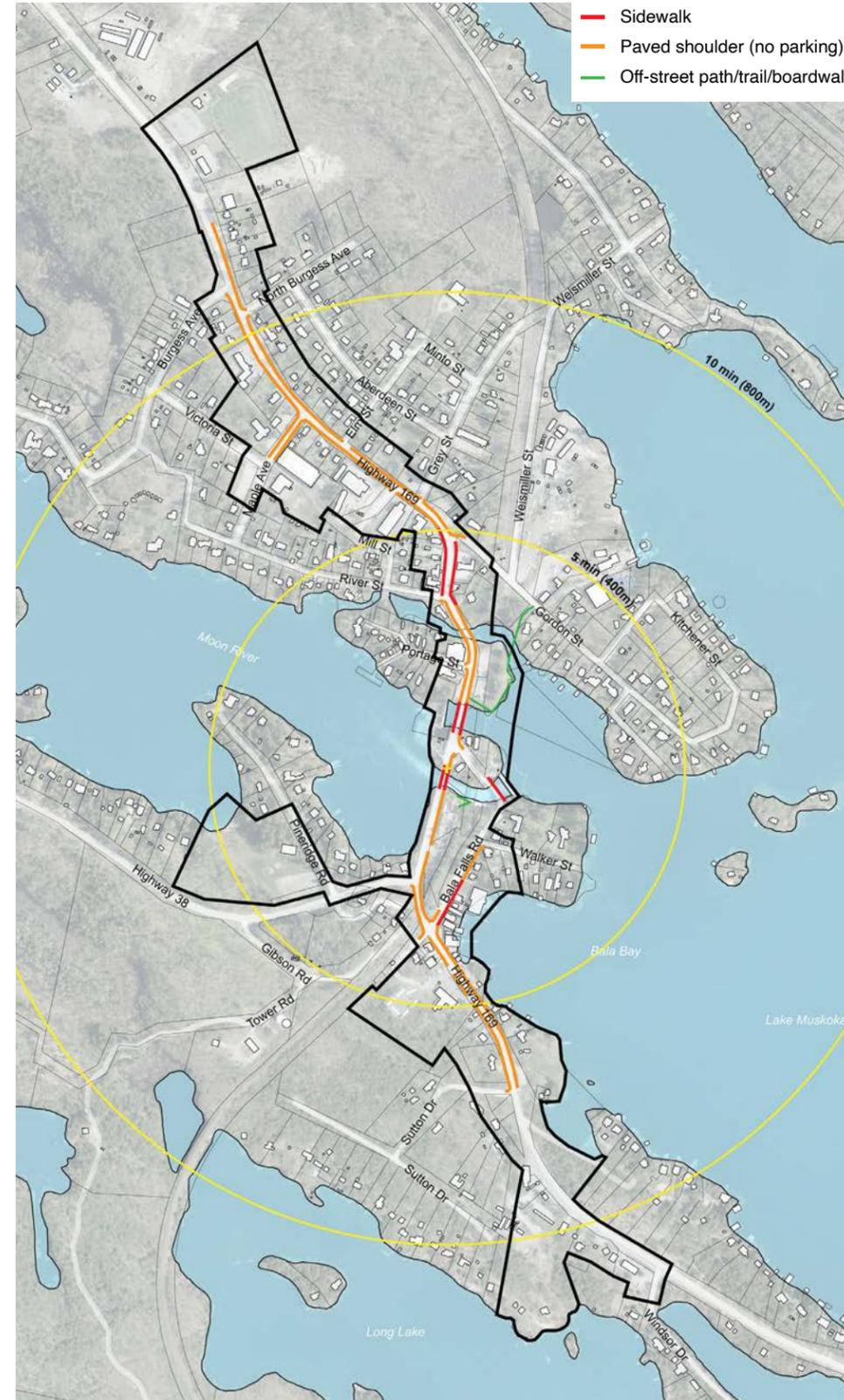
Parking



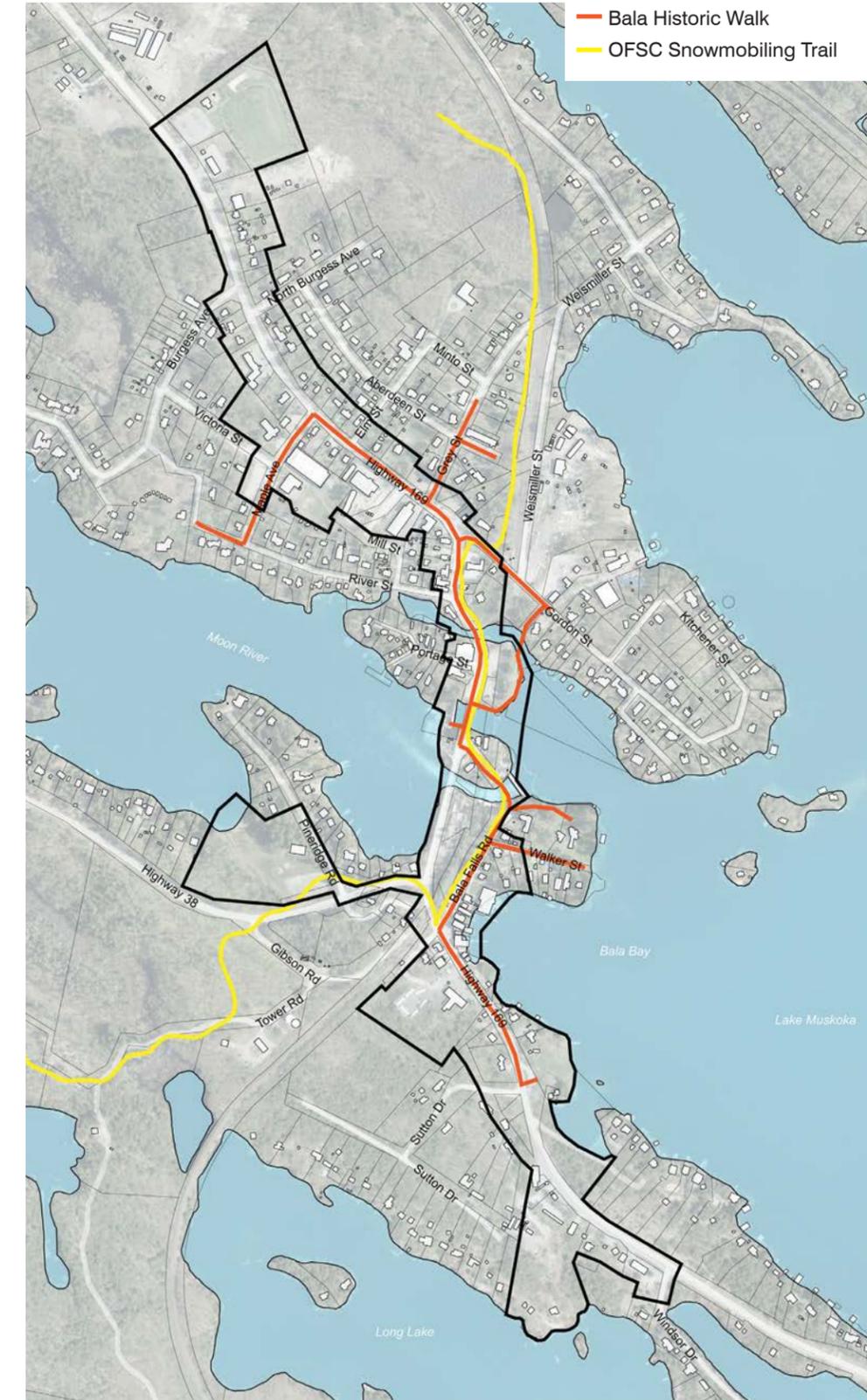
Municipal & Institutional Land



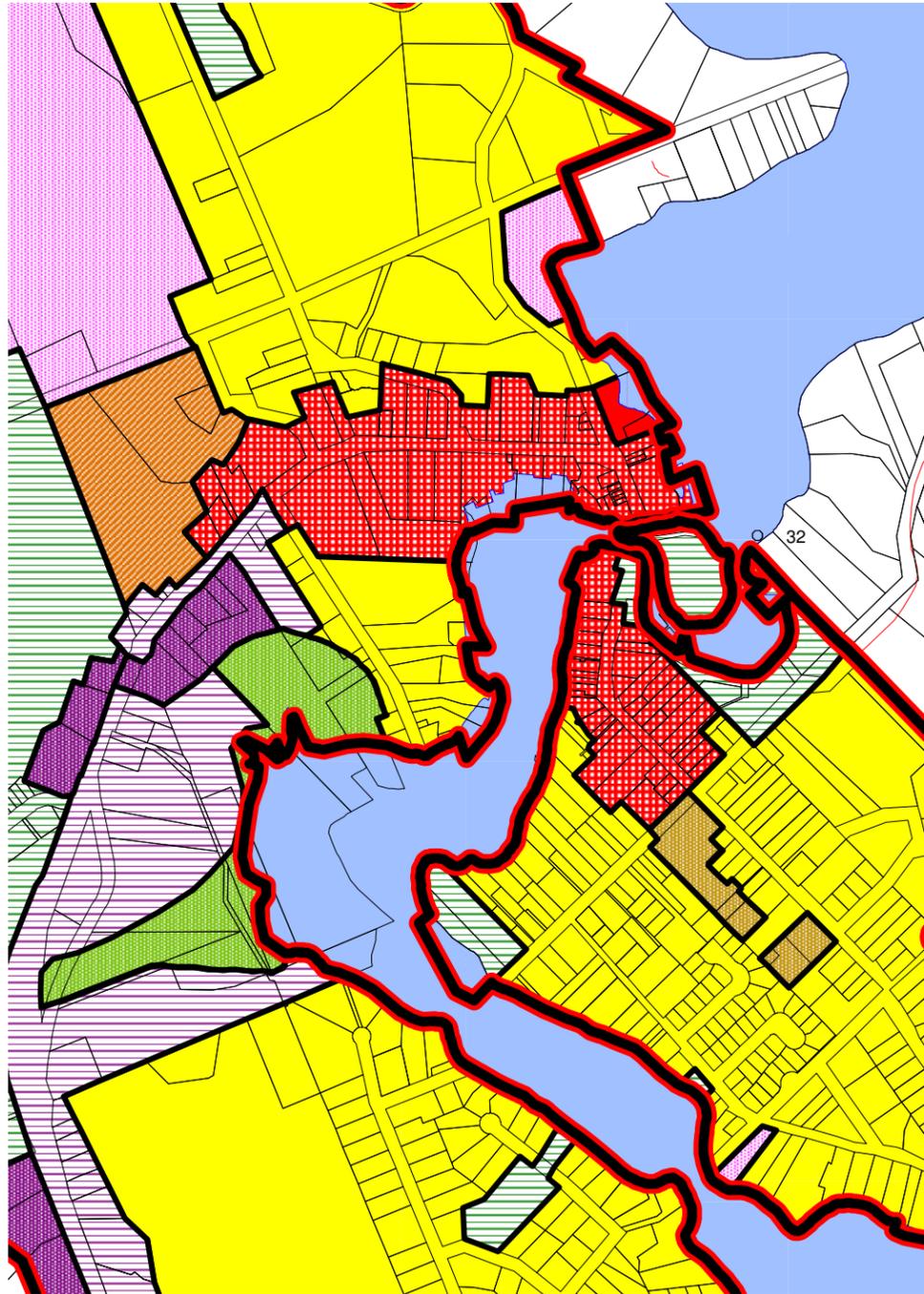
Pedestrian Facilities



Trails

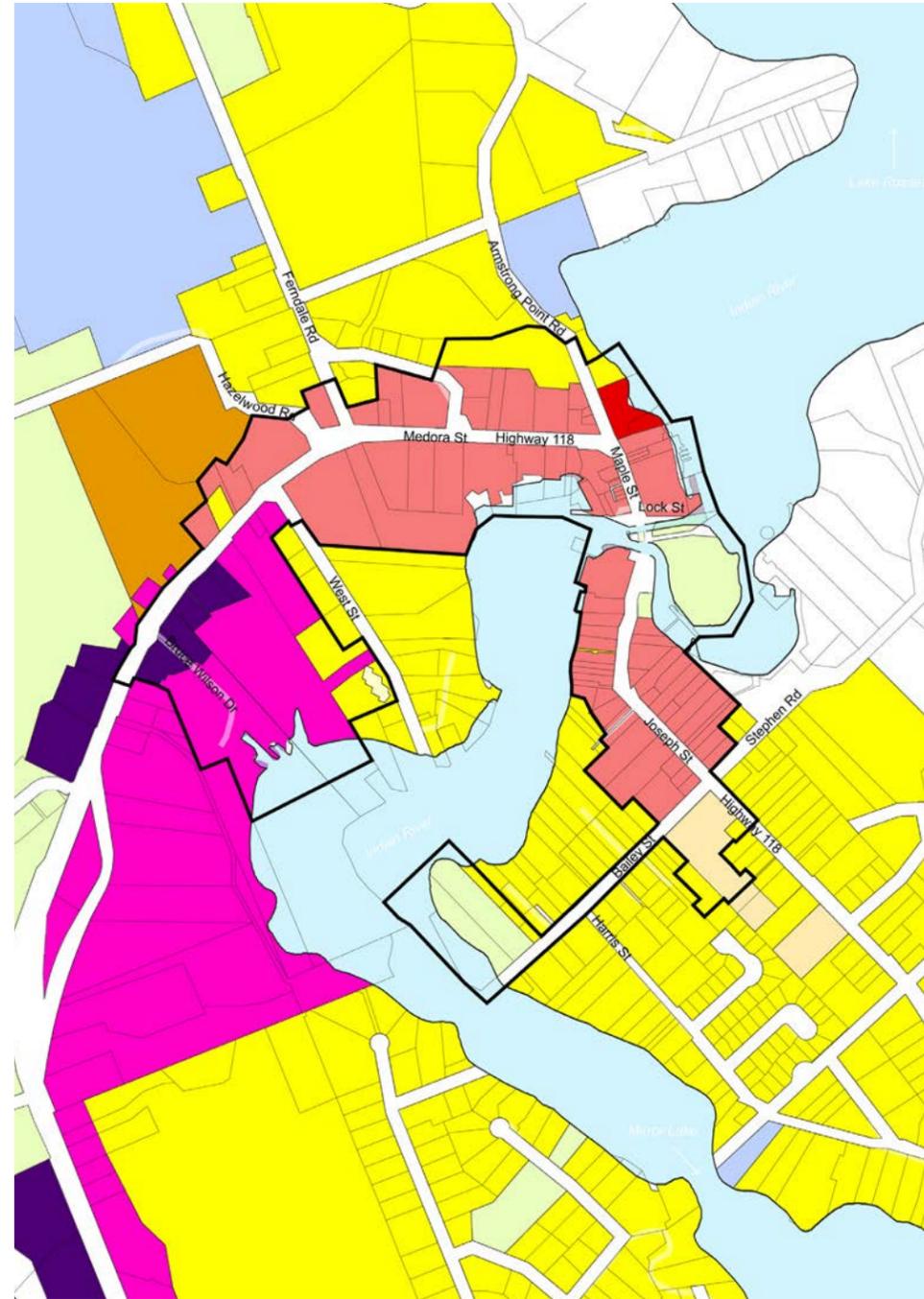


Port Carling Existing Official Plan Land Use



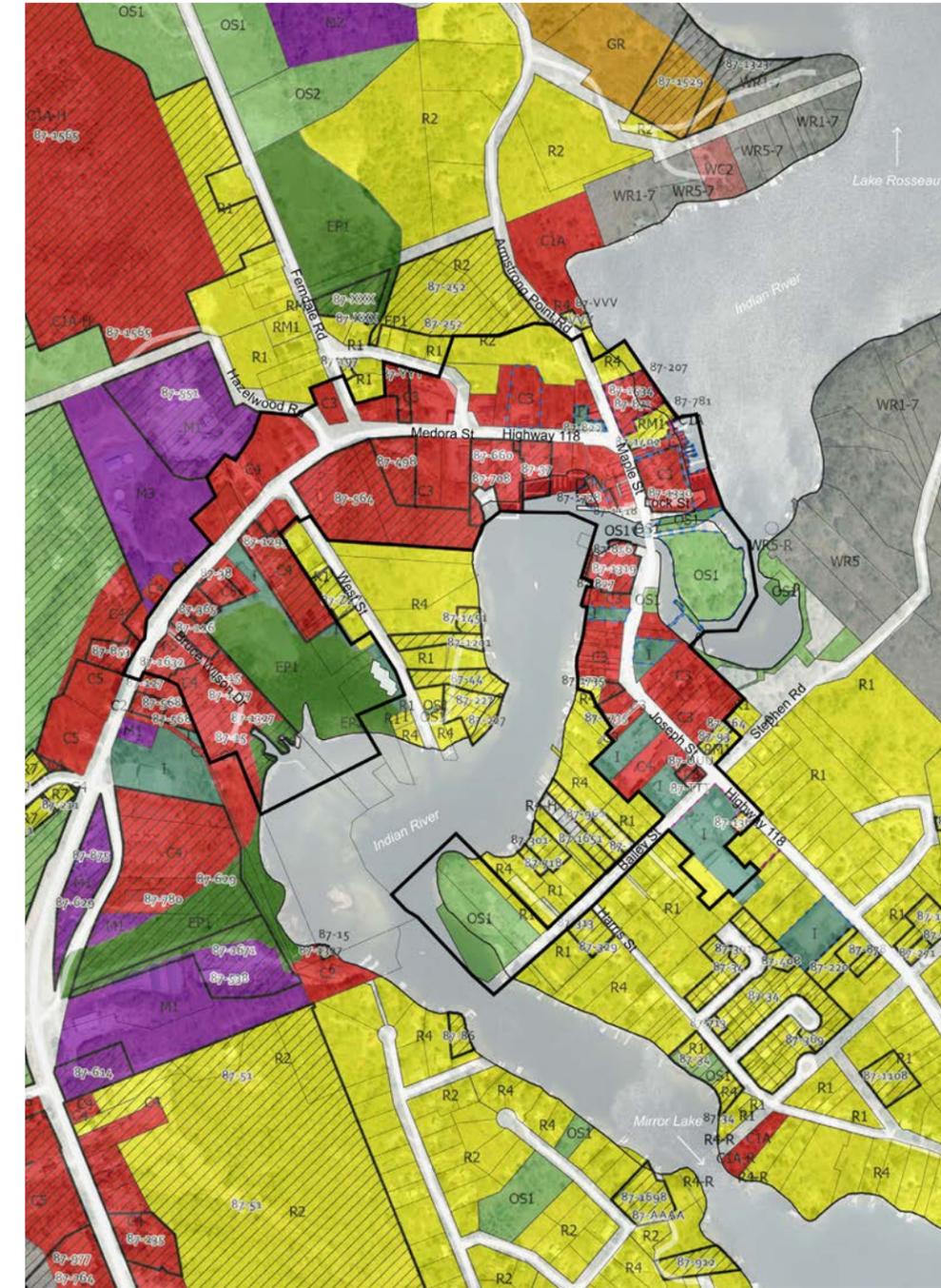
- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mixed Use | Institutional |
| Residential | Industrial |
| Core Commercial | Open space |
| Resort Commercial | Environmental Protection |
| Core Commercial - Resort | Urban Centre Boundary |
| Highway Commercial | |

Draft New Official Plan Land Use



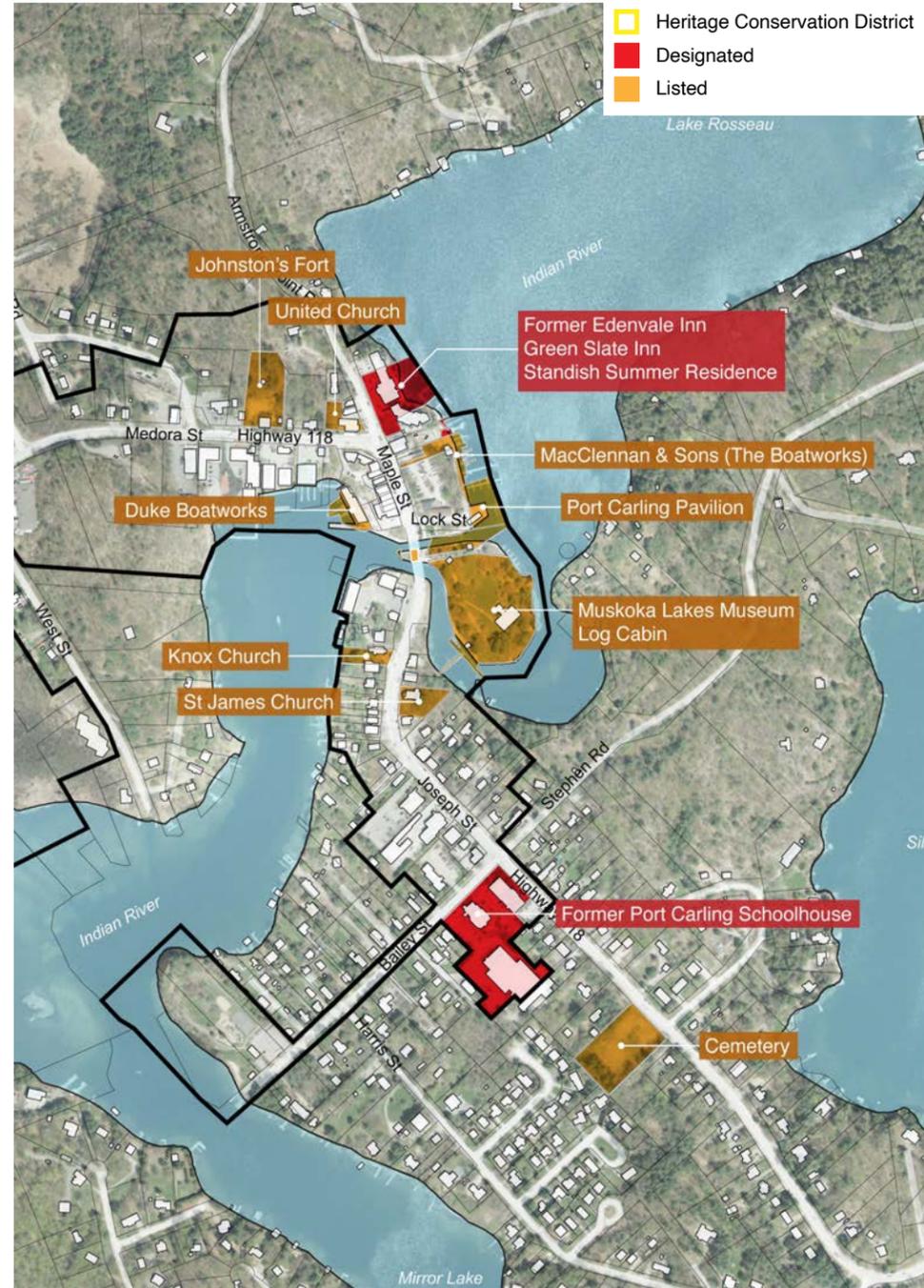
- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Mixed Use | Commercial Special Policy Area |
| Environmental Protection | Residential |
| Core Commercial - Resort | Core Commercial |
| Community Residential | Resort Commercial |
| Community Open Space | Highway Commercial |
| Community Institutional | Institutional |
| Community Employment | Industrial |
| Community Core | Open Space |

Existing Zoning

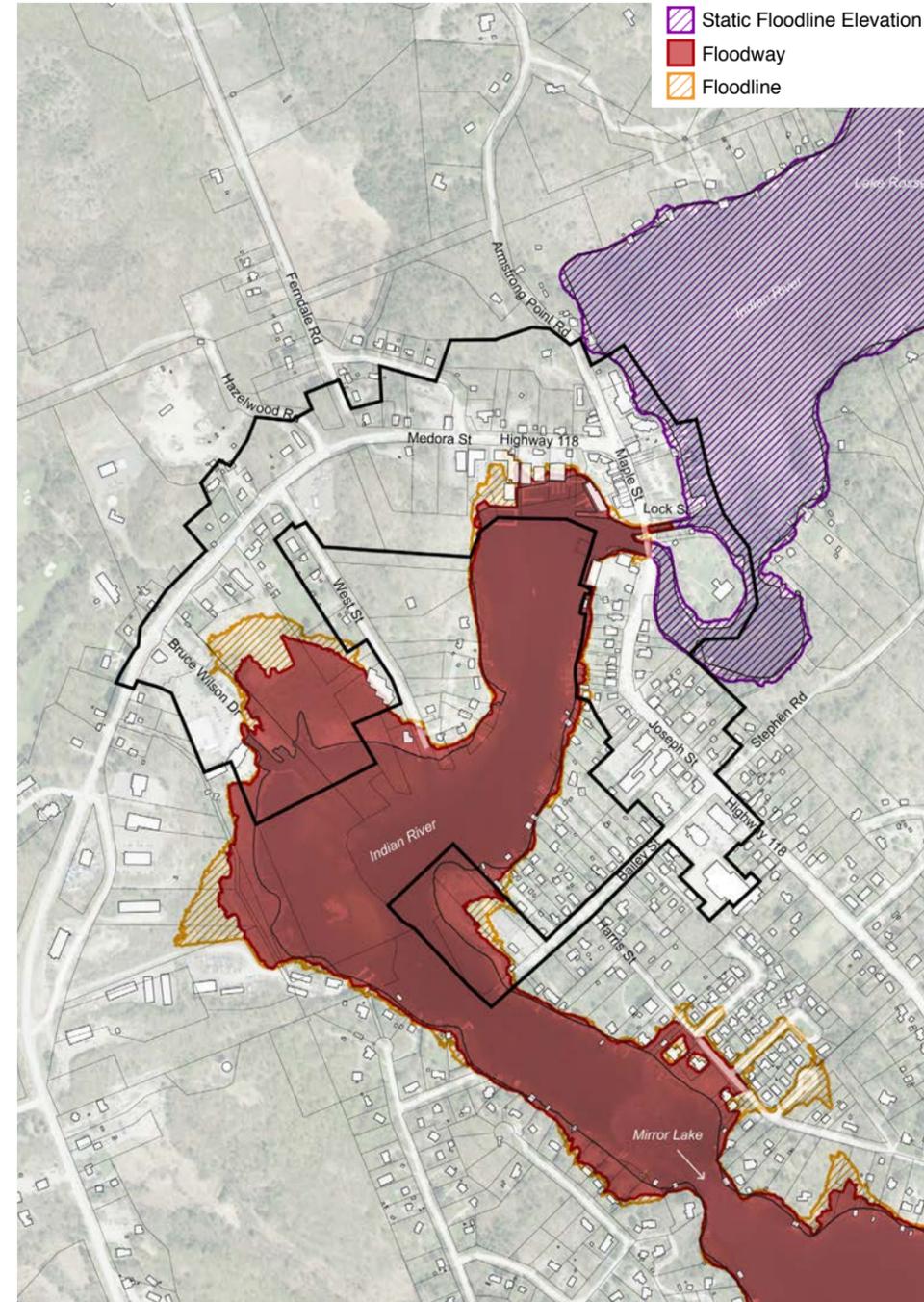


- | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Scenic Corridor | Community Waterfront Landing | Waterbody Open Space |
| Heritage Designation | Environmental Protection | Waterfront Commercial |
| District Heritage properties | General Restricted | Waterfront Landing |
| Heritage Properties List | Institutional | Waterfront Residential |
| Zoning Exemption | Open Space | |
| Community Commercial | Rural | |
| Community Industrial | Rural Commercial | |
| Community Residential | Rural Industrial | |

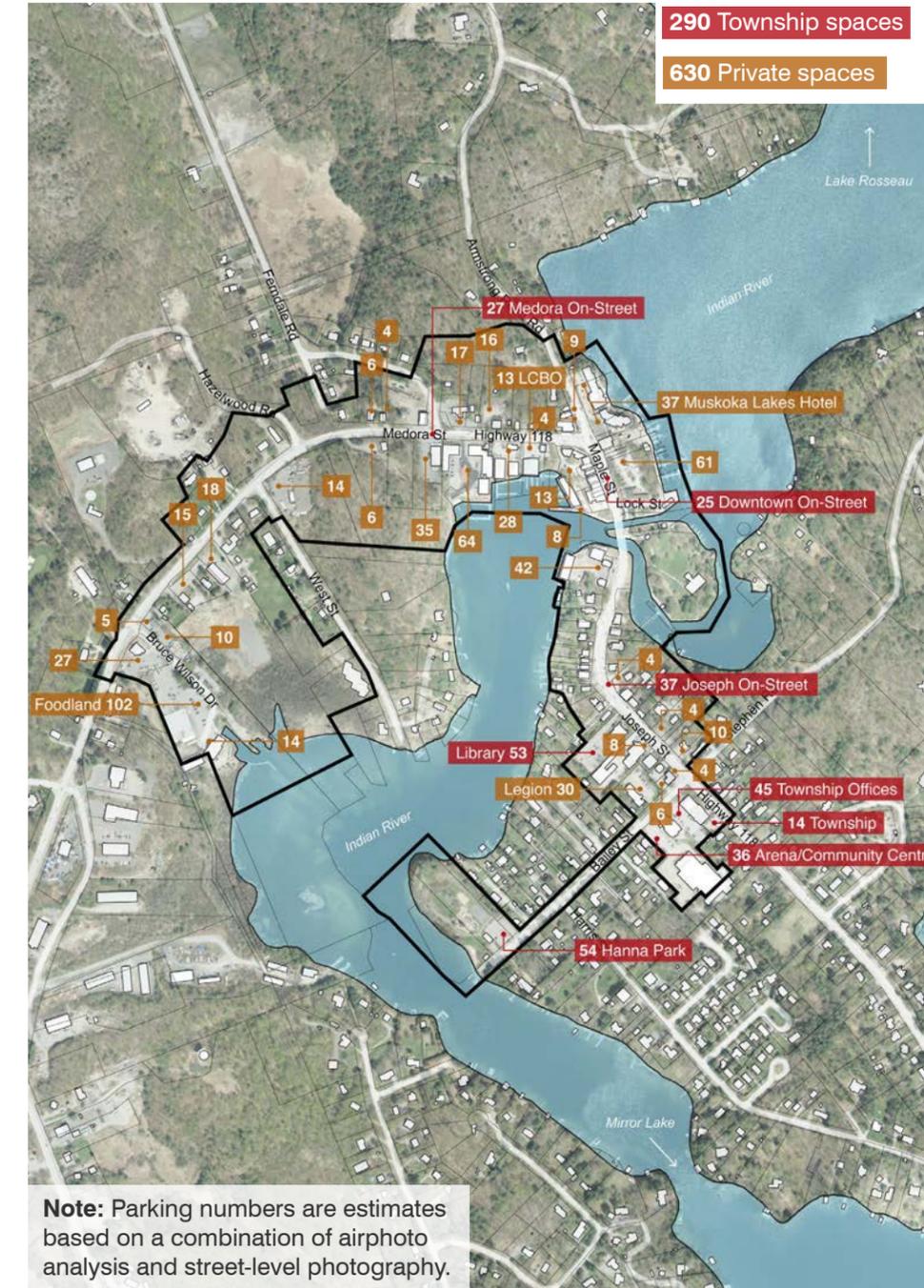
Heritage



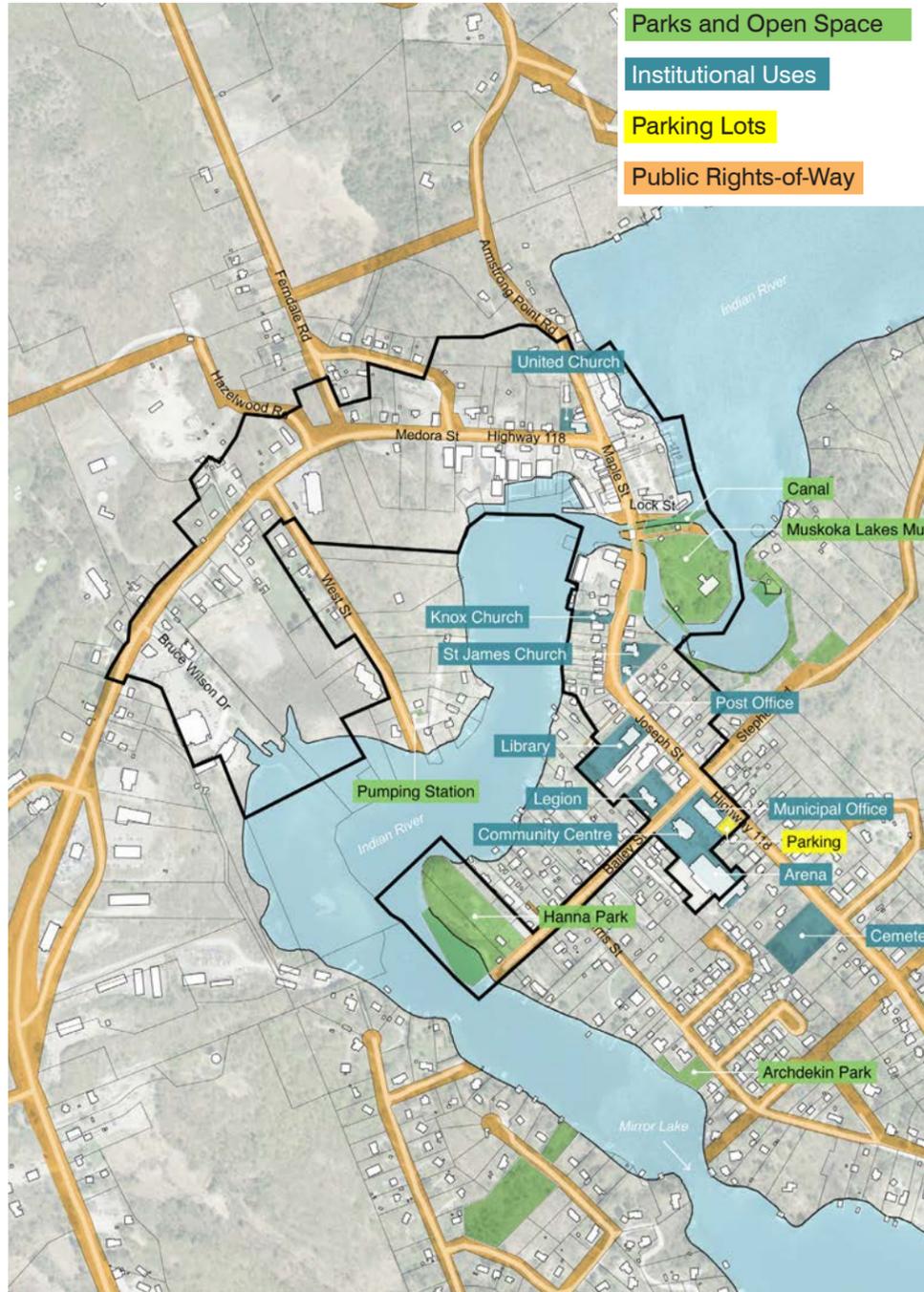
Flooding & Hazards



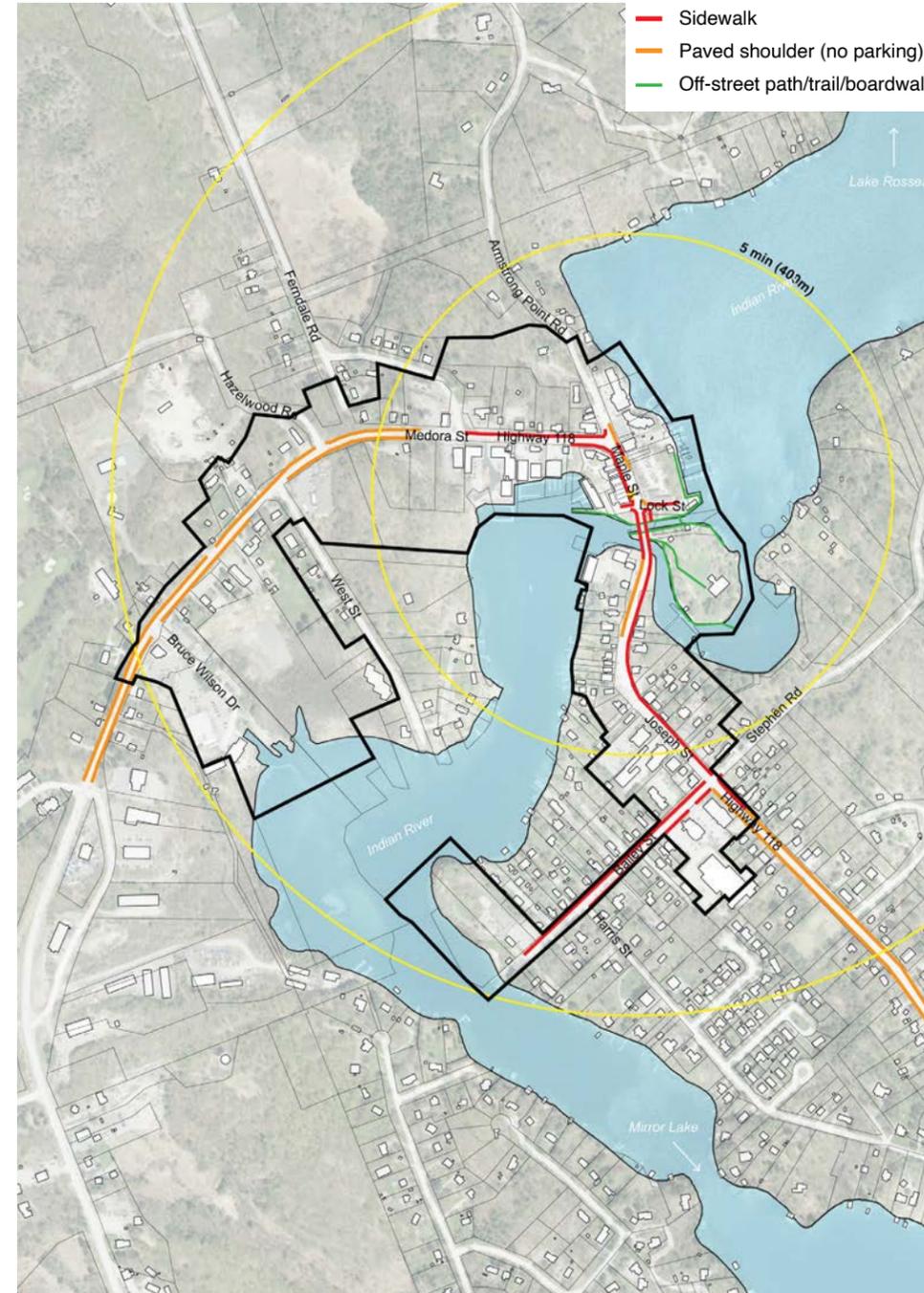
Parking



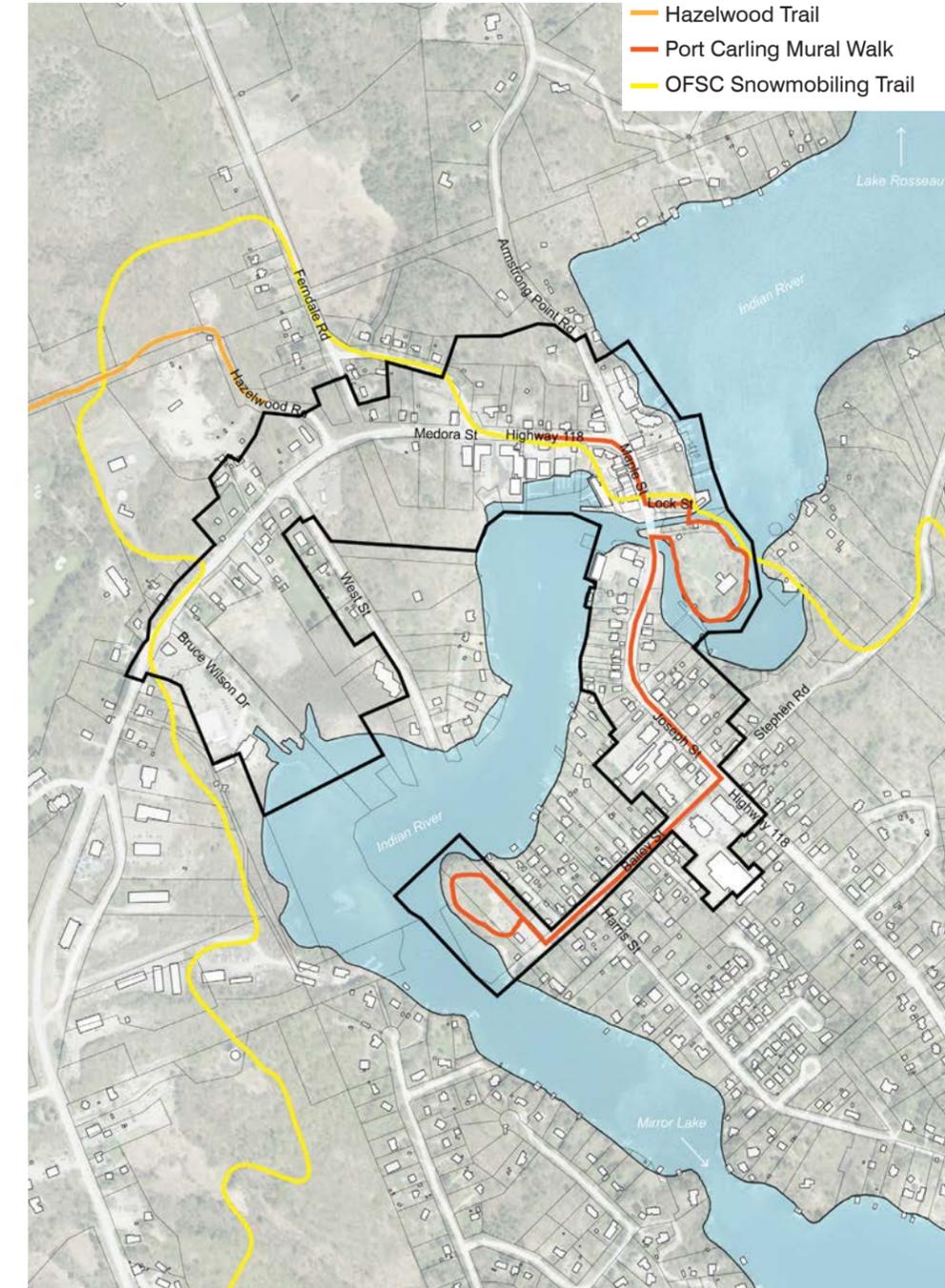
Municipal & Institutional Land



Pedestrian Facilities



Trails



4 Overall Framework

This chapter provides a description of the overall framework of recommendations for Bala and Port Carling with the maps on the following page that locate the key components of each plan as described below.

Framework for Bala

- Three anchor parks provide recreation destinations: Windsor, Jaspen and Muskoka Lakes Sports Park.
- A series of “Muskoka Moments” provide resting stops, some of which are in parks, each with signage, seating and enhanced landscape with native trees and shrubs.
- A signed and defined sidewalk/path provides a clear and safe route through Bala.
- Docking provides space for boaters to tie up, reducing the demand for parking. New docking and boardwalk suggested to connect businesses on Bala Falls Road.
- Railway bridges are used for gateway signage.
- Highways 169 and 38 are enhanced with defined pedestrian route, landscape and signage.
- Two locations are suggested as possibilities for long-term intensification: the Bala Legion and Bala Bay Inn.
- Several locations are suggested for possible pop-up retail to activate locations along Highway 169.
- Windsor Park provides an option to mark the southern gateway to Bala.

Assets to Leverage

- Bala Falls
- Two areas where commercial/retail uses are concentrated
- Parks that anchor the Urban Centre and act as gateways to Bala
- Existing on-street and off-street parking
- Location of community facilities in the Urban Centre
- Availability of on street and off street parking

Challenges to consider

- Clarity of pedestrian routes
- Lack of facilities for cycling
- Need for more docking to reduce the demand for parking and enable better access by boaters
- Lack of landscape planting

Framework for Port Carling

- Two anchor parks provide recreation destinations: Hanna Park and James Bartleman Island Park.
- A series of “Muskoka Moments” provide resting stops along a walking route, each with signage, seating and enhanced landscape.
- A signed and defined pedestrian route provides a safe route.
- Docking provides space for boaters, reducing the demand for car parking.
- A connected dock and boardwalk is suggested between Turtle Jacks Restaurant and Dukes, north of Lock Street along the river and along James Bartleman Island.
- Additional docking is suggested by Foodland on Bruce Wilson Drive and West Street.
- Highway 118 is enhanced with defined pedestrian routes, landscape and signage. Locations are suggested as possibilities for long term redevelopment that could include a mix of residential and commercial uses.
- Several locations are suggested for possible pop-up retail to activate locations along Highway 118.

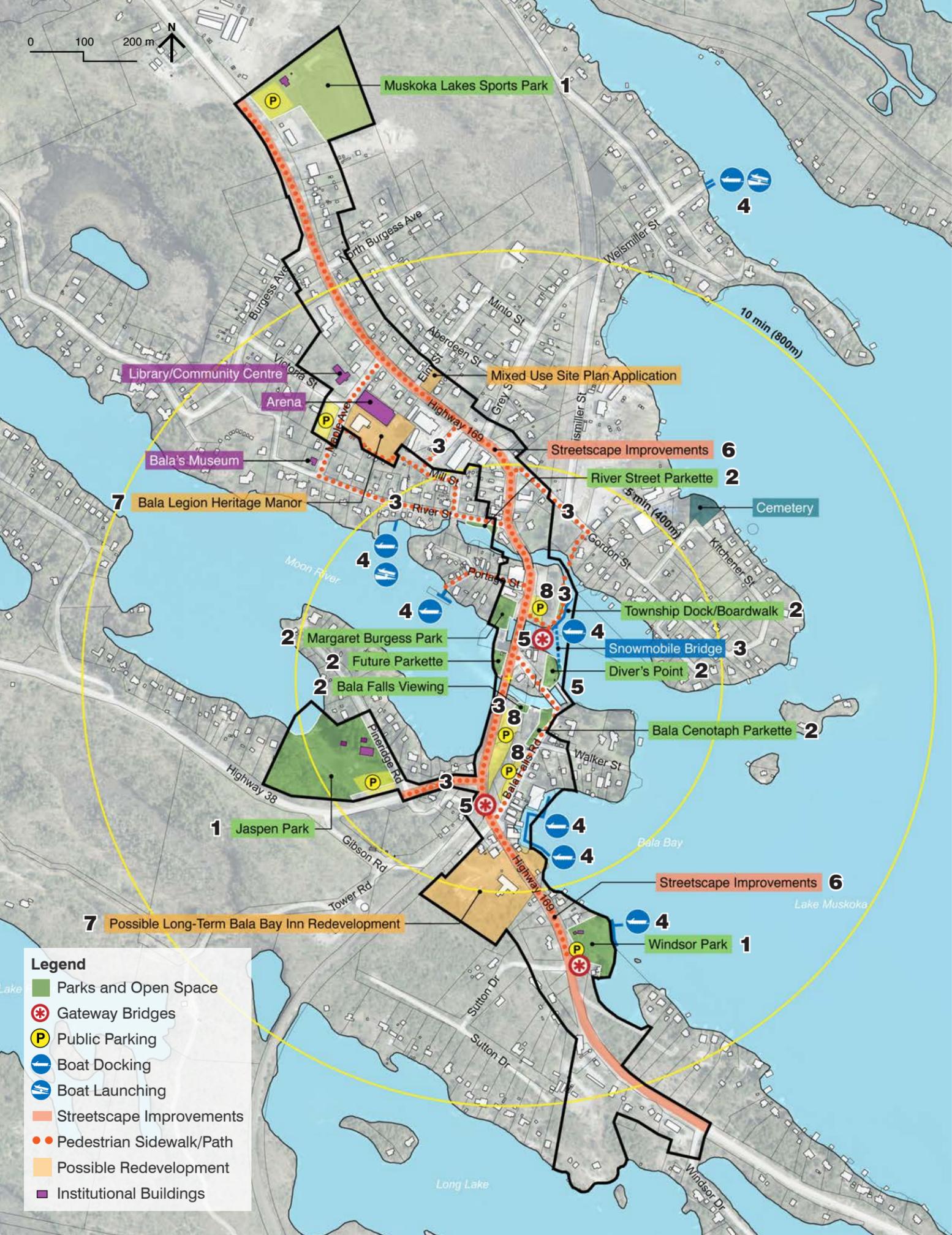
Assets to Leverage

- Concentration of commercial and retail uses on Medora Street
- Parks that anchor the Urban Centre
- Public access to the water’s edge
- Large redevelopment sites
- Streets that could be re-conceived as pedestrian focused spaces
- Location of community facilities in the Urban Centre

Challenges to Consider

- Plans for Highway 118
- Competing demands for space along Highway 118 for parking versus safe pedestrian routes
- Lack of facilities for cycling
- Lack of landscape planting

Ten Ideas for Bala



1 Anchor Parks
Three anchor parks provide destinations for recreation and visitors (see Public Park Guidelines).

- Windsor Park:**
- Augment existing boat docking, swimming and parking
 - Year round washrooms
 - Additional recreation facilities such as games tables and exercise stations
 - Map for orientation to Bala and its businesses and other attractions; gateway signage
 - Bike station/racks

- Jaspen Park:**
- Augment existing swimming, play facilities, parking, changeroom and picnic pavilion
 - Year round washrooms
 - Additional recreation facilities such as exercise stations and beach volleyball
 - Map for orientation to Bala and its businesses and other attractions
 - Bike station/racks

- Muskoka Lakes Sports Park:**
- Augment existing play facilities, skateboard park, parking, walking track and sports fields
 - Year round washrooms
 - Additional recreation facilities such as splash pad, games tables, pickle ball court, exercise stations, skating trail
 - Map for orientation to Bala and its businesses and other attractions
 - Bike station/racks

2 Muskoka Moments (see Public Park Guidelines). Muskoka Moments provide resting stops along the Historic Walk and other walking and cycling routes.

- Interpretive signage and map, locate “you are here”, nearby restaurants, cafes, interesting sites
- Seating and planting/landscape features
- Viewing plaforms

3 Access
Clearly designed/defined/improved walking and cycling route that integrates the Bala Historic Walk.

- Crosswalks
- Maps to locate “you are here”
- Snowmobile bridge
- Boardwalk in Bala Bay
- Bike racks

4 Docks
Docking to provide numerous locations in Bala for boat tie up to reduce the demand for parking.

- River Street
- Moon River Dock (off Portage)
- Township Dock
- Windsor Park
- Bala Falls Road
- Bala Bay Inn
- Weismiller Street

5 Gateways

- Signage/gateway graphic on the railway bridges
- Light up the Falls at Bala Falls Bridge

6 Streetscape improvements on Highways 169 and District Road 38 (see Proposed Street Conditions)

- Defined/improved pedestrian route
- Defined cycling route & bike parking
- Landscape
- Signage
- Benches and waste receptacles
- Pedestrian lighting

7 Intensification (see Large Site Guidelines)

- Possible sites for infill/redevelopment to accommodate additional housing (including affordable housing):
 - Bala Legion for seniors housing
 - Bala Bay Inn (protecting/preserving original hotel)
 - Bala-Hy Motel site

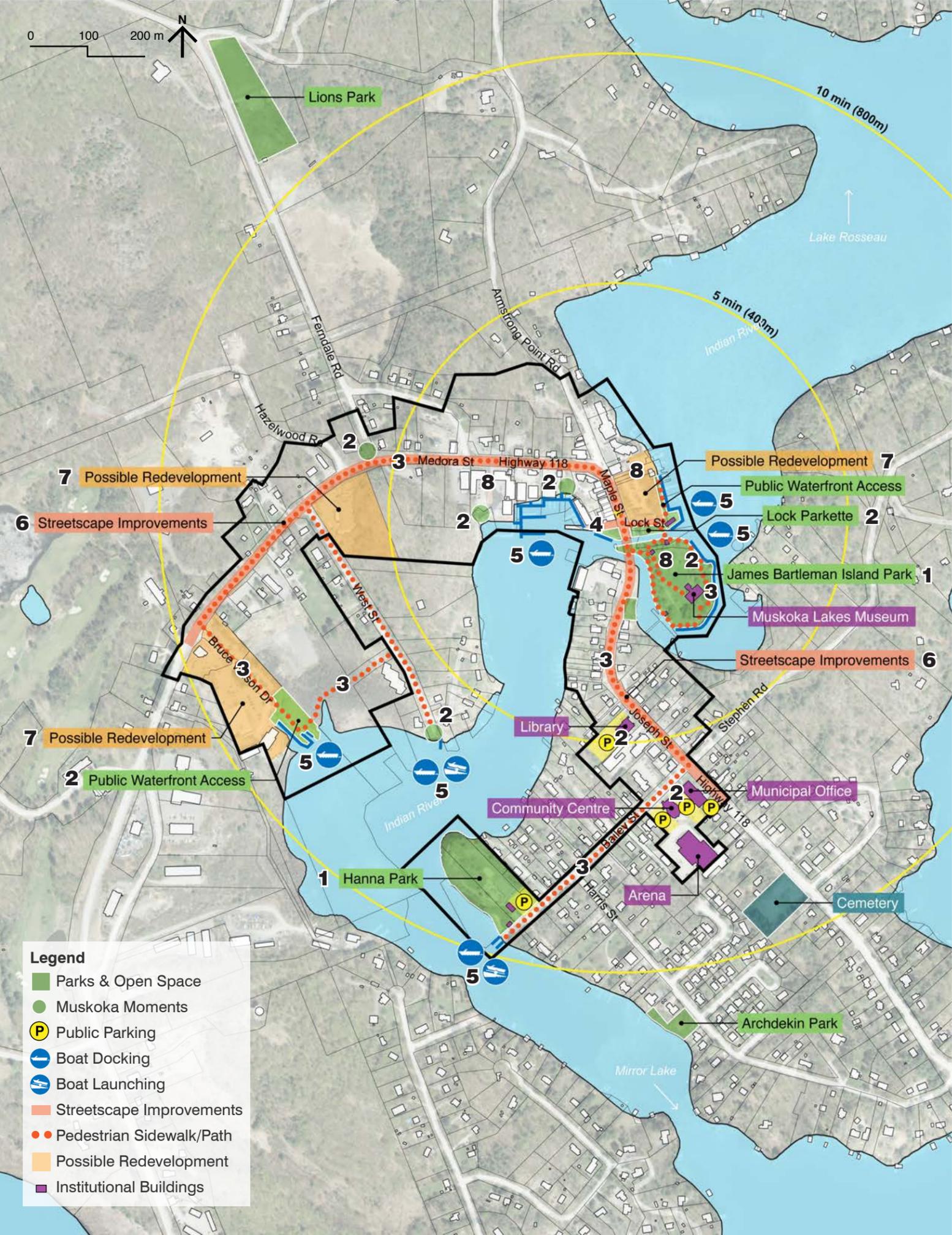
8 Possible locations for pop-up retail

9 Wayfinding

- Information signs, directional signs and kiosks

10 Guidelines (see Urban Design Guidelines)

- Design guidelines to provide direction for development/redevelopment on private property
- Design guidelines to provide direction for design of streets and public spaces to ensure a green framework for Bala



Legend

- Parks & Open Space
- Muskoka Moments
- P Public Parking
- Boat Docking
- Boat Launching
- Streetscape Improvements
- Pedestrian Sidewalk/Path
- Possible Redevelopment
- Institutional Buildings

Ten Ideas for Port Carling

- 1 Anchor Parks**
Two anchor parks provide destinations for recreation and visitors (see Public Park Guidelines).

Hanna Park:

 - Augment existing boat docking, swimming, playground, skating trail and parking
 - Additional recreation facilities such as games tables and exercise stations
 - Year round washrooms
 - Map for orientation to Port Carling and its businesses and other attractions
 - Bike station/racks

James Bartleman Island Park:

 - Augment existing boat tie up and seating
 - Recreation facilities such as a playground, games tables and exercise stations
 - Pavilion
 - Year round washrooms
 - Map for orientation to Port Carling and its businesses and other attractions
- 2 Muskoka Moments**
(see Public Park Guidelines)
Provide a series of resting stops along heritage trail, and other walking and cycling routes.

 - Interpretive signage and map, locate “you are here”, nearby restaurants, cafes, interesting sites
 - Seating and planting/landscape features
 - Viewing platforms
- 3 Access**
Clearly designed/defined/improved walking and cycling route.

 - Crosswalks
 - Maps to locate “you are here”
 - Bike racks
 - Boardwalk
- 4 Pedestrian space** (see Public Park Guidelines). Summer pedestrian-only space on James Bartleman Way in front of the mural and on Lock Street

 - Patios, seating
 - Planting/landscape features
- 5 Docks**
Docking to provide numerous locations in Port Carling for boat tie up to reduce the demand for parking.

 - Hanna Park
 - James Bartleman Island Park
 - Port Carling bay
 - West Street
 - Bruce Wilson Drive
- 6 Streetscape improvements on Highway 118** (see Proposed Street Conditions)

 - Define/improve pedestrian route
 - Define cycling route
 - Signage
 - Benches and waste receptacles
 - Pedestrian lighting
- 7 Intensification** (see Large Site Guidelines)

 - Possible sites for infill/redevelopment to accommodate additional housing (including affordable housing) and commercial uses:
 - Foodland
 - Port Carling core
 - West Street at Highway 118
- 8 Possible locations for pop-up retail**
- 9 Wayfinding**

 - Signage, logo, walking distance to locate public parking and key amenities
- 10 Guidelines** (see Urban Design Guidelines)

 - Design guidelines to provide direction to development/redevelopment on private property
 - Design guidelines to provide direction to design of streets and public spaces to ensure a green framework for Port Carling

Parking Strategy

Parking is always the first item to come up in any conversation about an urban area. There is never enough parking and there's never enough in the "right" location. Finding the correct balance of parking is the challenge as choices are required in determining the best allocation of the limited space for pedestrians, landscape planting and cars. The Project for Public Spaces is a central hub of global place-making connecting people to ideas and resources. For 40 years they have helped to transform places in 3000 communities in 47 countries. Project for Public Spaces says:

"nobody goes to a place because it has parking" ; and

"the current obsession with parking is one of the biggest obstacles to achieving livable cities and towns"

There are choices to be made in Port Carling and Bala as streets area improved in the coming years.

The Community Improvement Plan aims to put pedestrians first in the Urban Centres. The results of the online survey revealed that "safe walking routes" was one of the three top ranked considerations for both Bala and Port Carling. In Port Carling, having "lots of places to park" was also in the top three considerations.

There are a few days over the course of the year when parking is in high demand, particularly on some of the summer weekends. There is no question that parking supports business, particularly when most of the businesses operate in only a few months of the year. However, it is also important to also consider the role of safe pedestrian routes, public space for families and friends to meet and docks in supporting business as well.

The area within the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) area for Port Carling has a total of about 920 parking spaces in a combination of on street and off street parking, public and private spaces. The main off street parking is provided at Hanna Park, the Township office and Library. On street parking is distributed across the CIP area.

The area within the Community Improvement Plan Area for Bala has 540 parking spaces in a combination of on street and off street parking, public and private spaces. The main off street parking is provided in the Precambrian Shield lot, Portage lot, Jaspén Park and Muskoka Lakes Sports Park. Parking in both Urban Centres is within a 5-8 minute walk of the core areas.

The parking strategy is comprised of a number of initiatives:

- 1 Continue to provide on and off street parking distributed across the Urban Centres, with accessible parking spaces clearly marked.
- 2 Encourage shared parking in private off street parking areas and improve the design and layout of spaces to maximize parking.
- 3 Enhance wayfinding and signage to identify the direction to and location of public parking, the surrounding amenities and walking distance.
- 4 Provide well placed maps in the Urban Centres to identify the location of parking, nearby amenities and attractions and walking distances.
- 5 Provide maps showing parking available in all businesses.
- 6 Provide information to explain a priority given to pedestrians, healthy active living and generally encouraging walking.
- 7 Enhance the supply of dock space to reduce the demand for car parking in the core areas.
- 8 Identify opportunities to secure public parking when redevelopment of larger parcels occurs by working in partnership with private developers and property owners.
- 9 Identify areas that could be used for temporary/event parking on the relatively few days when car parking is in high demand.
- 10 Continue to accept cash-in-lieu of parking, consolidate funds and provide parking when opportunities arise.
- 11 Enhance awareness of parking apps such as Rover that enable residents to rent out parking spaces on their driveways.
- 12 Research and consider the provision of/planning for electric vehicle infrastructure.

Finding the right balance will be critical to informing decisions on streetscape improvements, specifically whether to use the very limited space in the right-of-way to make space for cars, or pedestrians or to accommodate increased tree planting and landscape.



Mapping to locate parking

Wayfinding & Signage

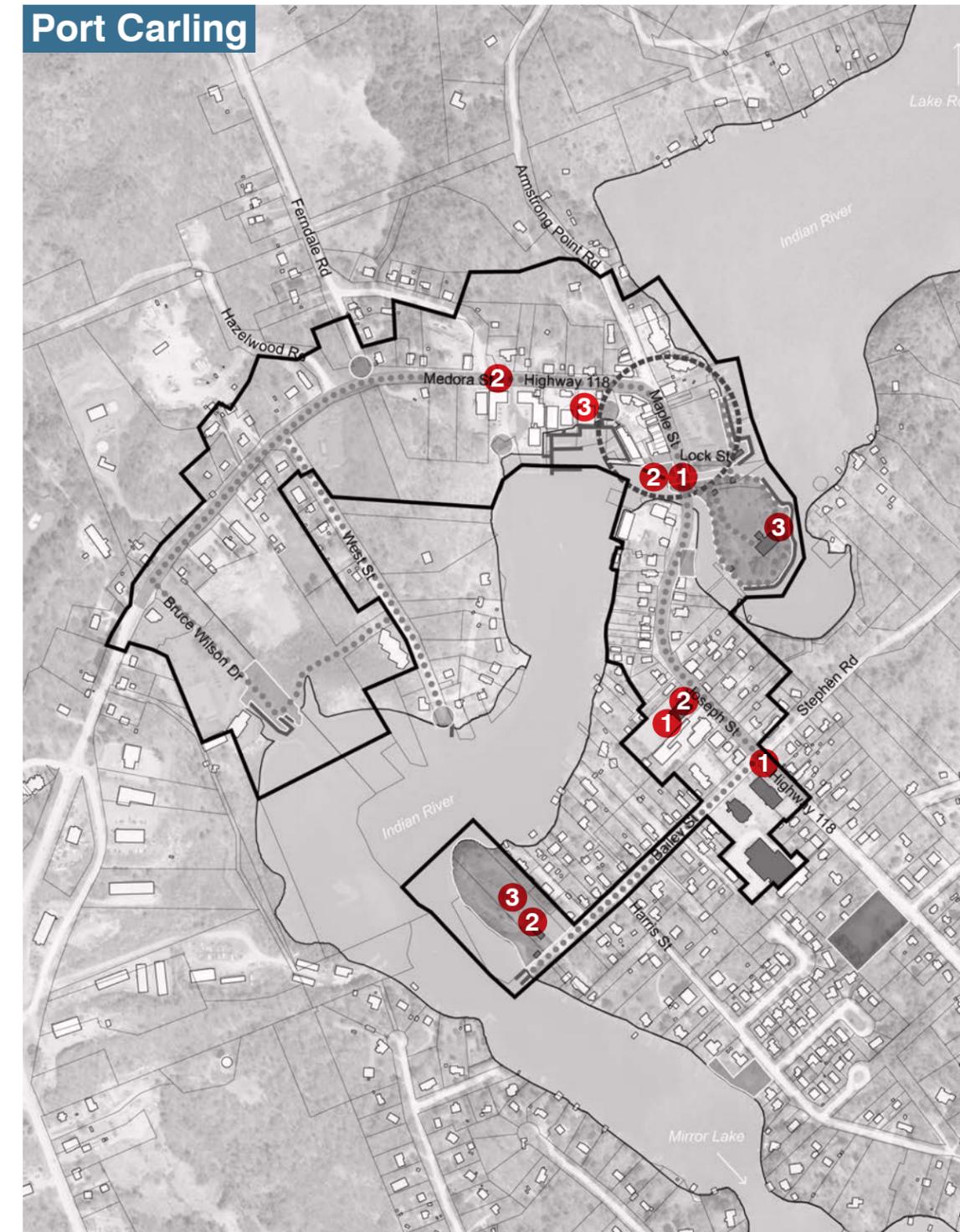
The Township has an established brand/wayfinding/signage program that clearly identifies the Urban Centres, key destinations, information/ mapping etc. Bala and Port Carling are both identified with community entry signs. Wayfinding and signage helps to orient people to key destinations (such as parks, core areas, historic sites), parking and amenities (such as washrooms) using maps, directional signs, identifier signs and interpretive panels. This is imperative to ensure enjoyable visitor experiences where people are comfortable to explore all that Bala and Port Carling have to offer walking, driving, boating or cycling. Wayfinding and signage also helps to reinforce the Muskoka brand.

The framework to guide the location and type of wayfinding and signage is based on an intent to:

- Support local business;
- Enhance awareness of key destinations; and,
- Facilitate clarity and ease of movement among key destinations.

The hierarchy of wayfinding includes

- 1 Consolidating the direction to multiple destinations in Directional Signs for motorists and pedestrians.
- 2 Providing a collection of information such as a map showing parking, key destinations and walking radius in an Information Kiosk or on a pedestal.
- 3 Providing information on historic, cultural or environmental features on Interpretive Signs at key destinations aligned with the heritage/historic walks.
- 4 Identifying key destinations such as parks, public docks, municipal buildings in a Destination Sign.



Directional Sign



Example of Information Kiosk



Example Interpretive Sign



Information Pedestal



Information Pedestal



Information Pedestal



Destination Sign



Duke's Boats building in Port Carling

5 Urban Design Guidelines

Purpose of the Guidelines

Urban design involves the arrangement and design of the built environment and provides a framework that gives form, shape and character to buildings, public spaces, streets and amenities. It blends architecture, landscape architecture and town planning together to enhance the urban centres of Bala and Port Carling. The Urban Design Guidelines promote high quality urban design that is based upon the quality, scale and character of the surrounding existing and emerging contexts, reinforce 'human scaled' environments, and promote a sense of place.

Urban Design Guidelines provide design guidance, criteria, and standards for how to shape the built environment, both the individual elements, as well as how these should be spatially arranged and relate to one another. The Guidelines are intended to provide direction for architects, landscape architects, engineers and developers to understand the Township's objectives for design in the Community Improvement Areas. The Guidelines also inform staff and Council in their review, and approval of development applications.

Urban Design Guidelines are a planning tool that work alongside zoning, site plan control and technical standards to implement the vision of the Official Plan. The Guidelines will be used through the development process including site planning, landscape and building design.

The Urban Design Guidelines are divided into two sections:

- **Private Realm** (buildings, loading, access, parking, pedestrian access)
- **Public Realm** (streets and public spaces)

This chapter describes the character areas in Port Carling and Bala, sets the context by defining compatibility and 'Muskoka style', highlights the urban design structure for Port Carling and Bala, includes guidelines for the private realm, direction for the key large sites in Bala and Port Carling and public realm guidelines for streets and parks.

Character Areas

A number of areas with a particular character of built form, streetscape and landscape are identifiable in both Urban Centres.

Port Carling

Four segments have been identified in Port Carling as illustrated on the map below.

Highway 118 West

- Western gateway to Port Carling with water access
- Some larger format buildings with surface parking
- Individual buildings with parking in front
- Little or no defined sidewalks or pedestrian routes

Medora Street

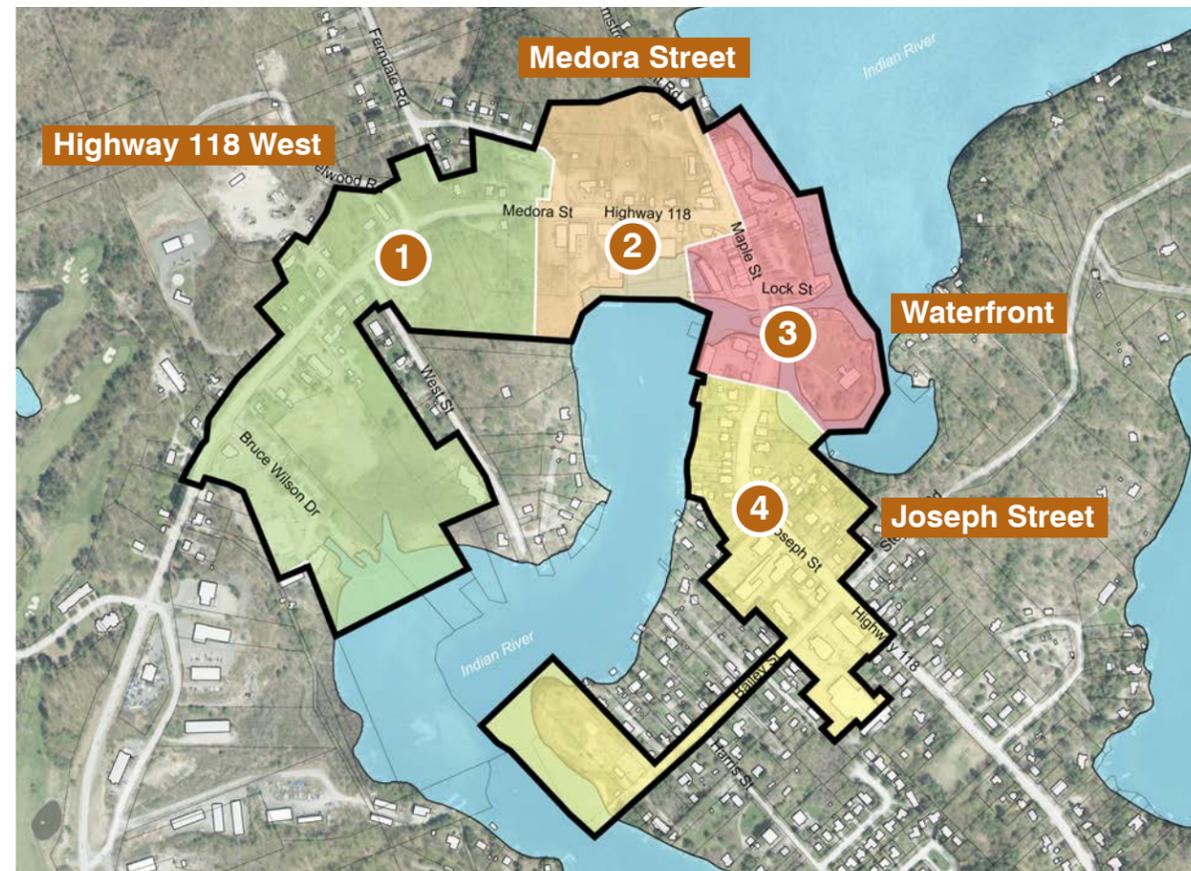
- Cluster of commercial uses with both street and water access
- Large areas of surface parking
- Few sections of defined sidewalk or pedestrian route on the south side
- Sidewalk on the north side

Waterfront

- Core main street commercial on one side of the street
- Site with development opportunity that could complete the street
- Continuous water's edge of Indian River and locks

Joseph Street

- Stand alone buildings set in the landscape
- Key municipal buildings



Bala

Seven segments have been identified in Port Carling as illustrated on the adjacent map.

Highway 169 North

- Larger format retail with surface parking
- Stand alone buildings on the north side
- Limited defined pedestrian route with asphalt path

North Core

- Concentration of commercial uses
- Stand alone buildings
- On street parking
- Sidewalk

Portage

- Small group of commercial buildings
- Separated by bridges on two sides
- Large parking lot on east side

Bala Falls Road

- Concentration of commercial uses on Bala Falls Road
- Stand alone buildings
- On street parking on Bala Falls Road
- Sidewalk next to commercial on Bala Falls Road, asphalt shoulders along highway

Jaspens Park

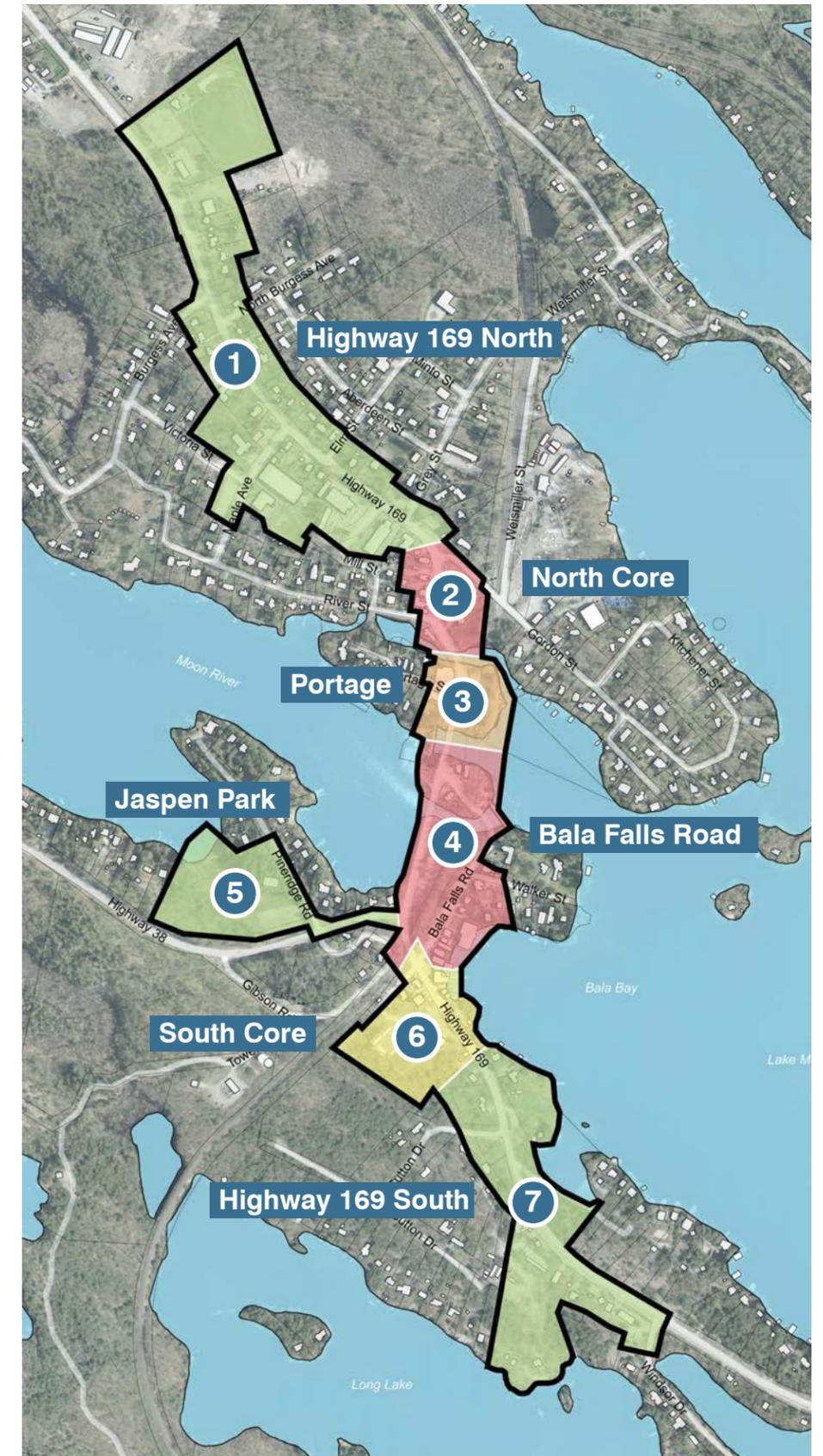
- Residential uses
- Narrow highway with gravel shoulders
- Jaspens Park

South Core

- Defined by crossing underneath railway
- Bala Bay Inn site with waterfront access across the highway

Highway 169 South

- Residential uses and larger sites
- Windsor Park
- Small cluster of stand alone commercial uses on south side towards south end



Defining Compatibility

These Urban Design Guidelines are intended to promote development that is compatible with the characters of Bala and Port Carling. Without being prescriptive about architectural style, the guidelines promote a sense of stylistic unity, respecting the architectural and urban design conventions of Bala and Port Carling, while still allowing for creativity and innovation in individual buildings.

Compatible development means development which may not necessarily be the same as, or similar to, the existing development, but enhances the established community and coexists with existing development without unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding area.

These guidelines primarily address properties that front on one of the main highways in the urban centre areas of Bala and Port Carling, and are expected to have primarily commercial or mixed use development. Such developments should not necessarily be expected to mimic styles more appropriate for cottages or century old tourist hotels.

Defining a “Muskoka Style” is not meant to restrict the architectural style that can be used, but to assist in understanding the characters of Bala and Port Carling and achieving compatibility for new development.



Example of a new development using Muskoka Style elements in Port Carling

Muskoka Style

Cladding

Much of Muskoka's historic character comes from the preservation and continued use of traditional cladding materials, including brick, clapboard, batten board, shingles and stone. Using these cladding materials on new development helps to ensure the continuation of this character.

Wood Structure

Exposed wood structures and details are common in Muskoka and are particularly evocative of the architectural style of the area. This includes thick beams and posts supporting roofs, gables and overhangs.

Roofs

A variety of pitched roof styles have historically been popular in Muskoka, often broken up with gables. While pitched roofs are generally desired, they are typically only appropriate on buildings up to 3 storeys, and can be limiting on upper storey uses when building heights are restricted.

Colours

Exterior colours popular in Muskoka include earth tones, deep reds, pale blues, white, grey and natural wood tones. In general, brick and stone should be left unpainted to reveal the natural colours of the materials.

Porches and Terraces

Porches, overhangs and terraces are frequently included on buildings as part of a tradition that connects indoor spaces out into the landscape.

Landscape

Surrounded by the landscape and maintaining views into the landscape is a key characteristic of Muskoka. Areas directly surrounding buildings should be enhanced and landscaped using native plant material to maintain the sense of connection to the wider landscape.

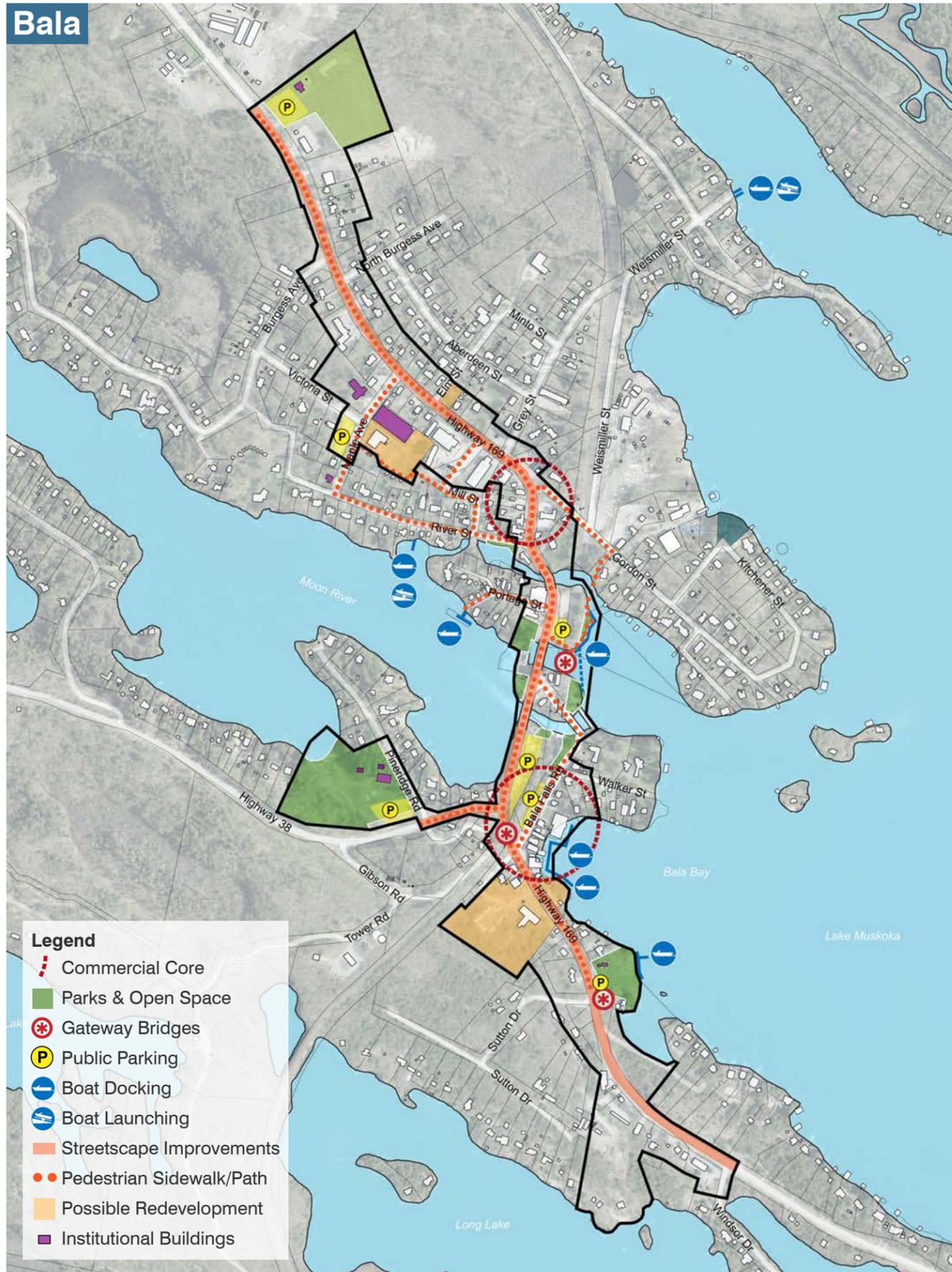
Environment

At the heart of 'Muskoka Style' is the environment. Sustainable materials are encouraged in local development in an effort to protect and preserve the natural environment.



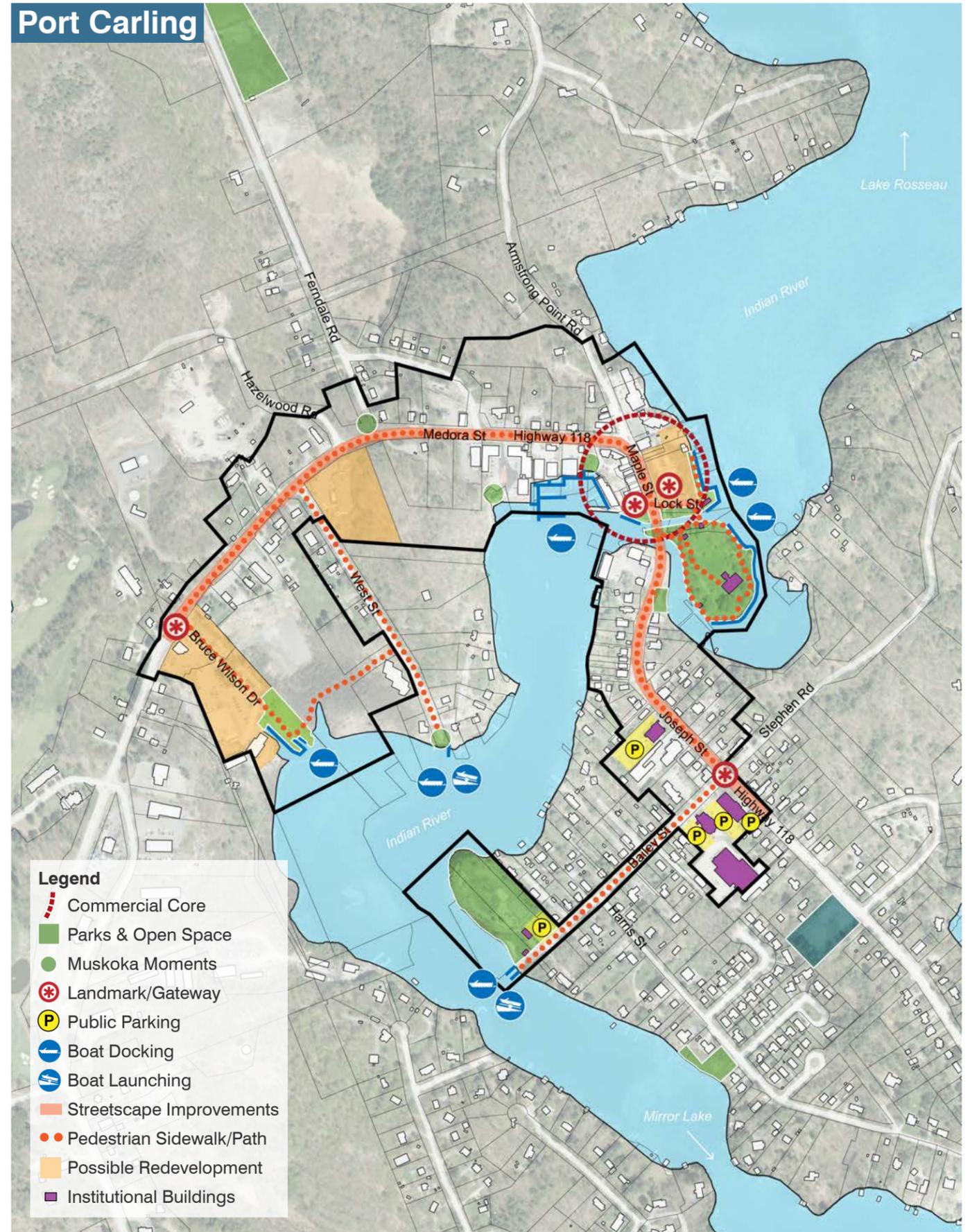
Urban Design Structure Plan

Bala



- Legend**
- - - Commercial Core
 - Parks & Open Space
 - * Gateway Bridges
 - P Public Parking
 - | Boat Docking
 - | Boat Launching
 - Streetscape Improvements
 - Pedestrian Sidewalk/Path
 - Possible Redevelopment
 - Institutional Buildings

Port Carling



- Legend**
- - - Commercial Core
 - Parks & Open Space
 - Muskoka Moments
 - * Landmark/Gateway
 - P Public Parking
 - | Boat Docking
 - | Boat Launching
 - Streetscape Improvements
 - Pedestrian Sidewalk/Path
 - Possible Redevelopment
 - Institutional Buildings

The purpose of these Urban Design Guidelines is to provide design guidance for infill and intensification in Bala and Port Carling. The design objective for new developments is primarily to maintain and reinforce the 'small town' and 'human-scaled' character of the area.

While these guidelines are meant to provide design standards and benchmarks for development, they are also meant to provide flexibility within certain parameters, to encourage distinction, variety and creative architectural and design responses.

Site Organization

On larger sites, a well-organized site layout contributes to the ease of access and understandability for visitors, and improves relationships with adjacent properties.

- 1 Provide for appropriate transitions to adjacent properties and different land uses (i.e. setbacks, landscaping, location of servicing and parking areas, pedestrian connections).
- 2 Create a pedestrian-scaled, permeable and connected internal layout (block and street pattern).
- 3 Arrange buildings to create comfortable and protected pedestrian spaces that have a sense of enclosure.
- 4 Integrate existing topography and natural features into the development, and minimize alteration to both, wherever feasible. There are trade offs to be considered in development, particularly when it comes to opportunities to provide housing.
- 5 Enhance wayfinding through site organization by including buildings as gateways and landmarks, public spaces as focal points, and streetscapes that frame significant views.
- 6 Views into the landscape should be maintained and highlighted.
- 7 Larger sites should include significant landscaping to soften built form and build on the character of connection to the landscape.



A recent site plan application in Port Carling

Height & Massing

Building heights play an important role and can impact the character and quality of the street experience. Consistent height and mass of buildings along the street edge ensures visual continuity and maintains the pedestrian scale at the street.

- 8 New buildings should consider and respect the scale, material and massing of adjacent buildings.
- 9 2-storey or 3-storey buildings are encouraged to make more efficient use of buildable land, and to allow for the possibility of residential units on upper floors.
- 10 Divide up larger building masses through architectural articulation, varying setbacks and roof lines.
- 11 The usable area of top floors should not be compromised in order to provide largely decorative roofs and gables. Alternative means of providing articulation and variety of roof line should be explored, or provide flexibility on increased height to accommodate pitched roofs where they are seen as desirable.
- 12 Terraces and decks for residential uses are encouraged on upper levels.
- 13 Taller buildings or building features may be encouraged at strategic locations such as corner sites and other prominent sites to enhance community structure, sense of place and provide landmarks.
- 14 Minimum ground floor heights in non-residential buildings should be 4.5m to allow for flexibility and adaptability for a variety of potential uses.



Unique and articulated massing: library building in Port Carling



Traditional massing: along Josepht Street in Port Carling

Placement & Orientation

Orientation and placement of buildings along the street helps to reinforce the public realm by enhancing the pedestrian environment by creating a sense of enclosure. This is achieved by framing the street with buildings.

- 15** Buildings should be oriented to frame the street edge.
- 16** Buildings should front directly onto public streets and other public spaces, in order to clearly define the public realm and create an attractive and safe pedestrian environment.
- 17** Buildings at corner locations should be sited to address the intersection, with consideration given to both street frontages.
- 18** Buildings should generally be aligned with the setbacks of their neighbours.
- 19** Setbacks from the street should be used for pedestrian access, landscaped areas, additional street tree planting, amenity areas, seating, display areas or sidewalk cafés and patios.



Buildings lining Highway 169 in Bala



Buildings lining Joseph Street/Highway 118 in Port Carling

Street Wall/Facades

Facades are one of the most significant elements of a commercial street. They are the 'first impression' given by businesses to patrons and visitors, and collectively shape the character of the community. The Community Improvement Plan will assist landowners and developers with building the best possible facades in Bala and Port Carling, or improving those that already exist.

- 20** Ground floor of the street wall should be highly transparent, including transparent windows and entrance doors, to establish a strong visual connection between the street and the interior of active ground floor uses.
- 21** Divide up large facades through architectural articulation of the street wall, including the use of fenestration, bands, columns, and other repeated elements.
- 22** Blank walls should not be permitted on any building fronting a street.
- 23** Additional architectural treatment is encouraged for corner sites and landmark buildings to enhance the visual prominence of these buildings and their locations.
- 24** Spaces between buildings (such as alleyways and setbacks) should be well-lit and enhanced through fenestration, side entrances, decorative signage, decorative paving, public art and landscaping.
- 25** Main building entrances should face the street and should be clearly defined with architectural details and easily identifiable within the facade composition.
- 26** Publicly accessible front entrances for stores, offices, and institutional uses must permit barrier-free access and universal accessibility, including both visual and physical accessibility.



Street wall/facades along Highway 169 in Bala



Street wall/facades along Bala Falls Road in Bala



Street wall/facades along Maple Street in Port Carling

Shopfront Signage

Shopfront signage contributes to the quality of individual buildings and the character of the overall streetscape.

- 27** Signage should be located and designed to reflect the heritage character of the streetscape, while allowing for the creativity of individual businesses.
- 28** Diversity in storefront signage should be encouraged to create shopfronts with “personality.”
- 29** Principal commercial signs should be placed above the storefront windows or on canopies over the storefront.
- 30** Secondary signs such as on windows and doors, and signs hanging perpendicular to the building facade should be visually subordinate to the principal sign.
- 31** Movable signs like sandwich board signs are also encouraged but should be located on private property where possible and positioned so as not to impact traffic sight lines.
- 32** Large freestanding signs (such as pylons), roof signs, and large-scale advertising (such as billboards) are discouraged.
- 33** Signage should be attractive, durable, easy to read and complementary to the overall facade design.
- 34** Sign scale should be in proportion with the building and should reflect the pedestrian scale of the streetscape.
- 35** Signs should be located outside the pedestrian right-of-way and, when located over pedestrian areas, should have a minimum clearance of 2.4m from grade.
- 36** Signage should not obscure windows, doors or architectural features.



Signage in front of Duke's Boats building in Port Carling



Signage along Maple Street in Port Carling

Shopfront Awnings, Canopies, Porches and Lighting

Shopfront awnings, canopies and lighting contribute significantly to the character of the overall streetscape.

- 37** Awnings and canopies are encouraged for weather protection and shelter, for additional signage opportunities and for the aesthetic appeal of a facade. Retractable awnings are preferred as they are flexible for diurnal and seasonal changes.
- 38** Awnings and canopies should align with modules of the building's vertical rhythm, such as the space between column or pilaster elements, or the divisions between windows and doors.
- 39** The design, shape, colour and material selected for awnings and canopies should be complementary to the design of the building's facade and should reflect the character of the context.
- 40** Awnings should not obscure windows, entrances or architectural elements on a facade, or impede views down a street.
- 41** Porches should be usable and not simply decorative with a minimum depth of 2m.
- 42** Creative exterior and shop window lighting is encouraged to promote vibrant streetscapes at night, encourage pedestrian traffic and enhance the safety of the pedestrian experience. Lighting must be dark sky friendly.
- 43** Signs should be externally lit. Back-lit or neon signs are prohibited.



Awnings along Maple Street in Port Carling

Access, Loading and Parking

Parking is one of many elements that is needed for retail commercial areas to thrive. The design and location of parking can minimize their visibility, reduce conflicts with pedestrians and help to create a pleasing and inviting environment.

- 44 Minimize the visibility of surface parking areas from the street by placing them to the side or to the rear of buildings.
- 45 Large expanses of surface parking should be broken up with buildings and landscaping to reduce their visual prominence. At least one tree for every 2 stalls is encouraged.
- 46 Provide at least one active frontage containing a high proportion of clear glazing to building edges that face surface parking areas.
- 47 Where existing parking areas are adjacent to the sidewalk, a landscaped area should be located between parking spaces and the sidewalk, providing a clear sight lines at eye level.
- 48 Include pedestrian-scaled lighting, walkways, landscaping, and signage to enhance pedestrian safety, movement and comfort through parking lots to the adjacent sidewalks.
- 49 Ensure parking areas are adequately lit at night. Prohibit light spill from these areas to adjacent residential areas.
- 50 Parking areas should be shared between adjoining facilities.
- 51 Provide multiple entry and exit points from streets to off-street surface parking to reduce congestion.
- 52 Locate service bays, site storage and access points for waste collection out of sight from public spaces, streets and residential areas. Use measures to provide buffers such as appropriate landscaping to reduce the visual impacts on adjoining sensitive uses.

- 53 Lighting of loading and storage areas should be designed so that there is no light that spills, glares or casts over adjacent residential areas.
- 54 To maximize space efficiencies, service and utility areas should be shared between different users within a single building, or, wherever possible, between different buildings.
- 55 Continue to accept cash-in-lieu of parking and consolidate funds to enable the municipality to provide public parking when opportunities arise.



Examples of plantings in parking lots

Pop-Up Retail

Pop-up retail can help increase the variety and vibrancy of the shopping and eating experience in Bala and Port Carling. Local business owners should be encouraged to consider pop-up retail to augment the “bricks and mortar” establishments.

- 56 Design of the pop-up structure should resemble a shed, with wood structure to reflect the Muskoka style.
- 57 Where there are clusters of multiple pop-up retail units, there should be a variety of roof shapes and colours.
- 58 Include planting in pots, furniture such as benches and garbage/recycling receptacles and lighting if the retail will be open in the evening.
- 59 Include a hard walking surface or boardwalk in front of pop-up retail when they are located on permeable surfaces.



Example of portable pop-up retail



Pop-up retail sheds, Western Market, Muskegon, Michigan



Photomontage of pop-up retail in the Precambrian Shield parking lot in Bala

Large Site Guidelines

There are five key large sites that offer particular opportunities for intensification with a mix of uses. Others may also be identified. Guidelines are provided for when and if the landowners want to

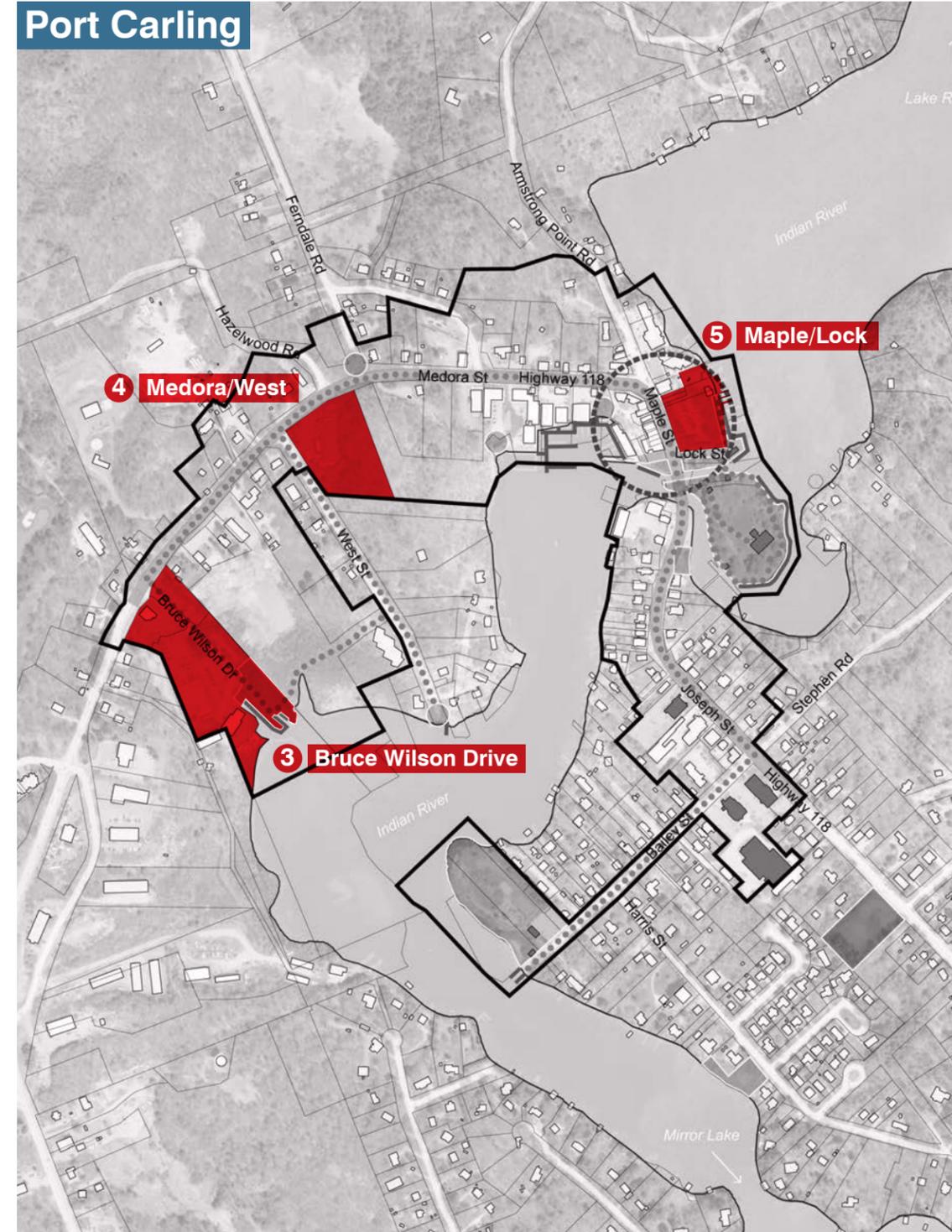
consider redevelopment. These sites offer particular opportunity to provide housing in both Bala and Port Carling.

In order to achieve the infilling and intensification objectives of the Official Plan, District Plan and Provincial Policy Statement, significant site alteration may be required for some properties in

Port Carling. The easily developed lands within this Urban Centre have already been developed, and some of the remaining locations have significant terrain and vegetation.



Location map of the key large sites in Bala



Location map of the key large sites in Port Carling

1 Bala Legion Site in Bala

Context

The site is located on a parcel that includes the Bala Legion building on the east side of Maple Avenue and wraps around the Bala Arena. Apart from the Bala Legion building the site is primarily vacant. The site slopes down from behind the Bala Legion building to Mill Street. There is potential for access to the Mill Street right-of-way to the east. There is a proposal to build a 3-5 storey senior's residence with 128 units on the site.

Site Organization

Area A

- 1 Connect the existing Bala Legion building to new development.
- 2 Preserve the space in front of the Legion building for events.
- 3 Consider replacing the Bala Legion building and integrating its uses into the new development. This would be potentially allow for additional useable floor area above the Bala Legion uses and provide a front door/address on Maple Avenue.

Area B

- 4 The main concentration of new development is expected in this area.
- 5 Parking should be integrated into the building wherever possible. The site's grading makes this an efficient option.
- 6 If at grade exterior parking is provided, it should be designed like a pedestrian-friendly mews.
- 7 Enclosed at grade parking areas facing Mill Street should be sleeved with active uses or otherwise activated or beautified.

Area C

- 8 Provide a landscaped amenity area/walkway through this area. If at grade parking is provided, it should be designed like a pedestrian-friendly mews.

Legend

-  Main Vehicular Access
-  Pedestrian Access/Permeability



Conceptual organization plan of the Bala Legion site in Bala

Built Form

Area B

- 9 Buildings should be a minimum of 3 storeys.

Access

- 10 Main vehicular access should be provided from Mill Street, with an additional access from Maple Avenue.
- 11 A pedestrian connection should be provided from Mill Street to Maple Avenue.

Landscape

- 12 At grade parking areas should be landscaped.

General guidelines for height, massing, street wall/facades, shopfront signage, awnings/canopies and lighting, access, loading and parking also apply.

2 Bala Bay Inn Site in Bala

Context

The Bala Bay Inn (former Swastika Hotel) is a listed heritage building, was built in 1912, and was the first brick hotel built in Muskoka. The property is 6.7 acres (2.7 hectares) and includes a small waterfront parcel on Bala Bay. Apart from the hotel itself, the site is largely undeveloped and currently has several portable units used for temporary housing for workers.

Site Organization

Area A

- 1 Consider appropriate context-sensitive expansions to the Bala Bay Inn building.

Area B

- 2 Consider converting the space in front of the Bala Bay Inn into a landscape pedestrian space suitable for events.

Area C

- 3 Provide a landscaped public waterfront access through this area. Views through to the water should be maintained through vegetation management.

Area D

- 4 The main concentration of new development is expected in this area.
- 5 If at grade parking is provided, it should be landscaped.

Built Form

Area A

- 6 Buildings in area A should not exceed the height of the Bala Bay Inn.
- 7 Buildings to either side could push forwards toward Highway 169, framing the heritage building.
- 8 Commercial uses should be concentrated in area A.
- 9 Provide a landmark element with high visibility from Highway 169.

Area D

- 10 Buildings should be a minimum of 2 storeys.

Legend

- * Landmark Element
- Built Form Edge - Street Wall
- Built Form Edge - Waterfront
- Main Vehicular Access
- > Pedestrian Access/Permeability



Conceptual organization plan of the Bala Bay Inn site in Bala

Access

- 11 Main vehicular access should be provided from Highway 169, with an additional access from Mushquash Road.

- 12 Pedestrian access should be provided to the water's edge in Area C.

Landscape

- 13 At grade parking areas should be landscaped.

General guidelines for height, massing, street wall/facades, shopfront signage, awnings/canopies and lighting, access, loading and parking also apply.

3 Bruce Wilson Drive Site in Port Carling

Context

The site is located along Medora Street/Highway 118 at Bruce Wilson Drive. The site stretches all the way down to the Indian River and currently contains a variety of commercial uses, including a Subway and a former Tim Hortons, a Foodland grocery store, a furniture store, and a small bakery/health food store. The flood hazard line affects a significant part of the site near the Indian River (areas C and D).

Site Organization

Area A

- 1 The built form should create a street wall along the edges of Medora Street and Bruce Wilson Drive.

Area B

- 2 The main concentration of new development is expected in this area, and may include at grade parking.
- 3 The built form in Area B has the potential to address the waterfront.

Area C

- 4 The Flood Hazard affects part of this area, and it is likely to remain a parking area.

Area D

- 5 Public access and a public waterfront/boardwalk should be provided along the water's edge.
- 6 Docks should be provided for public boat tie-up.

Built Form

Area A

- 7 Buildings should be a minimum of 2 storeys with retail/commercial uses at grade.
- 8 A landmark element should be created at the corner of Medora Street and Bruce Wilson Drive.
- 9 Above 2 storeys, a stepback of minimum 1.5 metres should be provided.

Legend

- * Landmark Element
- Built Form Edge - Street Wall
- Built Form Edge - Suggestion
- Main Vehicular Access
- > Pedestrian Access/Permeability



Conceptual organization plan of the Bruce Wilson Drive site in Port Carling

Area B

- 10 Continue the street wall down Bruce Wilson Drive, and facing the waterfront where possible.
- 11 A landmark element that is visible from the Indian River should be created close to the bottom of Bruce Wilson Drive.
- 12 Buildings should be a minimum of 2 storeys with retail/commercial uses at grade.
- 13 Consider "sleeving" large format retail with street-facing small retail units, displays, pop-up retail locations, or other active uses.
- 14 Residential uses should be integrated where possible.

Access

- 15 Main access will be provided from Bruce Wilson Drive.
- 16 Provide pedestrian access to the waterfront and connect to potential trail to the east.

Landscape

- 17 Bruce Wilson Drive should be treated as a public street, including sidewalks on both sides, and lined with street trees.
- 18 At grade parking areas should be landscaped.

General guidelines for height, massing, street wall/facades, shopfront signage, awnings/canopies and lighting, access, loading and parking also apply.

4 Medora Street/West Street Site in Port Carling

Context

The site is located along Medora Street/Highway 118 at West Street. The property is 3.4 acres (1.4 hectares) and is currently home to the Indian River Trading sporting goods store. The remainder of the site is largely covered in trees. There is a significant slope down West Street towards the Indian River, and the site also sits relatively high above Medora Street/Highway 118.

Site Organization

Area A

- 1 Commercial/mixed use development should create a street wall along the edges of Medora and West Streets.
- 2 Setbacks may be required to handle the grade difference along Medora Street.

Area B

- 3 Lower intensity/residential uses are appropriate in this area.

Area C

- 4 Residential development may be appropriate in this area, however trade offs resulting from the alteration to the terrain and tree removal will have to be considered.
- 5 At grade parking may be provided in this area, behind the street-fronting buildings in Areas A and B.

Area D

- 6 Consider protecting the trees and landscape in this area - it includes thick vegetation, slopes and currently forms a gateway to the lower part of Medora Street (along with the trees on the neighbouring property).

Built Form

Area A

- 7 Buildings should be a minimum of 2 storeys with retail/commercial uses at grade.
- 8 A landmark element should be created at the corner of Medora and West Streets.
- 9 Above 2 storeys, a stepback of minimum 1.5 metres should be provided.

Legend

- * Landmark Element
- Built Form Edge - Street Wall
- - - Built Form Edge - Suggestion
- Main Vehicular Access
- - - Pedestrian Access/Permeability



Conceptual organization plan of the Medora Street/West Street site in Port Carling

Area B

- 10 Continue the street wall down West Street.
- 11 Buildings should be a minimum of 2 storeys.

Access

- 12 Main access will be provided from West Street.
- 13 Provide a pedestrian access from Medora Street.

Landscape

- 14 At grade parking areas should be landscaped.

General guidelines for height, massing, street wall/facades, shopfront signage, awnings/canopies and lighting, access, loading and parking also apply.

5 Maple Street/Lock Street Site in Port Carling

Context

The site is a large waterfront site located in downtown Port Carling on the east side of Maple Street (Highway 118), north of the locks. Current uses include a large at-grade parking lot and some retail commercial uses along Lock Street. The Boatworks directly faces the waterfront. The site is currently used for public parking, The Boatworks and commercial uses. There is a significant grade change from the water to the top of the site. This site is a significant opportunity to have an impact on the overall character and strength of downtown Port Carling by completing the east side of Maple Street to establish a two-sided main street.

Site Organization

Area A

- 1 The built form should create a street wall along the edges of Maple Street and Lock Street, with allowance for pedestrian access into the site and some separation between individual buildings.

Area B

- 2 If at grade parking is provided, it should be designed like a pedestrian-friendly mews, be faced with active uses, and be capable of being used for events and festivals.
- 3 Views to the water should be provided from the central area of the site.

Area C

- 4 The built form in Area C should address the waterfront.
- 5 Views and access should be provided through Area C down to the waterfront.

Area D

- 6 A public waterfront/boardwalk should be provided along the water's edge.
- 7 The grade transition to the upper level of the site should be landscaped and planted or terraced rather than blank retaining walls.
- 8 The waterfront/boardwalk should be landscaped with appropriate paving, planting, furniture and lighting.

Legend

- * Landmark Element
- Built Form Edge - Street Wall
- Built Form Edge - Waterfront
- Main Vehicular Access
- > Pedestrian Access/Permeability



Conceptual organization plan of the Maple Street/Lock Street site in Port Carling



Street wall of the main street buildings on the west side of Maple Street

Built Form

Area A

- 9 Buildings facing Maple Street should be a minimum of 2 storeys with retail/commercial uses at grade.

- 10 A landmark element should be created at the corner of Maple and Lock Streets.

- 11 Above 2 storeys, a stepback of minimum 1.5 metres should be provided.

Area C

- 12 The built form should be highly articulated and differentiated, with particular attention paid to the roofline and roof elements.

- 13 Balconies facing the waterfront should be encouraged.

- 14 A landmark element should be created at the bottom of Lock Street.

- 15 A key landmark/destination element should be created at the north end of Area C.

Area D

- 16 Retail/commercial uses at the waterfront level should be encouraged where possible.

Access

- 17 Main vehicular access should be provided at the north end of the site.

- 18 Permeability for pedestrian access through the site and down to the waterfront should be provided.

- 19 Public access should be provided along the water's edge.

Landscape

- 20 At grade parking areas should be landscaped.

- 21 Trees should be planted along Maple Street.

General guidelines for height, massing, street wall/facades, shopfront signage, awnings/canopies and lighting, access, loading and parking also apply.

This section provides direction for streets and parks building on the concepts and built work from previous streetscape improvements in Bala and Port Carling.

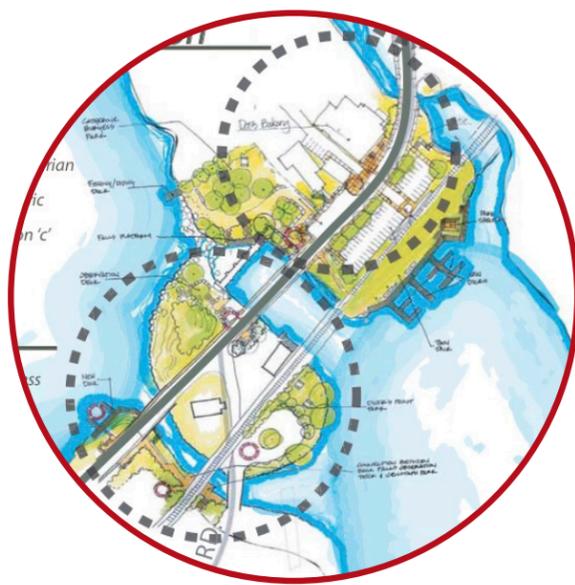
Street typologies are included for various segments of the streets. Illustrations provide a demonstration of new conditions with a priority placed on safe pedestrian access and enhanced landscape conditions through the Urban Centres.

Previous Streetscape Improvements

Streetscape improvements were implemented on Highway 169 north of the bridge and on Bala Falls Road and included enhancements to parking, addition of sidewalks, lighting and planting.

Bala

Bala Streetscape & Parking Improvement Plan (2008)

Streetscape Improvements (2008) - Highway 169 between Gordon St and River St



Streetscape Improvements (2008) - Bala Falls Road



Port Carling

Streetscape improvements were implemented in Port Carling on Medora Street and Maple Street. The District is currently preparing an Environmental Assessment for Highway 169 between Lock Street and Armstrong Road. A number of options are being evaluated.

Streetscape improvements were implemented in Port Carling based on the Streetscape Master Plan completed in 2006 and included terraced rock retaining walls, lighting, planting and re-organization of parking.

Port Carling Streetscape Master Plan (2006)



Medora Street Improvements (2009)



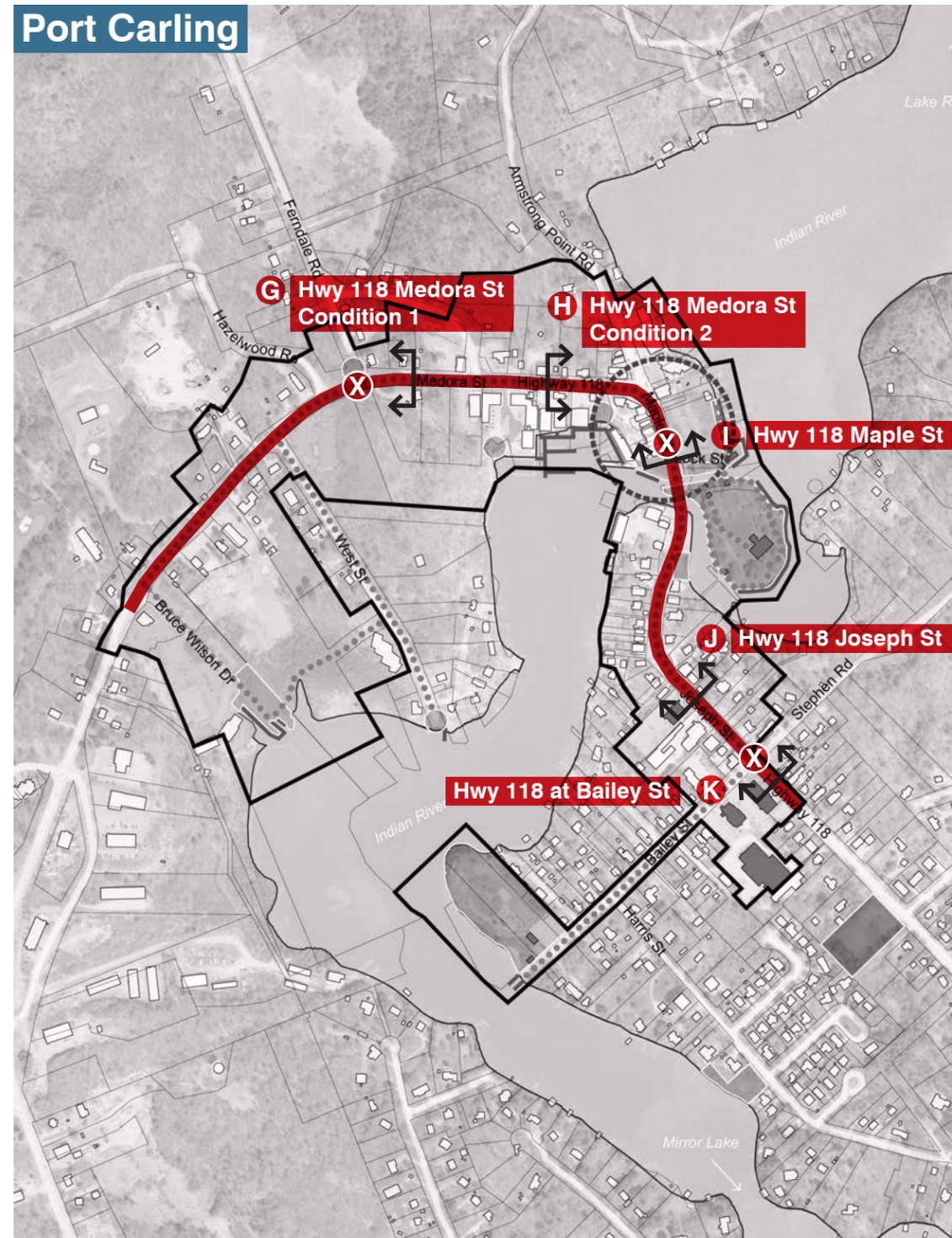
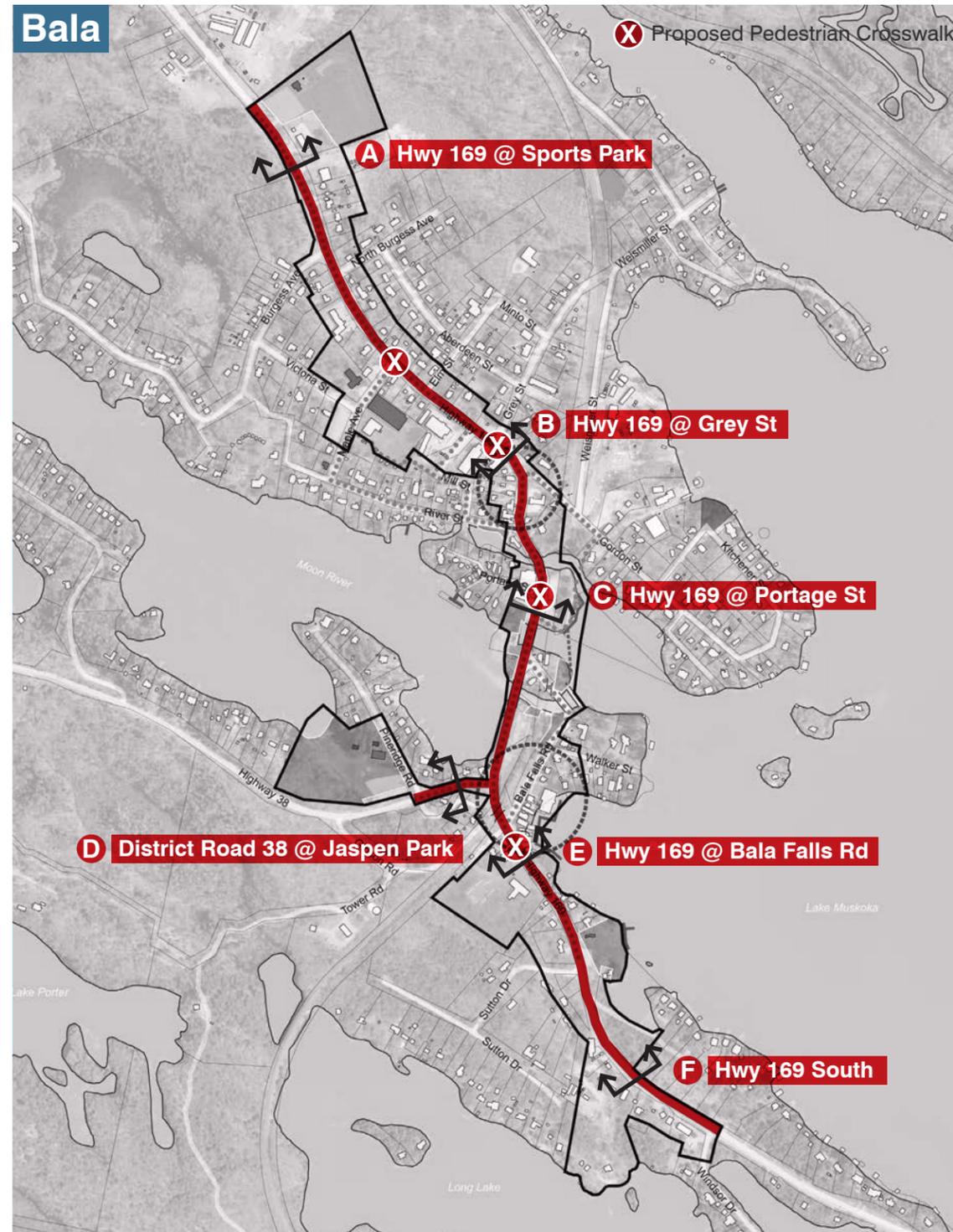
Maple Street Improvements (2009)



Proposed Street Conditions

A number of streetscape typologies provide direction for detailed planning and design that will be undertaken in the future as part of the District's plans for Highway 118 in Port Carling and other

initiatives on Highways 169 and 38. The final location of crosswalks will be confirmed through discussions with the District.



Bala

A Highway 169 at Muskoka Lakes Sports Park

Travel Lanes

No change is proposed to travel lane widths.

Streetscape

Additional trees should be added on private property wherever possible in consultation with adjacent owners.

Sidewalk

A new sidewalk is proposed on the east side of Highway 169, subject to the following guidelines:

- Sidewalk should have a minimum clearway of 2.1 metres (wherever possible).
- Sidewalk material should be differentiated from the road surface material.
- Sidewalk treatment should cross all driveways and access roads that are not public streets.

- At intersections with public streets and highways pedestrian crossing lines should be painted across the intersection.

Crosswalks

No crosswalks are proposed in this area.

Site Furnishings

Muskoka chairs, benches and waste receptacles should be added.

Dark Sky Friendly Lighting

Dark sky friendly pedestrian scale lighting should be added.



Photomontage illustrating proposed improvement to Highway 169 at Muskoka Lakes Sports Park



B Highway 169 Bridge at Grey Street

Travel Lanes

No change is proposed to travel lane widths.

Streetscape

Additional trees should be added on private property wherever possible in consultation with adjacent owners.

Sidewalk

New sidewalks are proposed on both sides of Highway 169, subject to the following guidelines:

- Sidewalk should have a minimum clearway of 2.1 metres (wherever possible).
- Sidewalk material should be differentiated from the road surface material.
- Sidewalk treatment should cross all driveways, parking areas, and access roads that are not public streets.

- At intersections with public streets and highways pedestrian crossing lines should be painted across the intersection.

Crosswalks

A pedestrian-activated crosswalk is proposed across Highway 169 at Grey Street. The crosswalk should be highly visible, include warning lights when activated, and meet all requirements of the District of Muskoka and the Highway Traffic Act.

Site Furnishings

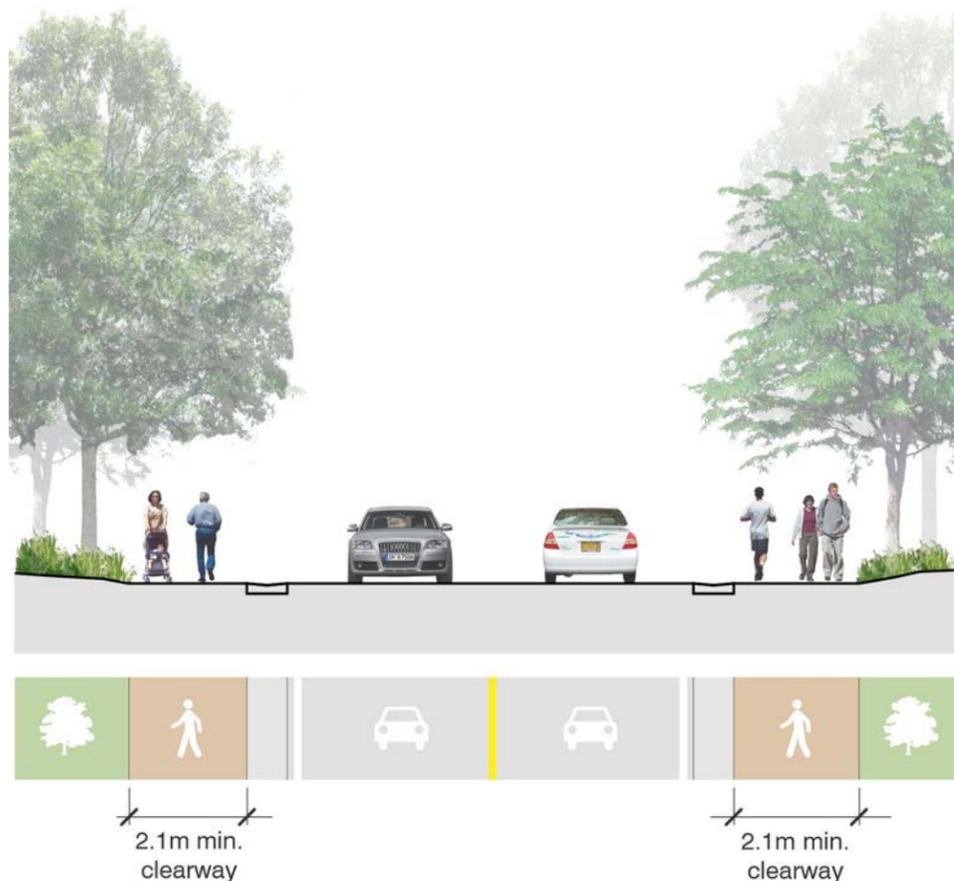
Muskoka chairs, benches and waste receptacles should be added.

Dark Sky Friendly Lighting

Dark sky friendly pedestrian scale lighting should be added.



Photomontage illustrating proposed improvement to Highway 169 Bridge North of Portage Street



C Highway 169 Bridge at Portage Street

Travel Lanes

No change is proposed to travel lane widths.

Streetscape

Additional trees should be added on private property wherever possible in consultation with adjacent owners.

Sidewalk

New sidewalks are proposed on both sides of Highway 169, subject to the following guidelines:

- Sidewalk should have a minimum clearway of 2.1 metres (wherever possible).
- Sidewalk material should be differentiated from the road surface material.
- Sidewalk treatment should cross all driveways, parking areas, and access roads that are not public streets.

- At intersections with public streets and highways pedestrian crossing lines should be painted across the intersection.

Crosswalks

A pedestrian-activated crosswalk is proposed across Highway 169 at Portage Street. The crosswalk should be highly visible, include warning lights when activated, and meet all requirements of the District of Muskoka and the Highway Traffic Act.

Site Furnishings

Muskoka chairs, benches and waste receptacles should be added.

Dark Sky Friendly Lighting

Dark sky friendly pedestrian scale lighting should be added.



Photomontage illustrating proposed improvement to Highway 169 Bridge North of Portage Street



D District Road 38 towards Jaspén Park

Travel Lanes

No change is proposed to travel lane widths.

Streetscape

Additional trees should be added on private property wherever possible in consultation with adjacent owners.

Sidewalk

A new sidewalk is proposed on the north side of District Road 38 leading towards Pine Ridge Road and Jaspén Park, subject to the following guidelines:

- Sidewalk should have a minimum clearway of 2.1 metres (wherever possible).
- Sidewalk material should be differentiated from the road surface material.
- Sidewalk treatment should cross all driveways and access roads that are not public streets.

- At intersections with public streets and highways pedestrian crossing lines should be painted across the intersection.

Crosswalks

No crosswalks are proposed in this area.

Site Furnishings

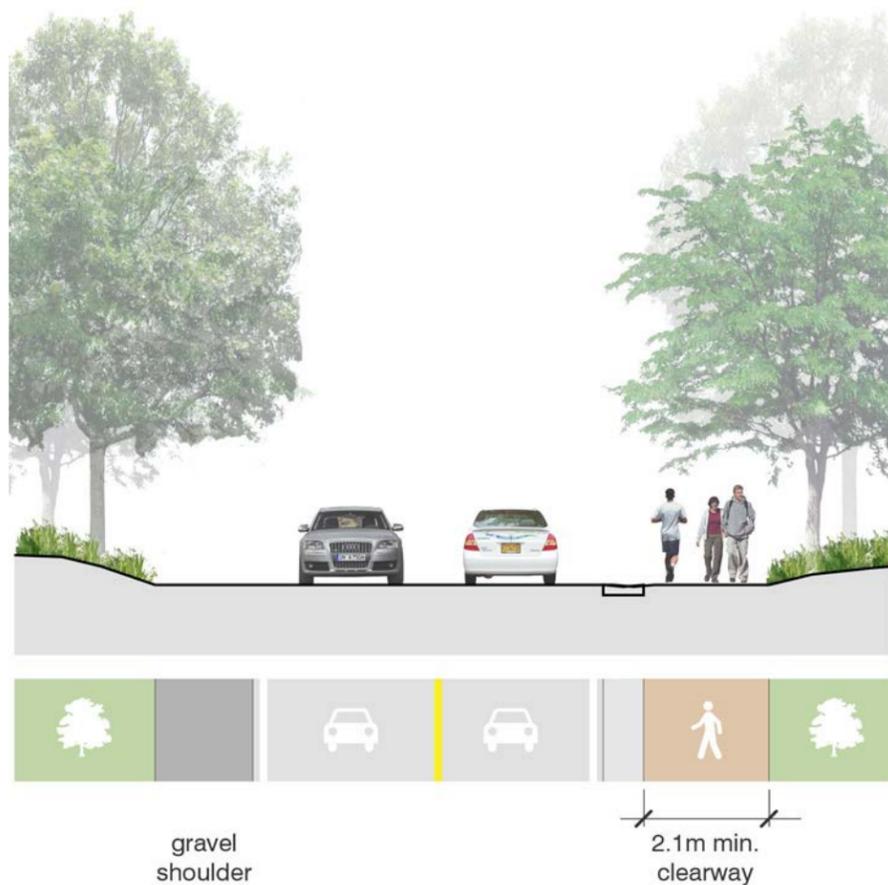
Muskoka chairs, benches and waste receptacles should be added.

Dark Sky Friendly Lighting

Dark sky friendly pedestrian scale lighting should be added.



Photomontage illustrating proposed improvement to Highway 38 towards Jaspén Park



E Highway 169 at Bala Falls Road

Travel Lanes

No change is proposed to travel lane widths.

Streetscape

Additional trees and plantings should be added on private property wherever possible in consultation with adjacent owners.

Sidewalk

New sidewalks are proposed on both sides of Highway 169, subject to the following guidelines:

- Sidewalk should have a minimum clearway of 2.1 metres (wherever possible).
- Sidewalk material should be differentiated from the road surface material.
- Sidewalk treatment should cross all driveways, parking areas, and access roads that are not public streets.

- At intersections with public streets and highways pedestrian crossing lines should be painted across the intersection.

Crosswalks

A pedestrian-activated crosswalk is proposed across Highway 169 at Bala Falls Road and Musquash Road. The crosswalk should be highly visible, include warning lights when activated, and meet all requirements of the District of Muskoka and the Highway Traffic Act.

Site Furnishings

Muskoka chairs, benches and waste receptacles should be added.

Dark Sky Friendly Lighting

Dark sky friendly pedestrian scale lighting should be added.



Photomontage illustrating proposed improvement to Highway 169 at Bala Falls Road



F South End of Highway 169

Travel Lanes

No change is proposed to travel lane widths.

Streetscape

Additional trees and plantings should be added on private property wherever possible in consultation with adjacent owners.

Sidewalk

A new sidewalk is proposed on the west side of Highway 169, subject to the following guidelines:

- Sidewalk should have a minimum clearway of 2.1 metres (wherever possible).
- Sidewalk material should be differentiated from the road surface material.
- Sidewalk treatment should cross all driveways and access roads that are not public streets.

- At intersections with public streets and highways pedestrian crossing lines should be painted across the intersection.

Crosswalks

No crosswalks are proposed in this area.

Site Furnishings

Muskoka chairs, benches and waste receptacles should be added.

Dark Sky Friendly Lighting

Dark sky friendly pedestrian scale lighting should be added.



Photomontage illustrating proposed improvement to the south end of Highway 169



Port Carling

G Medora Street (Highway 118) - Condition 1

Travel Lanes

No change is proposed to travel lane widths.

Streetscape

Additional trees and plantings should be added on private property wherever possible in consultation with adjacent owners.

On-street parking on both sides of Medora Street should be removed through this area to provide sidewalks on both sides. Consider including bollards to slow traffic coming over the hill and protect the sidewalks from attempts to park/stop vehicles.

Sidewalk

New sidewalks are proposed on both sides of Medora Street, subject to the following guidelines:

- Sidewalk should have a minimum clearway of 2.1 metres (wherever possible).

- Sidewalk material should be differentiated from the road surface material.
- Sidewalk treatment should cross all driveways, parking areas, and access roads that are not public streets.
- At intersections with public streets and highways pedestrian crossing lines should be painted across the intersection.

Crosswalks

No crosswalks are proposed in this area.

Site Furnishings

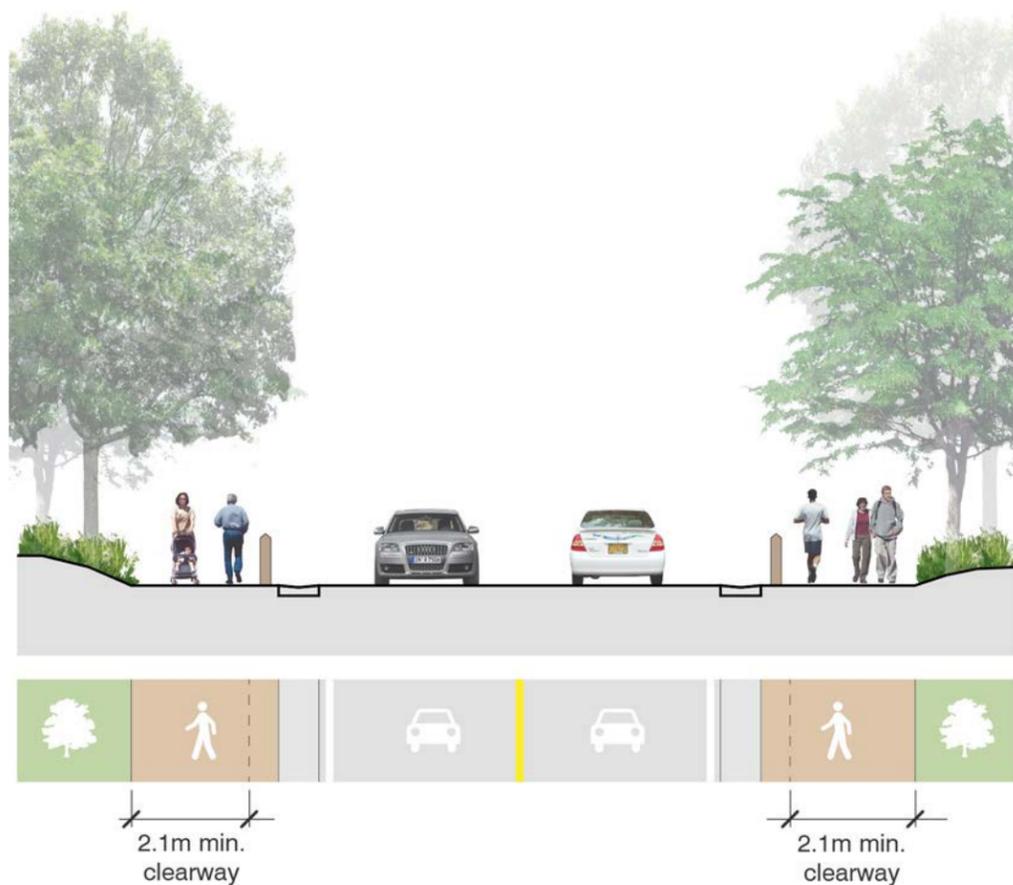
Muskoka chairs, benches and waste receptacles should be added.

Dark Sky Friendly Lighting

Dark sky friendly pedestrian scale lighting should be added.



Photomontage illustrating proposed improvement to Medora Street (Highway 118) - Condition 1



H Medora Street (Highway 118) - Condition 2

Travel Lanes

No change is proposed to travel lane widths.

Streetscape

Additional trees and plantings should be added on private property wherever possible in consultation with adjacent owners.

On-street parking on the south side of Medora Street should be narrowed to be a maximum of 2.25 metres to provide space for a new sidewalk. Where space is too limited to accommodate both, on-street parking should be removed.

Sidewalk

A new sidewalk is proposed on the south side of Medora Street, subject to the following guidelines:

- Sidewalk should have a minimum clearway of 2.1 metres (wherever possible).

- Sidewalk material should be differentiated from the road surface material.
- Sidewalk treatment should cross all driveways, parking areas, and access roads that are not public streets.
- At intersections with public streets and highways pedestrian crossing lines should be painted across the intersection.

Crosswalks

No crosswalks are proposed in this area.

Site Furnishings

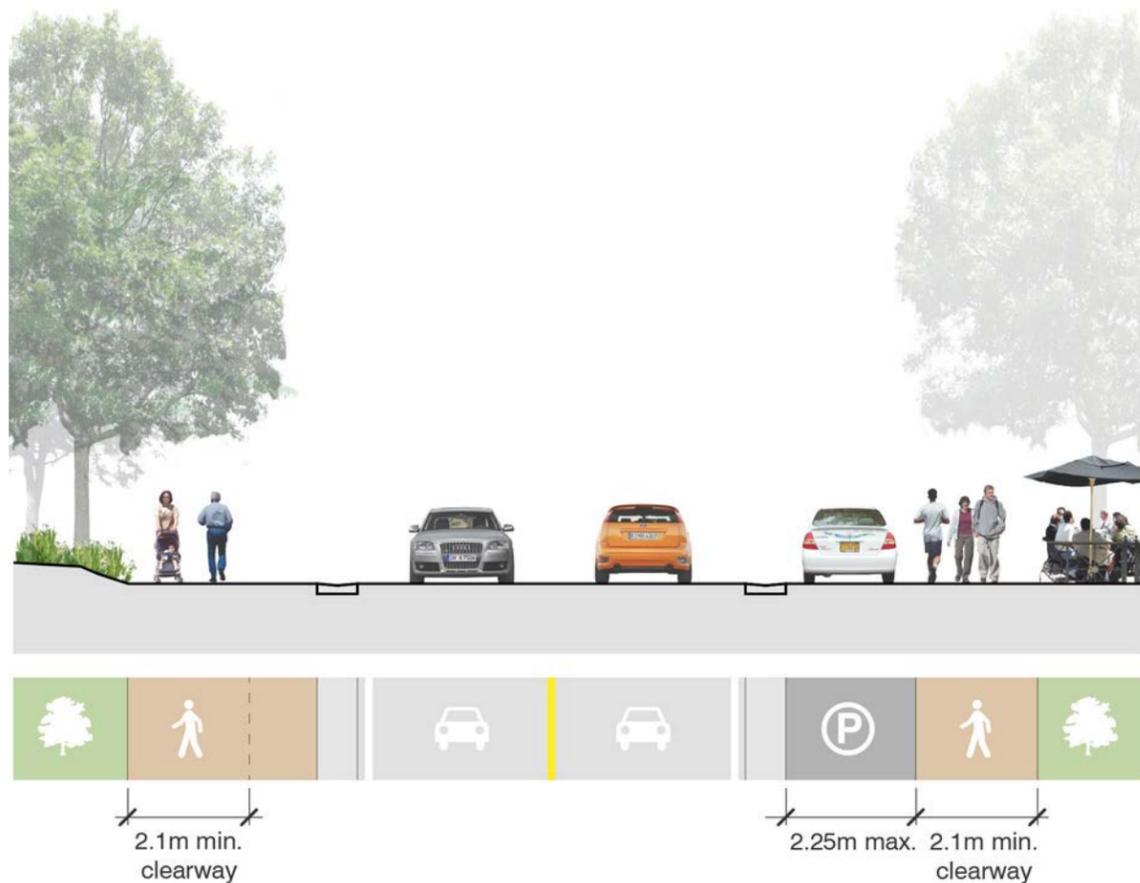
Muskoka chairs, benches and waste receptacles should be added.

Dark Sky Friendly Lighting

Dark sky friendly pedestrian scale lighting should be added.



Photomontage illustrating proposed improvement to Medora Street (Highway 118) - Condition 2



I Maple Street (Highway 118)

Travel Lanes

No change is proposed to travel lane widths.

Streetscape

Additional trees and plantings should be added on private property wherever possible in consultation with adjacent owners.

On-street parking on the east side of Maple Street is proposed to be converted into parallel (lay-by) parking to provide space for a new sidewalk.

Sidewalk

A new sidewalk is proposed on the east side of Maple Street, subject to the following guidelines:

- Sidewalk should have a minimum clearway of 2.1 metres (wherever possible).
- Sidewalk material should be differentiated from the road surface material.
- Sidewalk treatment should cross all driveways, parking areas, and access roads that are not public streets.

- At intersections with public streets and highways pedestrian crossing lines should be painted across the intersection.

Crosswalks

A pedestrian-activated crosswalk is proposed across Maple Street/Highway 118 at James Bartleman Way/Lock Street. The crosswalk should be highly visible, include warning lights when activated, and meet all requirements of the District of Muskoka and the Highway Traffic Act.

Site Furnishings

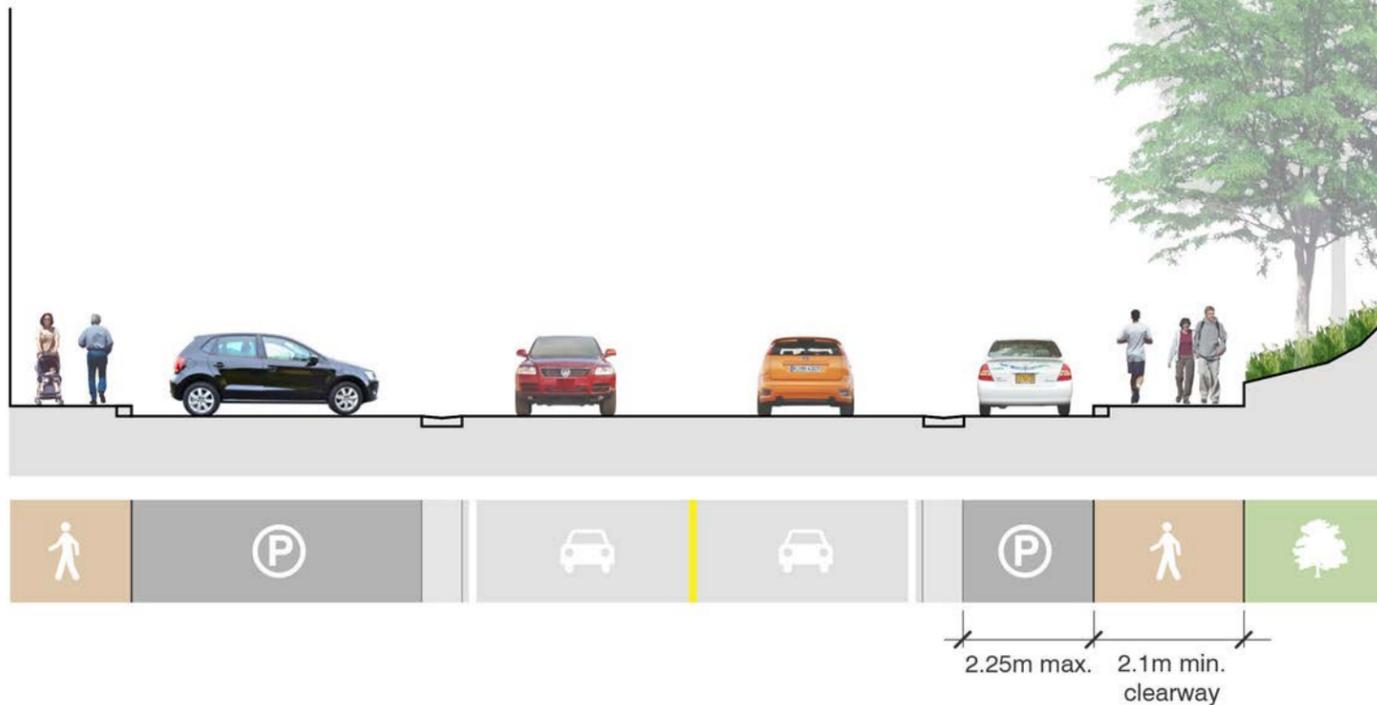
Muskoka chairs, benches and waste receptacles should be added.

Dark Sky Friendly Lighting

Dark sky friendly pedestrian scale lighting should be added.



Photomontage illustrating proposed improvement to Maple Street (Highway 118)



J Joseph Street (Highway 118)

Travel Lanes

No change is proposed to travel lane widths.

Streetscape

Additional trees and plantings should be added on private property wherever possible in consultation with adjacent owners.

Sidewalk

The existing sidewalk on the north/east side of Joseph Street should be widened where possible. A new sidewalk is proposed on the south/west side of Joseph Street, subject to the following guidelines:

- Sidewalk should have a minimum clearway of 2.1 metres (wherever possible).
- Sidewalk material should be differentiated from the road surface material.
- Sidewalk treatment should cross all driveways, parking areas, and access roads that are not public streets.

- At intersections with public streets and highways pedestrian crossing lines should be painted across the intersection.

Crosswalks

No crosswalks are proposed in this area.

Site Furnishings

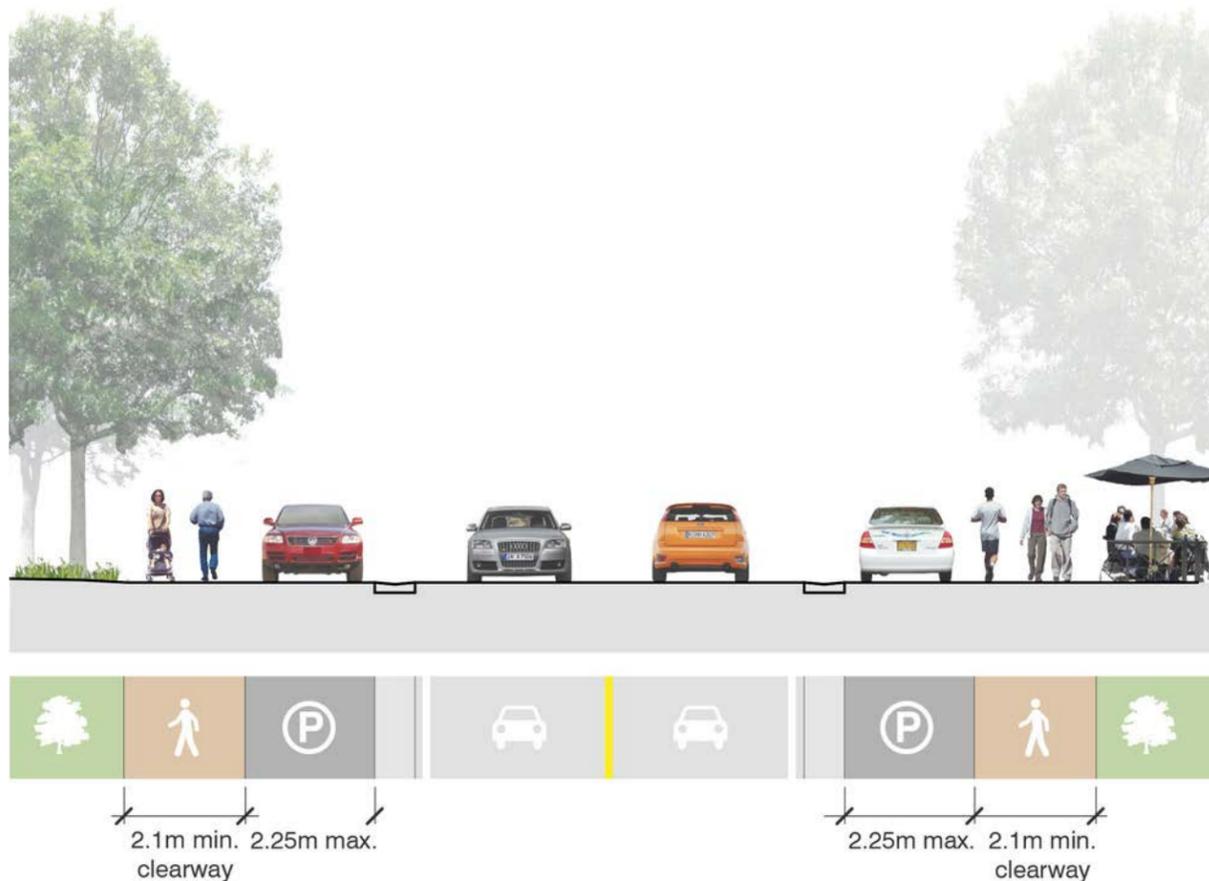
Muskoka chairs, benches and waste receptacles should be added.

Dark Sky Friendly Lighting

Dark sky friendly pedestrian scale lighting should be added.



Photomontage illustrating proposed improvement to Joseph Street (Highway 118)



K Joseph Street (Highway 118) at Bailey Street

Travel Lanes

No change is proposed to travel lane widths.

Streetscape

Additional trees and plantings should be added on private property wherever possible in consultation with adjacent owners.

Sidewalk

The existing sidewalk on the north/east side of Joseph Street should be widened where possible. A new sidewalk is proposed on the south side of Joseph Street, subject to the following guidelines:

- Sidewalk should have a minimum clearway of 2.1 metres (wherever possible).
- Sidewalk material should be differentiated from the road surface material.
- Sidewalk treatment should cross all driveways, parking areas, and access roads that are not public streets.

- At intersections with public streets and highways pedestrian crossing lines should be painted across the intersection.

Crosswalks

A pedestrian-activated crosswalk is proposed across Joseph Street/Highway 118 at Bailey Street/Stephen Road (not visible in illustration at right). The crosswalk should be highly visible, include warning lights when activated, and meet all requirements of the District of Muskoka and the Highway Traffic Act.

Site Furnishings

Muskoka chairs, benches and waste receptacles should be added.

Dark Sky Friendly Lighting

Dark sky friendly pedestrian scale lighting should be added.

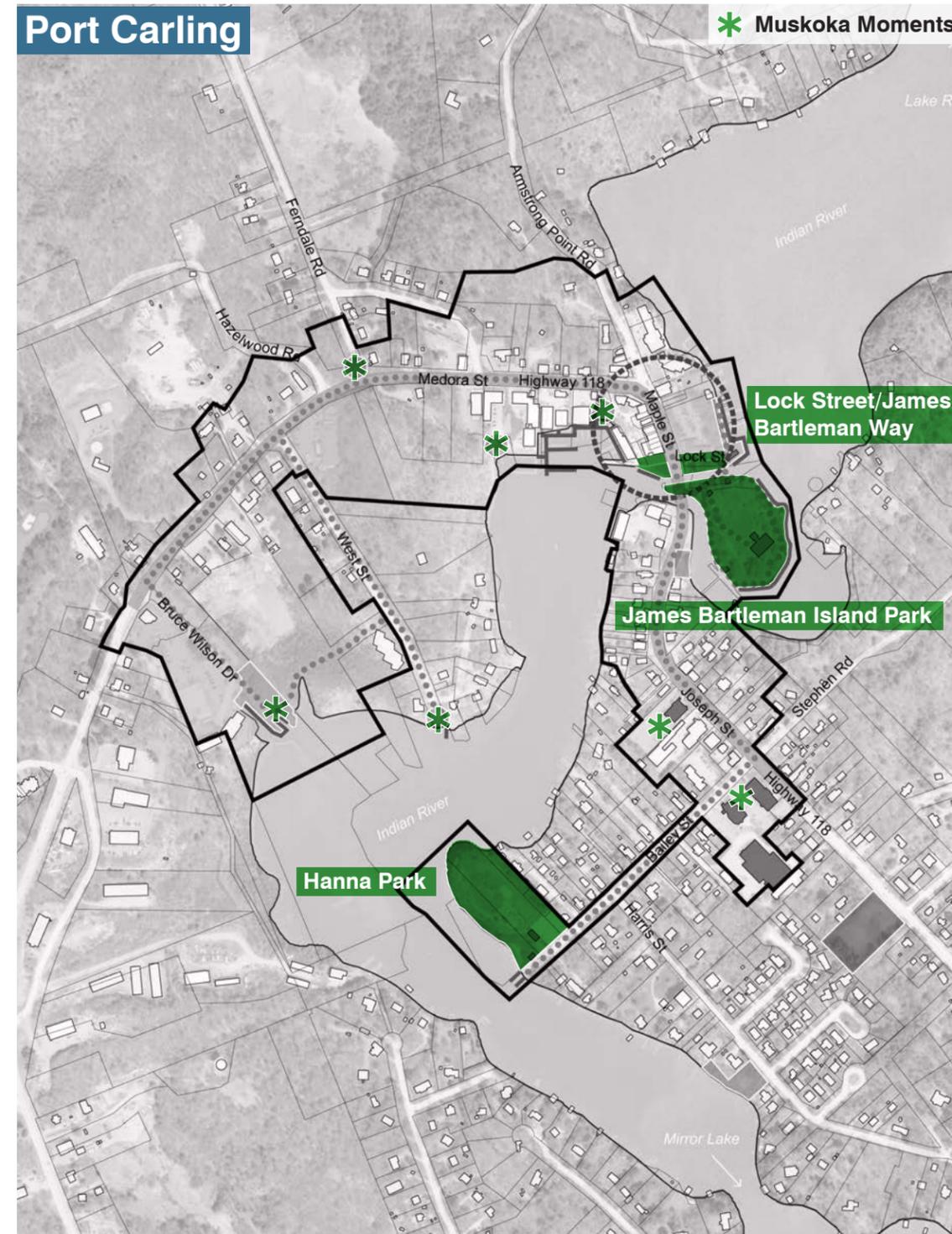


Photomontage illustrating proposed improvement to Joseph Street (Highway 118) at Bailey Street



Public Park Guidelines

The public park guidelines provide direction for enhancements to the key public spaces in Bala and Port Carling. The guidelines also suggest the location of Muskoka Moments.



Bala

Muskoka Lakes Sports Park

- Augment existing play facilities, skateboard park, parking, walking track and sports fields.
- Provide year round washrooms.
- Consider additional recreation facilities such as splash pad, games tables, pickle ball court, exercise stations, skating trail.
- Locate an Information Map for orientation to Bala and its businesses and other attractions.
- Provide a bike station.

Jaspén Park

- Augment existing swimming, play facilities, parking, changeroom and picnic pavilion.
- Provide year round washrooms.
- Consider additional recreation facilities such as exercise stations and beach volleyball.
- Locate an Information Map for orientation to Bala and its businesses and other attractions.

Windsor Park

- Augment existing boat tie up, swimming and parking.
- Provide year round washrooms.
- Consider additional recreation facilities such as games tables and exercise stations.
- Update the Information Map for orientation to Bala and its businesses and other attractions.

Muskoka Moments

- Provide a series of resting stops along a walking and cycling route.
- Include Interpretive signage and Information Map, locate “you are here”, nearby restaurants, cafes, interesting sites.
- Provide seating and planting/landscape features.
- Accommodate winter activities.
- Provide bike stations at key locations.



Bike Station



Map/Wayfinding



Exercise Station



Seating



Skating Trail



Beach Volleyball



Games Tables



Signage/Wayfinding

Port Carling

Lock Street/James Bartleman Way

- Create a summer pedestrian-only space on James Bartleman Way in front of the mural and on Lock Street.
- Include special paving materials, tables and seating.
- Include planting/landscape features.
- Include a bike station.
- Include an Information Map for orientation to Port Carling, its businesses and attractions

James Bartleman Island Park

- Augment existing boat tie up and seating.
- Consider adding recreation facilities such as a playground, games tables and exercise stations.
- Consider adding an outdoor pavilion.
- Consider adding year round washrooms.
- Include an Information Map for orientation to Port Carling, its businesses and attractions

Hanna Park

- Augment existing boat tie up, swimming, playground, skating trail and parking.
- additional recreation facilities such as games tables and exercise stations.
- Provide rear round washrooms.
- Include an Information Map for orientation to Port Carling, its businesses and attractions.
- Include a bike station.

Muskoka Moments

- Include Interpretive signage and Information Map, locate “you are here”, nearby restaurants, cafes, interesting sites.
- Provide seating and planting/landscape features.
- Accommodate winter activities.
- Provide bike stations at key locations.



Photomontage of pedestrian-only space on James Bartleman Way

Elements to include in the Muskoka Moments



Illustration of the potential components of a Muskoka Moment

Considerations for Implementation

There are many influences on determining the implementation of improvements in Bala or Port Carling. There may be opportunities presented to “piggy back” with other capital projects of the District or Township, choices made in response to specific funding programs, a strategy to ‘sprinkle’ improvements across both urban centre, a strategy to focus on one or two key areas. Staff and Council will consider all of the variables and influences when making decisions on projects to implement.

Possibilities for immediate implementation include:

1. Bike racks/bike stations;
2. Signage and wayfinding;
3. Muskoka Moments (street furniture, planting);
4. Begin discussions with parties on approvals for priority areas such as crosswalks, boardwalks and gateway signage in Bala; and,
5. Begin discussions to convert James Bartleman Way as a pedestrian only space.

6 CIP Programs, Monitoring and Marketing

Review of Comparable Communities

A review of Community Improvement Plans in comparable communities outlined in the table below describes the variety of priority programs available for a municipality to use. The comparison summarizes the policy tools each municipality has in place. Budgets change from year to year, so each municipality's ability to fund the CIP incentives is an annual decision of Council.

Incentive	Bracebridge	Burks Falls	Gravenhurst	Huntsville	Penetang.
Affordable Housing					✓
Façade Improvement	✓	✓	✓		✓
Fee or Development Charge Rebates		✓	✓	✓	
Landscaping / Property	✓		✓		
Professional Fees Grant		✓	✓		
Residential Rehabilitation	✓		✓		
Signage	✓	✓	✓		✓
Structural / Building Improvement	✓		✓		✓
Tax Increment Grant	✓	✓		✓	

Incentives in Comparable Communities

Emerging Trends

In the past, many municipalities only had a façade improvement program in their Community Improvement Plan. Now, municipalities are experimenting with new concepts for incentives to encourage private-sector reinvestment, especially where it will enhance the public realm and build the overall vitality of the community.

Affordable Housing

Housing availability has become a challenge for many rural communities, especially in terms of attainability for new homeowners, young people, seasonal workers, seniors, and low-income populations that do not qualify for government-funded affordable housing.

- **Barrie Affordable Housing Development Grant Program:** This program aims to create a mix of unit types across the continuum of affordable housing options, geared towards the low and low to moderate income households.
- **Brantford Greyfields Community Improvement Plan:** This program is aimed at converting former retail and institutional uses by incentivizing mixed use, multi-storey residential infill and redevelopment.
- **Cambridge Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan:** This program has preserved or created more than 3,000 affordable units to date.
- **North Grenville Tax-Increment Equivalent Residential Grant:** This program supports the development/intensification of residential (stand-alone or as part of mixed-use developments) in downtown Kemptville.
- **Worker Housing:** Accommodation for employees has also been the topic of study for municipalities, for example:
 - [Southern Georgian Bay Tourism Industry Workforce Housing Research and Business Case](#)
 - [Tofino Seasonal Workers Housing Action Plan](#)

Industry Stimulus

- **Amherstburg Building and Accommodation Grant Program:** This program is aimed at rehabilitation, redevelopment, or development of overnight accommodation uses and other uses which support the tourism sector.
- **Lucan Biddulph Industrial Stimulus Program:** This program supports private investment geared to the creation of jobs and diversification of the local economy by incentivising exceptional projects.
- **Wellington County Invest More Grant:** This program aims to develop more rooftop patios/ outdoor dining spaces, privately owned publicly accessible spaces, and Bed and breakfast accommodations.
- **Windsor Business Development Grant:** Project must create a minimum of 50 new jobs within the manufacturing sector or a more than 20 jobs within any other targeted sector(s).

Waterfront

Public access to waterfront has become a focus of Community Improvement Plans. Some municipalities have advanced funding for boat slips.

- **Kawartha Lakes Marina Slips:** Given that the Kawartha Lakes are part of the Trent-Severn Waterway, this program encourages the development of additional temporary docking spots for boaters travelling to/through the Community Improvement Plan area.

Public / Private Space Links

- **Sarnia Landscape and Property Improvement Program Grant:** This program funds landscaping improvements, pedestrian connections, sidewalk cafes/patios and other improvements that can contribute to enhancing the public realm; installation of alternative ground cover treatments; re-sodding; installation or improvement of pedestrian walkways; tree planting; installation or improvement of a permanent sidewalk café or patio; installation of benches or permanent planters; and services of a professional landscape architect.

Implementation Tools

Fee Rebates

A basic tool for implementing programs in the Community Improvement Plan are rebates for municipal fees and charges, including:

- Planning Application Fees, including fees for Official Plan and Zoning By-Law Amendments, applications for Minor Variance, etc.
- Building Permit Fees, including Plumbing Permit Fees
- Development Charges, if not already exempt for the applicable development type in the Development Charges By-Law (see Figure 2)
- Other municipal fees related to the development proposed

On top of the typical eligibility filters set out for any incentive, the policy must set out what percentage of the total fee amount a municipality will rebate to an applicant, when the rebate is issued, and when the rebate is void (e.g. approval not received on a zoning by-law amendment).

Municipalities may record the use of fee rebates by transferring funds from the Community Improvement Plan budget to the budget line of a specific revenue line of a Department.

Development Charge Eligibility	Exempt	Institutional	Commercial	Residential
Location				
Within Designated Central Business District	x			
By Development Type				
Hospitals		x		
Nursing Homes		x		
Homes for Aged		x		
Retirement Homes				x
Industrial Development	x			
Other Institutional		x		
Commercial Development			x	
Roofed Accommodation	x			
Temporary Structures (less than one year)	x			
Garden Suite (Apt. Rate)				x
Farm Help House Development	x			
Farming Business Development	x			
Cannabis Production Facility			x	
Affordable Housing – County SH Prog. Funded	x			
Parking Garage	x			
Place of Worship	x			
Designated Brownfield Development	x			
Single detached dwellings				x
Semi-detached or row dwellings				x
Other residential buildings / facilities				x
Tiny Homes (100 m ² usable area or less)				x
By Property Ownership				
Education Boards	x			
County	x			
Local Boards of the County	x			

Example of Development Charge Exemptions

Loans

Construction loans are low-interest or interest-free loans offered by a municipality to an applicant. A loan agreement is signed between the parties, and a loan amortization repayment table is established. Sometimes municipalities provide a “forgivable portion” of the loan if the applicant stays current on payments.

In recent years, some municipalities are no longer offering loans, preferring grants as an implementation tool because of the following concerns:

- Loans are available from private financial institutions and Community Futures Development offices, creating a scenario where the Township would be competing (with little or no experience) against the private lending sector or federal business loan programs.
- Administration and monitoring of loans is labour intensive, placing additional human resource obligations and financial burdens on the municipality. If the loans are not administered and monitored by staff with appropriate fiduciary and accounting skill sets, or if staff are replaced or reassigned, fiscal problems may develop that will need to be repaired, and any negative perceptions may harm the reputation of the Township.
- During the pandemic, advocacy groups warned of business aversion to taking on more debt, regardless of the cost to borrow.
- The practice of registering the loan on title is not welcomed by businesses and causes increased costs that are not budgeted if the business wishes to discharge the loan when renegotiating with other lenders.
- Loans may create unwelcome complexities with municipal budgeting.
- Staff who lack confidence in administering a loan program may not promote it aggressively, creating lower business intake rates.

If the Township chooses to implement a loan program, assistance from the Township’s Finance Department is mandatory. Finance staff will also determine their level of comfort with forgivable loan amounts, amortization conditions, etc. Alternatively, the Township could outsource the delivery of such a loan program to the local Community Futures Development Corporation.

Construction Grants

Construction grants are another fundamental tool for implementing programs in the Community Improvement Plan. The nature of a construction grant must be defined clearly in the CIP and/or associated policy documentation.

On top of the typical eligibility filters set out for any incentive, the policy must set out the following:

- **Maximum Grant Amount:** The maximum grant amount is the total funding a municipality will provide per property to any successful applicant (e.g. \$10,000 per program per property, maximum of \$50,000 total from all incentive programs per property), regardless of the total project cost estimate.
- **Matching Percentage:** The maximum percentage is the share of the total project cost estimate the municipality will provide to any successful applicant (e.g. 50% of total project estimate cost). If the calculation of matching percentage of total project cost estimate exceeds the Maximum Grant Amount, then the lesser of the two amounts will be the Maximum Grant Amount.

Tax Increment Grants

A Tax Increment Grant is a financial tool used by municipalities to provide financial support to development projects by rebating the difference between property tax bill amount on a property prior to construction and the taxes on the same property after construction and tax reassessment. For example, if the property tax bill increased from \$30,000 to \$50,000 in Year One after reassessment, the municipality would rebate a percentage (e.g., 100% or \$20,000) of the difference in tax bills, after all property taxes (\$50,000) have been paid. In Year Two, the percentage may be 80%, resulting in a \$16,000 rebate grant after the \$50,000 total bill is paid. If the rebate continued to drop in increments of 20% each year for a total of five years, then the business would receive three more grants at \$12,000, \$8,000, and \$4,000, respectively, totalling \$60,000 over five years. Usually, the total rebate amount over the rebate period must not exceed the total original cost of construction that activated the tax assessment increase.

Construction grant programs are defined clearly in the CIP and/or associated policy documentation. On top of the typical eligibility filters set out for any incentive, the program will detail:

- Number of years the rebate will be granted after the property is improved and reassessed (e.g., five years vs ten years).
- Change in rebate percentage each year (e.g., 100% in Year One, 80% in Year Two, etc.).
- Total rebate amount the municipality will provide per property to any successful applicant (e.g. the sum of all rebates will not exceed the total construction costs).
- Other conditions.

Tax increment-based grants are very labour intensive to implement and require detailed documentation to mitigate against staff turnover and institutional memory gaps. The program is difficult for financial staff to budget, as the difference between the pre-development and post-development assessment will be unclear until the project is fully built and reviewed by

the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC). Municipal staff will no doubt promote a cautionary approach.

Eligibility criteria may need to change for programs that utilize a Tax Increment Grant as a tool, such that a project must be much larger in scale or generate tangible spin-off benefits to justify the increase in grant contributions. Smaller projects may need to be eliminated from the program for ease of administration. The complexity of tracking and monitoring dozens of \$25,000 rebates will be more burdensome than three \$250,000 rebates.

The objectives of any Community Improvement program that uses a Tax Increment Grant for implementation should include long-term tangible targets. For example, employment targets need to be set for eligible industrial building developments, not including temporary construction labour. A net increase of employment in the target geographic areas, directly because of these developments, should be among the criteria for receiving a rebate. For residential projects, there may need to be an audit system that ensures that housing meant for local employees is not converted to short-term rentals for tourist. Potential developers will need to be warned specifically about any conditions that may void their grant eligibility in the future.

If the rebate period of a program is extended from five years to ten years, the need for careful administration, financial analysis, legal services, risk mitigation, and more considerations will be amplified. The effects of rebating so much property tax to development projects will test political stamina over as many as three Council terms.

Expectations of the developer will need to be written into any agreement, in terms of how the rebate is administered, whether it can be sold with the property if the development changes hands, etc., as well as any funding limitations that the Township may institute in the future.

The complexity of a tax-increment rebate application can confuse many developers.

The stimulative effect will be enhanced if the proponent can clearly understand how their bottom line will specifically benefit from participating in the program. If the Township can demonstrate how much the developer can expect to save, and how that data can be used to leverage loans from financial institutions or investors, the stimulative effect increases even more.

Given that large-scale developments will cost many millions and could dramatically increase the tax assessed on a vacant or derelict property (if eligible), the promise of a tax rebate that could tip the balance on such an investment may not sell the concept to a developer if the Township placed a cap on total rebates. For example, if the total rebate is capped at \$100,000 over five years on a \$10-million development, the program is unlikely to stimulate a company to invest.

This type of incentive should only be exercised if there is a clear financial advantage to the developer, and an obvious community benefit to the Township of Muskoka Lakes. Design Guidelines are important to ensuring that new development or renovations are compatible with the existing character of the community. The order of magnitude of the grant should be very high to justify a developer's willingness to invest in a project that otherwise may not happen. The win-win nature of the development must be very clear to all parties.

Developers that are not eligible for Tax Increment Grants may put pressure on elected representatives to expand the scope of the program beyond the original objectives the incentive tool was designed to assist. Program creep will need to be monitored carefully, as any changes in eligibility will eat into overall budget allocations and potentially compromise priority objectives.

Eligibility Filters

Municipalities use eligibility filters to narrow the focus of Community Improvement Plan incentives, prioritizing specific objectives for local economic development.

- **Priority:** An incentive program may be categorized as high priority. Applicants, if eligible, will receive funding approval first, before any other incentive program applications.
- **Geographic Areas:** The eligible geographic area is shown in the Community Improvement Area as a map (e.g. defined waterfront area vs agricultural area), as prescribed in the Community Improvement Plan. In some municipalities, the entire municipality is the eligible geographic area.
- **Industry Focus:** The eligible industry areas are defined (e.g., downtown commercial vs agricultural, tourism vs industrial).
- **Property Types:** The eligible property types are defined (e.g., non-residential vs commercial).
- **Applicant Types:** The eligible applicant types are defined (e.g., property owners vs tenants with written approval by the owner).
- **Expenditures:** The eligible expenditures are defined (e.g., brick veneer refacing vs replacement windows, load-bearing wall rehabilitation vs replacement roofing material).
- **Other General Conditions:** Applicants should not be in tax arrears. They also must not start construction until their application is approved. Other conditions may be added.

Proposed Private Realm Incentive Programs

Attainable and Employee Housing Grant

Objective

To increase the number and quality of dwelling units available exclusively to employees of tourism establishments in Bala and Port Carling.

Rationale

Workers in accommodation, food services, and retail related to tourism are usually younger people who are paid lower wages for seasonal work. Businesses have identified a shortage of workers, especially in summer, complicated by the lack of affordability and availability of worker housing in the Township.

Implementation Tools and Funding Amounts

Implementation Tool	Tool Available?	Municipality Match %	Maximum Grant Range
Fee Rebate	Yes	N/A	N/A
Construction Grant	Yes	25%	\$20,000 to \$40,000
Loan	No	N/A	N/A
Tax Increment Grant	Yes	5-year period	\$150,000 to \$900,000 total over 5 years

Eligibility Filters

Eligibility Filter	Details
Priority	High
Geographic Areas	Bala and Port Carling
Industry Focus	Tourism, Hospitality and Retail Workforce Housing
Property Types	Residential, Commercial, Institutional
Applicant Types	Property Owner
Expenditures	Construction costs related to development or redevelopment of multi-residential housing for workers in the tourism and hospitality sector. Exclusions: appliances.
Special Conditions	Property owners may apply for the construction grant (small projects) or the tax increment grant (large projects), but not both. Housing is intended for employees of businesses in the area. Use will be registered on title. Property owners cannot convert the housing to tourist accommodation or residential dwelling units without Township permission. Construction must follow building codes and regulations for housing of workers

Budget and Stimulative Effect

Scenarios were developed for this grant with options for annual budgets ranging from \$20,000 to \$100,000. Under the scenarios calculated, the Township of Muskoka Lakes could stimulate 6 to 15 Employee Housing projects over ten years. The stimulative effect could be valued as high as \$4.2 million in private-sector investment over ten years, depending on the level of incentives provided.

Shoreline Structure Grant

Objective

Encourage the development of additional day-use docking and/or boat slips for operators of pleasure craft and boat taxis travelling to the Community Improvement Plan area.

Rationale

Businesses in Bala and Port Carling and cottage owners on adjacent lakes wish to see an increased number and frequency of safe pleasure craft traffic. By developing additional boat slips and docking areas, property owners and the Township will help to increase the amount of foot traffic in the commercial areas while decreasing pressure on vehicle parking.

Implementation Tools and Funding Amounts

Implementation Tool	Tool Available?	Municipality Match %	Maximum Grant Range
Fee Rebate	Yes	100%	To be determined
Construction Grant	Yes	50%	\$5,000
Loan	No	N/A	N/A
Tax Increment Grant	No	N/A	N/A

Eligibility Filters

Eligibility Filter	Details
Priority	High
Geographic Areas	Bala and Port Carling
Industry Focus	Tourism and Hospitality, Retail
Property Types	Waterfront Commercial, Waterfront Open Space, Waterfront Institutional
Applicant Types	Property Owner
Expenditures	Construction costs related to development of new docks or boat slips.
Special Conditions	Docks and boat slips are intended for public day-use by boaters to access the businesses in Bala and Port Carling. The use will be registered on title. Current or future owners of the property who restrict public access or allow overnight use without Township permission will be prosecuted. Construction must follow guidelines established by appropriate authorities.

Budget and Stimulative Effect

Scenarios were developed for this grant with options for annual budgets ranging from \$10,000 to \$60,000. Under the scenarios calculated, the Township of Muskoka Lakes could stimulate 14 to 84 Shoreline Structure projects over ten years. The stimulative effect could be valued as high as \$1 million in private-sector investment over ten years, depending on the level of incentives provided.

Business Structural & Mechanical Upgrade Grant

Objective

To support upgrades and investment in structural and mechanical components of commercial properties to enhance business viability, building integrity, energy efficiency and year-round use.

Rationale

Older buildings may have decayed structural supports, out-of-date electrical systems, substandard plumbing, sanitation concerns, or heating systems and insulation. Even the smallest of cafes, restaurants and food shops need proper ventilation for food preparation, renovations for contactless food-delivery, as well as fixes for pest control, or upgrades to drains, grease traps and interceptors. Small business owners need support to ensure their businesses stay compliant with regulations, are energy efficient, welcoming to customers, safe for employees, financially viable, and open in all seasons.

Implementation Tools and Funding Amounts

Implementation Tool	Tool Available?	Municipality Match %	Maximum Grant Range
Fee Rebate	Yes	100%	Municipality to rebate any fee paid
Construction Grant	Yes	50%	\$10,000 to \$25,000
Loan	No	N/A	N/A
Tax Increment Grant	No	N/A	N/A

Eligibility Filters

Eligibility Filter	Details
Priority	Medium
Geographic Areas	Bala and Port Carling
Industry Focus	Tourism, Hospitality and Retail
Property Types	Commercial
Applicant Types	Property Owner or Tenant with Property Owner's Written Permission
Expenditures	Construction costs related to structural and mechanical upgrades to existing commercial buildings, including upgrades to plumbing and electrical systems, installation of safety and fire protection systems, structural upgrades, upgrade and installation of windows, new technologies, building insulation, consultant fees, fire suppression systems, carpentry, HVAC, and interior renovations.
Special Conditions	All construction must follow Ontario Building Code and other regulations.

Budget and Stimulative Effect

Scenarios were developed for this grant with options for annual budgets ranging from \$10,000 to \$80,000. Under the scenarios calculated, the Township of Muskoka Lakes could stimulate 9 to 20 Business Structural and Mechanical Upgrade projects over ten years. The stimulative effect could be valued as high as \$1.3 million in private-sector investment over ten years, depending on the level of incentives provided.

Business Accessibility & Facade Upgrade Grant

Objective

To encourage business owners to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities and to enhance the exterior façade of their building.

Rationale

Accessibility to businesses in Bala and Port Carling is critical. Not only must property owners comply with Provincial law, those who do not are missing out on opportunities. The number of Canadians living with a physical disability that impairs their mobility, vision, or hearing, will rise to 3.6 million over the next ten years. Improvements to workplace access would allow 550,000 Canadians with disabilities to work more, increasing GDP by \$16.8 billion by 2030. The increase in labour availability would lift the income of people with disabilities by more than \$13.5 billion. These outcomes would also improve availability of workforce and generate new customers for small business owners.

Implementation Tools and Funding Amounts

Implementation Tool	Tool Available?	Municipality Match %	Maximum Grant Range
Fee Rebate	Yes	100%	Municipality to rebate any fee paid
Construction Grant	Yes	50%	\$5,000 to \$25,000
Loan	No	N/A	N/A
Tax Increment Grant	No	N/A	N/A

Eligibility Filters

Eligibility Filter	Details
Priority	High – Accessibility Upgrades Low – Facade Upgrades
Geographic Areas	Bala and Port Carling
Industry Focus	Tourism, Hospitality and Retail
Property Types	Commercial
Applicant Types	Property Owner or Tenant with Property Owner's Written Permission
Expenditures	Accessibility Upgrades: Construction costs related to renovation of building entrances, upgrading of doors, installation of power assist door operators, installation of ramps, elevating devices, and accessibility washrooms for the public. Facades Upgrades: External repairs to facades on any public-facing wall, including signage, lighting appropriate for night sky promotion, entrances, and display windows.
Special Conditions	All construction must follow Ontario Building Code and other regulations and conform to Design Guidelines.

Budget and Stimulative Effect

Scenarios were developed for this grant with options for annual budgets ranging from \$5,000 to \$30,000. Under the scenarios calculated, the Township of Muskoka Lakes could stimulate 7 to 13 Business Accessibility and Façade Upgrade projects over ten years. The stimulative effect could be valued as high as \$700,000 in private-sector investment over ten years, depending on the level of incentives provided.

Ecological Space Grant

Objective

To improve the landscape between commercial business properties and public properties, highlighting environmental sustainability, native vegetation, natural beauty, and local culture.

Rationale

There is a constant push to keep Muskoka natural and green. Regeneration, environmental sustainability, and climate change are top of mind among citizens, business owners, and visitors. Places can build community pride by responding to these trends, encouraging more greenery and native vegetation, and generally making the collective community look more beautiful and forward-thinking.

Implementation Tools and Funding Amounts

Implementation Tool	Tool Available?	Municipality Match %	Maximum Grant Range
Fee Rebate	No	N/A	N/A
Construction Grant	Yes	50%	\$5,000 per property
Loan	No	N/A	N/A
Tax Increment Grant	No	N/A	N/A

Eligibility Filters

Eligibility Filter	Details
Priority	High
Geographic Areas	Bala and Port Carling
Industry Focus	Tourism, Hospitality, Retail, Office, Industrial near Public Spaces, Residential or Mixed Use in limited cases
Property Types	Commercial, Industrial
Applicant Types	Property Owner or Tenant with Property Owner's Written Permission
Expenditures	Material, labour and consulting costs associated with building ecological space connections between private and public outdoor spaces (land or water), including supply and installation of soil, alternative cover treatments, native trees and shrubs, lighting appropriate for supporting dark sky promotion, permanent sidewalk café/patio, benches, planters, public art.
Special Conditions	Owners of contiguous properties should be permitted to apply as a group and pool their grant allotments. They could then hire one professional landscape architect and/or contractor to design and install the projects together, accelerating activation and maximize the time of available contractors.

Budget and Stimulative Effect

Scenarios were developed for this grant with options for annual budgets ranging from \$5,000 to \$30,000. Under the scenarios calculated, the Township of Muskoka Lakes could stimulate 7 to 54 Ecological Space projects over ten years. The stimulative effect could be valued as high as \$700,000 in private-sector investment over ten years, depending on the level of incentives provided.

Financial Considerations

Budgeting for a municipal Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a challenging endeavour. Under the ideal scenario, Township officials would have a full grasp on the sizes and types of property improvements that business owners are considering, and an understanding of construction costs.

The numbers stated below do not include operational costs related to administration of the program, such as wages and benefits, financial or legal costs, debt servicing, office space, materials, supplies, services, printing, advertising, or promotion.

Any funding allocated by the Township to a public realm CIP budget would be considered an incremental enhancement to existing capital expenditures and is not meant to offset total budget lines. Funding amounts committed to stimulate private-sector incentives are assumed to be matching, at a minimum. In many cases, CIP incentives can generate a threefold to fivefold multiplier when developers tally total project costs.

Neither scenario considers potential public-private partnerships that may unexpectedly materialize requiring major infusions of tax rebate grants to stimulate their construction. Such opportunities would need to be considered by Council on a case-by-case basis, with a separate cost-benefit analysis, and separate budget.

Annual Allocation by Council

Option A: \$300,000

To demonstrate overwhelming commitment to accelerating economic improvements to the Township of Muskoka Lakes, Council may wish to devote more funds to a substantial CIP budget. This would send a clear signal to developers and businesses small and large that the Township support its existing businesses and wishes to attract new investment to its communities. In this scenario, there would be additional funding for private-sector incentives, but a portion of unallocated funds in the Business Incentive Reserve that are unused by the private sector could be used to augment the separate budget for public-realm projects. Over ten years, it is predicted that private property owners would invest an additional \$8.1 million, more if projects access tax-increment rebates, and less if portions of the budget are allocated to the public realm.

Option B: \$150,000

The budget amount required to activate an effective toolbox of incentives for the Township of Muskoka Lakes Community Improvement Plan Township of Muskoka Lakes would be \$150,000 per year for a minimum period of ten years. Over the course of ten years, it is estimated that private property owners would invest an additional \$4 million, excluding large-scale projects eligible for Tax Increment Grants. Any public realm improvements should be budgeted separately.

Option C: \$50,000

In a compromise scenario, the Township of Muskoka Lakes could activate a portion of its incentives with a smaller budget of \$50,000 annually. The degree to which the private-sector will respond to this scenario is not as clear. However, if businesses do respond positively, the program could generate additional private-sector investment of \$1.5 million over ten years. It may be difficult to determine if the program investment actually triggered any projects or if the fund was used by savvy entrepreneurs to subsidize work that would have been completed anyway. Any public realm improvements should be budgeted separately.

Business Incentive Reserve

The Township should establish a Community Improvement Incentive Reserve Account to ensure there is no interruption in the program from year to year, and that as many applicants can be considered as possible if there is sufficient funding in the reserve, and that flexibility in managing funds is designed into the program to account for unexpected needs related to the Tax Increment Grant.

The scenario developed for the Township of Muskoka Lakes anticipates grants being disbursed in the first five years of the program exclusively to construction and fee rebates. The calculations assume that a small number of large projects related to Worker Housing are completed in the first five years, and starting in Year 6, the entire annual budget allocation is consumed by a 100% rebate in tax assessment increase(s) related to the new project(s). As the sliding scale of rebates drop, more money becomes available for construction grants. However, as more Tax Increment Grant projects come on stream, and others are retired after five years, the importance of the Reserve Fund will become evident.

Administration

Intake and Approval

Communication and Facilitation

Since a business owner or employee may oversee smaller projects, there will need to be no surprises when they file their paperwork for the grant. The nature of estimates and final supporting documentation must be confirmed in simple terms, so the applicant complies with the process. Design Guidelines are important to ensuring that new development or renovations are compatible with the existing character of the community.

Eligibility Requirements

An effective program starts with an easy-to-understand intake process and approval mechanism. General eligibility requirements for any of the programs should be outlined clearly in the intake process. Any specific criteria for individual programs must be highlighted. Recommended general eligibility requirements would include:

- a** Eligible projects must be located within the Community Improvement Plan area.
- b** Applicants must apply for the specific grant prior to the commencement of any work. Financial incentives offered in the Community Improvement Plan will not be offered retroactively for costs incurred prior to receipt of written approval of the application.
- c** Applicants must submit drawings and/or plans, two cost estimates, and other details with their application.
- d** Properties will not be eligible if they have any tax arrears or any other legal claim, lien, or order that may adversely affect title of the property, other than a mortgage in good standing. All utilities and any other municipal financial obligations must be up to date.
- e** Approved grants are not transferable to any other property but may be transferred to the new owner of the same approved property, provided the new owner agrees to the terms and conditions.

- f** Applicants must permit the public disclosure and promotion of all information regarding the grant, including Applicant name, project street address and town, grant amount, description and images of project (before and after construction), and total project budget, i.e., including additional financial investment made by the Applicant over and above the grant amount. If the information is not available at the application stage, the Applicant must disclose it when the project is completed or the grant may not be issued.
- g** Municipal staff will inspect and approve improvements of the building upon completion, as required. Improvements must be consistent with any existing design guidelines or other policies. For the grant to be paid, the final project must be significantly consistent with the project outlined at the application stage. An audit of work completed and associated costs may be ordered if deemed necessary.
- h** For Tax Increment Grants, funding is usually available at a high order of magnitude that requires case-by-case considerations and direct approval by Council (i.e. no delegation to staff or Committees). The Township's Finance staff, or a consultant, would need to analyze any proposal and clearly determine the budget implications of what could be a multi-million-dollar contribution by the municipality. Tax Increment Grants should be targeted to very specific properties or development types, perhaps involving public-private partnerships, and generating tangible Township-wide community benefit, such as a major waterfront park that can be enjoyed year-round by residents and tourists while serving as a backdrop for a multi-residential building housing tourism workers for local businesses.

Promotion

It is important to engage with businesses directly to promote the financial incentives. A specific protocol for handling marketing of the CIP should be put in place, including ensuring that all Township staff and business associations are aware of the program.

Monitoring

The frequency of monitoring reports increases the integrity of the program, but also raises the administrative cost and labour intensity of the program.

At a minimum, staff should monitor the program on a quarterly basis. Council should receive a report annually, at a minimum, well in advance of the budget review process.

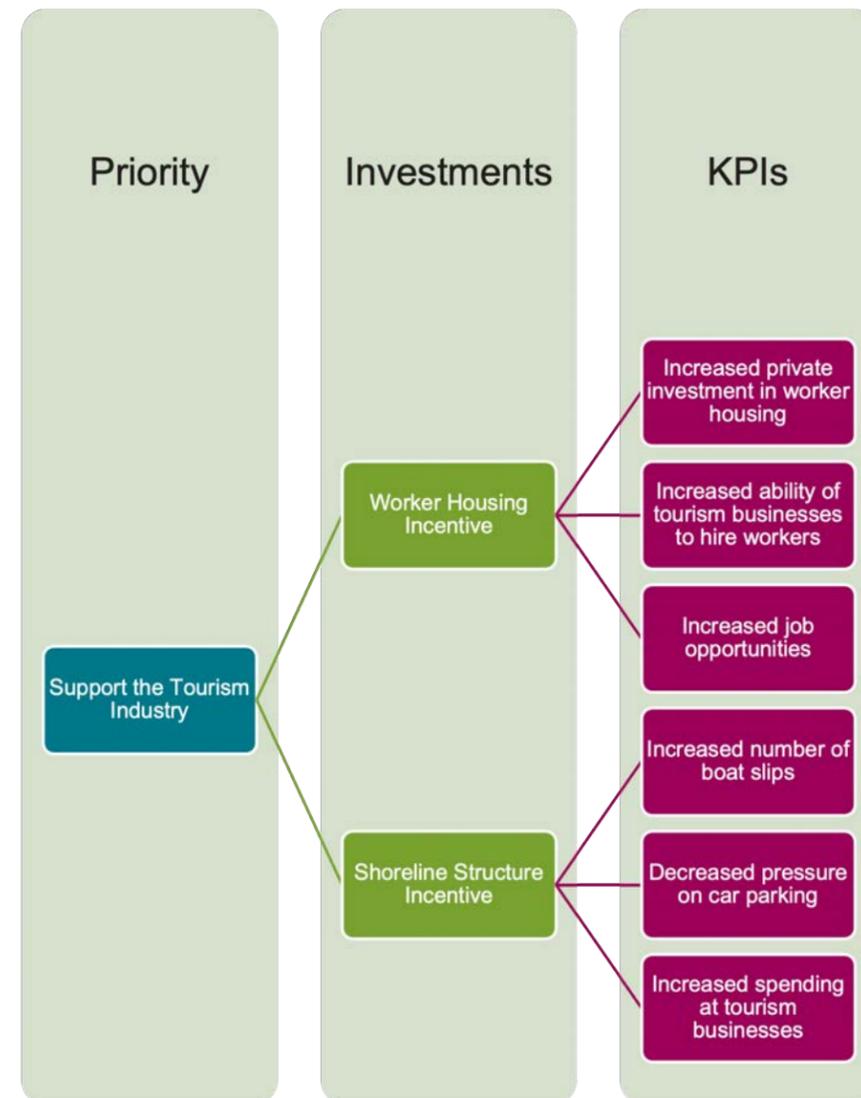
Performance Measurement

Measuring the effects of investments by monitoring progress towards priority areas for a CIP through quantitative key performance indicators (KPIs) allows the Township to see the impact of specific investments as well as how they are leading towards the achievement of big picture goals. Examples of priorities could include the following.

- Promote cultural development and tourism
- Improve buildings and infrastructure
- Use land strategically for redevelopment of vacant/ underutilised properties

As seen in the diagram at right, this measurement tool groups investments under each priority and groups KPIs under each investment.

It is possible that an investment fits under more than one priority. When this is the case the investment can fit under more than one priority with KPIs relevant to each priority. Under this situation when measuring the effects of a specific investment the Township can pull all KPIs for the investment to track progress. The KPIs can also act as an input for the benefits part of a cost benefit analysis to allow the Township to evaluate the return on investment of public realm investments and incentives.



General Example of the Investment Measurement Tool (This figure is for reference only and is not a holistic list of priorities, investments or KPIs)



Community Improvement Plan

Bala & Port Carling

