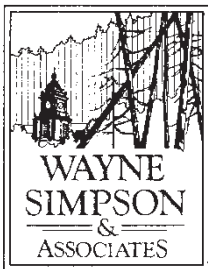


# **BRACEBRIDGE NORTH TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR CLASS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

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**Land Use Report**

**September 2012**



**Planning and Development Consultants**

**11 Centre Street South, Suite 102**

**Huntsville ON P1H 1W4**

**Tel: (705) 789-9092 Fax: (705) 789-9094**

**Email: [planning.wsa@bellnet.ca](mailto:planning.wsa@bellnet.ca)**

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## LAND USE REPORT

### 1. Introduction

This Land Use Report is intended to assist in the review of routing alternatives for the Bracebridge North Transportation Corridor. The Report is a component of the Class Environmental Assessment being undertaken by the District Municipality of Muskoka.

The Town of Bracebridge and the District Municipality of Muskoka jointly completed, in June 1994, the Town of Bracebridge Transportation Study. The purpose of the study was to identify a long term strategic transportation plan addressing the traffic demands associated with future development in the urban area of the Bracebridge. The resultant plan described transportation systems and traffic operation improvements which would provide a more efficient road system and ensure that the road network had sufficient capacity to optimally provide for the transportation needs of existing users and those new users expected during the 20 year time horizon of the plan.

The 1994 Study confirmed a need for additional north-south and east-west arterial road capacity, especially to serve inter-regional traffic. It recommended that additional studies be undertaken for a westerly arterial route from Highway 11 to Highway 118 West and for a northerly arterial route from Highway 11 to Highway 118 West. The former was examined and the findings are documented in the Bracebridge West Transportation Corridor - Class Environmental Assessment that was completed by the District Municipality of Muskoka in 2005. The latter is the subject of this current class environmental assessment.

The principal objective of this report is to identify the land use planning considerations that might reasonably form part of the dialogue that needs to take place during the process of determining a preferred location for the transportation corridor. Matters to be considered in this report include: the current social and cultural environment; the local policy and regulatory framework guiding and controlling where future development might be expected; and the land use impacts that might result from both the identification of a preferred location for the transportation corridor and the future possible construction of an arterial road along all, or parts of, the selected alignment.

### 2. Social and Cultural Environment

#### 2.1 Land Use

The study area is generally defined by Highway 11 on the east, Falkenburg Road (MR #47) on the north, South Monck Drive on the west and on the south by a line generally parallel to, and about 1.0 kilometre south of High Falls Road (MR #50) and Nichols Road. While almost all of

the study area is situated within the Town of Bracebridge, the most westerly portion lies within the municipal boundary of the Township of Muskoka Lakes. (See Figure 1)

The study area is sparsely populated. The historic development pattern may be characterized as ‘ribbon development’ with what limited intensive development there is generally confined to frontage along the road network and most notably Muskoka Road #4 and the Old Falkenburg Road. To a lesser extent homes can be found along Falkenburg Road, Lone Pine Drive, Naismith Road, High Falls Road and the year round maintained sections of Nichols Road and South Monck Drive.

Any large tracts of land with limited, or no, frontage on a municipally maintained road are generally undeveloped, with only scattered evidence of the farming and forestry efforts of those who first settled the area. There appear to be no commercially viable farms operating in the study area.

Commercial or industrial development in the area is generally limited to a few properties situated on Muskoka Road # 4. Of greatest significance is Muskoka Lumber, which is found on the edge of the study area at the north-west corner the Falkenburg Road and MR #4.

## 2.2 The Landscape

The landscape is principally forested and typical of the varied and rugged terrain so often associated with Muskoka. The scenic interest of the natural landscape is best enjoyed by motorists travelling the less developed sections of roadway, most notably the western stretch of Nichols Road and South Monck Drive.

A snowmobile trail that traverses the south-west quadrant of the study area and the informal trails and pathways that are no doubt found on sections of unopened road allowance and Crown Land likely provide other opportunities to enjoy the landscape.

## 2.3 Built Heritage

The Town of Bracebridge has neither a formal heritage group nor a local architectural conservation advisory committee to provide advice to Council on the architectural or historical significance of properties. So within the study area there are no properties that have been designated under the Ontario Heritage Act.

That being said, within the study area there are two properties of significance that should be noted. Namely: St. George’s Anglican Church, which was established in 1876, and the adjacent Falkenburg Union Cemetery dating back to 1886.

There are no doubt a number of properties of lesser significance dating back to the late 1800’s or early 1900’s where homes and out-buildings, or the remnants thereof, might be found. Examples

of these might include a stone dwelling near the west end of Nichols Road or the remnants of seven buildings comprising the early settlement of Lot 8, Conc. 9 in the geographic Township of Macaulay by Thomas Peacock, which although not a formal settlement, was affectionately referred to as “Jerusalem”.

### **3. Local Policy and Regulatory Framework**

#### **3.1 The Muskoka Official Plan**

The Official Plan of the Muskoka District Planning Area was first adopted in November 1988 and approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in June 1991. The Plan is continuously subject to review and a number of Official Plan Amendments have subsequently been adopted and approved. Some OPA’s have been site specific, while others are generally applicable throughout the District. None are specific to the Study Area.

The Muskoka Official Plan sets out a number of objectives and policies that are intended to guide land use planning decisions of a broad or regional nature. The Muskoka Official Plan also provides the framework upon which the official plans of the six local municipalities in Muskoka are built.

The division of responsibility between Muskoka and the area municipalities is established by various Acts and municipal policy. Of particular note in the instance of this Class EA is Muskoka’s responsibility for:

- Broad scale planning for future population change and growth in accordance with the principles of sustainable development; and
- Planning for an integrated transportation system which stresses safe and efficient movement of vehicles, including inter-community and inter-regional traffic.

Included as Schedule “H” in the Muskoka Official Plan is a map showing the current road system under the jurisdiction of the District of Muskoka. District Roads lying within the study area include: MR # 4 (i.e. the extension of Manitoba Street), MR #47 (Falkenburg Road) and MR #50 (High Falls Road). Neither the Bracebridge West nor the Bracebridge North transportation corridors are currently depicted on Schedule “H”.

The guiding vision of the Muskoka Official Plan is to always strike a balance between growth and development and the preservation of the natural Muskoka environment. This vision is implemented through policies that are based on the following principles:

- The forested landscape of Muskoka will be protected;

- Development will be based on the principle of a carrying capacity to ensure that the quality of the environment is maintained;
- Tourism and recreational opportunities will be enhanced;
- Improvement to services that support economic development will be promoted; and
- Urban-type development will occur in serviced urban areas.

The support of settlement areas and the protection of the natural environment demands that growth be managed. This includes directing the type of development requiring a range of urban services to 'Urban Centres' and controlling non-urban development in such a manner as to maintain the character of rural and waterfront areas.

The Muskoka Official Plan recognizes the urban area of Bracebridge as a settlement area and thus the primary area for the Town's growth and development. The Bracebridge urban area boundaries are not defined in the Muskoka Official Plan, but rather identified on Schedule A in the Bracebridge Official Plan. (See Figure 2)

Lands in the Rural designation are identified, in the Muskoka Official Plan, as not being subject to any other strategic land use designation specified in the Plan. The rural area is described as a community comprised of a mix of resource related activities, single unit residential uses on lots sufficiently sized to accommodate private septic and water services and other small scale or land extensive developments. It is characterized as expansive, aesthetically pleasing, and predominantly open landscape with large tracts of land remaining in a natural state. The policies in the Plan are intended to control development and lot creation that can fragment the area and diminish its rural character. Controlling strip or ribbon development is specifically cited as an objective. Industrial, commercial and institutional uses are generally not permitted in the Rural designation unless the use: is resource based; does not require urban services; does not negatively impact the natural and cultural heritage of the area; and is compatible with surrounding uses.

The Muskoka Official Plan is intended to severely restrict development in the area immediately surrounding an Urban Centre so as to maintain a sense of community for the urban area, reduce potential land use conflicts between rural and urban type uses, and to facilitate the orderly and proper extension of the urban community in the future.

### 3.2 Bracebridge Official Plan

The Town of Bracebridge Official Plan, dated October 2005, is primarily intended to guide development decisions in the urban area and on certain adjacent lands referred to as the 'Near

Urban Area'. The Plan also includes general policies applicable everywhere in the Municipality. The Plan does not contain specific policies for just the Rural or Waterfront designations. Development in these two designations is therefore guided by the policies found in the Muskoka Official Plan. The environmental policies of the Muskoka Plan are to be applied throughout the Town of Bracebridge.

The lands within the Study Area are predominantly beyond the 'Urban' and 'Near Urban' boundaries and would thus be within the 'Rural' designation.

That part of the Study Area situated in the Town of Bracebridge and lying to the south of High Falls Road (MR #50) and Nichols Road is situated within the Near Urban Boundary.

The only part of the Study Area lying within the Bracebridge Urban Boundary is Lot 5, Conc. 3, Monck, which lands are for the most part occupied by the Muskoka Highlands Golf Club. (See Figure 3)

Consistent with the Muskoka Official Plan, all new development requiring full municipal services is being directed to the appropriately designated lands within the urban area. The urban area land use designations are set out in 'Schedule A: Land Use Plan' to the Official Plan. Generally speaking, commercial development is directed to the traditional downtown area; the Balls Flats highway commercial district on Hwy 118 West; or the newer Taylor Road/Highway No. 11 commercial precinct. Smaller commercial enterprises can also be found throughout the community, but most typically along the major roadways such as Wellington Street, Ecclestone Drive and the extension of Manitoba Street (MR #4).

Industrial development is generally directed to the southern portion of the urban area and centred along Ecclestone Drive. The most recent industrial project is the South Bracebridge Industrial Park, a plan of subdivision that is currently being developed as a public-private initiative by Fowler Construction Company and the Town of Bracebridge. The project is about 1.0 kilometre from the Hwy 11 and Hwy 118 interchange. Industrial development is generally not permitted in the Near Urban Area, except in the instance of an existing industrial development on Cedar Lane. Subject to site analysis and consideration of the planning merits, dry industrial development may be permitted on a site specific basis in the Rural designation.

As might be expected, residential development has historically been centred about the urban core. The eastward expansion of residential development has been constrained by a combination of the unavailability of municipal services, the terrain, the presence of incompatible uses and Highway 11. So the direction of new residential development has been to the west and north. Schedule 'A' to the Official Plan shows the expanse of lands slated for residential development as generally extending to Douglas Drive in the north, South Monck Drive in the west and Santa's Village Road in the south. Based on growth projections by the municipalities, there is an approximate 40 year supply of residentially designated lands within the urban area.

Lying beyond this 40 year supply of residential lands is the Near Urban Area. The Official Plan describes the Near Urban Area as an area where development pressures exist because of the area's proximity to the Urban Area. Thus to prevent new development in the Near Urban interfering with the logical expansion of the urban boundary in the future, the policies in the Plan effectively limit land uses to those currently existing. Until the area within the Urban Boundary expands, the Near Urban Area is to remain predominantly rural in character with only small-scale development and infilling permitted. Based on the estimated supply of residential lands, it would be reasonable to not expect the urban area boundary to be extended into the Near Urban Area for at least 20 years, and quite possibly closer to 40 years.

The Bracebridge Official Plan encourages the development and integration of a road network that ensures the safe, convenient and efficient movement of traffic while having regard for the natural and physical features of the Town. Included in the Official Plan as Schedule 'C' – Transportation is a map showing the hierarchy of roads within the environs of the urban area. Depicted are local, collector, arterial and inter-regional roads. All the roads shown on Schedule 'C' and lying within the Study Area, except MR #4 and Highway 11, are categorized as local roads. (See Figure 4)

Schedule 'C' shows the 'proposed location' of the Bracebridge West Transportation Corridor, but only the 'conceptual location' of the Bracebridge North Transportation Corridor. The conceptual routing is within the Study Area. The Plan states that the final alignment of the latter is to be established through the approval of a Class Environmental Assessment, such as is now underway.

### 3.3 Township of Muskoka Lakes Official Plan

The small part of the Study Area lying within the boundaries of the Township of Muskoka Lakes is designated Rural under the Township Official Plan and for the most part falls within the 'Country Residential' character area. The area lying to the west of South Monck Drive and just north of Partridge Lane is identified as being in the 'Rural Estate' character area. (See Figure 5)

Development in the 'Country Residential Areas' has historically manifested itself as intensive strip development along Township roads, owing in large part to the close proximity of the character area to an urban centre. While low density residential uses are permitted in the 'Country Residential' area, the Township Plan now encourages such development to be by registered plan of subdivision so the development can be comprehensively planned and integrated into the existing rural character. Otherwise individual lot creation is limited to one new lot per land holding, with both the severed and retained lots having a minimum of 180 metres frontage and 4 hectares in area.



In the 'Estate Residential' character area new residential development may proceed only by a registered plan of subdivision. To preserve the character of the area, estate development must be comprised of large lots and demonstrate a design sensitivity to the natural environment.

That section of Nichols Road lying within the Township of Muskoka Lakes and much of South Monck Drive are only seasonally maintained by the Township. That poses a real constraint on new development. Under the Official Plan, the Township discourages the year-round maintenance of seasonally maintained public roads and if Council does deem it advisable to provide year-round maintenance the full cost of improving the roadway is to be borne by the benefiting property owners, presumably a developer.

### 3.4 Municipal Zoning By-laws

The majority of the lands lying within the Study Land are zoned "RU-Rural" under Bracebridge Zoning By-law 2006-120. (See Figure 6) Permitted uses in the Zone include agriculture, bed & breakfast establishments, kennels, detached dwelling units, forestry, hobby farms, home industries & occupations, hunt camps, market gardens, tree nurseries and veterinary clinics. Except for hunt camps, the minimum frontage is 120 metres and minimum lot area is 4 hectares.

The second most prevalent zone category in the Study Area is "RR-Rural Residential". This zoning is generally applied to those sections of roadway that have seen ribbon development take place over the years; most notably along MR #4 and the Old Falkenburg Road. The permitted uses in the RR Zone are restricted to bed & breakfast establishments, detached dwelling units, hobby farms and home industries & occupations. Because these uses are not land extensive the minimum lot frontage and lot area requirements are only 60 metres and 0.8 hectares respectively.

There are few commercial or industrial uses within the Study Area and fewer properties that are specifically zoned for commercial or industrial uses. These include: two properties near the junction of the Old Falkenburg Road and MR #4 that are zoned "RC – Rural Commercial" and the previously noted Muskoka Lumber property, which is predominantly outside the Study Area, and zoned "RUI – Rural Industrial".

There is a single property on MR #4 that is zoned "Institutional". It accommodates the congregational building of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Under the Township of Muskoka Lakes Zoning By-law 87-87 most of the lands situated within Lot 6, Conc. 5 and Lots 4 and 5 in Conc. 8 are zoned "RU1 – Rural Area 3". This zoning is very similar to the above described "RU-Rural" both in term of uses permitted and the development standards applied. (See Figure 7)

The lands on the east side of South Monck Drive and just north of Crawford Lane are, for the most part, zoned "RUER – Rural Estate Residential". This zoning category under the Township

By-law is similar to Bracebridge's "RR-Rural Residential" zone, in that it allows dwellings on smaller lots with reduced lot frontages.

The lands on either side of the seasonally maintained section of South Monck Drive, in Concessions 6 and 7, are zoned either "OS2 - Private Open Space" or "EP1- Environmental Protection One". Such zoning effectively precludes all development, including single family dwellings.

#### **4. New Development and Land Use Impacts**

##### **4.1 Growth Projections**

In recent years the permanent population of the Town of Bracebridge has increased at an annual rate of about 2.6%. While the Town will likely continue to attract a large portion of Muskoka-wide permanent population growth, the District is projecting continued growth at a rate of only 1.5%. At this rate the permanent population will be about 23,800 in the year 2031.

Seasonal population growth is expected to continue at an annual rate of 0.7%. The seasonal population is therefore projected to reach 8,300 in 2031.

The Bracebridge economy is comprised predominantly of service sector employment and employment is projected to increase at an annual rate of 1.2%.

##### **4.2 Residential Development**

In accordance with Official Plan policies and the Provincial Policy Statement, most of the increase in the permanent population is expected to be accommodated by new housing in the urban area.

The supply of urban area homes will likely be increased through a combination of infill projects (such as the condominium units recently constructed overlooking the Bracebridge Falls or the Waterways project beside the Wellington Street bridge); redevelopment projects (such as is planned for the former high school property); and new subdivisions (such as proposed by Mattamy Homes and Evanco Homes). Except for that small part of the Muskoka Highlands Subdivision lying in Lot 5, Concession 3 and being adjacent to South Monck Drive, none of the currently proposed developments lie within the Study Area.

According to municipal estimates, the supply of lands designated as "Residential" within the urban area exceeds the currently projected demand to such an extent that the outward movement of the urban boundary cannot be expected for upwards of 30-40 years. Therefore intensive development in the "Near Urban Area" cannot be expected for many years and expansion of the urban boundary beyond the "Near Urban Area" (say into the Study Area) is unfathomable.

A minority of new residents will continue to seek housing opportunities in the waterfront and rural designations, but the rate of growth in those areas is expected to decline as the policy and regulatory framework makes it increasingly more difficult to create new lots outside of settlement areas. This will be truer in the Study Area because of its close proximity to the urban area.

#### 4.3 Employment Areas

The modest growth in employment opportunities will likely be accommodated by new or expanding development on the urban area lands currently designated as commercial, industrial or business area on Schedule 'A' to the Bracebridge Official Plan.

Construction and resource based employment will continue to be found outside the urban area, such as is the case with Muskoka Lumber the only major employer within the Study Area.

#### 4.4 Land Use Impacts

The identification of an alignment for the Bracebridge North Transportation Corridor is not expected to have any major impact on land uses and no shift in the land use designations on Schedule 'A' to the Bracebridge Official Plan should be expected. Intensive development should continue to be expected in the urban area in accordance with the currently ascribed land use designations, which were only established after consideration of a number of factors including: historic development, land use compatibility, site suitability, serviceability and transportation. It is highly unlikely that the possibility of a new inter-regional arterial road would be such a factor as to influence the location of any new land use or business.

Owners of properties lying within the preferred alignment can expect any applications they may submit under the Planning Act to be reviewed in the context of the then proposed development and its future impact by, or on, the proposed arterial road. Whether or not there will be any practical repercussions to property owners is difficult to predict, but given the current restrictive policy framework it is unlikely that the identification of the alignment will have that effect.

While it is impossible to know the future policy and regulatory framework that will guide land use decisions in the somewhat distant future, the only land use impact that might be anticipated as a result of the construction of the Bracebridge north arterial road will be the pressure to allow the creation of new lots, whether residential or rural commercial, along the roadway. In effect the replication of the historic pattern of ribbon development. It is reasonable to expect that the pressures to create new land uses along the roadway will be compounded if the arterial is constructed on lands that move from the present 'Near Urban Area' designation to the fully serviced 'Urban Area' designation.

## 5. Conclusion

The North Transportation Corridor is expected to have very little effect on land uses due to it being sufficiently removed from the existing urban community and the development that may be expected in, or near the urban area, within the next 40 years. This is in contrast to the Bracebridge West Transportation Corridor, where land uses impacts could reasonably be expected because the roadway (if constructed) will cut right through both the Urban and Near Urban areas.

That being said, properties along the final alignment will be impacted to varying degrees through the property acquisition, road construction and future zoning stages.

Prepared by

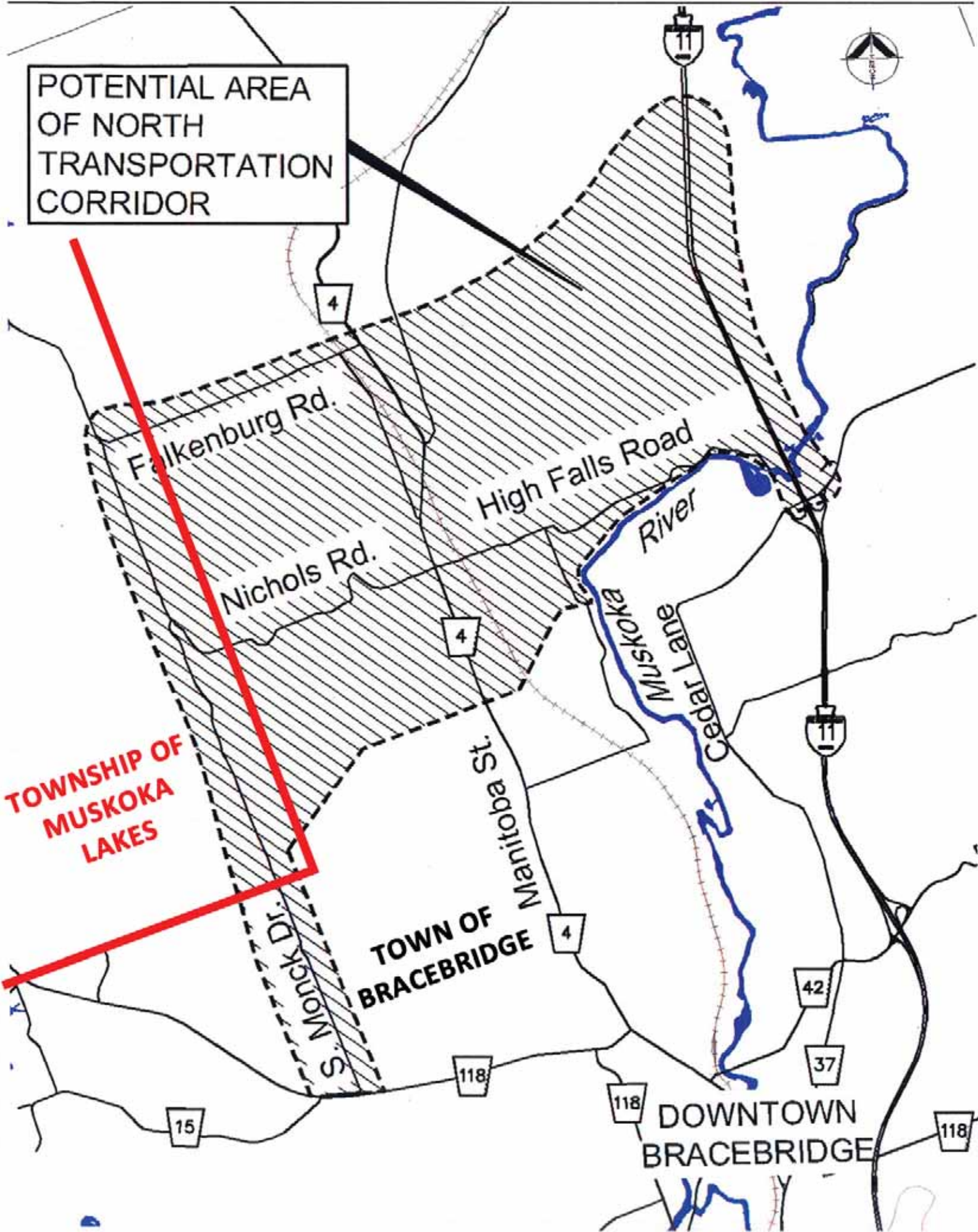
WAYNE SIMPSON & ASSOCIATES

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'W. Simpson', is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Wayne Simpson, MCIP, RPP  
Principal Planner

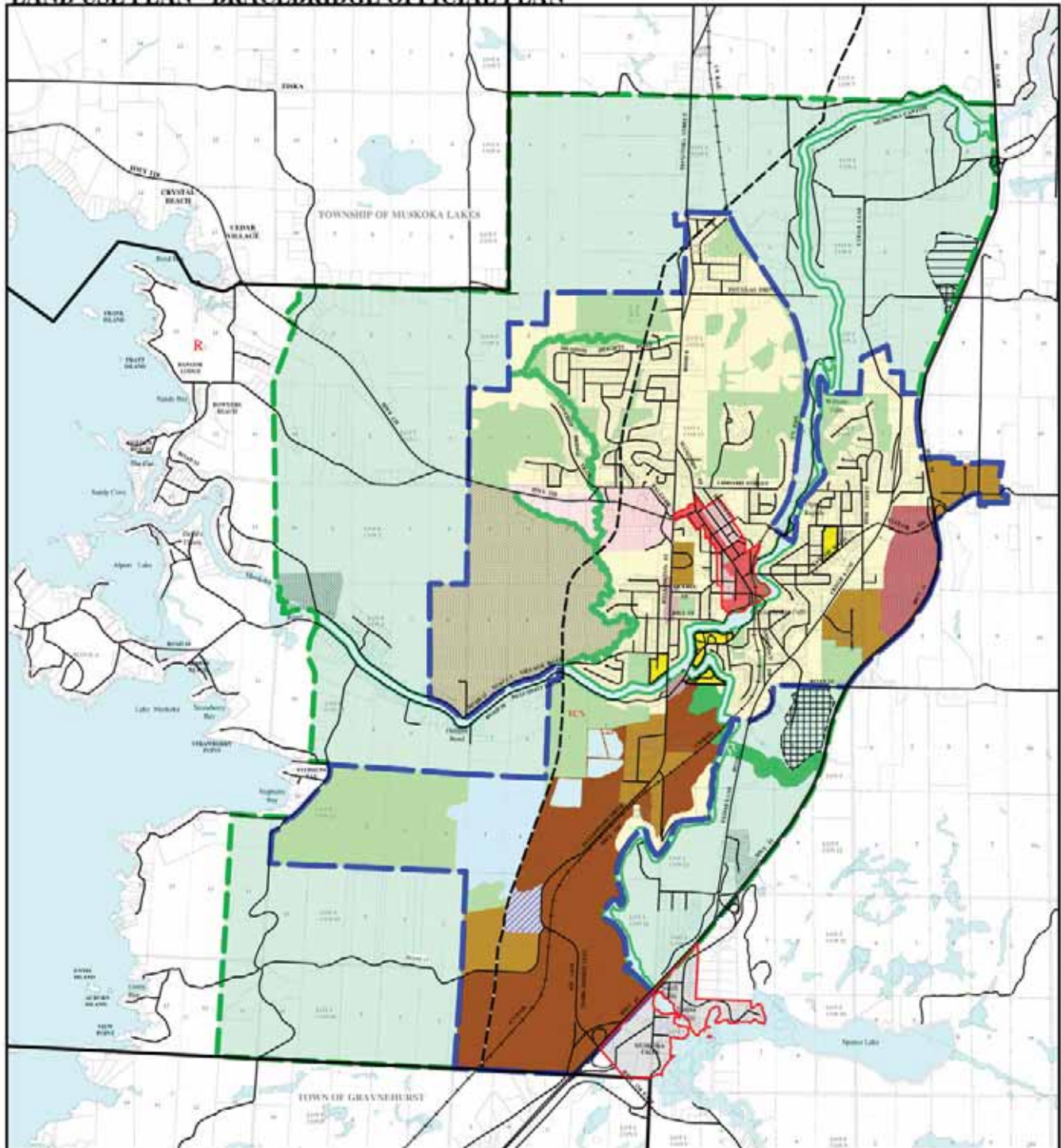
# FIGURES

**FIGURE 1 - North Transportation Corridor Study Area**



# FIGURE 2

## SCHEDULE A: LAND USE PLAN - BRACEBRIDGE OFFICIAL PLAN

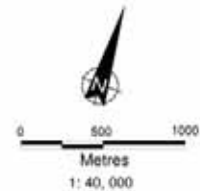


### LEGEND:

- BRACEBRIDGE URBAN BOUNDARY
- RESIDENTIAL
- MULTIPLE RESIDENTIAL
- WEST BRACEBRIDGE RESIDENTIAL
- SOUTH BRACEBRIDGE ADULT LIFESTYLE RESIDENTIAL
- OPEN SPACE
- ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
- CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
- DOWNTOWN/UPTOWN AREA
- CBD MIXED USED AREA
- DISTRICT SHOPPING
- SPECIAL PURPOSE COMMERCIAL
- SOUTH BRACEBRIDGE COMMERCIAL
- WELLINGTON STREET MIXED USE
- ECCLESTONE DRIVE MIXED USE
- DISTRICT ROAD #118 WEST
- SPECIAL POLICY AREA
- INDUSTRIAL
- BUSINESS AREA

- NEAR URBAN BOUNDARY
- NEAR URBAN AREA
- NEAR URBAN INDUSTRIAL
- SANTA'S VILLAGE SPECIAL POLICY AREA
- MUSKOKA FALLS COMMUNITY
- PRIMARY AGGREGATE
- SECONDARY AGGREGATE
- TRANSCANADA PIPELINE
- TRANSCANADA COMPRESSOR STATION
- MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY
- RECREATIONAL COMMUNITY

- TCS
- R



prepared by:

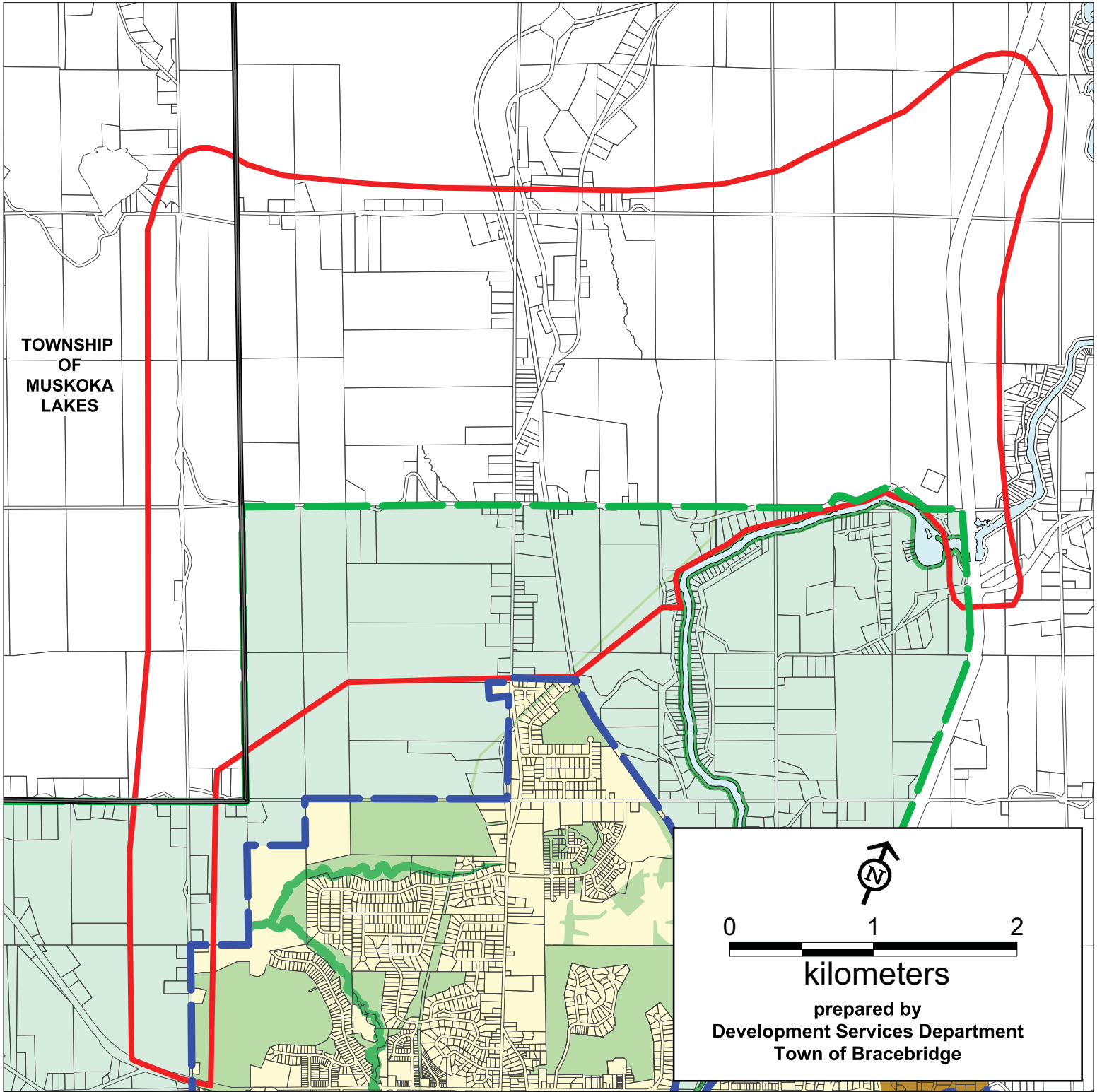
TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE  
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

OCTOBER 17, 2005









SCHEDULE 'A'  
LAND USE PLAN

# NORTH TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR STUDY AREA TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE - OFFICIAL PLAN DESIGNATIONS

Figure 3

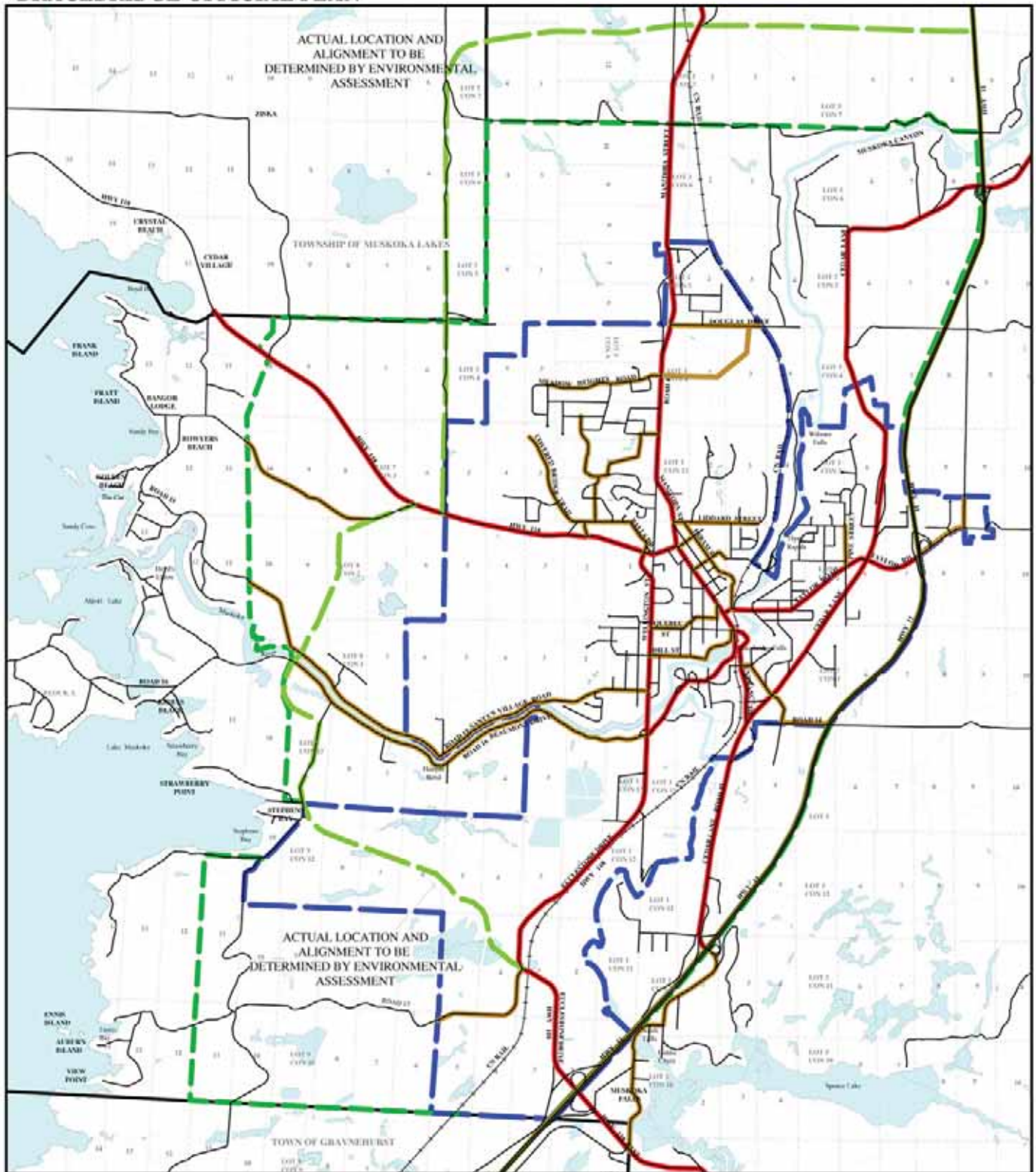


## Legend

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  Municipal Boundary                      |  Residential Designation              |
|  Town of Bracebridge Urban Boundary      |  Open Space Designation               |
|  Town of Bracebridge Near Urban Boundary |  Environmental Protection Designation |
|  Study Area                              |  Near Urban Area Designation          |

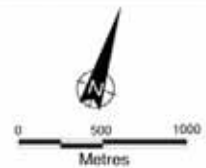


**FIGURE 4**  
**SCHEDULE C:**  
**TRANSPORTATION PLAN**  
**BRACEBRIDGE OFFICIAL PLAN**



**LEGEND:**

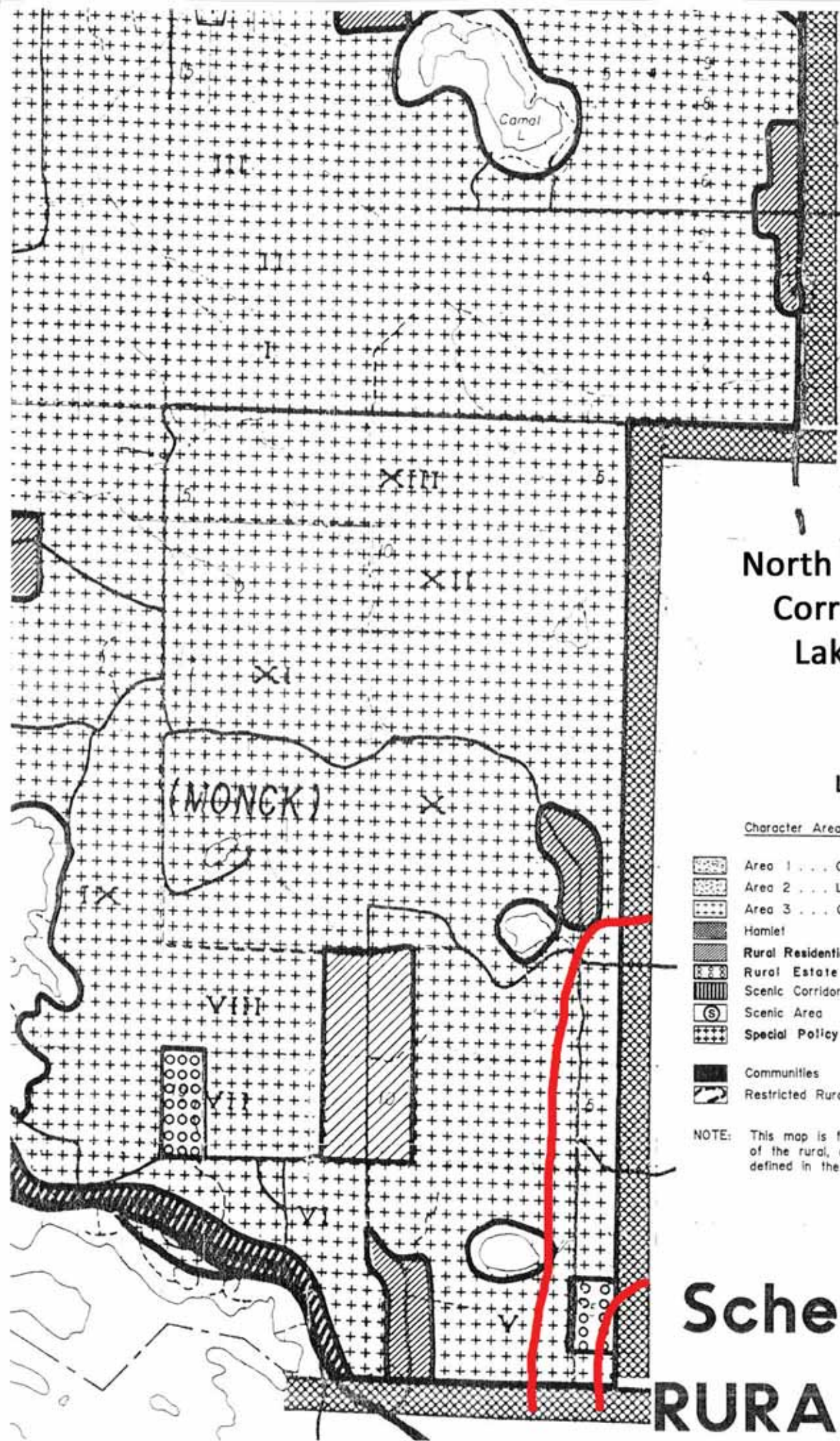
- BRACEBRIDGE URBAN BOUNDARY
- NEAR URBAN AREA BOUNDARY
- INTER-REGIONAL (PROVINCIAL HIGHWAY)
- ARTERIAL
- COLLECTOR
- PROPOSED NORTH AND WEST TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS
- MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY



prepared by:

TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE  
 DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

OCTOBER 17, 2005



**FIGURE 5**  
**North Transportation**  
**Corridor - Muskoka**  
**Lakes Official Plan**

**LEGEND**

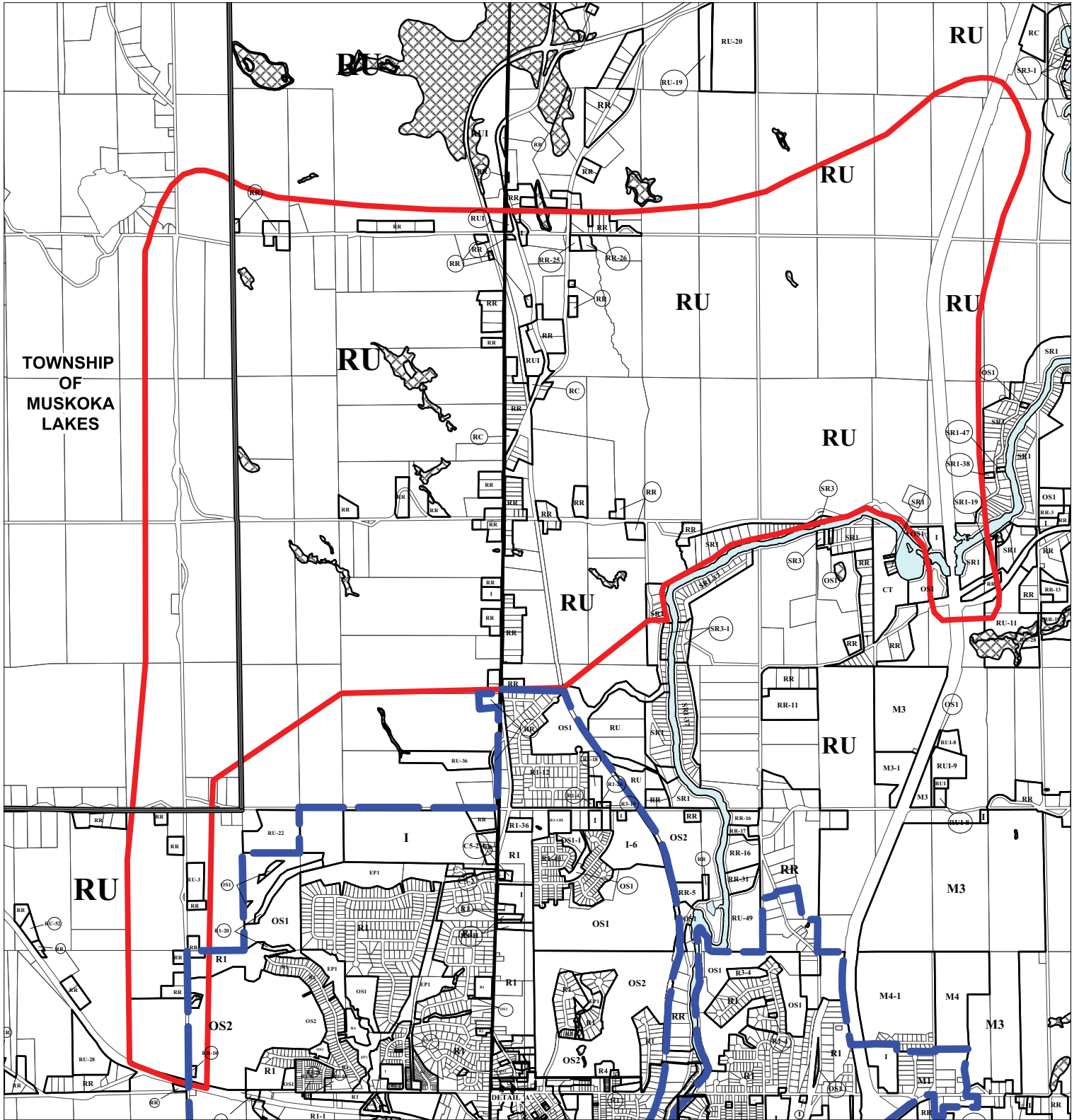
- Character Areas
- Area 1 . . . . . Open Space
  - Area 2 . . . . . Low Density
  - Area 3 . . . . . Country Residential
  - Hamlet
  - Rural Residential Cluster
  - Rural Estate
  - Scenic Corridor
  - Scenic Area
  - Special Policy Area
- Communities
  - Restricted Rural

NOTE: This map is for rural policies only. The limits of the rural, community and waterfront areas are defined in the Comprehensive Zoning By-law.




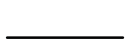

**Schedule 'F'**  
**RURAL AREA**

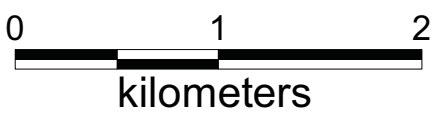
**NORTH TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR STUDY AREA  
TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE - ZONING**

**Figure 6**



**Legend**

-  Municipal Boundary
-  Town of Bracebridge Urban Boundary
-  Study Area
-  Zone Boundary
-  EP1 Overlay Zone



prepared by  
Development Services Department  
Town of Bracebridge

**FIGURE 7**

**North Transportation  
Corridor Study Area  
Zoning (Township of  
Muskoka Lakes)**

