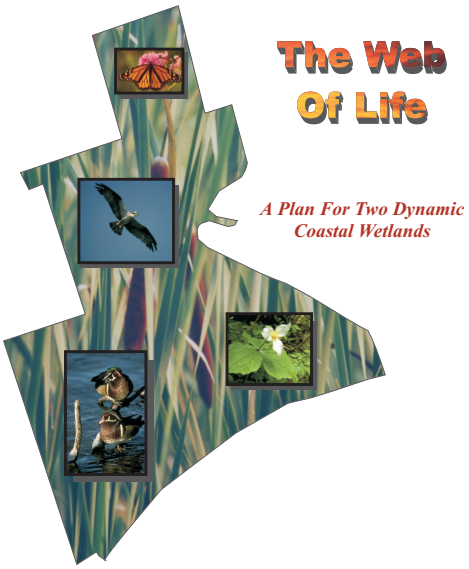
Central
Lake Ontario
Conservation

Long-Term Concept Plan

Lynde Shores Conservation Area

April 2000

Derived from
Lynde Shores Conservation Area Management Plan
March 1999



BACKGROUND

The Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority approved *The Web of Life, A Plan for Two Dynamic Coastal Wetlands* as a Management Plan for the Lynde Shores Conservation Area in March of 1999. This Plan identified the forms, functions and linkages of the two Provincially Significant coastal wetlands located within the Conservation Area boundary, evaluated the current health and sensitivities of the area, and examined appropriate locations for public access and use. The Management Plan also addressed restoration and rehabilitation requirements, opportunities for recreation and resource interpretation, strategic direction for additional land acquisitions, and public stewardship and community partnering.

The following long-term concept plan has been derived from *The Web of Life* (1999) Management Plan, to more clearly illustrate the details of the Natural Heritage and Public Use Visions for Lynde Shores. It expands upon the ideas presented in Figure 20: Strategic Directions from *The Web of Life*, in the following ways:

- Natural Heritage objectives are identified in detail;
- Restoration objectives are identified in detail;
- Potential public access sites have been refined; and
- Trail locations have been specifically evaluated and defined.

INTRODUCTION

A concept plan was created for the Lynde Shores Conservation Area (LSCA) to illustrate the collective long-term goals for natural heritage management and public use. The concept is intended to be ideal or visionary; it incorporates principles of ecosystem management without taking a prescriptive approach to planning. It is inherently flexible, in that the plan lends itself to modification without compromising underlying conservation principles. Thus, all interim management options can be part of the progress leading towards the fulfillment of this vision. It is intended that the plan will be implemented in phases, as dictated by the pattern of land acquisitions over time.

The entire planning area was divided into two Sections for ease of discussion and management planning. Sections 1 and 2 represent the entire areas north and south of Victoria Street respectively. Victoria Street serves as a convenient boundary between the two Sections, as it essentially separates them spatially and functionally. Each Section can then be discussed separately, although interactions between the two do exist.

For each Section, the vision for the future natural heritage system will be discussed, followed by a description of restoration works required. The vision for public use will then be reviewed in terms of compatibility with the natural heritage goals. The ideas presented within this document complement the goals set out by the public within *The Web of Life* (1999).

> *Natural Heritage Goal:*
> The Natural Heritage Goal is to maintain and enhance the ecological integrity of the Lynde Shores Conservation Area. The plan will consider the interaction of the two coastal wetlands, the upland meadow and forested habitats as well as connections north to the watershed, south to Lake Ontario, and east/west along the coast.
>
> *Recreation Goal:*
> The Recreation Goal is to evaluate and to accommodate recreational and educational uses within the Lynde Shores Conservation Area compatible with the Natural Heritage Goal.

The vision for Victoria Street will be presented at the end, in the context of how it relates to the overall natural heritage function of the LSCA. Key natural heritage concerns will be addressed, along with a recommendation for future alignment.

SECTION 1

Natural Heritage Vision:

To maximize ecosystem function, stability and integrity, Section 1 should be restored to a continuously vegetated landscape. In the long-term, Section 1 will become a landscape of alternating patches of forest, swamp and marsh. To accomplish this, the fragmented portions of the landscape will be restored to successional forest cover. The total area of Section 1 would then be 155 ha, and the forested area would be approximately 135 ha. The entire wooded area would then be considered a meta-woodland according to Riley and Mohr (1994), exceeding the size criteria for woodland significance (OMNR 1999). The following conservation principles have guided the Natural Heritage Vision for Section 1:

Size
Section 1 is identified as an area having sensitive vegetation and wildlife attributes. The current size of the area is sufficient to accommodate the existing compliment of species groups, but it is not large enough to function as a stable source habitat. With incremental losses of habitat throughout urban areas, there is an associated need for large and relatively undisturbed tracts of land. One of the first principles of conservation biology is: bigger is better (Soule 1989).

Corridors
Wildlife utilize the land between the deciduous swamp units to travel between habitat patches, which emphasizes the need for a more permanent and high quality wildlife movement corridor. Re-vegetating the area will ensure that the corridor functions for movement of forest dependent species.

Disturbance
The fragmented nature of the area increases the amount of habitat edge that is prone to disturbance. By increasing the physical size of Section 1, disturbance can be minimized by increasing the areas of interior habitat. Trees will aid in the mitigation of light and noise effects from surrounding land uses, such as transportation routes and industrial development. They will also serve to stabilize the soil and prevent erosion.

Hydrology
Reforestation will contribute to hydrological stability of the Lynde Creek system, by functioning to intercept the majority of surface water run-off typically affecting adjacent naturally vegetated areas. This will contribute to better water quality within the marsh and open water habitats of Lynde Creek.

Diversification
New habitat types will be created, thus diversifying the existing vegetation and wildlife communities, ultimately leading to a more stable ecosystem. Although the agricultural land and associated habitat will be lost, the overall gains in habitat exceed any negative losses.

Restoration Vision:

Reforestation

To fulfil the Natural Heritage Vision, the key restoration works will involve reforestation. The topography of the area was analyzed to identify the natural limits for potential upland forest and swamp restoration. Ontario Base Maps (OBM) were used to examine existing vegetation boundaries and associated elevation contours. The highest elevation of naturally occurring swamp was used to denote the potential extent for swamp restoration of existing agricultural lands. This boundary became the transition line delineating future upland forest from lowland swamp. The upland zones were designated as potential forest or thicket.

The agricultural field between the two deciduous swamp units will be planted to advance the forest regeneration as quickly as possible since this area is designated for public use. The agricultural area to the east will be left to succeed naturally, as there will be limited public pressures within this section. Both of the agricultural areas however, will be planted at the perimeter to establish an immediate light, noise and wind buffer for the adjacent sensitive habitats.

Historic Orchard

The land area representing the historic orchard site within the agricultural field will be tested for residual chemicals used for propagation, such as arsenic. Test results will direct future management options and possibly indicate a need for restoration and/or rehabilitation. This should occur before reforestation plans are implemented.

Lynde Creek

The main channel of Lynde Creek will be monitored to ensure seasonal passage for migrating cold water fish species. In addition, stream bank stabilization will be undertaken to protect fish habitat and limit unnecessary sediment loading within the creek. Opportunities for enhancing spawning grounds for native fish species will also be explored.

Public Use Vision:

Public use is limited within Section 1 as a measure to protect the sensitivity and ecological value of the entire area. The agricultural land located between the two deciduous swamp areas is the least sensitive, and thus the best candidate for public use designation. The sensitivity of the surrounding lands however, necessitates that public use be restricted to the trail only. Moreover, the entire area east of Lynde Creek will be off limits to the public as it represents some of the most sensitive habitat within Section 1 and is most easily damaged by public use.

Restrictions upon types of public uses will have to be determined within the context of the operational constraints existing at the time of trail construction.

Trail A (2.4 km with 1.2 km loop)
Trail A has been designed within the upland forest area for the purposes of passive recreation such as hiking and nature appreciation. The trail may be constructed and maintained to accommodate all forms of public use in all seasons. The route passes through two main habitat types, and should provide for diverse viewing and recreation opportunities. However, the trail is situated in such a way that it does not pass within 120 m of any sensitive habitats, and is set back at least 150 m from known wildlife movement areas. There is potential to create scenic lookouts, observation shelters and/or viewing areas, to be determined in accordance with future recreation needs.

Parking Facilities
A parking lot could be created north of Victoria Street within a presently developed area. It would be best positioned to partially conform to the footprint of the existing house and shed within the acquisition lands. The lot would be serviced by a pay-and-display machine, and signage could indicate that the parking facility is for trail users only. All patrons using the southern portion of the LSCA will be expected to park within the Halls Road parking lot. It is expected that the entrance and exit of the parking lot will only accommodate vehicles travelling west. Turning eastbound from the parking lot should be prohibited.

SECTION 2

Natural Heritage Vision:

Within Section 2, there is a high diversity of spatially fragmented habitats. These habitats currently function independently to provide discrete habitat opportunities for all species within the Lynde Shores Conservation Area. The goal is to restore the area such that these units no longer function independently, but work together as a healthy ecosystem. This goal can be achieved while incorporating public use and recreation opportunities. The following is a description of such a landscape:

Lynde Marsh Riparian and Buffer Zones
The east side of Lynde Marsh will be left to regenerate naturally. There are limited opportunities for expansion of this habitat, and restoration of health will occur gradually if left alone. The ultimate goal is to increase the buffer capabilities of this land and improve the quality of wildlife habitat.

The buffer strip to the west of Lynde Marsh will be widened and connected to Cranberry Marsh via two lateral forest corridors, incorporating elements of existing natural vegetation. This west side of Lynde Marsh is in need of vegetation improvements to augment its buffer capability. In addition, the habitat edge will be moved further west thereby reducing predator access to riparian wildlife communities.

Corridors
Additional forested corridors will be created along the Lake Ontario shoreline and east-west to the Ajax Warbler Swamps. By improving the quality of these corridors through restoration and/or reforestation, opportunities for wildlife movement are improved.

It is anticipated that the forested area surrounding the eastern Warbler Swamp and especially north of the swamp will be of high value as a wildlife movement corridor. This area will provide access to the Lynde Creek Marsh system for species of wildlife that are averse to using the lakefront corridor.

Cultural Meadows
By default, increasing the physical size of the forested areas decreases the amount of other habitat types (i.e. cultural meadow). Therefore additional meadow habitat will be created between Cranberry Marsh and the Warbler Swamps to compensate for the encroachment of forested corridors on existing meadows. It is hoped that the additional meadow will be suitable as avian breeding habitat. The effectiveness of Halls Road as a barrier to avian movement should be examined concurrently with the planning for the creation of the meadow. This will dictate the species assemblage focus for the area at the time of restoration.

The existing cultural meadows will continue to be managed to maintain habitat for inland bird species and waterfowl. The potential for warm season native grass species is also an option within these meadows. However, the overall size and shape of these meadows will change over time.

Cranberry Marsh

The long-term goal for Cranberry Marsh is to rehabilitate the vegetation communities and thereby improve the health and productivity of the Marsh. Ideally, the Marsh will be restored to a condition having a healthy balance of open water to vegetation. This will maximize the opportunities for wildlife feeding, breeding, and refuge habitat. Long-term monitoring of water levels in the Marsh coupled with the long-term improvements to water quality will eventually create habitat conditions suitable for diverse populations of fish, amphibian and reptiles.

Plantation

The plantation north of Cranberry Marsh will be extended west to Halls Road in an effort to connect the existing forest at the north end of the marsh to the area immediately south of Victoria Street. This will aid in the re-establishment of the wildlife corridor function in this area. The plantation will consist of White Pine acting as a nurse crop for Red Oak. The intent behind creating an Oak Savannah in this area is to re-introduce a rare habitat within Southern Ontario.

Immediately north of the meadow marsh within the southern boundary of the Oak Savannah, a one hectare demonstration wetland could be constructed. The design and location of the wetland should attempt to incorporate elements of seasonal amphibian breeding habitat in addition to providing for other aquatic wildlife habitat needs. Furthermore, the wetland should be positioned to intercept surface water run-off from the proposed land development area. This will contribute to improving the water quality of Cranberry Marsh.

Habitat Creation and Improvement

The small parcel of land bordering the west side of Lynde Creek Marsh, south of Victoria Street, will be restored to mature vegetation. This should reduce the impacts from the Victoria Street widening to both the Marsh and the small tributary. Barrier plantings along the southern limits of Victoria Street will buffer against wind, noise and light. The alternative entrance from Halls Road allows the remains of the parking lot in this area to be converted to turtle nesting habitat. The creek then could be restored to a natural channel for the benefit of fish and other aquatic wildlife habitat.

Restoration Vision:

Reforestation
Section 2 restoration works primarily consist of reforestation in order to rehabilitate the natural heritage corridors. The key corridors are identified as: 1) the area north of Cranberry Marsh; 2) the west side of Lynde Creek marsh including the two east-west linkages to Cranberry Marsh; and 3) the area surrounding the eastern Warbler Swamp excluding the area that is to become cultural meadow. Edges that are prone to disturbance may be planted first, and then followed by interior plantings if it is deemed necessary. Otherwise, some areas may be left to regenerate naturally.

Cranberry Marsh
To restore cranberry Marsh, a water control structure will regulate water levels within the Marsh. This will maintain an appropriate ratio of marsh vegetation to open water. The restoration is intended to make the marsh suitable for a diversity of aquatic wildlife and vegetation species.

Cultural Meadow
The area between Cranberry Marsh and the eastern Warbler Swamp will be restored and maintained as a cultural meadow. This area will add to the spatial diversity of the landscape in the west. The actual size and shape of the meadow will be determined at the time of restoration. The details will be dependent upon expected wildlife use and contemporary public use demands.

Eastbourne Beach Road and Estates
Portions of Eastbourne Beach Road that are not to be designated for public use will be allowed to regenerate naturally. Specifically, the section of the road that bisects the cultural meadow habitats will be ploughed up and allowed to regenerate. Eventually, this area will be mowed as part of the larger cultural meadow unit. Other portions of the road will be converted to trails and maintained as such. The road will not be accessible to vehicles.

The area currently used for the Eastbourne Beach Estates will be converted to forest, to complete part of the coastal corridor linkage. This area will likely be planted to establish stable vegetation cover and prevent erosion.

Lynde Creek
In the forested area south of Victoria Street and west of the Lynde Marsh, the Lynde Creek tributary will be restored to a natural channel by removing all water crossing structures. The remains of the parking lot will be ploughed up to loosen the sand and rock to make the area more suitable for turtle nesting. Barrier plantings along the south side of Victoria Street will also aid to reduce disturbance to this sensitive area.

Public Use Vision:

The main public use feature in Section 2 is the designation of a 2.6 ha development parcel. These lands are located south of Victoria Street off Halls Road. The main entrance to LSCA will be from this location as opposed to from Victoria Street. The widening of Victoria Street and associated high volume traffic concerns preclude design of a safe entrance from this road. The development area is large enough and located appropriately to accommodate both parking facilities and educational facilities. Buildings could be designed to be wheelchair accessible, and provide washroom facilities. The size of the development area is intended to be suitable for the expected population increase and additional land users (i.e. Waterfront Trail).

Waterfront Trail
The proposed Waterfront Trail follows the main roadways around the Conservation Area, and is generally compatible with the natural heritage and recreation plans for the LSCA. Two recreation opportunities can be incorporated into the Waterfront Trail, providing public access to CLOCA lands:

1. The boardwalk into Lynde Marsh will be accessible from the Waterfront Trail along the south side of Victoria Street; and
2. Two angling platforms will be constructed as extensions of the Waterfront Trail overlooking the Marsh south of Victoria Street. Anglers and Waterfront Trail users should be encouraged to use the parking facilities off Halls Road.

CLOCA Trail Network
The main trail network has been designed to follow habitat edges, in an attempt to mimic natural disturbance pressures. All trails within Section 2 may be constructed and maintained in such a way that all public uses for all seasons may be accommodated. However, public use must be restricted to the trails and designated facilities in order to protect the natural heritage values of LSCA. Restrictions upon types of public uses will have to be determined within the context of the operational constraints existing at the time of trail construction.

Canoeing launching from Conservation Authority lands will be permitted, and launching points will be accessible from trails at the main entrance only. Seasonal canoeing restrictions will continue to apply. Skating could be permitted at the constructed wetland, as it is the area where ice conditions could be most easily monitored.

Trails to Cranberry Marsh will continue to be provided, but canoeing and angling within the Marsh will continue to be restricted.

Trail B (1.1 km)
Trail B takes visitors to the northern part of the LSCA, where they can access forest trails or marsh-side trails. Trail B will be considered a high use area and human induced disturbance will be mitigated with good trail construction. A platform for viewing of the marsh can be constructed at the north-east quadrant of the looped trail overlooking the small tributary. Access to the boardwalk will be available from the Waterfront Trail.

Trail C (1.8 km)
Trail C will be contoured to follow the edge of the cultural meadow, adjacent to the Lynde Creek Marsh. It passes through the eastern edge of the forested corridor and follows the southern limit of that area. Trail C continues down to the Lake Ontario shoreline, where beach access is provided. From this trail, there are three viewing opportunities: a historic silo; and two scenic lookouts to Cranberry Marsh.

Trail D (0.85 km)
Trail D is one of the arterial routes from the main entrance, providing direct access to the northern viewing platform on Cranberry Marsh. The trail is designed to run adjacent to the habitat edge dividing the meadow marsh and cultural meadow. From the viewing platform, other trails to the Marshes or Lake Ontario can be taken.

Trail E (1.8 km)
Trail E provides visitor access to the two western viewing platforms on Cranberry Marsh, as well as additional beach access. The trail extends to the lakefront and along the beach towards the water control structure of the Marsh. The trail passes by the demonstration wetland, where high concentration uses such as picnic facilities could be accommodated. The constructed wetland is intended to be used as a teaching aid as well as providing additional habitat for aquatic species.

Trail F (1.7 km)
Trail F travels around the perimeter of the cultural meadow between Cranberry Marsh and the eastern Warbler Swamp. It follows the vegetation edges to reduce disturbance into the interior of the meadow habitat. This trail can be accessed from Trail E, or from the angle parking available along Halls Road.

VICTORIA STREET VISION

Future widening of Victoria Street will inevitably affect the lands, resources and management of the Lynde Shores Conservation Area. The road is designated as a Type A arterial road, representing a potential 6-lane causeway. Although a 4-lane causeway is obviously less intrusive upon a landscape, a properly designed 6-lane road may be accommodated. However, to be compatible with the natural heritage planning for the LSCA, three main concerns must be addressed: 1) hydrological stability of the Lynde Creek and Marsh; 2) road permeability for wildlife; and 3) compensation for loss of habitat. If these issues cannot be satisfactorily resolved within the 6-lane plan, it may be necessary to consider an alternative combination of mitigation techniques for a 4-lane plan.

1) Hydrological Stability of the Lynde Creek and Marsh

Lynde Creek flows under the Victoria Street causeway towards Lake Ontario, through a defined channel and associated sections of marsh. The form and function of this aquatic system has changed over time with the presence of the causeway spanning the entire aquatic habitat of the Lynde Creek and Marsh. Historically, the upstream area would have been stream channel habitat with associated riparian forest. After the construction of Victoria Street, the stream habitat changed to a marsh environment, which may have been caused by altered (raised) water levels during normal flow conditions. Over the past several decades, the Lynde Marsh ecosystem has equilibrated, and the design of the Victoria Street widening must not affect the existing hydrological stability of this system. Specifically, the integrity of the defined channel must be preserved, and the area of open water and marsh should remain relatively constant. To accomplish this, creek crossing structures should be designed to accommodate the natural channel while maintaining the existing areas of open water. These structures should also be suitable for passage of aquatic wildlife and fish.

2) Road Permeability for Wildlife

Wildlife mortality along wetland causeways is a well documented problem (Ashley and Robinson 1996). For the LSCA, there are three main groups of wildlife that will be greatly affected by the road widening: small mammals (including aquatic mammals); amphibians and reptiles; and waterfowl with dependent young. Other species groups, such as ungulates and canids, are highly mobile and typically experience moderate road mortality rates in comparison.

Small terrestrial mammals often utilize roadside habitats, and move frequently among habitat patches on either sides of roads. However, road width has been identified as the limiting factor for small mammals. Divided highways with clearances of 90 m or more may effectively preclude dispersal of small mammals (Oxley *et. al.* 1974). Thus, crossing structures built into a roadway for passage of small mammals can greatly reduce localized mortality. To perforate the causeway, bottomless concrete box culverts can be built into the fill, allowing passage underneath the road. Size and configuration of these culverts is dependent upon road design variables. Directional fencing can be incorporated into the plans to increase successful use of these perforations.

Aquatic mammals and waterfowl with young are likely to travel along waterways wherever possible. The building of a water crossing structure that accommodates the natural channel meander will by default allow for passage of these wildlife groups as well. Incidental mortality along the roadway can be mitigated with directional fencing in strategic locations.

Reptile mortality is often associated with the thermoregulatory requirements of this group of wildlife. Turtles and snakes for example will utilize paved surfaces for basking in the sun or as a residual heat source. Alternative basking sites should be created to mitigate this mortality factor. Alternative sand and gravel sites will also create suitable nesting areas for turtles currently using the gravel shoulders. Directional fencing can be constructed to increase use of the road perforations by reptiles as well.

Amphibians typically experience road mortality at night, when peak movements occur. Mortality can be reduced by utilization of the road perforations and directional fencing. Amphibians are good candidates for use of the concrete culverts, due to their size and activity patterns at night.

3) Compensation for Loss of Habitat

By extending the road allowance to a maximum of 50 m, loss of habitat is inevitable. The four main habitats lost will be cattail marsh, meadow marsh, open water and deciduous forest. For the long-term, the amount of deciduous forest will increase, and the overall habitat change will be positive. The two marsh habitats however, are regulated by natural water level fluctuations and are not expandable. These vegetation types are known to provide habitat for rare avian species. To compensate for the loss of these specific habitats, restoration work will be required within adjacent wetlands. Specifically, additional areas of appropriate marsh vegetation will need to be created. The open water habitat compensation will need to be considered as per the requirements relating to the Federal Fisheries Act.

Victoria Street Alignment

From a natural heritage perspective, the general alignment of the proposed Victoria Street widening also needs to be considered. Ideally, the road expansion would be aligned to the north rather than built on centre. Currently there is an approximate 30 m road allowance, yet the proposed widening requires up to 50 m. Thus, it would best satisfy the natural heritage requirements if additional lands were purchased from the north rather than south.

Although the lands to the north are considered sensitive, they are most easily compensated for if lost. Future plans for expansion of Section 1 will ultimately increase the physical size of the area, and replace some of the habitats that will be lost. The habitat units that cannot be expanded, such as the cattail marsh, can be compensated for in other marsh habitats in Section 2. Moreover, the existing breeding bird records show that rare species are using the southern cattail marsh more than the north. Additionally, the natural meander of the Lynde Creek immediately south of the existing boundary of Victoria Street will be less affected from a northern crossing than one on centre.

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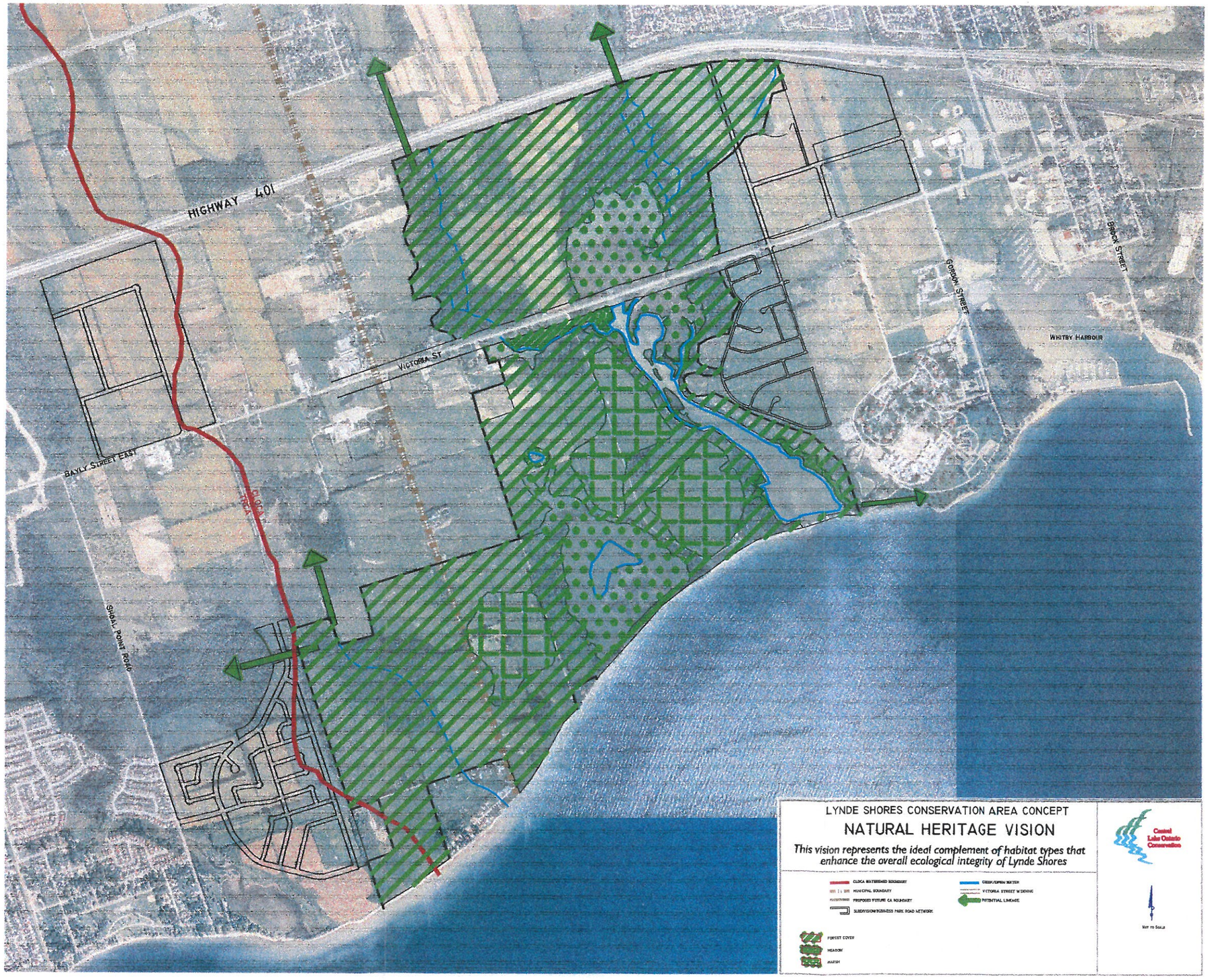
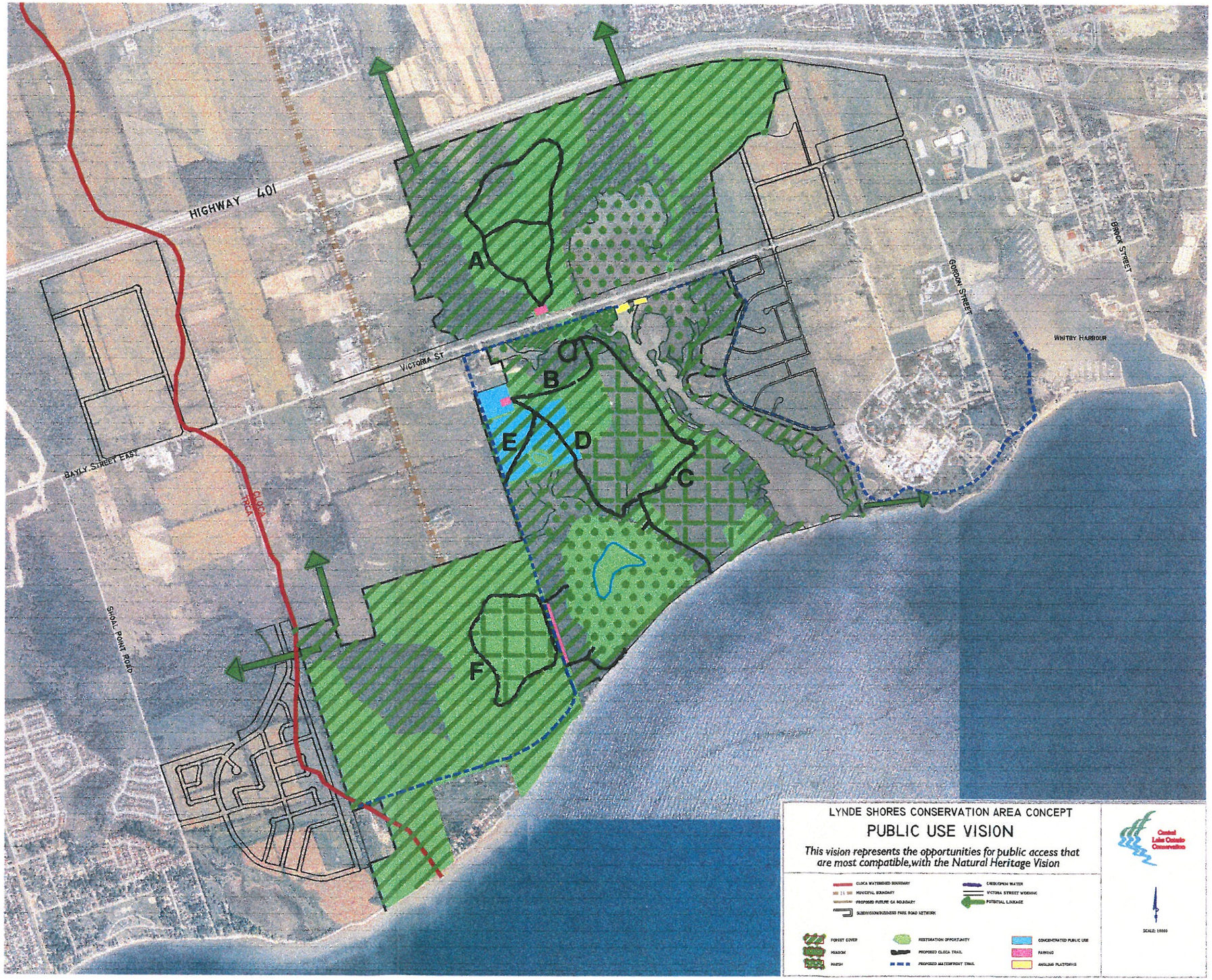

HIGHWAY 401
VICTORIA ST
BAYLY STREET EAST
SHOAL POINT ROAD
GORDON STREET
BROCK STREET
WHITBY HARBOUR
LYNDE SHORES CONSERVATION AREA CONCEPT
NATURAL HERITAGE VISION
This vision represents the ideal complement of habitat types that enhance the overall ecological integrity of Lynde Shores
CLOCA WATERSHED BOUNDARY
MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY
PROPOSED FUTURE CA BOUNDARY
SUBDIVISION/BUSINESS PARK ROAD NETWORK
CREEK/OPEN WATER
VICTORIA STREET WIDENING
POTENTIAL LINKAGE
FOREST COVER
MEADOW
MARSH
Central Lake Ontario Conservation
Not to Scale


HIGHWAY 401
VICTORIA ST
BAYLY STREET EAST
SHOAL POINT ROAD
GORDON STREET
BROCK STREET
WHITBY HARBOUR
A
B
C
D
E
F
LYNDE SHORES CONSERVATION AREA CONCEPT
PUBLIC USE VISION
This vision represents the opportunities for public access that are most compatible,with the Natural Heritage Vision
CLOCA WATERSHED BOUNDARY
MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY
PROPOSED FUTURE CA BOUNDARY
SUBDIVISION/BUSINESS PARK ROAD NETWORK
CREEK/OPEN WATER
VICTORIA STREET WIDENING
POTENTIAL LINKAGE
FOREST COVER
MEADOW
MARSH
RESTORATION OPPORTUNITY
PROPOSED CLOCA TRAIL
PROPOSED WATERFRONT TRAIL
CONCENTRATED PUBLIC USE
PARKING
ANGLING PLATFORMS
Central Lake Ontario Conservation
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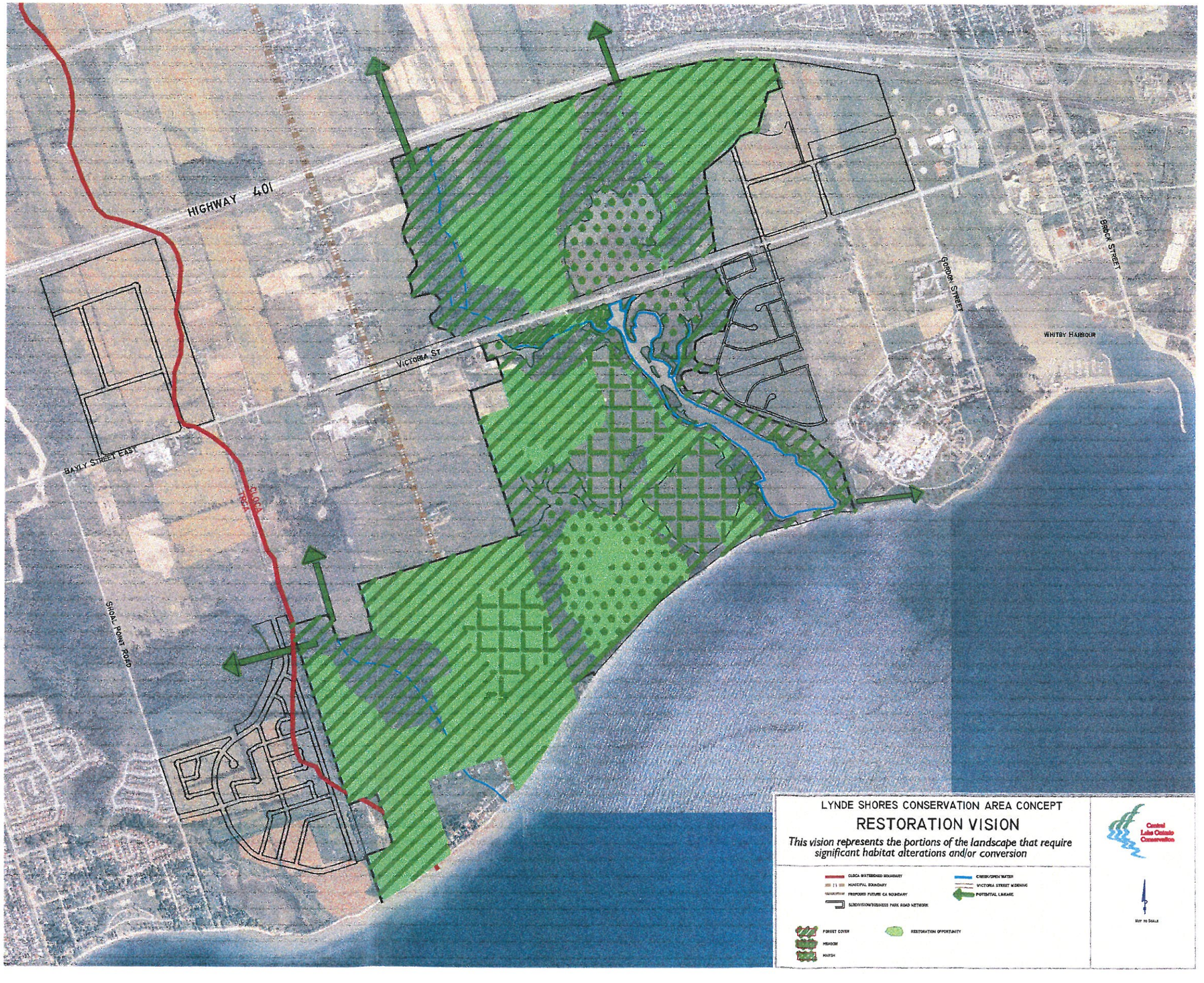
HIGHWAY 401
VICTORIA ST
BAYLY STREET EAST
SHOAL POINT ROAD
GORDON STREET
Brock STREET
WHITBY HARBOUR
LYNDE SHORES CONSERVATION AREA CONCEPT
RESTORATION VISION
This vision represents the portions of the landscape that require significant habitat alterations and/or conversion
CLOCA WATERSHED BOUNDARY
MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY
PROPOSED FUTURE CA BOUNDARY
SUBDIVISION/BUSINESS PARK ROAD NETWORK
CREEK/OPEN WATER
VICTORIA STREET WIDENING
POTENTIAL LINKAGE
FOREST COVER
MEADOW
MARSH
RESTORATION OPPORTUNITY
Central Lake Ontario Conservation
Not to Scale