MCPB Item No. Date:01-19-12

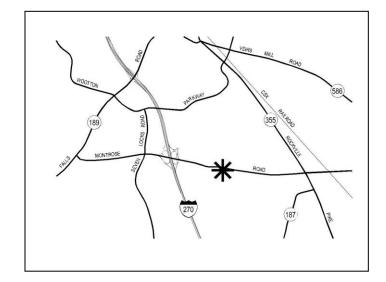
Montrose Parkway West Trail Final Forest Conservation Plan Amendment, MR2001806

Steve Findley, Acting Planner Supervisor, Area 2 Planning Division, steve-findley@montgomeryplanning.org , 301.495.4727
Glenn Kreger, Acting Chief, Area 2 Planning Division, glenn.kreger@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-4653

Completed: 1/6/12

Description

- Southwest of intersection of Montrose Road and Tildenwood Drive
- R90 Zone, North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan, 10.5 Acres
- Amend the Final Forest Conservation Plan for Montrose Parkway West to add a hiker-biker trail connection from Swim Club Way to Tildenwood Drive
- Submitted August 25, 2011



Summary

- Staff recommends approval with conditions.
- This amendment will add a hiker-biker trail connection to the previously approved Final Forest Conservation Plan for Montrose Parkway West.
- This project adds 31,109 square feet of additional forest disturbance and mitigation.
- No alterations to easements are proposed for this amendment.
- A variance request is part of this application.
- No correspondence has been received on this application.

Recommendation: Approval, subject to the following conditions:

- The proposed development shall comply with all of the conditions of the Final Forest Conservation Plan as amended. All conditions shall be met prior to the issuance of sediment and erosion control permits by the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services.
- 2. Limits of disturbance shown on the Sediment Control Plan must match the limits of disturbance shown on the Final Forest Conservation Plan.
- 3. Site inspections must be performed by M-NCPPC inspectors as specified in section 22A.00.01.10 of the forest conservation regulation.

Discussion:

This memorandum covers staff's review and recommendations on the amended Final Forest Conservation Plan (FFCP) for Montrose Parkway West. The Mandatory Referral for Montrose Parkway West was approved by the Planning Board on July 26, 2001, and the Final Forest Conservation Plan was signed by staff on March 3, 2005. The Mandatory Referral covered the proposed construction of Montrose Parkway West, approximately from the intersection of Montrose Road and Tower Oaks Boulevard to the intersection of Montrose Road with "old" Old Georgetown Road. The project included construction of a 10-foot hiker-biker trail on the north side of Montrose Parkway West, and proposed a hiker-biker trail connection from Tildenwood Drive to Old Farm Creek. Construction of Montrose Parkway West, including the hiker-biker trail along the northern portion of the road right-of-way, was completed in 2009. Construction of the connector trail from Tildenwood Drive to Old Farm Creek is proposed for construction in the spring of 2012.

While a conceptual alignment for the connector trail was reviewed and approved as part of the Montrose Parkway West Mandatory Referral, this portion of the connector trail was not covered by the Final Forest Conservation Plan due to concerns by neighbors about the exact alignment. After reviewing variations in the alignment with owners of the neighboring properties, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) has finalized the trail alignment. This Final Forest Conservation Plan Amendment adds the additional land disturbance and resultant forest mitigation requirements to the existing plan. MCDOT has engaged in outreach to the affected community throughout this project.

Site Description:

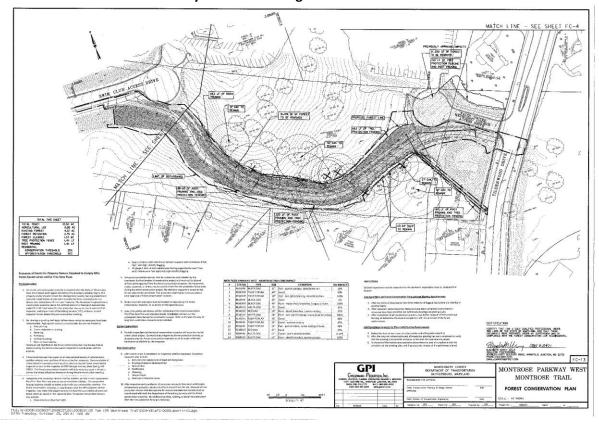
The proposed connector trail crosses a 10.5 acre parcel of R90 zoned property in the Tilden Woods subdivision. The parcel, identified on the GIS property file as Parcel no. 98, stretches from Swim Club Way on the west to the Faith United Methodist Church Access Drive and Tildenwood Drive on the east. Adjacent properties to the north are owned by the Old Farm Swim Club, Incorporated, Faith United Methodist Church, and Mayer and Rachmil Jacobovits. On the south, the parcel abuts properties in the Old Farm Section 2 subdivision along Wolftree Lane and Oden Court. The Natural Resources Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (#420013380) was approved in 2001, which was prior to approval of the final forest conservation plan. The parcel is largely wooded with a forest dominated by tulip poplars (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), northern red oaks (*Quercus rubra*), white oaks (*Quercus alba*), and black oaks (*Quercus velutina*). The forest includes a number of significant and specimen-sized trees. The land

slopes from the northwest corner of the property to the southeast. This parcel contains no streams, stream buffers, wetlands or their buffers, or floodplains. The site lies within the Cabin John Creek watershed, which carries a State Use Class designation of I-P. The site does not lie within a Special Protection Area. No Rare, Threatened or Endangered species are known to occur on the site.



Project Description:

This portion of the Montrose Parkway West Trail project proposes construction of a 10-foot wide paved hiker-biker path, including necessary grading and stormwater management facilities, from Swim Club Way on the west to Tildenwood Drive on the east. The other section of the connector from Tildenwood Drive to Old Farm Creek will traverse Park property and is not part of this amendment. The alignment hugs the lower part of the slope on the southern portion of the site to minimize forest loss. A six-foot high wooden fence and landscape trees will be placed along the southern side of the trail to help screen the trail from the adjacent residences to the south.



Montrose Parkway West Trail - Alignment and Limits of Disturbance

Forest Conservation:

Construction of this portion of the trail will increase the forest disturbance associated with the Montrose Parkway West project by 31,109 square feet, increasing the total forest disturbance from 1,246,115 square feet (28.61 acres) to 1,277,224 square feet (29.32 acres). As noted on the Final Forest Conservation Plan, "Per Montgomery County Code Section 22A-9, County highway projects must reforest at a rate of one acre of reforestation for each acre of forest cleared." Therefore, this Final Forest Conservation Plan Amendment increases the reforestation requirement for this project to 29.32 acres. Fulfillment of this requirement will be accomplished off-site at MCDOT's reforestation bank. No easements are established on the construction site as a result of this Final Forest Conservation Plan Amendment.

Under Section 22A.00.01.13 of the forest conservation regulation anytime an applicant proposes to remove an additional 5,000 square feet, or greater, of forest, it constitutes a major amendment. Since the applicant is proposing to remove an additional 31,109 square feet of forest it is a major amendment. The Planning Board is being asked to review the amendment to the approved forest conservation plan since it was part of mandatory referral reviewed by the Board in March 2001.

Forest Conservation Variance:

Section 22A-12(b) (3) of Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law provides criteria that identify certain individual trees as high priority for retention and protection. Any impact to these trees, including removal of the subject tree or disturbance within the tree's critical root zone (CRZ) requires a variance. An applicant for a variance must provide certain written information in support of the required findings in accordance with Section 22A-21 of the County Forest Conservation Law. The law requires no impact to trees that: measure 30 inches or greater, DBH; are part of an historic site or designated with an historic structure; are designated as national, State, or County champion trees; are at least 75 percent of the diameter of the current State champion tree of that species; or trees, shrubs, or plants that are designated as Federal or State rare, threatened, or endangered species. This variance provision was not in affect at the time of the originally approved Final FCP; therefore, the County Arborist will offer no recommendation on the variance request (see Attachment A).

<u>Variance Request</u> - The applicant submitted a variance request on October 25, 2011. Construction of the connector trail will impact the Critical Root Zone of nine (9) trees that are considered high priority for retention under Section 22A-12(b) of the County Forest Conservation Law; six (6) of these are proposed for removal.

Trees affected but retained

Tree Number	Species	DBH Inches	CRZ Impact	Status
1	Black oak	31	16%	Fair condition- sparse canopy, dead branches
4	Black oak	36	30%	Good condition
13	Black oak	42	0.10%	Good condition

Trees to be removed

Tree Number	Species	DBH Inches	CRZ Impact	Status
2	Tulip poplar	40	50%	Good condition
3	Tulip poplar	36	100%	Fair condition – one sided canopy, dead branches
5	Black oak	46	100%	Poor condition – many dead branches, fungus on bark
7	Red oak	30	37%	Poor condition – dead branches, sparse canopy
9	Tulip poplar	38	48%	Good condition
14	Black oak	45	100%	Poor condition – dead branches, sparse canopy

The applicant has offered the following justification of the variance request:

(1) Describe the special conditions peculiar to the property which would cause the unwarranted hardship;

Response (Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.) – "The difficulties in this design are maintaining a handicapaccessible trail at 5% slope, maintaining the integrity of the forest, and providing stormwater treatment for the proposed impervious surface of the 10' wide trail. The property is wooded and slopes downhill to the proposed trail."

Because this site is covered by mature forest, there is no trail alignment possible that would avoid significant and specimen-size trees. Maintaining a slope of no more than 5% as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act and providing necessary stormwater treatment imposes significant constraints on the engineering. The applicant has worked with staff and adjacent landowners to determine a trail alignment that minimizes the loss of forest and specimen trees. Staff has reviewed this application and based on the existing conditions on the property, staff agrees that there is an unwarranted hardship.

(2) Describe how enforcement of these rules will deprive the landowner of rights commonly enjoyed by others in similar areas;

Response (Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.) – "Many different alignments were considered as part of the design process and each would have included some tree removal. The final design proposes removing 6 trees with a 30" or greater caliper."

The proposed impacts to the subject trees are due to construction associated with the required grading, construction and stormwater management needed to accommodate the proposed trail, which is an approved part of the Mandatory Referral for the road project. The proposed alignment has been significantly modified from the original design specifically to minimize tree and forest loss. Staff has reviewed the application and agrees that enforcing the rules of the variance provision would deprive the landowner of rights commonly enjoyed by others.

(3) Verify that State water quality standards will not be violated or that a measurable degradation in water quality will not occur as a result of the granting of the variance;

Response (Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.) - "Stormwater treatment will be provided by a roadside ditch on the uphill side of the trail and piped to an existing system. State water quality standards will not be violated and a measurable degradation in water quality will not occur as a result of the variance."

Appropriate stormwater management measures have been incorporated into the site design. The property does not contain any streams, wetlands, 100-year floodplain, or environmental buffers so the proposed impacts to the subject trees will not affect these environmentally sensitive areas. Staff has reviewed the application and agrees that State water quality standards will not be violated or that a measurable degradation in water quality will not occur.

(4) Provide any other information appropriate to support the request.

Response (Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.) - "Other trees adjacent to the limit of disturbance will be root pruned and protected during construction. Many of the other trees on the property are of similar species and size so the character of the property will not change."

Tree protection measures are being employed to minimize further tree loss and maintain the wooded character of the rest of the property. In addition, the applicant is planting a line of landscaping trees south of the trail to help screen it from the adjacent properties. Staff believes that substantial work has been done to minimize impacts.

Section 22A-21 of the County Forest Conservation Law sets forth the findings that must be made by the Planning Board or Planning Director, as appropriate, in order for a variance to be granted. Staff has made the following determinations in the review of the variance request and the proposed forest conservation plan:

Variance Findings - Staff has made the following determination based on the required findings that granting of the requested variance:

- 1. Will not confer on the applicant a special privilege that would be denied to other applicants.
 - Granting the variance will not confer a special privilege on the applicant as the impacts to the nine trees are due to the development of the site. Granting a variance to allow land disturbance within the developable portion of the site is not unique to this applicant. Staff has determined that the impacts to the trees subject to the variance requirement cannot be avoided. DOT and Planning staff have analyzed the pathway alignment that resulted in a relocation of a portion of the path to reduce impacts to specimen trees and reduce the amount of forest loss. Therefore, staff believes that the granting of this variance is not a special privilege that would be denied to other applicants.
- 2. Is not based on conditions or circumstances which are the result of the actions by the applicant.
 - The requested variance is not based on conditions or circumstances which are the result of actions by the applicant. The requested variance is based upon existing site conditions.
- 3. Is not based on a condition relating to land or building use, either permitted or non-conforming, on a neighboring property.
 - The requested variance is a result of the existing and proposed site design and layout on the subject property and not as a result of land or building use on a neighboring property.
- 4. Will not violate State water quality standards or cause measurable degradation in water quality.
 - The Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) has found the stormwater management concept for the proposed project to be acceptable and conditionally approved it on June 25, 2001. A waiver was granted by DPS on September 15, 2011 permitting the project to

continue to be covered by the stormwater regulations in place when the original Mandatory Referral and Final Forest Conservation Plan approvals were granted. In addition, the granting of this variance request will not result in the impact or removal of any trees located within environmental buffers. Therefore, the project will not violate State water quality standards or cause measurable degradation in water quality.

County Arborist's Recommendation on the Variance - In accordance with Montgomery County Code Section 22A-21(c), the Planning Department is required to refer a copy of the variance request to the County Arborist in the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection for a recommendation prior to acting on the request. The request was forwarded to the County Arborist on November 23, 2011. The County Arborist issued a letter on December 5, 2011 with the determination that she would not be providing a recommendation on this variance request (see Attachment A).

<u>Variance Recommendation</u> - Staff recommends that the variance be granted.

<u>Finding</u>: The plan meets all applicable requirements of the County Forest Conservation Law. As a result of the above findings, staff recommends approval of the Final Forest Conservation Plan with the conditions cited in this staff report. The variance approval is included in the Planning Board's approval of the Final Forest Conservation Plan.

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Attachments:

- A. Variance Response Letter from County Arborist Laura Miller
- B. Amended Final Forest Conservation Plan



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Robert G. Hoyt Director

December 5, 2011

Françoise Carrier, Chair Montgomery County Planning Board Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission 8787 Georgia Avenue Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

RE: Montrose Trail Plan, MR 2001806, amendments to FCP approved on 3/3/2005

Dear Ms. Carrier:

Based on a review by the Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission (MNCPPC), the application for the above referenced request is required to comply with Chapter 22A of the Montgomery County Code. As stated in a letter to Royce Hanson from Bob Hoyt, dated October 27, 2009, the County Attorney's Office has advised me that the specific provisions pertaining to significant trees in the State's Forest Conservation Act do not apply to any application that was submitted before October 1, 2009. Since this application was submitted before this date, I will not provide a recommendation pertaining to the approval of this request for a variance.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Laura Miller County Arborist

cc:

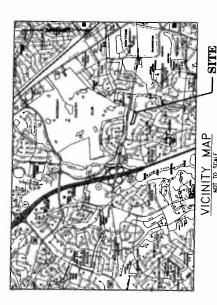
Robert Hoyt, Director Walter Wilson, Associate County Attorney Mark Pfefferle, Acting Chief

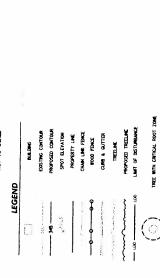
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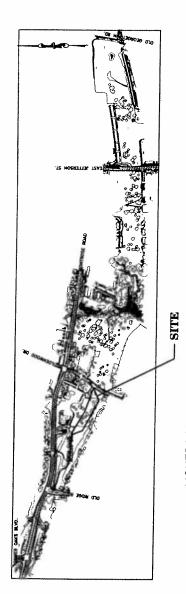
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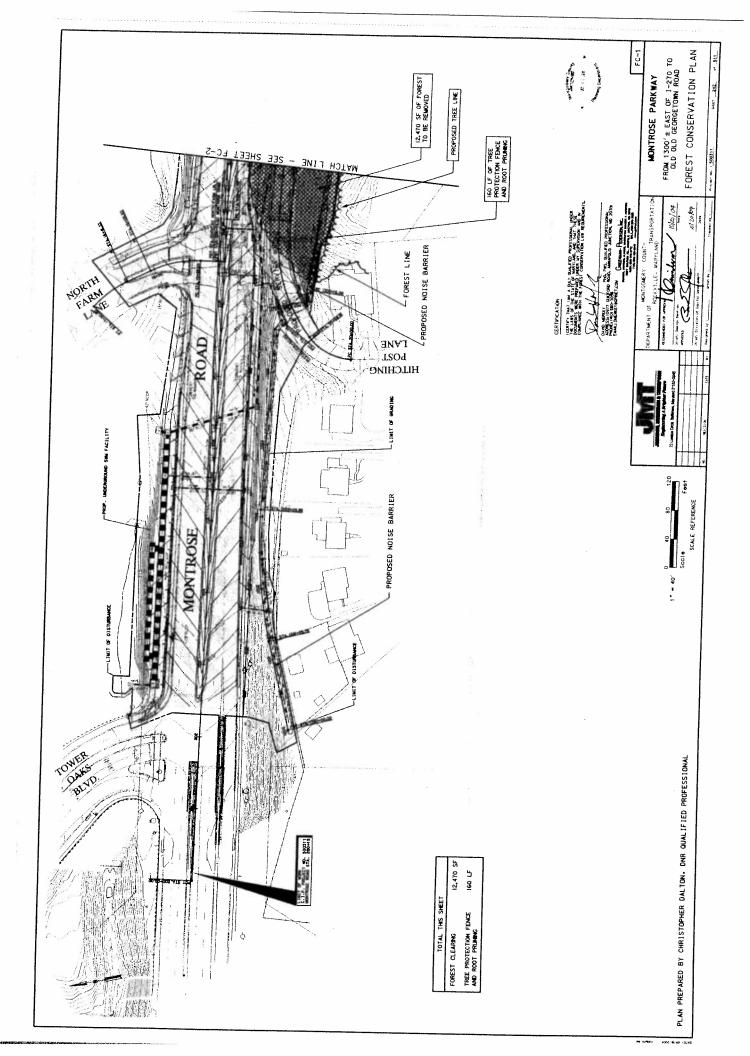


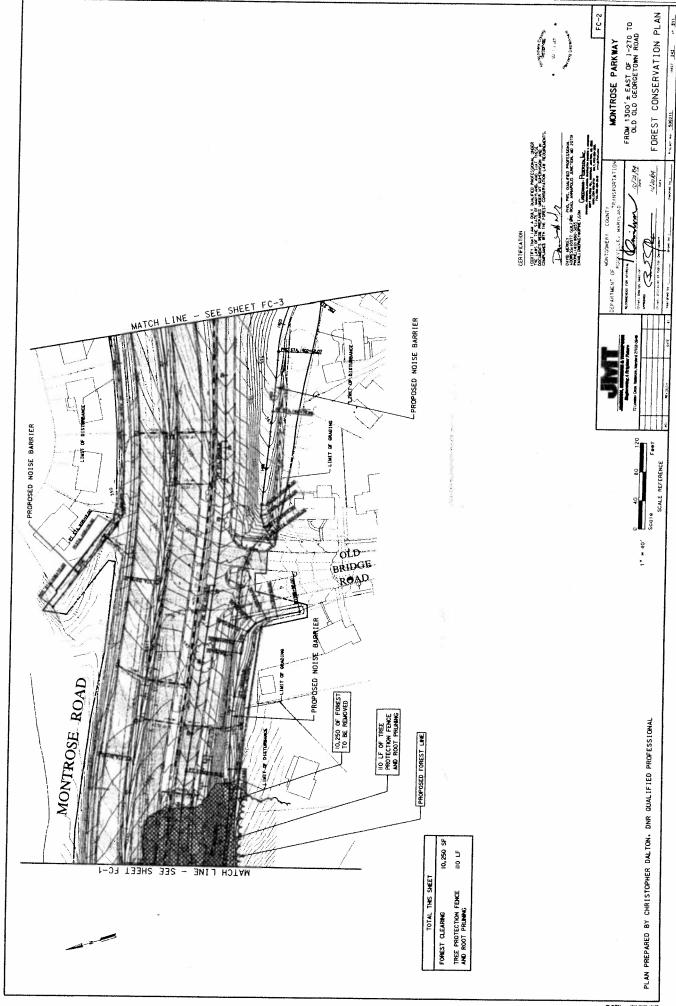


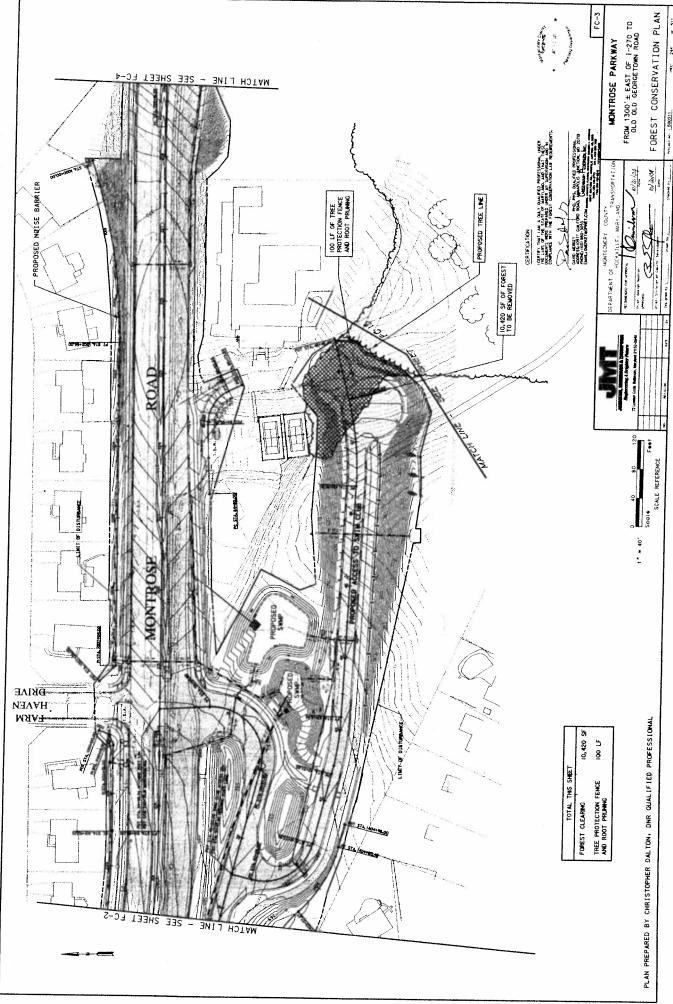
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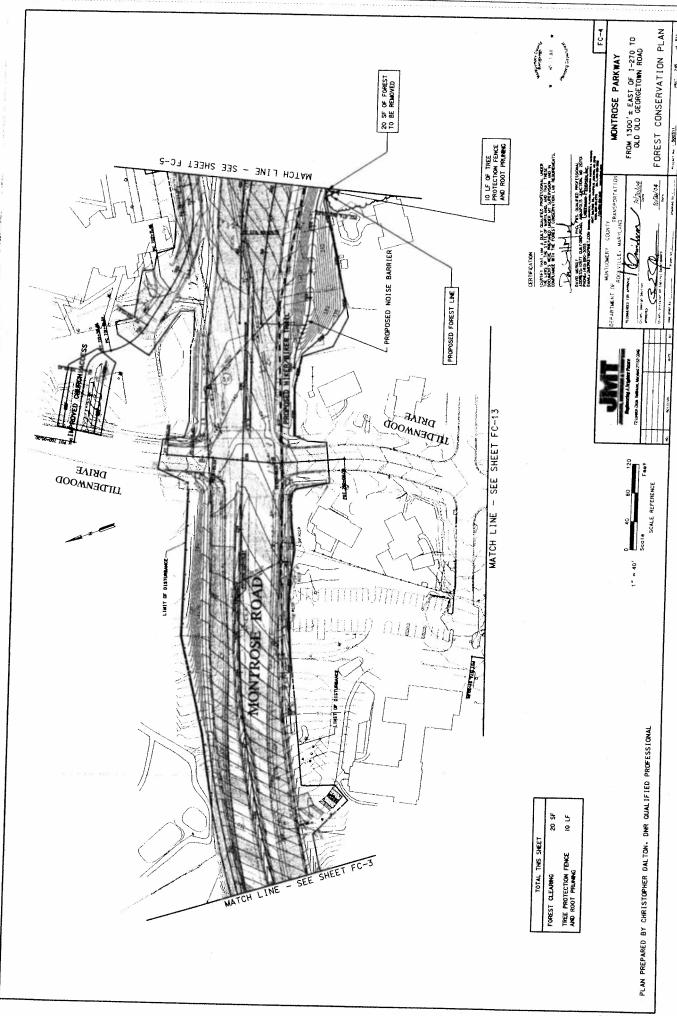
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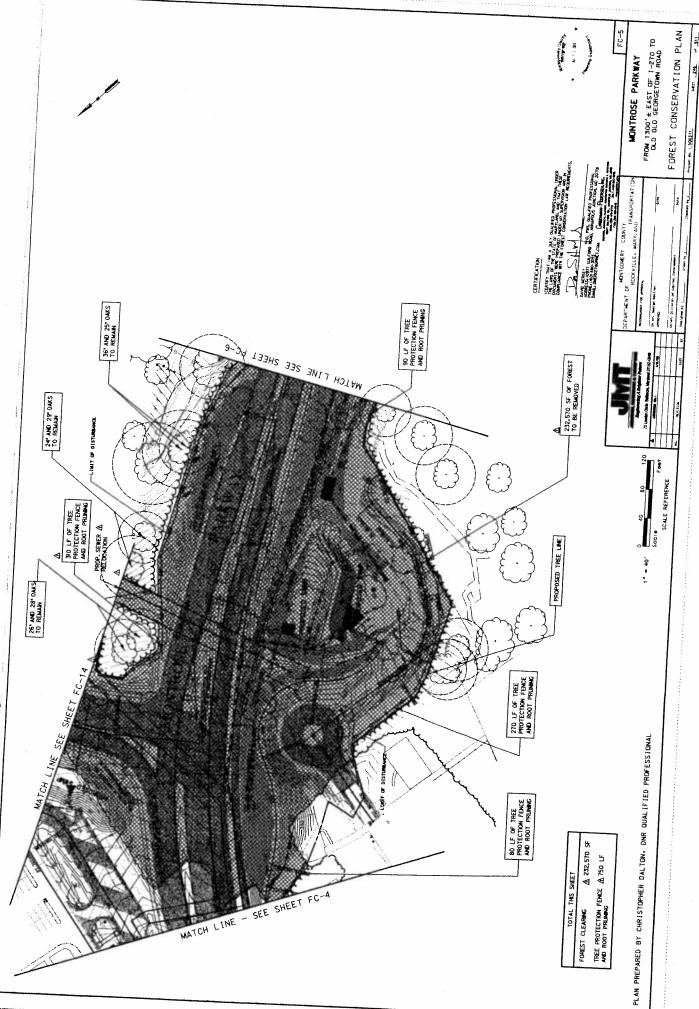
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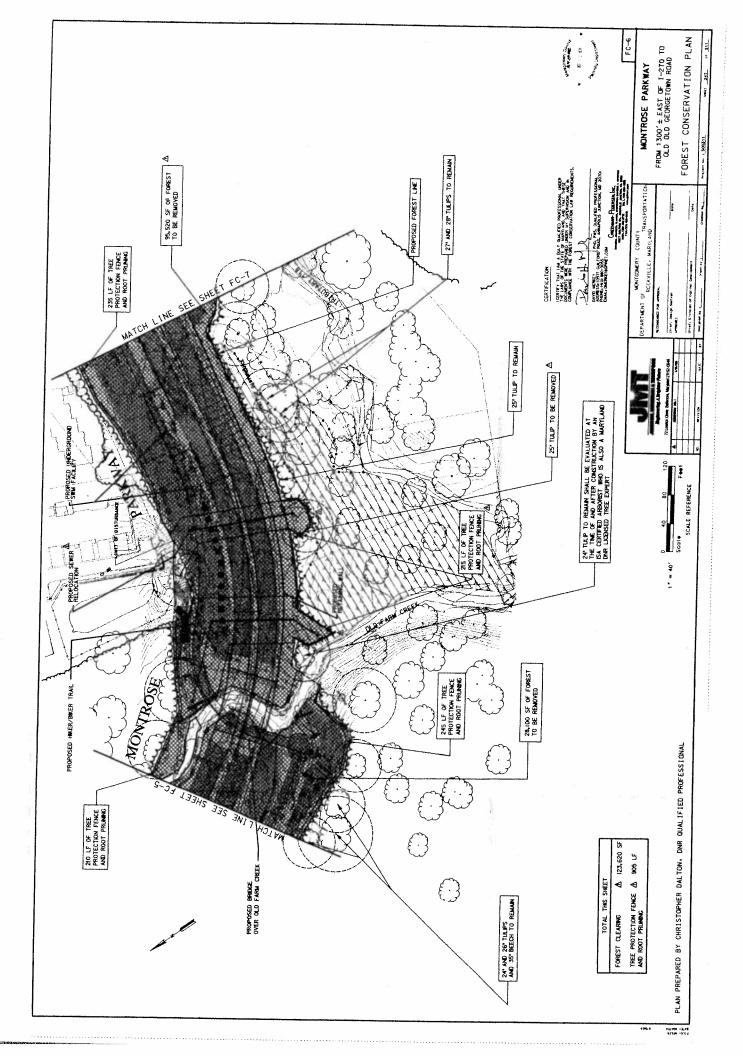


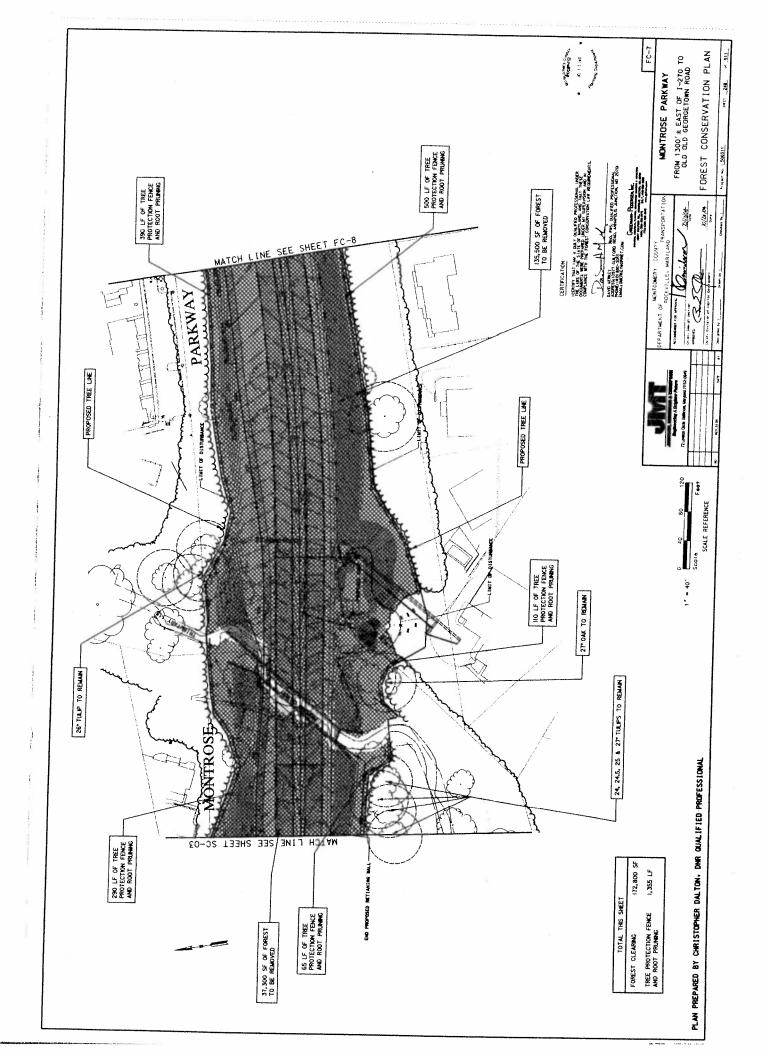


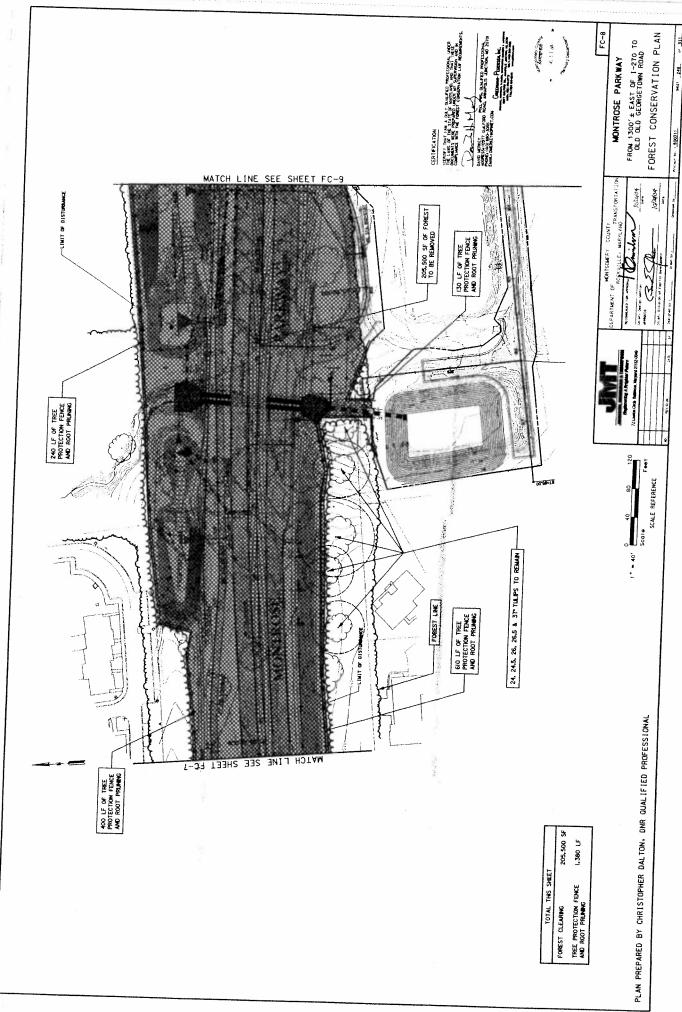


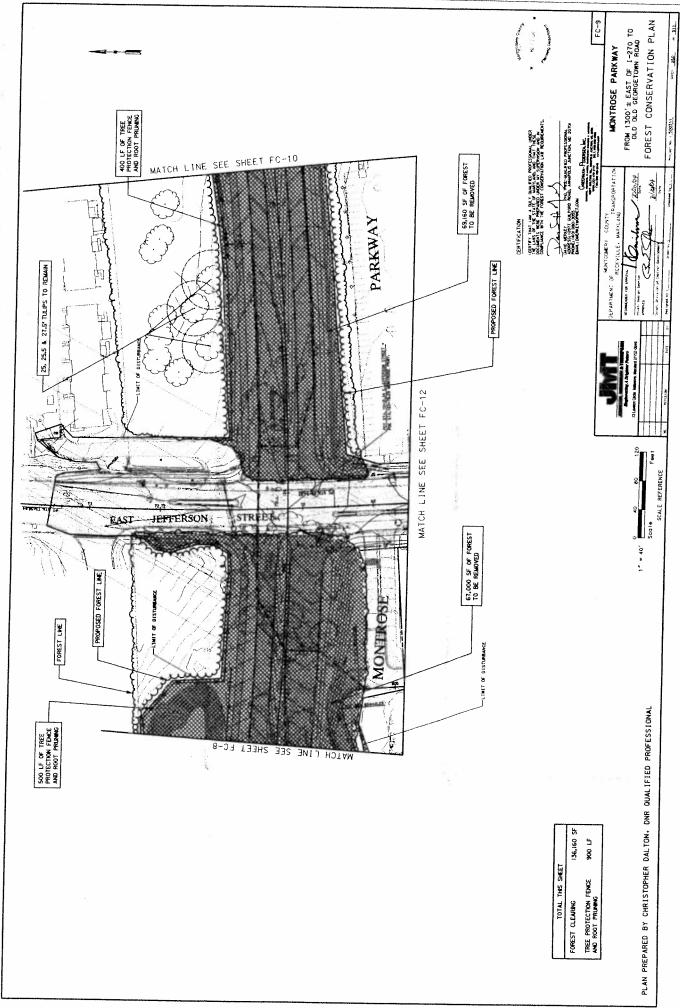


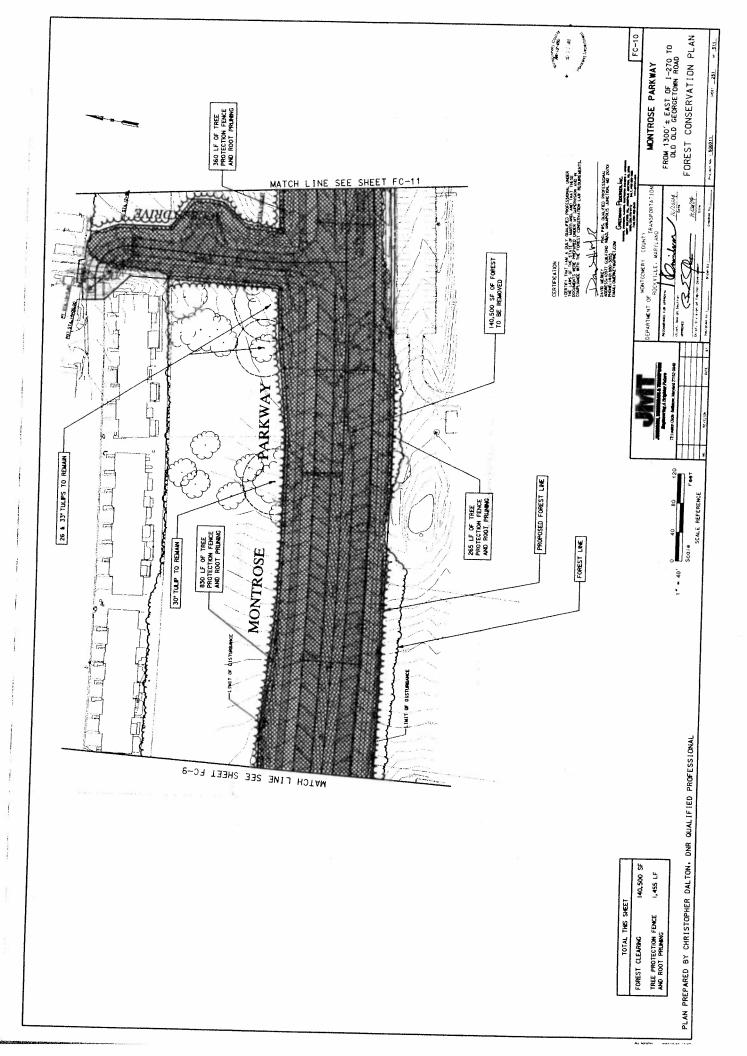


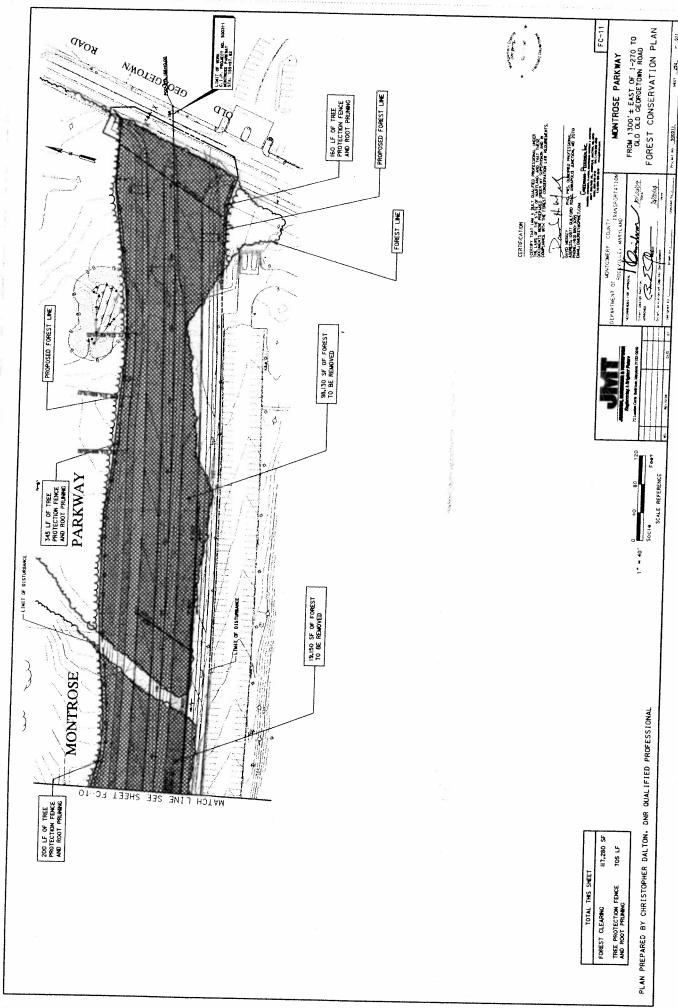


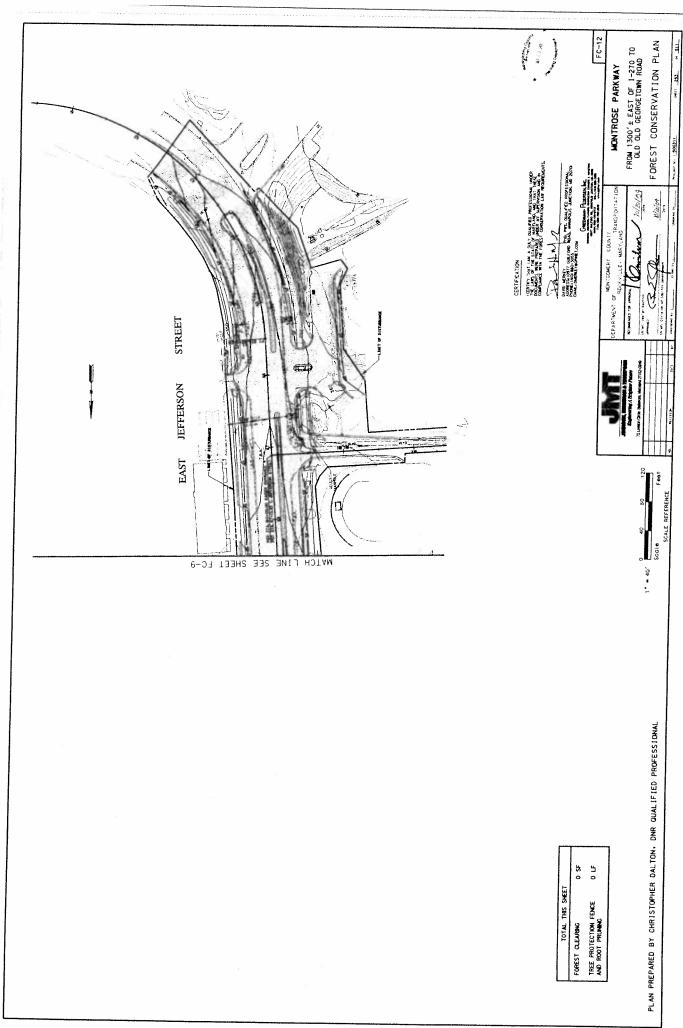


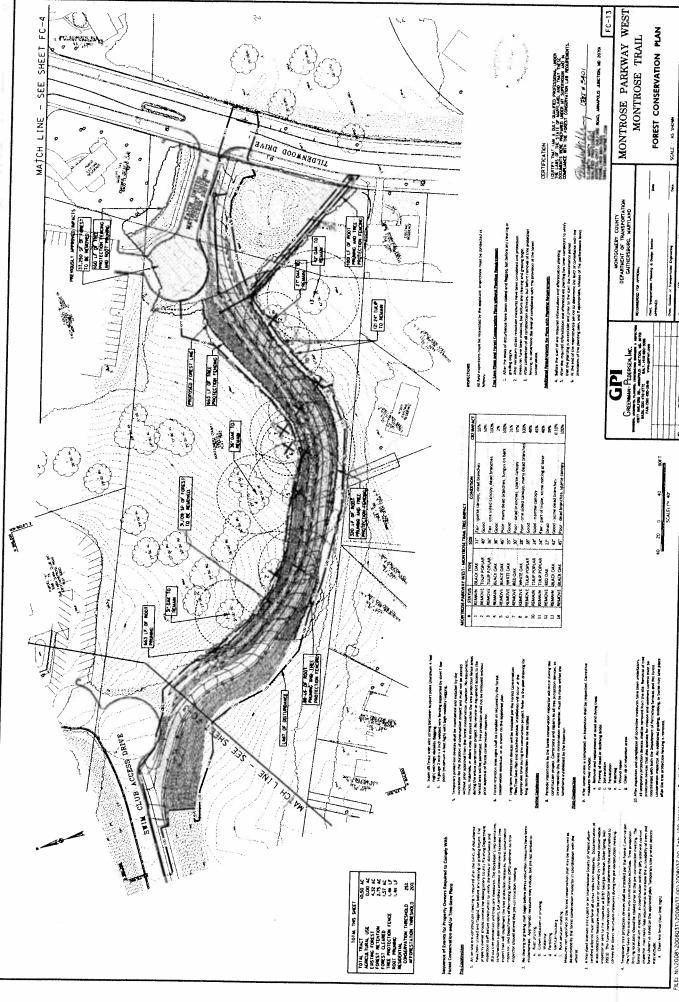




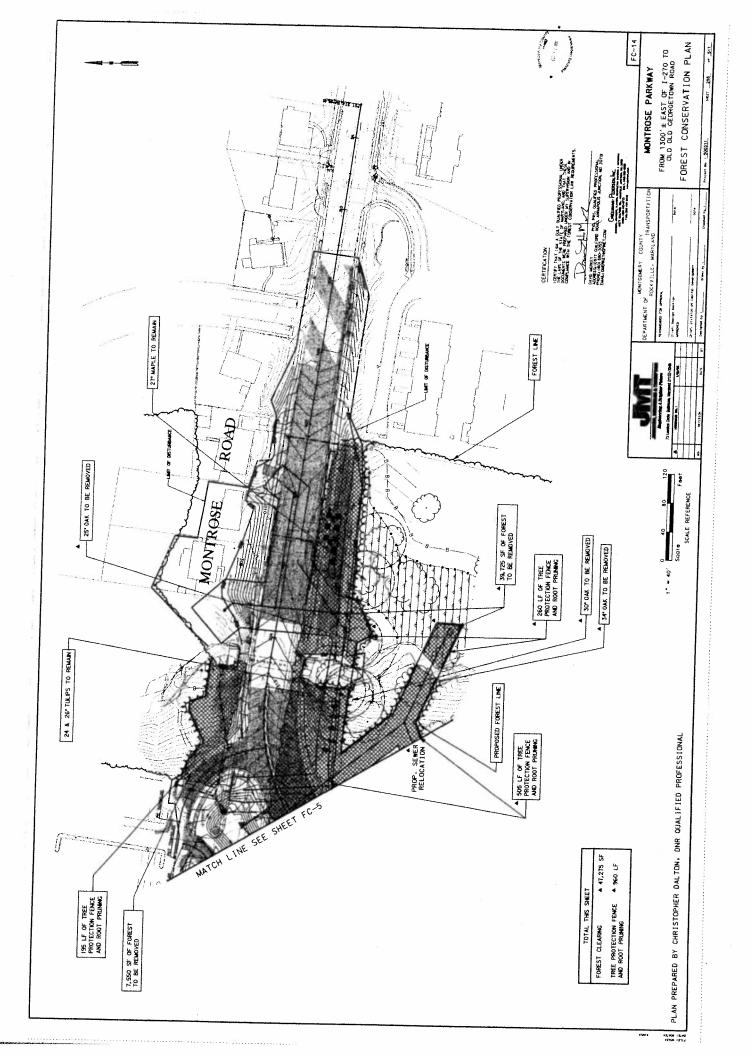






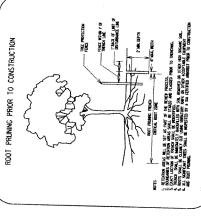


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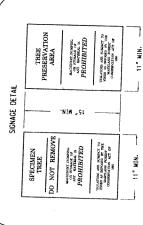
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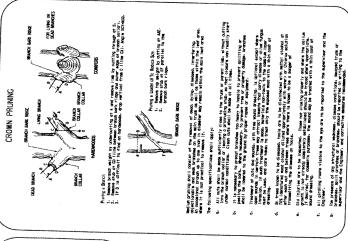
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