MCPB Item No.

Date: 12-13-12

Wheaton High School/Thomas Edison High School of Technology, Forest Conservation Plan, MR2013011

Amy Lindsey, Senior Planner, Area 2 Planning Division, amy.lindsey@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.2189

[[]]

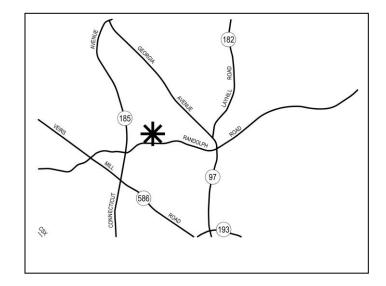
Khalid Afzal, Planner Supervisor, Area 2 Planning Division, khalid.afzal@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.4650

Glenn Kreger, Chief, Area 2 Planning Division, glenn.kreger@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.4653

Completed: 11-29-12

Description

- Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan for MR2013011, Wheaton High School/Thomas Edison High School of Technology
- 12501 & 12601 Dalewood Drive, Silver Spring, MD
- 25.42 acres, R-60 Zone
- 1989 Master Plan for the Communities of Kensington-Wheaton
- Applicant: Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)
- Filing date: October 1, 2012



Summary

- Staff recommends approval with conditions.
- All forest on-site retained.
- Forest conservation planting requirements to be met off-site.
- Variance request for removal of eight specimen trees and impacts to five specimen trees.
- The proposed project does not have any proposed activities within any streams or wetlands, and no new proposed permanent encroachments in environmental buffers.

Condition

- 1. The Applicant must obtain approval of a Final Forest Conservation Plan from the Planning Department prior to issuance of a Sediment Control Permit from the Department of Permitting Services. The Final Forest Conservation Plan must be consistent with the approved Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan.
- 2. The Applicant must plant 24 three-inch caliper native trees as mitigation for the removal eight specimen trees. The species and locations of the mitigation trees must be identified on the Final Forest Conservation Plan.
- 3. The Applicant must restore the softball field on M-NCPPC property in conformance with MR1998901.
- 4. The Applicant must record a Category I Conservation Easement by deed over areas of stream valley buffers and forest retention as shown on the Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan dated 11/8/2012, prior to any demolition, clearing, or grading occurring onsite.
- 5. Applicant must provide a Certificate of Compliance to use an off-site forest mitigation bank prior to any demolition, clearing and grading occurring onsite.
- 6. Copies of the Final Forest Conservation Plan and recorded Category I Conservation Easement must be kept at Wheaton High School and Thomas Edison High School of Technology and given to the school maintenance staff(s) to ensure compliance with conditions of the Forest Conservation Plan.

Pursuant to Chapter 22A of the County Code, the Planning Board's actions on Forest Conservation Plans are regulatory and binding.

Project Description

The 25.42-acre property is located at 12501 and 12601 Dalewood Drive, Silver Spring, within the 1989 Master Plan for the Communities of Kensington-Wheaton and in the R-60 Zone. MCPS is proposing to replace the existing facility, which houses both Wheaton **High School and Thomas** Edison High School of Technology, with construction of two separate school buildings, and associated circulation and athletic facilities. Wheaton-Glenmont Swimming Pool, owned by M-NCPPC but operated by Montgomery County Department of Recreation, is located to the south and east. The school



site provides an entrance and some parking for the pool.

Analysis

Environmental Guidelines

Staff approved a Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD #420121520) for the school site on April 10, 2012. The Subject Property is in the Josephs Branch subwatershed of the Rock Creek watershed; a Use I watershed. The 25.42-acre site is developed with the existing schools, associated facilities, and infrastructure. There is a small strip of undeveloped forested land along the north entrance to the Wheaton-Glenmont Swimming Pool that contains a tributary to Rock Creek and Valleywood Drive. The 0.16 acres of high priority forest and 0.79 acres of stream valley buffer extend onto the Subject Property from the adjacent right-of-way



(ROW). The stream buffer encroachment on the school site, approximately 0.63 acres, is primarily an access road to the Wheaton-Glenmont swimming pool. The school is not proposing any changes to this portion of the school site and the roadway will stay as is, therefore, there are no new encroachments. MCPS will protect the 0.16 acres of forested environmental buffer with a Category I Conservation Easement.

Forest Conservation

This property is subject to the Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law (Chapter 22A of the County Code) and a Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan has been submitted for Planning Board approval (Attachment 1). The proposed development plan will retain the entire 0.16 acres of high priority forest and generates a 3.78-acre planting requirement. MCPS is proposing to meet the planting requirement off-site.

The proposed project includes several areas of off-site disturbance. Approximately 0.84 acres of off-site disturbance is in an adjacent ROW, primarily for Randolph Road, and included in the forest conservation worksheet. However, the Applicant is showing grading and stormwater management facilities on the softball field on the adjacent Wheaton-Glenmont Pool site. The Applicant has provided a plan of compliance, demonstrating that the proposed disturbance complies with the approved Final Forest Conservation Plan for the Wheaton-Glenmont Pool (MR1998901) (Attachment 2). The Applicant will need to obtain a Park Permit for all disturbance on M-NCPPC property.

Forest Conservation Variance

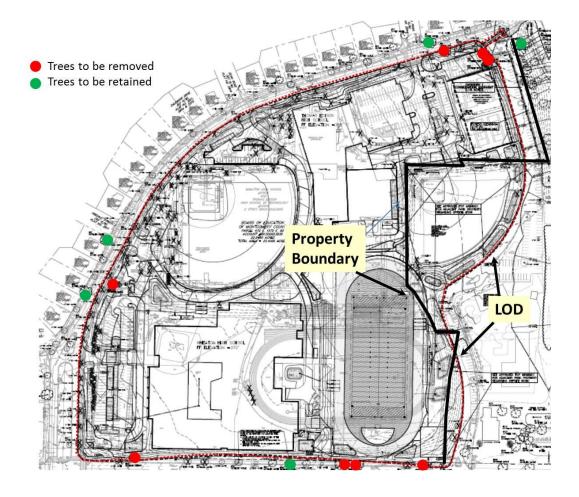
Section 22A-12(b) (3) of County code identifies certain individual trees as high priority for retention and protection. Any impact to these trees, including removal or disturbance within the tree's critical root zone (CRZ) requires a variance. An applicant for a variance must provide certain written information in support of the required findings in accordance with Section 22A-21 of the County code. The code requires no impact to trees that:

- a. measure 30 inches or greater diameter at breast height (DBH);
- b. are part of a historic site or designated with a historic structure; or
- c. 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.

The Applicant submitted a variance request on 10/11/2012 for the impacts to trees with the proposed layout (Attachment 3). The Applicant proposes to remove eight trees, and impact, but not remove, five trees that are considered high priority for retention under Section 22A-12 (b) (3) of the County code.

Unwarranted Hardship - As per Section 22A-21, a variance may only be granted if the Planning Board finds that leaving the requested trees in an undisturbed state would result in unwarranted hardship. In this case, the unwarranted hardship is caused by the public need for updated and enlarged schools that meet all regulatory requirements. The development envelope is not enlarged even though the two schools are being separated and the site is being completely redesigned. As there is no high school holding facility, both schools will remain open through the construction process, which poses a serious limitation to the site design. Additionally, all of the on-site forest is retained.

The exhibit below indicates the location of the thirteen specimen trees that are impacted by this project. Of the eight trees proposed for removal, six are within the ROW and two are on-site. The ROW trees are affected by grading and site access. The two on-site trees are impacted by a new parking entrance and a stormdrain connection.



Variance Findings - Based on the review of the variance request and the proposed Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan, staff makes the following findings:

1. Granting the variance 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 disturbance of the specified trees is due to redesign of the entire site. Disturbance has been minimized and tree protection measures have been used to minimize damage. Therefore, staff believes that granting this variance is not a special privilege that would be denied to other applicants.

2. The need for the variance 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 on the locations of the trees and the need to completely redesign the Subject Property.

3. The need for the variance 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 redesign of the Subject Property to accommodate the two schools and related facilities and not a result of land or building use on a neighboring property.

4. Granting the variance will not violate State water quality standards or cause measurable degradation in water quality.

The proposed project should improve water quality by the addition of modern stormwater management facilities. Additionally, the new trees proposed as mitigation for the loss of specimen trees will substantially replace the form and function of the existing tree canopy. The planted trees will also protect water quality by reducing runoff through rainfall interception and water uptake. Additionally, they will provide shade for impervious areas and improve soil texture, which also improve water quality.

Mitigation for Trees Subject to the Variance Provisions – The proposed removal of eight trees will be mitigated by additional plantings. Generally, mitigation is not recommended for trees impacted but retained. The Applicant will plant 24 native canopy trees, with a minimum size of 3" caliper, with details to be provided on the Final Forest Conservation Plan submission.

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. Staff forwarded the request to the County Arborist on 10/11/2012. The County Arborist has reviewed the variance request and recommended approval (Attachment 4).

Variance Recommendation - Staff recommends the variance be granted with the proposed mitigation.

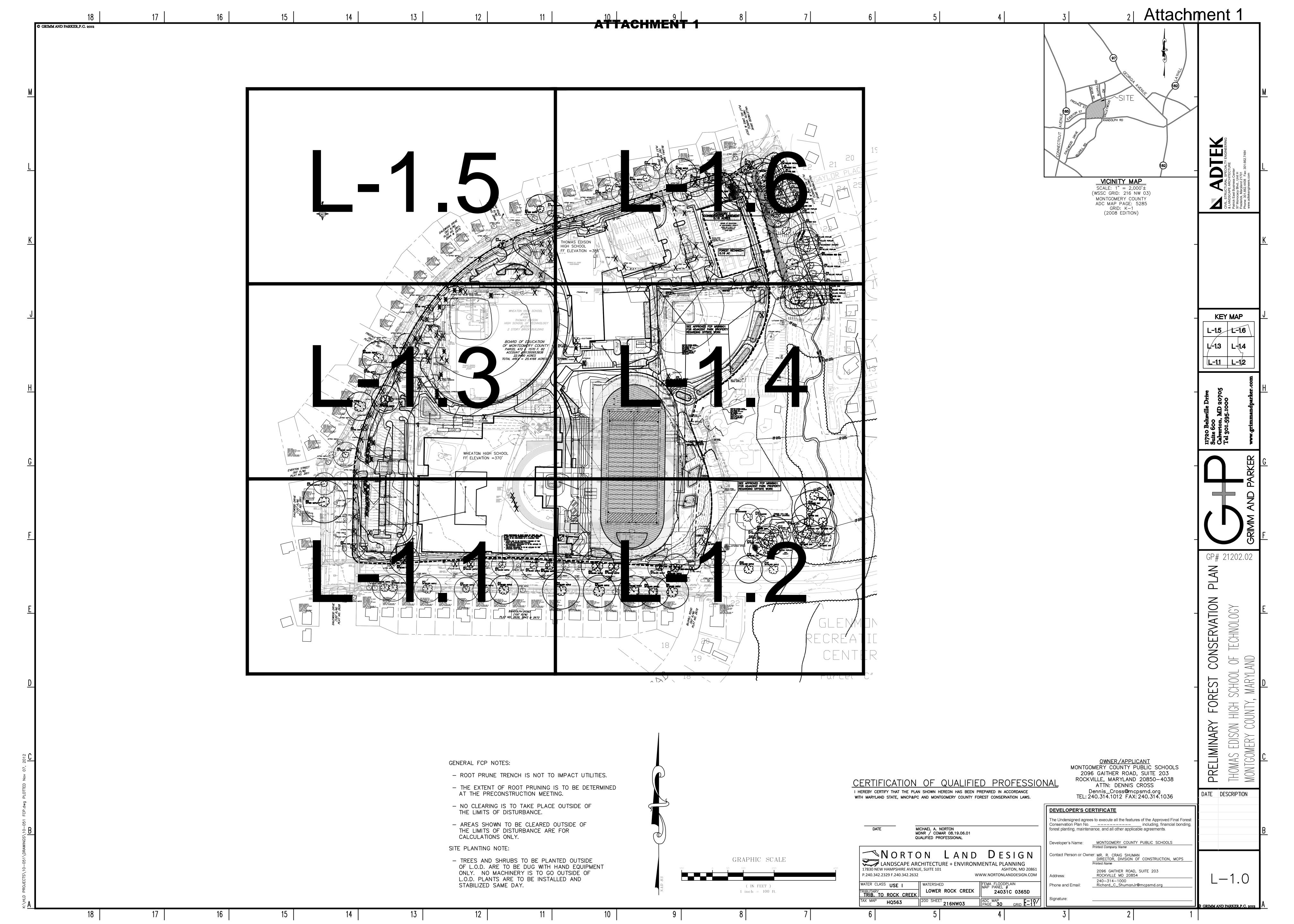
Conclusion

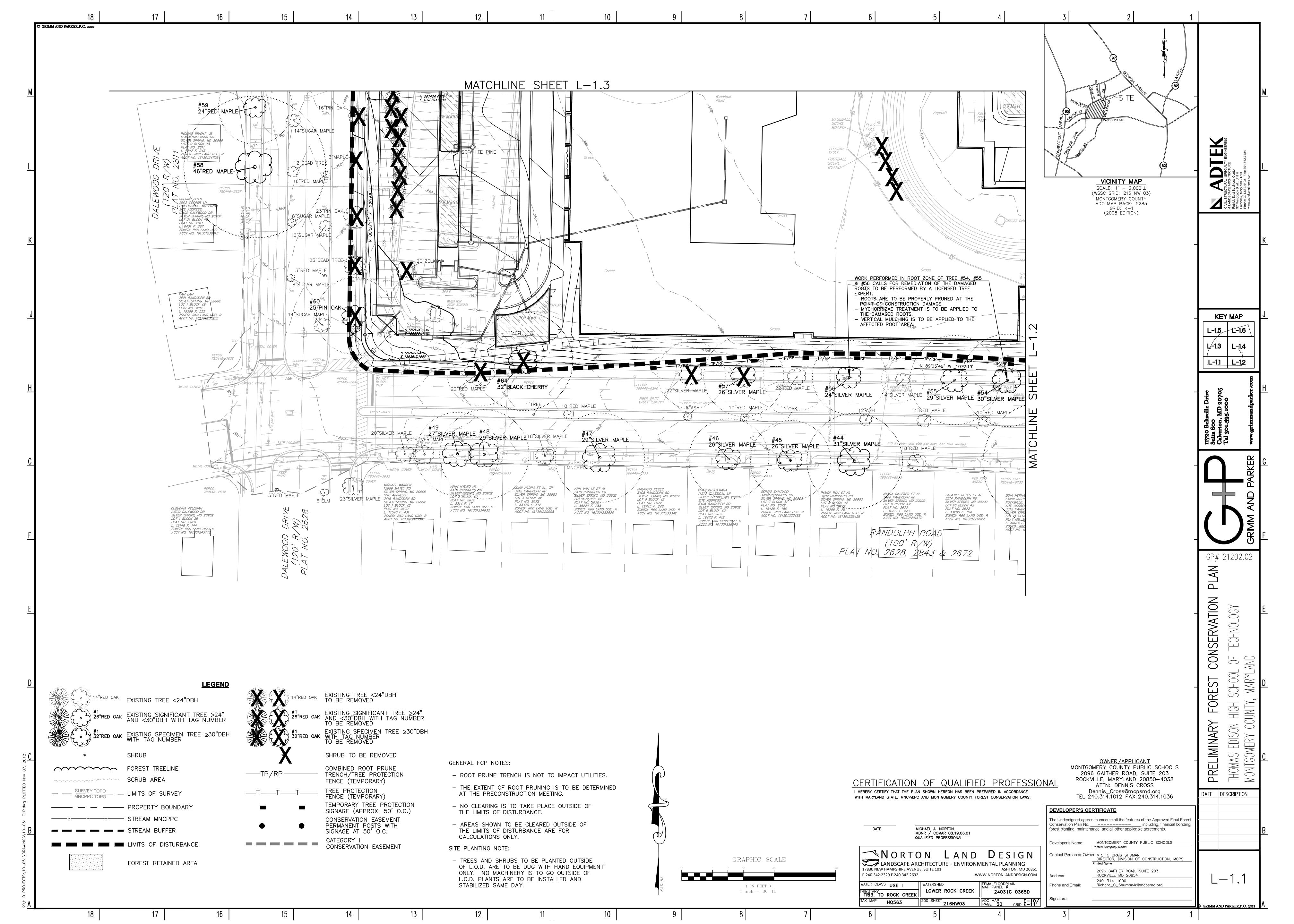
Staff recommends that the Planning Board approve the Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan with the conditions cited in this staff report. The variance approval is assumed into the Planning Board's approval of the Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan.

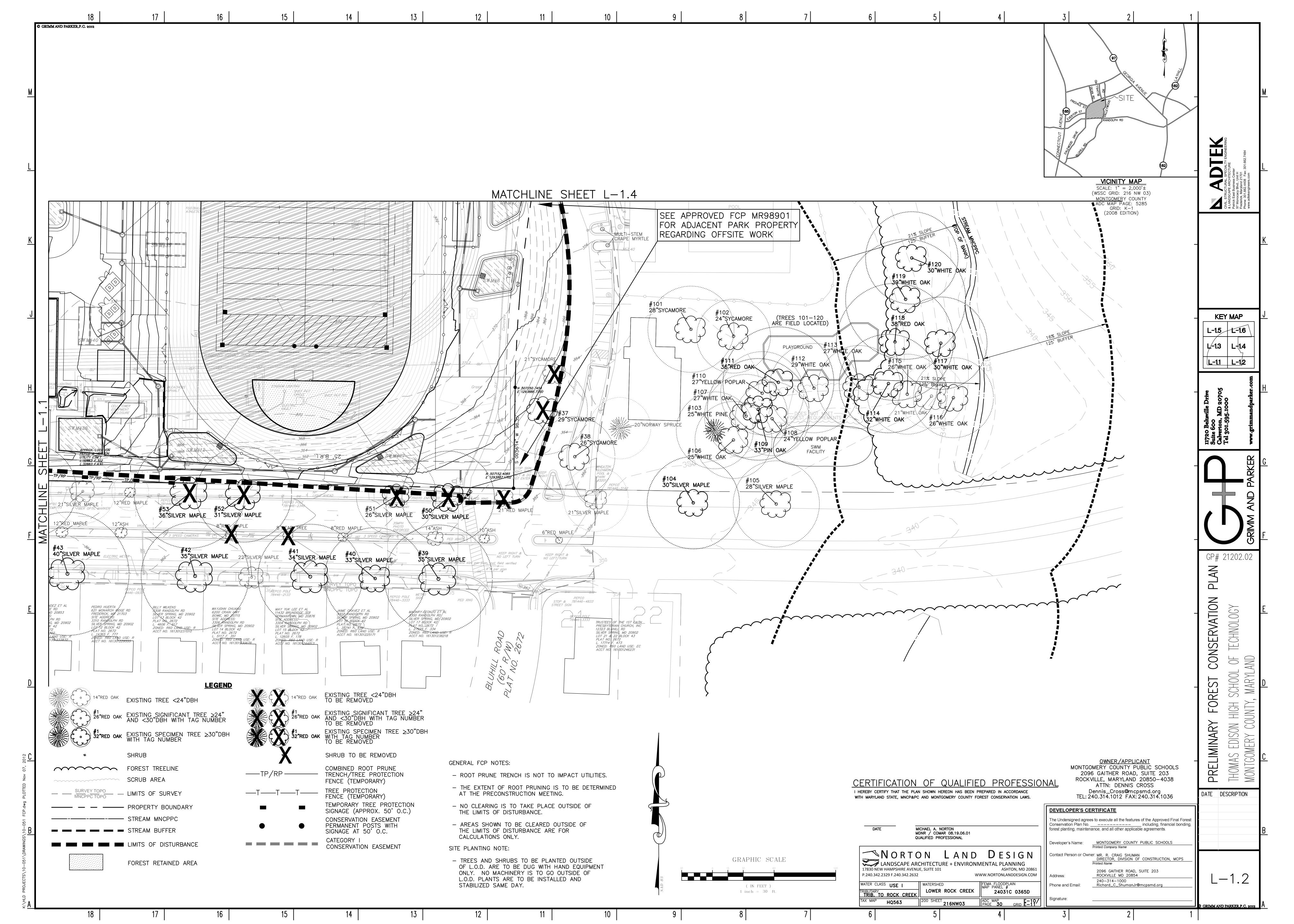
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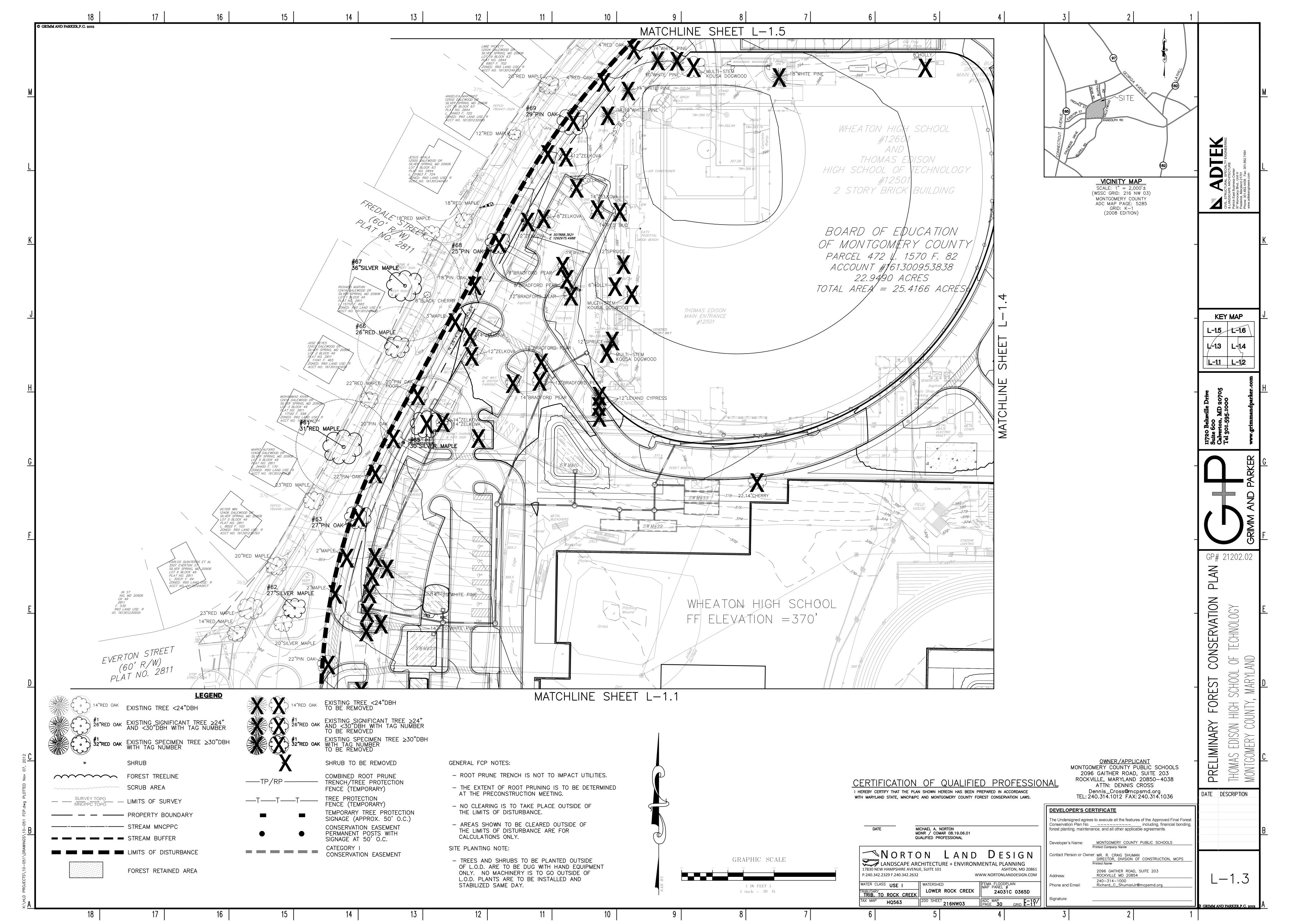
Attachments:

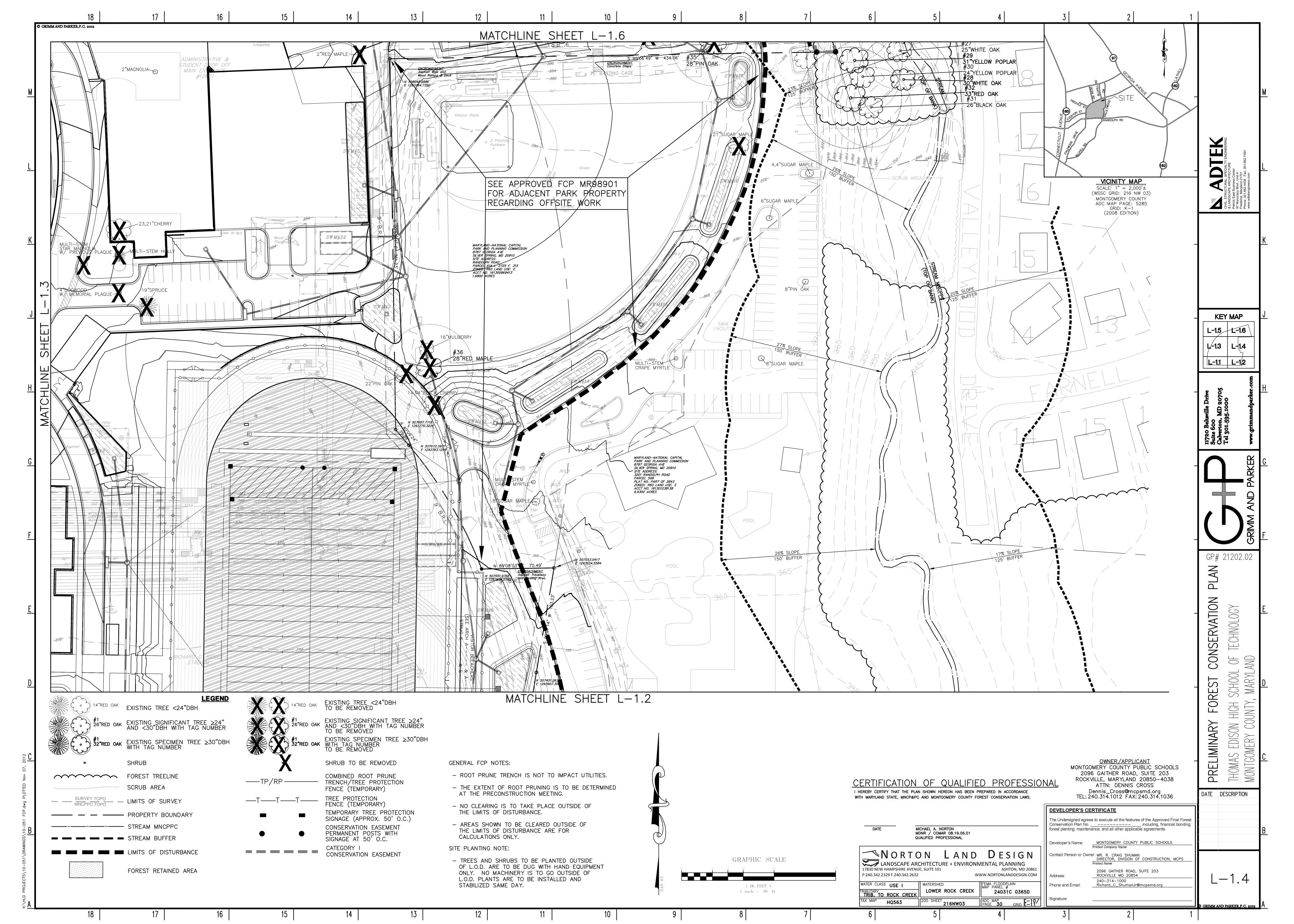
- 1. Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan
- 2. Plan of compliance for MR1998901
- 3. Variance application
- 4. Letter from County Arborist

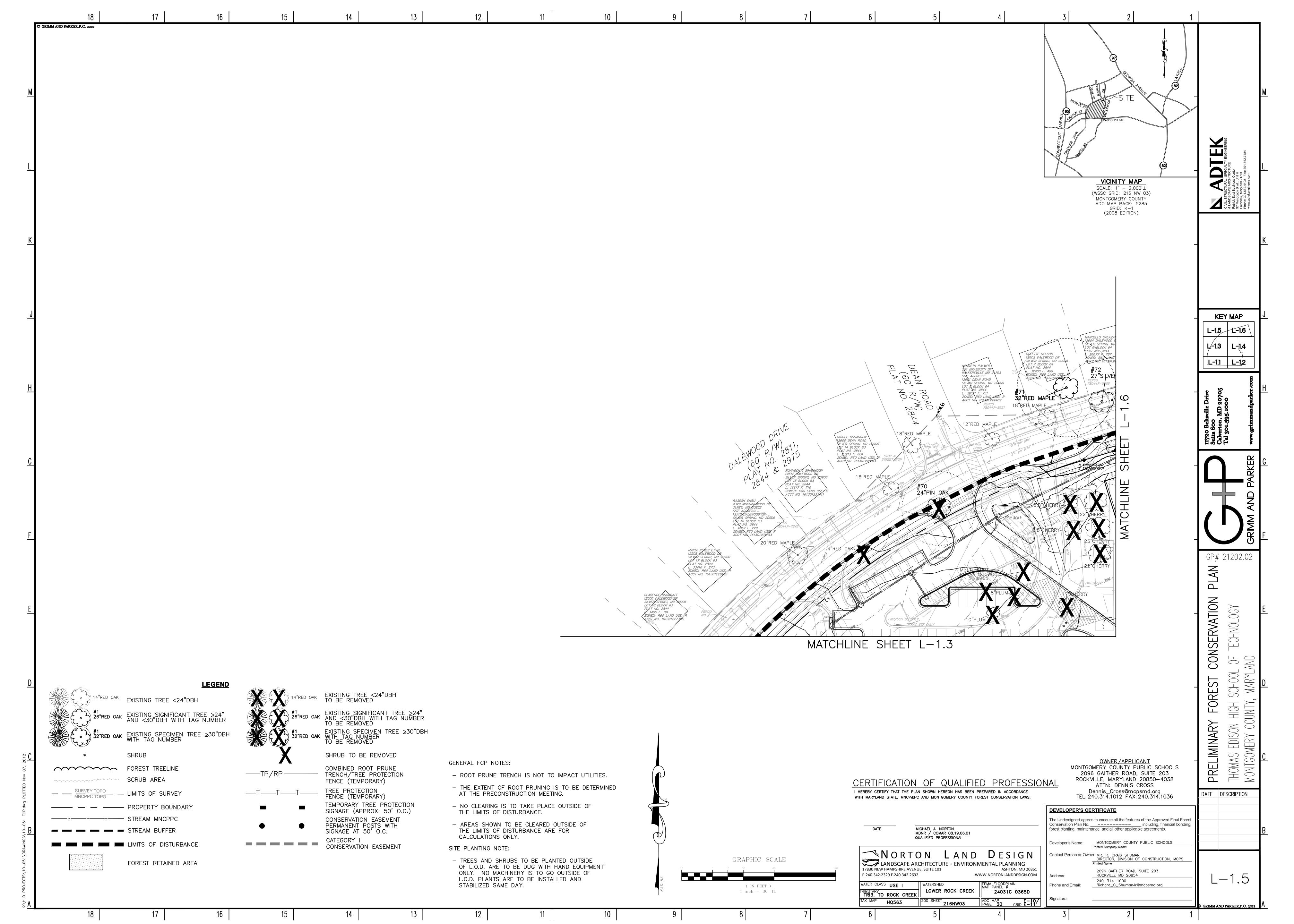


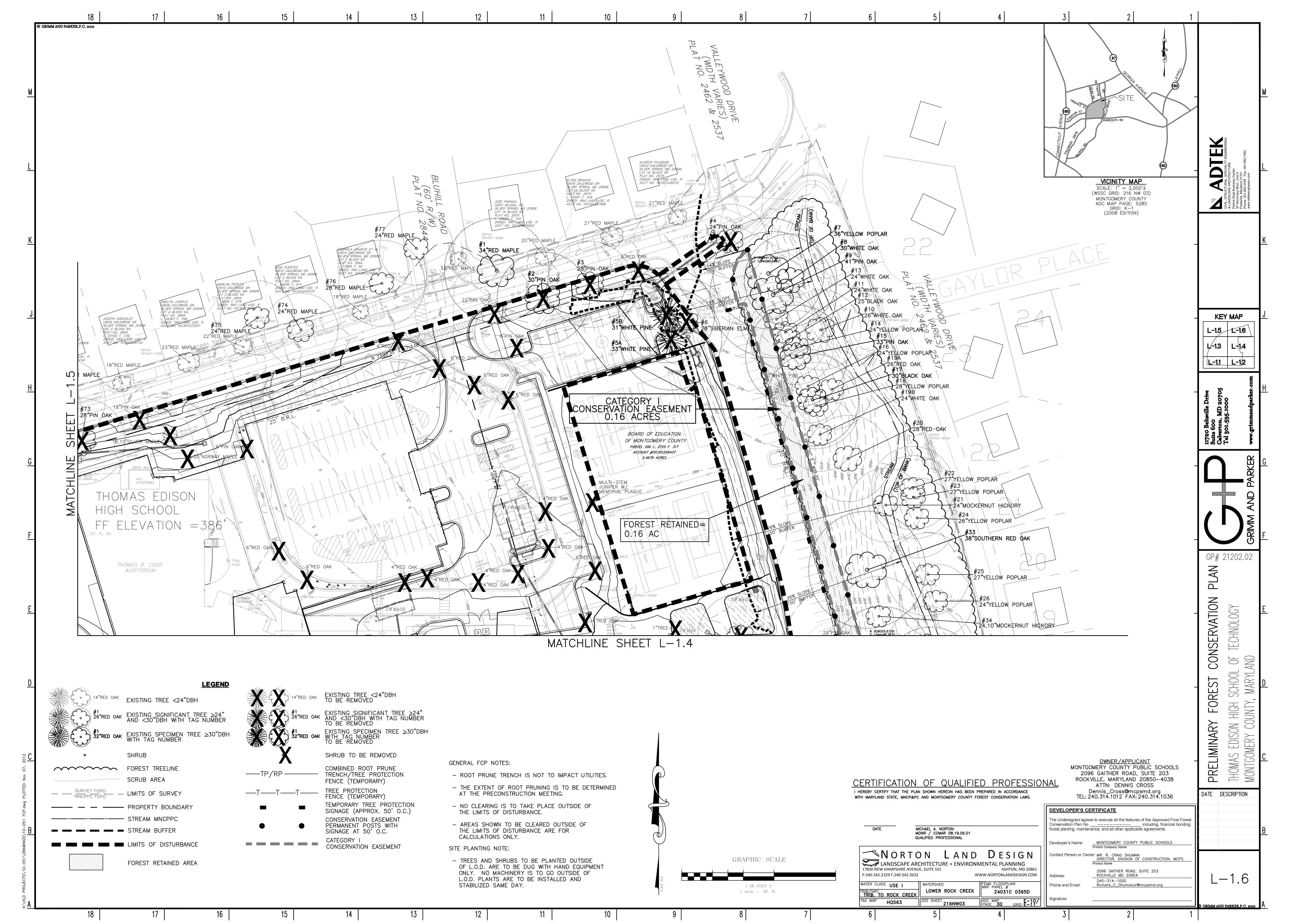


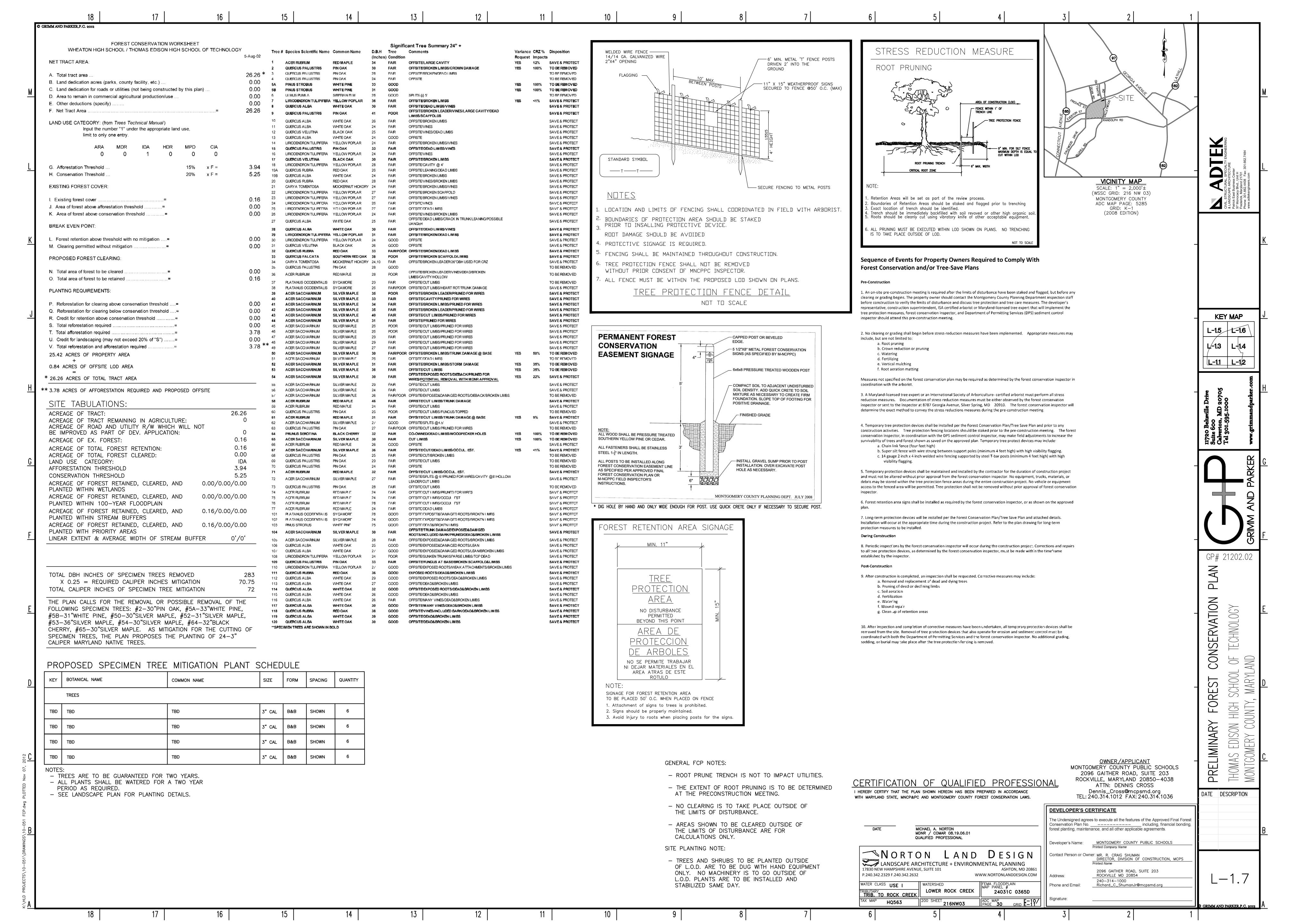


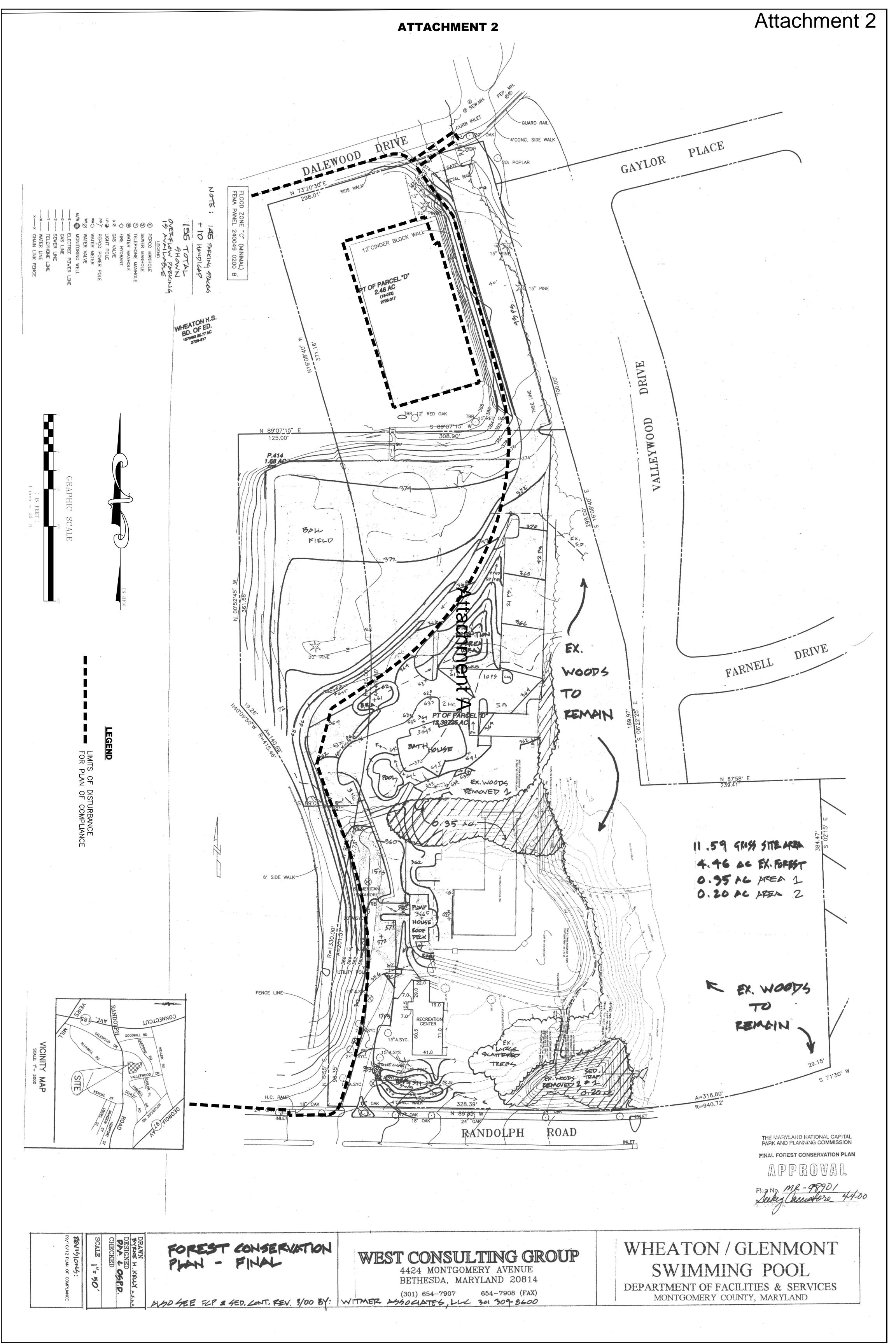


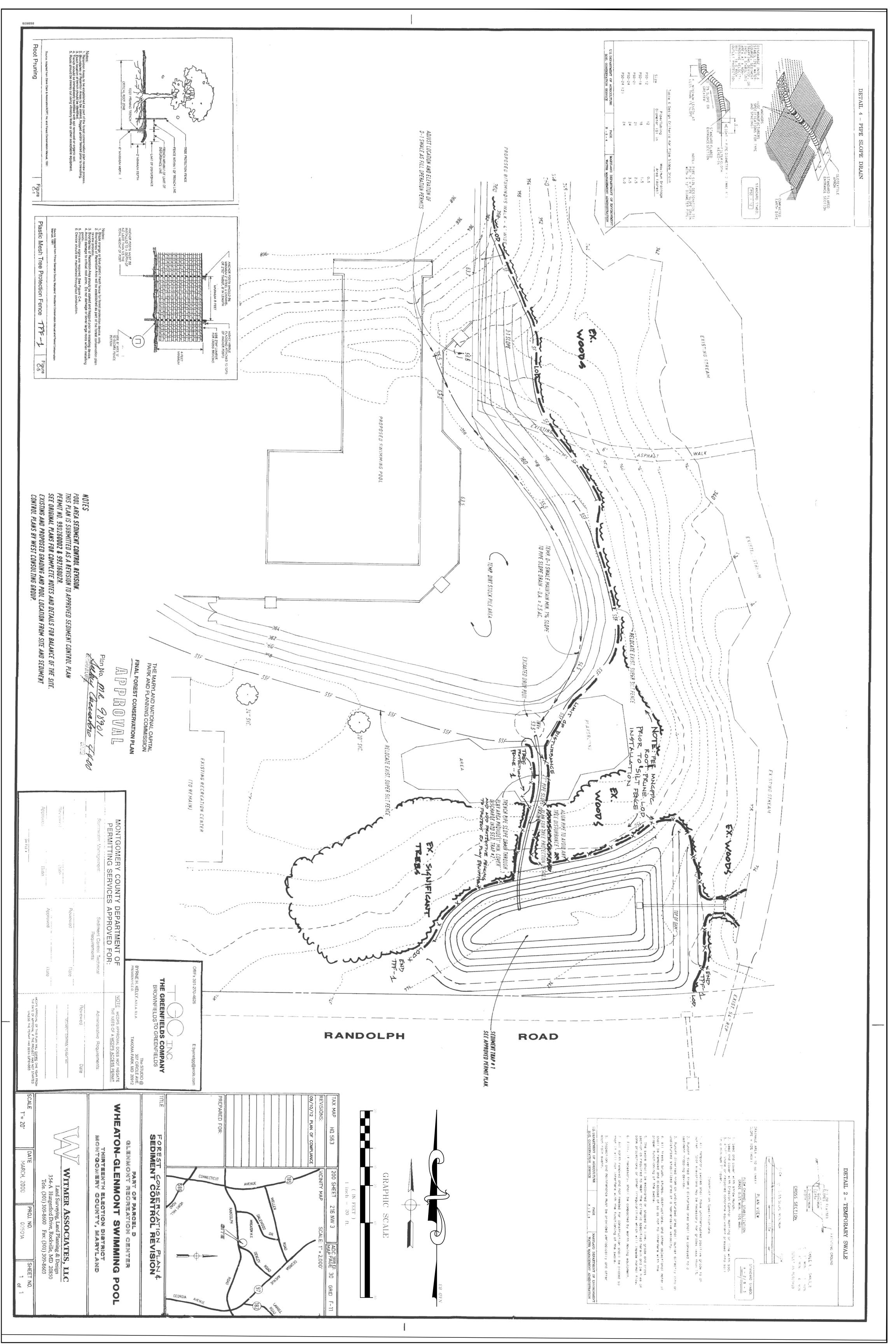












October 11, 2012

Mr. Mark Pfefferle Environmental Planning Division Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) 8787 Georgia Avenue Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

> Re: Wheaton HS/T. Edison HS of Technology Request for Specimen Tree Variance MNCPPC NRI 420121520

Dear Mr. Pfefferle:

On behalf of the Montgomery County Public Schools and pursuant to Section 22A-21 *Variance provisions* of the Montgomery County Forest Conservation Ordinance and recent revisions to the State Forest Conservation Law enacted by S.B. 666, we are writing to request a variance(s) to allow impacts to or the removal of the following trees identified on the approved Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation for the above-named County construction project:

Project Description:

The existing Wheaton High School and Thomas Edison High School of Technology are located at 12601/12501 Dalewood Drive in Silver Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland. The site is approximately 25.42 acres and is comprised of two parcels owned by The Board of Education. The site currently hosts the existing schools, ball fields and associated parking and circulation. There is one wooded area on the property. The forested area measures 0.16 acres and will not be affected by the proposed improvements. The site is surrounded by residential properties to the north, west and south. MNCPPC's Wheaton-Glenmont Pool lies to the east.

Proposed construction consists of full site modernization including two new school buildings, ball fields and associated parking and circulation.

Requirements for Justification of Variance:

Section 22A-21(b) *Application requirements* states that the applicant must:

- (1) Describe the special conditions peculiar to the property which would cause the unwarranted hardship;
- (2) Describe how enforcement of these rules will deprive the landowner of rights commonly enjoyed by others in similar areas;

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

Justification of Variance

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

Response: As part of the program, the task was to provide the community with an updated high school facility that can accommodate a growing number of students as well as a modernized, safe and healthy environment for students to learn. Efforts have been made to impact no forest and as few existing trees as possible on the property.

The site currently contains very little forest with the majority of mature trees around the perimeter offsite. Proposed specimen tree impacts to the critical root zone include 2 trees onsite, 1 tree that is co-owned with the right-of-way and 10 trees within the right-of-way. The majority of impacted specimen trees are in the right-of-way which must be improved for access to the site.

This work will require disturbance of the root zones of a total of thirteen (13) specimen trees. Eight (8) of the thirteen (13) impacted trees will be required to be removed. It should be noted that the trees which require removal are primarily within the right-of-way. If Montgomery County Public Schools is not allowed to impact or remove these trees, there would not be adequate room for the development program, and there will not be necessary updates to the right-of-way to ensure the safety and welfare of the school community.

If no impacts are allowed to the trees, the school will not be able to be updated due to the close proximity of specimen trees to necessary renovation features. As such, this would cause an *unwarranted hardship* to the community that it serves.

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

Response: If the applicant is required to keep all improvements outside the root zones of the specimen trees, the site would fail to be rebuilt due to the close proximity of specimen trees. (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: The existing forest onsite is proposed to be saved. The preservation of the existing forest within the stream buffer ensures the continued functionality of natural pollutant removal within the drainage system.

In addition, this property will be developed in accordance with the latest Maryland Department of the Environment criteria for stormwater management. This includes Environmental Site Design to provide for protecting the natural resources to the Maximum Extent Practicable. This includes limiting the impervious areas and providing on-site stormwater management systems. A Stormwater Management Concept is currently under review by the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services to ensure that this criterion is enforced.

Therefore, the proposed activity will not degrade the water quality of the downstream areas and will not result in *measurable degradation in water quality*.

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

Response: The proposed landscape planting is intended to provide the site with more canopy coverage outside of forested areas than previously existed onsite.

As further basis for its variance request, the applicant can demonstrate that it meets the Section 22A-21(d) *Minimum criteria*, which states that a variance must not be granted if granting the request:

(1) Will confer on the applicant a special privilege that would be denied to other applicants;

Response: The Wheaton High School/Thomas Edison High School of Technology Modernization is in conformance with the County's General plan. As such, this is not a *special privilege* to be conferred on the applicant.

(2) Is based on conditions or circumstances which are the result of the actions by the applicant;

Response: Montgomery County Public Schools has taken no actions leading to the conditions or circumstances that are the subject of this variance request.

(3) Arises from a condition relating to land or building use, either permitted or nonconforming, on a neighboring property; or

Response: The surrounding land uses (residences & MNCPPC Park) do not have any inherent characteristics or conditions that have created or contributed to this particular need for a variance.

(4) Will violate State water quality standards or cause measurable degradation in water quality.

Response: Granting this variance request will not violate State water quality standards or cause measurable degradation in water quality.

SPECIMEN TREE IMPACTS SUMMARY

Tree Scientific Name	Common Name	D.B.H	Tree	Comments	Variance	CRZ %	Disposition
#		(inch)	Condition		Request	Impacts	
1 ACER RUBRUM	RED MAPLE	34	FAIR	OFFSITE/LARGE CAVITY	YES	12%	SAVE & PROTECT
2 QUERCUS PALUSTRIS	PIN OAK	30	FAIR	OFFSITE/BROKEN LIMBS/CROWN DAMAGE	YES	100%	TO BE REMOVED
5A PINUS STROBUS	WHITE PINE	33	GOOD		YES	100%	TO BE REMOVED
5B PINUS STROBUS	WHITE PINE	31	GOOD		YES	100%	TO BE REMOVED
7 LIRIODENDRON TULIPIFERA	YELLOW POPLAR	36	FAIR	OFFSITE/BROKEN LIMBS	YES	<1%	SAVE & PROTECT
50 ACER SACCHARINUM	SILVER MAPLE	30	FAIR/POOR	OFFSITE/BROKEN LIMBS/TRUNK DAMAGE @ BASE	YES	50%	TO BE REMOVED
52 ACER SACCHARINUM	SILVER MAPLE	31	FAIR	OFFSITE/BROKEN LIMBS/STORM DAMAGE	YES	35%	TO BE REMOVED
53 ACER SACCHARINUM	SILVER MAPLE	36	FAIR	OFFSITE/CUT LIMBS	YES	35%	TO BE REMOVED
54 ACER SACCHARINUM	SILVER MAPLE	30	FAIR	OFFSITE/EXPOSED ROOTS/DIEBACK/PRUNED FOR WIRES/POTENTIAL REMOVAL WITH MDNR APPROVAL	YES	22%	SAVE & PROTECT
61 ACER RUBRUM	RED MAPLE	31	FAIR	OFFSITE/CUT LIMBS/TRUNK DAMAGE @ BASE	YES	9%	SAVE & PROTECT
64 PRUNUS SEROTINA	BLACK CHERRY	32	FAIR	CO-OWNED/DEAD LIMBS/WOODPECKER HOLES	YES	100%	TO BE REMOVED
65 ACER SACCHARINUM	SILVER MAPLE	30	FAIR	CUT LIMBS	YES	100%	TO BE REMOVED
67 ACER SACCHARINUM	SILVER MAPLE	36	FAIR	OFFSITE/CUT/DEAD LIMBS/OCCUL. EST.	YES	<1%	SAVE & PROTECT

The following specimen trees will be impacted by construction and require specific treatment to enhance survivability based on conditions noted during an updated site visit on August 16, 2012. Some of the impacted trees designated to be saved will require prolonged monitoring due to current health conditions and may require future removal if the condition of the tree begins to decline.

Tree #54: Work performed in the root zone of the tree calls for remediation of the damaged roots to be performed by a licensed tree expert.

- Roots are to be properly pruned at the point of construction damage.
- Mychorrizae treatment is to be applied to the damaged roots.
- Vertical mulching is to take place in the area of the affected roots.

Conclusion:

For the above reasons, the applicant respectfully requests that the Planning Board APPROVE its request for a variance from the provisions of Section 22A of the Montgomery County Forest Conservation Ordinance, and thereby, GRANTS permission to impact/remove the specimen trees in order to allow the construction of this vital project.

The recommendations in this report are based on tree conditions noted at the time the NRI/FSD field work was conducted and updated for specific construction measures prior to the submittal of the forest conservation plan. Tree condition can be influenced by many environmental factors, such as wind, ice and heavy snow, drought conditions, heavy rainfall, rapid or prolonged freezing temperatures, and insect/disease infestation. Therefore, tree conditions are subject to change without notice.

The site plans and plotting of tree locations were furnished for the purpose of creating a detailed Tree Protection Plan. All information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and experience. All conclusions are based on professional opinion and were not influenced by any other party.

Sincerely,

Michael Norton

Copy to:

Dennis Cross, MCPS Kieran Wilmes, Grimm + Parker Architects



ATTACHMENT 4

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Robert G. Hoyt Director

November 1, 2012

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

RE: Wheaton/Edison High School, MR 2013011, NRI/FSD application accepted on 4/3/2012

Dear Ms. Carrier:

The County Attorney's Office has advised that Montgomery County Code Section 22A-12(b)(3) applies to any application required under Chapter 22A submitted after October 1, 2009. Accordingly, given that the application for the above referenced request was submitted after that date and must comply with Chapter 22A, and the Montgomery County Planning Department ("Planning Department") has completed all review required under applicable law, I am providing the following recommendation pertaining to this request for a variance.

Section 22A-21(d) of the Forest Conservation Law states that a variance must not be granted if granting the request:

- 1. Will confer on the applicant a special privilege that would be denied to other applicants;
- 2. Is based on conditions or circumstances which are the result of the actions by the applicant;
- 3. Arises from a condition relating to land or building use, either permitted or nonconforming, on a neighboring property; or
- 4. Will violate State water quality standards or cause measurable degradation in water quality.

Applying the above conditions to the plan submitted by the applicant, I make the following findings as the result of my review:

- 1. The granting of a variance in this case would not confer a special privilege on this applicant that would be denied other applicants as long as the same criteria are applied in each case. Therefore, the variance <u>can be granted</u> under this criterion.
- 2. Based on a discussion on March 19, 2010 between representatives of the County, the Planning Department, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forest Service, the disturbance of trees, or other vegetation, as a result of development activity is not, in and of itself, is not interpreted as a condition or circumstance that is the result of the actions by the applicant. Therefore, the variance <u>can be granted</u> under this criterion, as long as appropriate mitigation is provided for the resources disturbed.

- 3. The disturbance of trees, or other vegetation, by the applicant does not arise from a condition relating to land or building use, either permitted or nonconforming, on a neighboring property. Therefore, the variance can be granted under this criterion.
- 4. The disturbance of trees, or other vegetation, by the applicant will not result in a violation of State water quality standards or cause measurable degradation in water quality. Therefore, the variance can be granted under this criterion.

Therefore, I recommend a finding by the Planning Board that this applicant qualifies for a variance conditioned upon the applicant mitigating for the loss of resources due to removal or disturbance to trees, and other vegetation, subject to the law based on the limits of disturbance (LOD) recommended during the review by the Planning Department. In the case of removal, the entire area of the critical root zone (CRZ) should be included in mitigation calculations regardless of the location of the CRZ (i.e., even that portion of the CRZ located on an adjacent property). When trees are disturbed, any area within the CRZ where the roots are severed, compacted, etc., such that the roots are not functioning as they were before the disturbance must be mitigated. Exceptions should not be allowed for trees in poor or hazardous condition because the loss of CRZ eliminates the future potential of the area to support a tree or provide stormwater management. Tree protection techniques implemented according to industry standards, such as trimming branches or installing temporary mulch mats to limit soil compaction during construction without permanently reducing the critical root zone, are acceptable mitigation to limit disturbance. Techniques such as root pruning should be used to improve survival rates of impacted trees but they should not be considered mitigation for the permanent loss of critical root zone. I recommend requiring mitigation based on the number of square feet of the critical root zone lost or disturbed. The mitigation can be met using any currently acceptable method under Chapter 22A of the Montgomery County Code.

In the event that revisions to the LOD are approved by the Planning Department, the mitigation requirements outlined above should apply to the removal or disturbance to the CRZ of all trees subject to the law as a result of the revised LOD.

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, Chief