

**CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT**  
**STAFF REPORT**  
**Conditional Use Permit CUP.1.25**

**DATE:** August 5, 2025  
**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Jacob A. Graichen, AICP, City Planner

**APPLICANT:** City of St. Helens  
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager

**OWNER:** Presbytery of the Cascades  
Nationwide Health Properties, LLC

**ZONING:** Moderate Residential, R7

**LOCATION:** 2615 Sykes Road  
2400 Gable Road

**PROPOSAL:** New public (city) sanitary sewer main through two private properties

**SITE INFORMATION / BACKGROUND**

There are two adjacent properties involved, with one abutting Sykes Road and the other Gable Road. Both Sykes and Gable Roads have a sanitary sewer main within their rights-of-way. A new sanitary sewer main through the subject properties is proposed a part of a broader project throughout the City of St. Helens to improve capacity and reliability while reducing the possibility of sanitary sewer overflows. The sanitary sewer project is identified in the city's 2021 Wastewater Master Plan as needed improvements to ensure its functionality and to support growth of the city.

2615 Sykes Road is a church, that per County Assessor data was built in 1950. 2400 Gable Road is a elderly assisted living use, more recently developed in 2000.

**PUBLIC HEARING & NOTICE**

**Public hearing** before the Planning Commission: August 12, 2025

**Notice** of this proposal was sent to surrounding property owners within 300 feet of the subject property(ies) on 300 via first class mail. Notice was sent to agencies by mail or e-mail on the same date.

**Notice** was published on July 25, 2025 in the Columbia County Spotlight newspaper.

**AGENCY REFERRALS & COMMENTS**

**Columbia County Public Works:** Any work within the Gable Road right-of-way will require a Construction Permit through the County Public Works Department. The work site for this project will need to be fully restored to equal or better conditions once the project is complete.

*Staff note: The impacted portion of Gable Road is a county jurisdiction road, whereas the affected portion of Sykes is a city jurisdiction road.*

### **APPLICABLE CRITERIA, ANALYSIS & FINDINGS**

**Zoning Compliance:** The site is zoned R7. The new sanitary sewer main is a “public facility, major” as defined by the Development Code.

Public facility minor and major are defined as:

“Public facility, major” means any public service improvement or structure developed by or for a public agency that is not defined as a minor public facility.

“Public facility, minor” means the following public service improvements or structures developed by or for a public agency:

(a) Minor utility structures, except substations, but including poles, lines, pipes or other such facilities.

(b) Sewer, storm drainage, or water system structures except treatment plants, reservoirs, or trunk lines, but including reconstruction of existing facilities, pump stations, manholes, valves, hydrants or other portions of the collection, treatment and distribution systems located within public property or specified easement.

(c) Street improvements within existing development including sidewalks, curbs, gutters, catch basins, paving, signs and traffic control devices and street lights.

(d) Transit improvements, such as shelters or pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements, located within public right-of-way or on public property.

The proposed sanitary sewer main is a new trunk line, and thus cannot be classified as a “public facility, minor,” which would be a permitted use.

\* \* \*

### **General Development Code Review:**

Impacts to paved drive aisles, landscaping and parking areas are proposed, albeit temporarily. Once completed, the sewer main will be underground with some manholes visible from the surface. The application narrative notes that restoration to surface impacts is proposed upon completion of construction.

\* \* \*

**Site Development Review:** Conditional Use Permits include Site Development Review considerations.

A key factor in this case pertains to trees. Pursuant to SHMC 17.96.180(2)(b):

Trees having a six-inch DBH (as defined by Chapter 17.132 SHMC) or greater shall be preserved or replaced by new plantings of equal character;

The application narrative notes that no trees are planned to be removed. However sheet C-120 shows a tree being removed and subject to replacement.

Also, many trees are close to the work area. Root impact and ultimate health of affected trees is a consideration.

\* \* \*

**Conditional Use:** Pursuant to SHMC 17.100.040:

(1) The planning commission shall approve, approve with conditions, or deny an application for a conditional use or to enlarge or alter a conditional use based on findings of fact with respect to each of the following criteria:

- (a) The site size and dimensions provide adequate area for the needs of the proposed use;
- (b) The characteristics of the site are suitable for the proposed use considering size, shape, location, topography, and natural features;
- (c) All required public facilities have adequate capacity to serve the proposal;
- (d) The applicable requirements of the zoning district are met except as modified by this chapter;
- (e) The supplementary requirements set forth in Chapter 17.88 SHMC, Signs; and Chapter 17.96 SHMC, Site Development Review, if applicable, are met; and
- (f) The use will comply with the applicable policies of the comprehensive plan.

**These are the core CUP criteria for the Commission consideration.**

SHMC 17.100.150 has additional requirements for certain conditional use types. The proposal does not include any of these.

SHMC 17.100.040(3) provides “condition of approval guidance” as follows:

(3) The planning commission may impose conditions on its approval of a conditional use, which it finds are necessary to ensure the use is compatible with other use in the vicinity. These conditions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (a) Limiting the hours, days, place, and manner of operation;
- (b) Requiring design features which minimize environmental impacts such as noise, vibration, air pollution, glare, odor, and dust;
- (c) Requiring additional setback areas, lot area, or lot depth or width;
- (d) Limiting the building height, size or lot coverage, or location on the site;
- (e) Designating the size, number, location, and design of vehicle access points;
- (f) Requiring street right-of-way to be dedicated and the street to be improved;
- (g) Requiring landscaping, screening, drainage and surfacing of parking and loading areas;
- (h) Limiting the number, size, location, height, and lighting of signs;
- (i) Limiting or setting standards for the location and intensity of outdoor lighting;
- (j) Requiring berming, screening or landscaping and the establishment of standards for their installation and maintenance;
- (k) Requiring and designating the size, height, location, and materials for fences; and
- (l) Requiring the protection and preservation of existing trees, soils, vegetation, watercourses, habitat areas, and drainage areas.

**These are for the Commission’s consideration.**

The uses impacted are institutional supporting religious and elderly care aspects of the community. As places where people visit and congregate, the existing trees are an important amenity.

Chapter 17.132 (discussed below) address trees with a trunk diameter exceeding 12" dbh. However, as noted above, Site Development Review / Conditional Use Permit tree considerations includes trees at least 6" dbh, though a protection plan by an arborist is not explicitly triggered for these smaller trees.

As such, staff recommends that the arborist's tree protection plan per Chapter 17.132 SHMC include trees as small as 6" dbh, not just those >12" dbh.

\* \* \*

**Tree Removal/Preservation:** Chapter 17.132 SHMC addresses the preservation of trees with a diameter at breast height (DBH) >12 inches. Protection is preferred over removal per this Chapter and Site Development Review Chapter 17.96 SHMC.

A tree inventory has been provided, which is required when there are more than 10 trees or any trees over 2' dbh. There are more than 10 trees on the subject properties and at least two trees greater the 2' dbh. More specifically, there are over two dozen trees along the proposed sanitary sewer route including over a half dozen larger than 12 inches dbh.

A protection program by a certified arborist defining the standards and methods that will be used to protect the existing trees to be preserved shall be required. This shall be on or with the construction plan set to ensure contractors and others follow the tree protection plan during site development.

Note that there is a tree specifically proposed to be removed because the sanitary sewer line runs right through its location, though it is identified as being 8" dbh, and thus not specifically subject to replacement per this Chapter.



**Left:** two of the largest trees close to the proposed sanitary sewer line are in a greenspace area along Sykes. This photo taken from the 2615 Sykes Road property looking north towards Sykes.





**Upper Left:** This photo taken from the 2615 Sykes Road property looking south. Note the trees along the fence line and, in particular the grove towards the ends of the asphalt; this is where at least one tree is proposed to be removed.



**Center Left:** This photo taken from the 2400 Gable Road property from the north side looking south. Note the trees on the right side of the paved drive aisle, which will be close to the construction effort. Note the already broken curb in the foreground on the right side.



**Below Left:** This is a bulb-out in the otherwise straight curb along where the new sewer line will be placed on the 2400 Gable Road property. The plans show a tree here though this photo taken on July 31, 2025 shows only a stump. Note the already broken curb and busted PVC pipe.

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

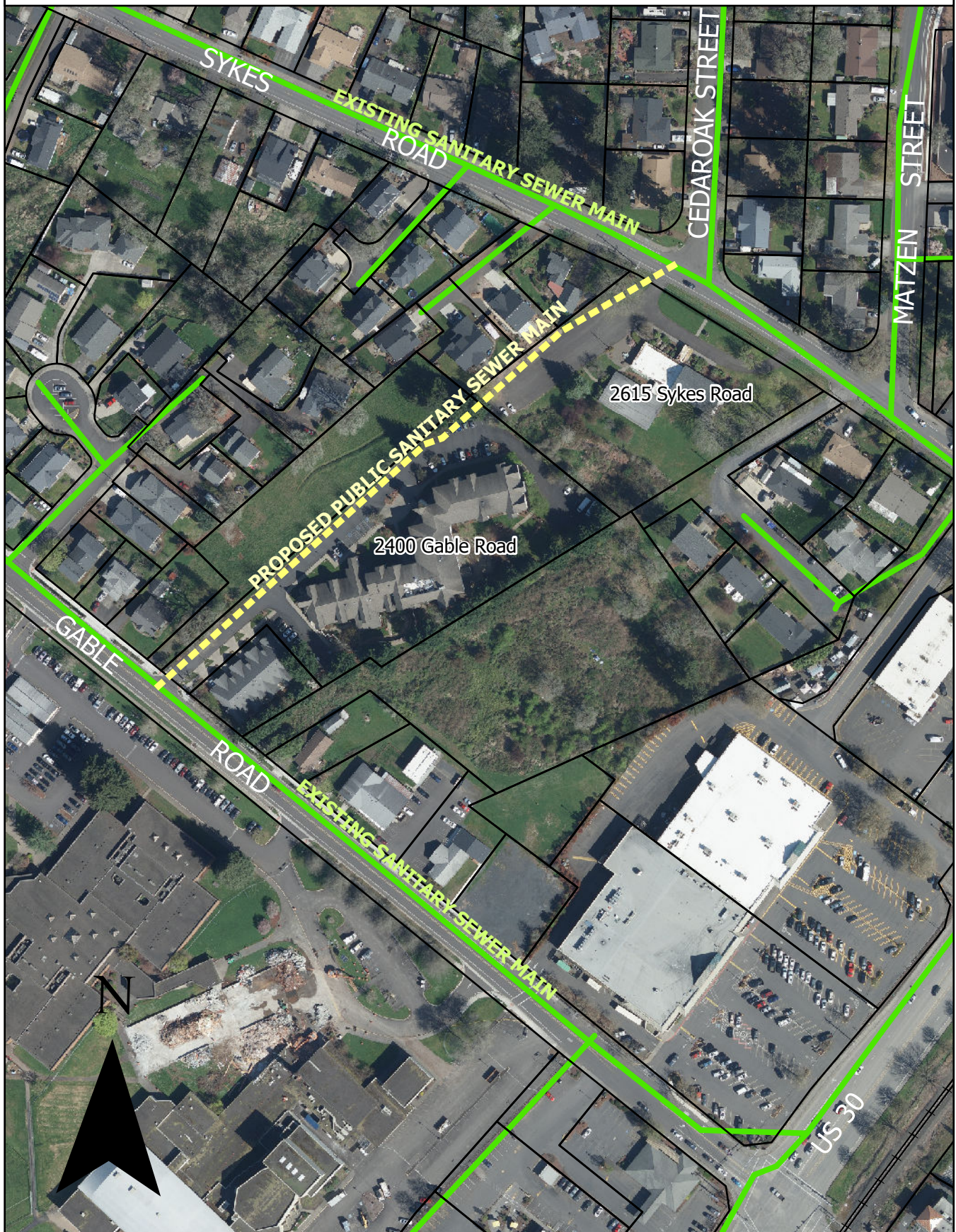
**Based upon the facts and findings herein, staff recommends approval of this Conditional Use Permit with the following conditions:**

- 1.** This **Conditional Use Permit** approval is valid for a limited time (to establish the use) pursuant to SHMC 17.100.030. This Conditional Use Permit approval is valid for 1 year. A 1-year extension is possible but requires an application and fee. If the approval is not vested within the initial 1 year period or an extension (if approved), this is no longer valid and a new application would be required if the proposal is still desired. See SHMC 17.100.030.
- 2.** Any work within the Gable Road right-of-way will require a Construction Permit through the County Public Works Department.
- 3.** A protection program by a certified arborist defining the standards and methods that will be used to protect the existing trees to be preserved shall be required. This shall be on or with the construction plan set to ensure contractors and others follow the tree protection plan during site development. **This tree protection plan shall include all trees at least 6" dbh with their critical root zone in the area of impact for sanitary sewer construction. The area of impact includes but is not limited to trenching, temporary storage of materials such as dirt and pipe, and areas needed for machinery maneuvering.**

**Attachment(s):** General Proposal Map (city staff created)  
Plan and Profile Sheets (x3) (Conzor created)



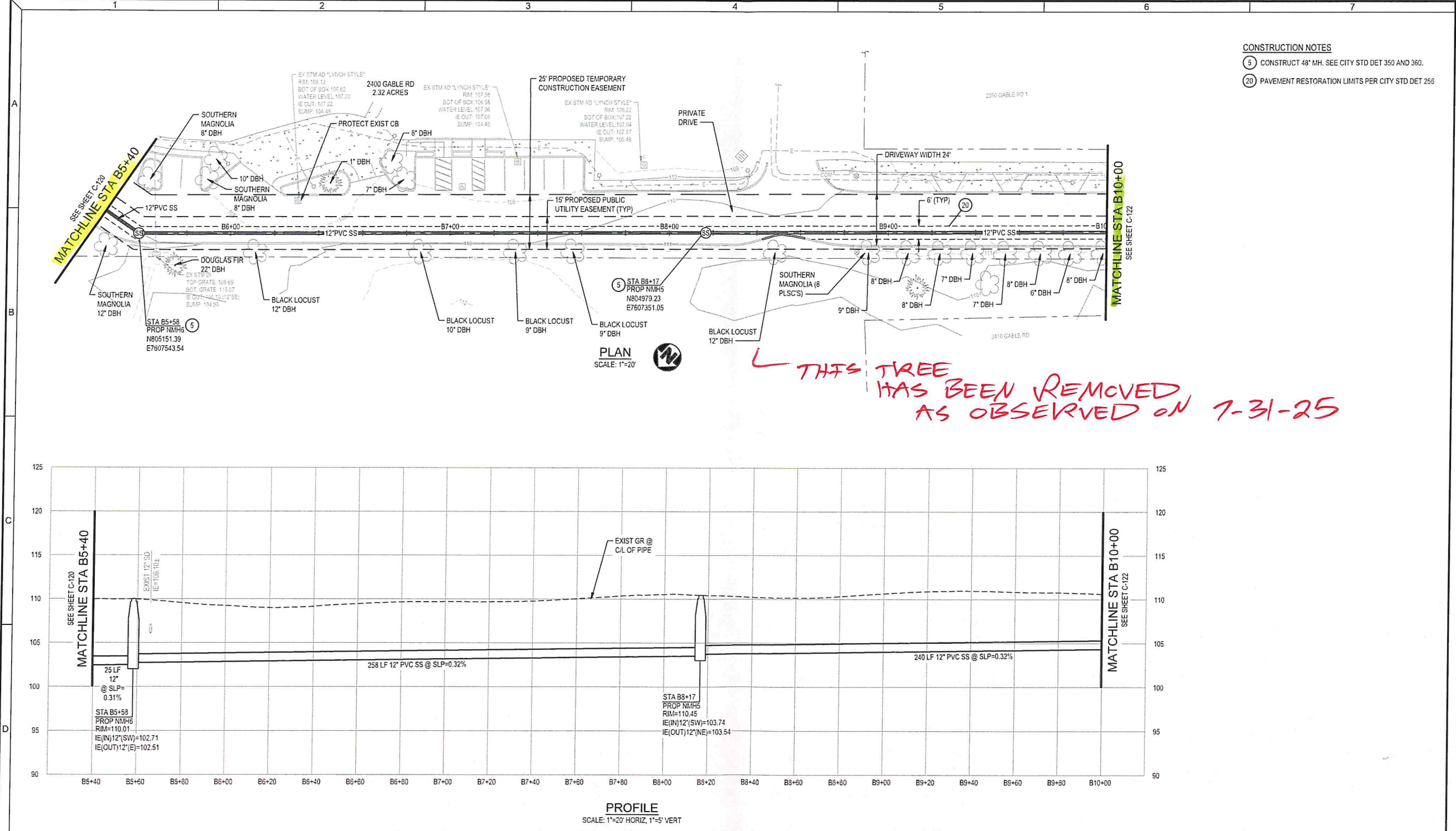
# CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT CUP.1.25 - GENERAL PROPOSAL MAP











- CONSTRUCTION NOTES
- 5 CONSTRUCT 48" MH. SEE CITY STD DET 350 AND 360.
  - 20 PAVEMENT RESTORATION LIMITS PER CITY STD DET 255

THIS TREE HAS BEEN REMOVED AS OBSERVED ON 7-31-25

 <small>This document, ideas, and designs incorporated herein, are an instrument of professional service, and is not to be used, in whole or in part, for any other project without the written authorization of CONSOR.</small>	<b>CITY OF ST HELENS LAND USE APPLICATION</b>	<b>PRELIMINARY NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION</b>	 <small>CITY OF ST. HELENS FOUNDED IN 1890</small>	<b>CITY OF ST. HELENS WASTEWATER SYSTEM CAPACITY IMPROVEMENTS BASIN 4 AND 6 PROJECT NO. S-679</b>	<b>CIVIL BASIN 6  PLAN AND PROFILE STA B5+40 TO STA B10+00</b>	Designed By: <b>BTM</b>	Consor Project No.: <b>W233257OR</b>
						Drawn By: <b>NEM</b>	Issued On: <b>MAY 2025</b>
						Checked By: <b>WSE</b>	Sheet: <b>C-121</b>
						Approved By: <b>BVO</b>	

