

Request to Littleton Conservation Commission

Request to remove two hazardous trees

DEP File No. 204-901

49 Matawanakee Trail
David and Patricia Barr
978-201-9524
barrdt@gmail.com

Arborist Dean Charter has provided documentation identifying two trees on our property as being hazardous and recommending that they be removed.

One tree (a large oak) is within the 50-foot buffer zone for Lake Matawanakee. The other tree (a smaller oak) is within the 100-foot buffer zone for Lake Matawanakee.

Although the removal of these trees is not directly related to the open Order of Conditions for DEP File No. 204-901 (Construction of a single family home and related work) that project is identified here since it is in ongoing at the site.

The letters from Dean Charter with his recommendations are included here.

In addition, pictures of the trees and a map showing their locations are included.

Additional content provided 7/19/2023:

Narrative for tree removal

Locations of remaining oak trees

Tree replacement plan

Vegetation planted in 2022-2023

Plan for removing stump of large oak

DEAN A. CHARTER, CONSULTING ARBORIST
ISA #NE-0333A
81 CHARTER ROAD, ACTON, MA 01720
DEAN_CHARTER@VERIZON.NET
978-501-1408

May 7, 2023

Mr. David Barr
49 Matawanakee Trail
Littleton, MA
barrdt@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Barr,

I am an Arborist certified by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA # NE-0333A), with over forty years of experience in both the commercial and municipal fields.

You asked me to evaluate a large (27" DBH) Oak tree on the slope between your home and the lake, and make a recommendation about how to save the tree during construction. On Friday, May 5 we met on site to look at the situation. All observations were made from ground level, and other than a steel push rod no investigative tools or equipment was used.

The tree was on a steep slope between the house and lake, and the grade had been disturbed in the past and presently. The ground was compacted, and a number of retaining walls were either present or under construction. I noted that the tree had a crack in the main crotch about 30 feet up, and that there was a large cavity in the buttress roots.

The critical root zone of a tree is commonly defined as a radius in feet around the tree equivalent to the diameter of the tree in inches. All excavation and disturbance in the Critical Root Zone should be avoided or mitigated. The Critical Root Zone of this tree is about 27 feet in radius or 54 feet in diameter. Virtually the entire critical rootzone of the tree has been compromised. This fact, plus the obvious flaws noted above (crack in crotch and cavity in root buttress), leads me to the recommendation that the only safe course of action would be to remove the tree. This is a standing hazard tree.

If the decision is made to retain the tree, further excavation should be avoided, and a Certified Arborist hired to install a cable secured with through bolted eye bolts installed to attempt to hold the two leaders together. That said, my original recommendation stands.

Regards,
Dean A. Charter
Dean A. Charter, Certified Arborist

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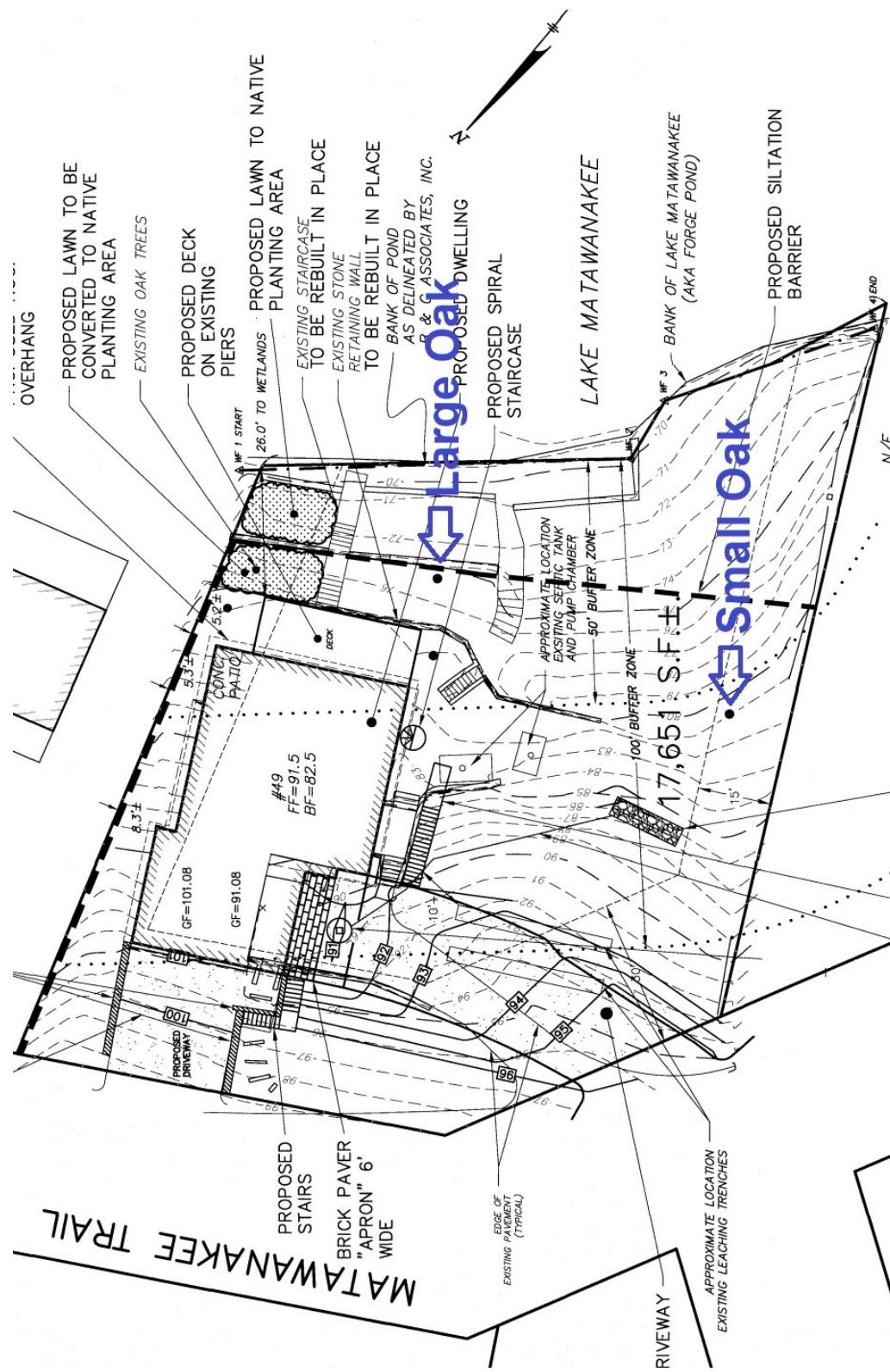
You asked me to evaluate a small (14" DBH) Oak tree on the slope between your home and the neighbor at #45, and make a recommendation about the condition of the tree. On Friday, May 5 we met on site to look at the situation. All observations were made from ground level, and other than a steel push rod no investigative tools or equipment was used.

The tree was leaning towards the residence at #45 Matawanakee, and I noted cavities in the tree at around four feet above grade. I probed the cavities and noted that the entire center of the tree is hollow and the two cavities, on opposite sides of the tree, almost connect. The tree trunk is like a soda straw with two holes in it, and it is at risk of failure, falling onto the adjacent home. The only safe course of action would be to remove the tree. This is a standing hazard tree.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,
Dean A. Charter
Dean A. Charter, Certified Arborist

Location of trees:



Photos of the large oak







Photos of the small oak:







Additional content provided 7/19/2023

Narrative

We would very much like to keep the large oak that is between the house and the lake. It provides great shade for our house and adds nice character to the lot. It was one of the four oaks that we had instructed our building contractor to be sure to keep in place during our house renovation.

This larger oak had previously pushed over the original stone wall that was next to it, with its growing roots. As we are replacing the former wall, we wanted to position the new wall in a way that would best preserve the oak. We envisioned a much lower section of the wall in this area that would now skirt around the tree, positioned at sufficient distance from the tree to avoid interfering with the tree roots and low enough to provide the right soil grade for the roots. We knew Dean Charter as a certified arborist from his time as the Tree Warden in Acton and we asked him to come review the tree and advise us on how best to position the wall to preserve the tree.

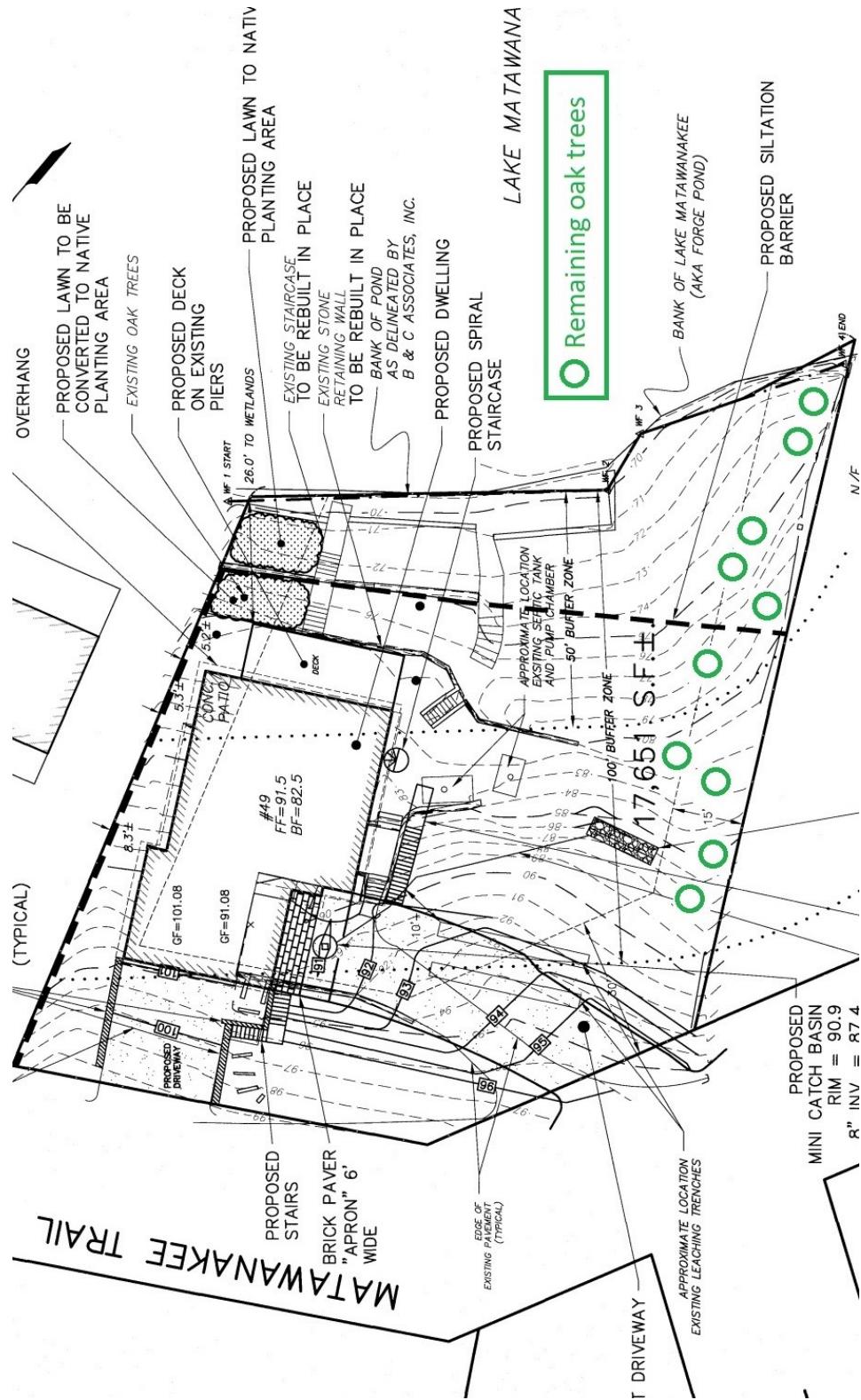
To our surprise, he said the tree was a hazard with the two main branches splitting apart and an open area between two of the main tree roots. He recommended that the tree be removed for safety reasons. We asked about reinforcing the branches with a cable to relieve the stress where the main branches meet and allow the tree to remain standing. He said our best option with cabling was not going to be very satisfactory. And the open area between the roots had soft wood that extended upward and also halfway through the tree diameter. We brought in a tree company to give us a quote on doing the cabling to support the branches and their representative also said that cabling would not be effective and the soft wood at the base of the tree was a particular concern.

As such, we reluctantly decided that the large oak needed to be removed. The yard area around the tree is actively used as the waterfront and a play area. And the height of the tree would mean that it could pose a real risk at quite a distance from the tree, including to those of us in the house.

The smaller oak, on the side of our lot next to the Hoffmans' house (45 Matawanakee Trl) was also recognized by Dean Charter as a hazard when he was here, with two holes on opposite sides of the tree and rotten wood completely between the two holes. He recommended that we remove it, especially since it leans over the Hoffmans' house. We agreed and included it in our request.

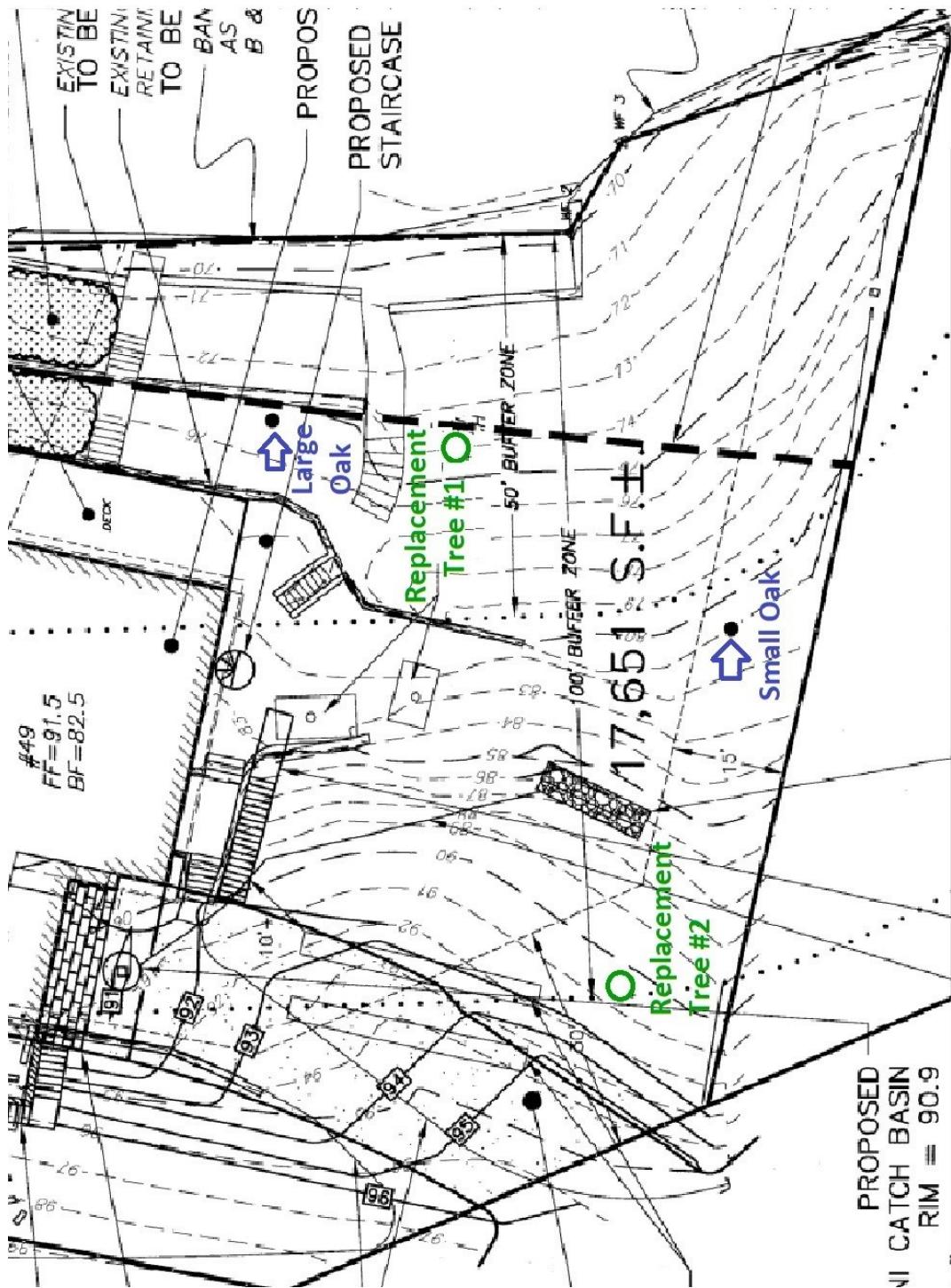
If we do get permission to take out the larger oak, we would ask that its stump could also be removed. With the distance from the lake and the landscaping that will be in place (level turf and stone walls), there won't be an issue with any erosion into the lake. As much as we would like to keep the tree in place, there is really no reason to leave the stump behind.

Location of remaining oak trees
 (approximate locations, since we are currently out of town)





Tree replacement plan



Suggest replacement trees to be flowering trees, such as Cherry, Dogwood, or Apple, etc.

Vegetation planted in 2022-2023

Locations A, B, C, D shown in figure on next page

Location A

Bushes

- Lilac bush
- Forsythia bushes – 3

Low plants

- Daylilies
- Stella d'Oro Daylilies
- Hostas
- Lupine -- multiple plants
- Iris -- multiple plantings (2 kinds)
- Hydrangea
- Pink flowers
- Autumn joy
- Lily of the Valley – multiple plantings

Location B

Bushes

- Lilacs – 2

Location C

Bushes

- Blueberry bushes – 4 (replaced existing grass)
- Rose of Sharon
- Hydrangeas -- 2
- PJM rhododendrons -- 4
- Boxwood

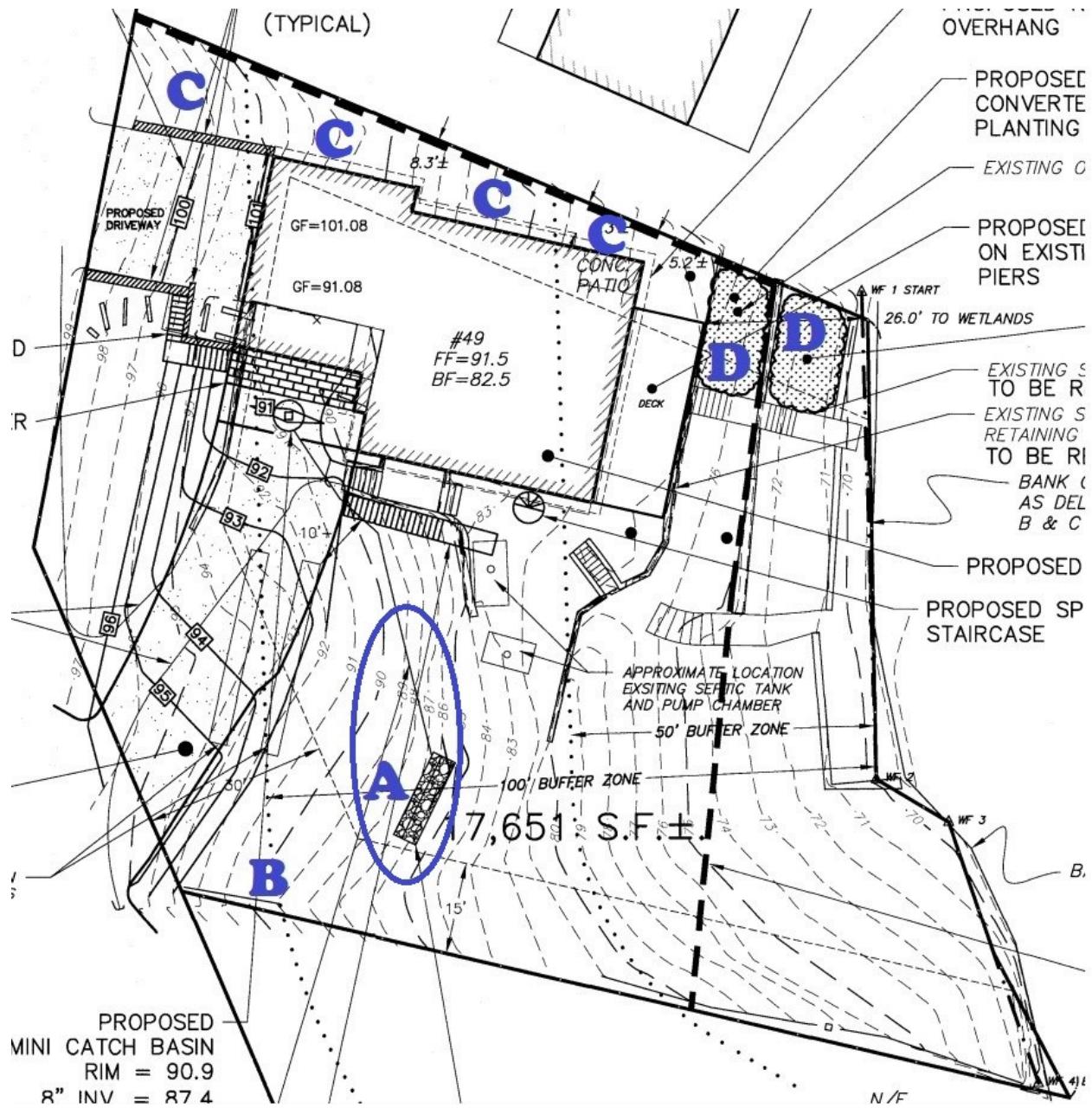
Low plants

- Ornamental grasses (2 kinds)
- Various ground cover plants
- Iris -- multiple plantings
- Lupine plantings
- Hostas
- Daylilies – 10-ft bed
- Rhubarb -- 4
- Lily of the Valley – multiple plantings

Still to be planted:

Location D

Pollinator gardens



Plan for removing stump of large oak

We propose removing the stump for the large oak by using a backhoe, shovels, and pickaxes to excavate around the stump, only as much as is needed to cut the stump loose. We plan to use chainsaws and a backhoe to cut the roots and a backhoe to remove the stump from the area.

Care will be taken so no erosion occurs while the stump is being removed. The ground is level between the tree and the stone wall next to the lake. Erosion controls are in place between the tree and the lake. When the stump has been removed, the stone wall which had been in front of the tree will be rebuilt, so there will be no chance of erosion from the site where the stump was removed.