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Local Businesses Team Up to Save Trees on Round Hill Project

When Bay Homes started planning for a custom home project in the town of Round Hill last December, they faced a problem that has turned into an opportunity. "The half-acre home site on the West side of Town was a beautiful lot with a gentle slope and views to the Blue Ridge, but it had a lot of large trees in and near the building envelope" said the builder. Large dogwoods, redbuds, apple and plum trees, and an exotic magnolia were directly in the building area on the site.



There were also a couple of towering oaks and maples including a specimen Scarlet Oak that measured over ten feet around the trunk that would need to be removed in order to build a traditional style custom home. "We determined early on that we would try to save every tree."

Their first task was to develop a custom home plan that would mitigate damage to the trees immense root systems. Gretchen Ginnerty, the owner of The Design Department, an architectural firm in McLean presented in designs options and after numerous iterations and revisions, the architect and builder had designed a 4,200 s.f. plan that was functional, aesthetically pleasing, and that

appeared to fit between the trees. The resulting custom plan named "The Oak" for obvious reasons, has an L shaped floor plan with a front building width of only thirty feet, a rear width of nearly fifty feet and a detached garage that could be sited between the trees in the rear yard area.

In March, the builder hired Round Hill resident and past Town Mayor, Jeff Wolford and his engineering firm Wolford and Chen PC to create a house site and grading plan for the home to meet Town's zoning requirements. The preliminary plan was revised three times to move the house further back on the lot and to rotate the house and garage structures to optimize the

trees' chances for survival. The process of shoehorning the buildings between the trees created a couple of surprise benefits for the project. According to the builder, "By moving the house back on the lot, we were able to accommodate a circular drive in front of the home and to add seven large windows into the finished basement area for great light and views due to the additional drop in grade toward the rear of the lot. The rotation of the house also allows the wrapped porch a better exposure to the street and a curved driveway for improved access around the maple into the garage."

The builder consulted with an arborist, Don Zimar of Zimar Associates, to determine the best method for moving the smaller trees and protecting the large shade trees. Don indicated that the Scarlet Oak was valued around \$30,000 due to its size, age, shape and health. Arbogast Lawn and Tree Inc. of Purcellville donated several loads of wood chips for root protection and moisture retention and some bee sting medicine to the cause while judiciously trimming branches from the large trees to allow the concrete pumps and cranes clearance for the home's construction. "I was glad to help when I heard that (the builder) was planning to save the huge oak," remarked Paul Arbogast, former Purcellville Town

Council member, while supervising his bucket truck crew.

In May, Jack Patience, owner of Shady Dell Tree Movers Inc., brought in his biggest spade truck to relocate eight trees from the building area to other locations around the perimeter of the site and adjoining property. At the end of the day, Jack informed the builder how to care for the newly transplanted trees. All of the trees appear healthy today, although they show some signs of stress from the move and the summer heat.

The house construction started in July and is scheduled to be completed in February. According to the builder, "The process of saving the trees has been and continues to be a team effort that includes the project engineers, architects, subcontractors and suppliers. It has added costs and challenges to the project. However, it has been worth the effort according to Bay Homes. The home will look like it's always been there and the response from the neighbors and potential buyers has been great.

An open house will be held in early spring after the home is completed for all. The project is located at 10 North Locust Street in the Town of Round Hill. ♦