

# **DeKalb County Zoning Board of Appeals**

Department of Planning & Sustainability 178 Sams Street Decatur, GA 30030



Michael L. Thurmond Chief Executive Officer Wednesday, June 12th, 2024

Cedric Hudson Interim Director

## **Planning Department Staff Analysis**

D4. Case No: A-24-1246907 Parcel ID(s): 18 105 06 030

#### **Commission District 02 Super District 06**

Applicant: Bill Caldwell – BCLA Design

85 Wing Mill Road

Sandy Springs, GA 30350

Owner: Rya Zalik

1141 Empire Road Atlanta, GA 30329

**Project Name:** 1141 Empire Road **Location**: 1141 Empire Road, Atlanta, GA 30329

**Request**: Variance from Section 27-2.2.1 of the DeKalb County Zoning Ordinance to increase the lot coverage from 35%

to 39.5% to construct an elevator addition to a single-family residence within the R-85 (Residential Medium

Lot) Zoning District.

**Staff Determination**: Approval with Condition.

1. The following information about this variance shall be noted on any site plan prepared for the subject property: case number, approval date, type of variance and condition(s) of approval.

#### **STAFF FINDINGS:**

1. There is an extraordinary or exceptional physical condition(s) pertaining to the particular piece of property (such as, but not limited to, lot size, lot shape, specimen tree(s), steep slope(s), or preservation of historic characteristics of the property), which was not created by the current owner, previous owner, or applicant; by reason of a clearly demonstrable condition(s), the strict application of the requirements of this chapter would deprive the property owner of rights and privileges enjoyed by other property owners in the same zoning district, as distinguished from a special privilege or convenience sought by the property owner.

The applicant has revised plans to eliminate the request to construct the elevator outside of the western side yard setback. Additionally, the applicant reduced the lot coverage request from the original proposed 42.9% to 39.5%, therefore, the variance request is now to increase lot coverage from 35% to 39.5% rather than the aforementioned setback reduction.

The subject property does not appear to possess any extraordinary or exceptional physical conditions that would limit the applicant to eliminate additional concrete/pavement, construct the elevator. However, the site plan dated 5/28/2024 *Proposed Conditions Plan* details over 800 square feet of driveway being replaced with permeable surface as well as the elevator built on an existing patio in the rear southwest corner of the structure, no longer adding to the existing lot coverage. The elevator requires safe and proper internal functionality of the house. The request appears to demonstrate an accommodation that would otherwise deprive the property owner to remain in their current housing situation.

2. The requested variance does not go beyond the minimum necessary to afford relief, and does not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the zoning district in which the subject property is located:

The proposed elevator may be the minimum necessary to afford relief. The applicant has explored alternative locations and options (stairlift) which were not viable options. Additionally, the applicant has revised plans to eliminate the request to construct the elevator outside the side setback and reduce the lot coverage from the original request. The applicant is seeking to construct the minimum necessary size structure required (36 square feet) to the pre-existing primary structure and rear patio.

3. The grant of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zoning district in which the subject property is located:

The proposed elevator will not be visible from the street and will no longer encroach into the western side setback. While the applicant did not include letters of support in their application, it has been stated that the applicant has received letters of support for the proposal. Therefore, the renovation may not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or the zoning district. A letter of deferral has been submitted by the neighbor located at 1135 Empire Road (bordering the subject property to the west) due to a conflict with the June 12 ZBA meeting and Shavout.

4. The literal interpretation and strict application of the applicable provisions or requirements of this chapter would cause undue and unnecessary hardship:

The literal interpretation and strict application of the applicable provisions or requirements of the zoning regulations may cause an undue and unnecessary hardship as it pertains to the construction of the elevator. The applicant has revised plans to eliminate the request to construct the elevator outside the side setback and reduce the lot coverage. The applicant desires to age in place and is wheelchair bound.

5. The requested variance would be consistent with the spirit and purpose of this Chapter and the DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan Text:

The requested variance may not align with the spirit and purpose of the 2050 Unified Plan. The Comprehensive Plan's goal for suburban lots to maintain existing neighborhood characteristics and enhance pedestrian accessibility. The requested variance to construct an

elevator may not be considered as maintaining the existing character of the neighborhood, as elevators in single-family residences are niche and not well found in these areas. However, the request appears to be the minimum necessary to afford relief and would allow an existing resident to remain in their current housing situation.

#### **FINAL STAFF ANALYSIS:**

Under the strict application of the current requirements, the homeowner may be limited in their ability to continue to age in place without the construction of an elevator. While the request would increase the lot coverage 4.5%, it may be the minimum necessary to afford relief and no longer encroaches into the side setback. Therefore, staff recommends approval with conditions.

**Staff Determination**: Approval with Condition.

1. The following information about this variance shall be noted on any site plan prepared for the subject property: case number, approval date, type of variance and condition(s) of approval.



Development Services Center 178 Sams Street Decatur, GA 30030 www.dekalbcountyga.gov/planning 404-371-2155 (o); 404-371-4556 (f)

Chief Executive Officer
Michael Thurmond

# **DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & SUSTAINABILITY**

Interim Director Cedric Hudson

# ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION FOR PUBLIC HEARING (VARIANCES, SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS, APPEALS OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS)

Applicant and/or Authorized Repres	entative: Bill Caldwell	- BCLA Desig	jn	
	85 Wing Mill Road			
City/State/Zip Code	<sub>e:</sub> Sandy Springs, G	SA 30350		
Email: bill@bo	cladesign.com			
Telephone Home:	678-358-8055	Business:	678-358-805	5
		CORD OF SUBJEC	T PROPERTY	
Owner: Rya Z	alik			
Address (Mailing):	1141 Empire Road	d Atlanta, GA	30329	
Email:		Telephone Home: _	E	Business:
	ADDRESS/LOC	ATION OF SUBJEC	CT PROPERTY	
Address: 1141	Empire Road	City	<sub>y:</sub> Atlanta	State: GA Zip: 3032
District(s):	18 Land Lot(s):	105 <sub>Blo</sub>	ck:	Parcel: 1810506030
Zoning Clas	ssification: R85	Commission Di	strict & Super District	D 2 / SD 6
CHECK TYPE OF H	HEARING REQUESTED:			
X VARIANCE	(From Development Standar	ds causing undue ha	ardship upon owners	of property.)
SPECIAL E	XCEPTIONS (To reduce or w	aive off-street parkir	ng or loading space re	equirements.)
OFFICIAL A	APPEAL OF ADMINISTRATIV	/E DECISIONS.		

\*PLEASE REVIEW THE FILING GUIDELINES ON PAGE 4. FAILURE TO FOLLOW GUIDELINES MAY RESULT IN SCHEDULING DELAYS.\*

Email plansustain@dekalbcountyga.gov with any questions.



#### ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION

#### AUTHORIZATION TO REPRESENT THE PROPERTY OWNER

I hereby authorize the staff and members of the Zoning Board of Appeals to inspect the premises of the Subject Property.

I hereby certify that the information provided in the application is true and correct.

I hereby certify that I am the owner of the property and that I authorize the applicant/agent to apply for a hearing to the ZoningBoard of Appeals for the requests as shown in this application.

DATE:Feb. 22, 2024	Applicant/Agent Signature:	Bill Caldwell
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:	フルレ	
(I)/ (WE): Raya. (Name of Owners)	Lavin	
being (owner/owners) of the proper signed agent/applicant.	PURIPES	or attached hereby delegate authority to the above
Michael Layon	09-20-2027	RZalik
Notary Public	ton Coulin	Owner Signature
Notary Public		Owner Signature
Notary Public		Owner Signature



## ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION

#### **AUTHORIZATION OF THE PROPERTY OWNER**

I hereby authorize the staff Subject Property.	and members of the Zo	oning Board of Appeals to inspect the premises of	the
I hereby certify that the infor	mation provided in the ap	oplication is true and correct.	
I hereby certify that I am the	owner of the property su	ubject to the application.	
DATE: 02/22/24	Applicant Signature:	Rzolik	_
DATE:	Applicant		_

Signature:

### Letter of Intent 1141 Empire Road

#### Introduction

My name is Bill Caldwell, owner of BCLA Design – Landscape Architecture, and I am representing the owners of 1141 Empire Road as their agent for their zoning variance application.

#### **Context of Zoning Variance Application**

1141 Empire Road was constructed in 1994 according to tax records. The configuration of the property, with the house, driveway, pool, and hardscapes has existed since the original house was constructed, meaning that the lot coverage of the property has been this way since the house was originally built by the developer. The owner of the property is an elderly widow who wishes to age in place in her home. To achieve this, a means to get from the living spaces on the first floor to the bedrooms on the second floor is necessary, as there are no bedrooms on the first floor of this residence. The owner wishes to age in place in this home because her ties to her personal network and community are convenient to her home.

To achieve the goal of the owner being able to age in place her current home requires the construction of an elevator on the outside of the home's existing footprint, specifically, at the southwest corner of the home. This in turn requires a zoning variance to construct the elevator in a way that encroaches over the 8.5-feet side yard setback. Additionally, the property in its current state exceeds the maximum allowable lot coverage of 35%.

Given these two criteria, two zoning variances are being sought from the same section of the zoning code being Sec. 2.2.1.

The first variance request is to reduce the side yard setback from 8-feet to 6-feet to allow for the construction of an exterior elevator attached to the home.

The second variance request is to allow for the increase of lot coverage ratio from 35% to 42.9% to allow for the addition of the proposed elevator. Please note that the current lot coverage of the property is 45.8%, so the variance requested from Sec. 2.2.1 for lot coverage is less than what currently exists. This is to be achieved by replacing 442 square feet of existing impervious concrete with permeable paving. Please refer to Exhibit B for the specific Pre and Post Development Lot Coverage Analysis Tables for more specific information.

Below are responses to the five zoning variance application criteria.

#### **Physical Conditions Of The Site**

1141 Empire Road was constructed in 1994 in conjunction with the development of the subdivision that it resides within. The floor plan layout of the house did not take into consideration the possibility of a future elevator being a necessity as there is not an elevator shaft or even stacking closets between the main and second floors where an internal elevator could be constructed.

Additionally, there are no bedrooms on the main floor of the house that could be used for one-story living.

A builder and elevator company were consulted to assess the house and determine whether an elevator could be installed somewhere within the existing footprint of the house and no such viable option could be found other than constructing an elevator outside the footprint of the southwest corner of the house. The elevator is proposed in a location that would connect the family room directly to the owner's bedroom on the second floor.

It was determined that an elevator could not be retrofitted on the east side of the house due to the floor plan configuration of the kitchen, garage and dining room that has a fireplace on the eastern wall. A stair lift was also considered, but this not a practical solution for someone who is wheelchair bound.

#### **Minimum Variance Necessary**

The proposed variance for the elevator is the minimum size structure required as conveyed by the elevator company that was consulted. The existing impervious lot coverage of the property is 6,445 sq. ft. which constitutes a lot coverage ratio of 45.3%. In effort to mitigate the impact of the proposed elevator addition, the front walkway and a portion of the driveway are proposed to be replaced with permeable pavers. These two elements constitute a 442 sq. ft. reduction of impervious on the site. The resulting lot coverage, factoring in the elevator and permeable pavers is 6,038 sq. ft. which is a reduction of 407 sq. ft. equating to a 6.3% reduction of impervious on the site.

#### **Public Welfare**

The proposed elevator addition to the house is not anticipated to have a negative impact to the community for the following reasons.

- 1. The proposed location of the elevator will not be readily visible from the street.
- 2. The area of the side yard where the elevator is proposed will not require the removal of any shade trees or screening trees. To that end, new screen trees would be planted in conjunction with the construction of the elevator to mitigate its visual impact to the neighbors.
- 3. Letters of support have been obtained from adjacent neighbors for this proposed addition.
- 4. To offset the environmental / stormwater impact of this addition, 442 square feet of impervious surface is proposed to be replaced with permeable paving. This will result in a net reduction of impervious on the site, equaling 407 square feet.
- 5. No trees will be removed in the addition of the elevator. Furthermore, additional trees will be planted to screen the elevator from the neighboring property.

#### **Ordinance Hardship**

The current owner is elderly, and desires to age in place in her home because of her community ties within the immediate area, but to accomplish this, a means to get between the main and second floor for someone with impaired mobility is a necessity. To make this house functional for her lifestyle as she ages will require an elevator or stair lift, as there are no bedrooms on the first floor of

this house. The owner does not wish to move from this house due to her ties to this community and proximity to her long-standing place of worship that is nearby. As previously mentioned, a builder and elevator company assessed the house and determined that the proposed location is the only viable location for an elevator based on the configuration of the house. A stair lift system was considered, but a stair lift does not accommodate a person who is wheelchair bound which makes an option of limited benefit.

#### **Alignment With The Spirit Of The Law**

The intent of the Suburban Character Area is to recognize those areas of the county that have developed in traditional suburban land use patterns while encouraging new development to have increased connectivity and accessibility. These areas include those developed (built out) and those under development pressures. These areas are characterized by low pedestrian orientation, limited transit access, scattered civic buildings and curvilinear street patterns. Future development should provide better pedestrian and community connectivity and be designed in a way that preserves and enhances existing greenspace. The proposed density for areas of this type is up to 8 dwelling units per acre.

#### Conclusion

Summarily, the owner of 1141 Empire Road wishes to age in place in the home she's lived in since 2006. To accomplish this, an elevator to accommodate limited mobility is a necessity based on the configuration of the house. Based on the input of a builder and elevator company, the proposed location of the elevator on the exterior southwest corner of the house is the only viable option for this house. The proposed elevator addition is proposed in conjunction with mitigative measures that include evergreen screening plants and replacing 442 square feet of impervious surface with permeable pavers, resulting in an overall reduction of 407 square feet of impervious surface on the site and will reduce the impervious lot cover from 45.3% to 42.4%.

Thank you for the board's thorough consideration of this matter and zoning variance petition.

Sincerely,

Bill Caldwell BCLA Design

Applicant for 1141 Empire Road

Bill Caldwell

# Exhibit A Site Photos Of Existing Conditions



Photo 1 – Front of Residence from Empire Road



Photo 2 – View of West Side of 1141 Empire As Seen From Google Maps Street View

# Exhibit A Site Photos Of Existing Conditions



Photo 3 – View of West Side of 1141 Empire
As Seen From Rear Yard of Property

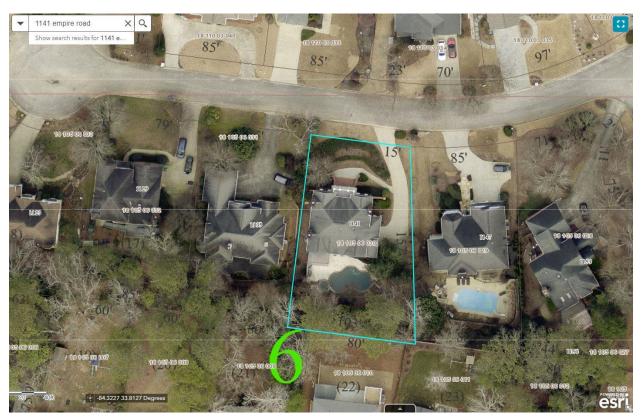


Photo 4 – Aerial View of 1141 Empire From DeKalb Co. GIS

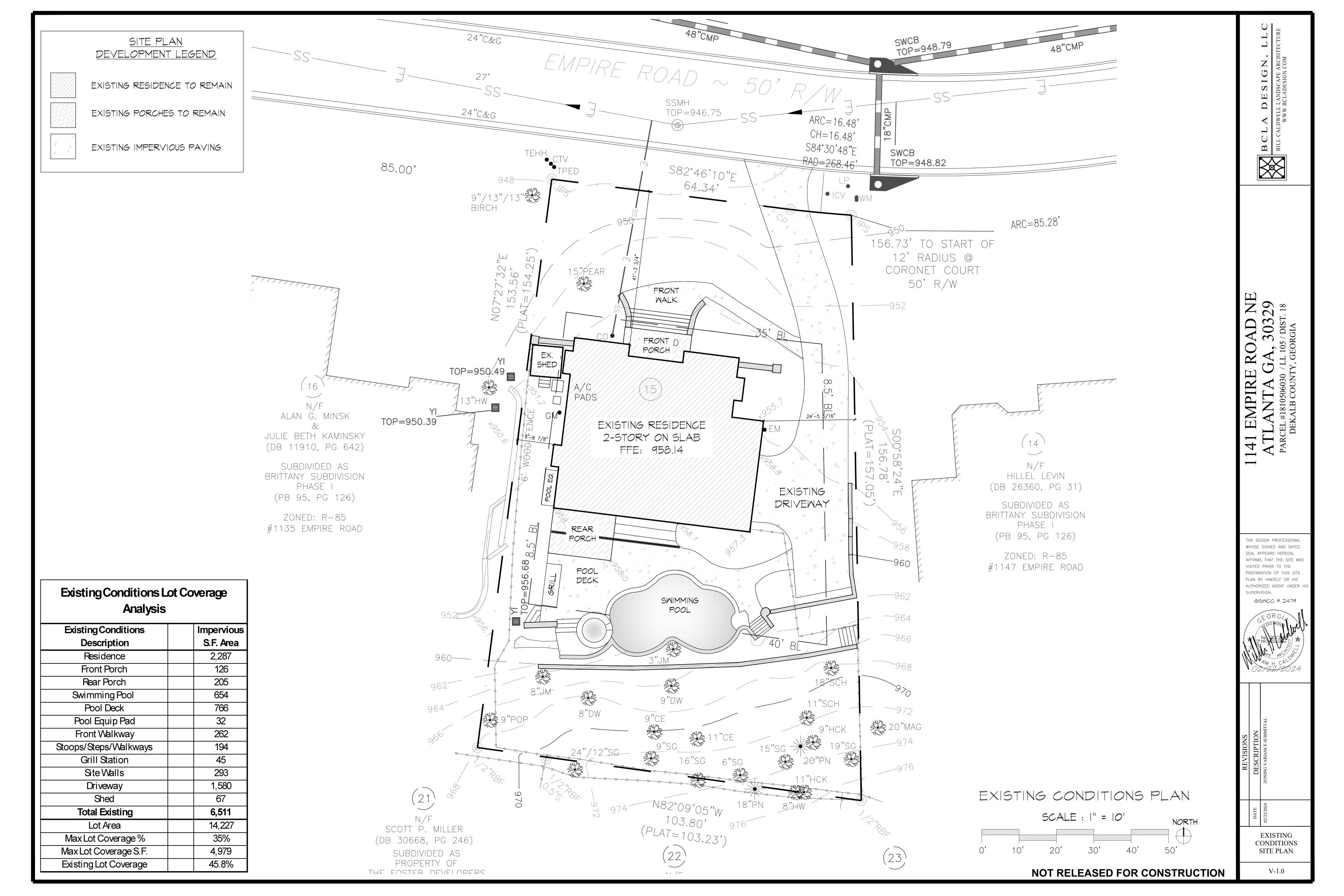
**Exhibit B**Pre and Post Development Lot Coverage Analysis Tables

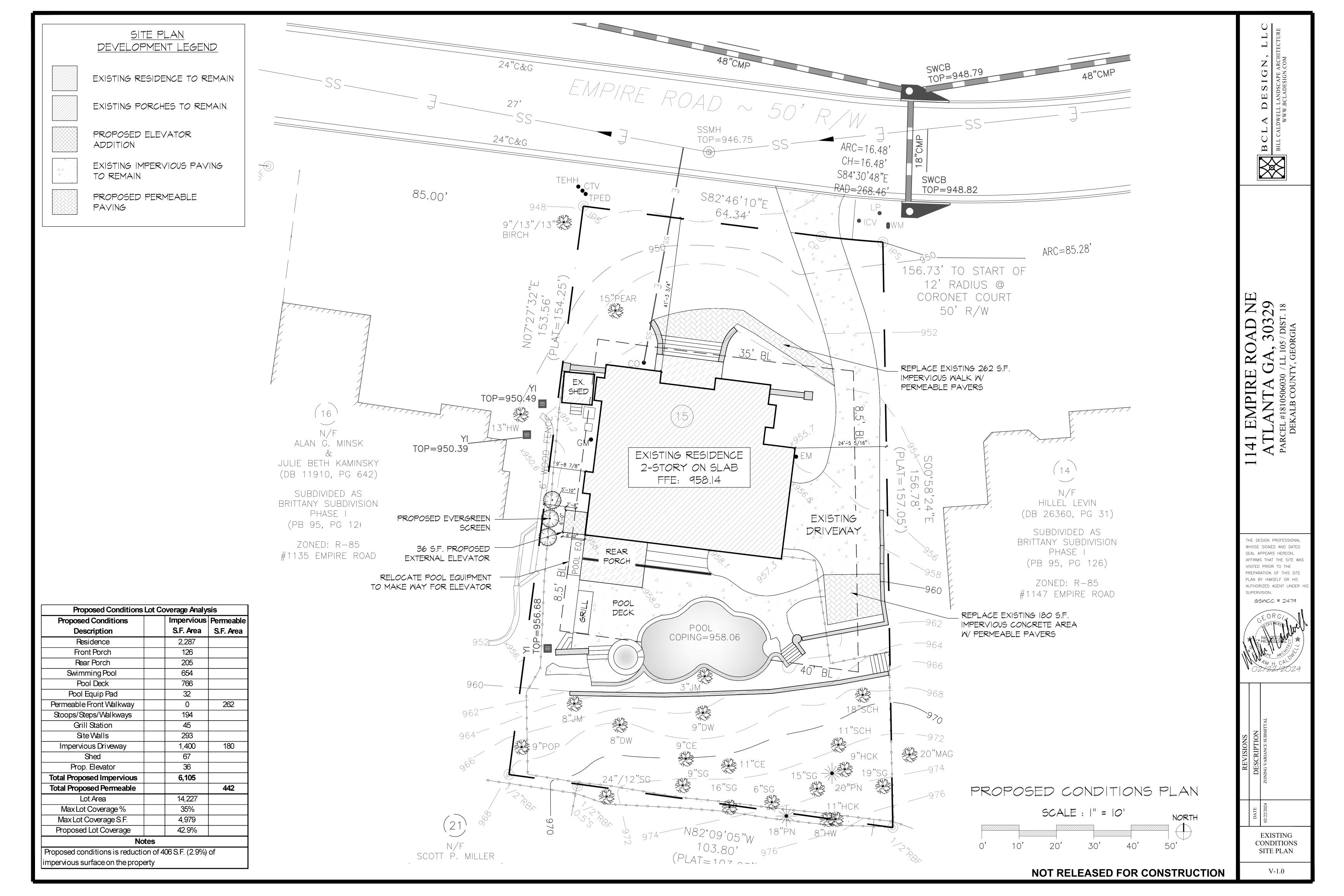
Existing Conditions Lot Coverage Analysis			
Existing Conditions Description	Impervious S.F. Area		
Residence	2,287		
Front Porch	126		
Rear Porch	205		
Swimming Pool	654		
Pool Deck	766		
Pool Equip Pad	32		
Front Walkway	262		
Stoops/Steps/Walkways	194		
Grill Station	45		
Site Walls	293		
Driveway	1,580		
Shed	67		
Total Existing	6,511		
Lot Area	14,227		
Max Lot Coverage %	35%		
Max Lot Coverage S.F.	4,979		
Existing Lot Coverage	45.8%		

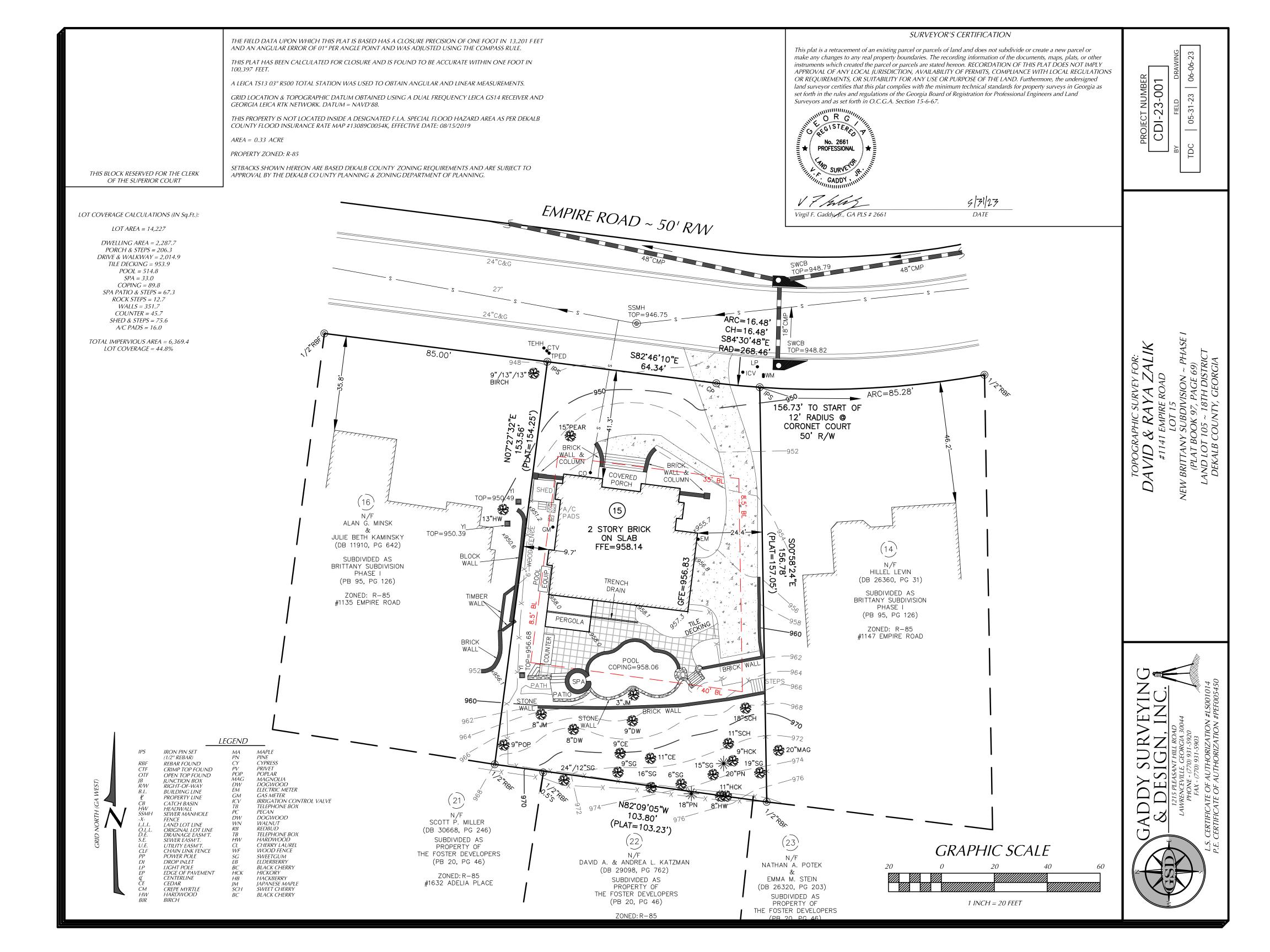
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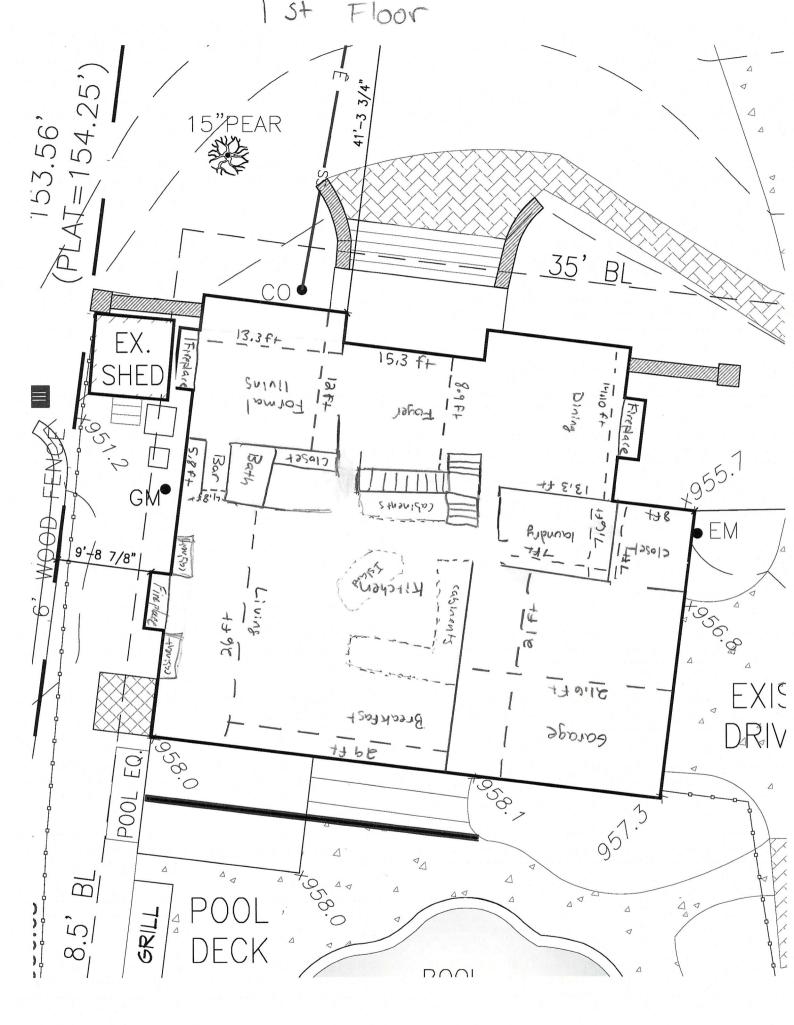
Proposed Conditions Lot Coverage Analysis			
Proposed Conditions  Description	Impervious S.F. Area	Permeable S.F. Area	
Residence	2,287		
Front Porch	126		
Rear Porch	205		
Swimming Pool	654		
Pool Deck	766		
Pool Equip Pad	32		
Permeable Front Walkway	0	262	
Stoops/Steps/Walkways	194		
Grill Station	45		
Site Walls	293		
Impervious Driveway	1,400	180	
Shed	67		
Prop. Elevator	36		
Total Proposed Impervious	6,105		
Total Proposed Permeable		442	
Lot Area	14,227		
Max Lot Coverage %	35%		
Max Lot Coverage S.F.	4,979		
Proposed Lot Coverage	42.9%		
Note	S		

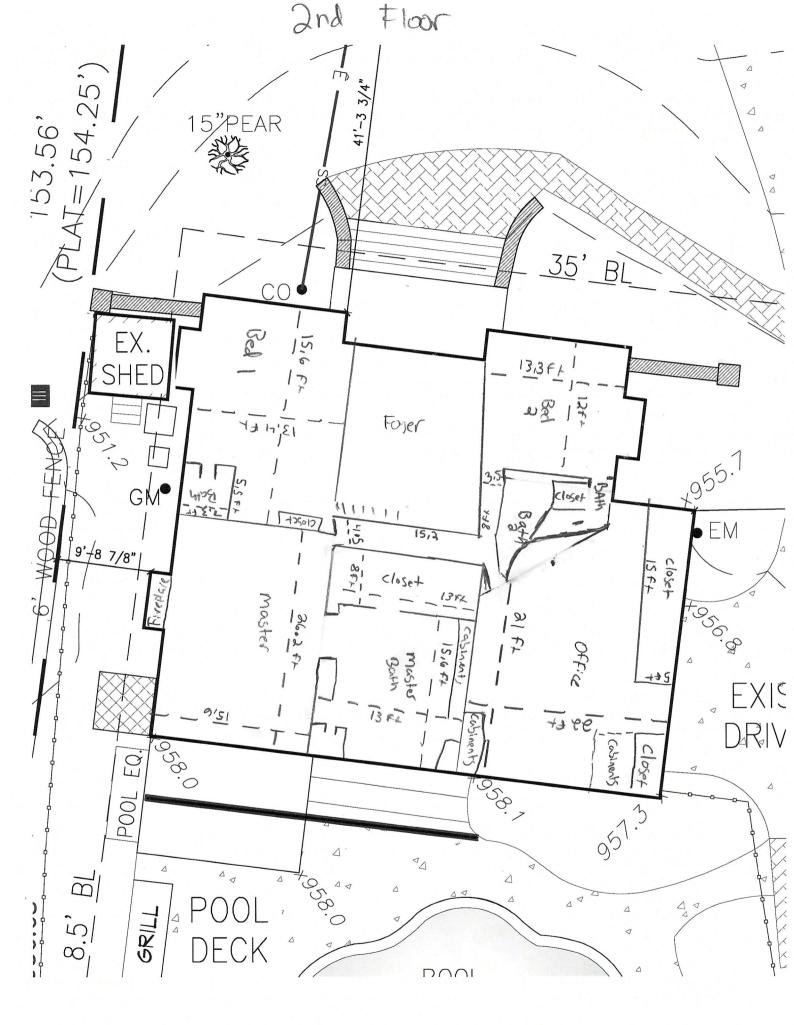
Proposed conditions is reduction of 406 S.F. (2.9%) of impervious surface on the property

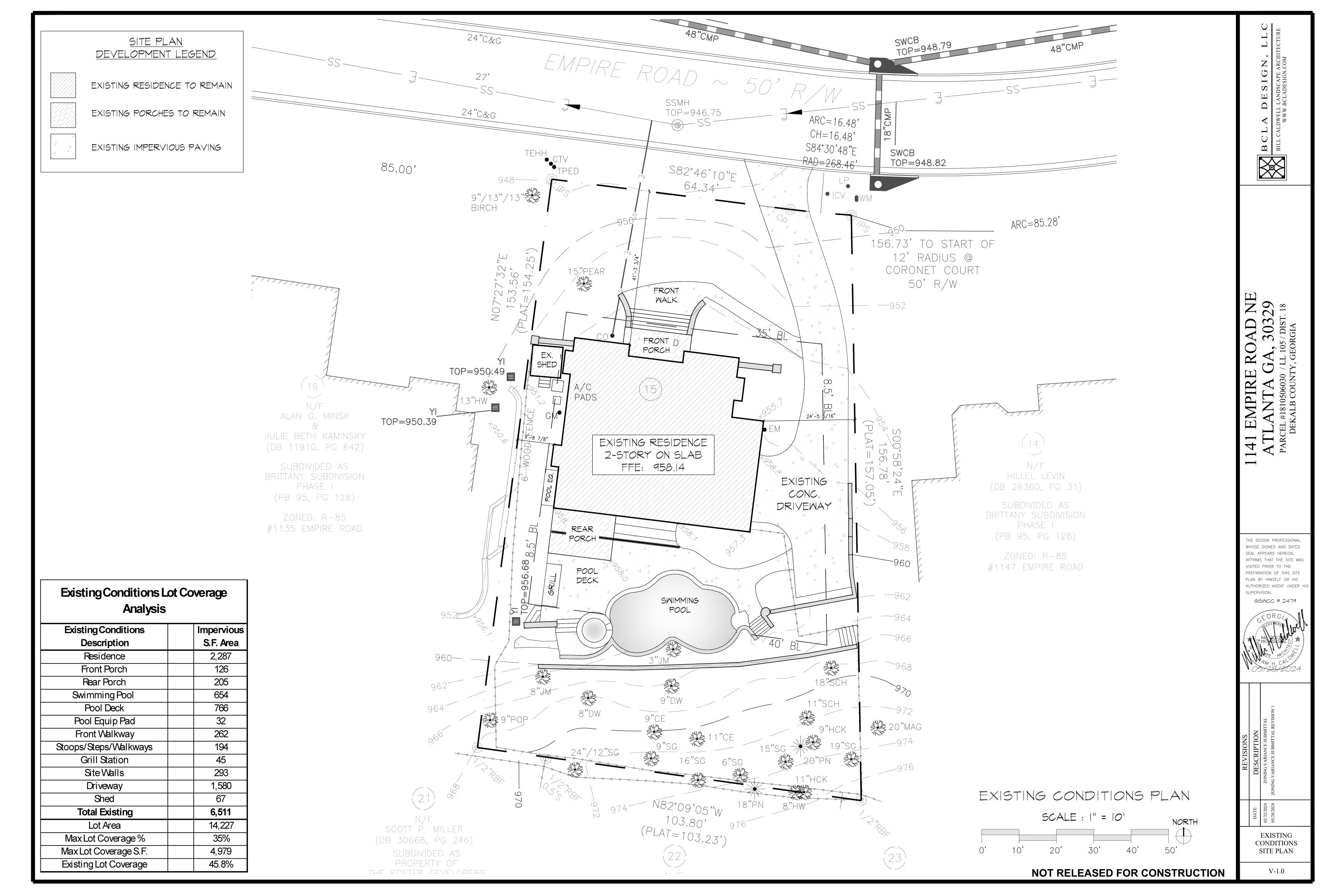


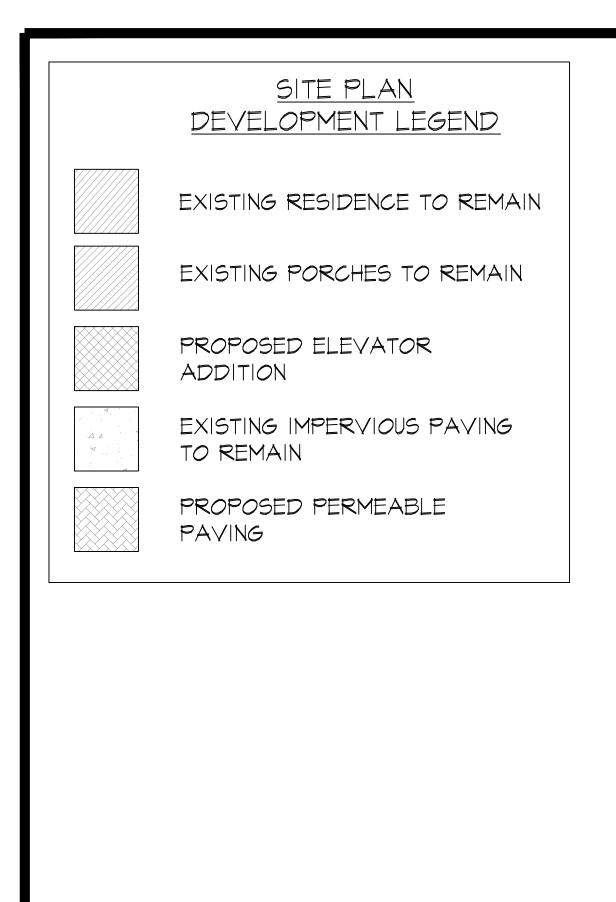








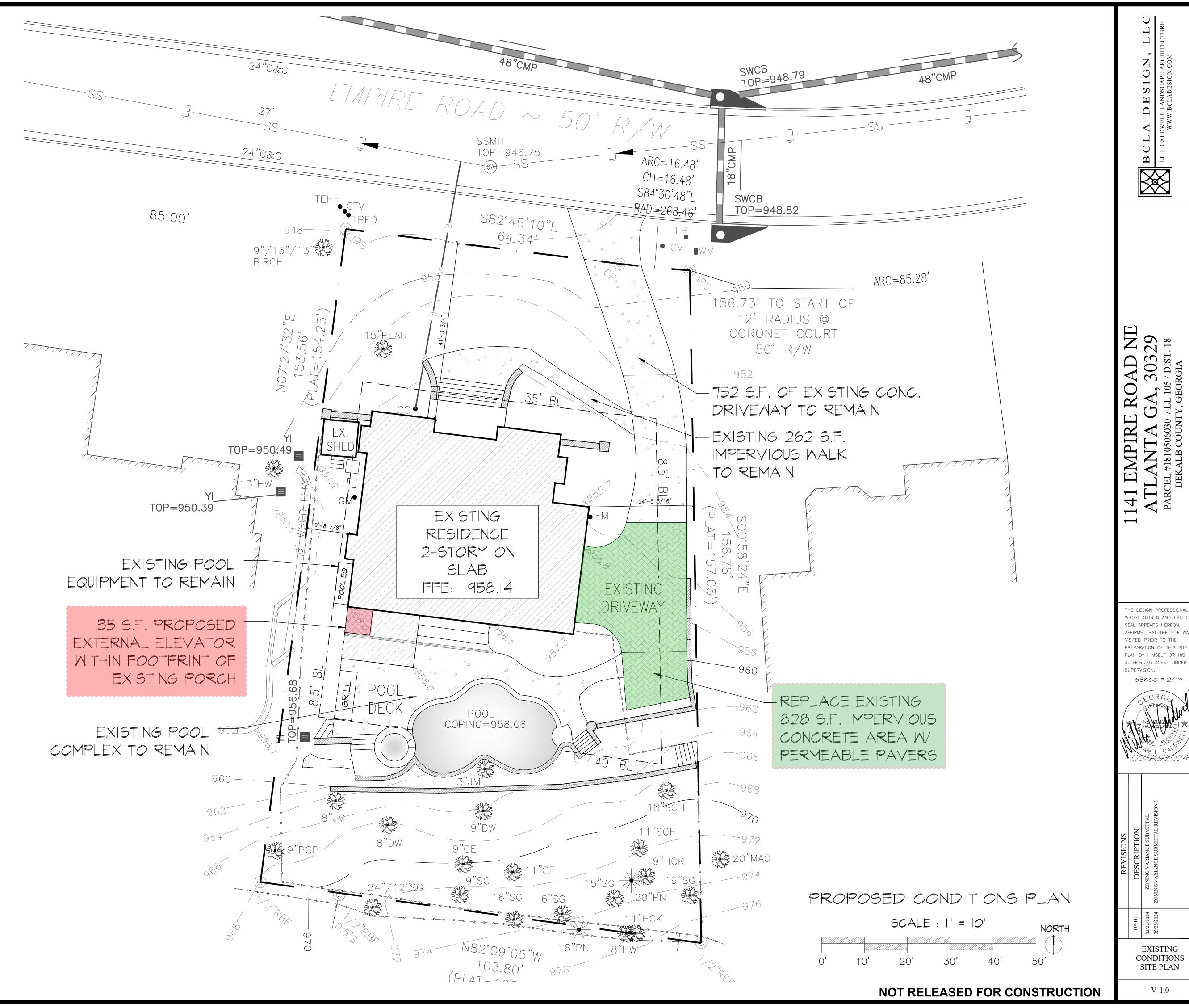


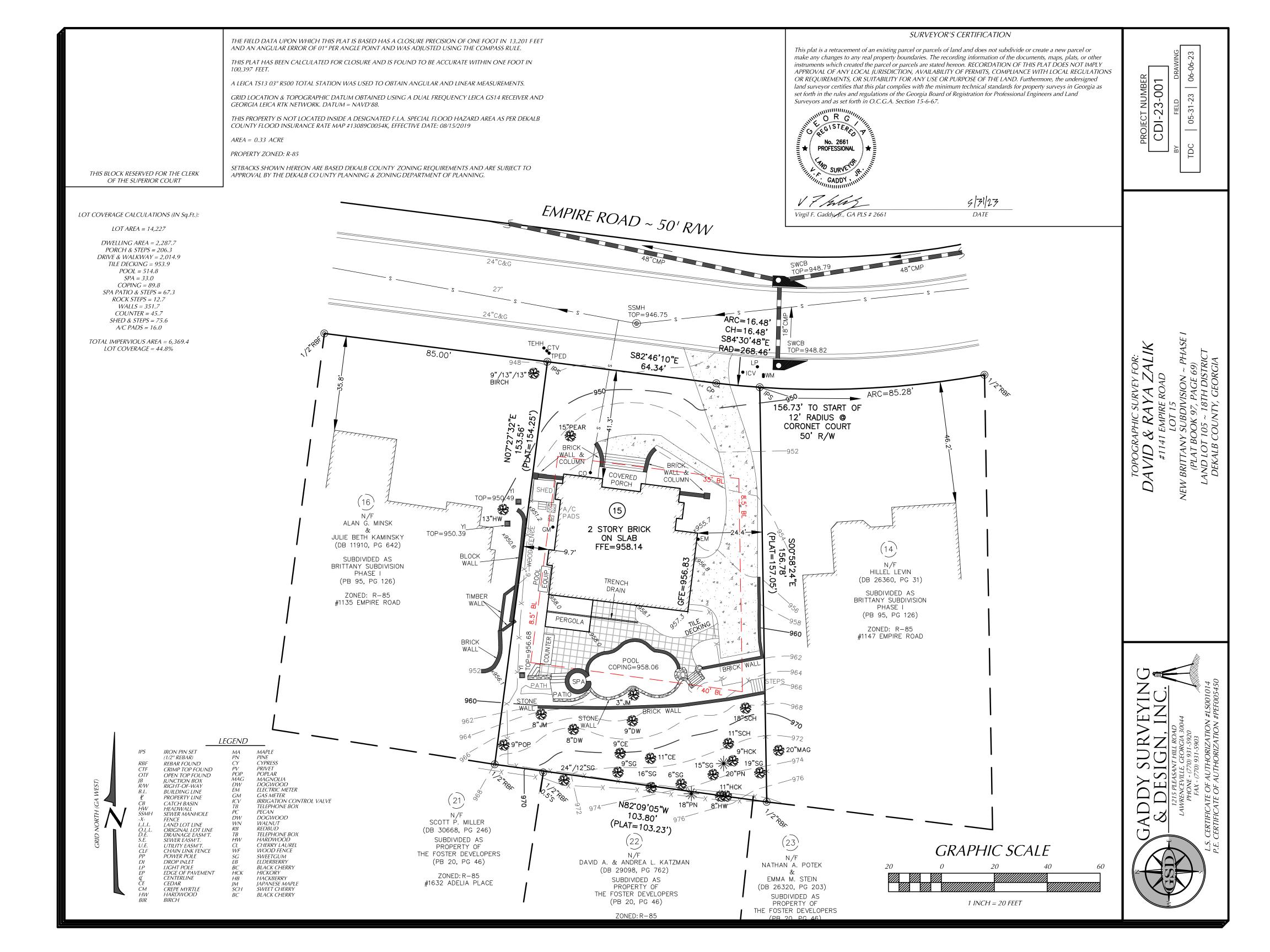


Post-Development L	ot Coverage Analy	 ysis
Proposed Conditions	Impervious	Permeable S.F.
Description	S.F. Area	Area
Residence	2,287	
Front Porch	126	
Rear Porch	170	
Pool	716	
Pool Deck	766	
Pool Equip Pad	32	
Permeable Front Walkway	262	
Stoops/Steps/Walkways	194	
Grill Station	45	
Ret. Walls	232	
Impervious Driveway	752	828
Prop. Elevator	35	
Total Proposed Impervious	5,617	
Total Proposed Permeable		828
Lot Area	14,227	
Max Lot Coverage %	35%	
Max Lot Coverage S.F.	4,979	
Proposed Lot Coverage	39.5%	
No	tes	
Proposed conditions is a reducti impervious surfac	•	-

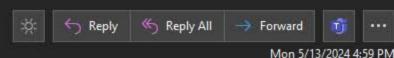
Total reduction in lot coverage is 828 s.f. which represents a

decrease from 45.3% to 39.5% (5.8% reduction in lot coverage.





## D4. A-24-1246907 -- June 12 -- request for rescheduling



20-00-0

Dear Mr. Carter,

Thank you for taking time to explain rescheduling requests. As my wife and I have explained to you, through email, we are requesting that the ZBA meeting on June 12 be rescheduled. It conflicts with a Jewish holiday called Shavuot, which is considered one of the 3 High Holidays (Shavuot, Passover and Sukkot). While many in the non-Jewish world know of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, these three holidays are major in our religion, requiring no work, attendance at synagogue, no use of phone or other electronic devices, and many other prohibitions. While we appreciate that there are supposed to be no exceptions to rescheduling, you informed us that the ZBA would review on a case by case. You encouraged us to write a request for rescheduling, and you would forward it to the ZBA, for which we are grateful.

As background, this past Friday, we received a notice that the ZBA intends to hold a hearing on June 12, reviewing the aforementioned matter, that potentially affects our property. A neighbor has requested a variance in lot size to build an elevator. We would normally attend such a Zoom meeting, but this conflicts with our religious observance. When we inquired this Monday, through the general ZBA mailbox, we were told that rescheduling is not allowed because dates are set in December and there are no exceptions (what setting a calendar in December has to do with anything is unclear). We understand the ZBA doesn't meet on Good Friday or other Christian holidays, even if not Federal holidays, because they do not conflict with the standard Wednesday monthly dates. That's convenient for Christians.

We were told that we could write in letters of support or opposition of the variance request but, if we cannot attend a zoom call, in real time, we cannot hear the discussion or know whether we want to add anything that is said. This is not the same or equal "access" that would be afforded for non-Jews. We were also told that, if there is an exception made in our case, it will need to be done for everyone. I'm not sure it's such a bad idea to consider non-Christian religious holidays when setting a calendar. We can get a postponement for jury duty when there is a conflict, but not here.

The county's response seems to be "this is the way it is, we cannot be bothered, and we will not reconsider." Not a very accommodating position for religious observance.

If the ZBA can review such requests on a case-by-case matter, we respectfully request this be done here. We see no reason why we cannot reschedule the meeting for the next month; there is no time-sensitive nature to this matter and a one-month delay will not unjustly affect our neighbor (who happens to observe the same holiday). We happen to be very friendly with our neighbor, who has requested the variance.

Thank you for sharing our concerns with the ZBA. We hope the ZBA will grant a one-month extension.

Alan

# Alan G. Minsk PARTNER, HEAD OF FOOD & DRUG TEAM d 404.873.8690 | f 404.873.8691 ARNALL GOLDEN GREGORY LLP

ATLANTA

Celebrating 75 Years

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