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## Giant sequoia tree to find new home

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Century old conifer to be relocated to facilitate progress of hospital in Idaho



Workers build a burlap, plywood and steel-pipe structure to contain the rootball so they can move the roughly 100-foot sequoia tree in Boise, Idaho, Thursday, June 22, 2017. The sequoia tree sent more than a century ago by naturalist John Muir to Idaho and planted in a Boise medical doctor's yard has become an obstacle to progress. So the 98-foot (30-meter) sequoia planted in 1912 and that's in the way of a Boise hospital's expansion is being uprooted and moved about a block to city property this weekend. (AP Photo/Rebecca Boone)

**Idaho:** Workers in Idaho prepared to inflate rolling tubes beneath a massive sequoia that grew over more than a century from a seed sent by naturalist John Muir. Then, they'll wrestle the tree up a ramp to street level Friday.

The 10-story-tall landmark is in the final throes of a complex effort to uproot it from the path of a Boise hospital's expansion and move it two blocks away to city property.

Workers will use the rolling tubes to get the 800,000-pound tree to its new home, starting the journey at midnight Saturday. It is expected to arrive at noon Sunday after shutting down a busy street.

St. Luke's Health System needs more space and is spending \$300,000 to move the largest sequoia in the

state rather than chopping it down and risking a public relations backlash.

Most of the soil surrounding the roots will go with it to improve the chances of the transplant succeeding.

Onlookers watched as the massive tree was prepped for its move, and some spoke about what it meant to them and how they feel about its relocation:

Christian Schaffeld lives near the tree, which he loves. But he also has a personal connection to the hospital that's seeking more space.

"I grew up here in Boise. ... I plant a lot of trees in my backyard - about 200 of them, right up the street - and I am amazed: That's the biggest tree I've ever seen ever picked up and transplanted. ... It's a service to the City of Trees that kind of epitomizes Boise."

Schaffeld said he was especially grateful that the hospital was making the effort because doctors there helped him battle cancer.

"I had Stage 4 head and neck cancer. And that's why when I see something like this, the gift of the tree in the City of Trees, it's amazing that St. Luke's is doing all this."

Schaffeld thinks it will thrive at its new location.

"Trees are amazing, and I think that tree wants to live," he said, adding that he was likely to watch the process throughout the weekend.

Bob and Jen Stefanakos brought their kids, 7-year-old Theo and his little sister Daphne, to watch the work.

"It's exciting because of all the action," Theo said.

Jen Stefanakos grew up in Boise and remembers seeing the tree covered in lights during the holidays. The hospital stopped decorating it in the mid-1980s after learning the lights were damaging the sequoia.

"It's pretty incredible. I wouldn't have tuned in to it had it not been for my husband explaining the expertise and the expense that everybody's willing to put forth to see this done," she said. "And now that I know there's such value placed on it, it's amazing.

"I mean, it's a 105-year-old tree. That's just incredible that everyone's willing to keep it here and ensure its survival," Jen Stefanakos said.

Her husband moved to Boise in 1995 and has driven by the tree almost daily on his way to work or the store.

"It'd be a shame if it wasn't here, so it's awesome that St. Luke's is willing to keep it," he said. "It's a pretty monumental moment - it's not every day that you move this massive of a tree, so I didn't want to miss it."

Theo, who pondered the engineering while enjoying an ice cream cone, had his own ideas on how to move the giant tree.

"I would get a giant beach ball, put it under and put it on its side and roll it," he said.

Jacob Cox, one of the workers helping move the tree, said crews are being extra cautious.

"We've attached guide wires back to the trunk to help stabilize the tree. ... There's really little risk of the tree going either way. It's just extra insurance," he said.

Eric Geyser, who lives near the hospital, was watching the action in a baseball cap emblazoned with a tree.

"I've been coming over a couple times a day to watch the progress," he said. "I'm pleased that they're taking the time and the expense to move this tree. ... I think it deserves another chance rather than being cut down."

Geyser said the tree is special to him.

"I have a long love for that particular tree. ... It has a historic value in this community because of where it came from. But me, I just like sequoia trees. ... They will live hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years, and their size, they're fire resistant - they stand out, I think, among other trees."

Source: <http://www.asianage.com/life/more-features/240617/giant-sequoia-tree-to-find-new-home.html>