

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER

SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

OLD GLORY HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION

"Old Glory," a venerable Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*), stands proudly within the County-owned Pico Canyon Park at 25600 Pico Canyon Road, in the unincorporated Santa Clarita Valley. Estimated to be over 400 years old, this majestic tree is not only a symbol of resilience and community spirit but also an important remnant of the rich ecological heritage of the region.

Valley Oaks, which once dominated California’s landscapes, are key species in the local ecosystem, providing essential habitat for countless species of wildlife. Their towering canopies offer shade, protect soil from erosion, and contribute to the health of surrounding vegetation by maintaining a balanced microclimate. Trees like Old Glory also serve as living archives of the area’s environmental history, having witnessed centuries of change and development in the Santa Clarita Valley.

In 2002, a proposed subdivision threatened Old Glory’s existence, sparking significant public outcry. The local community rallied to protect this cherished natural landmark, spearheaded by the Santa Clarita Organization for Planning the Environment (SCOPE). Environmental activist John Quigley, known for his dedication to preserving heritage trees, joined the cause and famously lived in Old Glory’s branches for 71 consecutive days, garnering widespread media coverage and raising awareness of the tree's plight.

In 2004, following intense public debate, a compromise was reached, and Old Glory was carefully relocated approximately a quarter-mile to Pico Canyon Park. This extraordinary effort, requiring meticulous planning and execution, remains a remarkable achievement in conservation. In 2007, Guinness World Records officially recognized Old Glory as the largest transplanted tree in the world. Today, more than two decades later, the tree continues to thrive, with strong growth and vitality—a testament to the dedication of those who fought to save it.

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SOLIS _____

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BARGER _____

HORVATH _____

Old Glory holds profound significance not only as a living relic of the natural history of the Santa Clarita Valley but also as a symbol of community activism and environmental stewardship. Preserving mature oaks and native vegetation plays a critical role in maintaining biodiversity, supporting local wildlife, and fostering sustainable growth within the region. By designating Old Glory as a County Historic Landmark, the County affirms its commitment to preserving heritage oak trees as irreplaceable natural and cultural resources for future generations. This designation will ensure that the legacy of Old Glory, and the efforts of those who worked tirelessly to protect it, are honored and safeguarded.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Find that the project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and
2. Adopt a resolution designating the Old Glory oak tree, located within Pico Canyon Park on Assessor's Parcel 2826-119-900 in the unincorporated community of Stevenson Ranch, as a Los Angeles County Historic Landmark, effective September 24, 2024.

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KB:rao

**RESOLUTION
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
OLD GLORY LANDMARK DESIGNATION
PROJECT NO. PRJ2024-002164
CASE NO. RPPL2024003271**

WHEREAS, on September 24, 2024, the County of Los Angeles ("County") Board of Supervisors ("Board") found the project categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, pursuant to Section 15331 of the State CEQA Guidelines (Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation – Class 31) and designated the heritage oak tree known as "Old Glory" located at Pico Canyon Park, 25600 Pico Canyon Road in unincorporated Santa Clarita Valley, a County Landmark pursuant to Section 22.124 of the County Code; and

WHEREAS, the Board finds:

1. On July 25, 2023, the Board passed a motion in support of Old Glory's designation as a County Landmark.
2. To account for future changes in the tree's size, the historic property boundary of the proposed landmark is not static. It will fluctuate as the tree changes in size over time and is defined as five feet beyond the tree canopy's drip-line. The boundary includes the root system; if the root system extends beyond the tree canopy's drip-line, the boundary extends five feet beyond the edge of the tree's root system.
3. Pico Canyon Park is approximately 21.28 acres in size and located on the south side of Pico Canyon Road. Old Glory stands at the center of a hexagonal-shaped wood split rail fence on the northern side of the park. A map indicating the location of the tree is attached.
4. Old Glory is a heritage Valley Oak (*Quercus Lobata*) tree, currently standing at approximately 50 feet tall, having an 80-foot crown, and the trunk's diameter of approximately seven feet as measured four and one-half feet above mean natural grade. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.14.150, a heritage oak tree is "any oak tree measuring 36 inches or more in diameter, measured four and one-half feet above the natural grade or any oak tree having significant historical or cultural importance to the community, notwithstanding that the tree diameter is less than 36 inches."
5. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.070.A, the proposed landmark is at least 50 years old. Given Old Glory's size, its age is approximated to be 400 years old.
6. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.070.A.7, the subject property is eligible for designation as a County Landmark because it is a tree that has historical

significance due to an association with a historic event and because it is a defining or significant outstanding feature of a neighborhood. Specifically, the community's interest in this particular tree activated a well-publicized advocacy effort surrounding the tree's preservation and relocation.

7. In 1999, L. Newman Design Group, Inc. prepared an Oak Tree Report for developer John Laing Homes' ("JLH") planned subdivision adjacent to the property that is now Pico Canyon Park. The report outlined a plan to remove 59 trees, including Old Glory, and plant new trees elsewhere, a mitigation measure opposed by the Santa Clarita Organization for Planning the Environment (SCOPE). In 2002, SCOPE members contacted tree activist John Quigley to help save the tree. Quigley climbed the tree on November 1, 2002 and camped there for 71 days. After Quigley's ascent, JLH offered relocation, and the Valley Crest company signed a contract to move the tree to Pico Canyon Park. Quigley's activism drew considerable media attention, which ultimately influenced Valley Crest's decision to walk away from the project a month later. Quigley and other environmentalists argued that it was unlikely that the tree would survive relocation. After Valley Crest relinquished the job, Senna Tree Company was contracted for the tree's move. In January 2003, Quigley was removed by force. On January 20, 2004, the relocation project began. The 460-ton tree was placed on a 128-wheel trailer and moved one quarter-mile to its present location. In 2007, Guinness World Records certified Old Glory as the largest transplanted tree documented in the world. A photograph of Old Glory in its 2023 condition is attached.
8. Historic integrity is commonly defined as the ability of a site to convey its historical significance and is the composite of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. While Old Glory was relocated from its original location, it retains integrity of location because the activism surrounding the tree's relocation itself is the primary reason for its historical significance. It also retains integrity of association and feeling because it retains the magnificent physical presence that it did when the community advocated for its preservation. Old Glory has good integrity of setting, as its relocation is within an existing natural oak woodland. A split rail wood fence surrounds the tree. While it offers Old Glory protection, it was installed after the relocation and is not a character-defining feature of the landmark. While the fence does not detract from Old Glory's significance, it diminishes integrity of design. Therefore, Old Glory retains all seven aspects of integrity.
9. The National Park Service defines period of significance as "the span of time during which significant events and activities occurred" associated with the historic site. The period of significance of the subject property is 1999 to 2007. 1999 marks the beginning of the historic event: the year Old Glory was threatened with

destruction by the subdivision project. 2007 marks the year that Guinness World Records certified Old Glory as the largest transplanted tree documented in the world.

10. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.130, the Board may, by written resolution, designate County-owned property as a landmark.
11. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.130.B.3, the designating resolution may establish guidelines and standards for future proposed changes to the landmark. Maintenance guidelines for the landmark are attached.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES DOES HEREBY RESOLVE, DETERMINE AND ORDER AS FOLLOWS:

1. Find the project categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, pursuant to Section 15331 of the State CEQA Guidelines (Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation – Class 31);
2. Old Glory located at Pico Canyon Park, 25600 Pico Canyon Road in unincorporated Santa Clarita Valley, is hereby designated as a Los Angeles County Historic Landmark;
3. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.14.080, character-defining features are defined as “the materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses, and cultural associations or meanings that contribute to the historic character of a historic resource that must be retained to preserve that character.” Character-defining features of Old Glory compose the tree itself, including its root system, trunk, branches, leaves, and the undeveloped space between the trunk and fencing; and
4. Pursuant to County Code section 22.124.130, the effective date of this designation is September 24, 2024 and the decision of the Board is final.

EDWARD YEN
Executive Officer-Clerk of the Board of
Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles

By: _____
Deputy

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

DAWYN HARRISON
County Counsel

By: *Thomas R. Parker*
Senior Deputy

Attachments:

- A. Photograph
- B. Site map
- C. Location map
- D. Maintenance Guidelines

**OLD GLORY LANDMARK DESIGNATION
RESOLUTION ATTACHMENT A
PHOTOGRAPH**

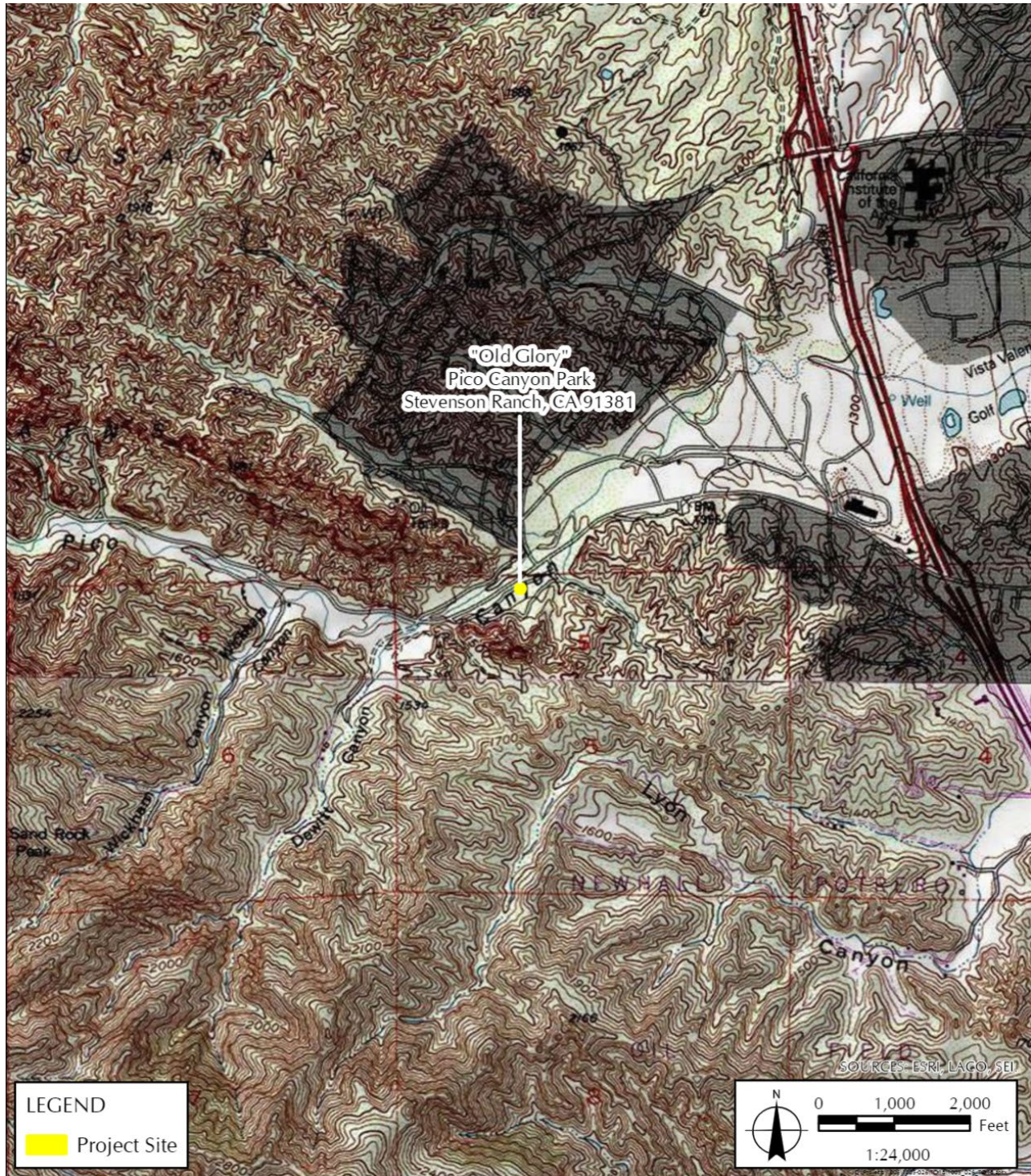


**OLD GLORY LANDMARK DESIGNATION
RESOLUTION ATTACHMENT B
SITE MAP**



SOURCE: *Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2024*

OLD GLORY LANDMARK DESIGNATION
RESOLUTION ATTACHMENT C
LOCATION MAP



SOURCE: Sapphos Environmental, Inc., 2024

**OLD GLORY LANDMARK DESIGNATION
RESOLUTION ATTACHMENT D
MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES**

1. Water the tree by filling the earth-watering basin constructed at the perimeter of the rootball with water allowing the water to percolate into the rootball a minimum depth of 18" each watering. Refill basin if necessary to achieve the recommended percolation depth. Verify the depth of percolation with a soil probe. It is not necessary to achieve a percolation depth greater than 2'. Rebuild watering basin as required to maintain water-holding capacity.
2. Before watering again:
 - a. Take a soil sample from the rootball with a soil probe and inspect soil moisture. This will indicate if adjustments in watering frequency are required.
 - b. Check sump inspection tube (if installed) for standing water in planting pit sump. If more than 3" of water is found, pump out excess water and investigate possible sources. Contact Senna Tree Company if excess water persists.

Use the following schedule as a starting point:

Warm Weather (May through October):

Once a month, provide overhead irrigation of 3 (three) inches of water to the entire area within the drip line.

Cool Weather: (November through April):

Once a month, provide overhead irrigation of 2 (two) inches of water to the entire area within the drip line.

3. Periodically rebuild watering basin and pull weeds as required to maintain water-holding capacity.
4. Supplement the tree with a well-balanced, organic based fertilizer to the area covering the historic property boundary once in the Spring and again in October.