



2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan

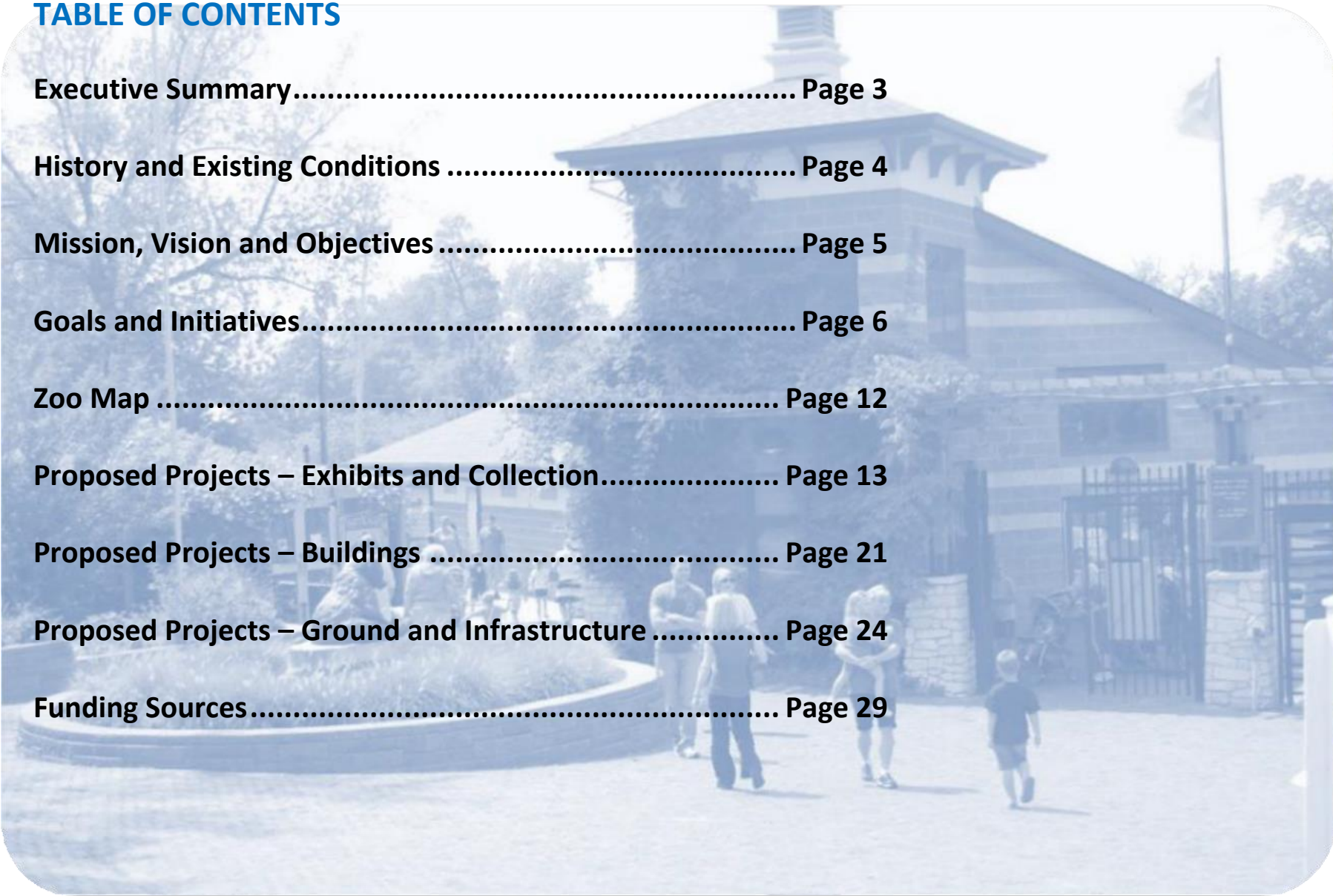
Guidelines for Redevelopment – Swinging into Action



January 2022



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Washington Park Zoo has been an integral part of the Michigan City landscape since 1928. Over time, the zoo has seen many changes and we are excited about the planned changes to the zoo in the near future. The Washington Park Zoo Strategic Plan includes ideas for future expansion and renovation with a focus on animal exhibits, public amenities, and support facilities. Our plan's goal is to chart the course towards the realization of our mission—to connect people, animals, and the natural world. This document identifies opportunities and concepts for improving, adding, and expanding facilities and operations to meet the needs, goals, and mission of the Washington Park Zoo as it develops from a local family attraction into a regional destination. The primary factors in decision-making were animal health and welfare, as well as the overall guest experience.



The initial phases of the plan are intended to be implemented over the next 5 years with additional improvements identified to span beyond that time frame. The animal collection plan identified within each zoogeographic area is tentative and may change when final exhibit design is completed or fundraising goals are accomplished. The collection plan provides a framework for program development, fundraising, public relations, and exhibit design. Factors affecting the ultimate collection include species availability, AZA Species Survival Plan (SSP) program requirements, and creating differentiation from other zoological institutions in the region.

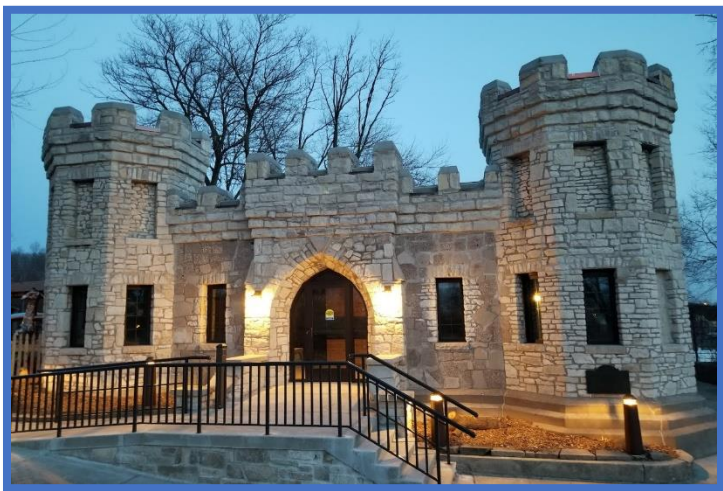
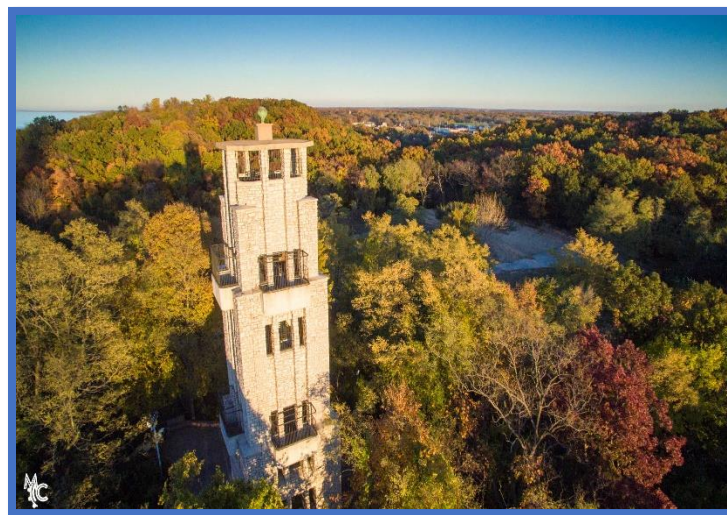
We must achieve the following in order to move the Washington Park Zoo forward:

- Maintain a collaborative approach
- Encourage and embrace community involvement
- Commit to high standards for success
- Achieve financial stability in annual operating costs
- Develop and maintain fundraising mechanisms for capital improvements

HISTORY AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

The first official Zoo Board was appointed in 1928 to create a zoological garden. The idea was to develop a park to include the study of zoology to furnish wholesome and free entertainment to the families of Michigan City as well as to the thousands of summer visitors.

The zoo was further developed during the Works Progress Administration (WPA) era in the early 1930s. Projects included Monkey Island, the Observation Tower, the Primate House, and the Engineers Castle, a replica of the Army Corp of Engineers insignia, along with many small stone buildings, walkways, benches, and walls. Many of the original WPA structures are still in use today. These 80-year-old structures require major repairs if we continue to use them.



Of the nine acres within the zoo perimeter fence, approximately 5.5 acres are developed. The remaining 3.5 acres are undeveloped, primarily due to a variety of steep and sloping dune conditions. Improvement highlights over the years to the zoo include:

1977 New feline house constructed	2015 New Reptile Adaptation exhibit opened in Discovery Center	2017 Completed the Otto J. and Margaret M. Zack Charitable Trust Animal Care Clinic
1978 New elephant house constructed	2015 Rotary Children's Castle Interior renovations including a new HVAC system, spray foam	2017 Constructed a dedicated maintenance workshop building
1990 Elephant house turned into an education center	2015 New Timber Wolf exhibit opened	2017 Built an attached building onto the upper Aviary
1994 Gardens refurbished landscape designed	2016 Added gunite rockwork in the Wolf exhibit and wood decks for climbing	2017 Added a Koi pond, pollination flowerbeds, wild bird, and bat houses throughout the Zoo.
2004 New entrance constructed on Lake Shore Drive	2016 Enhanced the Jungle building exhibits with shotcrete rock work, ropes, and substrate	2017 Lowes constructed a new raptor exhibit near the Bobcat habitat
2005 New gift shop opened in the admission building	2016 Updated keeper office and breakroom	2018 A new Fallow Deer exhibit opened on the back hill area of the zoo, along with the Crow/ Vulture / Raven habitat.
2006 Observation tower restored and re-opened	2016 Covered the Discovery center deck and added concrete to the patio area.	2018 Grant Zebra yard was expanded and an African Sulcata Tortoise yard was constructed.
2007 New North American Carnivore exhibit opened	2016 Created a covered area for the safari train	2019 Installed a second concession area near the Red Barn called the Coop.
2007 New 40' x 80' maintenance building was constructed on the south side of the grounds	2016 Added new perches, nest box, and solid metal siding onto the south wall of the Wings of Wonder exhibit	2019 The Zoo buildings and ground light fixtures were changed over to LED
2008 Existing primate building renovated, removing bars and cages and adding glass front exhibits	2016 Installed a stamped concrete viewing patio with a wooden pergola overhang near the Hoof stock exhibits	2019 The Castle restoration and renovation project which started in the fall of 2018 was completed and now exhibits misc. small animals including an observation honey bee exhibit.
2009 Australian Avian Adventure opens allowing guests to enter the exhibit and feed parakeets and cockatiels.	2016 Opened a new North American Porcupine habitat	2020 Replaced the electrical service panel outside the tortoise yard and inside the Tortoise barn. Also installed a new tortoise pool and water spigot.
2011 Treehouse gift shop expanded, adding 200 sq. ft.	2016 Guest photo opportunities were installed around the zoo and new exhibit signage continues to be added	2021 Finished the off-exhibit holding shed behind the castle
2011 Safari train ride opened producing additional revenue	2017 Added 3 generators onto buildings as an emergency backup power source and fans with lights on the discovery	2021 Restored the historic spring well attraction
2013 Discovery Center was enlarged with the construction of a front room and public restrooms foam insulation	2017 Transformed the old classroom near the Discovery Center into the concession stand and the old concession stand into the classroom	2021 Added concrete to the Tortoise barn and added an electric heater.
2015 New Australian Outback exhibit opened	2017 Renovated the WPA limestone building into a new Arctic Fox habitat	2021 Installed a sponsorship tree for donor names and an eco-friendly refillable water bottle fountain in the Discovery Center.

MISSION AND VISION



Vision

The Washington Park Zoo will create a unique, family-friendly experience that offers fun ways to learn about animals. Our approach will be demonstrated by

- Helping families understand and appreciate the unique, fragile relationship people share with animals and their environments
- Expand ongoing communication and respond to our audience's needs
- Strengthen collaborations within our organization and community

Mission

The Washington Park Zoo is dedicated to promoting the appreciation of animals and conservation in ways that educate audiences through wildlife experiences while meeting the biological and psychological needs of the animals in our care.

Objectives

- Provide a cohesive circulation pattern that emphasizes the different zoogeographic areas of the zoo
- Create unique guest experiences
- Strategically locate guest services
- Provide opportunities to incorporate storylines and cultural themes to strengthen educational messages
- Create revenue-generating opportunities
- Address needed facility improvements
- Provide adequate space and services for the present and future animal collection

GOALS AND INITIATIVES

Animal Collection

Strengthen and maintain an inspirational animal collection.

- Leverage the current collection to create bio-themed, multi-species habitats with priority regions of Eurasia, Africa, Australia, North America, and South America
- Emphasize temperate climate animals until more winter holding is available
- Develop exhibits and programs that support the biological and psychological needs of the animals in the collection
- Exceed the USDA and ZAA requirements and habitat guidelines for every animal in the collection
- Develop training and enrichment programs for appropriate animals in the collection
- Seek educational and training opportunities for all keepers to ensure the best possible animal care
- Focus acquisition on animals that can be exhibited in multi-species habitats



GOALS AND INITIATIVES

Marketing

Create an environment of excitement and intrigue through our Brand Image, “Connecting wildlife to you at the Washington Park Zoo,” which provides families with a fun, educational and engaging experience at each point of contact.

- Expand marketing efforts including media relations, promotions, and advertising on a regional level to reach maximum attendance goals.
- Create annual events, promotions, and interactive programs to meet the needs of customers and achieve annual attendance and revenue goals.



GOALS AND INITIATIVES

Guest Experience

In addition to educational and engaging experiences, guests' needs must be met in order to create a comfortable and fulfilling experience. Gathering and resting places should be considered. Restrooms and drinking fountains must be strategically placed throughout the zoo and properly identified. Food and beverage service, as well as the gift shop, should include many options for all age groups. The zoo is built on a steep sand dune making access to some exhibits difficult; ADA is a paramount concern and must be addressed in this plan.



The entry plaza of the zoo provides adequate space for groups to gather and plan their visit. This space is also large enough for animal presentations to groups of up to 50.

The classroom provides space for up to 30 people for educational programming.

The deck and patio area can accommodate up to 150 seated guests.

Restrooms are located on the northwest and southeast corners of the zoo.

GOALS AND INITIATIVES

Guest Experience (continued)

In 2017, the Peacock Café was relocated to the front area of the Discovery Center building. The renovations included adding plumbing, and countertops, upgrading the electrical service and installing two serving windows. This space is centrally located and has direct access to the covered dining area/deck, as well as the public restrooms. The new location also has heat and air conditioning; the former facility did not.



In the future, we would like to construct a new, two-story building at the Northwest corner of the Zoo, where the current classroom is located to house larger guest service spaces. The upper level of the new building would be a classroom/rental space and the lower level a gift shop with an attached merchandise storage area. The existing Treehouse Gift Shop is not large enough to accommodate large groups or house the merchandise inventory storage.

GOALS AND INITIATIVES

Education

Develop and implement a comprehensive education plan that raises awareness about the fragile relationship between people, animals, and the habitats they share.

- Establish a self-sustaining education department under the direction of a full-time Education Curator
- Utilize partnerships to create and implement educational programming
- On-going assessment and evaluation of current educational programs
- Grow a strong docent program that will support all aspects of zoo operations



GOALS AND INITIATIVES

Exhibits & Facilities

Create and implement a 5 to 10-year exhibit renovation and facility strategic plan for the Washington Park Zoo that illustrates the interconnections and excitement of the animal collection.

- Satisfy AZA and exceed USDA guidelines in the design of all facilities
- Make all exhibits viewer-friendly and accessible
- Increase winter holding facilities
- Develop exhibits that offer immersive (walkthrough) experiences for guests
- Beautify the zoo with landscaping and gardens and use landscaping to develop a line of sight barriers
- Design exhibits with natural habitats for the animal collection
- Receive accreditation from the American Zoological Association



PROPOSED EXHIBITS AND SERVICE AREAS



PROPOSED PROJECTS - EXHIBITS AND COLLECTION

African Savannah Exhibits

Renovate the existing northeastern hoof stock displays into new African Plain exhibits. These exhibits will showcase savanna species including Grant Zebras, and Sulcata Tortoises. The existing barns and exhibit area will provide zookeepers with adequate space to safely manage a pair of zebras, as well as give the zoo's five, still-growing Sulcata Tortoises access to designated heated barn and yard.

Completed improvements:

2015- Replaced the northeast exhibit fence

2016-Constructed a stamped concrete viewing pad with a pergola roof

2019 -Installed a water spigot and replaced the shift gate in the far east zebra yard

2020- Upgraded the electrical service to the tortoise barn, and installed a pool, and water service in the area

2021- Installed a concrete floor and glass patio doors on the tortoise barn

The final projects for the area would include two automatic water units in the two exhibit yard spaces as well as the planting of new shade trees in the main zebra yard.

Year: 2023

Estimated cost: \$10,000

Funding Sources: 2023 Endowment Fund



PROPOSED PROJECTS - EXHIBITS AND COLLECTION

American Wetlands

This exhibit space needs a permanent all-season building for the American Alligator, as well as a heated building in the side yard for the Capybara with direct access into their exhibit yard. This building would eliminate the need for the staff to move these animals into other zoo areas for the winter months. Currently, we are seasonally borrowing rescued alligators from the Herpetological Society each year since we do not have the space to house them in the winter after a certain size.

The new building plans will include a large picture window on the south side of the building to allow for year-round visitor viewing. Construction plans could hopefully be completed in the winter of 2022.

Year: 2023

Estimated cost: \$75,000

Funding Source: 2023 Endowment Fund



PROPOSED PROJECTS - EXHIBITS AND COLLECTION

Monkey Island Exhibit

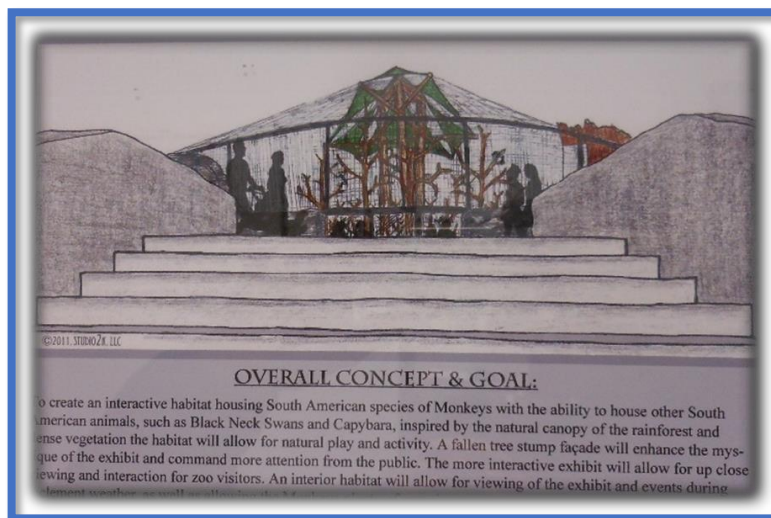
Monkey Island was constructed in 1934 under the Works Progress Administration and is now outdated to house a larger species or group of primates since it lacks the off-display holding area for cleaning and winter housing. Our goal would be to renovate this exhibit before the zoo's milestone 100 anniversary in 2028.

Future restoration plans will need to include an attached, heated, block building on the south side of the exhibit for primate holding and keeper access. The upper floor will be a large, open room with glass windows facing the exhibit where visitors can view the primates. The massive outer walls surrounding the exhibit, the center rock base, and the metal tower will also need to be updated. The moat area could be partially filled and planted if the proper safety modifications were done to prevent an escape. A smaller pond could be incorporated into the design to reduce the maintenance and utility costs for this exhibit. The exhibit will feature a mixed-species primate exhibit based on the design.

Year: 2025

Estimated Cost: \$1,900,000

A preliminary engineering study conducted in 2011 by Roger Potratz estimated the project cost at \$996,000 Funding Sources: Grants / Zoo Society / City / RDC / Private Donation





PROPOSED PROJECTS - EXHIBITS AND COLLECTION

Eurasian Exhibit

These exhibits currently display some of our raptor species. Minor improvements made in 2016 included painting the walls, replacing the wood framing, and adding natural substrate. Low hanging and dead trees have also been removed from the surrounding area to prevent damage to the exhibits from falling trees and rubbing limbs on the roof panels.

Future renovations are needed to create a larger flight yard so that we could bring in a male Eurasian Eagle Owl to create a breeding pair exhibit.

Year: 2024

Estimated cost: \$15,000

Funding Source: 2024 Endowment



PROPOSED PROJECTS - EXHIBITS AND COLLECTION

Cat Canyon Exhibit

Since 2015, the Zoo has made many improvements to this exhibit, but its overall design is small and outdated. Plans to modernize the exterior habitats are a priority since this is the first exhibit that visitors see when they enter the Zoo.

Completed improvements:

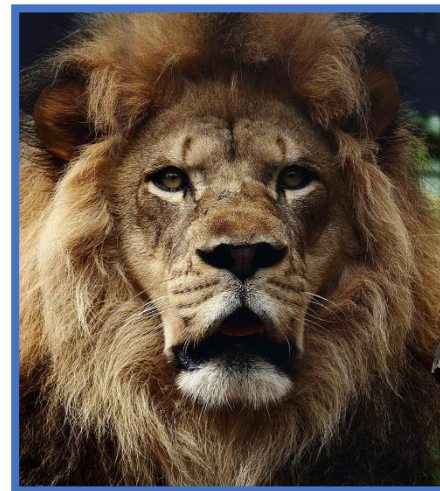
- 2015-Restructured the safety workspace for keepers inside the building
- 2015-Added decorative film to the main building windows for keeper safety
- 2016-Constructed climbing decks in the outer yards for the big cats
- 2016-Painted the inside den areas
- 2016-Installed an automatic watering bowl in the outer Lion den
- 2016-Installed safety boxes over the guillotine lift cables in the six interior dens
- 2016-Welded horizontal safety bars onto the fronts of the six interior dens
- 2016-Updated the lighting in the main building to four-foot LED fixtures
- 2017-Installed a backup generator for the building's electrical service and the refrigeration unit
- 2017-Raised the height of the Bengal Tigers perimeter fence from four-foot to five-foot-tall chain link
- 2017-Replaced the originally constructed interior wall-mounted climbing shelves in the dens with large, freestanding platforms

We hope to start the construction of these two habitats in the spring of 2022. Renovation plans include expanding the exterior enclosures by approximately 25 feet on the east and south side of the building. Attach artificial rock outcroppings to the building's exterior, and install glass panels on the south side of both exterior exhibits to allow up-close viewing of the big cats. The northern back keeper holding space would expand to enclose the length of the outer exhibit access door, for general safety precautions.

Year: 2022

Estimated Cost: \$1,600,000

Funding Sources: Matching Redevelopment / Private Donation/Endowment/Common Council



PROPOSED PROJECTS - EXHIBITS AND COLLECTION

Mixed Species Exhibit

The hilltop aviary exhibit currently houses a variety of exotic birds including Cattle Egrets, ducks, and cranes.

In 2017, phase one was completed and an attached block building was constructed on the north side of the exhibit to serve as a winter holding area for the exhibited animals. A glass window was installed on the west side of the building to allow visitors viewing access during inclement weather. Dirt ground fill and a smaller wading pond replaced the large rubber-lined pool in order to address some of the pond drainage issues in the area. This change was a necessity since there are no cost-effective routes to install a drainage line from this exhibit since it is the highest point of the zoo and in a sand dune.

Plans are to transfer the species collection over to a mixed exhibit for a pair of small African or Asian deer and various regional birds depending on the available deer species.

A secondary safety keeper entrance would need to be added to prevent escape, which we have been adding to all the area exhibits as a precaution, as well as lexan panels around the lower four feet of exhibit fencing since there are no safety barriers to prevent incidences with the public.

Year: 2026

Estimated cost: \$15,000

Funding Source: 2025 Endowment



PROPOSED PROJECTS – BUILDINGS

Observation Tower

The historic Observation Tower will need limestone masonry repairs, including rebuilding and tuck-pointing different sections due to deterioration caused by weather elements.

Year: 2027

Estimated Cost: Pending estimate \$700,000

Funding Source: Grants / Zoo Society / City / RDC / Private Donation



PROPOSED PROJECTS – BUILDING

New Gift Shop with Classroom and Rental Space

A new, two-story gift shop is planned for the northwest corner of the zoo where the old concession stand was located. The upper level would be used as a classroom and rental space with private restrooms and a kitchenette. The lower level would house a larger gift shop with an attached merchandise storage room. The existing Treehouse Gift Shop and classroom are not large enough to accommodate large groups. Both of these areas are very successful in generating revenue. The investment in expanding and improving the spaces will pay for themselves within a few years.

Year: 2023-2024

Estimated Cost: \$1,000,000

Funding Source: Gift Shop Funding Account/2025 Endowment/ Donation/ Grant/ City Capital



Lower Giftshop Space



Upper Classroom/ Rental Space



PROPOSED PROJECTS – BUILDINGS

Greenhouse Enclosure over the Wings of Wonder Aviary

Replace the exhibit mesh with an enclosed, heated, and cooled structure. The new building would permit the exhibit to be open to visitors and the avian residences throughout the changing weather conditions. It would also be a safer habitat for the birds by preventing disease and predator harassment.

Year: 2023

Projected Cost: \$150,000

Funding Source: 2023 Endowment/Grant



PROPOSED PROJECTS – GROUNDS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Replace Handrail

Replace the damaged metal handrail leading from the Bald Eagle exhibit to Upper Aviary with a safer, ADA-compliant railing.

Year: 2023

Projected Cost: \$ 7,000

Funding Source: 2023 Operation Budget /Grant

Security and Safety Systems

Replace gate 3 from being an out swing gate with a slide gate for safety while opening and closing.

Year: 2023

Projected Cost: \$16,000

Funding Source: 2023 Endowment/ Operation Budget/ Capital

Jungle Furnace

The secondary, public hallway furnace in the Jungle Building will need to be replaced in the near future. It has been repaired a few times within the last few years, and it still is working but needs to be considered in future budget plans.

Year: 2023

Projected Cost: \$ 12,000

Funding Source: Zoo Operating Budget

Outdoor Lighting

Continue to work on adding outdoor lighting near pathways to accommodate after-hour rentals and events and for added security. We address these concerns each time we renovate an area.

Year: 2022 -2026

Projected Cost: \$ 40,000

Funding Source:

Sidewalk Repairs

Replace the main sidewalk on the north side of the zoo and repair the sidewalk on the north side of Red Barn. We address these concerns each time we renovate an area, as well as cold patch applications.

Year: 2025

Projected Cost: \$50,000

Funding Source: Endowment

Install metal siding onto the Wings of Wonder and the Red Chicken Coop

The wood siding on both of these buildings are in need of a more durable metal material to prevent the birds and rodents from repeatedly damaging these buildings, not only for appearance reasons but also for the health and safety of the animals.

Year: 2022

Projected Cost: \$3,000

Funding Source: Operation Budget

Funding Sources

FUNDING SOURCES	Fund 1301/0804	Grants	MCCEC
Annual Operating Budget Fund 1301/0804 (pending approval by State of Indiana)			
2023 Michigan City Community Enrichment annual contribution			100,000
2024 Michigan City Community Enrichment annual contribution			100,000
2025 Michigan City Community Enrichment annual contribution			100,000
2026 Michigan City Community Enrichment annual contribution			100,000
TOTAL FUNDING			
	775,454		400,000

Projects Listed by Funding Source and Year

YEAR	TYPE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	EST COST	FUNDING SOURCE
2022	Exhibit	Big Cat Canyon	exhibit renovation	1,600,000	City/RDC/Grants/Donation/Society
2022	Exhibit	Red Barn and the Wings of Wonder Aviary	Reside two avian buildings	3,000	Zoo Operating
2023	Exhibit	African Savannah	exhibit renovation	15,000	Endowment/ Budget
2023	Infrastructure	Replace Handrail near Eagles	install new handrail	7,000	Zoo Operating
2023	Infrastructure	Jungle Building Furnace	replacement	12,000	Zoo Operating
2023	Exhibit	Wings of Wonder Aviary	construct new enclosed building	150,000	City/RDC/Grants/Donation
2023	Building	New Gift Shop/Classroom	new building	1,000,000	Endowment/ Zoo Retail/ City/RDC
2023	Infrastructure	Security Slide Gate	replace old gates with a new slider	16,000	City
2024	Exhibit	Eurasian Exhibit	exhibit renovation	15,000	Zoo Operating
2024	Exhibit	American Wetlands	exhibit renovation	100,000	Endowment
2025	Exhibit	Mixed Species Aviary	exhibit renovation	20,000	Zoo Operating
2025	Exhibit	Monkey Island	exhibit renovation	1,900,000	City/RDC/Grants/Donation/Society
2025	Infrastructure	Replace Sidewalks	remove and replace main north & barn	50,000	City/RDC/Grants/Donation
2026	Infrastructure	Outdoor Security Lighting	purchase and install	30,000	City/RDC/Grants/Donation/Society
2027	Building	Observation Tower	renovation	700,000	City/RDC/Grants/Donation/Society
			TOTAL PROJECTS	5,618,000	

• ***Zoo Admission and Guest Services***

Year	Admissions	Visitors	Train	Train Rides	Feeder/ Cones	Aviary	Gift Shop	Concessions	Coop
2013	\$332,150.51	73,426	\$13,566.00	4522	\$5,921.25	\$12,564.00	\$99,432.09	\$70,256.00	
2014	\$338,081.42	90,859	\$17,165.00	5722	\$7,282.25	\$12,488.00	\$118,373.92	\$73,495.42	
2015	\$388,754.11	79,460	\$13,829.00	6645	\$7,325.75	\$11,373.00	\$124,165.57	\$76,494.53	
2016	\$401,054.75	85,121	\$18,715.00	6439	\$6,317.00	\$12,540.00	\$128,174.47	\$78,770.02	
2017	\$448,952.05	100,122	\$22,954.00	7683	\$7,061.00	\$16,589.00	\$147,155.07	\$82,205.65	
2018	\$452,195.04	96,828	18372	6146	\$7,460.50	\$17,307.00	\$158,709.64	\$87,726.95	
2019	\$556,509.95	103,123	free	0	\$6,890.50	\$12,579.00	\$168,576.32	\$88,128.76	\$2,603.66
2020	\$221,978.97	34,771	free	0	\$6,528.00	\$5,102.00	\$26,949.13	\$32,003.47	\$2,926.73
2021	\$725,685.99	116,190	free	0	\$20,339.00	\$6,279.00	\$262,170.03	\$33,708.82	\$22,528.46