

OREGON ZOO CAMPUS PLAN: CAPITAL FINANCING & PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

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Affairs & Policy Development
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ISSUE STATEMENT

The Metro Council has directed staff to develop and present a potential capital financing approach to implement the updated Oregon Zoo Campus Plan.

ACTION REQUESTED

Provide feedback and direction on draft capital project prioritization and financing approach to advance the zoo's work for animal care, conservation, education and visitor experience over the next several years.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

- Advance the Oregon Zoo's mission of connecting our community to the wonder of wildlife to create a better future for all
- Support animal well-being, visitor education and accessibility, energy and water conservation, and climate resilience at the zoo
- Implement Metro's Sustainable Buildings and Sites Policy, the Strategic Plan to Advance Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, and construction workforce diversity and construction clean air policies

POLICY QUESTION(S)

- How well does draft capital project prioritization and financing approach support the zoo's mission, fulfill community needs and advance Council policy priorities?

POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

Staff will present a draft capital project prioritization proposal and relevant financing considerations for Council's discussion and feedback.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommend that Council advance a capital project prioritization and financing approach that provides the greatest potential to align the zoo's capital investment needs and priorities, with the likely feasibility and capacity of available revenue. Staff recommend

that the financing approach does not increase taxes currently paid by property owners in the region.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The Oregon Zoo is a source of pride for the greater Portland region, advancing conservation education and species recovery locally as well as around the globe. The zoo is committed to continually improving animal well-being, guest and staff experiences, equity, accessibility, climate resilience and conservation across its 64-acre campus in Washington Park.

In 2008, the region’s voters approved Measure 26-96, authorizing Metro to issue general obligation bonds to dramatically improve animal habitats, visitor facilities and sustainability at the zoo. The zoo successfully completed implementation of the 2008 bond in 2021, having transformed around 40% of the campus, including the elephant, polar bear and primate habitats, as well as a new veterinary medical center, California condor exhibit and conservation education center.

In fall 2022, staff from the Oregon Zoo and Capital Asset Management began work on a new Campus Plan to replace the zoo’s 2011 Master Plan that guided implementation of the bond. The new plan focuses on areas of the campus that were not targeted for substantial investment from the 2008 bond. Included are some of the zoo’s oldest existing habitats and buildings, as well as outdated and not fully accessible pathways and facilities.

Implementation of a new Zoo Campus Plan is a significant opportunity to advance the Metro Council’s goals for climate, equity, accessibility, education and economic vitality in one of the region’s most beloved community institutions.

Community engagement

Development of the Campus Plan included in-person engagement sessions with historically marginalized communities, including representatives of the following organizations:

- Adelante Mujeres
- Autism Empowerment
- Boys & Girls Club of the Portland Metro Area
- Center for African Immigrants and Refugees
- Centro Cultural
- People of Color Outdoors
- Rosewood Initiative
- Self-Enhancement Inc.
- Youth Empowerment Project PNW

Staff also engaged with youth participating in the Zoo Apprenticeship Program; the zoo’s Community Advocacy Council, composed of young professionals of color; zoo volunteers and members; staff and board of the Oregon Zoo Foundation; and zoo staff.

Zoo staff heard broad community support for the goals of the draft plan, particularly goals to improve accessibility, wayfinding and other visitor facilities at the zoo, and to update or replace outdated animal habitats, particularly in the popular Coastal Shores, Africa and

Great Northwest areas. Zoo staff were also supportive of proposed improvements to behind-the-scenes care-staff facilities, guest amenities, storage areas and service access.

Moving forward, staff and partners at the Oregon Zoo Foundation are engaging a broader range of stakeholders, neighbors and community leaders to share the mission of the Oregon Zoo and how it is expressed through the new Campus Plan.

Legal antecedents

When complete and approved by the Metro Council following City of Portland permitting, the final Campus Plan will update the 2011 Comprehensive Capital Master Plan, approved by the Metro Council through Resolution No 11-4304. The 2011 Master Plan guided the implementation of Measure 26-96, the Oregon Zoo bond measure approved by the region's voters in November 2008, as well as other non-bond-funded improvements.

The new Campus Plan's finalization and implementation will also advance several other Metro Council policies, including but not limited to:

- Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Sustainable Buildings & Sites Policy
- Clean Air Construction policy
- Construction Careers Pathways policy
- Contracting Equity Policy

Anticipated Effects

Pending Council direction at this work session, staff will refine a potential investment framework for further Council consideration and direction in early 2024.

Financial Implications

The Metro Council's adopted budget for FY24 includes funding for zoo campus planning as part of the agency's capital improvement plan. Funding for the exploration of funding options is supported through Government Affairs and Policy Development's budget.

BACKGROUND

On Oct. 26, 2023, the Metro Council adopted Resolution No. 23-5357, accepting the draft Campus Plan's concepts, with emphases on animal care and well-being, sustainability and conservation, and visitor education and accessibility. The resolution directed staff to begin the work of permitting review with the City of Portland to renew the zoo's Comprehensive Use Master Plan, and to continue refining the Campus Plan for final adoption in 2024.

Additionally, the Council's adoption of Resolution No. 23-5357 directed staff to prepare capital financing and business planning options for Council's consideration.

ATTACHMENTS

None

Is legislation required for Council action? Draft legislation will be developed as required based on Council feedback at this work session.