

Lake Superior Zoo/Fairmount Park Facility Purposes, Parameters, and Exhibit Preferences

PLEASE NOTE: *The following purposes, parameters, and preferences serve only to inform the 2014 work of the City of Duluth, the Lake Superior Zoological Society, and the Zoo/Fairmount Park Planning, supported by ConsultEcon, to develop a preliminary long term facility plan for the zoo and Fairmount Park. None of the following represent binding policy or funding commitments. Policy and funding commitments may only be made by the City Administration, the City Council and the LSZS Board of Directors via their respective governance processes.*

Purposes: For the 2014 work of the Zoo/Fairmount Park Planning Group to develop Zoo/Fairmount Park facility plans, the purposes of the zoo and park facilities are assumed to be:

1. Advance shared environmental learning and sustainability goals
 - A. Zoo and park facilities envisioned in the plans will provide up close experiences with wildlife and nature which inspire connection to wildlife and nature and actions toward conservation in our region and around the world¹.

2. Achieve long-term financial sustainability for the City and the Society.
 - A. Plans shall provide for a strong LSZS business model that, to the extent permitted by our other agreed upon purposes, maximizes operational efficiency and generation of earned and contributed income.
 - B. Plans shall decrease the long-term capital liability for zoo facilities to a financially sustainable level enabling more prompt and full funding of ongoing capital maintenance.

¹ Derived from the LSZS mission “to provide close-up animal experiences which inspire connections to wildlife and action towards conservation in our region and around the world,” but broadened to reflect the broader environmental learning goals of the City of Duluth that are implicit in the St. Louis River Corridor vision and the envisioned physical and programmatic connection between the zoo and the St. Louis River.

- 3. Meet rigorous professional standards for zoo operations and retain AZA accreditation.**
 - A. Plans shall enable LSZS to continue meeting rigorous AZA accreditation standards for animal welfare, veterinary care, wildlife conservation, scientific research, education, professional staffing, and safety.**
 - B. Plans shall enable LSZS to continue meeting USDA requirements.**

- 4. Improve accessibility and connectivity of the zoo/Fairmount Park and the community**
 - A. The goal is to establish free and unobstructed public access to sizable areas of Fairmount Park along lower Kingsbury Creek from adequately sized and located parking lots, the Western Waterfront Trail, Superior Hiking Trail, Duluth Traverse, the DWP Trail, and the surrounding neighborhoods².**

- 5. Strengthen the zoo and park as tourist attractions**
 - A. Plans shall support increased tourist visitation and expenditures in Duluth in general and the St. Louis River Corridor specifically.**

- 6. Improve neighborhood quality of life**
 - A. Plans shall add real and perceived value to quality of life in the St. Louis River neighborhoods for existing and prospective residents.**

- 7. Contribute to the development of a tourism hub in the Lake Superior Zoo/Fairmount Park/Spirit Mountain/Indian Point Campground area**
 - A. Plans shall contribute to the creation of an integrated and appealing outdoor learning and environmental recreation experience throughout the hub area for tourists and residents alike.**

² Thus far, the spatial implication of this purpose appears to be the necessity to at least convert the southwest corner of the zoo shown in Exhibit A from fenced zoo space to unfenced park space and the resultant separation of the zoo's veterinary medical care facility, the Willard Munger Animal Care Center (ACC), from the zoo's animal exhibits. While AZA accreditation standards specifically provide for meeting animal care and public safety standards at zoo's where the veterinary care facility is outside the perimeter fence, there remain important concerns about potential compromises to public safety associated with transport of animals out of the zoo to the ACC. The planning group and ConsultEcon will continue to seek ways to fulfill this purpose without separating the ACC.

- 8. Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of vehicular and pedestrian flow for visitors and LSZS personnel.**
 - A. Plans shall improve the flow of visitors from Grand Avenue into the zoo parking lot, into the zoo gate, through the zoo, and between Fairmount Park, the zoo, and surrounding neighborhoods, trails, and parks.**
 - B. Plans shall maximize the effectiveness, efficiency, and safety with which LSZS moves personnel, materials, and animals within the zoo and between the zoo and the Animal Care Center.**

Parameters: The 2014 work of the Zoo/Fairmount Park Planning Group to develop Zoo/Fairmount Park facility plans shall be informed and constrained by the following parameters:

1. Capital Funding

- A. Plans shall assume the availability of a total of \$0-to-\$12 million dollars in capital funding from all sources – federal, state, local, and private – for the six-year period from 2015-to-2020. Actual funding levels will depend on the perceived merit of the final facility plan and the City/LSZS partnership responsible for implementing it.**

2. Operational Funding

- A. For the purposes of modeling the financial performance of different facility scenarios, plans shall assume that the City will continue to annually provide \$510,000 from tourism tax revenues to LSZS for operation and maintenance of the zoo.**
- B. Plans shall assume that the City will continue to convey State of Minnesota annual operating support for zoos to LSZS. In 2014, state operating support for Duluth’s zoo was \$160,000.**

3. Zoo Footprint – Animal Perimeter Fence and Zoo Operating Area³

³ All facility scenarios to be closely investigated by ConsultEcon will include these changes to the footprint. In addition, the facility scenarios selected for ConsultEcon analysis will likely include a variety of other spatial changes including additions and subtractions to the current footprint.

- A. Unless and until the planning team identifies another way to increase accessibility and connectivity per Purpose #4, all plans shall assume that, with the exception of the Willard Munger Animal Care Center (ACC), the southwest portion of Fairmount Park bounded by Grand Avenue, N. 74th Avenue West, Coleman Street, Kingsbury Creek, and its western tributary shall no longer be within the zoo's animal fence or operating area. (See Exhibit A.)
- B. All plans shall assume that the Willard Munger Animal Care Center will remain the zoo's primary veterinary medical care site with site security improvements necessary to retain AZA accreditation and USDA licensure.
- C. All plans shall assume that the area of the former Polar Shores exhibit and current playground shall have dual park and zoo uses (see Exhibit A).

Facility Development Principles: The Fall 2014 work of the Zoo/Fairmount Park Planning Group to develop Zoo/Fairmount Park facility plans shall be informed, but in no way restricted, by emergent agreement between the City and LSZS about the desirability of the following facility development principles:

- 1. Integrate facilities functionally, programmatically, and spatially so that park, adventure, outdoor recreation, play, animal exhibit, and education facilities function smoothly together and complement each other.
 - A. See Brevard Zoo [map](#), play area, and [ropes course](#).
- 2. Integrate play, adventure, and outdoor recreation facilities that combine destination appeal and educational impact.
 - A. See the Brookfield Zoo's [Hamill Family Play Zoo](#), Zoo New England's planned [Nature's Neighborhoods Children's Zoo](#), and [Tamarack Nature Center's Discovery Hollow play area](#).
- 3. Design all facilities to powerfully reflect the zoo and park's unique place – lower Kingsbury Creek, Kingsbury Bay and the St. Louis River, the St. Louis River Corridor neighborhoods, Duluth, northeast Minnesota, and the upper Midwest.

- A. See the [Western North Carolina Nature Center's Master Plan](#), especially the replica historic farm with heirloom livestock species and the pre-colonization and pre-historic animal exhibit areas.
 - B. See the oft-discussed potential for the zoo grounds to become a native plant arboretum, LSZS's existing partnership with the Lake Superior Botanical Society to develop native plant gardens, and the potential for other community-based partnerships with native communities, historical societies, natural resource management agencies, etc.
4. Focus on facilities that engage a wide variety of visitors – diverse in age, race, residence, socio-economic status, etc. – via a wide variety of multi-sensory, interactive experiential and educational modalities.
 5. Provide flexible indoor and outdoor spaces for new and/or travelling exhibits.
 6. Maximize the efficiency of the building and land used by moderately reducing unused/unprogrammed space.