

CHAPTER 3.0

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter provides a description of the Proposed Project, including a description of the Phase I components. The proposed land uses, and square footage of development in this Chapter are used as the basis for analysis and assessment of environmental impacts in this EIR.

The Proposed Project consists of a plan to redevelop the existing Zoo in phases over the course of approximately ten years. The Proposed Project is being evaluated under a Program EIR because the proposed Concept and Vision Plan (**Appendix A**) consists of a series of development activities over time within a specified geographic area. Specific development projects within the project site will be subject to additional site-specific environmental review in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(c). While serving as a Program EIR for the entire Plan, this document also serves as the project specific EIR for the construction of the first phase of planned developments within the Zoo.

Since this EIR includes both a program level analysis of the overall master plan as well as a project specific analysis, this chapter is divided into three parts:

GENERAL INFORMATION

This section includes information such as the project location that is common to both the program level analysis and the project specific analysis.

PROGRAM LEVEL PLAN INFORMATION

This section includes information specific to the overall Plan.

PHASE I PROJECT SPECIFIC INFORMATION

This section includes information specific to the proposed Phase I developments.

3.2 GENERAL INFORMATION

3.2.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The project site is located south of Downtown Sacramento on 14.7± acres in the southwesterly corner of William Land Park within the Land Park Community Planning Area (**Figures 2-1 and 2-2**). The project site is contained within the boundaries of the existing Zoo grounds. The Zoo is bordered by Sutterville

Road to the south, Land Park Drive to the east, 15th Avenue and William Land Park Drive to the north, the Holy Spirit School (3290 West Land Park Drive) and the Sacramento Southern rail line to the west.

3.2.2 BACKGROUND

The Sacramento Zoo, which originally opened in 1927, exhibits approximately 400 animals including 32 endangered or threatened species. The Zoo manages national breeding programs for two endangered species - the thick-billed parrot and the mangabey, and is involved in 19 Species Survival Plans (SSP) that seek to maintain the genetic pool for threatened or endangered species.

The American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA), a national non-profit organization that sets standards for zoos and aquariums, has accredited the Sacramento Zoo since 1975. The AZA reviews and inspects the Zoo every five years to determine compliance with AZA policies. Upon completion of review, the AZA may request improvements the Zoo's operations or facilities; if these improvements are not undertaken in a timely fashion, the AZA may withdraw the Zoo's accreditation status. While a zoo can remain open to the public without AZA accreditation, a zoo is subject to further inspections and approvals with regards to the loan of animals from other zoos and participation in SSPs and breeding programs.

The Zoo is also subject to regulation by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the regulations of the Animal Welfare Act. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the USDA inspects the care of animals in zoo facilities and licenses the Zoo to maintain animal collections. Animal exhibits, and holding areas as well as care and treatment practices must meet specified standards. If the USDA revokes a Zoo's license, the Zoo can be shut down. The Sacramento Zoo is currently licensed by the USDA.

ZOO-2002: MASTER PLAN FOR THE SACRAMENTO ZOO AND SURROUNDING AREA

The Zoo's current master plan *Zoo – 2002: Master Plan for the Sacramento Zoo and Surrounding Area* was adopted in December 1988. The Sacramento City Council approved, with modifications, an alternative which involved the renovation of many of the outdated exhibits. This alternative also included a pedestrian over-crossing of Land Park Drive between Fairytale Town and the Zoo entrance, and a two-acre expansion of the Zoo boundaries to Fifteenth Avenue; these two planned developments were eliminated as conditions of approval by the Sacramento City Council (*Resolution 88-1076*). The adopted plan did include the construction of a two-story education/administration building adjacent to Fairytale Town. The education/administration building, however, has not been built, nor are there plans for its construction as envisioned in the *Zoo – 2002: Master Plan* (Mary Healy, pers. comm.).

The adoption of the preferred alternative in 1988 resulted in the incorporation of 27 mitigation measures for identified environmental effects. Most of the mitigation measures have been undertaken and completed, however, several have not. Those that have not been undertaken include: discounted admission to public transit users, a shuttle system for parking at Sacramento City College, and design stipulations on the education building. The first two mitigation measures were included to mitigate the effect of increased attendance envisioned by the master plan. As discussed below, actual attendance expectations were never met. The third mitigation measure was included to mitigate the effect of the education building, which as noted above, has not been constructed.

It should be noted that mitigation identified in the previous EIR was based on an analysis of impacts that would occur with projected visitation estimates that were significantly higher than those actually experienced over the past 13 years (**Table 3-1**). In 1988, when the current master plan was developed and approved, attendance at the Sacramento Zoo was approximately 550,000. Under the approved alternative, Zoo attendance was projected to increase to 718,000 in 1995/1996 and to 800,000 in 2002-2003. Actual figures for 1995/1996 were approximately 400,000, while in 2001, 468,086 visitors came to the Sacramento Zoo. These attendance figures are below the base year established in 1988, and significantly lower than those estimated in the previous EIR. Therefore, when compared with the base year of 1988 the increased attendance impact never materialized.

ZOO MODIFICATIONS – 1988 vs. 2001

Figure 3-1 provides an aerial photo of the Zoo taken in 1988, the year in which the current master plan was approved, and an aerial photo of the Zoo taken in 2001. Comparing the two figures, a number of developments can be seen which have occurred at the Zoo since 1988. In 1992, the rare feline exhibit was constructed east of the lions, tigers and bears exhibit. In 1995, the Kampala Center and Lake Victoria were constructed in the middle of the Zoo. Also in 1995, the gift shop and the amphitheater were built adjacent to the reptile house. Other features that have been developed since 1988 include the tamarin exhibit (1997), the snow leopard habitat (1998), the Red Panda Exhibit (2000-2001). The entrance and administration buildings have undergone minor renovations. Many exhibits, including the lion, tiger, and bear habitats have remained. The Zoo was expanded in 1989 to include the lawn area to the north of the Zoo where three large valley oak trees exist.

The changes depicted in the two aerial photos reflect changes in the evolving roles of zoos. Over the past 13 years, standards of animal care and husbandry have risen. However, prior to 1997, the City of Sacramento had difficulty funding the City-owned Zoo to meet more rigorous standards. In 1997, the City of Sacramento and the Sacramento Zoological Society created a new management structure to respond to funding problems. Under this new structure, the Zoological Society has taken on the daily and financial management of the Zoo, while the Zoo grounds and facilities continue to be owned by the City. The new management structure is prescribed by the Sacramento Zoo Partnership Agreement, which was approved by the City Council on February 25, 1997 (Resolution 97-099). The Partnership Agreement defines the roles and responsibilities of both the City and the Zoological Society concerning the Zoo's operation and maintenance. Under the terms of the agreement, the Zoological Society is responsible for maintaining membership in the AZA, meeting USDA standards for the care of animals, as well as providing public access to the Zoo. The Zoological Society was also required to update the *Zoo – 2002 Master Plan*. The agreement stipulates that the master plan revision “focus on improving Zoo operations within the existing Zoo boundaries” (Partnership Agreement, Section. 11(B)).

In January 2000, a new plan was developed with input from Zoo staff, Zoo Board, Land Park community, and the Portico Group, a design firm based in Seattle that specializes in zoo planning. The resulting Sacramento Zoo Concept Plan has been developed to respond to changes in zoo standards, maintain the Zoo's accreditation with the AZA, USDA license, and to fulfill the objectives listed in Section 3.2.3 below. The proposed Concept Plan will update both exhibits and the facilities for animal care and the Zoo's administration and education.

Insert Table 3-1

Insert Figure 3-1

When preliminary drawings were available, the Zoo staff held a public forum in July 2000 to present the plan and solicit comments. After a series of updates and meetings conducted with the Sacramento City Council, the Land Park Community Association (LPCA), and other interested parties; a second public forum was held in October 2000. Meetings between the Zoo staff, the LPCA and other parties have continued through 2001. As part of the environmental review process, the City and Zoological Society held a public meeting at the Zoo on October 10, 2001 to solicit comments concerning the NOP and Initial Study released on October 4, 2001. Details of the CEQA process, including the public review period for this EIR are summarized in Section 1.4 of this document.

3.2.3 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The following are objectives of the Proposed Project.

- Establish the Zoo as a premier visitor attraction in the Sacramento region focused on the quality of visitor experience and managed attendance by encouraging year round use of the Zoo.
- Create opportunities to raise visitor awareness and concern for the world's wildlife and natural resources. Emphasize interconnectedness of all living things.
- Provide updated facilities necessary for continued accreditation with the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA).
- Improving off-peak season visitation by providing more weather protection to encourage year round visitation.
- Provide a resource for wildlife conservation regionally and globally.
- Increase Zoo membership and community support.
- Provide engaging educational programs for visitors of all ages.
- Provide an on-site animal hospital for the enhanced care of the animal collection and to partner with the UC Davis Veterinary Residency program.

3.3 PROGRAM LEVEL CONCEPT/VISION PLAN INFORMATION

3.3.1 PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

The proposed Plan will update the exhibits and facilities within the existing 14.7± acre Zoo (**Figure 3-2**). A map of the existing Zoo is shown in **Figure 3-3**. The Plan envisions the redevelopment of the Zoo with the concept of a “sensory zoo” as a central interpretive theme. The plan that has been developed will focus on creating a zoo that will teach visitors to use their senses as they walk through the Zoo. The proposed Plan is focused on creating eight zones within the zoo that define the exhibits, visitor services, and zoo operations (**Figure 3-4**). The eight zones include the following: Sensory Exhibit Center, Sensory Reptile Center, Discovery Lake, Asian Transect, African Savanna, African Forest, Visitor Service and Amenities, and Zoo Operations and Maintenance. The eight zones will incorporate a number of existing features and facilities. These include: Victoria Lake, an artificial lake and animal exhibit; Kampala food service, a cafeteria serving Zoo patrons; a picnic area, which includes a number of mature oak trees; the

INSERT FIGURE 3-2

INSERT FIGURE 3-3

INSERT FIGURE 3-4

Gift Shop; Reptile House; Amphitheater; Jaguar Exhibit; and Red Panda Exhibit. The eight zones are described in **Table 3-2** and in the following discussion.

TABLE 3-2
PROPOSED ZOO ZONES

| Zones | Area |
|--|--|
| 1. Sensory Exhibit Center | 28,000 sq.ft. |
| 2. Sensory Reptile Center | 8,000 sq.ft. |
| 3. Discovery Lake | 59,000 sq.ft. |
| 4. Asian Transect: Tiger Complex | 98,000 sq.ft. |
| 5. African Savanna: Giraffe Complex | 102,000 sq.ft. |
| 6. African Forest: Chimpanzee Complex | 107,000 sq.ft. |
| 7. Visitor Services and Amenities: | 88,000 sq.ft. |
| a. Entry ticketing and Information | |
| b. Gift Shop | |
| c. Multi-use & Catering Facilities | |
| d. Kampala & Other Food Service | |
| 8. Zoo Operations and Maintenance: | 160,000 sq.ft. |
| a. Administration | |
| b. Medical & Recovery Holding | |
| c. Education | |
| d. Food Preparation | |
| e. Marketing & Community Relations | |
| f. Maintenance & Storage | |
| Total | 640,000 sq.ft. = 14.7 Acres |

SOURCE: Sacramento Zoo Concept Plan, 2001

SENSORY EXHIBIT CENTER

The concept of a “sensory zoo” is the central theme of the exhibits described in the Plan. The Sensory Exhibit Center will be located near the entrance and will be designed to prepare visitors for a new type of visitor experience. The exhibit will consist of a hall presenting interactive and live displays chosen to bring out visitor awareness of their senses and how senses are used by a variety of living creatures. This exhibit is proposed to include underwater viewing of river otters and penguins.

SENSORY REPTILE CENTER

The Sensory Reptile Center will consist of the existing reptile house, which will be refurbished to support the sensory zoo theme. This exhibit of interactive and live displays will be located near the entrance along with the Sensory Exhibit Center to form a gateway to other Zoo exhibits.

DISCOVERY LAKE

The central water feature of the Zoo, Victoria Lake, will remain, but will be redesigned as a marsh exhibit with several new features. Part of the lake will be mesh-enclosed to form a large free flight aviary, and part will be mesh-enclosed to feature small to medium sized primates. The aviary will allow flocks of small birds, including several South American species, to fly overhead. Large birds such as flamingos will no longer need to be pinioned, and will be able to fly. Discovery Lake will include exhibits of crocodiles, cottontop tamarins or sifaka monkeys and jaguars viewed from boardwalks.

ASIAN TRANSECT: TIGER COMPLEX

This exhibit complex will consist of two zones, one comprised of tropical forest animals such as the orangutan, gibbon, sun bear and tiger; and the other with Himalayan animals such as snow leopard, red panda and pheasants. These exhibits will be linked by a trail that will take visitors along a series of caves inhabited by bats and a tiger before descending through trees with eye-level viewing of tree-dwelling orangutans and hornbills. After passing by exhibits of gibbons swinging through trees, sun bears, snow leopards, and pheasants, the visitor will exit through the existing red panda exhibit.

AFRICAN SAVANNA: GIRAFFE COMPLEX

This exhibit complex will include large hoofed animals and a number of other animals associated with the African savanna. Animal exhibits will include giraffe, wildebeests, zebra and other similarly sized animals as well as lions. Exhibits of small animals will be included with the attention of visitors again brought to the sensory faculties of various species. Meerkat, porcupine, bat-eared fox, hornbill, eagle, wild dog and kudu species will be exhibited.

AFRICAN FOREST: CHIMPANZEE COMPLEX

The chimpanzee exhibit complex will expand the chimpanzee habitat at the Zoo and will provide exhibits for a number of other animals. Through a series of heavily vegetated paths, visitors will observe pygmy hippopotamus, swamp monkeys, red river hog and okapi. A number of bird species in the exhibit will include turacos.

VISITOR SERVICES AND AMENITIES

Several facilities will be updated or created to better accommodate visitors. A new entry will be provided designed to be consistent with the style and materials of the surrounding residential area. The entry building will provide space for ticketing, information, membership, first-aid, and restroom services. A new restaurant with a covered food court will be located near the Okapi Forest. A multi-use pavilion will be constructed north of Victoria Lake to accommodate changing exhibits, catering and after hours functions (the pavilion is described in greater detail in Section 3.4 below). Several existing visitor service facilities will be maintained including the Kampala food service, picnic areas, amphitheater and the gift shop. As improvements and new exhibits are designed, they will include weather moderating features as much as possible. Misters, shade structures, heaters, and fans will all be incorporated as much as possible to encourage year round spread of attendance.

ZOO OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

A new service core, located at the southwestern corner of the Zoo, will provide all program requirements for administration, education, medical, food preparation, marketing, public relations, development, and primary maintenance and storage. The service core will be divided into two areas.

The first area will consist of an office complex containing space for administration, marketing, public relations, graphics, and education classrooms. The complex will include a reception area for bus drops and deliveries accessed by vehicles entering from 15th Avenue. Four parking spaces will be provided within a turning circle directly east of the reception area. Six garages will be provided south of the marketing building, and will be constructed with a planting area above. Other features of the complex include a courtyard, an outdoor animal space and a covered entry court. A below grade parking structure will be located below the office complex and will provide up to 52 parking spaces for staff. The parking structure will be accessed directly from 15th Avenue by a separate gated driveway.

The second area will consist of a medical/service complex that will include a veterinary clinic, a food storage building, a kitchen/commons building and a shop/storage building. These buildings will be constructed as part of the Phase I developments, and are described in greater detail in the following section.

3.3.2 GROWTH MANAGEMENT

The Concept/Vision Plan proposes to incorporate features to encourage year-round visitation. These features include enclosed animal exhibits such as within the Sensory Exhibit Center, and weather moderating features, such as misters, shade structures, heaters, and fans. Seasonal pricing differentials may also be implemented in an effort to encourage local residents to visit the Zoo more during the shoulder seasons of the fall and winter. The Plan projects an increase in visitation from 468,086 in 2001 to approximately 650,000 in 2011. This growth is expected to occur gradually over the 10 year period as new exhibits and facilities are developed, as shown in the Sacramento Zoo Attendance figure in Concept and Vision Plan included in **Appendix A**.

3.3.3 EXISTING ZOO FEATURES WHICH WILL BE MAINTAINED

There are several facilities within the Zoo that will not be affected by the Proposed Project, and will not be significantly modified. These facilities include the following: gift shop, reptile house, amphitheater, jaguar exhibit, and the red panda exhibit. To the extent possible, the existing vegetation bordering and within the project site will be maintained. This includes City Street Trees and Heritage Trees.

3.4 PHASE I PROJECT SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The first phase of proposed programmed developments will include improvements and/or upgrades at three distinct locations within the Zoo boundaries: (1) medical/service, (2) Kampala Center, and (3) north lawn. The locations of Phase I projects are provided in **Figure 3-5**. A description of improvements proposed under Phase I for each of these areas is provided below:

Insert Figure 3-5

MEDICAL/SERVICE

The medical/service complex will provide space for a veterinary medical clinic, a kitchen for preparing animal foods, a commons, food storage, shop and general storage. These facilities, including quarantine holding areas provided with the medical clinic, are required to maintain accreditation with the AZA.

Medical/Service Complex Components:

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. Veterinary Clinic | 8,460 sq.ft. + 1,500 sq.ft. holding area |
| 2. Kitchen/Commons | 3,000 sq.ft. |
| 3. Food Storage | 2,400 sq.ft. |
| 4. Storage and Shop | 2,400 sq.ft. |

Figure 3-6 depicts preliminary elevations of the proposed veterinary clinic. The veterinary clinic is the largest of the 4 structures that will be provided in the Medical/Service Complex. The clinic will have a 5,670 square foot footprint, with a 2,790 square foot second floor for a total of 8,460 square feet of building area (**Figure 3-7**). Additionally, the clinic will have an attached 1,500 square foot fenced in holding area. The clinic will be of concrete block construction, or of standard frame construction finished with natural wood siding. The clinic will be finished and/or trimmed with selected earth tones. The building will have a finished height of 26 feet above grade. Preliminary plans are not available for the remaining three buildings of the Medical/Service Complex; however the remaining buildings will be consistent with the height, finish, and style of the veterinary clinic.

KAMPALA CENTER

Two improvements will occur to the Kampala Center located in the center of the Zoo near Victoria Lake (**Figure 3-8**). A 40 x 60 foot covered deck will be located immediately across from the existing Kampala Center. The 2,400 square foot structure, which will overlook the lake, will provide a shaded area for up to 240 seated guests, or 750 standing guests. The structure will have a wood planking floor, wood railings and wooden pergola-type shading. A metal standing seam roof to match the existing Kampala Center will cover part of the deck.

The existing service section and west patio section of the Kampala Café will be enclosed with a roof and walls. The enclosed area, totaling 2,073 square feet, will allow an internal expansion of the kitchen facilities. The exterior walls will be finished with plaster to match the existing café.

NORTH LAWN

A multi-use pavilion will be constructed on the north lawn of the Zoo (**Figure 3-9**). The pavilion will consist of a shell structure with removable sides that will accommodate changing exhibits, catering and after hours functions. The area covered by the pavilion will be 80 feet long by 38 feet wide providing a total of 3,040 square feet of floor space which can be used in a variety of weather conditions. The pavilion will be located near a number of mature oak trees that are protected under the Sacramento City Code (Chapter 12.64) as Heritage Trees (**Figure 3-10**). The pavilion will be located outside of the drip line of all existing trees.

Insert Figures 3-6 thru 3-10