



CITY of OAKLAND  
OFFICE of PARKS & RECREATION

## PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

City of Oakland

Monday, March 14, 2011 5:00 P.M.

Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA

### **\*SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA**

1. CALL TO ORDER:
2. ROLL CALL:  
BELCHER, ENABULELE, FINLINSON, HAMMOCK, MATIS, MILLER, MONTAUK,  
RICARDS, TAYLOR, WONG, WU
3. DISPOSITION OF MINUTES:
  - A. Minutes of March 9, 2011
4. SPECIAL ORDERS:
5. PRAC PENDING LIST:
  - A. Commissioners Report Update, Commissioner Taylor
6. MODIFICATIONS TO THE AGENDA:
7. NEW BUSINESS:
8. COMMUNICATIONS:
9. PRAC COMMITTEE REPORT:
10. ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORTS:
11. CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS:
  - A. **Recommendation Concerning the Proposed Amendment to the Master Plan for the Oakland Zoo (Major Conditional Use Permit No. CM09085):** This item was continued from the March 9, 2011, Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission meeting.
12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:
13. COUNCIL REFERRALS:
14. DIRECTOR'S REPORT:
15. OPEN FORUM:
16. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

17. ADJOURNMENT:



This meeting is wheelchair accessible. To request materials in alternative formats, or to request an ASL interpreter, or assistive listening device, please call the *Office of Parks and Recreation* at (510) 238-7532 or TDD (510) 615-5883 at least three working days before the meeting. Please refrain from wearing scented products to this meeting so attendees who may experience chemical sensitivities may attend. Thank you.

*Next Meeting:*

*Wednesday, April 13, 2011; 4:30 p.m.  
Lakeside Garden Center  
666 Bellevue Ave, Oakland, CA*

CITY OF OAKLAND  
Interoffice Memorandum



**Office of Parks and Recreation**

**TO:** Michael Hammock, Co-Chair, Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission  
Susan Montauk, Co-Chair, Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission  
**FROM:** Darin Ranelletti, CEDA Planning and Zoning Division  
**DATE:** March 14, 2011  
**SUBJECT:** Recommendation Concerning the Proposed Amendment to the Master Plan for  
the Oakland Zoo (Major Conditional Use Permit No. CM09085)

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This item was continued from the March 9, 2011, Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission meeting. Attached is the staff report from the March 9 meeting. Exhibit C to the March 9 staff report (public comments) has been updated to include the public comments received through March 9, 2011.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darin Ranelletti".

Darin Ranelletti  
Planner III

Attachment: Staff Report from March 9, 2011

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CITY OF OAKLAND  
Interoffice Memorandum



**Office of Parks and Recreation**

**TO:** Michael Hammock, Co-Chair, Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission  
Susan Montauk, Co-Chair, Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission  
**FROM:** Darin Ranelletti, CEDA Planning and Zoning Division  
**DATE:** March 9, 2011  
**SUBJECT:** Recommendation Concerning the Proposed Amendment to the Master Plan for the Oakland Zoo (Major Conditional Use Permit No. CM09085)

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SUMMARY

The East Bay Zoological Society (EBZS), which operates the Oakland Zoo and manages Knowland Park on behalf of the City in accordance with a management agreement, proposes to amend the approved 1998 Master Plan for the Zoo. The proposed amendment requires approval by the City. Staff recommends that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission recommend approval of the amendment.

FISCAL IMPACT

Pursuant to the management agreement between the City and EBZS, the City provides an annual subsidy of at least \$172,414 to EBZS for operating the Zoo and managing Knowland Park. The agreement allows EBZS to request additional funding from the City with approval from the City Council. This additional subsidy has varied year-to-year.

Implementation of the amended Master Plan would cost approximately \$72 million. Funding would come from a variety of sources including private donations, Measure G (a City bond measure), and Measure WW (an East Bay Regional Park District bond measure). At this time, EBZS is not seeking additional funding from the City for the Master Plan amendment. Therefore, the Master Plan amendment would not result in a direct negative fiscal impact to the City beyond the annual City subsidy.

Both the approved Master Plan and the Master Plan amendment have the potential to result in an indirect negative fiscal impact to the City. The expansion of the Zoo would increase demand for City infrastructure, such as sanitary sewer service and storm drainage service, and could increase demand for public safety services, such as fire protection and police service, however, these potential increases are expected to result in minimal fiscal impacts to the City. EBZS would be required to fund any necessary improvements to the City's sanitary sewer and storm drain systems to serve the expanded Zoo; and EBZS maintains an on-site security staff and an emergency response plan to reduce demand on City public safety services. Approval of the Master Plan amendment would not result in additional indirect fiscal impacts to the City compared to the approved Master Plan. The effect of the Zoo expansion on City services is further discussed in the environmental document for the project described below in the "Key Issues" section of this report.

## BACKGROUND

In 1998 the City approved a Master Plan to upgrade and expand the Zoo. Certain elements of the approved Master Plan have already been completed, including the new Center for Science and Environmental Education, improvements to the Children's Zoo, restoration of Arroyo Viejo Creek, and various upgrades to existing Zoo facilities. The approved Master Plan also includes other proposed elements which have not yet been built, most notably the proposed new animal exhibit area previously called "California 1820" which would feature native California species present in California prior to the Gold Rush and be located to the east of the existing Zoo in an undeveloped portion of Knowland Park. A perimeter fence to enclose the California 1820 exhibit was also approved and has not yet been built.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

EBZS proposes to amend the previously approved Master Plan to revise certain elements of the plan. The amended Master Plan would still include a new animal exhibit area featuring native California species (now called the "California Trail") proposed to be located to the east of the existing Zoo in an undeveloped portion of Knowland Park. By featuring native California species, many of which are now extinct in the state, the new exhibit would provide educational opportunities concerning ecology and conservation. The California exhibit area would also include a California Interpretive Center with indoor educational exhibits and programs. The proposed Master Plan amendment includes some new elements not previously included in the 1998 Master Plan, such as a new Veterinary Medical Hospital located immediately east of the existing Zoo parking lot that would replace the existing veterinary hospital, and a new overnight camping area located to the east of the existing Zoo in an undeveloped portion of Knowland Park. The primary elements of the proposed Master Plan amendment are listed below and are further discussed in detail in the environmental document for the project described below in the "Key Issues" section of this report. The project drawings for the current proposal are attached to this report as Exhibit A.

### Proposed Revisions to Approved Master Plan

1. Replacement of the previously approved loop road and shuttle bus system to transport Zoo visitors from the existing Zoo to the California exhibit with an electric aerial gondola people-moving system;
2. Reconfiguration of the previously approved animal exhibits within the California exhibit;
3. Relocation of the previously approved California Interpretive Center within the California exhibit area to a site approximately 300 feet northwest of the previously approved location, and redesign of the Center;
4. Elimination of the previously approved off-site breeding activity, with incorporation of this area into the California exhibit;

5. Replacement of the existing veterinary hospital with the construction of a proposed new Veterinary Medical Hospital located immediately to the east of the existing Zoo parking lot on a portion of the previously approved California exhibit area;
6. Establishment of a new overnight camping area located to the northwest of the California exhibit area;
7. Establishment of the specific location of the proposed perimeter fence with modifications from the previously approved general location;
8. Improvement of the existing emergency vehicle access road off Snowdown Avenue; and
9. Provision of a public walking path located to the southeast and outside of the California exhibit to provide public access between existing fire roads and knolls in Knowland Park;

The size of the revised expansion area, as calculated by the area enclosed in the proposed perimeter fence, would decrease by six acres, from approximately 62 acres (1998 Master Plan) to approximately 56 acres (amended Master Plan).

The project would be constructed in phases over a total of approximately 42 months with the Veterinary Medical Hospital, perimeter fence, and improvements to the service road to the California exhibit area being constructed first. The California exhibit, gondola, and overnight camping area would be constructed in future phases.

EBZS is also proposing to implement a Habitat Enhancement Plan (HEP) for the California exhibit area and Upper Knowland Park. The HEP contains activities to control and eradicate target invasive plant species, such as French broom, revegetate areas where invasive species have been removed, protect and enhance grassland and trees, and protect and enhance habitat for notable native plant and animal species.

### KEY ISSUES

Below is a discussion of the key issues surrounding the proposed Master Plan amendment.

#### *Overview of City Review Process*

The proposed Master Plan amendment requires review by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC), Planning Commission, and City Council. The proposed Master Plan amendment was previously presented at informational sessions to the PRAC in June 2009 and the Planning Commission in April 2010. Pursuant to the zoning regulations, the proposed amendment requires approval of a major conditional use permit by the Planning Commission following the advisory recommendation of the PRAC. A hearing on the proposal at the Planning Commission is currently scheduled for March 16, 2011. The management agreement for the Zoo and Knowland Park stipulates that amendments to the Zoo Master Plan must be approved by the City Council. Following Planning Commission action on the proposal, the proposed amendment would be forwarded to the City Council for final decision.

The scope of the City's review is limited to the specific revisions proposed to the approved Master Plan. In the event that the proposed Master Plan amendment is not approved, EBZS would have the right to continue implementing the approved Master Plan from 1998.

### ***General Plan Policies***

The current General Plan land use classifications for the Zoo and Knowland Park have not changed since the previous Master Plan was approved in 1998. Knowland Park is divided into two different land use classifications in the Land Use and Transportation Element of the General Plan. The west-central portion of the park where the existing Zoo, the existing Arboretum, and the proposed California exhibit are located is designated as Urban Open Space. According to the General Plan, areas designated as Urban Open Space should be primarily used for active or passive recreation. The areas of Knowland Park located outside of the existing Zoo, the existing Arboretum, and the proposed California exhibit, in the far western portion of the park between Interstate 580 and the Zoo and in the eastern portion of the park to the east of the proposed California exhibit area, are designated as Resource Conservation areas in the General Plan. According to the General Plan, Resource Conservation areas are places where natural resources should be conserved. The Zoo expansion and the proposed Master Plan amendment are consistent with these General Plan designations; the Zoo expansion would be located in the Urban Open Space area where more intensive recreational activities are allowed. The Zoo expansion and the proposed Master Plan amendment are also consistent with the other relevant policies of the General Plan, including the policies of the Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation (OSCAR) Element of the General Plan, as explained in Section 3.8 of the environmental document described below in the "Key Issues" section of this report.

### ***Zoning Regulations***

The current zoning designations for the Zoo and Knowland Park have not changed since the previous Master Plan was approved in 1998. Knowland Park is divided into two different zoning districts roughly equivalent to the two General Plan land use classifications on the park. The western portion of the park where the existing Zoo, the existing Arboretum, and the proposed California exhibit are located is in the OS-SU (Open Space – Special Use) zone. The area located between Interstate 580 and the existing Zoo is also in the OS-SU zone. The OS-SU zone permits or conditionally permits a variety of activities related to active and passive recreation, such as botanical gardens, athletic fields, recreation centers, sports stadiums/arenas, golf courses, and zoological gardens (zoos). Modifications to zoos require a major conditional use permit. To approve the major conditional use permit for the proposed Master Plan amendment, the City would need to determine that the proposed amendment satisfies the approval criteria contained in the zoning regulations (see Exhibit B). The portion of Knowland Park located east of the existing Zoo and the proposed California exhibit is in the OS-RCA (Open Space – Resource Conservation Area) zone. The OS-RCA zone permits or conditionally permits a narrow range of activities related to open space conservation, such as hiking trails, picnic areas, unimproved camp sites, and wildlife preserves. The Zoo expansion and the proposed Master Plan amendment are consistent with the intent of these zoning designations; the Zoo expansion would be located in the OS-SU zone where more intensive recreational activities are allowed.

### *Community Input*

EBZS has sponsored a number of recent community meetings during the past three years, including meetings in February 2008, May 2009, September 2009, March 2010, and July 2010, to present information concerning the proposed Master Plan amendment and to receive feedback from the community. Numerous people spoke at these meetings, both supporters and opponents of the proposal. Prior to submitting the current proposal to the City, EBZS sponsored two formal 30-day public review and comment periods on the proposed Master Plan amendment during which it provided community members with plans for the proposal and solicited feedback. Numerous written comments have been submitted to EBZS and the City. Public comments submitted to the City, including comments submitted to EBZS which, in turn, submitted the comments to the City, are attached to this report (see Exhibit C). EBZS has also distributed regular project updates via e-mail to community members and interested parties and has held meetings with representatives of the Friends of Knowland Park, a community group organized in response to the proposal.

The Friends of Knowland Park (FOKP) developed an alternative concept for the expansion of the Zoo that locates the proposed California exhibit closer to the existing Zoo. FOKP's alternative concept is attached to this report (see Exhibit D). EBZS considered the FOKP alternative concept and submitted a response (see Exhibit E). The EBZS response concludes that the alternative concept would contribute to degradation of sensitive landscape features such as stream corridors and oak groves, contribute to erosion of exceptionally steep slopes, create inappropriate and non-animal-friendly exhibits, diminish accessibility to a wide range of visitors including people with disabilities, and increase capital costs by more than \$10 million.

One of the concerns FOKP and other community members have expressed concerning the Zoo expansion is the effect of the expansion on open space in Knowland Park. The perimeter fence associated with the Zoo expansion in the approved Master Plan would enclose approximately 62 acres of Knowland Park. The perimeter fence in the proposed Master Plan amendment would enclose approximately 56 acres of Knowland Park (including approximately 18 acres of new animal exhibits in the California exhibit area). The modifications to the location of the perimeter fence in the proposed Master Plan amendment would allow continued access in Knowland Park to one segment of an existing fire road used by Knowland Park users to traverse the park and continued access to one of the knolls containing scenic views located in the southwestern portion of the park. Access to the fire road and the knoll by Knowland Park users is restricted under the approved 1998 Master Plan. The proposed Master Plan amendment also includes a proposed public walking path that would connect existing fire roads to increase public hiking opportunities compared to the approved Master Plan. With the implementation of the amended Master Plan, the public would still have access to approximately 355 acres of undeveloped area outside of the Zoo facility, including access to multiple locations suitable for hiking and containing scenic viewpoints. Since 1998 the City has added approximately 24 acres of new urban parkland and an additional approximately 116 acres of Resource Conservation area. Also, east of Knowland Park is Chabot Regional Park which provides an additional approximately 5,000 acres of open space. A detailed analysis on the effect of the amended Master Plan on public use of Knowland Park is contained in Sections 3.1 and 3.8 of the environmental document discussed below.



### *Environmental Impacts*

When the previous Master Plan was approved in 1998, the City adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The 1998 MND concluded that the previous Master Plan would not result in a significant impact on the environment with the incorporation of specified mitigation measures.

For the proposed Master Plan amendment the City has prepared a Draft Subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration/Addendum (SMND/A).<sup>1</sup> The Draft SMND/A was released for public review and comment on February 11, 2011. The Draft SMND/A evaluates whether the buildout of the amended Master Plan would result in new significant environmental impacts, or a substantial increase in the severity of impacts previously identified in the 1998 MND, due to the proposed changes to the Master Plan, new information, and/or changes to the circumstances surrounding the project. The Draft SMND/A finds that the buildout of the amended Master Plan would not result in new significant environmental impacts, or a substantial increase in the severity of impacts previously identified in the 1998 MND, with the incorporation of specified mitigation measures and the City's standard conditions of approval. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is not required. The Draft SMND/A identifies mitigation measures related to the following environmental topics: biological resources; geology and soils; hydrology and water quality; and transportation and circulation. The Draft SMND/A also identifies standard conditions of approval related to the following environmental topics: aesthetics; air quality; biological resources; geology and soils; hazards and hazardous materials; hydrology and water quality; noise; public services and utilities; and transportation and circulation. Together, the mitigation measures and the standard conditions of approval would reduce all potential environmental impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Any interested party may comment on the Draft SMND/A. All comments received will be considered by the City prior to making a decision on the SMND/A and the proposed Master Plan amendment. Comments must be received within 30 calendar days of the release of the Draft SMND/A (no later than 4:00 p.m. on March 14, 2011).<sup>2</sup>

### *Evaluation of Proposed Master Plan Amendment*

Staff believes the proposed Master Plan amendment is superior to the approved Master Plan for the following reasons:

1. Expansion Area: The proposed Master Plan amendment would result in a Zoo expansion area of 56 acres compared to 62 acres under the approved 1998 Master Plan.

<sup>1</sup> The Draft SMND/A was previously provided separately to the Parks and Recreation Commissioners when it was released for public review on February 11, 2011. The document is available for review at the Community and Economic Development Agency, Planning and Zoning Division, 250 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Suite 3315, Oakland, California, 94612. The Draft SMND/A is also available on the City's website at <http://www2.oaklandnet.com/Government/o/CEDA/o/PlanningZoning/s/Application/DOWD009157>.

<sup>2</sup> Comments on the Draft SMND/A should be submitted in writing to the attention of the case planner, Darin Ranelletti, Planner III, via mail or in person to City of Oakland, Community and Economic Development Agency, 250 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Suite 3315, Oakland, California, 94612, via fax to 510-238-6538, or via e-mail to [dranelletti@oaklandnet.com](mailto:dranelletti@oaklandnet.com).

2. Aerial Gondola: The proposed aerial gondola system for transporting Zoo visitors to the California exhibit would be superior to the previously approved shuttle bus system because the gondola system would require significantly less hillside grading, thereby reducing the environmental impact and visual impact on the neighboring houses. Additionally, the gondola would be located further away from nearby residents compared to the previously approved shuttle system and would not result in significant visual impacts as analyzed in the Draft SMND/A.
3. Veterinary Medical Hospital: The proposed Veterinary Medical Hospital would replace the existing undersized and aging veterinary facility at the Zoo with a modern veterinary facility. The new Veterinary Medical Hospital would be developed using "green" building principles. EBZS intends for the Hospital to be the first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified facility of its kind in California. In addition to providing an improved environment for animal diagnosis and treatment, the new Hospital would enhance the Zoo's research and education programs.
4. Overnight Camping Area: The proposed overnight camping area would supplement and enhance existing overnight camping programs at the Zoo by providing a unique recreational and educational experience for organized groups (youth, student, and family groups) facilitated and supervised by Zoo staff.
5. Perimeter Fence: The proposed perimeter fence in the Master Plan amendment would be superior to the perimeter fence in the approved Master Plan. The fence in the Master Plan amendment has been adjusted to reduce encroachment into valuable chaparral habitat and to provide continued public access to one segment of an existing fire road and one knoll containing scenic views located in the southwestern portion of Knowland Park.
6. Public Walking Path: The proposed public walking path would connect existing fire roads thereby increasing public hiking opportunities compared to the approved Master Plan.
7. Emergency Vehicle Access Road: The existing dirt fire road in Knowland Park located at the end of Snowdown Avenue would be improved (widened and surfaced with gravel) to provide enhanced emergency vehicle access to and from areas of Knowland Park.


### RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission recommend approval of the proposed Master Plan amendment. The proposed amendment would improve the previously approved Master Plan for the Zoo for the reasons stated above. The development of the amended Master Plan would further enhance a City-owned facility by providing a unique and valuable recreational and educational opportunity for visitors. The amended Master Plan is consistent with applicable General Plan policies and zoning regulations, and there have been no new City regulations or policies adopted since the approval of the 1998 Master Plan that would conflict with the amended Master Plan. The development of the amended Master Plan would not result in

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significant environmental impacts and the public would continue to have access to a substantial amount of open space in Knowland Park and the surrounding area.

Respectfully submitted,



Darin Ranelletti  
Planner III

Attachments: Exhibit A – Project Drawings  
Exhibit B – Approval Criteria for Major Conditional Use Permits  
Exhibit C – Public Comments  
Exhibit D – Alternative Expansion Concept Developed by the Friends of  
Knowland Park  
Exhibit E – East Bay Zoological Society Response to Alternative Expansion  
Concept Developed by the Friends of Knowland Park (Prepared by  
PJA Architects)