



CONNECT  
CARE  
CONSERVE

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## ***NEXT CENTURY PLAN***

*EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*



## FOREWORD

As we approach the centennial celebration of the opening of Brookfield Zoo Chicago in 2034, we are tremendously excited to reveal the transformational vision for the future of the Zoo that is contained within this *Next Century Plan*. Since our gates first opened in 1934, Chicago has been home to a world-famous zoo that is synonymous with innovation and excellence. From our leadership in animal care and wellbeing to our conservation programs around the world, Brookfield Zoo Chicago plays a crucial role in saving wildlife and protecting wild places. Through our award-winning programs in education and community engagement, Brookfield Zoo Chicago also makes a difference in the lives of people here in the Chicago region and around the world.

Over the past 90 years, global wildlife populations have plummeted and the list of endangered and extinct species continues to grow. Natural habitats continue to shrink and our oceans face unrelenting pressure. Fueled by climate change and biodiversity loss, our planet is facing an environmental crisis of unprecedented magnitude. Despite the scale of these challenges, at Brookfield Zoo Chicago we believe that there is hope and that we can make a profound impact on the conservation of wildlife and wild places. Accredited zoos like ours have evolved to become some of the most powerful contributors to conservation on the planet.

The vision and commitments at the heart of this *Next Century Plan* reflect our core narrative that zoos save species and ecosystems. We inspire conservation leadership. We touch lives. We save animals.

This *Next Century Plan* is the culmination of over a year of dedicated effort from our Board of Trustees, staff, and stakeholders. The Plan boldly envisions the redevelopment and expansion of the

Zoo's physical campus to bolster our excellence in animal care and wellness. The selection of animals and ecoregions ensures we invest resources to leverage conservation impact and restoration of wildlife. Through engaging and dynamic experiences, we will remain a premier destination as one of the world's best zoos, focused on the delivery of a fun and educational experience for all audiences. Our impacts will extend beyond our gates to reach local communities and global partners with environmental education. Through scientific advancement and conservation action, our expert teams will ensure that innovation and impact remain core pillars of our success. And finally—and perhaps most importantly—through up-close animal experiences we provide a connection for people to develop an empathy for wildlife and nature. We hope that as they connect, they learn to care, and to ultimately conserve our planet for future generations.

We have drawn inspiration from the timeless wisdom to “make no small plans”. From the onset, our teams were committed to Dream Big and create a future



vision for Brookfield Zoo Chicago that is befitting of our global stature and the impact we wish to make on conservation leadership in the years ahead. We are thrilled with the result and hope you will join us on the journey that lies ahead.

Dr. Michael J. Adkesson  
President & CEO

Brookfield Zoo Chicago & Chicago Zoological Society

Cherryl T. Thomas  
Chair, Board of Trustees

Brookfield Zoo Chicago & Chicago Zoological Society



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### **ZOO VISION**

Brookfield Zoo Chicago is a recognized leader in influencing people's actions to conserve wildlife and value nature.

### **ZOO MISSION**

To inspire conservation leadership by connecting people to wildlife and nature.

### **"CONNECT. CARE. CONSERVE."**

Brookfield Zoo Chicago's mantra encapsulates our mission to ignite emotional connections with wildlife that spark conservation action while leading vital programs to protect endangered species. More than just words, this reflects the journey we hope to inspire as the Zoo and our programs connect with people and communities to move them to a point of caring for the world around them — and ultimately to a point of behavioral change in which they help conserve and protect wildlife and wild places.



## NEXT CENTURY COMMITMENTS

Next Century Commitments at Brookfield Zoo Chicago set forth a visionary road map encompassing various pillars that collectively propel the institution into a dynamic future.

### 1. Champion Excellence and Leadership in Animal Care and Wellness

The Zoo will lead with unparalleled commitment to animal care excellence and conservation, shaping the future of zoological care through transformative development.

### 2. Revolutionize and Expand Animal Habitats and Spaces

The Zoo will pioneer innovative animal habitats and spaces, embracing opportunities to optimize the well-being and natural behaviors of diverse species.

### 3. Transform the Guest Experience and Elevate a Zoo For All

The Zoo will expand the guest experience, fostering inclusivity and empathy through personalized wildlife encounters in a modern and accessible environment at Brookfield Zoo Chicago.

### 4. Extend Community and Environmental Education Impact

The Zoo will inspire the next generation of conservation advocates by expanding its educational reach, fostering connections with nature, and bridging the gap between individuals and the natural world.

### 5. Expand Contributions in Conservation Science and Research

The Zoo will continue its leadership in conservation science, spearheading global projects and advocacy efforts to protect wildlife and wild places.

### 6. Reinvigorate Existing Zoo Facilities and Assets and Build Climate Resiliency

The Zoo will breathe new life into its facilities, preserving architectural heritage while embracing innovation to showcase sustainable practices and create economic opportunities.

### 7. Harness Collective Power of Staff and Supporters

Recognizing the strength in unity, the Zoo will empower its workforce, volunteers, and stakeholders to drive impactful change and ensure continued success in its mission.



*To read full descriptions of the complete Next Century Commitments, visit [brookfieldzoo.org/nextcenturycommitments](https://brookfieldzoo.org/nextcenturycommitments).*





### WELCOME TO THE FUTURE OF BROOKFIELD ZOO CHICAGO

As we stand on the brink of our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2034, Brookfield Zoo Chicago is poised to embark on an extraordinary journey with our *Next Century Plan*. This groundbreaking, ambitious vision aims to elevate our Zoo to unprecedented heights, leveraging over 90 years of unwavering commitment to wildlife conservation. With the urgent call to action against biodiversity loss and climate change, our mission is more critical than ever.

The *Next Century Plan* will transform Brookfield Zoo Chicago into a beacon of conservation and education, blending our storied legacy with innovative advancements. Our campus will be reimagined with dynamic animal habitats, updated facilities, and elevated standards of animal care. We will create a fun, beloved family destination but also a vibrant educational hub, ensuring unforgettable experiences for all our guests.

### Foundations of the Next Century Plan:

- **A 15-Year Plan with a 30-Year Vision:**  
Anchored on our 2034 centennial, our plan balances new, immersive experiences with the preservation and care of historical structures.
- **Expansion and Enhancement:**  
Doubling the experience footprint within our 235 acres on the Forest Preserves of Cook County, our westward expansion will feature immersive spaces that transport guests to distant landscapes, illustrating the interconnectedness between humans and nature.
- **Innovative Animal Habitats:**  
Introducing dynamic mixed-species environments based on 14 global ecoregions of the world will allow for ever-changing guest viewing opportunities and immersive environments that showcase the natural behaviors of our animals.
- **Unprecedented Guest Experience:**  
Our framework will ensure top-tier guest satisfaction as we strive to become the number one zoo in the country. Designing amenities that serve our guests of the future ensures accessibility, interactivity, and engagement for all backgrounds. People learn best when they are having fun and recreation has been a component of our mission since our inception.
- **Substantial Investment:**  
With a \$500 million investment, and rippling economic impact, this plan is not just about physical transformation but also about solidifying our role as a leader in global wildlife conservation.

### More Than a Campus Plan:

- **A Zoo For All:**  
Our commitment to accessibility means removing barriers to access and learning, ensuring all communities and individuals can participate and benefit.
- **Environmental Educational and Community Engagement:**  
Our vision extends beyond the Zoo, providing a North Star for delivering impactful education and community programs, making Brookfield Zoo Chicago a welcoming and inclusive environment not tethered to a physical visit.
- **Comprehensive Conservation Integration:**  
Our impact will extend throughout Cook County and across the globe, with a comprehensive 10-year conservation strategy underway that interweaves our animals, their care, and the development of our exhibits and experiences.
- **Advancing Conservation Science and Research:**  
Our plan will enhance our role in global conservation science, supporting groundbreaking research and innovative approaches to wildlife preservation.
- **Animal Wellness and Veterinary Excellence:**  
Elevating standards in veterinary care, animal wellness, and husbandry practices ensures the highest quality of life for our animal residents.
- **Sustainability and Climate Resiliency:**  
Integrating sustainability into our operations and facilities, we will prioritize climate resiliency to minimize our environmental footprint and model eco-friendly practices.
- **Investments in Organizational Culture:**  
Fostering a positive organizational culture through modern office spaces, improved communal areas, enhanced service roads, and growing our volunteer base to support our mission.



**Join us as we embark on this transformative journey. Together, we will shape a future where wildlife thrives, and our connection to nature is deepened for generations to come.**



## Brookfield Zoo Chicago Campus Plan







### A TRANSFORMATIVE VISION

The Brookfield Zoo Chicago *Next Century Plan* identifies an exciting, transformative vision for the future. Flexible, rotational animal habitats offer even richer experiences for animals and raise the curiosity and fascination of guests. Expanded and updated habitat and animal support spaces demonstrate the Zoo's commitment to animal wellness and conservation. With expansion to the west, the Zoo gains additional habitat area to enrich the lives of animals and enable the prioritization of critical infrastructure improvements to existing animal and support spaces.

Wherever possible, compatible species share support space, minimizing infrastructural footprints and maximizing land area available for animals. Improvements deviate from taxonomical organization of the Zoo's residents, resulting in a new way of caring for animals at the Zoo. Providing adequate and efficient support spaces allows animal care staff to prioritize time spent enriching the lives of resident animals, and minimizes time spent on tasks that have a less-direct impact on animal wellness.

### Landscape Immersion

Landscape immersion extends an animal's habitat into the public realm, engulfing guests into the world of the animal. Welcoming guests into the animal's home fosters empathy for the animal by creating a mutual experience within a shared landscape. Where possible, habitats and surrounding landscapes will reflect expansive landscapes of forests, woodlands,

grasslands, and riparian areas, providing animals with long- territorial views, complexity, and places to feel safe and protected. Since an animal is part of its ecosystem and bioclimate, the goal is to immerse guests in an animal's life – and not just a habitat.

Habitat simulation presents animals in the most natural settings possible within their respective bioclimatic landscapes. This approach requires that textures, forms, and landscape features within the habitat spaces draw from the animal's home environment. Careful selection of plant material that can withstand the climate of Chicago, yet reflect the character of the animal's home environment is integral to the success of this approach. Not only does the simulation of an animal's native habitat demonstrate the value and beauty of the world's dynamic wild spaces, but it also provides a context that elicits natural behaviors from animals. This, in turn, fosters public understanding of animal behavior, physical adaptation, and the historic relationships between animals and their ecosystems.

### Animal Wellness and Husbandry

Brookfield Zoo Chicago's reputation centers around its prioritization of meaningful and respectful animal husbandry and wellness. The *Next Century Plan* advances these priorities through improved efficiencies, updated buildings and care spaces, and expanded and flexible habitats. Habitats and support facilities are designed to create ideal management conditions for animal care staff. With a focus on animal care and wellness always coming first, the Zoo will ensure that animal care staff meet and exceed the physical and psychological needs of the animals in their care through complex environments, dynamic social groups, and enriching daily experiences.

Flexibility is a key theme throughout the *Next Century Plan*. The ability to modify habitats in a variety of ways will provide stimulation and elicit natural behavior. This allows for more opportunities for animal interactions in and with their habitat involving sensory, olfactory, tactile, and social interaction. Habitats will be designed and cared for in ways that support animal choice and promote elective behavior.

Key to the theme of flexibility and adaptation is the network of interconnected habitat spaces proposed in the *Next Century Plan*. Not only are the new habitats extensive in size, they form a mosaic of habitat options that support natural behavior and habitat richness, while contributing to an integrated conservation education experience for guests.



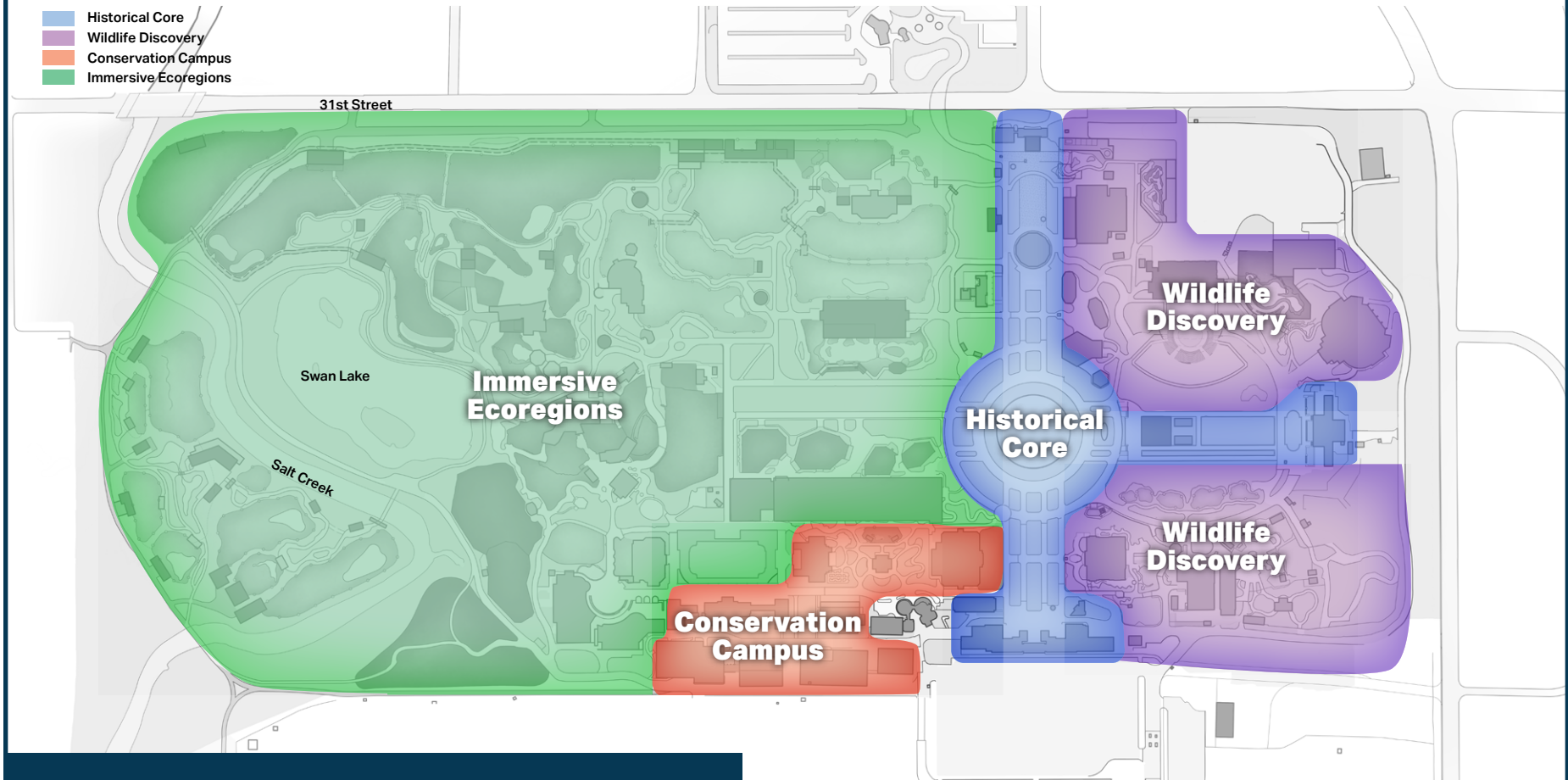




## Brookfield Zoo Chicago Zones

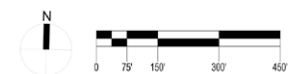
### Legend

- Historical Core
- Wildlife Discovery
- Conservation Campus
- Immersive Ecoregions



### Each of the four zones can be broadly described as the following:

- **Historical Core:** Legacy garden park layout with connections to North and South Gates
- **Wildlife Discovery:** Family-friendly animal experiences and attractions
- **Conservation Campus:** Collaborative science and research hub
- **Immersive Ecoregions:** Dynamic animal habitats and wild landscapes





### EMBRACING LEGACY: PRESERVING BROOKFIELD ZOO CHICAGO'S HISTORIC STRUCTURES FOR THE NEXT CENTURY

At the forefront of the Zoo's commitment to historical preservation lies the celebration of its cherished past and the anticipation of its vibrant future.

Brookfield Zoo Chicago stands as a testament to architectural ingenuity, with iconic structures like the Bear Grottos, Lion House, Pachyderm Building, and Australia Building gracing its landscape. Crafted with meticulous detail, these buildings, adorned with artificial rock formations, eschew traditional zoo design philosophies of the past, opting instead for a naturalistic aesthetic inspired by columnar basalt formations found globally.

For decades, these architectural marvels have captivated guests, offering glimpses of wildlife without the intrusion of visible barriers. The *Next Century Plan* proudly upholds the legacy of these historic exhibits, ensuring their continued significance in the guest experience.

#### The Pachyderm Building: A Vision for Today and Tomorrow

The Pachyderm Building, a cornerstone of Brookfield Zoo Chicago's architectural heritage, will undergo a transformation into a space offering expansive views of the flexible, mixed-species habitat to its north. Within its grand structure, picture windows are envisioned to seamlessly integrate human and animal realms, maintaining the intricate rockwork that defines its character.

#### Preserving the Classical Landscape: The North, South, and East Malls

Since its inception, Brookfield Zoo Chicago has been defined by its formal avenues and grand circular motifs, conceived in 1926 to connect its entrance gates. The *Next Century Plan* reveres this historic

connection, utilizing it to orient guests upon their arrival. The East Mall will continue to serve as a hub for activities that have enriched the Zoo experience throughout the ages.

#### Guardians of Tradition: The North and South Gates

With their regal presence, the North and South Gates stand as custodians of the Zoo's rich heritage, welcoming guests into the storied world of Brookfield Zoo Chicago. More than mere entrances, these gates embody the essence of the Zoo's history, providing a timeless link between past, present, and future. The Zoo remains steadfast in its commitment to preserving the enduring allure and significance of these gateways as it embarks on enhancements to honor its evolution. They serve as revered landmarks, uniting generations of families and ensuring that each visitor feels a deep connection to the Zoo's cherished legacy.

#### Revitalizing the Spirit of the Bear Grottos

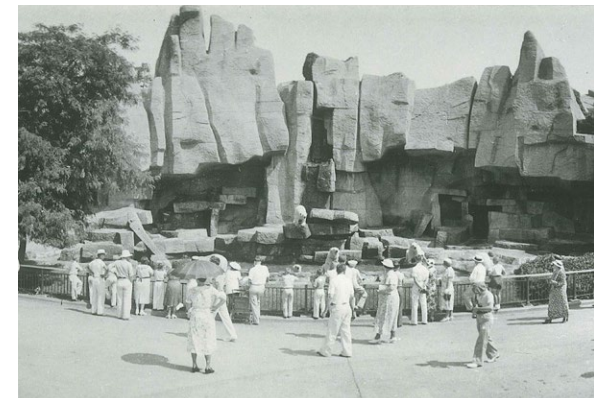
The Bear Grottos, echoing the design ethos of the Pachyderm Building, will be repurposed in alignment with the *Next Century Plan's* vision. Originally crafted as naturalistic habitats for bears, following renovation, they will provide a backdrop for red pandas, sloth bears, sun bears, and wolverines, honoring the Zoo's commitment to conservation and innovation.



Pachyderm Building

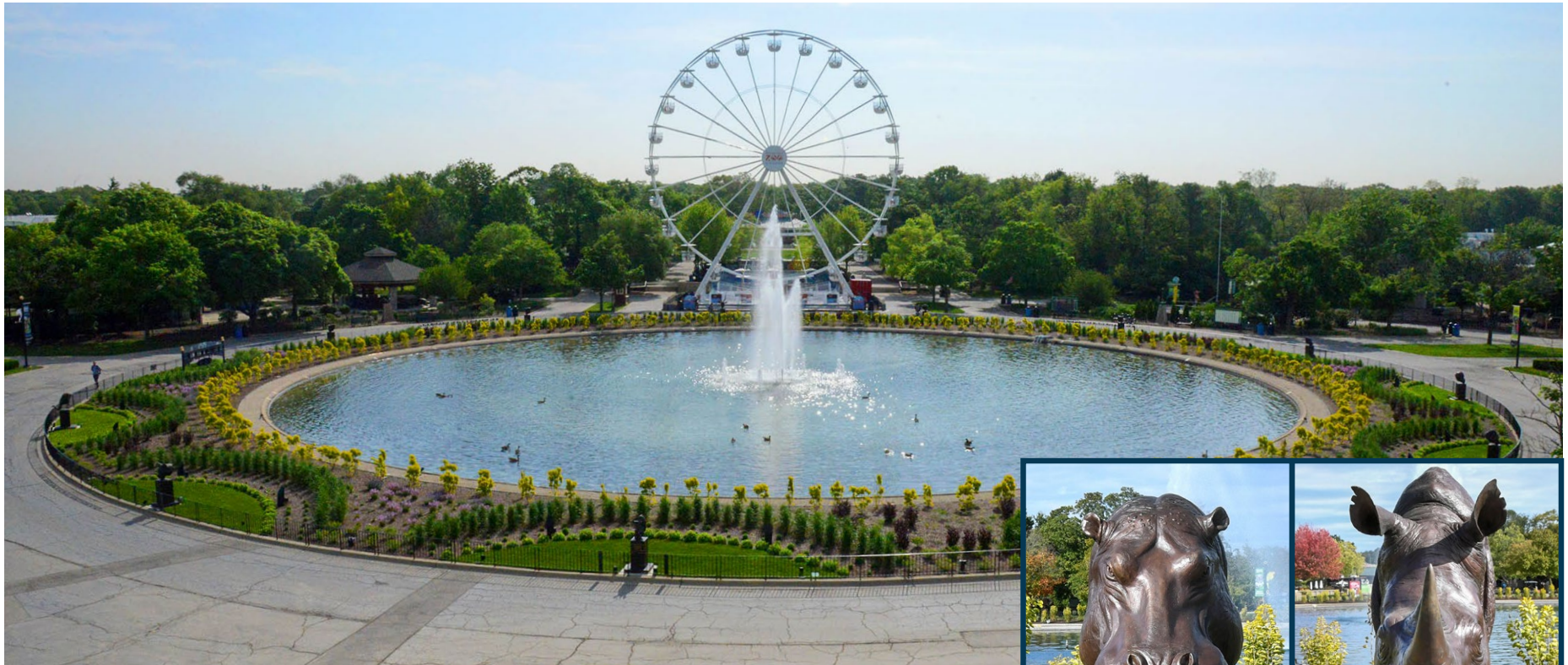


North, South, and East Malls



Bear Grottos





## KEY PROJECTS: Historical Core

Since its inception, Brookfield Zoo Chicago has been defined by its formal avenues and grand circular motifs, conceived in 1926 to connect its entrance gates. The North and South Gates stand as custodians of our rich heritage, welcoming guests into the storied world of Brookfield Zoo Chicago. More than mere entrances, these gates embody the essence of our history, providing a timeless link between past, present, and future.

Throughout the sprawling North and South Malls, guests will still encounter the Zoo's hand-carved wooden carousel featuring 72 animals, and the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Fountain—a timeless icon completed in 1954 to honor the legacy of the former U.S. president and his conservation efforts. Adorned by an awe-inspiring exhibition crafted by renowned public artists Gillie and Marc, 12 striking bronze sculptures stand as guardians of the animal kingdom, each intricately sculpted to capture the essence of one of the world's most endangered species.



Brookfield Zoo Chicago Zones:  
Historical Core





Brookfield Zoo Chicago Zones:  
Historical Core

**North Gate Arrival**  
| A new pedestrian  
overpass welcomes  
guests to the  
revitalized North Gate  
gift shop and plaza

## North Gate Arrival and Entry

The new arrival experience to Brookfield Zoo Chicago is filled with exciting and engaging experiences. From arrival via a new pedestrian overpass to exciting concessions and playful animal encounters, the revamped North Gate underlines the exciting new direction of the Zoo as an unparalleled amenity for guests and wildlife. Additionally, a commitment to enhancing pedestrian access, will make the experience of guests who arrive without a vehicle more walkable, seamless, and safe.

## PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS

The *Next Century Plan* envisions that all guests will have a shared arrival experience, enhancing the function of the north parking lot and gate. Guests arrive to the north parking lot and immediately proceed to their parking stall; there is no longer a parking ticket booth upon entry, eliminating the long waits in the queue of years past. On busy days, a parking shuttle will circulate throughout the entire north parking lot to alleviate the long-distance walk south to 31st Street. Remote ticketing will be the primary mode of purchase, with in-person ticketing

available. This approach reduces the need for multiple layers of ticket booths and staffing as currently exists at the Zoo.

Upon arrival to what was previously the beginning of the entry tunnel, guests will discover that an entirely new experience delivers them to the Zoo. A new, expansive wetland and pond that serves as stormwater management and vital natural habitat for native fauna and migrating birds. A sweeping bridge takes guests up and over 31st Street, where elevated





**North Gate Arrival** | The new arrival to Brookfield Zoo Chicago creates a comfortable and welcoming experience, void of ticketing lines and full of inviting features. The historic North Gate building will be renovated to its former glory, featuring a new retail experience that spills out from the historic building into an open-air market space. In the distance, guests are drawn to a new sea lion habitat to the east, or a formal promenade to the core of the Zoo to the south.

views of the Zoo provide the first orientation to what lies ahead and offer a glimpse of the Chicago skyline in the distance. At the end of this gently sloping walk, guests quickly pass through a low-profile ticket scanner to begin their visit, without waiting in line.

### NORTH GATE PLAZA

Once within the Zoo, guests are met with a renovated North Gate building, restored to its original prominence at the Zoo. The interior retail spaces are refreshed, with visual connectivity from 31st Street on the north to the North Gate Plaza on the south. From the southern arcade façade, an indoor/outdoor gift shop expands into the plaza.

With operable walls and a light-weight construction, this structure is highly adaptable to provide space for retail or other programming.

Gazing across the plaza toward the east, guests are drawn toward Sea Lion Cove or the new, permanent Butterfly House along the west façade of Discovery Center. A new allée of trees running south along the Zoo's original axis draws guests past The Carousel toward Roosevelt Fountain to begin their Zoo excursion. Alternatively, guests can begin their visit with an immersive, walk-through experience by following an inviting pathway curving westward toward the reimagined Australia region.







## KEY PROJECTS: Conservation Campus

Nestled on the site of the current commissary and warehouse buildings, the development of Brookfield Zoo Chicago's Conservation Campus will act as a nexus for researchers, educators, and conservationists alike. Here, cutting-edge facilities and collaborative spaces provide fertile ground for innovative research and interdisciplinary cooperation. Partnering with local universities and the Forest Preserves of Cook County, the Zoo aims to propel conservation efforts forward, addressing pressing environmental challenges with ingenuity and resolve.

However, the Conservation Campus isn't just for scientists and scholars—it also offers insight into the world of conservation for guests. Guests can discover the new indoor viewing gallery, where conservation research is showcased in action. Previously behind-the-scenes, ongoing projects will be transformed into interactive exhibits highlighting the importance of the work, inviting



Hamill Family Nature Plaza



Brookfield Zoo Chicago Zones:  
Conservation Campus





**Philip W. K. Sweet Jr. Center for Animal Care And Conservation** | The dawn of a new era in staff facilities is marked by the newly completed Philip W. K. Sweet Jr. Center for Animal Care and Conservation, located at the southwest corner of the Zoo next door to The Living Coast. Near Regenstein Wolf Woods, Great Bear Wilderness, and other beloved exhibits, this center revolutionizes the workspace for the Zoo's dedicated animal care and conservation teams. The project is made possible by a gift from The Grainger Foundation.

guests to become active participants in the mission to safeguard biodiversity. The Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Conservation and Biology Research Center will house a captivating indoor public interpretation gallery. Here, guests can delve deeper into the critical conservation work at Brookfield Zoo Chicago, gaining a deeper understanding of the Zoo's role in global conservation efforts. Through engaging exhibits and interactive displays, the aim is to inspire the next generation of environmental stewards, fostering a sense of responsibility and stewardship for the natural world.

Additionally, there are plans to enhance the collaborative education space at the Mary Ann MacLean Conservation Leadership Center (CLC), transforming it into a beacon of conservation

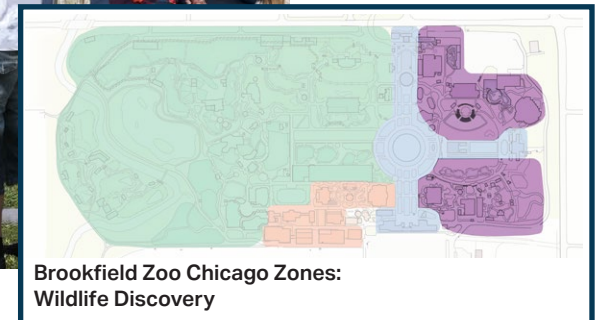
education. With improved visibility and access, the CLC becomes a vibrant hub of learning and discovery, empowering guests to explore the intersection of science, conservation, and education.

Finally, the commitment to excellence extends to the expansion of the veterinary hospital. The relocation of the Zoo's grounds and facilities department to a new location will allow for the growth of the Zoo's state-of-the-art medical facility to meet the evolving needs of the animal patients. From live-viewing opportunities of animal treatments to innovative digital exhibits showcasing veterinary procedures, this expansion offers a new dimension to the guest experience, deepening their appreciation for the vital role of veterinary medicine in wildlife conservation.





**Amphitheatre** | A new amphitheatre is located south of the existing Clouded Leopard Rain Forest and Desert's Edge exhibits. An elevated stage with terraced and lawn seating offers a variety of options for up to 4,000 guests. The new amphitheatre can host daily animal presentations with more intimate seating at the lower levels. Large events, such as concerts, can take advantage of the expansive seating areas.



Brookfield Zoo Chicago Zones:  
Wildlife Discovery

## KEY PROJECTS: Wildlife Discovery

The existing Wild Encounters area at the southeast corner of Brookfield Zoo Chicago will be expanded to include new and reimagined habitats at the former Bear Grottos. These new habitats will provide dynamic homes for charismatic animals, creating exciting experiences for the Zoo's youngest guests. New animals will include the sloth bear, sun bear, wolverine, and red panda.

Nearby, in the heavily wooded area to the northeast of the current Wild Encounters, a new aerial adventure is proposed. This amenity will be

nestled into the existing canopy, creating a thrilling arboreal experience for children and adults alike.

Additional recreational features may include new animal experiences, ticketed rides and attractions, and a 4D theater. Designed to create a central, communal space to attract more new and diverse audiences to the Zoo, a spacious new amphitheatre will offer seating for upwards of 2,000 guests and additional flexible lawn seating for up to 4,000 guests. Situated away from animal habitats will host programs from daily animal and educational

presentations to evening musical performances, such as the Zoo's successful Roaring Nights concert series that supports the organization's conservation programs around the globe.

Adjacent to the Discovery Center, a new, permanent butterfly house will be constructed to offer a lush, indoor experience. Year-round access to this conservatory will allow guests to learn about the life-cycle and migration patterns of these important pollinators.





## Pacific Coasts of the Americas

At the Pacific Coasts of the Americas at Brookfield Zoo Chicago, the sights and sounds of the Peruvian and California coasts come to life in an immersive experience like no other. As guests enter, they are greeted by the rhythmic sounds of crashing waves and the salty scent of the ocean breeze, transporting them to the rugged Pacific coastline.

The centerpiece of this region is Sea Lion Cove, a sprawling habitat where guests can witness these magnificent creatures in their natural element. From rocky shores to underwater viewing windows, guests will have the opportunity to observe California sea lions as they swim, play, and interact with each other, offering a glimpse into their dynamic social behaviors. As close relatives of the South American sea lion and Peruvian fur seal, Brookfield Zoo Chicago's California sea lions will also introduce guests to the wildlife of the Humboldt Current.

Adjacent to the sea lion habitat is a training and education area, where care staff and curators share stories of conservation efforts and conduct behavior training sessions with the sea lions. Through interactive storytelling and environmental education sessions, guests will gain a deeper understanding of the importance of protecting these marine mammals and the impact of climate change on their habitats.

Further exploration reveals the new Humboldt penguin habitat, inspired by Peru's Punta San Juan Marine Protected Area. Here, guests can marvel at the playful antics of Humboldt penguins as they swim gracefully through the water and nestle in rocky shores and cliff habitats. The habitat also features free-flying terns and gulls, creating a dynamic mixed-species experience that highlights the rich biodiversity of the region. With underwater viewing, Brookfield Zoo Chicago guests will be able to see the penguins as they "fly" through the currents.

By showcasing the interconnectedness of marine life and human impact on these delicate ecosystems,



the exhibit serves as a powerful catalyst for change. Through education, awareness, and advocacy, guests are empowered to take meaningful action in safeguarding oceans and coastal regions for future generations. From reducing plastic pollution to supporting sustainable fishing practices, each individual is inspired to play a vital role in preserving the precious biodiversity.

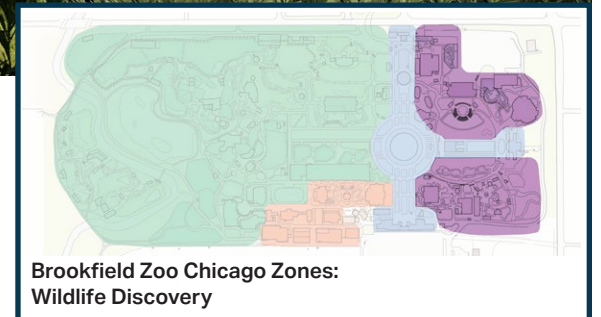


Brookfield Zoo Chicago Zones:  
Wildlife Discovery





**Our Rivers to the Gulf** | Dolphins at Brookfield Zoo Chicago find themselves at home with a new, indoor/outdoor shallow water pool habitat simulating their home range at Sarasota Bay. A sweeping boardwalk immerses guests in this mangrove landscape where connections between the Illinois River and the conservation efforts in the Gulf of Mexico are made.



Brookfield Zoo Chicago Zones:  
Wildlife Discovery





## KEY PROJECTS: Immersive Ecoregions

The proposed thematic organization will transition Brookfield Zoo Chicago from a zoological garden park into an immersive, exciting, and ever-changing landscape based experience that is as dynamic as the animals that reside here. The new thematic zoo layout organizes the Zoo into distinct ecoregions that are based on three organizational themes: Bioclimatic Zones, Global Ecoregions, and Megadiversity.

### ORGANIZATIONAL THEMES

#### Bioclimatic Zones

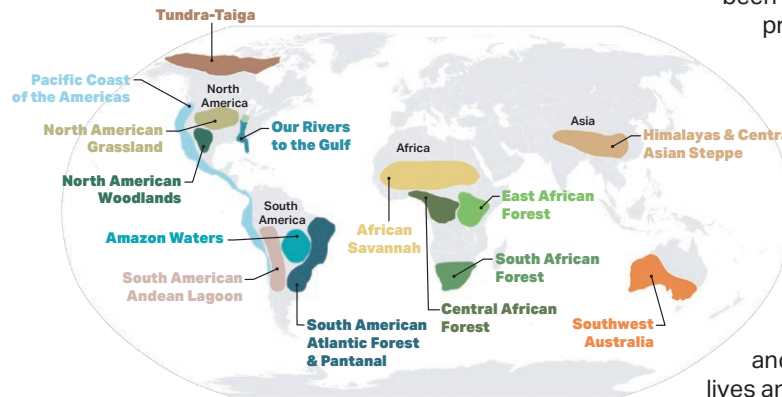
Bioclimatic zones are organized as major biome-types and groupings of terrestrial ecosystems which share major features of the environment and are similar in vegetation, structure, common climate, and biological makeup of plants and animals. The *Next Century Plan* proposes global bioclimatic zones that can be simulated in the Chicago climate.

#### Global Ecoregions

Ecologically and geographically defined ecoregions represent continuous, generally similar natural communities and species. A representation of global ecoregions coupled with Bioclimatic Zones provides opportunities to highlight conservation work around the globe, present partnerships in wildlife and habitat conservation in critically endangered ecoregions, and provide guests with opportunities to learn about positive conservation efforts from a diversity of cultures.

#### Megadiversity

Megadiversity highlights the richness of select ecoregions and countries endowed with greater biodiversity. This framework supports understanding of ecosystems and ecological processes that make our living planet, the imperative need for protection, and the most critical issues facing wildlife conservation. Highlighting ecoregions with megadiversity provides additional educational opportunities at Brookfield Zoo Chicago and increases awareness of the need for wildlife conservation.



*With the landscape providing a framework for learning, guests embark on a journey of discovery as they move from ecoregion to ecoregion. Each ecoregion is anchored by one or more key animal species residing in a landscape that ecologically and geographically simulates their home environment.*

The ecoregion designations across Brookfield Zoo Chicago provide a context within which guests can learn about the animals, their habitats, the conservation work of the Zoo, and the complex interconnectedness between humans and their surrounding landscape. Through ecoregion-based messaging and habitat-based animal species placement, the Zoo will foster appreciation and connection between guests and the unique habitats of the animals at home here. Landscape change and habitat loss underscore the notion of adaptability; the *Next Century Plan* 'zoo of the future' provides endless flexibility and adaptability to consistently provide excellence in animal wellness and exceptional guest experiences.

Ecoregions identified in the *Next Century Plan* were selected for Brookfield Zoo Chicago based on the critical need to enhance education and conservation of either the landscape or key species. Further, legacy conservation partnerships and programs have

been considered in the selection of ecoregions to provide continuity in messaging and efforts.

The landscape approach outlined in this chapter provides a framework for habitats to be designed and developed in way that creates similar, holistic ecosystems to the animal's home place. This is accomplished by providing similar features, textures, and landscapes to the animal's native habitats. This approach greatly contributes to the health and wellness of the animals by enriching their lives and providing complexity. As an example, the approach employs the use of plant material that is suitable to the climate of Brookfield while offering forms and textures that mimic those of the ecoregion's native plant material. Similar approaches will be used to create landform such as escarpments or mud wallows and landscape features such as boulders, rock outcroppings, waterways, and water bodies. This concerted approach brings the wildness of each ecoregion's native character to the Zoo in a way that is adaptive to the local conditions and climatic characteristics.

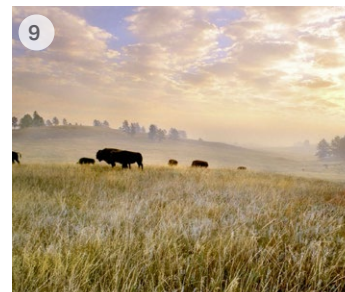
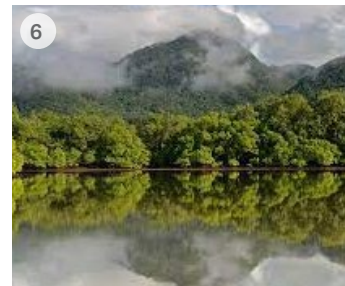
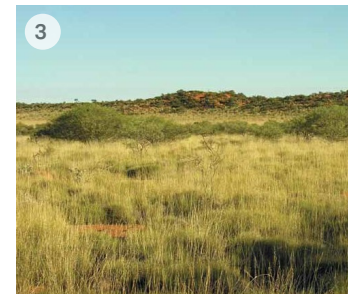
Generic place names are intended to describe the geographic and climatic conditions of the area. As each ecoregion is developed into a project phase, a compelling project name will be selected to meet the needs of development and guest engagement.







## Landscape Character of Selected Ecoregions

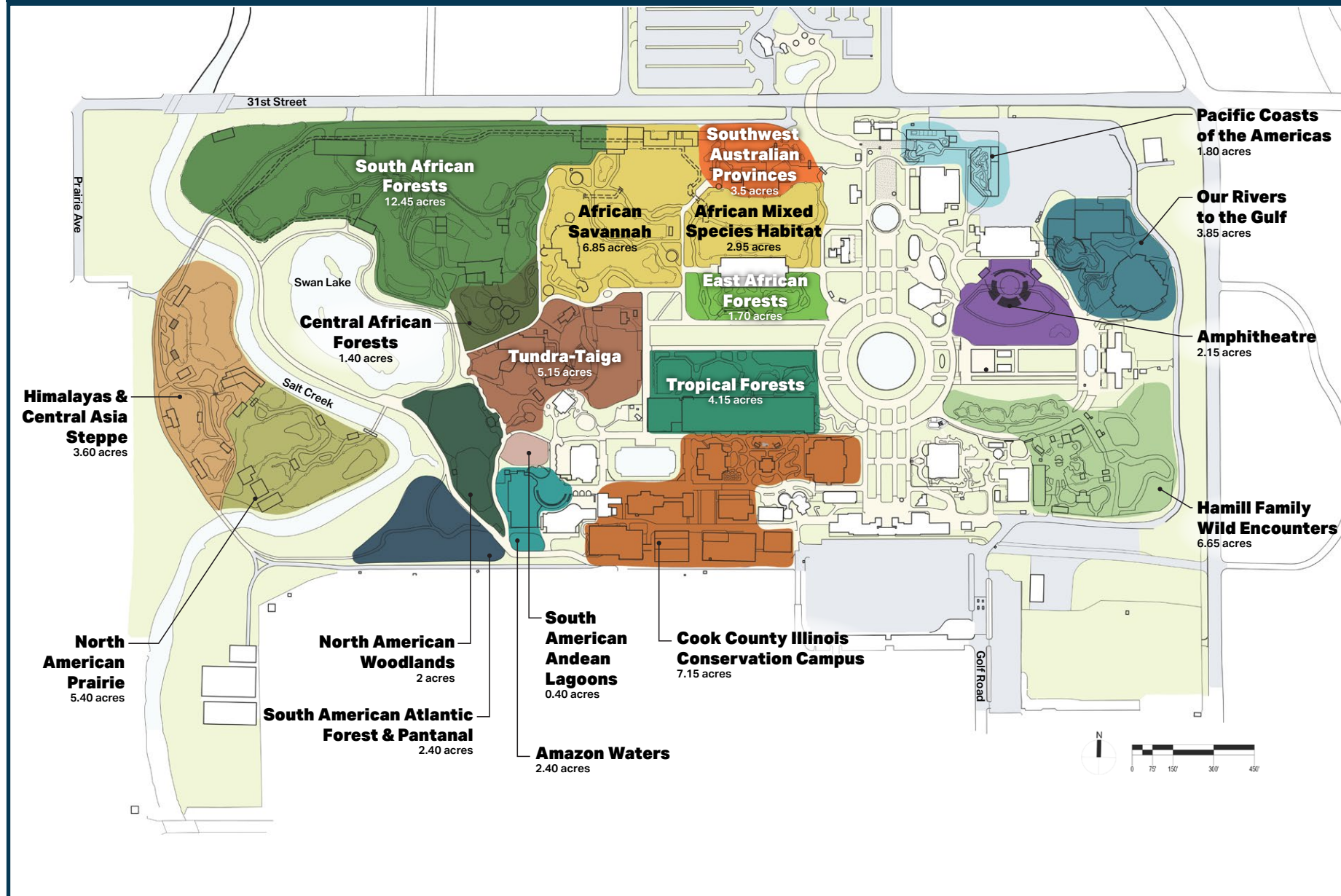


1. Gateway to Africa
  - A. South African Forests
  - B. African Savannah
  - C. East African Forests
  - D. Central African Forests
2. Himalayas & Central Asian Steppe
3. Southwest Australian Provinces
4. Our Rivers to the Gulf
5. Pacific Coasts of the Americas
6. South American Atlantic Forest and Pantanal
7. South American Andean Lagoons
8. Amazon Waters
9. North American Grasslands
10. Tundra-Taiga
11. North American Woodlands





## Thematic Organization Plan







**Tropical Forests |**  
An aerial view of the Northwest corner overlooking four magnificent new outdoor forests for gorillas, orangutans, and monkeys.



## Tropical Forests

Opening in Summer 2025, the new \$66 million Tropical Forests habitat will offer the first peek at the big things to come at Brookfield Zoo Chicago. The nearly 3 acres of outdoor space will feature dynamic environments, providing wildlife increased variety and choice. Guests will have direct views into the

Gorilla Conservation Center with a state-of-the-art learning space area for the public. Additionally, the expansion includes a dedicated home for the King Conservation Leadership Academy, the Zoo's flagship youth program for science learning that provides skills and learning for career and college readiness.





Tropical Forests





**Gateway to Africa:**  
**South African Forests |**  
An underwater aquatic planter forms an invisible barrier for the African bull elephants as they wade in a shallow pool at the edge of the new, expansive African Forests region of Brookfield Zoo Chicago - one of several areas totaling 12.5 acres of mixed-species habitat space for these animals. In the distance, giraffes or other African species navigate the Savannah Passage that links multiple habitats across the northwest quadrant of the Zoo.

## Gateway to Africa

The Gateway to Africa zone at Brookfield Zoo Chicago emerges as a sanctuary, a haven where guests can witness firsthand the splendor of Africa's wildlife and natural landscapes. The transformation provides a new innovation in animal shifting capabilities for flexibility between the various habitats, linking together four distinct ecoregions: South African Forest, African Savannah, East African Forests, and Central African Forests. This flexibility is the result of the new Savannah Passage, a half mile long, multi-species transfer corridor that

allows for rotational habitat expansion and variety. The Savannah Passage provides flexibility between habitats and allows for changing scenery from within the renovated Pachyderm Building into the mixed species savannah habitat to the north.

But it will not just be the wildlife that captivates guests' senses—it will be the interconnectedness of it all. As guests weave through the intricate pathways of the ecoregion, they will come to understand the delicate balance that sustains this ecosystem. Each

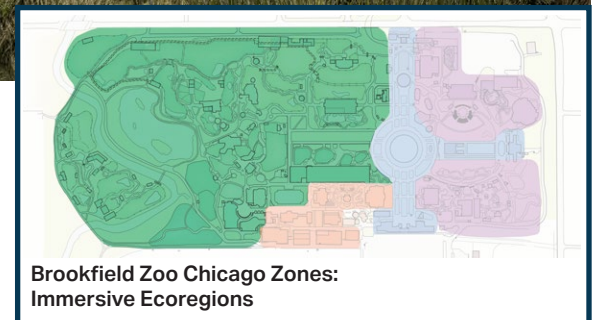
species plays a vital role in the web of life, their fates intertwined in a dance of survival and adaptation.

As guests emerge from the Gateway to Africa, their hearts will be full with a newfound appreciation for the wonders of the natural world. They will carry with them the echoes of distant roars, the rustle of leaves, and the vibrant spirit of Africa—a reminder that, in the face of adversity, hope and resilience will always prevail.





**Gateway to Africa: East African Forests** | South of the renovated Pachyderm Building, guests gaze underwater into the new hippopotamus pool. An overhead trellis provides comfort and improved viewing, while planting within and alongside the pool creates a wild and immersive experience for guests and animals alike. Adjacent to the hippo habitat, a Nile crocodile shares a similar riparian habitat, with muddy beaches for rest alongside a meandering pool and grassy shores.



Brookfield Zoo Chicago Zones:  
Immersive Ecoregions



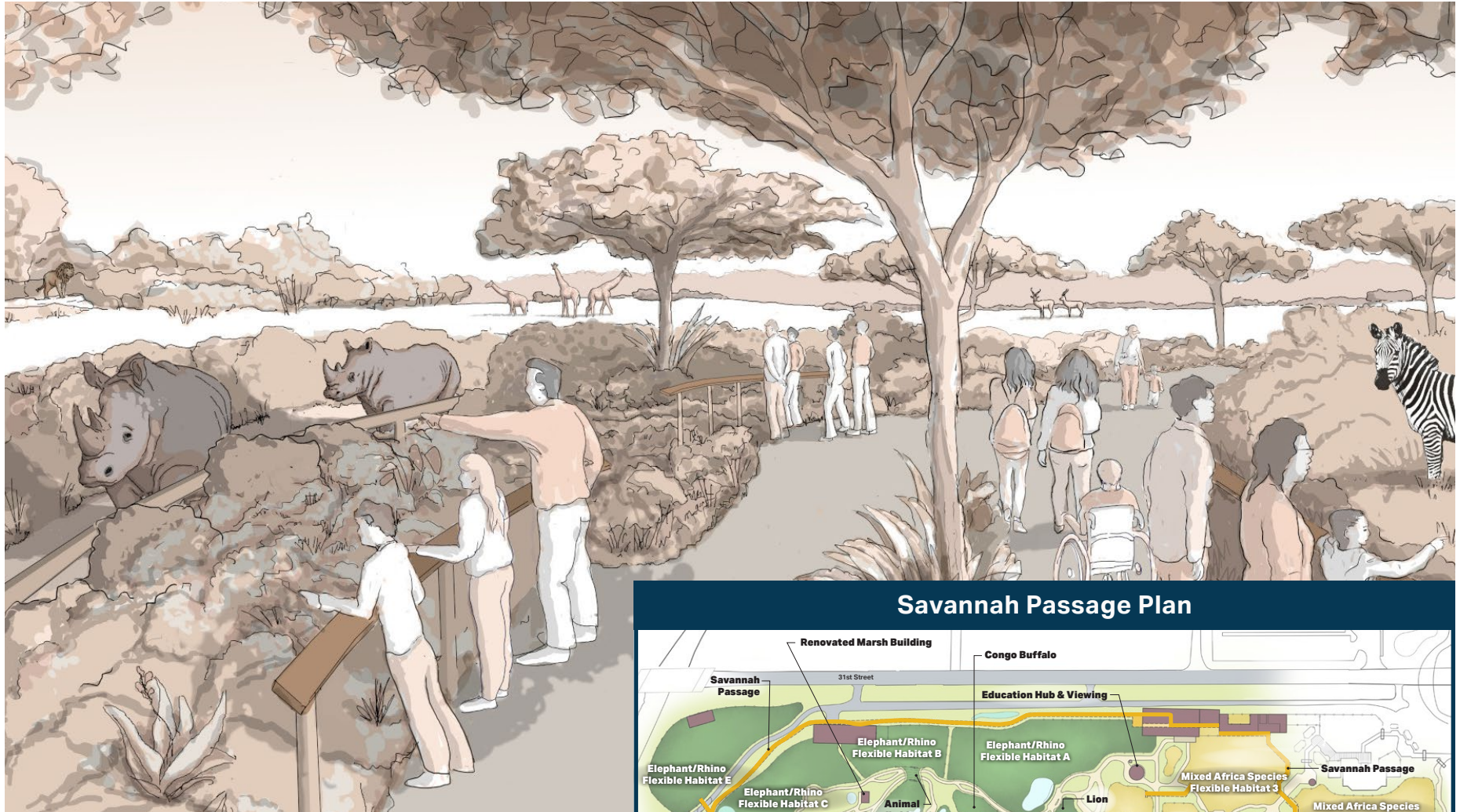


**Gateway to Africa: Pachyderm Building** | The renovated Pachyderm Building reverses the current animal-guest relationship by replacing indoor animal space with exciting guest and event space and offering expansive views to the flexible, mixed species habitat north of the building. Large picture windows create a seamless integration of human and animal spaces, while the Savannah Passage that links multiple habitats across the northwest quadrant of the Zoo facilitates a changing view of animals on view and an exciting habitat for the species to engage with.

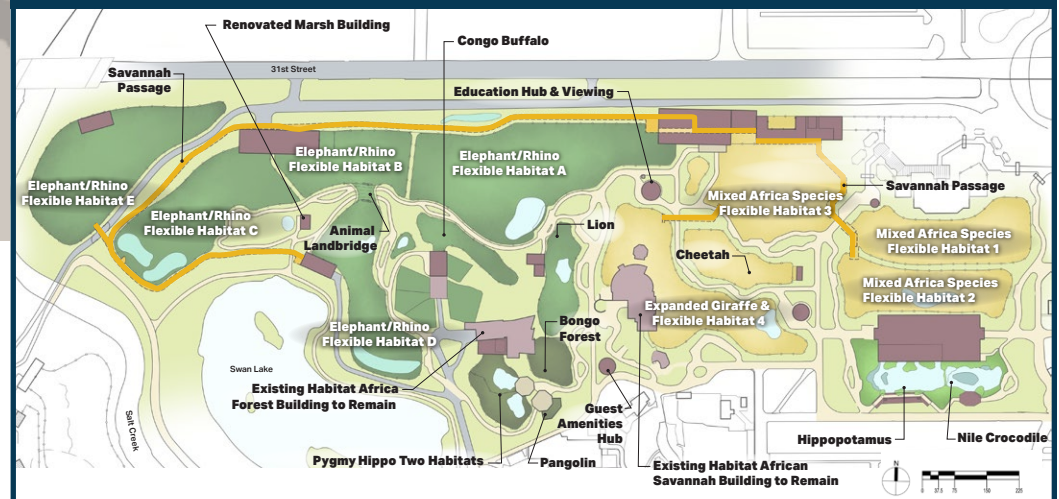


Brookfield Zoo Chicago Zones:  
Immersive Ecoregions





### Savannah Passage Plan



**Gateway to Africa: African Savannah** | Innovation in animal shifting capabilities will allow for flexibility between the various habitats, linking together four distinct ecoregions: South African Forests, African Savannah, East African Forests, and Central African Forests. This will be possible thanks to the creation of the new Savannah Passage, a half-mile long, multi-species transfer corridor that allows for rotational habitat expansion and variety. The Savannah Passage links multiple habitats across the northwest quadrant of the Zoo, facilitating a changing landscape for the animals and guests to experience.





### Southwest Australian Provinces

Brookfield Zoo Chicago's Australia House, a historic building located on the grounds, was one of the first Australian focused buildings in a North American zoo. The Zoo's rich history with Australian species and the successful efforts that lead to the creation of the Australian Landscape Trust reinvigorate the Australia House and will inspire the renovation of the historic building and the creation of a new Australian ecoregion at the Zoo, the Southwest Australian Provinces.

As guests step through the majestic portal into Australia at Brookfield Zoo Chicago, they are instantly transported to the awe-inspiring landscapes of Southwest Australia. Cultural cues abound, from the earthy scent of eucalyptus leaves to the haunting melodies of Aboriginal didgeridoos echoing in the distance. The air is alive with anticipation as guests prepare to embark on an extraordinary expedition through one of the world's most arid continents.

Venturing deeper into the Southwest Australian region, guests find themselves immersed in a world of wonder and discovery. Towering termite mounds rise like ancient sentinels amidst the scrublands, while the call of Tawny frogmouths fills the air with a sense of mystery. Vibrant rose-breasted cockatoos dart through the canopy, their colorful plumage a dazzling display against the azure sky.



The journey continues through the heart of the outback, where an elevated walkway offers panoramic views of the sprawling landscape. Here, guests can marvel at rare and endangered species, from the graceful kangaroos to the majestic emus, as they roam freely in their natural habitat. Two koala habitats provide intimate encounters with these beloved marsupials, their fluffy forms nestled among the branches of towering eucalyptus trees.

Exiting through a forest portal adorned with the vivid hues of Birds of Paradise, guests find themselves on the outskirts of the outback, where the newly renovated Australia Indoor Habitat Building awaits. Inside, Tasmanian devils, wombats, and owls roam amidst lush indoor and outdoor havens, offering guests a glimpse into the diverse ecosystems that define this extraordinary land. From tiny insects to elusive reptiles, the indoor sanctuary showcases the rich tapestry of Australian endemism, fostering a deeper connection to the remarkable biodiversity of Southwest Australia.





**Himalayan and Central Asian Steppe** | Tucked into the western reaches of Brookfield Zoo Chicago, a new Himalayan and Central Asian Steppe region highlights the rugged landscape home to the snow leopard and takin. From under a viewing trellis, guests search among the rocky outcrops to find the camouflaged cats hunting in their habitats. A nearly invisible barrier between the habitats creates visual continuity into the takin habitat beyond, where these rock-climbing mammals can be seen at the apex of the landform.



Brookfield Zoo Chicago Zones:  
Immersive Ecoregions





## GUEST EXPERIENCE OF TODAY AND THE FUTURE

At the core of Brookfield Zoo Chicago's ambitious vision for the next century is the intent to revolutionize our guest experience. This transformative shift will serve as a bold leap into the future, redefining how guests discover, connect with, and experience wildlife in meaningful and personal ways to inspire empathy, understanding, and drive action for positive change.

Modern guest amenities will not only meet the evolving needs of future audiences but also redefine the concept of a zoo visit. Streamlined ticketing and entry processes will provide a more seamless arrival, allowing guests to make immediate animal connections and to build their own personalized visit unique to their interests and needs.

Highly immersive exhibits and participatory-rich activities will bring guests eye-to-eye with awe-inspiring animals in new ways, and engaging recreational offerings and attractions will provoke curiosity and fun for guests of all ages. An emphasis on fun will connect the young and young at heart with the powerful educational messages the Zoo delivers.

New wayfinding navigation systems will provide seamless guidance throughout new ecoregions and recreational zones, while enhanced transportation systems and circulation pathways will make traversing the park more effortless. Additionally, the integration of technology – virtual and augmented reality, interactive displays, and mobile application features — will provide not only an extended educational dimension, but also greater hospitality services in the palm of the hand.

A new amphitheatre will be home to live programming for families, student field trips, community groups, and more, featuring lively offerings from concerts to animal encounters. And, new meditation and reflection gardens will offer a retreat for relaxation amidst the bustling Zoo environment.

The *Next Century Plan* structures envisions this new experience in the following nine facets:



**Guest Satisfaction & Audience Data**



**Inclusive & Accessible Design**



**Seamless Arrival & Circulation**



**Zoo Journeys**



**Guest Amenities**



**Technology**



**Programmed Experiences**



**Interpretation**



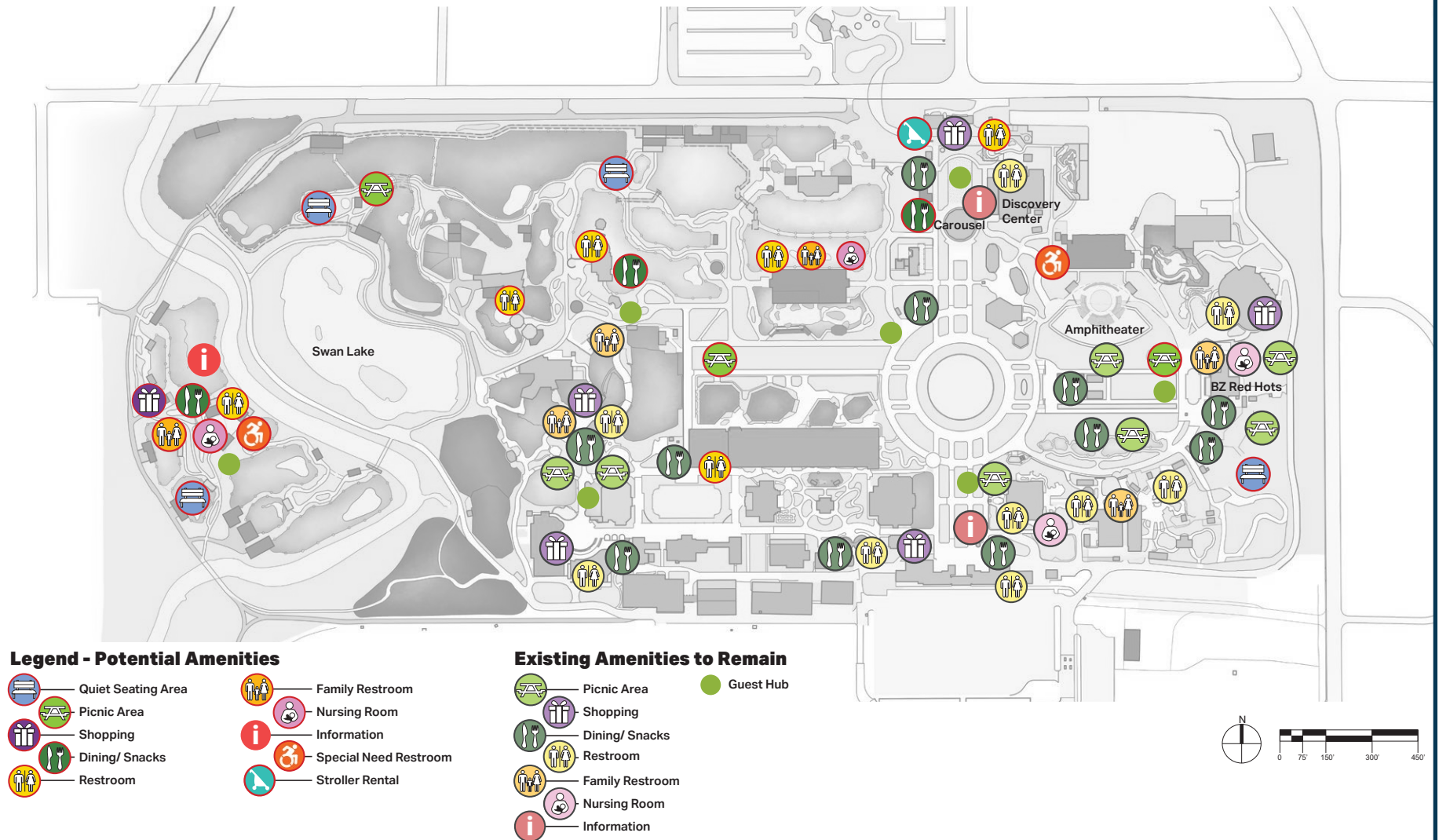
**Wayfinding**







## Guest Amenities Plan







## Zoo Journeys



Zoo journeys are provided to aid guests in charting their experience at the Zoo. While each journey outlines a specific route, guests have the ability to modify their experience to suit their needs.

### WINTER EXPERIENCE

As winter blankets the Zoo, a captivating journey unfolds revealing animal survival in the harsh landscape. Brookfield Zoo Chicago's Winter Zoo combines indoor and outdoor viewing areas to witness resilient creatures, from bison to snow leopards, that showcase adaptations to navigate the challenges of winter. Panoramic views from the 2.5 mile Winter Experience Journey highlight vantage points that provide sightings of high-altitude animals against the breathtaking beauty and harsh realities of their habitat. The route also leads guests through indoor habitat buildings, providing a welcome respite from inclement weather. Additionally, exterior viewing areas and guest hubs will be provided with heat elements to enhance guest experience and comfort. Guests will have the option to take the tram to maximize their time at each of the featured habitats.

### TWILIGHT SAFARI

As the sun begins its summer descent, Brookfield Zoo Chicago transforms into a Twilight Safari through the African Savanna and Central Asian Steppe regions. As guests journey through the untamed beauty of the savanna, expansive grasslands come alive with subtle vibrancy. The Twilight Safari continues seamlessly to the Central Asian Steppe region and immerses guests in the wide-open spaces of this unique region. Warm hues of the setting sun highlight the resilience of steppe inhabitants.

The Twilight Safari is a sensory immersion, where the transition from day to night unveils the nuances of the natural world.

## Winter Experience Plan | Indoor & Heated Viewing



### CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE JOURNEYS

Located within Brookfield Zoo Chicago's Wildlife Discovery zone, the Children's Experience Journeys promise an immersion of education and recreation. The experiences incorporate charismatic animal encounters, nature-based attractions, and celebration of nature's diversity.

The Pacific Coasts zone engages children in close proximity with playful sea lions and the delightful immersion into a world of waddling penguins with both underwater viewing and indoor facilities.

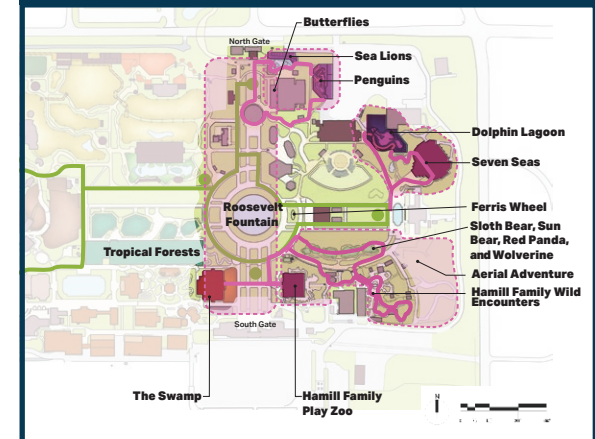
Another all-time favorite experience zone awaits beyond Pacific Coasts: Dolphin Lagoons and Seven Seas. The immersive experience of the renovated Seven Seas building and new Dolphin Lagoons allows children to be splashed by the dolphins, witness their graceful movements, and experience them up close in a new shallow habitat.

The adventure in the southeast corner of the Zoo unfolds into the Hamill Family Wild Encounters space with expanded offerings. Children engage with the world of the new sloth bear, sun bears, red pandas, and wolverine habitats within the legacy Bear Grottos. A new aerial adventure invites young adventurers to soar and glide through the air, adding thrills to their Zoo experience. This zone extends across the southeastern corner of the Zoo, linking

## Twilight Safari Plan



## Children's Experience Journeys Plan



the Hamill Family Wild Encounters and the existing Hamill Family Play Zoo.

The north-south mall becomes a hub with new and improved features, including a new exterior otter habitat and permanent butterfly conservatory, transforming the Children's Experience Zones into a multi-faceted experience.





## 10-YEAR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR CONSERVATION

At Brookfield Zoo Chicago, the *Strategic Framework for Conservation* is designed with adaptability in mind, allowing us to remain responsive to evolving conservation needs and priorities. This framework provides the flexibility to adjust our programs, cultivate new partnerships, and incorporate additional focal species as necessary, ensuring that our conservation efforts stay dynamic and effective in addressing the ongoing challenges confronting wildlife and their habitats.

Comprising four key pillars, our framework encompasses:

1. Conservation Hubs & Priority Species
2. Financial Capacity Building for Conservation
3. Strategic Approaches to Conservation
4. Conservation Campus







## 1. Conservation Hubs & Priority Species

Brookfield Zoo Chicago's strategic roadmap for the next decade prioritizes the establishment of Conservation Hubs, each representing critical biodiversity hotspots around the globe. These hubs serve as focal points for a multifaceted approach to wildlife conservation, emphasizing in-situ and ex-situ conservation programs, scientific research, capacity building, and strategic partnerships.

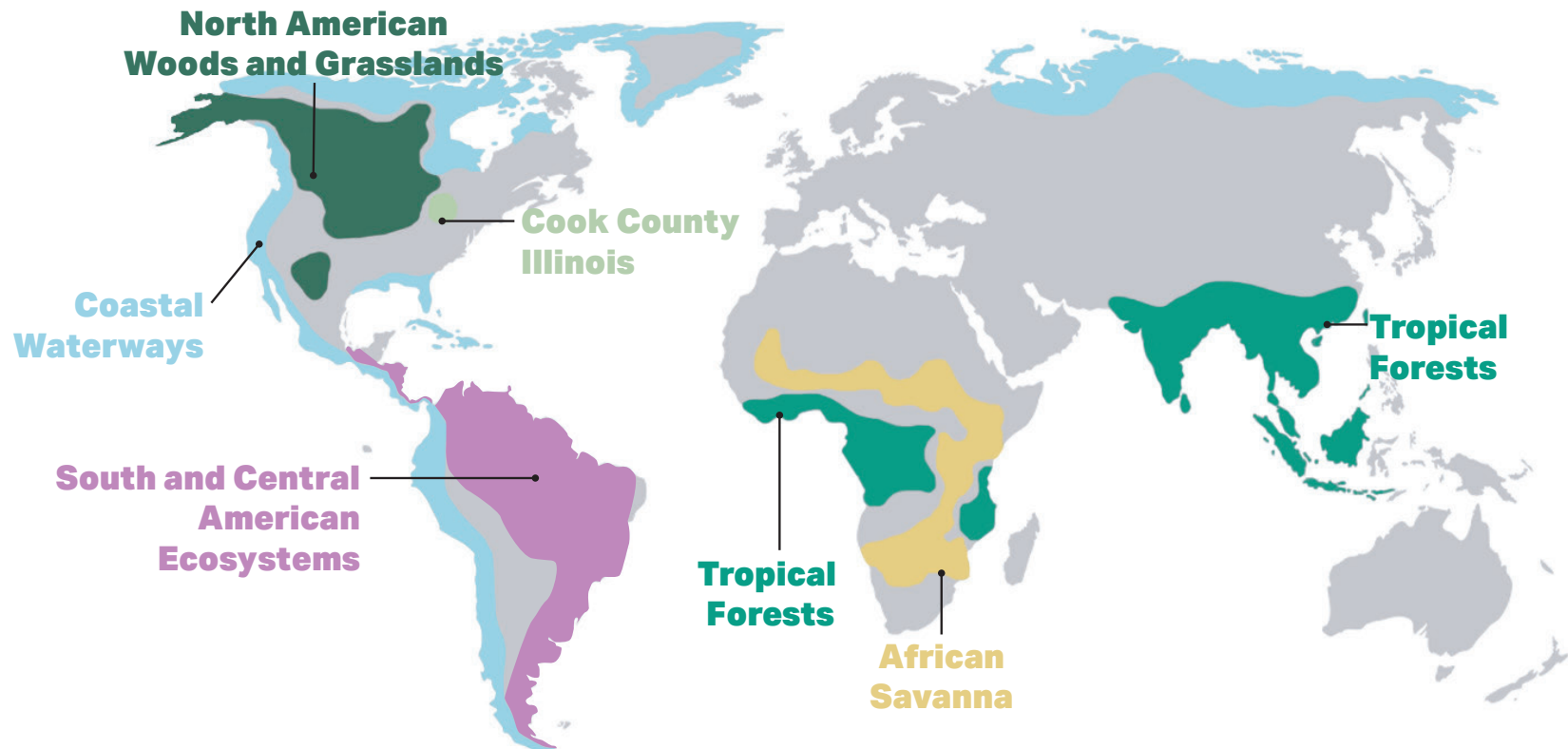
More than just centers of conservation activity, these hubs embody the essence of the Zoo's commitment

to preserving biodiversity and fostering ecological stewardship. The presence of these animals in our care at the Zoo plays a pivotal role in advancing scientific understanding and informing conservation management strategies. By studying the behavior, physiology, and health of these species in controlled environments, we gain valuable insights that contribute to their conservation in the wild.

Furthermore, our partnerships with research institutions and conservation organizations allow

us to leverage our expertise and resources to support critical fieldwork initiatives across the globe. And perhaps most importantly, the presence of these animals at Brookfield Zoo Chicago inspires connections with our guests that results in concern and empathy for their counterparts in the wild. Through that connection and caring, we strive to inspire our guests to take positive actions for the planet and conservation of wildlife.

### Global Conservation Hubs







### COASTAL WATERWAYS

**Bottlenose Dolphin | Humboldt Penguin |  
Sea Lion and Seal | Polar Bear**

Our Coastal Waterways Hub serves as a vital center for on-the-ground and in-the-ocean fieldwork across the globe, where we collaborate with partners to protect marine ecosystems.



### TROPICAL FORESTS

**Gorilla | Okapi | Hippo | Bongo | Pangolin | Orangutan**

Situated in the expansive Tropical Forests of Asia and Africa, key species within these ecosystems face significant threats, including habitat destruction, illegal poaching, and human-wildlife conflict.



### NORTH AMERICAN WOODS

**Mexican Wolf | Brown Bear | Bison**

Dedicated to the North American Woods, this Conservation Hub stands as a vital sanctuary for iconic species facing threats ranging from habitat loss and human-wildlife conflict to climate change.



### COOK COUNTY NATIVE

**Illinois Reptile | Monarch Butterfly | Songbird |  
Crane | Prairie Chicken | River Otter**

Moving inland, the Cook County Wildlife hub spotlights the unique biodiversity found in our own backyard within the Forest Preserves of Cook County. These native species are not only emblematic of our region but also play crucial roles in maintaining the health and balance of local ecosystems.



### AFRICAN SAVANNAH

**Giraffe | African Painted Dog | African Elephant |  
Addax**

Our efforts in the African Savannah Conservation Hub are focused on safeguarding the future of key species that call this region home. From research and breeding programs to community outreach and education, we are committed to ensuring the long-term survival of these iconic African species.



### SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICAN ECOSYSTEMS

**Panamanian Golden Frog | Andean Flamingo |  
Puerto Rican Crested Toad | Red Siskin**

The South and Central American Conservation Hub is an emerging body of future work that will focus on wildlife conservation needs across the diverse landscapes of Central and South America. From the lush rainforests of the Amazon to the expansive grasslands of the Pampas, South America boasts a rich tapestry of biodiversity, harboring countless unique species found nowhere else on Earth.





## 2. Financial Capacity Building for Conservation

Brookfield Zoo Chicago's dedication to bolstering financial capacity for conservation projects is evident in its support of the Conservation Fund grant program. The Conservation Fund is a vital component of the Zoo's broader mission to empower conservation efforts worldwide. The Conservation Fund is an important funding arm that enables the success of core Zoo conservation programs and partner projects, including the Sarasota Dolphin Research Program and the Punta San Juan Program.

In today's rapidly changing and increasingly threatened natural landscape, the role of grant funding in building conservation capacity is paramount. These grants not only provide essential financial resources but also foster capacity building, knowledge exchange, and collaboration among conservation stakeholders. By investing in projects aimed at safeguarding endangered species, protecting fragile habitats, and fostering sustainable relationships between communities and wildlife, Brookfield Zoo Chicago's grant programs play a pivotal role in equipping conservationists and organizations to effectively address pressing conservation needs.







### 3. Strategic Approaches to Conservation

Brookfield Zoo Chicago's programs and operations — whether in Chicago or in our Conservation Hubs — follow a framework of consistent strategies to produce meaningful impacts and results:

#### SCIENCE AND DISCOVERY

Vision: Advance knowledge through innovative research endeavors.

#### PEOPLE-POWERED SOLUTIONS

Vision: Empower communities for sustainable conservation action.

#### SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT AND POPULATION PLANNING

Vision: Secure enduring resilience and sustainability of wildlife populations.

#### POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Vision: Champion protections and policies for global impact.

#### CARBON-NEUTRAL AND GREEN OPERATIONS

Vision: Model the way for environmental sustainability in business and operational practices.



### SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Brookfield Zoo Chicago's existing facilities and assets will soon undergo a transformative metamorphosis that will honor and celebrate the campus' distinctive architecture, while augmenting infrastructure to meet the needs of tomorrow. The *Next Century Plan* will serve as both a compass and a blueprint as we navigate the delicate balance between honoring tradition and embracing innovation. We recognize the imperative to not only protect our architectural treasures, but also to breathe new life into aging facilities.

Through new facilities and renovation of historical buildings we will show our guests the importance of sustainable development and practices. With commitments to renewable energy, stormwater management, waste reduction, and other green practices, we will commit to a future that embodies our sustainability goals.

In tandem with Brookfield Zoo Chicago's commitment to transforming existing facilities and assets while preserving the campus' distinctive architecture, the Sustainability & Climate Resiliency Plan developed by the Forest Preserves of Cook County adds a vital layer to the *Next Century Plan*. As the Zoo embarks on a transformative metamorphosis to meet the needs of tomorrow, the Forest Preserves' plan strategically addresses the escalating challenges posed by climate change. This integration serves as a compass and blueprint for both embracing innovation and honoring tradition, recognizing the imperative to protect not only architectural treasures but also the environment.





#### 4. Conservation Campus

The Conservation Campus introduces the dynamic heart of Brookfield Zoo Chicago's conservation efforts. Serving as a cornerstone of the commitment to wildlife preservation, the Campus is dedicated to collaboration, research, animal science and wellness, and education. The Conservation Campus sets a new standard for global conservation initiatives.

Additionally, the Zoo's commitment to wildlife health extends to the Illinois Zoological and Wildlife Health Management Residency program, a collaborative effort between Brookfield Zoo Chicago, the Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC), and the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine. This unique three-year residency program provides advanced training in veterinary science with a focus on wildlife health management in urban and suburban settings. By bridging the gap between veterinary medicine and conservation science, this program enhances the Zoo's ability to safeguard native wildlife populations and their habitats, both locally and regionally.







## INVESTMENTS IN PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The success of Brookfield Zoo Chicago is dependent on its highly talented and dedicated staff. We are committed to providing a safe, welcoming, and inclusive work environment where staff know they are valued and have a true sense of belonging to the Brookfield Zoo Chicago team. As part of the *Next Century Plan*, we recognize that in order to continue to attract, develop, and retain the best of the best, we must strive to provide workspaces and employee amenities that are accessible, modern, and efficient.

### Back-of-House Space and Amenities

Brookfield Zoo Chicago is committed to a strong, values-based workplace culture, where staff are able to do their best work. Employee space and accommodations are an important part of the employee experience, and we must provide suitable spaces for work, rest, and breaks, appropriate eating areas, meeting, event, training, and storage space, and other staff amenities necessary to remain a competitive employer and provide a quality employee experience.

It is equally important that other back-of-house areas showcase the quality of animal care and address our basic operating and infrastructure needs. This includes animal and facilities back-of-house areas, employee parking and entry, maintenance and storage of equipment, machines, tools, and other needs, and secure building access. Designs will provide as much flexibility in employee spaces as possible for the future, as well as include efficient ways for staff to service buildings and exhibits throughout the park. A few examples of the types of changes envisioned for the future include recent renovations such as the Philip W. K. Sweet Jr. Center for Animal Care and Conservation, the Guest Services building, and the new King Conservation Leadership Academy offices.

In addition to our paid workforce, the success of Brookfield Zoo Chicago is also dependent on the participation of a large contingent of enthusiastic

and committed adult volunteers. In 2023, Brookfield Zoo Chicago's 304 adult volunteers and 124 Corporate Partner volunteers contributed nearly 33,000 service hours at a value of over \$1 million to the Zoo. Our volunteers play a pivotal role in the functioning and success of the organization. From our Guest Guides welcoming visitors at the north and south gates, to Docents engaging with families and guests throughout the park, our volunteers serve as ambassadors connecting the public to the animal kingdom through informative interactions and educational opportunities. Just about every department at the Zoo benefits from the contributions of our volunteers, from helping with events and special projects, to engaging with our earliest learners in nature play activities. In essence, volunteers are the heart of the zoo, embodying the spirit of community engagement and environmental stewardship that are essential for the welfare of both animals and ecosystems. Through improvements to volunteer space and amenities, including welcome booths and flexible meeting spaces throughout the zoo, we hope to acknowledge the incredible impact this group has on our operations and mission, and the value they bring to the institution, historically and into the future.







## INFRASTRUCTURE

As Brookfield Zoo Chicago embarks on its *Next Century Plan*, a pivotal aspect of this strategic vision is the focus on infrastructure that supports sustainable business practices. The Zoo is committed to advancing conservation efforts, promoting ethical practices, and enhancing its overall impact on the environment and society through robust infrastructure planning. The Zoo's integrated sustainability strategy is designed to address key areas that are crucial for animal welfare and environmental protection, benefiting both guests and staff. Infrastructure categories include Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) aspects, sustainability initiatives, stormwater management, utilities infrastructure, and facilities and operations.

By focusing on these essential infrastructure components, Brookfield Zoo Chicago aims to reduce its environmental footprint, improve operational efficiency, and set a benchmark in sustainable practices, thereby ensuring a resilient and inspiring environment for future generations.

### Plans are structured around five key facets:

#### SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES

Brookfield Zoo Chicago will contribute to conservation efforts, promote ethical practices, and will further enhance their impact on the environment and society. Brookfield Zoo Chicago commits to an integrated sustainability strategy with initiatives that reflect a holistic approach to animal welfare and protection of the environment for guests and staff. Categories include: Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG).

In tandem with Brookfield Zoo Chicago's commitment to transforming existing facilities and assets while preserving the campus' distinctive architecture, the Sustainability & Climate Resiliency Plan developed by the Forest Preserves of Cook County adds a vital layer to the *Next Century Plan*. The Forest Preserves' plan strategically addresses the escalating challenges posed by climate change. With a pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 from a 2016 baseline, the Forest Preserves' plan aligns seamlessly with the Zoo's commitment to sustainable development. The dual focus on new facilities and the renovation of historical buildings creates a dynamic synergy,

showcasing the importance of responsible practices. Through investments in renewable energy, stormwater management, waste reduction, and other green initiatives, the combined efforts of the Zoo and the Forest Preserves commit to a future that not only talks the talk but walks the walk. Together, these efforts present a united front in advocating for environmental stewardship.

#### SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Brookfield Zoo Chicago has engaged many sustainability initiatives that can form the basis of a Sustainability Plan that will evolve from the *Next Century Plan*. Several of the commitments and programs initiated by the Zoo are making impacts. Categories include: Energy Use Reduction, Sustainable Building Design and Practices, and Historic Preservation.

#### STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The implementation of green stormwater infrastructure improves water quality, mitigates flood risks, and enhances climate resilience. Brookfield Zoo Chicago will benefit from the use of these techniques, reducing negative stormwater impacts



Underground Storage



Permeable Pavers



caused by climate change. Categories include: Surface Storage, Underground Storage, Permeable Pavement, Rain Gardens/Bioswales, Green/Blue Roofs, and Rainwater Harvesting.

#### UTILITIES

As a further companion to the *Next Century Plan*, a Utilities Infrastructure Plan will be completed to provide a framework for future redevelopment of the Zoo. Categories include: Chilled Water, Storm & Sanitary Sewers, Electrical, Natural Gas and the Development West of Salt Creek.

#### FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS

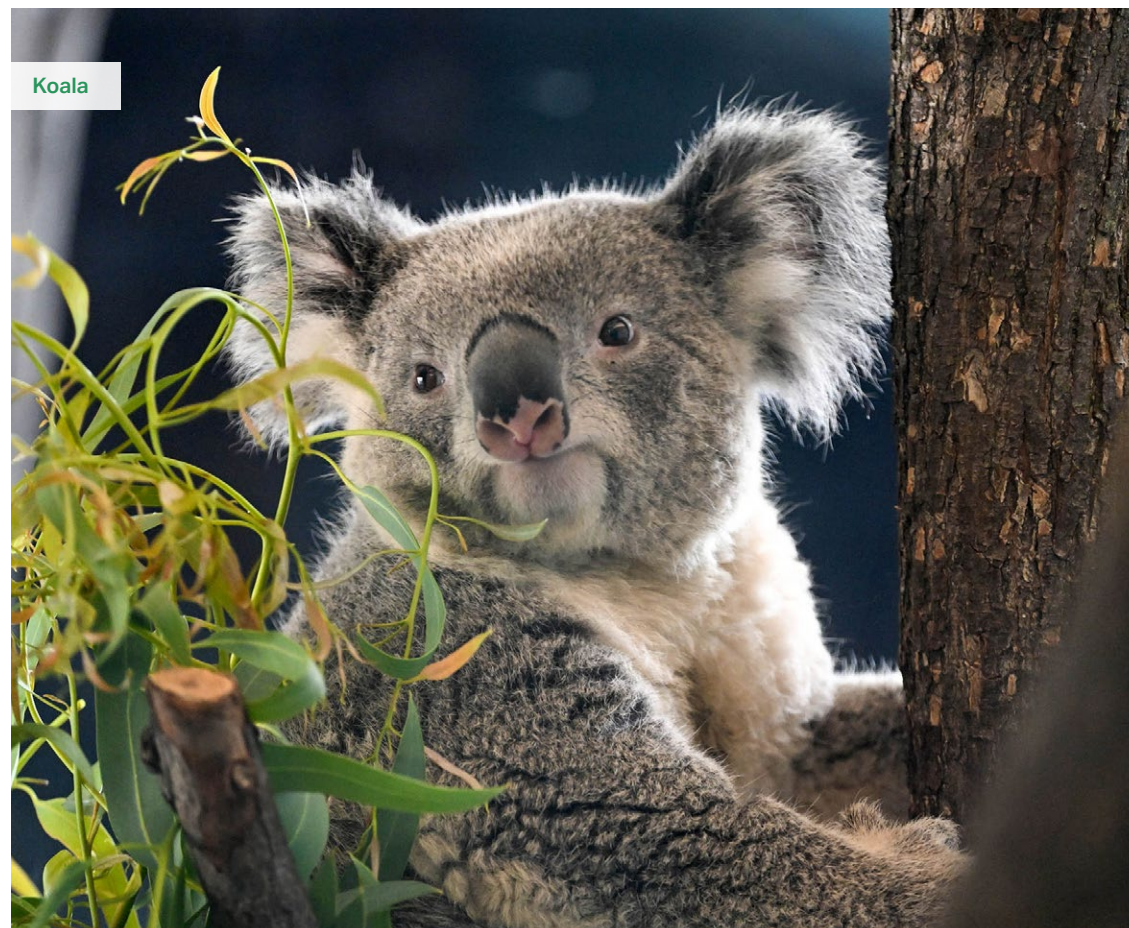
Efficiency in Facilities and Operations (F&O) has direct impacts to staff and animal wellness. With the expansion of the Zoo toward the west and comprehensive redistribution of habitats and amenities, there is a need to redefine how operations are orchestrated across the Zoo. Categories include: Perimeter Service Routes, Storage and Maintenance Zone, Concessions and Retail Warehouses, and Delivery.





## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND PHASING

As we chart the course for future phases, the Zoo will adopt a deliberate approach, crafting clusters of both agile initiatives and major projects. These clusters will be meticulously planned and executed in coordination with ongoing deferred maintenance projects, ensuring a harmonious progression toward our shared goals. Each phase will be bound by a commitment to financial prudence and conservation excellence, while simultaneously prioritizing the delivery of a robust guest experience both during and after implementation.



## PHASE I Completed Through June 2025

### MAJOR PROJECTS

- Seven Seas Renovation
- Tropical Forests

### AGILE INITIATIVES

- Conservation Campus
  - Philip W. K. Sweet Jr. Center for Animal Care and Conservation
  - Renovation of the Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Center Conservation and Biology Research Center
- North American Prairie Aviary
- Macaws!
- Roosevelt Fountain and "Faces of the Wild" Statues
- Anniversary Ferris Wheel
- Virtual Reality Experience
- Expanded Wild Connections Experience Programs

## PHASE II Projects

- Gateway to Africa (four regions)
- Southwest Australian Provinces
- North Gate Arrival Plaza
- Pacific Coasts of the Americas (sea lions and penguins)

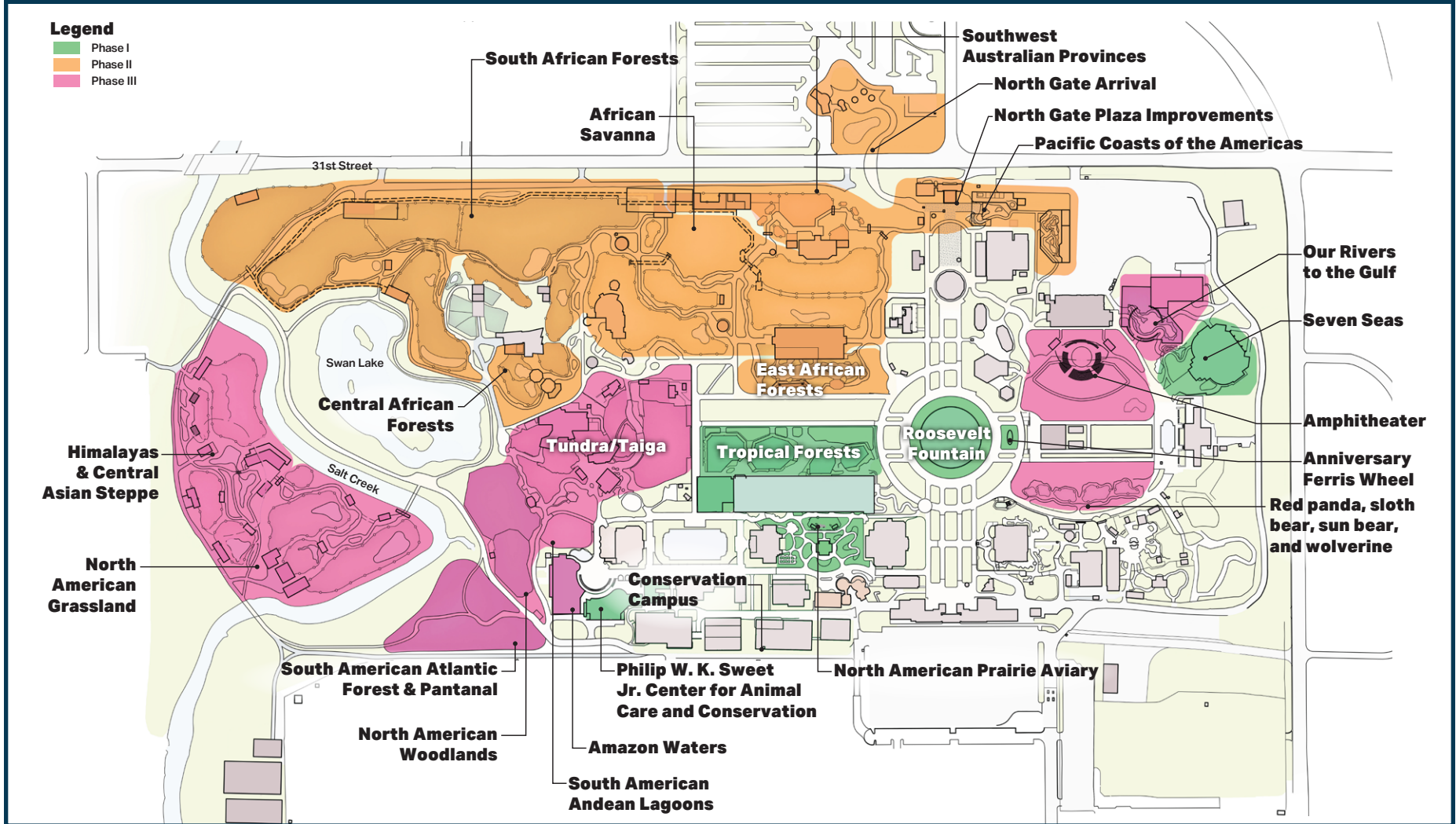
## PHASE III and Beyond

1. Himalayas & Central Asian Steppe
2. Hamill Family Wild Encounters Expansion and Old Bear Grotto Redevelopment
3. Our Rivers to the Gulf (dolphin expansion)
4. North American Grasslands
5. Tundra-Taiga
6. Amazon Waters and South American Sections





### Brookfield Zoo Chicago Phasing Diagram



Reinvigorating all aspects of the Brookfield Zoo Chicago campus – old and new – will advance the mission of this world-famous zoo:  
**CONNECT. CARE. CONSERVE.**





## INCLUSIVE PLANNING & COLLABORATION

The planning team for the *Next Century Plan* engaged Brookfield Zoo Chicago staff and leadership, as well as many community and Board stakeholders throughout the planning process.

A series of early visioning sessions were enhanced by multiple rounds of focus group sessions and town hall meetings. Visioning sessions helped the team outline the key *Next Century Plan* goals, objectives, and guiding principles. This framework helped to guide the conversations within the focus group sessions.

Focus group sessions were organized based on topic area, including:

- Animal Care and Wellness
- Conservation
- Education
- Guest Services and Guest Experience
- Guest Flow and Parking
- Facilities and Operations
- Implementation Strategy and Phasing

This level of collaboration continued with key members from Brookfield Zoo Chicago as the plan was developed, and results in a shared vision of Brookfield Zoo Chicago supported by inclusive community ownership of the *Next Century Plan*. There is a firm understanding that the *Next Century Plan* document will continue to evolve and improve over time as new opportunities arise and zoo trends develop.

**DECEMBER 2022 | Kickoff**  
(Executive Team, Master Plan Committee)



**JANUARY 2023 | Visioning Session 1**



**FEBRUARY 2023 | Visioning Session 2**



**MARCH 2023 | Focus Groups Session 1**  
(Focus Groups, Board of Trustees)



**APRIL 2023 | Focus Groups Session 2**  
(Focus Groups, Board of Trustees)



**APRIL 2023 | Staff Town Hall**



**APRIL 2023 | Volunteer Town Hall**



**MAY 2023 | Public Meeting Town Hall**



**MAY 2023 | Focus Groups Session 3**  
(Focus Groups, Board of Trustees)



**OCTOBER 2023 | 75% Plan**  
(Executive Team)



**NOVEMBER 2023 | Guest Experience, Interpretive & Wayfinding Workshop**



**JANUARY 2024 | 95% Plan**  
(Executive Team, Master Plan Committee, Regulatory Agencies)



**MARCH 2024 | Next Century Commitments & Rebrand Unveil**  
(Executive Team)



**JUNE 2024 | Next Century Plan**







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More than  
**550** Board Members,  
Staff, Volunteers, and  
Community Members  
participated in the Next  
Century Planning  
process



**5** All-day symposiums



**5** Zoo tours



**19** Focus group  
meetings



**8** Town hall meetings



## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Forest Preserves of Cook County are the current custodians of the land on which Brookfield Zoo Chicago sits. As part of the Forest Preserves, we share their Land Acknowledgement:

The Forest Preserves of Cook County acknowledges that we are on the lands of the Council of Three Fires—the Ojibwa, Ottawa and Potawatomi—as well as the Miami, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Sauk and Meskwaki peoples.

As a land management agency, we acknowledge that we have played a role in shaping the histories of local Native Americans by acquiring this land. We also recognize, share and celebrate their immemorial ties to this land.

We commit ourselves to developing deeper partnerships that advocate for the progress, dignity and humanity of the many diverse Native Americans who still live and practice their heritage and traditions on this land today.



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