



October 9, 2014

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ACCREDITED BY THE  
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Mr. Chuck Huckelberry  
Pima County Administrator  
130 W Congress, 10th Floor  
Tucson, AZ 85701

Dear Chuck,

I want to express our thanks to you and the County's Bond Committee for the important work you are doing to advance major investments for our community. As we have discussed, we are resubmitting Reid Park Zoo's project as *African Expansion Phase II* in place of the formerly submitted *Hippo Exhibit*. I appreciate you sharing this explanation of the change with Chairman Hecker and the members of the Bond Advisory Committee.

Since 2008 Reid Park Zoological Society has been collaborating with the City of Tucson and Pima County to seek bond funding for major improvements and enhancements to Reid Park Zoo. Over the intervening years, the purposes for which bond funds are needed have shifted as the Zoo has moved forward, projects have been completed, and new needs and priorities have emerged. I hope that this letter will help to clarify why these changes have occurred, and reassure you that our current request is for an extraordinary plan that will make Reid Park Zoo one of the best-of-class zoos in America for years to come!

**Background**

In 2000, Reid Park Zoological Society commissioned a Master Plan to guide the Zoo's development over the next 15 years. One of the innovations proposed in the Master Plan was a new architectural footprint based on geographic regions that would better balance the Zoo's recreational, entertainment and educational purposes – including a major *African Expansion* to provide improved accommodations for African elephants. The Master Plan was to be implemented in two phases, coinciding with two anticipated bond election cycles. The first phase was completed in 2006. The second phase, including the Zoo's Conservation Learning Center and Elephant Habitat/African Zoo Expansion on the property's south edge, was



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to be completed at a cost of \$12.5 million, to be shared equally by the Society and the City of Tucson.

To fulfill its part, the City intended to include \$3.75 million for the African Zoo Expansion in the 2008 Pima County bond package. However, due to the economic downturn, the bond election did not take place and was postponed indefinitely. In 2010, having successfully raised its half of the funds, the Society increased its fundraising efforts while the City searched for funds from other sources. In 2011, sufficient financing had been secured to complete the project. *Expedition Tanzania*, an expansive African elephant habitat, opened in March of 2012, resulting in record-breaking attendance of more than 600,000 visitors to the Zoo that year.

In 2013, the Society's Board of Directors and Zoo administrators began to consider next steps – particularly to repurpose the now-empty former elephant enclosure located at the center of the Zoo. To guide decision-making, the Society commissioned a Master Plan Update integrating two priorities: 1) an enhanced Animal Health Center to better meet the medical needs of the Zoo's expanding collection; and 2) a Hippopotamus Exhibit in the former elephant area, to fill the empty space with another African species. The Society's Board committed to raising 100% of the funds for the Health Center project and helping with a portion of the cost of the Hippo Exhibit. Since the hippo project was estimated at a total \$7 million cost, a revised request for \$3.75 million for the Hippo Exhibit was submitted for the upcoming bond election.

Earlier this year, both the Society and the Bond Committee began to question the sufficiency of the \$7 million budget for the hippo project, particularly with regard to the operation and maintenance (O&M) expenses. After consulting with other zoos and experts in the field, it was determined that a more realistic cost was \$12-14 million to accommodate two animals. Faced with a revised estimate that was roughly twice the originally anticipated cost, the Society decided to go back to the drawing board and seek alternative, more cost-effective solutions.

Last summer, the Society retained L. Azeo "Ace" Torre of Torre Design Consortium, Ltd., an award-winning, internationally renowned architectural planning and landscape design firm, to develop a more workable Central Zoo Plan. Torre was asked not only to consider how best to use the vacated elephant space, but also how to maximize revenue generation opportunities to help cover O&M costs. In addition, he was asked to address the top priorities identified through a March 2014 survey of 2,750 Zoo visitors: 1) more indoor space for respite from the weather; 2) more interactive exhibits; and 3) more play areas for children. Through intensive collaboration with the Society and Zoo, Torre Design produced a proposed Central Zoo Master Plan in September 2014.

### **The Central Zoo Plan & African Expansion Phase II**

The new Central Zoo Plan is a fresh, bold approach that looks comprehensively at the physical design of the Zoo, and incorporates the needs of Zoo visitors along with revenue enhancement to help cover O&M costs. Highlights of the Plan related to *African Expansion Phase II* include:

- In the former elephant site, construction of an “African Safari Lodge” that would serve as a rest-and-play space for visitors during regular Zoo hours, and a unique rentable venue for weddings, parties and other private events.
- Surrounding and viewable from inside and outside the Lodge, habitats will be created for various smaller African species such as meerkats, rock hyrax, fennec fox, African lizards and/or African pythons. These exhibits will include education animals that, under the supervision of Zoo staff, can be brought out for interactive experiences with visitors.
- New exhibits will incorporate up-close, underwater viewing of several semi-aquatic African species such as pygmy hippos, Nile crocodiles, and otters. Selection of this smaller endangered species of hippo will reduce construction and operating costs while still providing the exciting experience of encountering these exotic creatures face-to-face.

The Central Zoo Plan also includes several other innovative features designed to create more diverse childplay and revenue generation options, and increase the Zoo’s attraction and retention of visitors. These include: a carousel featuring assorted wildlife (instead of horses); an expanded splash park with shallow wading pool for respite from the heat; improvements to the initial entry area to provide a more green, shaded and inviting space; and a more visible and exciting entryway to the Zoo’s South American collection. **Please note that these items are not included in our bond funding request.** Rather they will be financed by the Society through other sources, with anticipated completion in the next several years. These enhancements will then generate revenues that can contribute toward the O&M expenses associated with the bond project.

The cost to complete the *African Expansion Phase II* project is estimated at \$20 million. Reid Park Zoological Society’s board is excited about the concept and has committed to raise \$10 million, with the intention of initiating construction in 2018-2020. We are requesting the remainder of \$10 million to be included in the 2015 bond package.

Reid Park Zoo is the highest attended gated attraction in Southern Arizona. Serving more than half a million people each year, the Zoo is a recognized and valued institution to many Pima County residents. As the support organization for the Zoo, Reid Park Zoological Society has a strong development base for raising funds, including both major donors and a large number of community supporters. The Society is financially strong and has already identified resources to provide bridge financing for multi-year pledges from our major supporters.

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The Society's 22-member board enthusiastically supports this request and is poised to aggressively advocate passage of the bond package. Under the leadership of the board's Government Relations Committee, we intend to "get out the vote" among our constituency, which includes more than 500,000 visitors, over 14,000 member households, and hundreds of dedicated staff and volunteers. As a beloved institution for generations of Pima County residents of all ages and backgrounds, the Zoo has the ability to mobilize the passion and support among our local electorate to get the bond package passed in 2015.

We are grateful for your support of Reid Park Zoo and this important project.

Sincerely,

Nancy Schlegel  
President

attachments

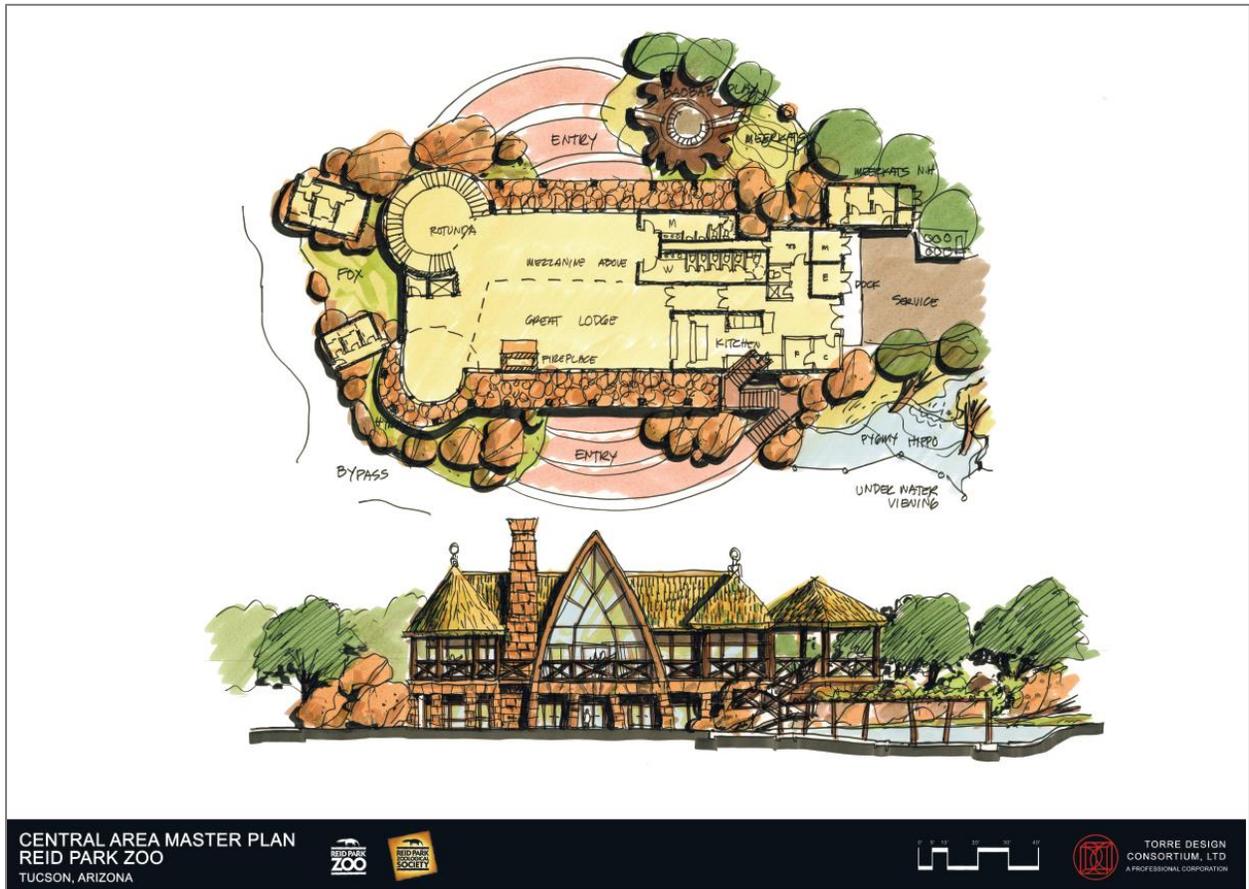
## CURRENT ZOO LAYOUT



## PROPOSED ZOO LAYOUT



## AFRICAN SAFARI LODGE



## UNDERWATER PYGMY HIPPO EXHIBIT

