



LINCOLN PARK ZOO®

FOR WILDLIFE. FOR ALL.



The Zoo of the Future: A New Strategic Plan for Lincoln Park Zoo

Reflecting and Reframing

Lincoln Park Zoo’s 2017 strategic plan guided the institution to having an expanded impact as an industry-wide leader in animal care and welfare, conservation, science, and learning. Through a unique community engagement model, we established new and authentic connections in Chicago neighborhoods. Those relationships remain strong today, and we are connecting more people than ever before with nature across the city.

We deepened our relationships with conservation partners and resident communities in the Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Puerto Rico, and Indonesia. We preserved wild spaces and built the world’s largest urban wildlife database—both critical elements as we pursue our vision of inspiring communities to create environments where wildlife can thrive in our urbanizing world. We expanded the reach of ZooMonitor, an app designed to help collect behavioral data that assists in making management decisions for the wellbeing of animals; it is now being used in 49 countries. (For more on the accomplishments of our last strategic plan, see our 2023 Annual Report at lpzoo.org/about-the-zoo).

Now is a time of advancement and awareness. With this new plan, Lincoln Park Zoo will invest in the areas of expertise that strengthen our mission and encourage progress toward our vision. And we are ambitious.

We have identified four priority areas that will yield the greatest impact and enable the investments that can help us get there. Our priorities include:

- **Stewards for Animals:** Honing our expertise and reputation for animal care, welfare, and ethics, and offering greater transparency into those processes.
- **Champions in our Urbanizing World:** Conducting science to support conservation, supporting boots-on-the-ground global conservation programs, mitigating international wildlife trafficking, and creating an expanded urban wildlife program that factors in social and environmental justice.
- **Connecting, Learning, and Taking Action:** Deepening our engagement with Chicago schools and neighborhoods and implementing new technology to help us communicate and connect with people no matter their location.
- **Free Transformational Experience:** Expanding on our reputation as one of the most inclusive cultural institutions in Chicago and creating a truly transformational zoo experience that inspires connection to wildlife, conservation action, brand affinity, and revenue growth.

These priorities are the result of a year-long process involving many stakeholders, including trustees, staff from all levels, and consultants, to help us create something both meaningful and actionable. We factored in the realities of the day: the planet is changing, and we must change with it for future generations to experience the biodiversity we see now. Many young people don’t know how accredited zoos are contributing to conservation or why it is valuable for us to keep animals in our care. Expenses like labor and animal food are at all-time highs, and we are committed to remaining free through 2050.

We have our work to do, and with the support of our generous donors, members, volunteers, and staff, we will rise to the challenge. We will transcend what people think a “zoo” is through good science, resourceful leadership, authentic connection, and robust storytelling. We will become known as the leaders we are.

For Wildlife. For All.

Sincerely,



Francesca M. Edwardson
Board Chair



Megan R. Ross, Ph.D.
President & CEO



Lincoln Park Zoo's Urban Wildlife Institute monitors the hundreds of black-crowned night herons that nest annually at Pritzker Family Children's Zoo to learn more about these state-endangered birds. It's part of the zoo's commitment to fostering coexistence with wildlife on a rapidly changing planet.



“The animals in our care are local and global ambassadors. They inspire us to see nature beyond our backyards, and they encourage us to be part of a bigger picture. To be a steward for these animals is to be ready to learn, change, and grow based on their needs, and to invite our guests into their world so they can be inspired just as we are every day. I look forward to being a part of this organization as it continues to grow and helps create a passion for all the animals in its care, big and small.”

Brittany Childs
Assistant Lead Keeper, Pritzker Family Children's Zoo

Stewards for Animals

By 2028, we are setting the industry-wide example for care, welfare, innovation, ethics, and transparency standards. To get there, we will:

- Focus on justified and ethical animal management.
- Bring greater transparency to the zoo experience.
- Innovate and use technology to understand animals and enhance choice and agency.
- Activate partnerships with animal welfare, rescue, and protection organizations.
- Bridge industry gaps to become the go-to zoo partner for animal advocacy organizations by increasing, diversifying, and tracking external collaborations.
- Grow public and peer awareness of the zoo's leadership in ethical animal care and animal welfare science via an integrated brand campaign.

Champions in Our Urbanizing World

By 2028, we are recognized as conservation scientists and advocates making change at the zoo, in Chicago, and around the globe. To get there, we will:

- Formalize a program focused on mitigating the illegal wildlife trade.
- Formalize a One Health program under the Urban Wildlife Institute (“One Health” examines the intersection of environmental, human, and wildlife health).
- Model environmental sustainability through campus innovation.
- Expand our impact in field conservation, horticulture, urban ecology, and population biology via external collaborations and other measurables.
- Track brand awareness of the zoo as a leader in conservation and wildlife advocacy.



Left to right: ZooMonitor observations, Ilchokuti tracking lion in Tanzania, Conservation Camp, guests enjoying AT&T Endangered Species Carousel.



“We want to create cities that leave a space for rare, endangered, and inspiring species as we help to reduce conflicts with invasive and overabundant species. That means doing unprecedented and groundbreaking research, but it also means collaborating with landscape architects, city planners, and politicians to make sure that when we plan the cities of the future, wildlife have a seat at the table. The future is urban, and Lincoln Park Zoo is working to make sure it’s also wild.”

Seth Magle, Ph.D.
Director, Urban Wildlife Institute

Connecting, Learning, and Taking Action

By 2028, we have increased our impact and deepened engagement with schools and communities through co-creation and technology. To get there, we will:

- Integrate and sustain Lincoln Park Zoo content and experiences as an element of learning in Chicago schools.
- Connect people to nature in culturally responsive ways through co-creation with partner neighborhoods in Chicago.
- Design and impart conservation and advocacy-based solutions to make them actionable, effortless, immersive, and fun.
- Track key performance indicators, including the number of teachers using zoo-created content in Skyline curriculums and the success of community engagement programs as reported by partners.
- Track brand awareness of the zoo as a center for learning and conservation action.

Free Transformational Experience

By 2028, we are one of the most inclusive cultural institutions in Chicago, adding value to the lives of our patrons and communities. To get there, we will:

- Enhance our welcoming guest experience.
- Increase animal visibility and ensure guests have positive, ethical animal connections.
- Share the zoo experience with a wide variety of communities—from Chicago neighborhoods to international consortiums—through technology and co-creation.
- Track overall experience ratings and guest feedback to find out what the impact of a visit is on our guests.
- Use technology to track guest behavior, audience sentiment, and earned revenue.



“The conservation challenges facing our world have never been more urgent, and people are seeking meaningful ways to make an impact and to connect with the wonder, comfort, and inspiration that nature holds around every corner. We can build upon areas of common interest to push ourselves forward as advocates for animals, plants and people. By working together with partners, schools, and communities, we ensure the next generation of changemakers has the passion and the means to create a better future for us all.”

Allison Price
Senior Director, Learning & Guest Engagement

Succeeding With Your Support

Lincoln Park Zoo is not just a place. It's a community of people who are passionate about providing a place for all to connect with nature, for free. It's a cohort of conservationists and avid animal lovers. It's an experience that lives in the hearts and minds of generations.

It costs more than \$100,000 per day to operate Lincoln Park Zoo, and we are the only privately managed, free-admission zoo in the nation. More than 85 percent of our operating costs are provided by purchases and contributions from guests and supporters like you.

You can help Lincoln Park Zoo remain free, participate in our growth, and support us on our path to realizing our mission and vision. Here's how:

- Visit the zoo. Each time you visit Lincoln Park Zoo, whether you purchase popcorn, attend an event like Summer Wine Fest, or rent a space here for a corporate or private event, you create lasting memories and contribute to the care, conservation, and community work we do every day.
- Join the zoo. Members are the foundation of our loyal community and the gifts of members help sustain the zoo. Members enjoy early access to popular programs and events, including ZooLights, and get free or discounted parking and deals on food and souvenirs.
- Give to the zoo. Every contribution counts, and there are many ways to give, from providing enrichment for your favorite animal to arranging corporate membership and sponsorships and supporting our care, conservation or public learning programs.
- Leave a legacy. Provide for the zoo through a life income or planned gift as part of the Heritage Society planned giving community.
- Share the zoo. Tell your friends and family about the global conservation organization right on Chicago's lakefront. Post images and videos from your visits on social media. Help us tell our stories and connect people to wildlife, so we can coexist together long into the future.



"Lincoln Park Zoo is committed to breaking down barriers that often prevent individuals, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, from accessing important experiences. We try to enable a diverse range of people to connect with wildlife, which helps foster a sense of stewardship toward the planet and its inhabitants. In the future, we will continue to enhance the educational aspects of the visitor experience here in ways that will benefit all."

Yesenia Ramirez-Medina
Guest Services Coordinator



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