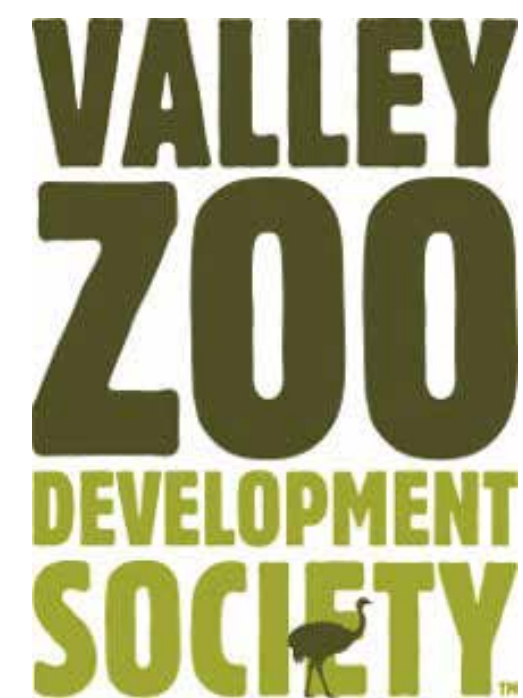
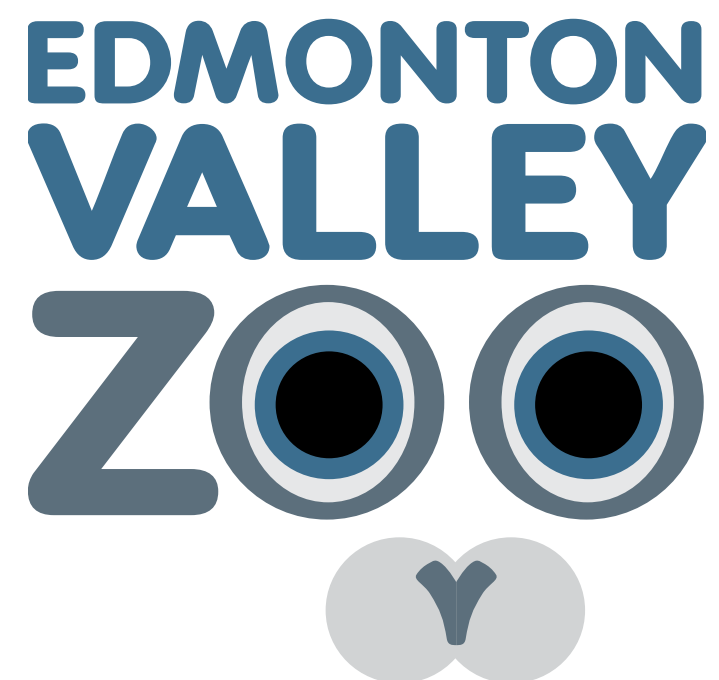


EDMONTON VALLEY ZOO

MASTER PLAN REPORT

APRIL 2025





The City of Edmonton acknowledges the traditional land on which we reside, is in Treaty Six Territory. We would like to thank the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries, such as nêhiyaw (Nay-hee-yow), Dene (Deh-neyh), Anishinaabe (Ah-nish-in-ah-bay), Nakota Isga (Na-koh-tah ee-ska), and Niitsitapi (Nit-si-tahp-ee) peoples. We also acknowledge this as the Métis' (May-tea) homeland and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel. It is a welcoming place for all peoples who come from around the world to share Edmonton as a home. Together we call upon all of our collective, honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.

FOREWORD

“And the world will be a better place!” (Jackie DeShannon)

Edmonton Valley Zoo - the quaint, storybook-inspired, child-focussed facility that opened in 1959, has and continues to undergo a dramatic transformation to an accredited, progressive zoological institution with an increasing focus on conservation, education, research, animal well-being, species survival and preserving biodiversity.

With most of the ambitious 2005 Master Plan complete including Makira Outpost, Arctic Shores, Entry Plaza and Wander, and Nature’s Wild Back Yard, a bold new chapter begins with this inspiring 15 year plan. The roadmap is rooted in Edmonton Valley Zoo’s newly minted strategic framework that reinforces our Vision for a sustainable world where all living things thrive and realizes our Mission to leverage our unique role to connect people with animals, care about wildlife and conserve the natural world.

Fueled by passionate staff, dedicated volunteers, and powerful local and international partners, Edmonton Valley Zoo is well positioned to continue making a critical difference in wildlife conservation addressing the urgent worldwide call to action against biodiversity loss and climate change. This pioneering plan for the Zoo’s future is bold, inspiring and sets the stage for us changing the world.

On behalf of the Zoo team and the City of Edmonton, I offer a heartfelt thank you to the Valley Zoo Development Society for their generous sponsorship of this Master Plan, another example of your unwavering commitment to supporting the Edmonton Valley Zoo experience. You’ve secured millions of dollars in support of transformative capital projects and conservation programs; led cost effective construction projects; created popular events and programs raising funds and awareness; delivered an expanding collection of food and retail services; supported education innovations and school field trip subsidies; and so much more!

I am proud of how far we have come and pumped for the tremendous potential this Master Plan unlocks!



Gary Dewar
Director, Edmonton Valley Zoo

The Valley Zoo Development Society has been a partner of the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Valley Zoo since 1989. Our mandate is the continued awareness and development of the Zoo, including its conservation and education programs.

We believe that a zoo is an essential part of a healthy community and that the City of Edmonton is particularly blessed with the Edmonton Valley Zoo at its heart in our spectacular River Valley. No one understands how much change happens annually in the world of animal, conservation and environmental science and research more than zoos and their staff. The latest advancements and practices in animal husbandry and care are constantly evolving to all our benefit, however those changes require a degree of flexibility and foresight never before faced in our planning processes.

The Edmonton Valley Zoo was in need of a new Master Plan envisioning its future and the Valley Zoo Development Society was proud to partner with the City in making that a reality. This enormous undertaking is just the beginning of a new direction that will continue to evolve and adapt to ensure that our future and the future of the animals we share this planet with are protected and we provide a space to inspire the love and learning that will be necessary in saving these species. It is our sincere hope that this Master Plan and its envisioned future for our Zoo is as inspiring to you as it is to us.



Tammy Wiebe
Executive Director, Valley Zoo Development Society

ZOO PROJECT TEAM

CITY OF EDMONTON

Ashley Hoogenboom – Project Manager
Terri Johnson – Project Manager
Gary Dewar – Director, EVZ
Tannia Franke – Zoo Experiences Supervisor, EVZ
Ellen Finn – Operations Supervisor, EVZ
Laura Castor – Animal Care Supervisor, EVZ
Ian Mulder – Architect, COE
Kimberly Simkin – Special Projects Coordinator, COE
Roger Jevne – Branch Manager, COE

VALLEY ZOO DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

Tammy Wiebe – Executive Director
Scott Varga – Board Member
The Board of Directors (2023-2025)
Staff and Volunteers

ZOO STAFF + TEAMS

Alex Hamilton
Catherine Shier
Courtney Van Roijen
Dallis Cartwright
Debi Winwood
Delia Gruninger
Dr. MJ Limoges
Justin Williams
Lisa Scheuer
Mitchell Davis
Nicki D’Angelo
Trevor Hickey
Wayne Woods
Animal Care + Animal Health Teams
Guest Services, Rentals + Bookings Teams
Interdepartmental + Support Team
Site Services + Operations Teams
Zoo Experiences, Education + Conservation Teams

CONSULTANT TEAM

GROUND CUBED

Natalie Goulet-Sorenson – Project Manager, Landscape Architect
Lauryn Record – Project Coordinator, Interpretive Planner
Jonathan Sagi – Landscape Architect

JONES & JONES

Mario Campos – Zoological Planning
Karen Davis – Zoological Planning Lead
Duane Dietz – Zoological Planning

CARE FOR THE RARE

Dr. Jake Veasey – Animal Collection Support

CONSULTECON

James Stevens – Economist
Robert Brais – Economist

TILGHMAN GROUP

Ross Tilghman – Transportation Planning

ARC STUDIO

Stephen Boyd – Architect
Stacy Kasnot – Architect

AL-TERRA ENGINEERING

Brittany Sutherland – Civil Engineer
Hussein Al-turk – Civil Engineer

BSC ENGINEERING

Adam Behiels – Electrical Engineer
Scott Hiller – Mechanical Engineer



08	I. INTRODUCTION	101	V. VISITOR EXPERIENCE	192	APPENDIX
09	Executive Summary	102	Site Circulation and Seasonal Activation	A.	Edmonton Valley Zoo Strategic Framework
11	Building on Success	106	Guest Amenities	B.	Master Plan Functional Program
15	Alignment with City Strategies and Regulations	111	Education, Programs and Special Events	C.	Existing Infrastructure
21	Master Planning Process	116	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	D.	Edmonton Valley Zoo Animal Resident Planning Tool
24	Phase I: Situation Analysis Summary			E.	Engineering Calculations
29	II. STRATEGY	120	VI. CONSERVATION	F.	Transportation Memo
30	Strategic Framework	121	Role of Zoos in Wildlife Conservation	G.	Polar Bear Feasibility Study
32	Guiding Principles of the Master Plan	122	Conservation Strategic Objectives and the Master Plan	H.	Cost Estimate
34	III. ANIMAL RESIDENT PLANNING	126	VII. FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE		
36	Master Planning Considerations	127	Site Information and Utilities		
37	Animal Resident Planning Tools	150	Design Considerations and Criteria		
38	Polar Bear Feasibility Study Summary	155	Parking		
		160	Lighting		
39	IV. 15 YEAR MASTER PLAN	161	Safety		
40	Site Organization and Zones	165	Landscape and Horticulture		
43	Interpretive Framework	169	Climate Resiliency and Sustainability		
47	Zone Concept Details	171	Operations		
48	You Are Here: Welcome and Parking	174	VIII. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN		
55	Nature Learn & Play	176	Recent and Ongoing Projects		
61	The Aerie	179	Implementation Strategy and Phasing		
68	Waterways to the World	180	Operational Impacts		
73	Amur River Taiga	189	Development Strategies		
79	Boreal Forest Northern Confluence	190	Master Plan Risks		
86	Coastal Arctic				
96	Administration and Services				



I. INTRODUCTION



Preface

The 2025 Master Plan sets a bold direction for the Edmonton Valley Zoo for the next 15 years, creating a visionary concept supported by zoo priorities, city policies, and industry guidelines while building upon previous and ongoing work. Through the implementation of this comprehensive plan, the Zoo will keep pace with evolving industry best practices. The plan represents a collaborative, interdisciplinary effort between the Edmonton Valley Zoo, City of Edmonton, Valley Zoo Development Society (VZDS), and the Consultant Team. The master planning process included three phases: conducting a comprehensive review of the site strengths and opportunities (Phase I – Situational Analysis) aligning the strategic plan to advance the mission and vision (Phase II – Strategic Framework), and creating a site concept and business plan to chart the path forward for the next fifteen years (Phase III – Master Plan and Business Case).



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 Master Plan provides a roadmap for the future development of the EVZ, setting the direction for facility, site, and operational improvements, enhancements for animal residents, zoo visitors, and staff, and a framework of support for conservation, research, education programming and special events. The Master Plan will be utilized to inspire funding and community support, catalyzing future investment in the zoo, and grow attendance. Over the next fifteen years, the EVZ will build on its past success, continuing to transform from its Storyland roots into a world-class zoo committed to wildlife conservation and visitor experience excellence.

As part of charting the path forward, the organization has finalized a Strategic Framework that includes new mission and vision statements and five focus areas with subsequent strategic objectives, that has shaped the Master Plan.

VISION

A sustainable world where all living things thrive.

MISSION

Leverage our unique role to connect people with animals, care about wildlife, and conserve the natural world.

FOCUS AREAS

- Animal Wellbeing
- Conservation
- Education
- Exceptional Experience
- Organizational Excellence

The Master Planning Guiding Principles were established early in the process and were informed by the Strategic Framework. The resulting Master Plan prioritizes habitats that deliver the highest standards of animal care, creates immersive learning opportunities and exceptional experiences, emphasizes the EVZ role in conservation and climate stewardship, and optimizes operations to ensure all aspects of the organization are efficient and sustainable.

The concept plan informed a new Animal Resident Plan and defined distinct, focused, thematic zones to reorganize the site ecologically and geographically. There is a shift in focus to more climate-appropriate and local species, with additional charismatic species from around the globe that are ambassadors for biodiversity hotpots and conservation stories. A key component of this process was the Polar Bear Feasibility Study (see Appendix G). Through research, outreach and site analysis, polar bears were determined to be a viable species option for the Edmonton Valley Zoo and are included in the concept plan.

A new thematic interpretive framework defines a cohesive, intentional visitor experience structured around the EVZ rally cry of *Connect. Care. Conserve.* to ensure the interpretive narrative and programs align with the organization mission. Opportunities for parallel play, art, technology and dynamic experiences are integrated into the concept. Enhanced guest amenities support improved accessibility, site circulation and year-round enjoyment.

The Master Plan cultivates an environment where conservation, sustainability and climate resilience are ingrained in every facet of the organization. The Master Plan ensures the site infrastructure and experience cultivates an atmosphere where the EVZ can demonstrate its conservation commitments and leadership and ignite passion for conservation in the community. The plan creates increased capacity and dedicated space for onsite

conservation initiatives including breeding, limited and intentional rescue or rehabilitation, research, and conservation education and engagement. In addition, the zoo is exploring acquiring off-site land to utilize for conservation breeding and translocation.

The Master Plan describes design criteria to inform future projects and ensure cohesive, intentional design across the site. The plan emphasizes the importance of landscape immersion, a zoological design principle that sees elements of wild ecosystems and habitats infused into the design, such that visitors feel transported into the world of the animal. Extending the wild experience of the animal’s home into the visitor experience fosters empathy for the animal by creating a mutual experience within a shared landscape. If it were not for the barriers in place, people and animals would be in the same environment. This philosophy extends to architecture, focusing on designs that support immersion into the environment with the goal of fostering deeper relationships between humans and wildlife. The EVZ is committed to green building practices, ensuring new developments adhere to high standards of sustainable design including energy efficiency, wildlife-friendly design, and nature-based solutions.

The facilities, infrastructure, site services and utilities see improved efficiencies, with considerations made to how the facility will grow and operate in the future. Circulation and guest flow are improved, defining primary versus secondary pathways, separating public paths from service paths, creating a thematic progression and improved wayfinding. Guest amenities are provided throughout the zoo with seasonality in mind, with an additional restaurant, indoor play and learning in the Outer Zoo, a new Conservation Education Centre and events space, and outposts and refuges providing increased comfort throughout the zoo. The Master Plan included engineering reviews of civil, mechanical and electrical infrastructure to inform

replacement, upgrade and new development requirements. Stormwater management is a major consideration for the Master Plan, with a focus on Low Impact Development (LID) solutions in addition to more traditional facilities. LID infrastructure is included across the site through water features, bioswales, soil vaults and planting areas. The Master Plan builds on the 2013 Utility Master Plan, incorporating the onsite developments that have since occurred and updating drawings to reflect the new site plan with servicing loops for electrical, natural gas, and civil infrastructure.

The Implementation Plan provides a strategic framework for development, spreading the improvements over the fifteen year period and considers continual excitement, attendance increases, operational growth, COE funding cycles, animal species considerations and obtainability, the EVZ’s path to Association of Zoos and Aquarium (AZA) accreditation and maintaining its Canada’s Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) accreditation, current capital renewal projects, potential key partnerships and relationships, and commitment to care for Lucy, the Asian elephant. The plan provides for sequenced infrastructure improvements throughout the zoo and flexibility to capture opportunities as they arise.

This holistic Master Plan and the associated Business Case provide for coordinated growth and development of the physical zoo and its operations. The resulting zoo will have a welcoming arrival experience, improved guest and service flows, unified design elements, upgraded utilities and infrastructure, a sustainable and thriving animal resident population, cohesive messaging, and an engaging experience for visitors. The Master Plan will further the Edmonton Valley Zoo growth as a world-class destination, and inspire pride in Edmontonians.

Building on Success

The 2025 Master Plan recognizes the rich history and continued evolution of the EVZ over time. We acknowledge the past accomplishments of the EVZ leadership and the present and past zoo staff teams that have set the organization up for long-term success, striving for the highest standards in animal husbandry and wellbeing, delivering excellence in education programming, and leading in conservation stewardship. The intent of the Master Plan is to build on this legacy.



Two Decades of Development

2005 MASTER PLAN

The 2005 EVZ Master Plan set the stage for almost 20 years of development, strengthening the conservation focus and addressing the desire for a reinvigorated experience and enhanced animal habitats that reflected the needs and expectations of the community and of animal wellbeing (Source: 2005 Master Plan). The plan retired elements of the original 1959 Storyland Valley Zoo character theming in favour of an educational focus on extreme climate adaptations to connect visitors with ecological narratives and species from around the world. The plan was updated in 2009.

The implemented phases of the 2005 Master Plan and 2009 update include:

- Arctic Shores
- Entry Plaza and The Wander - EdVenture Lodge, Cafe, Zootique, Meltwater Play, Beaver Dam, Naturalized Areas
- Red Panda, Urban Farm, Makira Outpost

These projects ushered in a new era for the EVZ, transforming the site from its Storyland roots while also demonstrating the organization’s commitment to enhanced animal wellbeing, visitor experience, and sustainable development.

Not all phases of the 2005 Master Plan were implemented as the Zoo navigated funding challenges, prioritized caring for more climate-appropriate species, and deepened its focus on conservation. The 2025 Master Plan builds on the foundation established by previous plans. While most of the original goals remain relevant, there is a strong desire to re-imagine how to achieve them and continue to evolve over the next fifteen years.

The EVZ will continue to emphasize conservation by focusing on climate-appropriate and unique Canadian species to create more landscape immersion in animal and visitor spaces. The foundations of the 2005 and 2009 Plans will remain, such as the intention to add new animal habitats, more family and play spaces, and exploration of the introduction of polar bears to the Zoo. The 2025 Plan will address aging infrastructure and remove final remnants of the Storyland Valley Zoo that are no longer in use.



EVZ IMAGE: RED PANDA

CONTINUED IMPROVEMENTS

The EVZ is committed to ongoing improvement through capital and maintenance projects that advance animal welfare, enhance guest experience, pursue sustainability initiatives, and support efficient operations.

In collaboration with the Valley Zoo Development Society, the EVZ has undertaken recent growth and renewal projects across the site including, but not limited to:

- Arctic wolf habitat
- Conservation carousel and conservation carousel building
- Washroom facilities in the outer zoo
- Northern leopard frog conservation breeding facility

The EVZ is currently in the process of an Enclosure Renewal Project, prioritizing areas across the site that the team has identified to meet evolving animal wellbeing best practices. All species have unique needs, facilities and husbandry practices tailored to ensure optimal wellbeing for each species and individual animal. The EVZ team demonstrates unwavering commitment to ensuring all animals that call the EVZ home are cared for through all phases of their lives, from neonate to geriatric.

This commitment is strongly evidenced by the dedicated care for the resident Asian elephant, Lucy. The Zoo intends to care for Lucy at the EVZ for the remainder of her life. To ensure Lucy’s wellbeing, the Zoo will enhance the size and complexity of her habitat as part of the Enclosure Renewal Plan. This work, which is currently underway, includes servicing upgrades to mechanical and electrical systems, expansion of the indoor and outdoor space, integrated infrastructure to ensure a protected contact management approach in alignment with industry standards, and the addition of health care, enrichment and husbandry infrastructure suitable for a geriatric elephant.

Prior to the 2025 Master Plan, the EVZ made the decision move away from Asian elephant as a resident species. At an appropriate time after the end of Lucy’s life, the habitat and holding building will be re-purposed. The unknown timing of that transition impacts the phasing plan. The elephant habitat covers a large area of the zoo, and so an interim phasing plan will be utilized as long as Lucy continues to occupy that space. This is further explored on page 181.



EVZ IMAGE: WASHROOM FACILITIES



EVZ IMAGE: CONSERVATION CAROUSEL



EVZ IMAGE: ASIAN ELEPHANT, LUCY

CONTINUED LEADERSHIP

The Edmonton Valley Zoo is a longtime Canada’s Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) member and expanded its global animal care and conservation network by joining the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) in 2023. To further increase its network and leadership in the industry, the EVZ will continue to retain CAZA and WAZA standing and is on the Pathway to Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Accreditation. The EVZ plans to achieve AZA accreditation early in its master plan implementation, joining seven other AZA accredited zoos in Canada: Assiniboine Park Zoo, Montreal Biodome, Ripley’s Aquarium in Toronto, Toronto Zoo, Vancouver Aquarium, Wilder Institute | Calgary Zoo, and Zoo de Granby. Similar to CAZA and WAZA, AZA is a professional organization dedicated to wildlife conservation, education, science and animal care whose members are continually improving their facilities based on the latest scientific research and animal management best practices.

Zoological Accreditation helps build and maintain public trust in zoological institutions and members gain access to programs and services, including professional development, continuous education, participation in conservation programs, and other resources. These associations set

professional standards for animal management and welfare, safety, conservation, and education that provides a member zoo with institutional support from fellow members. Accredited member institutions partake in animal exchanges for new animal exhibits or for breeding, and collaborate with colleagues who are experts in their field. AZA member institutions enjoy increased opportunities for animal exchanges and involvement in AZA Species Survival Plan (SSP) programs, and a larger network with additional resources. It is important for the EVZ to obtain AZA Accreditation to participate in SSP programs.

The EVZ is participating in a five year mentorship program in its pathway to AZA Accreditation and the coach prepared an AZA Accreditation Readiness Report in 2024 that helped guide the Master Plan. The report notes positive zoo assets, including the park-like setting with mature trees, excellent animal care staff, and red panda habitat.

The report also recommended items to be addressed included implementing restricted contact management for the Asian elephant, modernizing any aging exhibits, and finalizing the Strategic Plan, Master Plan, and Business Case.

ROADMAP TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The EVZ looks to grow its conservation arm through in-situ and ex-situ initiatives that support species-at-risk, and by inspiring the public to take action to sustain ecosystems. Zoological institutions play an important role in wildlife conservation, and incorporating conservation programs is becoming a core tenet of the philosophy of modern zoo operations.

The EVZ Master Plan is guided by the EVZ’s desire to accommodate several conservation-specific programs and aligns with City of Edmonton’s biodiversity goals and Green Network strategies. These include, but are not limited to: the Living Building Challenge, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), Dark Skies Initiative, and the City of Edmonton’s Environment and Climate Resilience programs.

As part of the Master Plan, the future animal resident plan reflects climate-appropriate and local species that thrive in the fluctuating Edmonton climate, while expanding indoor spaces for animals and people to support a year-round experience.



Alignment with City strategies

The Edmonton Valley Zoo is a cornerstone of public experiences in Edmonton and is a place where people have gathered for generations to connect with those that mean the most to them in a space dedicated to the care and conservation of our natural world. As we look to the future of the Zoo, the 2025 Master Plan aligns with the extensive strategic documentation from the City of Edmonton as summarized in this section. Further details on standards from key zoological accreditation organizations are discussed on page 20.

THE CITY PLAN (2020)

Edmonton’s City Plan, Charter Bylaw 20,000, was approved by City Council on December 7, 2020, and charts a path to a future city – a city that has the benefits we enjoy today with new opportunities for the future.

The City Plan is about spaces and places and how people move around the city. It is about community and what we need to do together to grow, adapt and succeed. Edmonton is sustained by a Green and Blue network traversing both urban and natural areas that confers mental and physical benefits to Edmontonians and supports biodiversity within the city and beyond, The City Plan reaffirms the City’s commitment to River Valley and biodiversity protection within its jurisdiction.

The EVZ Master Plan advances the Zoo’s role as stewards of this area of the River Valley, with opportunities for visitors to connect to the species that call it home, learn more about EVZ conservation initiatives, and be inspired to take action to become stewards themselves. The Master Plan reinforces the community connections that support city-building, and leverages technology and nature-based solutions for sustainable development.

CONNECTEDMONTON (2019)

ConnectEdmonton is a strategic plan that outlines the City’s commitment to caring about the impact of actions on social, economic, cultural, spiritual and environmental systems.

The Plan sets the direction for the future and outlines priorities to support the vision for Edmonton in 2050 in relation to four key spheres: Healthy City, Urban Places, Regional Prosperity and Climate Resilience. The strategic goals in ConnectEdmonton provide a framework by which to evaluate EVZ initiatives and prioritize spending.

The EVZ Master Plan integrates climate resiliency strategies across all landscape, architectural, and engineering recommendations to position the site and organization for success and adaptability in the face of a changing climate. The Zoo is a community-builder, and as a major gathering place in the City, is an important contributor to a healthy, vibrant City. The Master Plan also furthers the goal of elevating the EVZ as a tourist destination, advancing its economic impact in the region.

RIBBON OF GREEN (1992)

The City of Edmonton’s Ribbon of Green has provided a foundation for the planning, management, and prioritization of park development within the North Saskatchewan River Valley and ravine system since the early 1990s. The City has recently undertaken a project to expand and update this strategy and the River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan. Once complete, this will provide strategic planning, processes and regulatory tools for the entire River Valley and ravine system.

As phases of the Master Plan are built, each project should align with the recommendations from the River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, with the caveat that zoological-specific components will need to be integrated. The Master Plan proposes significant landscape development and landscaping choices should consider the overall River Valley and Parks System along with the zoological requirements.



ALIGNMENT WITH CITY STRATEGIES - CONTINUED

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND
RESILIENCE STRATEGY (2018)

The Climate Resilient Edmonton: Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan was presented to the Executive Committee of City Council in November 2018. The report outlines how the City of Edmonton will plan and invest resources to increase its communities’ climate resilience, minimize the exposure of people and assets to the impacts of climate change, and take advantage of new opportunities as they arise. The report contextualizes many of the environmental and ecological initiatives undertaken institutionally and municipally and describes the environmental conditions expected with their implementation.

Climate science and resiliency is one of the guiding principles of the Master Plan (explored further on page 169). The site organization and interpretive framework developed for the plan integrate climate-appropriate species, climate education opportunities, and conservation partnerships and initiatives for species heavily impacted by climate change. The Master Plan also utilizes development strategies that help the site address the impacts of climate change, including more extreme weather and disaster events such as wildfire smoke with more indoor experiences.

A GREENER EDMONTON: A VISION FOR
RESTORATIVE ACTIONS ON OUR URBAN
LANDSCAPE (2024)

The Naturalization, Restoration & Reclamation Plan updates the City’s approach to urban naturalization, restoration and reclamation superceding Edmonton’s 1994 Naturalization Master Plan. The new plan will facilitate: determining where naturalization will best help meet urban forest canopy and tree planting goals for the next 8 years; processes and criteria for site selection, planning, budgeting and implementation, including species lists suited to Edmonton’s climate, geography, soils and ecology; the processes and best practices for ongoing monitoring and maintenance; and the enhancement of the community’s involvement and stewardship.

The Master Plan uses sustainable landscape design principles to ensure naturalized design across the site.

TWO MILLION TREES INITIATIVE (2023)

Among the Goals of the City Plan is the urban initiative to plant two million trees, primarily through naturalization and boulevard planting to impart a more robust urban canopy coverage and offset issues associated with climate change and urban development like the Urban Heat Island effect.

The EVZ Master Plan recommends an increase in the number of trees planted across the site to support the proposed concepts which are based on forest ecosystems.

BREATHE-GREEN NETWORK STRATEGY (2017)

The goal of the Green Network Strategy is to plan and sustain a healthy city by encouraging connection and integration of open space at the site, neighbourhood, city and regional levels.

The EVZ Master Plan increases connectivity between the Zoo and the surrounding parkland and neighbourhoods with a concept design that draws visitors to the public plaza.

OPEN SPACE POLICY (2017)

The Open Space Policy signals a new direction for open space network planning that supports multifunctionality, recognizes open spaces as part of a connected landscape, and values public land as an important resource that must be thought of holistically.

The EVZ is an important part of the open space network in Edmonton and a public destination. While functioning as a zoological facility, the EVZ is a gathering place, recreation space, event venue, education campus, and destination. This multi-functional identity is considered in the Master Plan, with each purpose reflected in how the plan was developed and phased.



ALIGNMENT WITH CITY STRATEGIES - CONTINUED

NATURAL CONNECTIONS: STRATEGIC PLAN (2007)

In the 2007 report, Natural Connections Strategic Plan, the City outlines its commitments to strengthening the connections between biological corridors and Edmontonians. With the goals of establishing a coordinated direction for the City to conserve an ecologically functional network of natural areas; improving resource allocation; providing a flexible framework for the participation of partners and other associations; enshrining a means to measure progress toward improved natural areas conservation; and to initiate an ongoing dialogue between the public and the City about conservation, the plan sets out to apply research conducted through the Natural Area Report to the City's urban development strategies.

The Master Plan reinforces the importance of the North Saskatchewan River Valley and the unique position of the EVZ within the larger Central Parkland Natural Subregion. The site concept includes dedicated space to profile species that call this ecologically significant area home and encourages conservation of the ecosystem.

NATURAL CONNECTIONS: BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN (2009)

Building on The Natural Connections: Strategic Plan, the City's Biodiversity Action Plan further articulates actions to implement the vision, goals and strategic directions identified in the original report and develops a tool that City staff and relevant partners can use to work together to deliver a program of continuing action for biodiversity stewardship on a local level.

The EVZ Master Plan supports the Zoo in growing in its role as a leader in addressing the biodiversity crisis through expansion of its conservation initiatives and fostering a culture of biodiversity stewardship through education.



ALIGNMENT WITH CITY STRATEGIES - CONTINUED

“JUST SO YOU KNOW” INITIATIVE
(ONGOING)

Just So You Know is an initiative aimed at raising awareness about the various forms of flora and fauna in Edmonton. Edmonton is home to a number of tree and plant species, critters, wildlife and insects. Although some of these species may be considered pests, each contributes invaluablely to maintaining a healthy environment. The Wildlife and Pest Management Teams want to make sure residents experience a strong connection with nature by fostering an understanding of the natural world around us.

The Master Plan celebrates the location of the EVZ within the River Valley and the plethora of species that call this region home. Habitats are created for many local species, with stories of plants, insects, and species not represented in the resident plan told through art, interpretive signage and education programs.

WINTER CITY STRATEGY (2013)

Quality streetscapes and open spaces designed with a winter lens are foundational to creating a truly great winter and year-round city. Winter is a core part of Edmonton’s identity and designing for winter conditions needs to be fully considered as our City grows and develops. Good northern urban design overcomes the challenges of the winter season, making the city more accessible, safe, aesthetically pleasing, and enjoyable year-round.

The Master Plan addresses the full range of temperatures experienced in Edmonton, understanding that embracing winter is key to increasing visitation and enhancing visitor experience year-round. There is a significant increase in the number and location of indoor spaces with guest amenities, and shelters are spaced throughout the Zoo. Feature experiences are designed to be utilized year-round, with considerations made to snow removal, slip-resistant surfaces, and winter special events.

NATURAL AREAS SYSTEMS POLICY (2007)

Natural area systems provide essential habitat for plants and animals, support biodiversity, and maintain a high quality of life for current and future citizens by supplying critical ecological services, as well as opportunities for education, research, appreciative forms of recreation, and aesthetic and spiritual inspiration. The City of Edmonton will balance ecological and environmental considerations with economic and social considerations in its decision-making.

The City of Edmonton recognizes that it can accomplish the work that is required to achieve conservation more efficiently and effectively by supporting and developing partnerships to achieve effective conservation results. Therefore, the City will lead by example – engaging the public in natural area issues, and encouraging businesses, residents, and the community to secure new natural area systems and steward what we have effectively.

The Master Plan reflects the above considerations, balancing ecological and environmental needs with zoological, social, and economic factors. The Zoo looks to “walk-the-talk” as it leads and promotes actions to sustain biodiversity.

INDIGENOUS FRAMEWORK (2021)

The City of Edmonton’s Indigenous Framework is intended to answer the question: “How can the City of Edmonton best support and build strong relationships with Indigenous Peoples in Edmonton?” Through the adoption of this Framework, it becomes the responsibility of each and every City employee to forge stronger relationships with the descendants of the original inhabitants of this land, and to recognize we all have roles to play in our journey towards reconciliation. The Framework is designed to be a living initiative that will change and adapt as our relationships grow and mature.

The Master Plan creates opportunities for Indigenous community engagement and consultation on capital projects, operational initiatives and programs, which should be approached from a place of respect, listening, and honouring Indigenous customs, protocols, ceremony and practices around exchange of knowledge. The Master Plan is an excellent opportunity to further the Zoo relationships with local Indigenous communities, as well as look to establish relationships with communities living near the resident animal species wild ranges.



ALIGNMENT WITH CITY STRATEGIES - CONTINUED

PUBLIC ART TO ENHANCE EDMONTON’S PUBLIC REALM

Art in public spaces is essential for integrating art, design and creative ideas into public life. Public art: actively engages citizens and artistic leaders in planning and building an inclusive, attractive, liveable, healthy, and thriving city for the future, connects communities in cultural experiences that create a sense of belonging and connectedness to people, places, stories and creative ideas builds memorable urban places, neighbourhood vibrancy and unique city identity. By investing in public art the City of Edmonton supports the local economy and helps build an attractive, healthy and thriving city where creative spaces emerge and art, design, and culture flourish.

The Master Plan includes many opportunities to introduce more public art on the Zoo site to enhance the experience, create multi-sensory engagement opportunities, support local creators including Indigenous artists, and further the interpretive storylines.

EXPLORE EDMONTON’S TOURISM MASTER PLAN (2021-2030)

The plan is the city’s inaugural strategic framework designed to foster a unified vision for tourism growth and investment. Developed in collaboration with industry partners, the plan aims to position Edmonton as a premier year-round destination by enhancing visitor experiences and aligning them with evolving traveler expectations.

The City can leverage Explore Edmonton’s resources to market the Edmonton Valley Zoo as a world class tourist destination. The Tourism Master Plan’s five Guiding Principles align with the Zoo’s Strategic Framework and the Master Plan’s Guiding Principles (see page 31).

- 1. Collaborative Approach: Recognizing that tourism encompasses the entire destination, including businesses, ecosystems, cultural assets, and communities, the plan emphasizes the importance of collective efforts.
- 2. Sustainable Growth: Commitment to environmentally responsible development ensures that tourism initiatives contribute positively to Edmonton’s natural and urban landscapes.
- 3. Authentic Experiences: Leveraging Edmonton’s unique cultural and natural assets to create genuine and compelling visitor experiences.
- 4. Inclusive Engagement: Ensuring that tourism development benefits all community members and reflects the city’s diverse population.
- 5. Innovative Leadership: Encouraging forward-thinking strategies to keep Edmonton competitive in the global tourism market

SUMMARY OF STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

What follows are relevant standards and regulations that guide and inform certain aspects of the Edmonton Valley Zoo Master Plan and regulations that must be adhered to within projects as they are implemented.

ZOOLOGICAL INSTITUTION STANDARDS

Zoological accreditation demonstrates that an institution meets professional standards in the industry. The three primary accreditation entities are the Canada’s Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA), the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA). The CAZA accreditation standards are “designed to promote professionalism in all aspects of zoo and aquarium management.” They ensure CAZA members provide the best possible care for the animals they are entrusted with, and that the more than 12 million yearly visitors to CAZA-accredited facilities benefit from quality and safe learning experiences about animals and nature. The AZA standards include requirements for habitat design, animal husbandry and veterinary care protocols, education programming, conservation initiatives, safety and operations, finances, and staffing. WAZA expands global affiliation and is dedicated to the care and conservation of animals and their habitats around the world.

The Edmonton Valley Zoo holds CAZA accreditation and WAZA membership, and is on the pathway to AZA accreditation. All new developments must meet all of these standards, and the Master Plan aligns with and exceeds them for future-proofing and best practices.

LOCAL REQUIREMENTS

Locally, the Province of Alberta and City of Edmonton’s building, planning and permitting regulations provide the basis for any built environment, including significant tree preservation, open space, and other development criteria. This includes the following regulations.

- Standards for Zoos in Alberta
- District Planning
- Bylaw 7188
- Environmental Policy (2006)
- Zoning Bylaw 20001



The Making of a Zoo Master Plan

THE 2025 MASTER PLAN PROCESS

The 2025 Edmonton Valley Zoo Master Plan was developed through a comprehensive, interdisciplinary, collaborative process. The Consultant Team has steered the process, facilitating engagement with the diverse Zoological Project Team that includes the leadership and project management from the City of Edmonton, staff members from across many zoo departments, and the Valley Zoo Development Society, with inspiration from best practices from globally renowned industry-leading institutions. The group has co-developed this Master Plan after more than a year of focused workshops and regular consultant-client communication to ensure the perspective and experience of each team member informs the ultimate plan.

The Master Plan process was completed in three phases and these phases along with key deliverables from each are outlined in the below section with further detail provided on the Process Roadmap (see next page).



PROJECT PHASE SUMMARY

PHASE I - SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

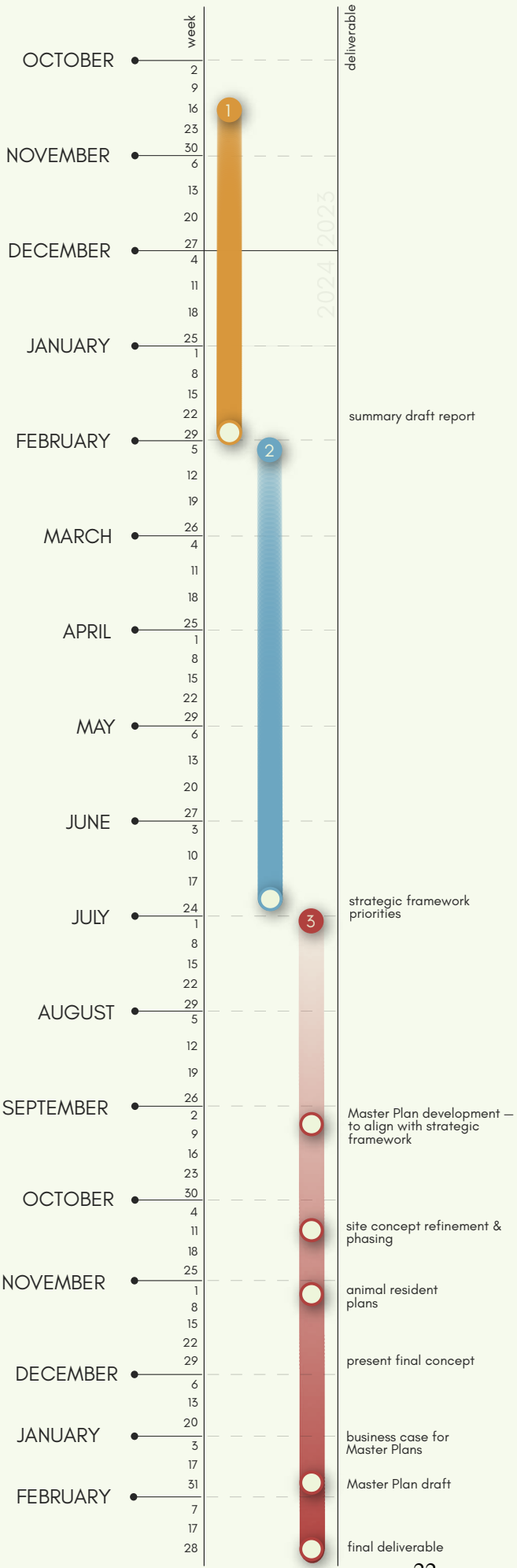
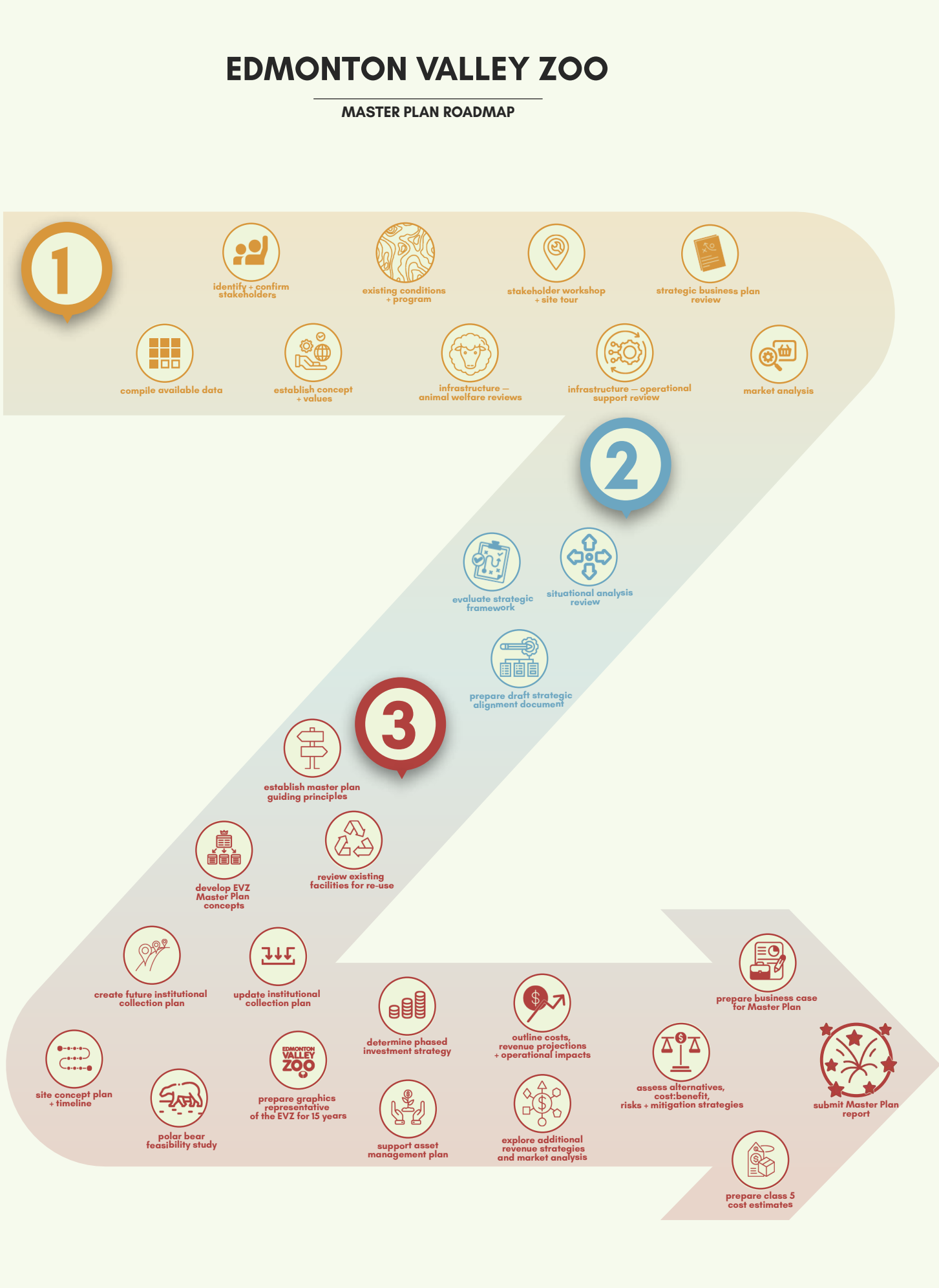
This foundational phase of the project laid the groundwork for developing the 15-year Master Plan for the EVZ informed by industry best practices and trends within the accredited zoo community, while understanding the current conditions, strengths and opportunities of the EVZ. The Phase I Situational Analysis Report is a comprehensive baseline assessment conducted through a zoological planning lens that highlights areas of excellence while identifying areas for growth or improvement.

PHASE II - STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

This phase focused on refining the EVZ’s strategic framework by reviewing and adjusting the existing Mission, Vision, Values and Objectives to ensure alignment with the Zoo’s future priorities and direction. The Phase II deliverable was the Strategic Framework that clearly outlines the EVZ goals and priorities to staff, partners, and the public.

PHASE 3 - MASTER PLAN, RESIDENT PLAN, AND COSTING

The final project phase represents the culmination of the Edmonton Valley Zoo Master Plan, where the current state analysis and strategic planning completed in previous phases inform this Master Plan report. The Site Concept plan was progressively refined to incorporate feedback and develop the final site plan, interpretive plan, and functional program. The Implementation Plan reflects the phased and opportunistic execution of the Master Plan and includes cost estimates and business planning to guide the long-term sustainability, growth and development of the Edmonton Valley Zoo.



PROJECT TOOLBOX

+ **WALKSHOPS** // Walking tours of the site were facilitated by the Zoo Project Team with the Consultant Team to stimulate group discussion and develop a common understanding of zoo needs, challenges and opportunities.

+ **WORKSHOPS AND FEEDBACK SESSIONS** // Took the form of in-person and virtual workshops or focused meetings intended to solicit feedback and brainstorm on specific topics and designs.

+ **REGULAR TOUCHPOINTS** // Regular touchpoints with key members of the project management and leadership teams to exchange information and keep stakeholders informed and engaged in the process.

+ **VISUALIZATIONS AND NARRATIVES** // Hand sketches, diagrams and documents were presented to illustrate ideas and help the project team visualize the concepts. Material packages were distributed pre- and post-meetings with feedback mechanisms for Project team and broader zoo and City of Edmonton staff input.

+ **OUTREACH** // Meetings with potential external partners, industry colleagues and subject-matter experts to share insights and perspectives from the broader zoo, conservation and research community.

+ **CLIENT EXPERTISE** // The project leveraged the experience, expertise and perspectives of the entire Zoo Project Team, including City of Edmonton, Edmonton Valley Zoo, and Valley Zoo Development Society staff, and consultation with a broader network of Zoo team members.

+ **CONSULTANT EXPERTISE** // The Consultant Team includes experts in zoological planning and design, interpretive planning, landscape architecture, architecture, engineering, transportation planning, zoological business planning and economic, and animal wellbeing. Each discipline has contributed to the development of the Master Plan, not only informing their respective sections but collaborating across sectors to deliver a plan that is innovative, creative, and achievable.



COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOP

WHAT WE LEARNED

SUMMARY OF PHASE 1

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS REPORT

EXISTING SITE ORGANIZATION AND SERVICING

The Zoo is located adjacent to the Laurier Heights neighborhood within the Edmonton River Valley Parks system along the North Saskatchewan River. The entrance and entry plaza are publicly accessible and are attractive spaces with many amenities for visitors.

The current site, habitats and buildings were reviewed by the Zoological Planning Team in January 2024, and the Phase I report assessed each space through three lenses – Animal Welfare, Visitor Experience, & Operational Support – to help prioritize development needs for the Master Plan. This high-level review considered aspects such as animal needs and choice, size and complexity of space, quality of immersion and views, public features, circulation and adjacencies, husbandry, containment & safety, and utilities and services. Diagrams from the Phase I Report are included on pages 26-28.

During the assessment it was noted that the existing spatial organization of the Zoo is a mixture of taxonomic and geographic with remnants of previous theming strategies. A large portion of the Zoo does not have animal habitats, and the areas that are geographically organized are spatially disconnected. Guest amenities are spread throughout the site but concentrated in the Entry Plaza and Urban Farm/ Red Panda/Makira outpost area, restricting services and revenue opportunities to one area of the site.

Site services were also reviewed in this phase, as many of the current utility systems servicing the Zoo require upgrades to bring them into alignment with current standards. Stormwater management infrastructure is adequate for minor storm events but lacks sufficient storage for major events.



EVZ IMAGE: RED FOX

SUMMARY OF PHASE 1 SITUATIONAL
ANALYSIS REPORT - CONTINUED

ATTENDANCE, PARKING & CIRCULATION

In Phase I, the team reviewed the current visitor circulation patterns to identify opportunities for efficiencies and experience improvement. Presently, there is a mix of primary and secondary pathways that may create wayfinding challenges for guests. The Zoo Project Team expressed intentions to change circulation patterns to distribute guests more evenly throughout the site.

Currently, visitors and service vehicles share the same pathways within the Zoo which can lead to inefficiencies, safety concerns and congestion. The main service access to the zoo has some turning radius challenges and stored items are blocking potential circulation areas.

The main parking lot is currently challenged by lack of clear stall identification creating inefficient use of space and requires more dedicated parking to meet accessibility goals. Based on its current capacity, the lot could support significant growth in annual attendance, which will be explored in the Business Case.

INDUSTRY TRENDS, BEST PRACTICES AND
EXTERNAL REGULATION

The zoo industry is constantly evolving in response to the biodiversity crisis, social demands, shifting demographics, audience expectations, regulatory changes, technological innovations and varying economic conditions.

Given the above context, heightened areas of focus include: further prioritizing animal wellbeing; selecting species who thrive in the Zoo’s climate’ landscape immersion; zoo leadership in conservation and research to save wild species and wild places; and modeling environmental sustainability. The EVZ is located in a desirable natural area adjacent to public amenities.

On an institutional level, opportunities stemming from Master Plan implementation include fostering professional growth and attracting talented staff, forming strategic and nontraditional partnerships, becoming a unique tourism destination, reviewing market driven content for economic sustainability, and improving technology to broaden audience reach. Based on reference zoo data, there are opportunities for the Zoo to grow attendance and increase revenue, which will be further explored in the business case.

The EVZ is subject to external regulations which must be maintained with the new Master Plan. There are Provincial and City regulations and development criteria that must be followed and maintained through implementation. The Zoo is accredited by the Canada’s Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) and intends to maintain this accreditation. The Zoo has set a goal to achieve accreditation by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) by 2027. The EVZ is also a member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA). Accreditation requirements will be further discussed in Section III - Animal Resident Planning.

MARKET ANALYSIS AND BUSINESS PLANNING

EVZ is one of the most visited attractions in Edmonton with almost 350,000 visitors in 2023, yet the experience of other zoos and attractions in other cities in Canada and U.S. indicate that there is potential for increased attendance given the size of the metropolitan area population and the competitive context.

Because of EVZ’s highly seasonal attendance patterns and unmet demand for peak season programming, there is a need to expand the Zoo’s facilities for program delivery and events in both peak seasons as well as non-peak seasons, and to develop spaces that can be used to generate income through rentals and special events.

The implementation of portions of the 2005 Master Plan resulted in a 178% increase in zoo visitation since 2015 and a 354% increase in revenue. These increased revenues have reduced EVZ’s reliance on the tax levy for operations.

The 2025 Master Plan will also yield substantial improvements in Zoo attendance, earned revenues, VZDS capital fundraising, and operational support over the next 15 years. The Master Plan also presents a considerable opportunity to support conservation efforts, modernize all areas of the zoo to reflect contemporary values and to keep pace with evolving accreditation standards and best practices. Delivering on the EVZ’s mission and realizing the vision for EVZ will ensure the long-term sustainability of the Zoo.

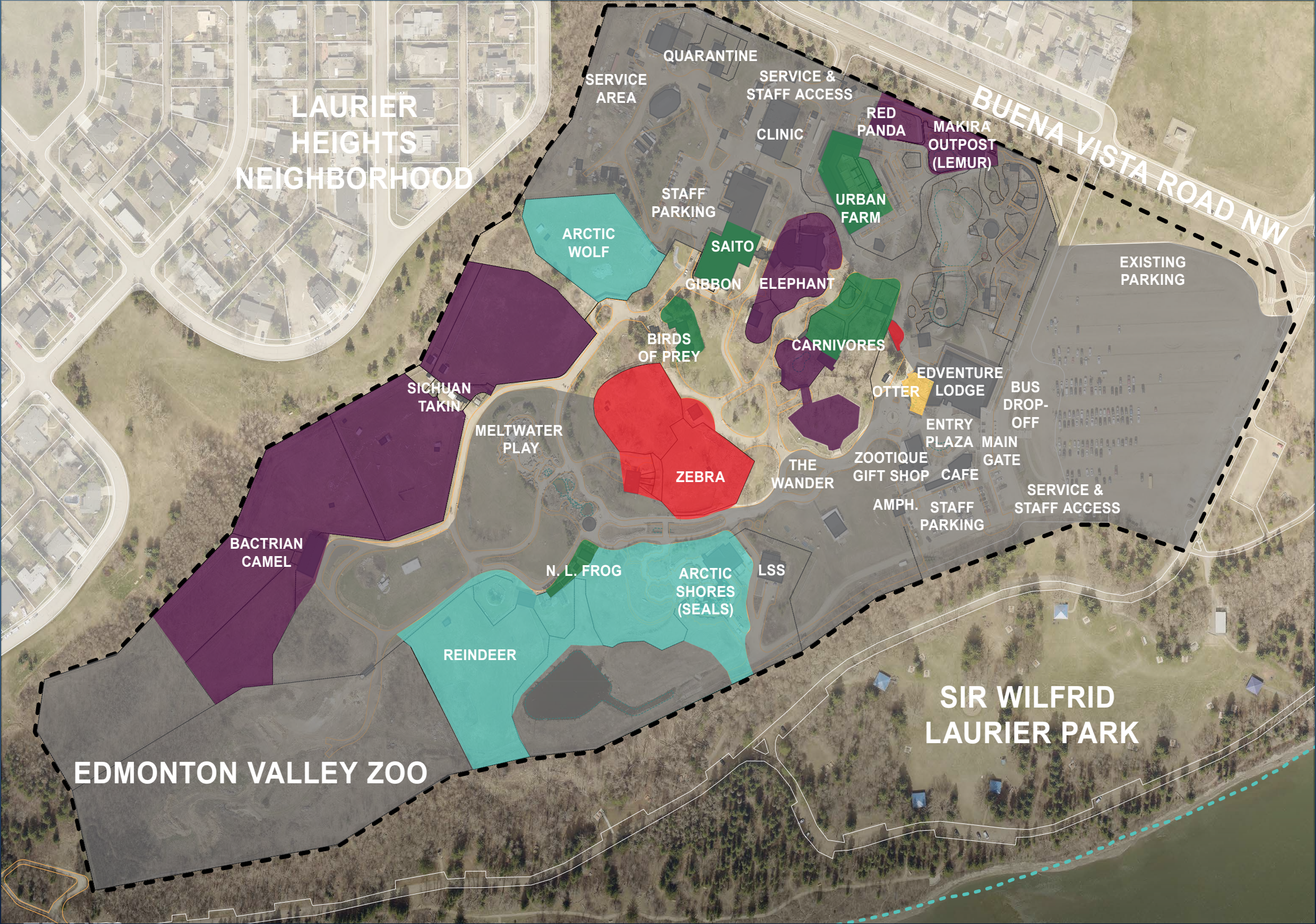
Existing Site Plan



Diagram from Phase I Report: Situational Analysis

Existing Habitat / Spatial Organization

MIXED: TAXONOMIC, GEOGRAPHIC + THEMATIC REMNANTS



LEGEND:

- ANIMAL-FREE
- ARCTIC
- AFRICA
- ASIA
- NORTH AMERICA
- MIXED/TAXONOMIC

Diagram from Phase I Report: Situational Analysis

Development Priorities



LEGEND:

- RECENT DEVELOPMENTS - OPPORTUNITY FOR MINOR IMPROVEMENT
- OPPORTUNITY FOR MODEST IMPROVEMENT
- OPPORTUNITY FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT
- OPPORTUNITY FOR SIGNIFICANT REDEVELOPMENT