

The Oakland Zoo ■ Knowland Park  
Master Plan

for the  
EAST BAY ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 10, 1990

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THE PORTICO GROUP ■ ARCHITECTS & LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS




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Introduction:

This Master Plan Summary for The Oakland Zoo - Knowland Park summarizes the results of eighteen months of planning.

Early in the process preliminary concepts were presented to local neighborhood groups at several public meetings. As a result the proposed Master Plan incorporates their concerns and minimizes impacts upon the adjacent neighborhoods and improves traffic flows into the Park.

In the spring of 1990, the planning efforts culminated in a series of interactive planning workshops. Members of the planning committee, zoo staff members, and The Portico Group participated intensively in these sessions.

The present planning process has been guided by the following two assumptions which were developed during the initial planning phases.

- ▣ The Master Plan should make optimum use of the unique combination of historic and native Californian landscapes in Knowland Park.
- ▣ Capital improvements proposed by the Master Plan must balance *fiscal prudence* and *bold new ideas*, building an achievable vision of the future for The Oakland Zoo/Knowland Park.

Three *Guiding Principles for Development* of The Oakland Zoo and Knowland Park are proposed by this Master Plan Summary. These three guiding principles strongly acknowledge the two key assumptions presented above and build an exciting foundation for future development.

The following individuals have contributed to this Master Plan Summary:

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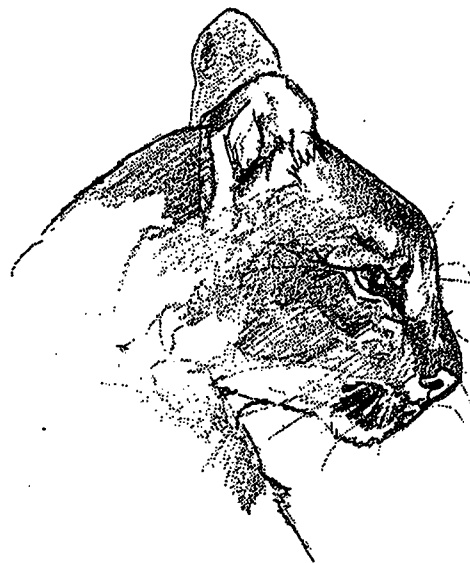
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Guiding Principles for Development:

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The Oakland Zoo/Knowland Park is a special regional environmental resource within the greater Alameda/Contra Costa County region. It combines three unique landscape environments within a single visitor experience: the Historic Park Landscape and Arboretum, the Zoological Park, and the California Wild Habitat Preserve.

- The *Historic Park Landscape and Arboretum* provides a pastoral setting for picnics and quiet recreation.
- The *Zoological Park* touches the senses and stimulates an understanding of the world's wild places. The experience promotes stewardship and conservation of the earth's wild animals, plants, and habitats.
- *Wild California* teaches visitors about California's rich, natural heritage and preserves hundreds of acres of chaparral, grasslands, and riparian habitats. Experiencing this landscape motivates visitors to understand and conserve the wild habitats of California.

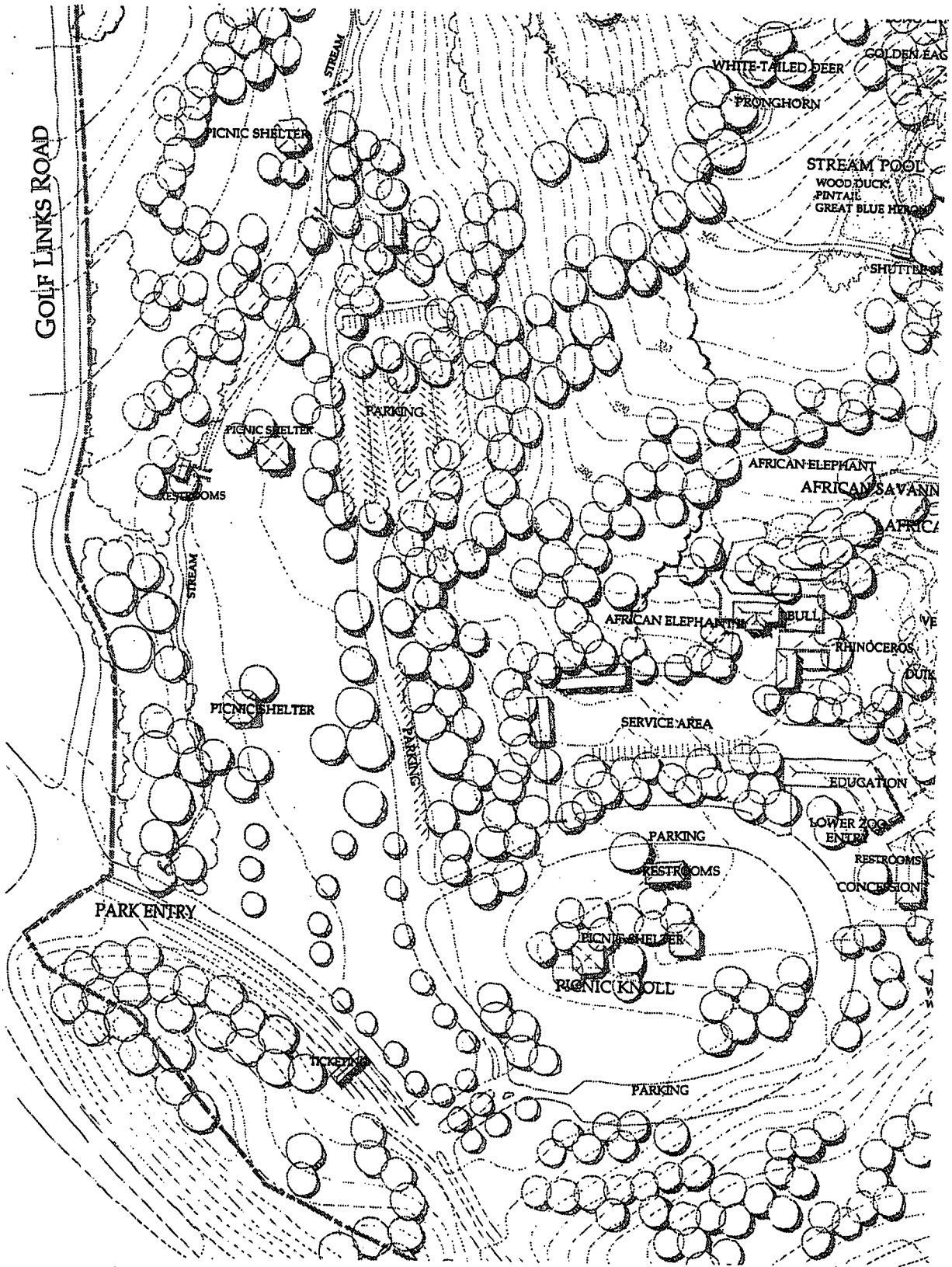
Both native Californian and exotic vegetation cover Knowland Park's rugged topography. Panoramic views of San Francisco Bay serve to dramatize the urban incursions which have transformed so much of California's habitat.

Wild habitat is never "lost", only transferred to human uses, often excluding the original residents. We constantly modify existing landscapes to provide for our industrial, commercial, residential, and recreational growth. The ecological ethic popularized in the 1960's has focused public awareness on this problem and begun the often slow process of mitigating our impact upon the habitats of other species.

The presence of three very different but complementary landscape components in Knowland Park offers us the opportunity to educate our visitors to the values of stewardship of wild habitats. Traditional family recreation in the Historic Park Landscape will complement the experience of exotic habitats and animals and provide a setting for enjoyment and exploration by Knowland Park's visitors.







HISTORIC PARK LANDSCAPE AND ARBORETUM:

The Oakland Zoo/Knowland Park:

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Historic Park Landscape and Arboretum:

Visitors enter the *Zoological Park* and *Wild California* through the picturesque landscape of the *Historic Park Landscape and Arboretum*. This intimate, enclosed stream valley was passed from the stewardship of the Costanoan Indians, to the Spanish land grant ownership of the Rancho San Antonio in the 1770's, and became the site of the Frederick Talbot mansion, an early Bay area lumber and shipping magnate.

The importance of Frederick Talbot's private arboretum is reflected in the earlier names of Knowland Park, formerly Alameda County Zoological Gardens and Arboretum (1936), and later Joseph Knowland State Park and Arboretum (1950).

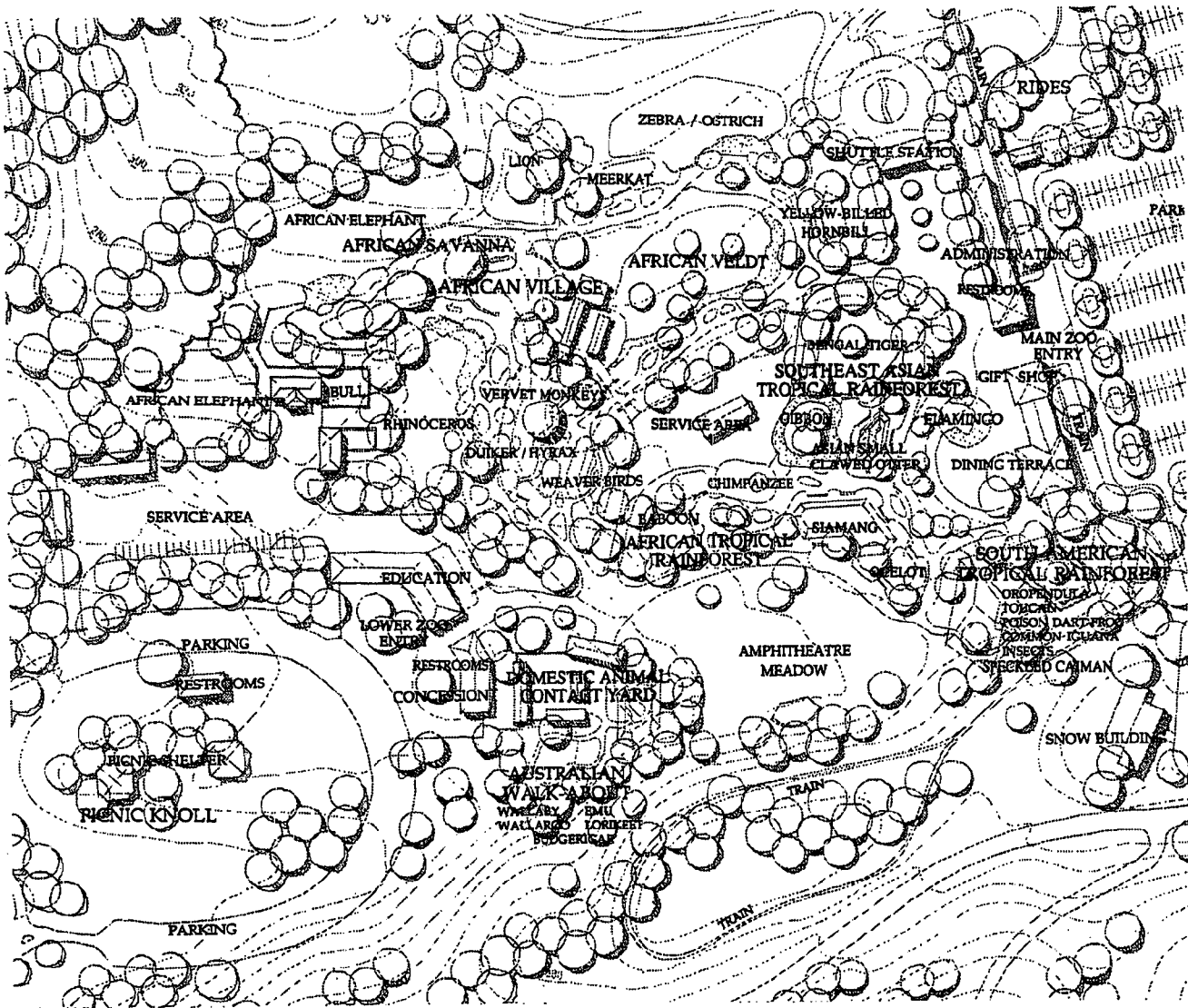
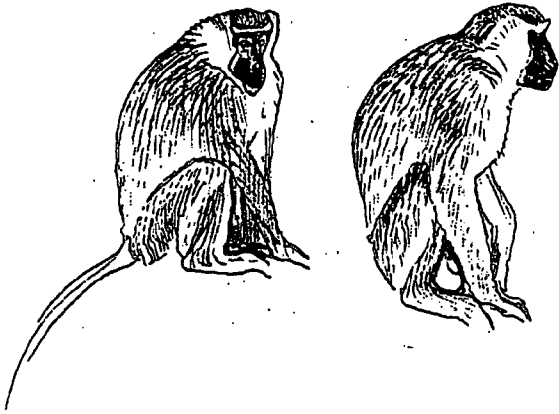
A row of Canary Island Date Palms greets visitors near the park entry. Stately Queen Palms from Brazil, Chinese Fan Palms, and exotic Bunya Bunya trees from Australia dot the formal meadows of the picnic grounds. These arboretum specimens were planted at the turn of the century as a part of the Talbot Estate grounds.

The Arboretum's international collection of trees includes eight species of palm, native and exotic oak species, pines, and many other specimens from areas such as Australia, North Africa, the Himalayas, Chile, and the Canary Islands. New plantings in the arboretum add to the present collection of semi-tropical and temperate trees. The formal serenity of this landscape is enhanced through new plantings, and roadway and parking improvements.

Both individual and group picnic sites provide opportunities for casual recreation in a quiet green oasis. The *Picnic Knoll* is immediately adjacent to the new *Environmental Education Center* and provides easy access to the Lower Zoo Entry. Parking is located immediately adjacent to the Education Center, convenient for evening events in the Education Center's meeting rooms and small theatre.

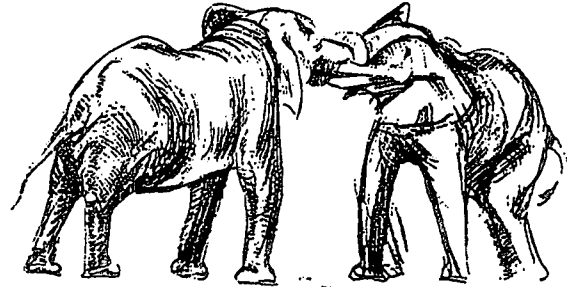
Several new picnic shelters are located in the meadow enhancing the Historic Park's ability to serve the recreational needs of both public and private groups. These shelters evoke the architectural richness of Oakland's many turn of the century Victorian structures. The meadow area extends to the east, taking advantage of the narrow valley formed by the ephemeral stream which bounds the meadows north edge. Here exotic plant materials intermingle with native oaks and the scented shade of naturalized Australian Gum Trees.

The Snow Building and its gardens overlooking the lights of the Bay Area are available for larger parties and receptions which require indoor space. The high-vaulted ceilings are complemented by kitchen facilities ideal for catering formal lunches or dinners.



THE ZOOLOGICAL PARK:





The Zoological Park:

The Zoological Park offers a world class experience of exotic animals and their natural habitats for its visitors. The Park's relatively compact topography and intimate scale provides a setting for easy exploration by parents and children alike.

In respect for the unique character of Knowland Park's other two landscape environments, the exotic habitats of the world are represented by four important zoogeographic biomes, the *Tropical Savanna of East Africa*, and the *Tropical Rain Forests of South East Asia, Africa, and South America*.

These biomes are superbly replicated utilizing the topography and vegetation of Knowland Park without undesirable visual or functional impacts on the adjacent landscapes of The Historic Park and Wild California.

The *Tropical Savanna of East Africa* allows Zoological Park visitors to experience many of the world's great large mammals. At the gateway to this biome, a Yellow Billed Hornbill nests in a simulated Baobab Tree, "the tree where man was born" of African myth.

Because of their dramatic size and coloration, African Elephant, White Rhinoceros, Reticulated Giraffe, Eland, and Grant's Zebra are easily discovered as visitors trek through the grasslands and acacia woodlands. Not as easily noticed with a casual glance, engaging Meerkats dig and tumble while their sentries watch for predators like the African Lions in the adjacent exhibit.

Vervet Monkeys forage at the edge of an open woodland as the visitor leaves the grasslands. Nearby, a small exposure of kopjes conceals a pair of Duiker and a family of rock Hyrax in its rocky shadows.

At the mid-point of the visitor's African Savanna experience, the *African Village* provides a shady rest. Hot food, cool drinks, and restrooms complement the picnic and barbecue area which sprawls within the circle of African dwellings. Interpretive exhibits present the ancient patterns of subsistence cattle herding and farming in East Africa. Visitors learn of fascinating ecological/cultural links such as those between modern efforts at Tsetse Fly eradication, and the disappearance of wildlife.

Historically, the Tsetse Fly infested African thorn-bush has provided a barrier to the cattle herds of the Masai. This fly carries diseases deadly to both man and cattle. Modern efforts to control sleeping sickness in man are eliminating the fly from large areas of potential cattle range. Such areas often prove irresistible to hungry, growing African peoples.



The *Tropical Rain Forest* introduces visitors to the three major rain forests of the world: Central Africa, South East Asia, and Central and South America.

Entering the Tropical Rain Forest through the island nations of South East Asia, zoo visitors encounter one of the world's more adaptable predators, the Bengal Tiger. Subspecies of the tiger range from equatorial habitats to the boreal forests of Siberia.

High in the tropical foliage, two species of lesser ape, the Siamang and the White-handed Gibbon, brachiate from branch to branch. Their hooting calls echo throughout the park. Across the pathway a group of Asian Small Clawed Otters frolic beneath a pair of Great Indian Hornbills. Glass panels split the stream's surface, providing glimpses of the Otter's aquatic adaptations.

A troupe of African Chimpanzees inhabits tropical vegetation, foraging, grooming each other, and paying great attention to zoo visitors.

The *South American Tropical Rain Forest* experience begins in the deep shade of the forest floor. Among the huge buttressed trunks of the forest, visitors encounter ground dwellers like the beautifully striped Ocelot or the Speckled Caiman, the most abundant crocodylian of the South American Tropics.

As visitors climb the boardwalks leading into the tropical forest understory, Three-toed Sloths - a member of the marsupial family - conceal themselves artfully among the leaves. Surprisingly, these studies in slow motion are the most common mammal of the Neotropical - South and Central American - Forest.

The boardwalks lead into a habitat experienced by very few humans. This is a separate world of insects, amphibians, reptiles, primates, and other mammals, most of whom rarely leave the three dimensional pathways of the upper forest. Oropendulas, Toucans, and other brightly colored birds surround the visitor. Small exhibits of Poison Dart Frogs and the Common Iguana inhabit sunny limbs, utilizing water caught in the cups of epiphytic plants like Bromeliads.

The *Australian Walk-About* provides zoo visitors the experience of walking the same trails as Wallabies, Wallaroos, and large flightless Emus. Low kickrails allow the animals a safe retreat from overly attentive youngsters. A walk-through tropical flight cage contributes the colorful chatter of Lorikeet and Budgerigar to the quiet rustling of the eucalyptus forest.

A *Domestic Animal Contact Yard* allows children and adults alike to delight in the opportunity to touch a few of the world's many varieties of domestic animals. There is no substitute for the sensory experience of touch in engendering the excitement which precedes learning and understanding.





### Wild California:

*Wild California* allows The Oakland Zoo's visitors the opportunity to experience California's rich, natural heritage. *California 1820* and the *California Habitat Preserve* provide glimpses of California's native wildlife which occurs today and in the year 1820. Five ecological units are highlighted: grassland, chaparral, oak woodland, riparian, and canyon. Four hundred acres of Knowland Park remains in its native state in the California Habitat Preserve.

A shuttle system departs from the Zoological Park's entry plaza transporting visitors along a loop trail which ascends through the five Californian ecological units. Each shuttle makes three stops to allow visitors to proceed on foot for close views of the native animals and plants.

The first stop is an open experience of *California's Rivers* which highlights the Grizzly Bear<sup>1</sup> a magnificent animal which once numbered over 10,000 individuals throughout the state and is represented on California's state flag. Wolf<sup>1</sup>, Bobcat, Great Horned Owl, and Harris' Hawk can be seen in natural habitats, which form a seamless continuation of the surrounding chaparral and oak woodland. Underwater viewing of River Otter and Beaver provides a dramatic look at two adaptable California residents which continue to survive in spite of human incursions.

As the shuttle climbs through the grasslands, California's own Tule Elk and American Bison<sup>1</sup> are seen in the distance. The second stop is at a wooded stream pool, where native Wood Duck, Pintail, and Great Blue Heron reside. A gentle canyon walk provides the visitor with a more intimate look at riparian species and leads to the *California Canyon* - home to Jaguar<sup>1</sup>, Cougar, Golden Eagle, Long-eared Bat, and Badger.

The shuttle continues up across the grassland inhabited by Pronghorn Antelope, encountering White Tail Deer<sup>1</sup> in the oak woodland, and makes its final stop at the *California Interpretive Center*. Situated on the dramatic crest of the Oakland Hills, the Interpretive Center provides a spectacular view of the relic salt marshes and human development of San Francisco Bay. The Center presents California's natural heritage from an ecological perspective. Equally important, it describes habitat destruction and extinction in California. Hopefully, the visitor will leave the Center with a deeper understanding of not only what we have lost, but also what we must do to preserve and enhance what remains.

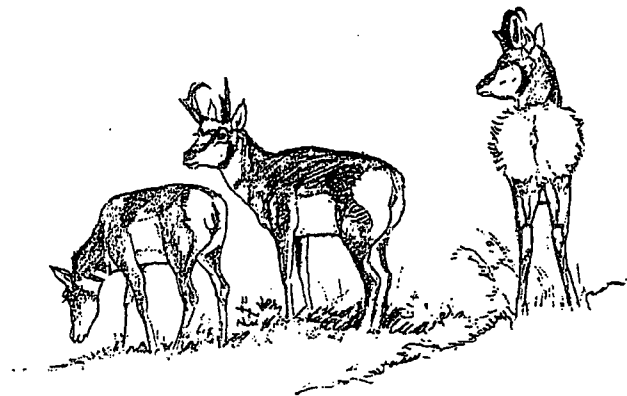
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<sup>1</sup> Animals once part of California's natural community but now extinct in California.

The *California Interpretive Center* presents concepts through a series of interactive exhibits and small displays of endangered plants, reptiles, fish and small mammals. The Center also forms a trail-head for self-guided walks into the surrounding chaparral, grasslands, and oak woodlands of the California Habitat Preserve.

Red Tail Hawks hunt overhead as visitors explore the vegetation of the chaparral, the small needle like leaves of the characteristic Chamise proclaiming its drought tolerance. Paths divide to lead visitors down into the shade of the live oak woodlands, where the burrows of fox and wood rat nests leave tell-tale signs on the forest floor.

The *California Habitat Preserve* protects the native habitats of Knowland Park. Appropriately, the *Off Exhibit Breeding Center* is located here. The Center provides an important component of the Zoological Park's commitment to the breeding of endangered and threatened species from around the world. This facility also provides the animal management capabilities appropriate for the breeding and reintroduction of California's endangered species.



The Oakland Zoo/Knowland Park Market Area:

The Master Plan has identified three primary population groups as potential visitors to The Oakland Zoo/Knowland Park. These three market areas include: the *local residents* of Alameda and Contra Costa counties, the *residents of the Greater Bay Area*, and the growing numbers of *tourists* who travel California's principal freeways and airways.

*Local Residents:*

Presently, three quarters of The Oakland Zoo's visitors arrive from locations in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. The combined population of these two counties has exceeded two million.

This strong local support is expected to continue to grow; the Historic Park and Arboretum provide a unique recreational experience and the Zoological Park and Wild California provide the opportunity to explore the natural world in a comfortable setting very close to home.

*Residents of the Greater Bay Area:*

The park's location adjacent to Interstate 580 provides excellent access from the Greater Bay Area. The residents of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties are all within a one hour drive of The Oakland Zoo. The combined population of this area exceeds six million.

The Oakland Zoo/Knowland Park's unique combination of three very distinct landscapes, in concert with the attraction of Wild California should dramatically increase total visitation from these neighboring counties. The percentage of the Park's visitors from these counties should increase well beyond the present 12 percent.

*Tourists:*

Each year, more than six million visitors arrive to visit the Bay Area from out of state. Many of these visitors will stay with friends and relatives, stimulating visits to local attractions. These visitors will form an important source of visitation to The Oakland Zoo and Knowland Park.

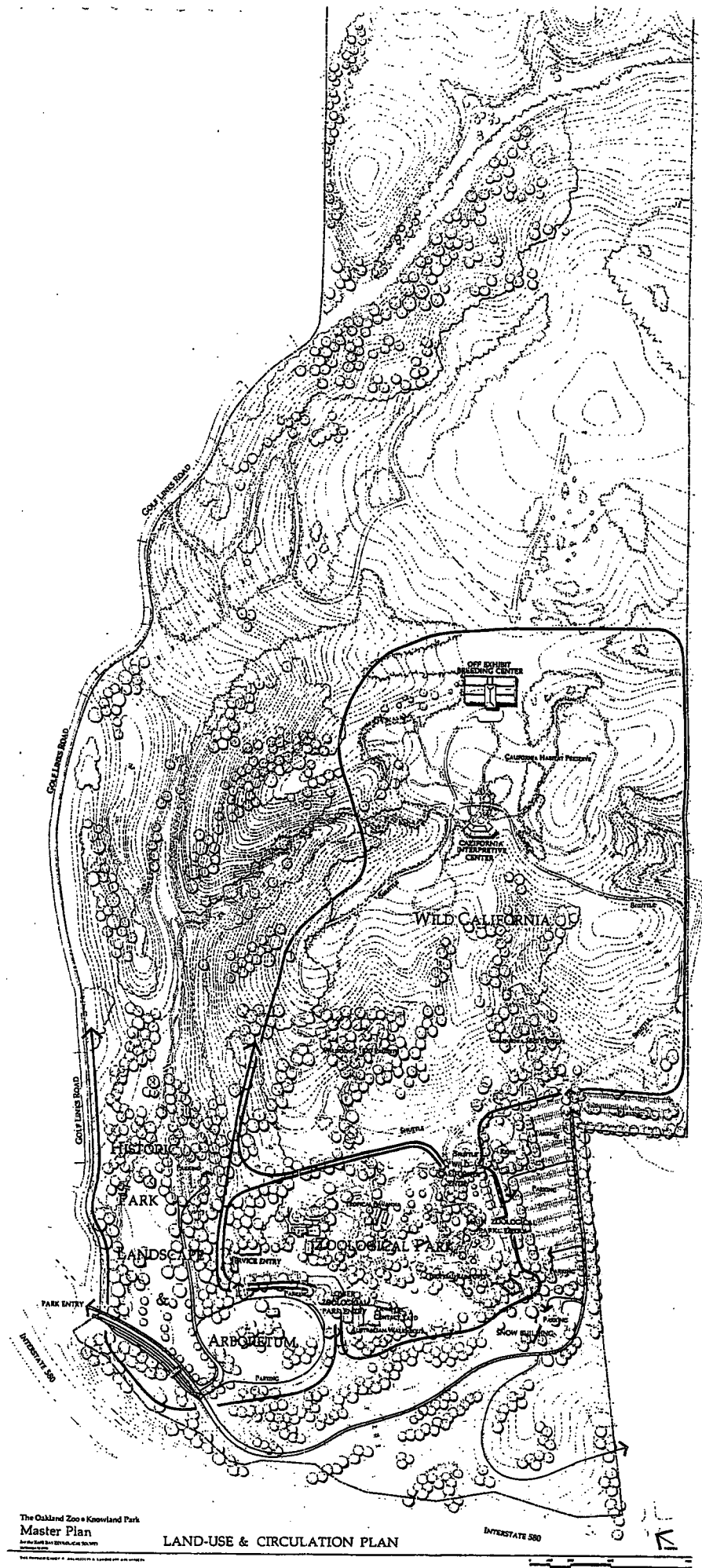
Projected Attendance:

The present attendance at The Oakland Zoo is 350,000 visitors annually. A general guideline for annual attendance at zoological facilities is to design for a range of one-half visitor to a maximum of one visitor for each resident of the local region.

With a local metropolitan area of more than two million people, a fully developed Knowland Park facility as proposed in the Master Plan should by conservative estimates draw one million visitors.

Acknowledging the necessity of phasing the proposed development the Master Plan addresses parking, circulation, and other key elements at attendance levels of both one-half million and one million visitors.





Automobile and Pedestrian Circulation and Parking:

The Master Plan Study reviewed present circulation patterns for both automobiles and pedestrians. Several areas of concern were identified in the present vehicular circulation system.

At the present time the configuration of the Knowland Park entry and the placement of the entry ticket booths can cause traffic to back up into the intersection of Golf Links Road and 98th Avenue. A severe backup can extend up the northbound freeway exit ramp from westbound Interstate 580. We propose that this problem be addressed by widening the entry area to 4 lanes and relocating the ticket booths to provide stacking space for a minimum of 60 automobiles.

The Master Plan proposes that the present one-way interior park roadway, which links the Historic Park and Arboretum with the Zoological Park, be redesigned to accept two way traffic. The road currently is one way, requiring visitors to leave Knowland Park and drive along several blocks of Interstate 580 in order to return to the picnic areas of the Historic Park and Arboretum.

The development of Wild California as an additional attraction adjacent to the Zoological Park, coupled with the planned enhancement of the picnic areas in the Historic Park and Arboretum, will only increase the need for visitors to drive between these two major areas of the park.

*Projected Automobile Parking Demands For The Oakland Zoo/Knowland Park:*

The following table provides an estimate of current parking demand, as well as projected parking demand at attendance levels of 500,000 and 1,000,000 visitors per year to The Oakland Zoo and Knowland Park.

Total Annual Attendance.....	350,000	.....	500,000	.....	1,000,000
Peak Month Attendance (1).....	59,500	.....	85,000	.....	170,000
Peak Week Attendance (2).....	13,740	.....	19,630	.....	39,260
Design Day Attendance (3).....	5,496	.....	7,852	.....	15,704
Peak In-Grounds Attendance (4).....	2,748	.....	3,926	.....	7,852
Parking Spaces Required (5).....	696	.....	995	.....	1,990

Footnotes:

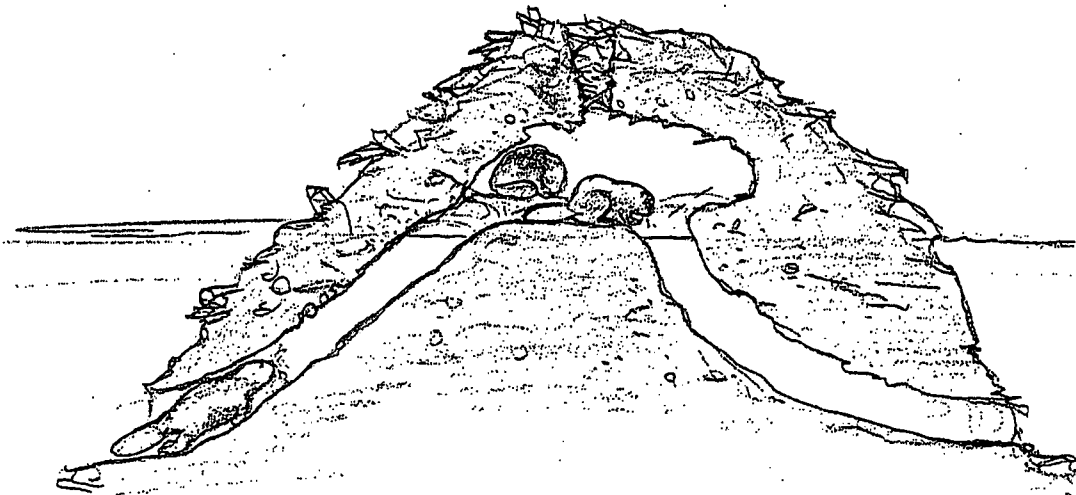
- (1) Assume 17% of annual attendance as peak month attendance.
- (2) Peak month divided by 4.33.
- (3) Assume 40% of peak week.
- (4) Assume 50% of design day (one turnover for each parking space).
- (5) Assume 95% arrive by car and 3.75 persons per car.

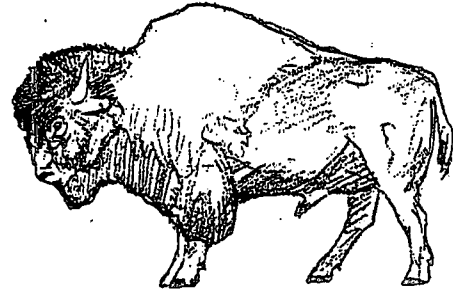
At the present time Knowland Park has a total of 921 parking spaces. The Historic Park and Arboretum has 277 of these spaces which serve both the picnic areas and the Zoological Park. The remaining 694 spaces are adjacent to the primary zoo entry with 30 spaces serving the Snow Building.

The Master Plan proposes increasing available parking to a maximum of 1,350 total spaces. This number of parking spaces will be adequate for an approximate annual visitation of 700,000, allowing present attendance to double.

As The Oakland Zoo/Knowland Park approaches this increased level of success over the next decade, alternative approaches to locating additional parking should be assessed. Potential solutions range from an increased reliance on visitors arriving by public transportation, to locating additional parking lots within the Park's 490 acres.

At this time the recommendation of the Master Plan is to investigate and establish direct public bus service to The Oakland Zoo. Establishing this service prior to the actual need for additional parking may moderate or eliminate this potential problem. Because of the rugged topography of the Knowland Park site, construction of additional parking lots will entail substantial physical and visual impacts.





Capital Improvement Budgets:

A detailed budget estimate was prepared for the improvements proposed in the Master Plan. These improvements are summarized below. The budgets below reflect the Master Plan's balance of fiscal *prudence* and *bold new ideas*.

The proposed capital improvements utilize existing facilities and utility systems whenever possible. The Master Plan works with, not against, the rugged topography of the landscape, minimizing site grading, expensive utility improvements, and steep pedestrian access routes.

Oakland's climate has guided selection of both exotic and native animals for each exhibit. Exhibits have been selected to minimize the use of water. All water which is employed will be filtered and recycled.

Historic Park and Arboretum:

Revised Park Entry and Picnic Area Improvements..... \$550,000

Zoological Park:

Main Entry Revisions including additional parking and ride relocation..... \$1,900,000

West Entry and Education Building..... \$950,000

Exhibit Improvements ..... \$6,450,000

Subtotal: \$9,300,000

Wild California:

California 1820 Exhibits..... \$4,300,000

California Wild Habitat Preserve: Interpretive Center, shuttles, trails, and roadway improvements..... \$1,950,000

Subtotal: \$6,250,000

Off Exhibit Breeding Center:

Holding building, paddocks, and access road..... \$600,000

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Total for all Proposed Capital Improvements: \$16,700,000<sup>1</sup>

The total budget for all proposed capital improvements is approximately \$17,000,000. If phased over a ten year development period the annual capital improvements investment in 1990 dollars will be \$1,700,000. If phased over a twenty year period the annual investment would be reduced to \$850,000.

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<sup>1</sup>1990 Dollars.



Capital Improvements and Operations Funding:

At present (FY 1989-90) the Oakland Zoo has an operating budget of approximately \$1,500,000 which includes revenue from admissions, concessions, education, and subsidies from the City of Oakland and the East Bay Regional Park District. As with all municipal zoos in the country, the Oakland Zoo requires public subsidies in excess of the income generated through zoo operations. This insures that admission prices remain affordable for all economic levels within the local community.

In the present fiscal year \$450,000 of The Oakland Zoo's overall budget will come from the City of Oakland and the East Bay Regional Park District. This represents approximately 30% of the operating budget. This is within a normal range for other similar facilities. Some other similar sized zoos, such as Point Defiance Zoo in Tacoma, Washington, have a lower percentage of their annual budget derived from their local taxing authority. However this is coupled with a higher annual budget per zoo visitor and includes greater concessions and other revenue generation directly from visitors.

Comparing the present annual budget of the zoo in relationship to its annual attendance (annual budget divided by annual attendance) results in an annual expenditure per visitor of \$4.45. This is relatively low when compared to other zoos in the western United States:

Santa Ana.....	\$3.54
Fresno Zoo .....	\$3.59
Oakland.....	\$4.45
Sacramento.....	\$5.16
The Living Desert in Palm Desert .....	\$6.00
Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle.....	\$6.48
Los Angeles Zoo.....	\$6.75
Santa Barbara Zoo .....	\$6.90
Metro Washington Park Zoo in Portland .....	\$9.50
Point Defiance Zoo.....	\$8.33
San Francisco .....	\$8.40
San Diego Zoo.....	\$10.15
San Diego Wild Animal Park.....	\$12.00

Direct comparisons are difficult because each facilities has differing proportions of revenues produced by the operation of food service and gift facilities. This comparison does indicate, however, that the Oakland Zoo is presently operating relatively efficiently and has significant room to grow in the generation of revenue from each visitor (per capita).

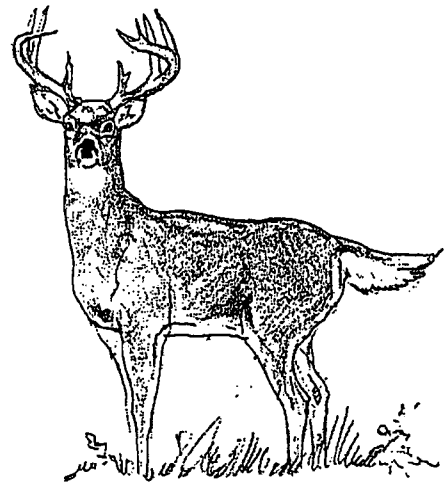
When the amount of municipal support per visitor ratio is compared, Oakland at \$1.32 per visitor is relatively low in comparison to other municipally funded and operated institutions.

Point Defiance Zoo.....	\$1.19
Oakland.....	\$1.32
Santa Ana.....	\$1.43
Fresno .....	\$1.89
San Francisco .....	\$ 2.00
Sacramento.....	\$ 2.40
Woodland Park.....	\$3.29
Metro Washington Park .....	\$3.95

The San Diego Zoo receives only \$0.30 per visitor. However, it is not a comparable institution considering that its annual operations budget of \$33,500,000 would provide a complete physical plant for most small and even some medium sized zoos.

Considering the two per capita ratios presented above, the Oakland Zoo has the potential to significantly increase its annual per capita revenues from visitors. Increasing the number and quality of food and gift concessions, in addition to an increase in admission fees is an immediate way to move toward increased revenues. To enable this strategy to work, the Oakland Zoo must increase visitor perceptions of value received. The key rests in two areas:

1. Increase the perceived quality and enjoyment of the exhibit/educational experience.
2. Increase the perceived quality and convenience of the visitor services: food service, restrooms, gift shop, and other public spaces.





Revenue Sources:

Implementation of the Master Plan for The Oakland Zoo/Knowland Park will be a long-term project and will necessitate funding from a variety of sources.

Operating funds are currently derived from public tax support and from revenues from entrance fees, educational activities, the train, the amusement rides, concessions, gift shop and picnic facility rentals.

Maintaining a stable tax base for support of Zoo operations is necessary for the continued health and growth of the institution. The zoo presently receives public support from the City of Oakland and the East Bay Regional Park District. With the implementation of the improvements anticipated in the Master Plan, attendance at the zoo will increase. With an increase in attendance, it will be possible for the zoo to document through surveys and questionnaires its importance to the city and region. This document will substantiate the need for additional support or for the maintenance of its share of current public funding allocations.

Further capital improvement funding to implement the Master Plan may be made through capital improvement levies, revenue bonds, or general obligation bonding sources. Private and corporate donations are also a potential source of capital improvement funding but for many zoos major corporate contributions have been difficult to acquire.

Local bond issues specifically for zoos have generally been very successful throughout the United States even when other municipal bond issues have failed. The City of New Orleans recently passed a \$40 million bond issue for an aquarium shortly after bond issues for increasing police and fire protection and schools were defeated. El Paso, Detroit, and Seattle have all recently passed bond issues for their zoos. The Metro Washington Park Zoo in Portland gained permanent tax levy support for operations through an election this past spring. However a bond issue for new construction was narrowly defeated.

Both program and capital fund raising projects must coordinate with the Zoo's development priorities. Ideally, capital improvement funds should be allocated proportionally to maintain an equitable balance among animal exhibits, educational facilities, visitor services facilities, and operational/maintenance facilities. Gifts and bequests should only be accepted by the Zoo when they are consistent with the needs and goals of this Master Plan adopted by the Zoo.

As the East Bay Zoological Society, the Zoo's non-profit support organization grows in membership, marketing and revenue development will increase the Society's ability to provide capital funds to assist in the implementation of the Master Plan.

Fund raising activities should be planned to provide appealing capital project opportunities for potential donors. These will also provide positive public relations and media attention for public tax and bond funding. The Master Plan's thematic exhibit organization allows for portions of work to be marketed, funded, and built in individual segments over time as funds become available.

