

*Northern Alameda County Group  
Oakland – Alameda – Berkeley – Emeryville – Albany  
– San Leandro*



March 6, 2008

**To:**  
Oakland City Council  
Mayor Ron V. Dellums  
East Bay Zoological Society

**Reply To:**  
Kent Lewandowski  
360 Monte Vista Ave., Apt. 213  
Oakland, CA 94611

### **Proposed Oakland Zoo Development in Knowland Open Space**

Dear Oakland City Council Members and Mayor's Office,

The Sierra Club recently heard presentations by Oakland Zoo Director Dr. Joel Parrott and by neighbors living next to Knowland Open Space regarding plans by the Zoo to build a new exhibit featuring native animals called "California in Constant Change" on land previously zoned as open space in Knowland Park. (Note: since 1998, a special use permit for the Zoo has been in force).

Although Sierra Club supports the conservation and environmental education mission of the zoo, and appreciates that the Oakland Zoo makes many positive contributions to Oakland, the Club still has concerns about this expansion and its impact on one of Oakland's last intact open spaces. Knowland Park has a unique topography with exceptional views of the City and San Francisco Bay. It represents one of the largest contiguous parcels of public open space within the city, hosts diverse native wildlife and vegetation, and is a destination for hikers and dog walkers. The space that would be enclosed by the new fencing on the promontory above the Zoo is estimated to be 23 acres, while "loss of public use acreage" in Knowland Open Space will be approximately 60 acres, depending on the Zoo implementation of the plan.

Another concern of the Club's is that it has been alleged (by the neighbors) that the expansion plans are not in conformance with city permit approvals or zoning. The Sierra Club does not have the resources to verify if this is true or not, but asks that the City of Oakland a) provide a copy of the land ownership and zoning overlays and b) investigate whether or not this allegation is true.

Since the last agreement in 1998, the Zoo's plan has changed, largely in response to protests from neighbors located closer to the zoo. For instance, a proposed tram shuttle and road, that was supposed to be located near existing homes, was replaced with a gondola ride. The new veterinary hospital appears to either have been moved or expanded in the new plan. Fence lines have been changed from what was originally proposed (in most cases, moving or recessing the fences to keep them out of sight of existing homes). The Sierra Club urges the City of Oakland to look into whether the modifications to the zoo's plan create an additional impact on the environment which must be declared and mitigated.

Sincerely,

Kent Lewandowski  
Chair, Northern Alameda County Group