

Ward 13

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Re: Priority status for the High Park Zoo

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

In the wake of the 2012 budget cuts, the Friends of High Park Zoo (FHPZ) was formed to raise awareness and funds necessary for the Zoo to remain open. Since the City restored operating funding to the Zoo in 2014, FHPZ and the City of Toronto have developed a strong partnership to ensure the Zoo thrives moving forward. FHPZ provides the fundraising and programming support necessary to enhance and sustain the Zoo.

The High Park Zoo was founded in 1892 and is the oldest zoo in Canada. A part of the High Park and Toronto community for almost 125 years, the Zoo allows all Torontonians to learn about animals from all continents and interact with nature. Currently the Zoo draws over 700,000 visitors annually, an increase in attendance of 37% in 2015 alone, demonstrating the value it offers to the residents and visitors of Toronto.

The FHPZ Master Plan has been created to identify repairs and upgrade key heritage structures to improve the quality of life of the animals, better facilitate the interaction between visitors and the animals and implement necessary accessibility infrastructure. The implementation of the Master Plan will also help make the Zoo more sustainable and reduce its carbon footprint by adding additional trees and passive storm water management systems. The Master Plan will also provide for technology-enabled interactive exhibits and further educational opportunities. One of FHPZ's plans is to highlight the contributions of the area's original First Nations' inhabitants.

Designating the High Park Zoo Master Plan a priority for the City will open new grant opportunities from both outside organizations and other levels of government, without affecting the City of Toronto's current financial responsibility. This potential funding will help propel the Master Plan forward, making this quintessential Toronto attraction even better.

Recommendation:

1. City Council declare the High Park Zoo Master Plan a priority for the City of Toronto.

Sincerely,

Sarah Doucette
Councillor, Ward 13