



toronto  
**ZOO**

**MASTER PLAN**

FEBRUARY, 2022



# WELCOME FROM THE CEO

The world as we know it is changing dramatically, with climate change, human population growth and habitat loss resulting in significant losses for animal populations globally. Your Toronto Zoo is a critical part of the wildlife conservation movement and committed to doing our part to reverse this trend. The Covid-19 pandemic also demonstrated the importance of building science literacy in our communities and the important role your Zoo must play in this dialogue.

The reality is that conservation is a team sport and we need more players. That is why we made the decision to update our Master Plan to consider the animals in our care, how guests use our site and how we inspire change to effect conservation. Never before in the Zoo's history has such an extensive consultation taken place, including a public survey with more than 3,000 responses. We took this feedback, along with perspectives from as many staff, volunteers, Zoo members, partners, donors, sponsors and community leaders as possible to plot a future for YOUR Toronto Zoo.

We are so grateful for the thoughtful feedback we received. What became clear was how much the community cares about their Zoo. With a first draft in hand we launched another round of consultation, creating a CEO Advisory Panel of 55 business, conservation and community leaders. We presented to a special committee of the Toronto Zoo Board of Management, the City Of Toronto executive team, and the City of Toronto's Aboriginal Affairs Committee and refined the Plan to ensure it represents the community we serve.

Your Zoo is committed to living our mission - connecting people, animals and conservation science to fight extinction - while becoming a true community hub. This will be achieved while ensuring animal welfare and conservation science are at the forefront of everything we do. The projects in this plan demonstrate how we can better serve the animals in our care and also meet the needs of our diverse, vibrant community.

The issues facing animals and humans today are immense and your Toronto Zoo team is well positioned to play a critical role as a key community and conservation partner. We thank you for your incredible support and look forward to implementing this new Master Plan together!

We look forward to working with the Toronto Zoo Wildlife Conservancy, the fundraising partner of the Toronto Zoo that was launched in 2019 to secure increased financial resources and support for the wildlife conservation work and capital projects being carried out by the Toronto Zoo. They will be integral to the ongoing success of your Toronto Zoo in implementing this Master Plan, by engaging and generating excitement from individuals, corporations, foundations, families and philanthropists to support these incredible projects.



Dolf DeJong - CEO, Toronto Zoo





# TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Your Toronto Zoo is a place of special significance and importance to many individuals, but more importantly, to many diverse communities. The Zoo is actively working to strengthen existing relationships, and to foster deeper, even more meaningful relationships, that help strengthen the Zoo's connection to the land, as well as to its community and to the people who call this traditional territory home.

We acknowledge the land that Your Toronto Zoo is on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.









While acknowledging the land we are on is an important step in the process, Your Toronto Zoo understands the importance of going beyond this, and actively working to involve First Nations communities in a dialogue and action about sharing and taking care of Mother Earth and all our relations, together. The Zoo has been engaging in these conversations for many years, and has worked with Elders, knowledge keepers and other community members to develop programs and resources that strengthen the Zoo's connection to First Nations communities, while also helping to make the Zoo a more accessible and welcoming space for them.

In engaging in these important conversations that lead to actions on the Zoo site and beyond, Your Zoo is recognizing the important people who have stewarded this territory, as well as the importance of being able to learn from these communities, and share these learnings with the broader Zoo and conservation communities. Your Zoo will continue to build on its existing relationships with First Nations communities, and is always trying to find new ways to share resources with communities. This commitment goes beyond the creation of programs and resources, however, and extends to the creation of dedicated spaces on Zoo land that help to meet the needs of these communities as well.

Image credit: City of Toronto



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● INTRODUCTION





# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. WHY A NEW MASTER PLAN?

Your Toronto Zoo is stepping into a moment of great change. Always looking forward, Your Zoo is taking on necessary site improvements to meet accessibility requirements by 2025. Additionally, Your Zoo faces many challenges including periodic flooding and aging buildings and infrastructure, as well as further challenges brought on by COVID 19. The series of required modifications to resolve these challenges act as a springboard for renewing the site as a whole. The redevelopment provides the perfect opportunity to re-envision the layout of Your Zoo to better reflect its recently renewed Strategic Plan, and to ensure that the site reflects Your Zoo's high-level ambitions, as well as better facilitating its progressive mission.

Your Toronto Zoo is poised to take on great challenges as well as great opportunities, with the ambition to engage its staff and volunteers, partners, guests and community in the co-creation of a strong vision for the future development of the Zoo. This will be a vision that transcends the evolution of Your Zoo over the next fifteen years, and positions it to be resilient and agile going into the future, while continuing to be a place of Conservation Science Research, forward-thinking animal welfare, and incredible and memorable experiences. There is a constant need to reinvent and remain current and forward-looking, both to reflect the vision and mandate of Your Zoo, as well as the shifting roles of Your Zoo in the greater wildlife conservation community, the city and the region as a whole.



*The Master Plan is being undertaken to develop a clear road-map to achieve greatness, and resilience, together.*



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.2. WHY NOW?

The world has entered a period of rapid transition, in the Anthropocene. At odds with climate change as well as other global pressures, such as resource extraction, this is accelerating species declines and extinction at unprecedented rates. Urban expansion continues to put pressure on species and ecosystems locally, and to chip away at natural spaces within and around cities. Facing this reality, accredited zoos are entities of increasing importance both as places of incredible science and research for protecting and improving the plight of species in peril, and are also uniquely positioned to bring this message of wildlife and environmental conservation to a broader audience locally and globally.

COVID shook many organizations, closing Your Toronto Zoo for an extended period of time, forcing leadership to reinvent what it was able to offer the public and requiring it to do so in a condensed timeframe. Agility such as this, in the face of unforeseen circumstances, is what will allow Your Zoo to future-proof itself and stay relevant, forward-looking, and versatile. Building on the current need to reassess what Your Zoo is able to bring to its audiences, and how it is able to do this most effectively, it is clear that now is the time to re-envision what this change looks like onsite and beyond the Zoo boundary. An important component of this is finding new and creative ways to expand and reimagine how we can increase funding. Building strong relationships with the community and its conservation partners, Your Zoo is ready to tackle the imminent challenges facing species and habitats, together.



*The current period of change and uncertainty has the potential to become a period of great excitement and opportunity, as Your Zoo moves boldly forward.*



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.3. WHY HERE?

Your Toronto Zoo is intricately woven into the greater urban fabric of Toronto, nestled beside the Rouge River, in one of the many ravines that are iconic to the city. The Zoo is a small city unto itself and also at the gateway to Canada's first urban national park, the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP). Pulling on these two contrasting qualities - hyper-urban, and very natural - Your Zoo is a unique entity to Toronto with the ability to offer both exciting, urban experiences as well as immersive natural escapes from urban life.

Your Zoo provides an incredible opportunity to see amazing wildlife, while also offering guests and staff a breath of fresh air and solace within a short commute from downtown. Your Zoo is one of many important destinations both for tourists and locals in the Greater Toronto Area, and is able to offer a rich and highly diverse experience that no other single entity in the GTA is able to offer. As a place of ground-breaking science and research, eye-opening animal encounters, and natural wonder, Your Zoo is multi-faceted. Strengthening partnerships with Rouge National Urban Park, Your Zoo is becoming even more embedded in its natural context, at a time when people are seeking out green space more and more. With a high-tech Wildlife Health Centre, Your Zoo is beginning to push the boundaries of technology and the guest experience, as well as bringing world-class science to a greater global audience through virtual programming.



*Building on its incredibly diverse and contrasting assets, Your Zoo is a destination unlike any other in Toronto, that is moving forward to meet the growing demands placed on it and high aspirations for it.*





## 2 • STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS





# 2. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

## 2.1. MISSION AND VISION

In 2020, Toronto Zoo Staff and Volunteers worked together to collectively develop a renewed mission and vision for Your Zoo going forward. The mission - “Our Toronto Zoo - Connecting people, animals and conservation science to fight extinction”- and the vision of “A world where wildlife and wild spaces thrive” are articulated in the document “Our Toronto Zoo/2020 Strategic Plan”. This document also establishes five Strategic Priorities: Save Wildlife, Ignite the Passion, Create Wow, Our Community + Our Zoo, and Revolutionize Zoo Technology. The Master Plan uses this document to guide its development such that the Master Plan, and eventually the site, will be a living reflection of the aspirations set out in the Strategic Plan.



### Save Wildlife

Providing state-of-the-art facilities for conservation research and science, paired with spaces that effectively showcase this work, and important conservation messages, to guests and our global audience.



### Ignite the Passion

Developing spaces, infrastructure, and buildings that facilitate the work of staff onsite, while also renewing their passion by creating an incredible working environment, and communicating the amazing work and knowledge of staff and volunteers to guests.



### Create Wow

Building on the awe-inspiring experiences that already exist onsite, and re-imagining how animal habitats, connecting spaces, pavilions, and arrival spaces for entering Your Zoo can all feed into a memorable, fun, and breath-taking experience.



### Our Community + Our Zoo

Reconnecting Your Zoo to the many communities of which it is an integral part, through intentional spaces and experiences that reflect the needs of Your Zoo as well as its local, regional and global communities and partners.



### Revolutionize Zoo Technology

Reimagining the place of technology at Your Zoo as interwoven with daily operations and experience to enhance both, adding layers of innovation, interaction, excitement, and information to site visits as well as experiences beyond the site.



# 2. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

## 2.2. 1TZ'S 4 CARES

In the 2020 Strategic Plan, Your Toronto Zoo adopted an internal branding of “One Toronto Zoo [1TZ]” based on the four “cares” that act as the guiding foundation for all of Your Zoo’s work as well as workplace culture. These four cares define the stakeholders - both animal and human - who are being designed for through the Master Plan, as it is these four groups that together make up the heart of Your Zoo today and in the future. These four cares are developed around Your Zoo’s commitment as an organization to better understand the threats to wildlife and develop sustainable solutions for people and nature around the globe.



### Our animals

Continually enhancing animal welfare onsite through animal habitat restructuring, expansion, and connection, paired with new technology, as well as new opportunities for modified routines that enhance enrichment and choice.



### Our team

Developing spaces and buildings on Your Zoo site to make Your Zoo a place that not only facilitates the work of its team of staff and volunteers, but gives back to our team as well. By creating spaces that serve our team, Your Zoo is ensuring that barriers are removed, and that the site is inviting to all as a place to work and play, and a place that the team of staff and volunteers is excited to come to everyday they work.



### Our guests

Enhancing existing spaces and pavilions onsite, as well as adding new ones that make for an inspiring, memorable and fun experience that leaves guests filled with excitement, wonder and an eagerness to return. Prioritizing inclusion to make Your Toronto Zoo the most accessible zoo in the world allowing guests of all abilities to enjoy the site and experiences.



### Our community

As an anchor institution in the east end of Canada's most diverse city, Your Zoo is committed to creating spaces that enable us to become more of a welcoming hub for our diverse community, and developing spaces that are able to serve both Your Zoo and its broader network of neighbours and partners to engage in Conservation Action.



# 2. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

## 2.3. YOUR ZOO OF THE FUTURE

As the Master Plan becomes a reality, building on the guiding principles established in the Strategic Plan, there are five facets of Your Zoo that will shine through. These five characteristics that Your Zoo will embody will enable it to pursue its mission in the near-future, while also allowing it to be innovative and adaptive in the long-run, creating successes that span both time-frames.



### Nimble

Your Zoo has the ability to become a test-bed for new solutions with rapid but thoughtful implementation. This will allow it to be even more adaptable to the changes surrounding it, especially in the face of events including pandemics and climate change, and to respond to the shifting demands placed on it.



### A catalyst

Your Zoo is the community's "kitchen": a place where people come together to share in discussions and innovation that act as positive change-agents both in the local community and the global wildlife community, including being a leader in discussions and action surrounding climate change and its effects on species.



### Tech-smart

With the ambition to become the most technologically advanced zoo in the world, tech will become a tool for monitoring animals, enhancing research and guest experience, and reducing Your Zoo's footprint through greater monitoring of systems such as water networks onsite, with a view to improving sustainability and reducing energy consumption.



### Accessible for all

Your Zoo is a space for everyone, and aims to become the most accessible zoo in the world. It will be even more ambitious in offering experiences for guests of all ages and backgrounds, varying by season. By offering variety Your Zoo welcomes diversity in its guests, staff, volunteers, partners, and collaborators.



### All day, all week, four seasons, forever

Your Zoo is a place that shines differently in different seasons, and at different times of day. The after-hours and shoulder-season Zoo will evolve so that different times of day and seasons present unique explorations, create return Zoo visits, and also allow the Zoo to be more agile and responsive to weather conditions.