Executive Summary
Executive Summary: Introduction, Summary Findings, Mission/Vision

Introduction

In 2013, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo engaged in a strategic planning process guided by Zoo Advisors, a national zoo planning firm. Zoo Advisors partnered with the architecture firm of GLMV to integrate a facility master plan. Particularly noteworthy in the process was the exceptional commitment and dedication of the County, the Friends, and staff and volunteers. The joint County and Friends team worked to create a plan that would build on the Zoo’s history and create a compelling vision for the future, grounded in solid business practices and guided by a true collaboration of County and Friends. The extraordinary commitment of staff time and the inclusion of a “blue ribbon panel” ensures that the plan represents innovative ideas, but based in reality.

Summary Findings

Revenue, attendance, and membership have increased substantially in the last five years, and a number of improvements to exhibits and infrastructure have been implemented, greatly enhancing the visitor experience. However, several areas remain to be addressed to springboard the Zoo to become a truly exceptional destination and a force in wildlife conservation.

Although the Zoo has a unique place in the lives of many Central New York residents, it has not taken advantage of its role in the community nor its charismatic leadership to develop a firm base of contributed support, nor has it developed the organizational capacity to realize its growth potential. Key issues identified during the planning process include: organizational capacity and structure, board capacity, diversity of funding sources, and focus and discipline.

Strategic Focus

A new mission, vision, and core values were developed as well as five strategic focus areas.

Mission - The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is dedicated to connecting people to the natural world by providing engaging guest experiences, exceptional animal care, and unparalleled conservation education.

Vision - Rosamond Gifford Zoo provides its guests “the best day ever,” ensuring experiences that excite, memories that endure, and knowledge that inspires worldwide conservation.
Executive Summary: Core Values, Strategic Goals

Core Values

**Animal Welfare:** We value animal well-being above all else

**Fun:** Fun is a gateway for learning and essential for a healthy workforce

**Sustainability:** We make wise choices in our practices and educate our guests to conserve

**Exceeding Standards:** We go above and beyond in all we do

**Integrity, Honesty, Trust:** We model these values for our guests, our business associates, the community and each other

**Diversity and Inclusion:** We believe that inclusion of all perspectives will enrich our workplace and help our Zoo grow and prosper

Strategic Goals

Five strategic goals were developed:

1. Enliven the Zoo Experience
2. Continually improve the Zoo’s facilities and grounds
3. Develop a more robust sustainability and conservation program
4. Position the Rosamond Gifford Zoo as a regional destination
5. Develop an effective and enduring governance model

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Rosamond Gifford Zoo Strategic Master Plan; April 2014
Executive Summary:
Master Plan Focus, Recommendations

Master Plan Focus

Master planning activities included a review of site, facilities, and adjacent land, along with numerous design workshops with key Board and staff, and concluded with concepts for exciting new exhibits and flow that make best use of the Zoo’s site and viewscapes. Site analysis included the following elements and yielded a 20-year “big picture” vision for the Zoo that integrated strategic goals and business recommendations:

- Traffic, circulation
- Parking/entry areas
- Visitor amenities
- Administrative and operations facilities
- Exhibits
- Site characteristics
- Site vegetation

Recommendations for master plan initiatives included a mix of long term, near term, and “quick success” projects that would re-energize the Zoo experience, take maximum advantage of its beautiful site, advance the conservation and education mission, generate revenue, improve guest amenities, and address AZA topics and ensure animal well-being.

Priority Projects (5-7 Years) Major project recommendations in the near term:

- African Savanna
- Gibbon/Asian Small-clawed Otter
- Elephant Pool/Theater
- Animal Health Center

“Quick Wins” for consideration in the immediate future:

- Temporary/seasonal exhibit
- Zip line/adventure course
- Kids play areas
- Animal/guest interactions

Future Development Long term initiatives might include:

- Parking, wayfinding
- Guest Entry
- Circulation
- Retail
- Guest Amenities
- Guest Experiences, Education

3--Rosamond Gifford Zoo Strategic Master Plan; April 2014
### Mission
The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is dedicated to connecting people to the natural world by providing engaging guest experiences, exceptional animal care and unparalleled conservation education.

### Vision
Rosamond Gifford Zoo provides its guests the “Best Day Ever,” ensuring experiences that excite, memories that endure, and knowledge that inspires worldwide conservation.

### Our core values
support our mission and guide our business practices and daily operations: animal welfare, fun, sustainability, exceeding standards, integrity/honesty/trust, and diversity/inclusion

### Strategic Focus Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoo Experience</th>
<th>Facilities and Grounds</th>
<th>Sustainability-Conservation</th>
<th>Regional Destination</th>
<th>Governance</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
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<td>1. Add more opportunities for engagement</td>
<td>1. Implement Master Plan improvement priorities</td>
<td>1. Capitalize on the region’s sustainability plans; establish the Zoo as a showcase</td>
<td>1. Highlight the Zoo’s appeal as a regional attraction for families and other audiences</td>
<td>1. Develop long range plan for most effective governance model</td>
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<td>2. Develop lifelong learning initiative</td>
<td>2. Create a plan for entry building and indoor exhibits</td>
<td>2. Partner with regional leaders on collaborative programs which maximize the Zoo’s strengths and audience</td>
<td>2. Improve Zoo access including wayfinding, signage</td>
<td>2. Begin developing relationships and leadership with governance model in mind</td>
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<td>4. Create improved guest entry</td>
<td>4. Develop and implement comprehensive interpretive plan</td>
<td>4. Increase education and awareness around conservation</td>
<td>4. Begin trial efforts to attract other geographic markets, particularly to the east of the Zoo</td>
<td>4. Identify new and diversified sources of support</td>
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<td>5. Develop animal-guest oriented revenue generation opportunities</td>
<td>5. Create a botanical plan</td>
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### Master Plan Concepts

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<td><strong>Kids’ play areas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Elephant pool</strong></td>
<td><strong>Animal interactions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Guest amenities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Improved entry</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Improved entry, circulation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Horticultural enhancements</strong></td>
<td><strong>Enhanced interpretation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Improved indoor exhibits</strong></td>
<td><strong>Major new exhibits</strong></td>
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<td><strong>New exhibits, interpretation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Animal Health Center</strong></td>
<td><strong>Education space</strong></td>
<td><strong>Guest-animal interactions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Model sustainability projects, interpretation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Improved wayfinding, signage to Zoo; enhanced “gateway” to Burnet park</strong></td>
<td><strong>Expanded parking</strong></td>
<td><strong>“Signature” major exhibits (Elephants, Savanna, Otters/Gibbons)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Administrative, operations space to accommodate new model</strong></td>
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Conclusion

During the past 10 years, the Zoo has made great strides in creating a high-quality facility, attractive exhibits and a top-notch experience. Through investment by the County and the success of the Friends of the Zoo — both in operations and capital fundraising — the Zoo has established a solid foundation for growth. The time is right to take the Zoo to the next level—adding that margin of excellence that will truly distinguish the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.

A compelling vision has been laid out to chart the next round of improvements with the first projects already identified. With the “can do” attitude found both at the Zoo and the support of the Zoo’s many stakeholders, innovative exhibit ideas can move from paper to reality.

This is a time of great excitement for the Zoo, yet one that will require the leadership and support of many — the Friends and Zoo staff and leadership, the Board, the County and other community stakeholders. It is only with everyone working together that this vision can be realized.

Next Steps

The conclusion of the strategic master planning process is the beginning of an exciting journey of implementation—making the plan real, seeing results, and celebrating success. Next steps for the Zoo might include completing the action plans for each goal/objective; further development of exhibit, attractions, and facilities concepts (5-7 year priorities and “quick successes”); creation of interpretive and botanical plans; and advancing the conversation on governance.

With the success of the current operating model, and the strong partnership between the County and the Friends, both groups are in an ideal position to begin further exploring a shift in governance. To take a shift in governance to the next step, a facilitated joint-planning initiative should be undertaken within the next 18 months.

Zoo Advisors LLC and GLMVZoos wishes to thank the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo and Onondaga County for the opportunity to join them in envisioning an exciting future for the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.