



City of New Bedford
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor



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PRESS RELEASE

New Master Plan Unveiled for Buttonwood Park Zoo

New Bedford, Massachusetts- Mayor Jon Mitchell, Buttonwood Park Zoo Director Keith Lovett, BPZoological Society members and the community gathered at the Buttonwood Park Zoo this morning for the unveiling of a master plan for the long-term redevelopment of New Bedford's 124 year-old zoo.

The 12-15 year plan details improvements and renovations of the zoo in three 4-5 year phases. Phase 1, part of which is already under construction, includes an enlarged habitat for the Zoo's two Asian Elephants and a complete overhaul of the Aquatics Environment Center. The new Aquatics Environment Center is scheduled to open in the spring of 2017 and will include dozens of forest and ocean species from around the world.

Mayor Mitchell said, "New Bedford residents and visitors from around the region have been enjoying our zoo for more than a century and the zoo is an important cultural asset for this community. The master plan unveiled today utilizes the existing zoo footprint and employs a phased redevelopment of the zoo that will enhance visitor experience and offer families a meaningful connection with animals, nature, and the environment."

Zoo Director Keith Lovett said, "Since the last renovation at the turn of the century the Zoo and Zoological Society staff has worked diligently to create institutional excellence. The master plan will continue that work and we are excited to become a more globally focused and connected zoo in the future."

Other Phase 1 projects anticipated to be completed within the next five years include an Endangered Asia area of the zoo which will allow guests to be immersed in the naturalistic habitats of tigers, snow leopards, Amur leopards, red pandas and many endangered bird, reptile and amphibian species.

Lovett said, "The Zoo's ability to provide the highest quality of care for a species, a species' ability to thrive in our temperate climate, and its status as either threatened or endangered were factors considered when we selected the new species to be incorporated at the zoo. The Zoo will continue to actively work to raise awareness of our endangered species and will also do its part to help conserve them in the wild."

Additional Phase 1 projects include the renovation of the existing Wildlife Education Center and Bear's Den Café into a "Great Lodge." The Great Lodge will significantly expand the Zoo's food service programs and will offer diners at the new restaurant up close views of the North American bison habitat. Great Lodge will also serve as a unique event rental space unlike anywhere else in the region.

Other plan highlights include the transformation of the Buttonwood Farm to the Nature Connection Education Center which will include classrooms for educational programming, an indoor-outdoor- nature play area, a wildlife amphitheater and an Animal Ambassador building for the Zoo's many education animals.

Lovett said the total cost to implement all phases of the zoo's master plan is in the area of \$22 million and will be funded by a combination of public and private dollars. Private funds have already been raised to complete the enhanced Aquatic Environment Center and a mix of public and private dollars have been secured for the initial phases of the Nature Play Education Center.

Projects included in Phase Two and Three of the plan call for a new South American section that will provide homes for jaguars and giant anteaters, expanded North American Plains' section that will create a new habitats for American black bears and prairie dogs, and upgrades of the Zoo's otter and harbor seal habitats. Additionally, the Zoo will be improving its guest entrance, creating a dedicated children's village around the carousel, and significantly expanding its botanical program throughout the entire ten acre campus.

Lovett stated in regard to the master plan, "The Zoo's future is very bright and we are dedicated to making the Buttonwood Park Zoo the place where the community comes to spend time with family and learn about wildlife and how to become a more environmentally responsible community member."

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