

## Communication from Public

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**Comments for Public Posting:** Despite its name the Zoo Vision Plan appears to be irrationally blind to the irony that it seeks to encroach into Griffith Park, one of the city's last-remaining patches of still-intact nature, in its proposed expansion. The plan rehashes a 19th century rationale of running roughshod over the delicate, ecological complex of our unique California biome to superimpose landscaping, construction, agriculture and production, which are implied to be an "improvement" over nature. When zoo director Denise Verret calls Griffith Park an "undeveloped area" she unabashedly uses the same wording that greedy 19th century real-estate developers did as they sought to turn land into coin. She is reproducing the same cultural legacy that praises relentless growth—heedless of nature's sanctity and balance—that has eradicated millions of acres of native, deep-rooted trees and vegetation. Los Angeles today faces climate, wildfire, and drought catastrophes as a cumulative result of a century of eviscerating indigenous nature in the name of "development." To not connect the fiery conflagrations for which California is now world-famous with this legacy of nature erasure and distortion, is to exist in a blinkered propaganda bubble. Residents of the city fully recognize the danger resulting from destroying nature, it shows up in the impaired lungs of their children. As well, the City of LA today is peddling the same grandiose narratives used in the racist history of land seizures and community evictions to build outsized stadiums (e.g., Dodger Stadium). The unselfconscious rhetoric about expanding the LA Zoo into a "world-class destination" is yet another example. The Bureau of Engineering plans betray a textbook case of prestige-seeking, as if power were projected by the size and scale of monuments and buildings. In reality, this proposed 20-year project in 7 phases would boil down to another gimcrack amusement park with vast paved parking lots, additional roads, a "funicular", and construction of various visitor's services. The recommendations for expanding the zoo are put forward by the same Department in charge of managing the zoo. This conflict of interest taints the entire remit—the Zoo Department is invested in perpetuating, if not expanding, its own budgetary commitments. Both options put forward by the Department of the Zoo to grow the zoo have negative consequences for the City's residents, its air quality, traffic congestion, and quality of

experience of visitors. Going from 1.8 million to 3 million visitors a year, demolition of existing buildings, installation of new facilities, new road connectors are no small impact on Griffith Park's trees, wildlife, and its surrounding traffic. Both development alternatives include expanding vehicular traffic in the park, and impact priceless native woodland habitat. To claim alongside the zoo expansion proposal, that Los Angeles is (1) a global biodiversity hot spot, and (2) a "global leader" in climate change mitigation measures sounds schizophrenic. This zoo expansion proposal runs counter to the implications of documents on biodiversity and climate impacts mitigation laid out by (other departments of) the city itself. In this contradiction is the tragedy of inertia, as the city's bureaucratic machinery grinds on inside administrative silos and entrenched budgets whose overriding logic is wedded to a values framework that upholds forever-growth and expansion as "good". In this contradiction is also the tragedy of timid leaders afraid of challenging the legacy processes for new terms and strategies that befit the future that lies before us. Why would the City of Los Angeles cling to past distortions and their resulting dystopia, rather than step into strategies for a saner future? The champions of this zoo "development" are no wise forward-looking captains steering us into the existential storms of climate instability, they are shrill salesmen of a model of "advancement" long-past its expiry date. The City Council would be doing grievous harm to its residents, human and nonhuman, by rubberstamping a proposal to destroy swaths of Griffith Park's natural heritage. We want to ensure a livable future with old mature trees, intact in Griffith Park. We uphold the "priceless, inherent good" of nature. Under the "No Project Alternative", our precious trees would be protected, and our City will remain livable into the future.