

(\$ in thousands)

Project Title	Rank	Fund	Project Requests for State Funds			Gov's Rec	Gov's Planning Estimates	
			2024	2026	2028	2024	2026	2028
Animal Hospital	1	GO	35,000	0	0	0	0	0
Asset Preservation	2	GO	10,000	10,000	10,000	4,089	4,089	4,089
Total Project Requests			45,000	10,000	10,000	4,089	4,089	4,089
General Obligation Bonds (GO) Total			45,000	10,000	10,000	4,089	4,089	4,089

<http://www.mnzoo.org/>

AT A GLANCE

- A world-class conservation organization that is home to nearly 5,000 animals —many endangered
- 485-acre campus with 125 buildings and related facilities
- Nearly 1.3 million guests in FY22
- Home of the Treetop Trail, the world’s longest elevated pedestrian loop offering a year-round accessible journey into nature for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities
- The state’s largest environmental educator, serving over 70,500 participants in FY22
- More than 64,000 free admissions to Minnesotans who qualify for public assistance programs through the “Free to Explore” admission program in FY22

PURPOSE

The mission of the Minnesota Zoological Garden (Minnesota Zoo or Zoo) is ***to connect people, animals, and the natural world to save wildlife.***

The Minnesota Zoo is an expansive environmental marvel with a campus including 125 buildings, 6.5 miles of roads, and 3.5 miles of pathways within nearly 500 acres of picturesque woodland and aquatic landscapes. Housing nearly 5,000 animals—including many threatened and endangered species from around the world—the Zoo is the state’s largest environmental learning center and a leader in wildlife conservation.

The Zoo provides engaging and hands-on learning and play opportunities for children to experience Minnesota’s native environment through amenities like the Hanifl Family Wild Woods and Woodland Adventure. Zoo guests can also learn about the natural world around the globe while visiting cutting-edge exhibits such as Discovery Bay, 3M Penguins of the African Coast, Medtronic Minnesota Trail, Tropics Trail, Northern Trail, Wells Fargo Family Farm, and Russia’s Grizzly Coast. Opened in 2023, the 1.25-mile Treetop Trail brings guests up to 32 feet above the ground and provides a year-round, accessible journey into nature for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. These experiences are designed to be intentional about building a bridge for collectively appreciating the treasures that Minnesota’s natural environment has to offer, as well as building awareness of global conservation issues.

The Zoo is ardently committed and actively engaged in saving wildlife and protecting the ecosystems upon which they rely in Minnesota and around the world. Minnesota Zoo experts use science, in partnership with other state and federal agencies, to focus on the reintroduction of the state’s most imperiled butterflies and the restoration of the prairieland they need to survive. Additional current conservation initiatives focus on threatened aquatic turtles, restoring native endangered freshwater mussels, and reintroducing wild bison herds onto Minnesota lands. Its international conservation efforts through the renowned black rhino project, reintroduction of Asian wild horses, and championing tiger conservation for decades led to the Minnesota Zoo’s recognition as a catalyst for wildlife conservation.

As a leading environmental education institution, the Minnesota Zoo has long offered a wide variety of expertly created educational and interpretive programming designed to build understanding and respect for nature and empower students to become change agents for protecting wildlife and wild places. In FY22, 78,861 students enjoyed educational programming offered through in-person and virtual community programs, school/youth group field trips, and classes. Also, over 700 in-person and virtual Summer Zoo Camp participants received age-appropriate professional education, animal encounters, special zoo experiences, active games, and tours in FY22.

Leveraging its proven environmental education model, the Minnesota Zoo continues to reimagine and offer new educational opportunities. The Zoo’s “Show Us Your Mussels” campaign inspires middle and high school students to create original digital media campaigns to educate the public about the importance of native mussels, their impact to water quality, and what actions are needed to ensure their survival. In 2023, the Minnesota Zoo successfully opened a licensed nature-based preschool with curriculum aimed to connect kids with nature by encouraging their innate affinity for the outdoors through dramatic play, art, stories, songs, and animal encounters.

- The Minnesota Zoo continues to prioritize diversity, equity, access, and inclusion initiatives so that a zoo experience is never limited due to economic, cultural, physical, geographic, or other barriers. During FY23 more than 10,000 school students from throughout the state received reduced or free zoo admission when attending a zoo field trip. Also, 94,276 guests accessed the Zoo through the “Free to Explore” program, which ensures Zoo admission is free for Minnesotans who qualify for public assistance programs. The Zoo recently expanded the outreach of this program, which now is available to participants of 16 public assistance programs.
- Furthermore, the Zoo offers a variety of programs which serve communities with special and differing needs. Recent examples include: American Sign Language (ASL) days at the Zoo, Dream Night for children with chronic healthcare needs, early access to special events for those requiring a less crowded and stimulating environment, autism camps, as well as [MNZoo4All](#), an app to help people with autism and sensory-processing disorders navigate the Zoo in ways that best meet their needs. The Zoo bridges additional access barriers by providing ASL interpreters, sighted guides, tactile and virtual tours upon request.

STRATEGIES

The following strategies guide the Zoo’s operations and capital investments:

1. People First: continuously strive to be an inclusive, equitable team that supports the Zoo’s mission and reflects changing communities while prioritizing people’s well-being and safety.
2. Advance Animal Care, Health and Conservation: as an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, continue to model best practices in animal care and welfare while growing the impact of our efforts to conserve at-risk wildlife species in Minnesota and beyond.
3. Serve Minnesota: provide a world-class and educational experience to people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities by continuously reducing barriers to access
4. Connect People to Nature: leverage the natural beauty of the Zoo’s campus including the newly opened Treetop Trail to provide immersive experiences that bring people in close connection to nature
5. Reimagine the Zoo Experience: continually evolve and expand the Zoo’s offerings to reach new audiences, serve the needs of our community, and showcase the Zoo as a portal into nature in all seasons
6. Sustainable Business Model: diversify revenue streams, maximize revenue growth, and maintain sound financial and operational management to support the Zoo’s mission for years to come

See Minnesota Statutes Chapter 85A (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=85A>) for an overview of the Minnesota Zoo’s purpose, organization and authority.

AT A GLANCE

The following strategies guide the Zoo's operations and capital investments:

1. **People First:** continuously strive to be an inclusive, equitable team that supports the Zoo's mission and reflects changing communities while prioritizing people's well-being and safety.
2. **Advance Animal Care, Health and Conservation:** as an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, continue to model best practices in animal care and welfare while growing the impact of our efforts to conserve at-risk wildlife species in Minnesota and beyond.
3. **Serve Minnesota:** provide a world-class and educational experience to people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities by continuously reducing barriers to access.
4. **Connect People to Nature:** leverage the natural beauty of the Zoo's campus including the newly opened Treetop Trail to provide immersive experiences that bring people in close connection to nature.
5. **Reimagine the Zoo Experience:** continually evolve and expand the Zoo's offerings to reach new audiences, serve the needs of our community, and showcase the Zoo as a portal into nature in all seasons.
6. **Sustainable Business Model:** diversify revenue streams, maximize revenue growth, and maintain sound financial and operational management to support the Zoo's mission for years to come.

The Zoo's capital priorities are determined against these strategic goals. The priority projects are designed to:

- meet the maintenance needs of a 45-year-old facility.
- enhance the guest experience to keep the Zoo on a financially sustainable path.
- ensure quality animal care and welfare standards for the next 45-years.

The Zoo's capital plan leverages private funding sources whenever possible, in line with the Zoo's business model of being a public/private partnership.

Factors Impacting Facilities or Capital Programs

Major factors impacting the Minnesota Zoo's facility and capital projects are:

- **An aging facility.** Minnesota's "New Zoo" is over 45 years old. The Zoo has increasing repair needs to maintain the existing site. Such repairs and investments are essential to the safety, security, and well-being of the Zoo's 1.3 million annual guests and 5,000 animals. Maintaining the Zoo's site is also essential to the Zoo's business in meeting guest expectations.
- **Guest expectations.** Over half of the Zoo's operating revenue comes from earned income sources such as admissions, membership, and education programs. To maintain and grow these revenues, the Zoo must meet increasing guest expectations for exhibit quality, new technology, guest amenities, and animal care. Our guests expect to have extraordinary, new experiences when they visit the Zoo. The Zoo's priority capital projects are chosen with these guest expectations in mind.
- **Animal care and welfare standards.** Standards for animal care and welfare have evolved and increased in the 45 years since the Zoo was built. As a result, some of the Zoo's facilities do not meet current animal care standards. Priority capital projects such as the remodeling of our current animal hospital are designed to bring the Zoo facility up to current standards.

Self-Assessment of Agency Facilities and Assets

The Minnesota Zoo has recently completed a full Facilities Conditions Assessment (FCA) of the Zoo site, which has identified over \$57 million in asset preservation needs throughout the site. Of that total amount, around 28% are found in buildings or structures that are in crisis or poor conditions. This assessment is used in setting priorities for large capital and maintenance projects.

Agency Process for Determining Capital Requests

Zoo management prioritizes capital requests based on the strategic and master plans. This fall, the Zoo will embark upon a stakeholder-inclusive process to develop a new Strategic Plan and revised master plan toolkit to guide the Zoo's capital projects for the next ten years.

The Minnesota Zoo Board has fiduciary responsibility for the Zoo and approves the capital project priorities through its oversight and approval of the Zoo's strategic and master plans.

Major Capital Projects Authorized in 2022 and 2023

In 2023, The Zoo was appropriated \$18.025 million for major capital projects, including:

- \$1.225 million to plan and design a new animal hospital to replace the Zoo's 48-year-old obsolete animal hospital.
- \$16.8 million for asset preservation projects such as replacement of the Lakeside Plaza infrastructure including the stairs and ramp to the upper plaza; and to design, construct, furnish and equip the renovation of related animal holding and mechanical spaces.

Animal Hospital

AT A GLANCE**2024 Request Amount:** \$35,000**Priority Ranking:** 1

Project Summary: Provide for modern veterinary technology and best animal care practices by building a new animal hospital at the Minnesota Zoo. Address significant risks that exist in the current animal hospital built in 1975, which the Zoo has outgrown caring for more than 5,000 animals representing 500 species. Meet current and anticipated future standards of animal care while supporting expanded partnerships to advance STEM education, scientific research, and the veterinary medical profession.

Project Description

This project will provide for modern veterinary technology and best animal care practices by building a new animal hospital at the Minnesota Zoo that incorporates:

- an ambulance bay for safe animal transport;
- an intensive care unit for small and large animals housed at the Zoo;
- an animal surgical suite and aseptic holding facilities for large animal species;
- modern radiology capabilities;
- conference and education programmatic space for visiting veterinarians, school children and Zoo guests through facilitated programs and experiences;
- medical equipment storage area;
- dedicated nutrition and pharmacy spaces; and
- improved biosecurity control measures and patient isolation capacity.

Project Rationale

The Zoo's animal hospital, built in 1975, predates the opening of the Zoo. The complexity, technology, tools, knowledge and expertise of veterinary medicine and its practitioners—like human health—have significantly advanced over four decades. The Zoo has outgrown its hospital space caring for more than 5,000 animals representing 500 species. There is an increased necessity to care for the animal collection at a more advanced level than the current facility allows. We must meet current and anticipate future standards of care for the animals at the Zoo by building a new animal hospital to meet the challenges facing us today and into the future.

This project addresses significant risks that exist within the current hospital:

- Safety hazards for both animals and humans

- Inadequate HVAC and plumbing systems
- Outdated electrical services
- Need to maintain compliance with evolving laws and standards of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), US Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, our accrediting authority

The Minnesota Zoo is uniquely positioned to serve Minnesota including expanded partnerships with:

- accredited zoos and wildlife rehabilitation centers in Minnesota working partnership with the Zoo;
- the veterinary medical profession via teaching and post-graduate training with university and academic partners;
- the veterinary medical industry through research and scientific advancement;
- STEM educators throughout Minnesota via access to virtual and onsite classroom education;
- partnerships with Minnesota-based human health partners to champion "One Health" for our state; and
- guests and the broader community through facilitated programs and curated tours.

Project Timeline

Predesign – completed by October 2023

Design – complete during calendar year 2024

Construction – complete within two years of receiving full project funding

Other Considerations

Due to disruption of Zoo operations and adequate animal holding spaces and animal wellbeing, this project is not scalable.

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

This project supports a sustainable business model by ensuring appropriate preventive and acute veterinary care for the Zoo's animal collection in a hospital environment that is safe and efficient for veterinary staff. The Zoo funds the majority of its operating costs through earned and contributed revenue sources such as admissions, membership, program fees, and private donations.

Description of Previous Appropriations

\$1,225,000 in FY2023 to design a new or renovated animal hospital building at the Minnesota Zoological Garden

Project Contact Person

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Legislative Relations

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Governor's Recommendation

The Governor does not recommend capital funding for this request.

(\$ in thousands)

Animal Hospital

PROJECT FUNDING SOURCES

Funding Source	Prior Years	FY 2024	FY 2026	FY 2028
State Funds Appropriated and Requested				
General Obligation Bonds	\$ 1,225	\$ 35,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
State Funds Pending				
Non-State Funds Already Committed				
Non-State Funds Pending				
TOTAL	\$ 1,225	\$ 35,000	\$ 0	\$ 0

TOTAL PROJECT COSTS

Cost Category	Prior Years	FY 2024	FY 2026	FY 2028
Property Acquisition	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Predesign Fees	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Design Fees	\$ 0	\$ 1,275	\$ 0	\$ 0
Project Management	\$ 0	\$ 400	\$ 0	\$ 0
Construction	\$ 0	\$ 30,705	\$ 0	\$ 0
Relocation Expenses	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
One Percent for Art	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Occupancy Costs	\$ 0	\$ 2,620	\$ 0	\$ 0
Inflationary Adjustment	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
TOTAL	\$ 0	\$ 35,000	\$ 0	\$ 0

IMPACT ON STATE OPERATING COSTS

Cost Category	FY 2024	FY 2026	FY 2028
IT Costs	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Operating Budget Impact (\$)	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Operating Budget Impact (FTE)	0.0	0.0	0.0

SOURCE OF FUNDS FOR DEBT SERVICE PAYMENTS

	Amount	Percent of Total
General Fund	\$ 35,000	100 %
User Financing	\$ 0	0 %

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements will apply to projects after adoption of the bonding bill.

Is this project exempt from legislative review under M.S. 16B.335 subd. 1a?	Yes
Predesign Review (M.S. 16B.335 subd. 3):	
Does this request include funding for predesign?	N/A
Has the predesign been submitted to the Department of Administration?	N/A
Has the predesign been approved by the Department of Administration?	N/A
Will the project design meet the Sustainable Building Guidelines under M.S. 16B.325?	Yes
Will the project designs meet applicable requirements and guidelines for energy conservation and alternative energy sources (M.S. 16B.335 subd. 4 and 16B.32)?	Yes
Have Information Technology Review Preconditions been met (M.S. 16B.335 subd. 5 & 6)?	Yes
Will the project comply with the targeted group purchasing requirement (M.S. 16C.16 subd. 13)?	Yes
Will the project meet public ownership requirements (M.S. 16A.695)?	Yes
Will a use agreement be required (M.S. 16A.695 subd. 2)?	N/A
Will program funding be reviewed and ensured (M.S. 16A.695 subd. 5)?	Yes
Will the matching funds requirements be met (M.S. 16A.86 subd. 4)?	N/A
Will the project be fully encumbered prior to the Cancellation Deadline (M.S. 16A.642): December 31, 2028?	Yes
M.S. 16A.502 and M.S. 16B.31 (2): Full Funding Required	Yes
M.S. 473.4485: Guideway Project	
Is this a Guideway Project?	N/A
Is the required information included in this request?	N/A

Asset Preservation

AT A GLANCE

2024 Request Amount:	\$10,000
Priority Ranking:	2
Project Summary:	Asset preservation to maintain the Minnesota Zoo’s nearly 50 year-old, 485-acre campus. Routine asset preservation appropriations are vital to maintaining this beloved state asset for future generations of Zoo guests.

Project Description

Minnesota’s “new zoo” is nearly 50 years old, and the campus is aging rapidly. Priorities for asset preservation during the next biennium include:

- replacement skylights and reflectors in the Tropics building to ensure appropriate lighting conditions for animals and plants;
- repair or replacement of masonry and roofs to prevent further deterioration of the Zoo’s oldest buildings;
- replacement of deteriorated bridge decking and safety railings to prevent dangerous falls for pedestrians and vehicles;
- upgrades to obsolete monitoring and control systems for HVAC and life support systems to prevent hazardous conditions;
- replacement of obsolete automatic door and storefront window systems to provide safe, secure, and reliable egress;
- accessibility improvements in restrooms to meet evolving standards and ensure the Zoo is welcoming to all;
- an assessment and pre-design of the campus heat plant and generation systems to inform long-term facilities planning to ensure a continuous supply of quality power;
- extending the useful life of animal exhibits through substantial renovation to meet evolving welfare standards and address staff safety issues; and
- renovate deteriorated asphalt in parking lots and pedestrian and vehicle pathways to reduce maintenance costs and improve safety.

Project Rationale

Asset preservation allows the Minnesota Zoo to remain a safe, secure, and world-class destination for people of all ages and abilities. The Minnesota Zoo operates on the scale of a small city, with 485 acres of land, 125 buildings, its own heat plant and backup generators, 6.5 miles of roads, 48 acres of parking lots, and 25 miles of fencing. Animal exhibits and holding facilities require complex air handling and life support systems to ensure animal welfare. Significant investment is needed each

year for the Zoo to remain fresh and relevant.

Project Timeline

Asset preservation funding will be spent during the four-year timeframe of the appropriation.

Other Considerations

None

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

Asset preservation projects support a sustainable business model for the Minnesota Zoo. More efficient building systems reduce utility and repair bills. Timely infrastructure improvements prevent costly failures and downtime. Renovating and retrofitting existing spaces makes staff more efficient and improves the guest experience – both of which are vital to generating revenue and controlling costs. The majority the Zoo’s operating budget is earned through admissions, membership, education, and contributions. Supporting a positive guest experience through maintaining the Zoo’s campus is essential to the Zoo’s continued operation.

Description of Previous Appropriations

2023 - \$16.8 million total of which \$15.12 million is for lakeside plaza replacement

2020 - \$13 million total of which \$11 million is for Treetop Trail

2018 - \$6 million

2017 - \$4 million

2014 - \$7 million

Project Contact Person

Missy McGrath

Legislative Relations

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Governor's Recommendation

The Governor recommends \$4.089 million in general obligation bonds for this request. Also included are budget estimates of \$4.089 million for each planning period for 2026 and 2028.

(\$ in thousands)

Asset Preservation

PROJECT FUNDING SOURCES

Funding Source	Prior Years	FY 2024	FY 2026	FY 2028
State Funds Appropriated and Requested				
General Obligation Bonds	\$ 35,800	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
State Funds Pending				
Non-State Funds Already Committed				
Non-State Funds Pending				
TOTAL	\$ 35,800	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000

TOTAL PROJECT COSTS

Cost Category	Prior Years	FY 2024	FY 2026	FY 2028
Property Acquisition	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Predesign Fees	\$ 0	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 200
Design Fees	\$ 0	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ 200
Project Management	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Construction	\$ 0	\$ 9,600	\$ 9,600	\$ 9,600
Relocation Expenses	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
One Percent for Art	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Occupancy Costs	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Inflationary Adjustment	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
TOTAL	\$ 0	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000

IMPACT ON STATE OPERATING COSTS

Cost Category	FY 2024	FY 2026	FY 2028
IT Costs	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Operating Budget Impact (\$)	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Operating Budget Impact (FTE)	0.0	0.0	0.0

SOURCE OF FUNDS FOR DEBT SERVICE PAYMENTS

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Have Information Technology Review Preconditions been met (M.S. 16B.335 subd. 5 & 6)?	N/A
Will the project comply with the targeted group purchasing requirement (M.S. 16C.16 subd. 13)?	Yes
Will the project meet public ownership requirements (M.S. 16A.695)?	Yes
Will a use agreement be required (M.S. 16A.695 subd. 2)?	N/A
Will program funding be reviewed and ensured (M.S. 16A.695 subd. 5)?	Yes
Will the matching funds requirements be met (M.S. 16A.86 subd. 4)?	N/A
Will the project be fully encumbered prior to the Cancellation Deadline (M.S. 16A.642): December 31, 2028?	Yes
M.S. 16A.502 and M.S. 16B.31 (2): Full Funding Required	Yes
M.S. 473.4485: Guideway Project	
Is this a Guideway Project?	N/A
Is the required information included in this request?	N/A