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Arts, Parks, Health, Education, and Neighborhoods Committee
Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

April 4, 2022

Re: **Los Angeles Zoo CF 21-0828 Support for Alternative 1**

Honorable Councilmembers:

The Hillside Federation, founded in 1952 and representing 46 resident and homeowner associations spanning the Santa Monica Mountains, reviewed the Los Angeles Zoo's Vision Plan EIR at its February 15, 2022 meeting and voted to support Alternative 1.

The Zoo is located at the eastern end of the Santa Monica Mountains and entirely within Griffith Park. The Zoo's Vision Plan proposes a 23-acre expansion on its site which is totally contrary to its mission to preserve wilderness and wildlife. It is also contrary to 30 by 30, the city, state and national goal to preserve 30% of our native habitat by the year 2030. The Zoo's plan goes in the opposite direction; it would *destroy* 23 acres of native habitat. But most ironic of all are its proposal to destroy 16.1 acres of real California native habitat in order to create an artificial California habitat complete with a vineyard on a steep slope and the proposed blasting of a 60-foot deep canyon to create a rock climbing wall. Only 35% of the destroyed native habitat would be used for animal care; the rest would be used for visitor attractions such as restaurants and event centers.

The proposed Vision Plan also violates the City's Protected Tree Ordinance. It would remove 224 protected oaks and walnuts along with the understory of native plants. Mitigating this loss is nearly impossible as it takes 50 to 70 years to replace a mature oak tree.

The Zoo's proposed increase in attendance also would bring with it an increase in traffic. The Zoo exit from the northbound I-5 freeway already creates mile-long backups on the northbound I-5 on Easter, Mother's Day, special events days, and any sunny Sunday. The Zoo does nothing to mitigate the traffic congestion.

The Zoo's own EIR identified a solution to these problems – Alternative 1 Reduced Project Alternative. According to the Zoo's own analysis in its EIR, Alternative 1 is the environmentally superior alternative. It also allows the Zoo to achieve almost all of its goals. Alternative 1 would not remove any protected trees. It would require no additional brush clearance. It would not build the 17,000-sq. ft. California Visitor Center and restaurant, nor the 60-foot deep Condor Canyon, nor the funicular, nor the universally rejected multi-level parking structure.

The Zoo can achieve its main goals under Alternative 1. There is plenty of room within its existing footprint to upgrade animal welfare and care and to build all the proposed sustainability features. It can be a world-class zoo, dedicated, as zoos of the future must be, to research, to education and to the conservation of endangered animals from around the globe—and, of equal importance, the ones that we are so fortunate to have right here in our beautiful Santa Monica Mountains back yard. It can, in short, be a zoo and not an amusement park, a truly *great* zoo that makes appropriate use of its very special location. And it can accomplish all of these goals for a much smaller price tag than the \$650 million for its initial Vision Plan.

The Hillside Federation therefore recommends that the Los Angeles Zoo adopt Alternative 1 as its Vision Plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charley Mims". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charley Mims

cc: Mayor Eric Garcetti
CM Nithya Raman
Councilmembers
Carol Armstrong