

**SPRINGFIELD COMMUNITY PRESERVATION  
FULL APPLICATION COVER SHEET**

**I. PROJECT INFORMATION**

CPA program area - check all that apply:

☐ community housing      ☐ historic preservation      ☐ open space      ☐ recreation

Project/Program Title:

Brief Project/Program Summary:

estimated start date: \_\_\_\_\_ estimated completion date: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. APPLICANT INFORMATION**

Type of Applicant - check one:

☐ City of Springfield      ☐ Non-Profit Organization      ☐ For-Profit Business      ☐ Individual

Name of Organization:

Name of Contact Person:

Mailing Address:

Mailing City/State/Zip:

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email:

Website:

**III. BUDGET SUMMARY**

Estimated Project Budget:

CPA Funding Request:

Will you be seeking multi-year funding      ☐ Yes      ☐ No

CPA Request as Percentage of Total Project/Program Budget:

List Other Secured Funding Sources:

List Other Prospective Funding Sources:

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Springfield Community Preservation Act 2020 Application for Funding**

Grant Category: Open Space & Recreational Land  
Grant Prospect: The Zoo in Forest Park & Education Center

### General Information:

Parcel ID Number: 11280-0460

The Forest Park Zoological Society has a long-term lease in place with The City of Springfield for use of approximately 4.5 acres inside Forest Park. The current contract is valid from 2010 to 2035 (Attachment D).

### Narrative:

#### Project Summary:

The Forest Park Zoological Society is seeking \$250,000 under the Open Space and Recreation portion of the CPA, which supports the renovation of small neighborhood playgrounds and green spaces. Funds received through this program would allow for necessary upgrades in several areas of The Zoo, including renovation of the bathrooms to bring them into ADA compliance, repairs to the structure of the barn, installation of new fencing, re-paving public walkways, updates to the medical clinic, renovating and upgrading animal exhibits, and renovating classroom space to better serve local students. These updates would allow us to better serve the public, and provide more advanced habitats for the animals that call The Zoo their home.

#### Proposal Description:

For 125 years, The Zoo in Forest Park has been serving Springfield, educating people of all ages and providing a safe, happy home for thousands of animals. While The Zoo has undergone many iterations, changes of location, of leadership, of mission and vision, one thing has remained constant – its impact on the community and peoples' imaginations.

One person whose time at The Zoo became literal lore is Theodore Geisel, whose father was The Zoo's third curator. The man who would become Dr. Seuss is reported to have based many of the fantastical creatures he created on the time he spent, and the animals he met, at the Forest Park Zoo.

Today, the torch has been passed to us; it is now our responsibility and our privilege to ensure the continued growth and success of this storied organization.

It has been many years since The Zoo has seen any large-scale improvements. In the late '90s and early '00s, a consulting firm was brought in to offer suggestions and create plans – plans that never made it beyond the conceptual phase.

Today, The Zoo welcomes more than 75,000 visitors each year. It is an asset that creates jobs, promotes tourism, contributes to the culture for young families looking to settle in Springfield, and provides an invaluable environmental and ecological resource in the heart of our city. In 2019, the Greater Springfield Convention & Visitors' Bureau commissioned an independent survey, which showed that The Zoo in Forest Park is the sixth most popular western Massachusetts destination for day visitors, behind only Six Flags, Yankee Candle, the Big E, MGM Springfield and Magic Wings Butterfly Conservancy. For overnight visitors, The Zoo is tied for fourth place with MGM Springfield, behind only Six Flags, Yankee Candle and The Big E.

The Zoo has long been part of the city's fabric, a cherished resource that has served generations of families. Three years ago, the Board of Directors pivoted, shifting away from the traditional zoo model to focus on education, conservation and rehabilitation. Now, more than 90% of the animals that call The Zoo their home are elderly, permanently disabled, injured, orphaned or otherwise deemed non-releasable. The Zoo works with sanctuaries and rescues from as far away as Alaska to identify animals in need and provide a safe, happy, healthy permanent home right here in the heart of our city.

The Zoo is growing in reach and expanding its mission. Our budget increased from \$550,000 in 2017 to \$705,000 in 2020. Attendance numbers also jumped from 45,000 in 2017 to 75,000 in 2019. Our Zoo on the Go educational program reached another 15,000 people, off-site, in 2019. We have established new partnerships with organizations like Square One, Girls, Inc. of the Valley, Massachusetts Fish & Wildlife and the Springfield Museums.

The projects included in this proposal will help bring The Zoo facilities into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, enable continued growth, preserve an important community landmark and allow The Zoo's dedicated staff to continue this important work in a manner reflective of our shared values. It will also provide updated and improved classroom space, allowing The Zoo to expand its relationship with local schools, after school programs and homeschool groups, all of which seek out Zoo resources regularly.

If awarded, the CPA funding would meet the criteria set forth in the CPC Preservation Plan, including:

- Enhancing the essential character of Springfield
- Protecting resources that would be otherwise threatened
- Serving more than one CPA purpose (there are many historical aspects of The Zoo that should be preserved)
- Producing an advantageous cost/benefit value (increased day and overnight visitors to Springfield and Forest Park)
- Utilizing Springfield-based resources for labor and materials whenever possible.

It would restore and protect The Zoo in Forest Park, which has cultural and historical significance within the city. It would help preserve the city's character by enabling this 126-year-old institution to grow and adapt to meet the needs of new generations of Springfield families. The Zoo is a critical part of the city's "urban character," and is the only zoo in Massachusetts to be located in the heart of a major city.

With this funding, and the upgrades we propose, we believe we will be able to increase our membership and attendance by 20%, which results in a greater number of visitors to Springfield's Forest Park and greater potential for out-of-town visitors to spend additional tourism dollars in the city.

#### Feasibility & Sustainability:

It has been many years since The Zoo has seen a major cash infusion for upgrades to the facilities or the grounds. Back in the 1990s and early 2000s, consultants were brought in to create feasibility plans and renderings for proposed upgrades. While not all of those plans remain viable, there are still some opportunities to finally tackle a few of these projects. Each year, the Forest Park Zoological Society Board of Directors budgets between \$12,000 and \$15,000 for repairs and maintenance of the facility. That funding would continue, and be used to maintain all projects completed under this grant program. The grant would be an investment both in The Zoo and in Forest Park, as the land and buildings technically belong to the City of Springfield.

The Zoo funds a full-time, year-round facilities manager, charged with ensuring the upgrades are properly maintained.

Most of the work would be done in the fall/winter of 2020 and spring of 2021 to make sure the work does not interfere with The Zoo's regular season. Typically, The Zoo closes to the public in November; however, it limits its hours to weekends-only in September and October, which would allow us to start some of these capital projects during the week in mid-September.

#### Applicant Experience:

Sarah Tsitso, executive director of The Zoo in Forest Park, has more than 20 years of nonprofit leadership experience. This has included major capital projects, such as gymnasium renovations, pool renovations, exterior renovations, playground construction and roof replacements. In addition, she served as interim executive director for Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity, where she led the team in constructing seven homes in one year for families in need.

Eric Schroder, facilities manager, is a U.S. veteran who has been working at The Zoo for four years. He moved into the full-time facilities manager position approximately 18 months ago.

Emily Bouwer, Zoo curator, has been employed at The Zoo for 12 years. She is trained and experienced in many areas, particularly the creation of animal habitats and structures.

#### Timeline:

July/August 2020 – Obtain quotes for all work

September 2020 – Replace fencing  
Begin barn repairs

October 2020 -	Bathroom upgrades to bring into ADA compliance Continue barn repairs
November 2020 -	Finish bathrooms Finish barn repairs
December 2020 -	Begin creating plans for exhibit upgrades
January 2021 -	Finish plans for exhibit upgrades
February 2021 -	Begin work on med room/health clinic Begin work on Discovery Room classroom
March 2021 -	Finish med room/health clinic Finish Discovery Room classroom Begin exhibit upgrades
April 2021 -	Work on exhibit upgrades Begin paving walkways
May 2021 –	Finish exhibit upgrades Finish paving walkways

### Budget

- Design and Engineering Services - \$5,000
- Construction
  1. Updates and renovations to The Zoo's bathrooms, bringing them into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - \$25,000
  2. Repairs to the barn, including the foundation, which has been compromised by runoff - \$60,000
  3. Updates to med room and clinic, ensuring sanitary conditions for all medical procedures and recovery areas - \$20,000
  4. Grading and re-paving of walkways - \$25,000
  5. Exhibit upgrades/maintenance – \$60,000
  6. Fencing repairs/replacement - \$30,000
  7. Renovation of Discovery Room for use as education center - \$25,000

### Attachments:

- A. Letter of Support from the Springfield Parks Commission
- B. Map
- C. Photographs
- D. Lease agreement
- E. Operating Pro Forma
- F. Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors' Bureau survey results