

			Project Requests for State Funds		
Project Title	Priority Ranking	Funding Source	2026	2028	2030
Asset Preservation	1	GO	\$ 30,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
Animal Hospital	2	GO	\$ 6,675	\$ 0	\$ 0
Total Project Requests			\$ 36,675	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
General Obligation Bonds (GO) Total			\$ 36,675	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000

(\$ in thousands)

## Asset Preservation

**AT A GLANCE****2026 Request Amount:** \$30,000**Priority Ranking:** 1

**Project Summary:** \$30 million in GO bonds for asset preservation to maintain the Minnesota Zoo's nearly 50 year-old, 485-acre campus so it remains a world-class destination for people of all ages and abilities. The Zoo's deferred maintenance includes nearly a third of structures and over half of total square footage rated in crisis or poor condition. Significant investment is needed to mitigate major risks that, if not addressed, will endanger the public, Zoo staff and partners, and the animals in the Zoo's care.

**Project Description**

The Minnesota Zoo is nearly 50 years old, and the campus is rapidly aging. The Minnesota Zoo operates on the scale of a small city, with 485 acres of land, 123 structures, 6.5 miles of roads, 4.75 miles of pathways, 48 acres of parking lots, and 25 miles of fencing. Like a city, the Zoo maintains and operates its own underground utilities such as sewer, water supply, and stormwater systems, as well as its own heat plant and backup generators. Above ground, animal exhibits and holding facilities require complex air handling and life support systems to ensure animal welfare.

Priorities for asset preservation during the next biennium include:

- Overhaul one of two high-pressure hot water boilers powering the Zoo's central heating plant that provides safe temperature conditions for sensitive animal species and for comfort of guests, staff, contractors, and volunteers. The other boiler already failed and was overhauled last summer. The remaining boiler must be overhauled to avoid a similar failure. Both boilers are 45 years old and at industry-recommended end-of-life. The Zoo cannot operate safely through the heating season without both boilers operational.
- Upgrade perimeter and carnivore fencing that is old and increasingly compromised by storm damage. Replacing fences and netting at tiger and leopard exhibits with newer technology is necessary to ensure continued containment of dangerous carnivores. Secure primary and secondary containment fences are required to maintain USDA licensure to exhibit wild animals and keep the public safe. Without this licensure, the Zoo could not remain open to the public.
- Renovations to deteriorating buildings including roof replacement, masonry veneer repair/replacement, and other structural problems to bring numerous buildings from the critical or poor facility condition categories up to fair or better, to ensure the buildings are safe and secure for animals, guests, staff, volunteers, and partners.
- Bridge renovation to replace deteriorated decking and safety railing systems that are beyond their useful life and will soon be unable to sufficiently protect the public from dangerous falls. Particular

areas of focus are bridges over the camel exhibit and the main lake.

- Replace remaining delaminated skylight glass and deteriorated reflector panels on the Tropics Building roof that are past their useful life and pose safety risks.
- Replace mechanical, electrical, plumbing systems, and civil infrastructure that have aged beyond their useful life and are prone to costly and dangerous failures, including water pipes, sewer systems, site lighting, HVAC systems, fire suppression systems, and life support systems, etc.
- Upgrade the obsolete HVAC and life support monitoring and control system that will no longer be supported by the manufacturer. A modern monitoring and control system is vital to ensuring Zoo staff can take action to prevent sudden temperature changes and other hazardous conditions from endangering the lives of animals or causing discomfort for guests, staff, volunteers, and contractors.
- ADA accessibility improvements to address issues identified through accessibility audits and feedback from guests, staff, and volunteers. Renovations to meet current accessibility standards is critical to the Zoo's efforts to be welcoming to all people.
- Extend the useful life of animal exhibits through substantial renovation to meet modern animal welfare standards, address animal and staff safety issues, and improve the viewing experience for guests.
- Replace asphalt and concrete that are past their useful life and pose safety hazards to pedestrians and vehicles and/or allow damaging water intrusion into below-ground building spaces.

### **Project Rationale**

Asset preservation appropriations are vital to maintaining this important state asset for future generations of Zoo guests. According to the recent Facility Condition Assessment Report issued by the Minnesota Department of Administration (2024):

- Zoo facilities rated the third worst in deferred maintenance as a percentage of replacement value among all state agencies managing more than 10,000 sq. feet of building space.
- The Zoo's total deferred maintenance exceeds \$67 million, which is nearly forty percent of the full replacement value of all Zoo facilities.
- Nearly one-third of the Zoo's structures—encompassing more than half the Zoo's square footage—are rated in crisis or poor condition.

Significant asset preservation appropriations are necessary to mitigate major risks that if not addressed will endanger the public, Zoo staff and partners, and the animals in our care.

### **Project Timeline**

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

### **Other Considerations**

#### **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, which are straining Zoo budgets and operations. 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**

2025 - \$2.74 million

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**

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**Animal Hospital****AT A GLANCE****2026 Request Amount:** \$6,675**Priority Ranking:** 2

**Project Summary:** Build a new animal hospital to support modern veterinary technology, best animal care practices, and safer working conditions, replacing the outdated 1975 facility. This critical investment will uphold the Zoo's commitment to animal welfare while advancing STEM education, scientific research, and veterinary medicine through expanded partnerships.

**Project Description**

This urgent project will address critical deficiencies in the Zoo's current facility including lack of biosecurity, risk of animal escapes during transport, and inability to support modern veterinary practices. This project will provide for modern veterinary technology, best animal care practices, and safer, more efficient working conditions by building a new 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;
- facilities to advance STEM education, scientific research, and the veterinary medical profession;
- medical equipment storage area;
- dedicated nutrition and pharmacy spaces; and
- improved biosecurity control and patient isolation capacity.

**Project Rationale**

Built in 1975, the current facility no longer meets modern veterinary standards or the needs of 5,000 animals; a recent study confirmed that building a new hospital is the most effective and cost-efficient solution to ensure high-quality care and support the Zoo's future. The Zoo received \$11M of the \$17.675M of remaining funding needed for a new animal hospital and is requesting the remaining funds of \$6.675M in 2026 to ensure that a complete facility can be built.

**Project Timeline**

Pre-design - completed in August 2024

Design - complete in mid-2026

Construction - complete by end of calendar year 2027

### **Other Considerations**

The Minnesota Zoo Foundation, the Zoo's nonprofit fundraising partner, has launched a private capital campaign to raise matching funds for the animal hospital project. The campaign has already raised \$9.7 million toward total anticipated private support of \$10.8 million for the project. Appropriating state funds is critical to maintain momentum for the private capital campaign.

### **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 2023 to design a new or renovated animal hospital building at the Minnesota Zoological Garden

\$11,000,000 in 2025 to design, construct, furnish, and equip a new animal hospital building at the Minnesota Zoological Garden

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