Zoo to prepare plan for future

Seattle firm to consider new location that could bring upgrades to animal enclosures

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Will the Greenville Zoo stay where it is or move to larger digs?

An architect was named Thursday to help the animal park answer that question.

With some exceptions, most of the zoo's exhibits are more than 30 years old and don't meet standards for modern animal enclosures, zoo director Jeff Bullock said Thursday.

"As we look at modern zoological practices and the way we need to manage animals, items like the elephant enclosure won't meet requirements in the future," he told GreenvilleOnline.com. "So we are in the process of a new master plan that develops a roadmap for the future of the zoo."

PJA Architects + Landscape Architects, p.s. of Seattle, which has worked on master plans for the Columbus Zoo, Houston Zoo, Buffalo Zoo and Singapore Zoo, was selected to develop the plan, Bullock said.

It will include an analysis of the pros and cons of the current site at Cleveland Park and compare it to another, undetermined site within the city of up to 50 acres, he said. The current zoo sits on 14 acres, but only about six acres are being used because of the slope, he said.

The master plan should be finalized within a year, and then go before the City Council for approval and public comment, he said. Implementation would depend on funding, he said, but it would take 15 to 20 years to complete.

Bullock outlined the vision at a luncheon celebrating 35 years of the nonprofit Friends of the Greenville Zoo's Circle of Friends where a new fundraising campaign to support future initiatives was launched.

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"We are very excited to provide support to the Greenville Zoo and take a role in the future of such a significant community resource," said Cindy Roddey, president of the Friends board.

"We are reaching out to the Greenville community to generate new excitement through the Circle of Friends that will enrich the lives of the animals and benefit our town in so many ways."

Bullock said it is an exciting time for the animal park.

"The plan will look at our entire vision and create a modern zoo," he said. "We are so thankful to the Friends for their key involvement in all the present and future initiatives."