



Mrs. Mandy Pas
Village Oaks Elementary
23333 Willowbrook Dr
Novi, MI 48375

Dear Mrs. Pas,

We here at the Detroit Zoo recently heard that the 4th graders at Village Oaks Elementary are exploring habitats and how animals survive within them. We would love to collaborate with you in designing new habitats for the Zoo! If you are all interested in sharing your knowledge, it would be greatly appreciated.

We are looking to design a few new habitats and we think you all could help a lot. We would like you to keep certain things in mind. These would include the animal's welfare, the guest experience and keeping zookeepers safe and productive.

In terms of animal welfare, we want our animals to be happy, healthy and comfortable. We don't want to make a cold climate animal stay outside in summer or a warm climate animal stay outside in the winter. We like to give them the option to come inside for comfort and also try to design exhibits so they can be comfortable outside in these extreme seasons. For example, our polar bears can jump in a giant pool that is kept at 50 degrees Fahrenheit, even if it's 100 degrees outside! Habitat size is also a major factor to consider for the animal's welfare. The bigger the space, the more room the animal has to explore and move around freely. We also do not want animals to harm one another so predators cannot live in the same habitat with an animal they would like to hunt but this can also be a simple design issue. You may just have to create a boundary that makes both species safe. I have sent photos for examples to display this. In addition, animals like zebras, gazelles, giraffes, ostriches and more could probably live alongside each other just fine, without any boundaries.

We also need to keep guests in mind. We want guests to be able to see the animals and have a sense of wonder. A habitat where you can become a part of the exhibit always make for great experiences. For example, at the Detroit Zoo you can walk through an underwater tunnel as polar bears swim above you, or you can walk through the aviary as birds fly around or you can crawl up a tunnel and pop up in the prairie dog habitat. These or any of your own ideas would be great!

Finally, zookeepers need to be considered as well. We want our zookeepers to have safe and easy access to the habitats. We must keep in mind that we DO NOT ever go in with any dangerous animal. This is for the protection of both people and animals. If a zookeeper is to interact with something dangerous like a tiger, a bear, a rhino, or a crocodile, they would do so through a protected boundary. Neither person, nor animal can get to the other side but feeding or giving medicine to an

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animal can still occur. These keeper areas are always behind scenes since they are not natural looking like the habitats. These keeper areas include indoor holding areas for animals, a keeper kitchen where animal diets can be prepared, as well as storage for animal enrichment toys and cleaning equipment.

Feel free to explore any animal that we may or may not already have. Zoos are always interested in improving their current habitats as well as creating new habitats for animals that they may receive from other zoos in the future as babies are born. We are excited to hear back from you and see your designs!

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at adewey@dzs.org.

Sincerely,

Adam Dewey