

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

# Bronx Zoo Master Plan

Bronx, New York



*Initial conditions*

The largest metropolitan zoo in the nation, the Bronx Zoo is a world-renowned center for science and education. It is also the headquarters for wildlife and wildlands conservation projects around the world.

In 2002 the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) engaged the team of Ayers/Saint/Gross Architect and Planners, Michael Vergason Landscape Architects and Biohabitats to prepare a master plan for the campus that reflects and facilitates the

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Zoo's mission and institutional values. "We spend a lot of money overseas working toward wildlife conservation, and if we're going to do that, we had better be living our mission at home," said Sue Chin, Director of Planning and Design for WCS.

Biohabitats' responsibilities focused on assessing the natural systems of the site including hydrology, soils, vegetation, landscape ecology, invasive plant threats and overall environmental sustainability. Concept development included preparing diagrams that explored and tested the spatial implications of the site's natural systems and their relationships with built systems, operations, and cultural features. The final master plan

evolved from the concept diagrams through a series of two-day workshops with WCS staff and various stakeholders.

A unique aspect of the final master plan was its recognition that the landscape fabric that weaves around and throughout the Zoo's exhibits is, in itself, an exhibit of the local ecology of the Bronx River Watershed that has been displaced by urban development. Inherent throughout the master plan is the recognition that this ecology should be protected, restored and celebrated.

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