MISSION
To provide close-up animal experiences that inspire connections to wildlife and action toward conservation in our region and around the world.

VISION
A future where all living things thrive together.
VALUES

Community
We strive to be a place of gathering for our community and empower our neighbors in conservation.

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility & Inclusion (DEAI)
We value and welcome all people and understand that diversity makes our organization stronger and more successful.

Innovation
We take pride in our creativity and pledge to ensure ethical excellence in every function of our organization.

Safety
We provide a safe space for all guests, staff, volunteers, and animals in our care.

Stewardship
We compassionately act each day to protect wildlife, the environment, and all resources entrusted to us.
I. Build a compelling animal experience that meets the highest standards of animal welfare.

The LSZ and surrounding community value in-person interactions and connections to animals and the natural world. It is our responsibility to assure guests of our animal welfare considerations and that animal care is our top priority. Contemporary animal habitats coupled with intentional educational messages can foster empathy for animals and positively influence a passion for conservation in our visitors. Modern zoological practices and philosophies guide each element.

- **Develop animal habitats and exhibits that build connections to regional and global conservation.**
  - Create interpretive signage telling stories of animal rescue, conservation, and SSPs.
  - Develop strategic communications to infuse marketing with empathy-based messaging.
  - By Q2 2022, re-establish Conservation Committee with each department represented to aid in emphasizing conservation elements and impact of exhibits.

- **Develop immersive ways to engage guests in the natural world**
  - Restore natural trail to better connect visitors to nature.
  - Enhance guest experience through addition of a new historical exhibit highlighting the LSZ’s history and importance of AZA accreditation.
  - Build opportunities for parallel play across zoo grounds
  - Ground all experiences in our mission.

- **Create greater transparency about how our staff ensure the best animal care possible.**
  - Highlight accomplishment of AZA accreditation at every opportunity.
  - Continue to invest in critical resources for animal care.
  - Create videos and interpretive signage for enrichment, training, SSPs, and veterinary care.

- **Develop engaging animal and guest interactions**
  - Embed empathy best practices into educational programming and all visitor experiences.
  - Enhance current behind-the-scenes tours and provide additional opportunities for visitors to observe animal training sessions.
  - Evaluate guest experience through enhanced feedback opportunities (survey, focus group, etc.).
II. Develop and implement a sustainable financial strategy that promotes the longevity of our presence in the community.

The LSZ values impactful partnerships with organizations and individuals with shared activities and values. We believe the path to maintaining a strong financial position involves fostering positive stakeholder relationships with government entities like the City of Duluth and State of Minnesota, elevating donor stewardship, and contingency planning for the future of our organization.

- **Build and foster sponsor and donor relationships**
  - Leverage networking opportunities for key staff and board members to tell our story.
  - Engage in a long-term development planning process.

- **Intentionally connect with potential donors for projects**
  - Develop enhanced donor materials to help facilitate conversations about goals and needs.
  - Create innovative opportunities for businesses to collaborate with the LSZ

- **Ensure economic sustainability through responsible saving, investing, and budgeting**
  - Maintain a six-month contingency fund to sustain operations during unexpected disruptions and crises.
  - Deliberately utilize resources to their fullest potential to promote sustainability.
  - Update financial contingency plan.
Our mission is brought to life by the people who make it all a reality, and the LSZ is committed to reflection and growth through thoughtful engagement with all Zoo staff through ongoing initiatives. Furthering a positive and transparent culture coupled with expanded professional development opportunities will enhance operations and promote retention. Investing in diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion initiatives and practices will help us reflect the communities we serve and grow as an organization. Partnerships with regional associations can provide stability and rewarding opportunities for our staff.

- Provide meaningful and fulfilling staff experiences
  - Enhance compensation packages sustainably and highlight our unique environment.
  - Increase professional development budget in each department year over year, while identifying cost-effective online options.
  - Maintain a communication philosophy of transparency through
  - Develop and implement an internal communications plan
- Recruit, hire, and build a diverse and inclusive staff that reflects the communities we serve
  - Empower DEAI committee to research and recommend plans for equitable hiring practices, compensation packages, and access to opportunities
- Build and leverage mission-based partnerships to enhance collaborative opportunities for staff and volunteers
  - Connect and network with local and regional organizations to develop a list of potential partnerships.
  - Increase the capacity of staff to participate in a wide variety of professional opportunities.
- Thoughtful engagement with all staff to maintain a positive organizational culture
  - Increase the frequency of all-staff meetings.
  - Elevate team building exercises and gatherings.
- Reflecting on past experience to continue to grow as an organization
  - Hosting periodic SWOT analysis focus groups to measure our growth
  - Develop internal communications plan
IV. Establish the Zoo as a trusted conservation leader in our community.

At the LSZ, we value animal welfare and conservation that supports upholding and exceeding Association of Zoos & Aquariums standards. Each decision we make is grounded in animal care, and we can positively affect the perception of zoos and aquariums through intentional communications of welfare standards. Building and expanding relationships with similar organizations will enhance the impact of our mission and broaden our reach as a conservation organization.

- **Highlight AZA standards to inform attitudes and perceptions of animals in human care**
  - Include strategies and messaging tactics related to our AZA accreditation in marketing plans.
  - Develop and implement interactive and educational exhibits about the history of the LSZ and what AZA accreditation means.

- **Develop mission-based partnerships that increase our impact and outreach through opportunities and experiences**
  - Hire an outreach educator to develop community engagement activities focused on conservation action
  - Identify means to increase staff bandwidth to participate in conservation opportunities such as field work.
  - SSP/Green initiatives – align with conservation plan

- **Engage in capacity building strategies to provide staff with additional opportunities to participate in conservation research and field programs**
  - Review current staffing levels and identify obstacles to participation
  - By Q4 2022, distribute digital survey to staff for conservation program feedback and ideas
V. Develop and maintain a long-term facilities plan.

The LSZ will address aging infrastructure and deferred maintenance through several approaches including a long-term facilities plan. We will allocate adequate resources to develop future plans and design revitalize existing spaces with feedback from staff and other stakeholders.

- **Revitalize and creatively adapt existing spaces.**
  - Host periodic staff workshops to discuss optimal space utilization across departments.

- **Address aging infrastructure and maintenance while enhancing unique experiences.**
  - Leverage the property committees knowledge and expertise in strategic infrastructure considerations and planning.
  - Utilize data from facility-site asset management system to inform priorities.

- **Create attainable plans to mitigate aging infrastructure and deferred maintenance**
  - Engage in predesign and development of new main building in 2022.
  - Work with a firm or agency to develop facility plans through benchmarking and assessments.
  - Continue to maintain positive working relationships with facility stakeholders.

**Master Plan**

2022 - 2037