

Project Background

Como Zoo is embarking on its very own arctic adventure as it prepares for Polar Bear Odyssey - a new polar bear habitat. Polar Bear Odyssey will place bears in a natural immersive environment that offers dramatically more land space and a multitude of opportunities for the bears to exhibit natural behaviors such as digging, swimming, foraging and hunting. Visitors will delight in up-close and personal views of the world's largest land predator. This year-round habitat will offer a climate controlled "Outpost" to experience the bears all four seasons and wonderful open air views that will bring the polar bears as close as twenty feet.



Polar Bear Odyssey will emulate a Hudson Bay ecosystem complete with a river-washed stream, rocky cliffs and evergreen plantings. Specific elements of the new habitat include:

- A 13,140 square foot outdoor habitat that is four times larger than the current polar bear space.
- Three pools of various depths to provide the bears with options that mirror their native Tundra habitat. One pool will contain live fish for the bears to hunt.
- A 260 square foot digging pit filled with bark chips, gravel and sand.
- A 1,270 square foot "Outpost" building to provide visitors with year-round climate-controlled experiences of the polar bears. From the Outpost, visitors will be able to observe bears swimming, hunting and playing through large floor to ceiling glass windows.
- A 650 square foot Lodge to provide a great get-away for business meetings, education classes and private receptions. The Lodge will have floor to ceiling windows looking out into Polar Bear Odyssey. Attached to the Lodge will be new restroom facilities.
- Two separate habitat areas that can either be separated or joined by a corridor. This structure allows Como Zoo to separate the two habitats

when housing a family group as the male bear must be isolated from the female and cubs.

- All land space in the habitat will be covered with soil and gravel so the bears have a soft, natural surface to walk on.
- Two designated stations for the public to watch operant animal training sessions between zookeepers and polar bears. During training sessions, zookeepers teach bears specific behaviors that help the staff to monitor their health and safety. For example, bears are taught to present their paws for inspection or to open their mouths to check on dental health.
- A 3,260 square foot state-of-the-art holding building to provide large indoor bedrooms, daylight, pools and a cub den.

Polar Bear Odyssey meets or exceeds the most recent versions of the USDA Marine Mammals Act, Association of Zoos and Aquariums Polar Bear Standards and the Canadian Polar Bear Protection Act. These three standards provide detailed requirements for all elements of the care and management of polar bears, including square feet of habitat space per bear, height of habitat barriers, opportunities for bears to display natural behaviors, type of water, filtration systems, size of holding space, etc. Como Zoo elected to pursue the most stringent standards available for polar bear care to insure a high quality of life for the bears, to increase the probability of receiving a wild bear from Canada, and to guarantee the habitat could house a family group with cubs.

