Cincinnati Zoo Nationally Recognized for Sustainability Efforts

Just in time for Earth Day, the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden in Cincinnati, Ohio, received national recognition for two of its sustainability initiatives. The Green Parking Council (GPC) designated the Cincinnati Zoo’s Vine Street parking lot the first GPC Demonstrator Site for surface parking lots three days after the Zoo was awarded the U. S. Green Building Council’s (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold for its Africa exhibit.

According to the GPC, the Cincinnati Zoo’s main parking lot has what it takes to make other lots green with envy. Its environmentally-responsible technologies and practices, including a 1.56-megawatt solar canopy with 6,400 panels, are now being used as a model for the parking industry. “The Cincinnati Zoo’s parking facilities have a number of sustainable features including a photovoltaic solar canopy, electric vehicle charging stations, a ‘Red Bike’ bike sharing station, a Metro bus transit stop, electric and biodiesel vehicle fleet and recycling programs,” explained Paul Wessel, executive director of the GPC.

On the other side of the Zoo, on the site that used to be the Zoo’s main parking lot, sits the Zoo’s largest and newest exhibit—Africa. Phase III of the Africa exhibit, which includes naturalistic spaces for lions, cheetahs, painted dogs and mixed hoofstock, has achieved LEED Gold certification in part due to what’s under the exhibit. A 400,000-gallon underground detention tank below the painted dogs collects rainwater that’s filtered and used to feed the streams, waterfalls and tanks in Africa and other Zoo exhibits. Other
green features that contributed to Gold certification include:
• Restored a once-asphalted parking lot into a natural habitat (hauled away 3,700 tons of asphalt, which was able to be reclaimed)
• Capturing and reclaiming rainwater for reuse (this water is held in the 400,000-gallon reservoir under Painted Dog Valley).
• Water use reduction through drought tolerant plants and efficient plumbing fixtures (faucets, toilets, waterless urinals)
• Energy efficient buildings
• Diverted more than 95 percent of the construction waste to recycling centers and away from landfills
• 12 percent of materials used were recycled
• 56 percent of materials used were regional
• Used solar tubes for natural lighting of the animal holding areas
• Used low VOC materials on the interior of the buildings
• The Base Camp Café is the Greenest Restaurant in America, as determined by the Green Restaurant Association.
• The solar array over the Zoo’s parking lot provides 20 percent of the power for the exhibit/restaurant.

Parking Lot Pride
The Zoo’s parking facilities also feature several immense underground rainwater cisterns, two large rain gardens, native, drought tolerant low plantings and larger perimeter trees, which provide natural beauty and help with local storm water issues. Before the parking lot was constructed, homes in the neighborhood below suffered sewage overflows during heavy rains. The parking lot’s on-site storage of rainwater mitigated these storm water issues, improving the health and well-being of home dwellers and the community.

GPC’s surface parking Demonstrator Sites and Green Garage Certification Programs represent a commitment by visionary, forward-thinking parking industry leaders to leverage their operations, partnerships, creativity and ingenuity to shift the transportation ecosystem toward greener practices and long-term sustainability. The surface parking Demonstrator Sites Program, initiated in 2015, recognizes sites across the United States and Canada.

Art

“Golden Girls” Make Official Debut at Zoo Miami

In celebration of Endangered Species Day, Zoo Miami in Miami, Fla., officially introduced two of its newest (and largest) arrivals while unveiling a very special donation to commemorate the Zoo’s commitment to caring for them.

Having cleared quarantine, Cita and Lisa, two female African elephants that arrived from the Virginia Zoo in Norfolk, Va., were officially introduced to the public in May. They will be in the African elephant exhibit’s adjoining paddock, next to Peggy and Mabel, Zoo Miami’s resident African elephant females. Zoo staff will be working to slowly introduce the elephants to each other with the eventual goal of placing all four together in the same paddock.

These four elephants range in age from 40 to nearly 48 years old. With a median life expectancy of 35 years in managed care, these ladies are well into their golden years and are being affectionately called the Zoo’s “Golden Girls.”

As part of this “Golden Girl” celebration, Zoo Miami is honored to be the recipient of an incredibly generous donation from the TREND Group of a life-size gold mosaic elephant figure, valued at $100,000. This stunning figure took 12 mosaic artists more than a year to create, weighs 2,710 pounds and measures 7 feet wide, 16 feet high and 27 feet long. Global Chief Executive Officer of TREND Group Andrea Di Giuseppe was in attendance to unveil this one-of-a-kind iconic sculpture, which will be on permanent display in front of the African elephant exhibit.