

# WILLOWBROOK WILDLIFE CENTER MASTERPLAN PHASE II PROJECT UPDATE AUGUST 17, 2021





# Willowbrook Wildlife Center Phase II Master Plan Improvements

Planning Project

## Background

## More About

### Willowbrook Wildlife Center Overcrowded As Veterinarians See Surge In Injured Animals

By Lauren Victory August 4, 2023 at 7:33 am Filed Under: Lauren Victory, Morning Edition, Willowbrook Wildlife Center



### Public Feedback Sought on Willowbrook Improvement Plans



# WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS EFFORTS

- Project website, comment form, and survey
- Social media – Facebook and Twitter
- Press releases
- CBS2 and Daily Herald news coverage
- Preserve banner
- 4 Public input meetings
- Direct email to over 300 stakeholders that have used Willowbrook Wildlife Center's services in the past that included public agencies, wildlife rehabilitators, police departments and animal control agencies.
- Resulted in 481 responses and counting.





- May 25 – Project website and social media. (37 responses received)
- June 1 – Public survey released (358 responses received)
- July 20 – Stakeholder meeting via Zoom with volunteers and donors. (14 people attended)
- July 29 – General public input meeting via Zoom (6 people attended)
- July 31 – General public input meeting in-person at Willowbrook (38 people attended)
- August 10 - General public input meeting in-person at Danada HQ. (7 people attended)

## WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS





# Willowbrook Wildlife Center Phase II Master Plan Improvements

Planning Project

## Background

Willowbrook Wildlife Center is a nationally recognized wildlife rehabilitation center that serves DuPage County. Its educational programs have introduced tens of thousands of schoolchildren and other visitors to the wild animals that share their backyards.

Over the decades the center has seen a dramatic increase in the number of injured and orphaned animals it cares for each year, and the aging visitor center has been unable to keep up with the growing needs of visitors, patients and programs. The District has operated [Willowbrook](#) as a wildlife rehabilitation and education center since 1956.

## More About

- [News Releases](#)
- [Upcoming Projects](#)
- [Recent Headlines](#)
- [Catching Nature Blog](#)
- [Conservationist](#)
- [Nature Blog & Stories](#)
- [E-Newsletters](#)
- [Photos & Videos](#)
- [Auction Updates](#)

July 29, 2021 public information session on Willowbrook plans

Willowbrook Wildlife Center Public Feedback Session 7/29... Watch later Share

- 1) To transition away from having a collection of non-releasable animals to focusing on rehabilitation and reintroduction into the wild.
- 2) To improve animal safety and conditions for the rehabilitation and restoration of animal species.

- 37 responses received with 26 local to DuPage County, 7 outside county and 4 outside of state.
- 5 requests for meeting invites or having technical issues completing survey.
- 32 comments formally submitted.
- 27 positive comments supporting plans . (84.3% of responses)
- 2 negative comment against plans. (6.3% of responses)
- 3 neutral comments neither for or against plans but have some concerns. (9.4% of responses)

# WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS





# QUICK SUMMARY

- Focus on wildlife rehabilitation, stick to mission, improve facilities for treatment.
- Emphasize education in the district's plan for Willowbrook including interconnection between people, animals and healthy ecosystems.
- Important for public to see animals up close.
- Do not increase stormwater runoff.
- Do not increase traffic or add new access from east.
- Do not disturb peace and quiet of community.
- Do not raise taxes to support the project.

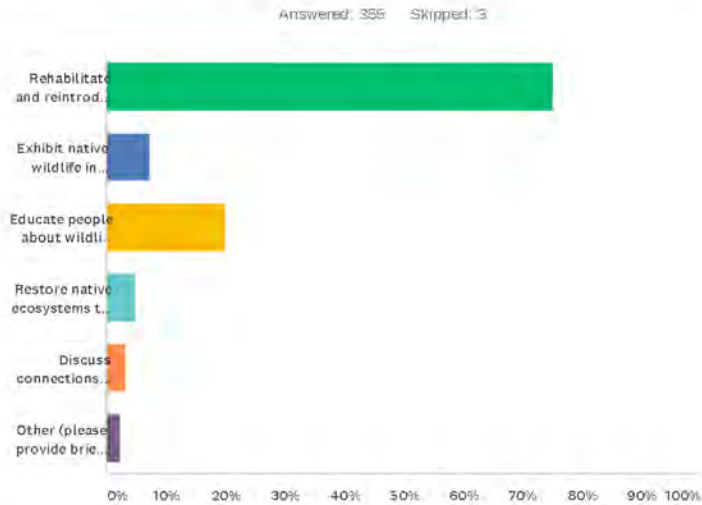
- Most Negative Comment:  
“I think this is an absurd amount of money to spend ,in general, let alone on wildlife. This represents a significant imbalance of funds used in one location that could be used in many other places. A more modest plan that is far less than 24M dollars needs to be developed that balances improvements across ALL the forest preserve properties”
- Most Positive Comments:  
“I strongly support the Phase II master plan improvements. I have lived in Naperville since 1997 and I want to thank you for all of your efforts. They are greatly appreciated. Really the best use of my tax dollars!”  
“I would support the Forest Preserve District spending any kind of money for improvements. I spent one of the most memorable days with my niece and nephew at Willowbrook”

## WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS





Q5 The mission of Willowbrook Wildlife Center is to be a native wildlife rehabilitation facility that provides care and medical treatment to injured and orphaned wild animals and to serve as a resource to teach DuPage residents about living in harmony with local wildlife. Which item below is the most important thing Willowbrook Wildlife Center should do to meet this mission? (Check one)



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Rehabilitate and reintroduce native wildlife back to natural areas	75.21% 267
Exhibit native wildlife in ways that limit stress to the animals	7.32% 26
Educate people about wildlife, their habitats, and interconnected ecosystems	20.00% 71
Restore native ecosystems to support native wildlife	4.79% 17
Discuss connections between sustainability, energy efficiency, pollution and climate as related to healthy wildlife	3.10% 11
Other (please provide brief description)	2.25% 8

Total Respondents: 355

- 358 responses received with 297 local to DuPage County, 55 outside of county, 4 outside of state, 1 out of country and 2 unknown zip codes.
- Survey prompted 294 other comments of which 37 discussed support for the project with 32 in favor and 5 against. Additional comments as follows:
  - 15 comments on outdoor amenities (5.1%)
  - 115 comments on program/wildlife (39.1%)
  - 115 comments on educational features (39.1%)
  - 17 comments on sustainability features (5.8%)
  - 13 comments on site restoration (4.4%)
  - 19 comments on cost/budget (6.5%)

# WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II PUBLIC SURVEY COMMENTS





# QUICK SUMMARY

- Over 40% of visitors go to Willowbrook 4 or more times per year. 50% go one or more times annually.
- Over 54% of respondents feel rehabilitation of wildlife and reintroduction into nature is the most important thing that Willowbrook should do to support the District's mission and 76% feel it is the most important thing for the Willowbrook Wildlife Center's mission.
- Education and public outreach should be a priority.
- Priority amenities: Interpretive trails, wildlife observation areas, non-traditional animal exhibits, accessible restored natural areas, educational youth programs and exhibits showing entire rehabilitation process.
- Priority sustainability features: Use of native landscaping, rainwater harvesting, renewable materials, stormwater management BMP's, and renewable energy sources.

- 70% of respondents willing to pay an admission fee.
- Other Recommendations

“Access to the property for all ages to learn about our native wildlife and habitats and how we are all connected. Classes, exhibits, interactive displays, examples of restored natural areas for viewing. One of the biggest things we need is for people to have a connection to our native plants and animals so that they are valued and therefore protected. Willowbrook has a great opportunity to help in this education”

“I think in the end, if the new plans and enhanced mission of WB is to be successful, business as usual has to be upgraded into a fully accepting and compassionate and respectful way to engage with all animals and work with people. The days of selecting some species to rehabilitate and denying other species should be over. A modern and compassionate community lifts all people and animals. If the whole process is to be as transparent as has been described, it will be very difficult to explain why WB is euthanizing a treatable animal or turning away an animal based on place where found”

## WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II PUBLIC SURVEY COMMENTS





- **Most Negative Comments:**

“Stop using tax dollars on animals Outside of DuPage County. Willowbrook then doesn't have the resources for MY in-county animals. I also disagree with providing unlimited resources to wildlife Rehabilitators in Illinois free of charge. Tax dollars! And some species need limits. Willowbrook is propagating endangered Blanding's turtles but rehabilitating raccoons with plans to rehabilitate And release even more! Again, many from out of county only adding to the overpopulation of raccoons in DuPage County”

“There seems to be a mission and/or vision creep when moving towards "energy efficiency" and solar-array panels, climate change and pollution. Is that really what people want to hear about when visiting Willowbrook. I don't and would prefer to go elsewhere. Taking the wildlife off the exhibit trail will make residents and visitors unhappy, dissatisfied and disengaged. You'll lose many people who have historically visited with their parents, schools, grandparents. and then do the same with their friends and family as adults”

- **Most Positive Comments:**

“Willowbrook does an amazing job and you have a great plan in place to meet your vision”

“We are grateful that your facility is so close to where we live. Whenever we need immediate care for our wildlife, we can count on Willowbrook Wildlife Center to be there for us”

“I think the plan as-is is excellent. Expanding the scope of the property itself will allow for more rehabilitation, more education, more space to enjoy and by doing all of that more awareness of what we can all do!”

“I have been bringing my grandchildren to Willowbrook since we moved to Wheaton back in 1993. We have all enjoyed these visits and appreciated being able to see the animal 'patients' up close. This has inspired two of my granddaughters to want to be veterinarians when they grow up. Perhaps you could offer more classes on careers in veterinary sciences and behind the scenes tours”

# WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II PUBLIC SURVEY COMMENTS







- 65 people participated locally in 4 public input and stakeholder meetings (2 conducted via Zoom and 2 conducted in-person)
- 86 comments provided or marked on exhibits.
- 28 comments on outdoor amenities (32.5%)
- 27 comments on program/wildlife exhibits (31.3%)
- 13 comments on educational components (15.1%)
- 8 comments on sustainability features (9.3%)
- 5 comments on site restoration (5.8%)
- 4 comments on cost/budget (4.7%)
- 1 comment on accessibility for all (1.1%)

## WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II PUBLIC INPUT MEETING COMMENTS





# QUICK SUMMARY

- Increased educational opportunities is important: How to spot and identify wildlife, know when wildlife needs help, and how to avoid negative conflicts were of most interest.
- Making rehabilitation process transparent is desired.
- People want to see wildlife in their natural habitats. Wildlife observation areas and interpretive trails and use of live video feed wildlife cameras was extremely positive.
- Concerns with treatment of common and nuisance species, humane treatment of animals turned away due to capacity.
- Concern raised about spending money on rehabilitating out of county wildlife. Consider fees.
- Three comments with concerns about overall project cost.

- Most Negative Comments:
  - “The project looks like no money was spared and requested to understand what was not included in the project”
  - “Believe priority, effort, and funding should not be given to more common animals like raccoons, robins, geese, etc.”
- Most Positive Comments:
  - “Love the ‘behind the scenes’ idea”
  - “The images shown seem appropriate to Willowbrook. Natural elements and having a building that doesn’t “feel foreign”
  - “This presentation changed my perspective on the project. I am a neighbor and was a proponent of seeing the resident animals. I now appreciate what the new vision is (RE: quality of life) and is a proponent of creating opportunities to see the animals in the wild”

## WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II PUBLIC INPUT MEETING COMMENTS







# WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II WILDLIFE ENCLOSURE BEST PRACTICES



Rainwater Harvesting



Solar Array



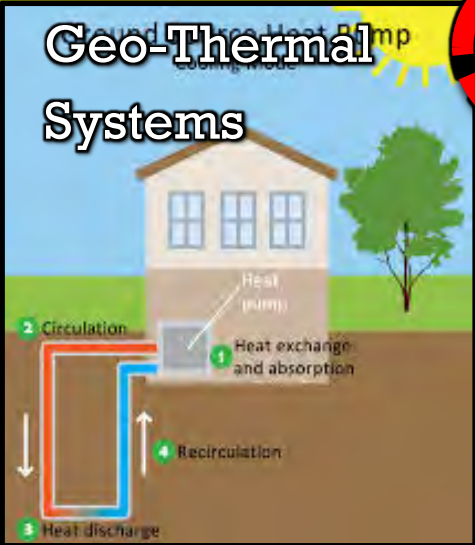
Native Landscaping



Dark Sky Lighting



Geo-Thermal Systems



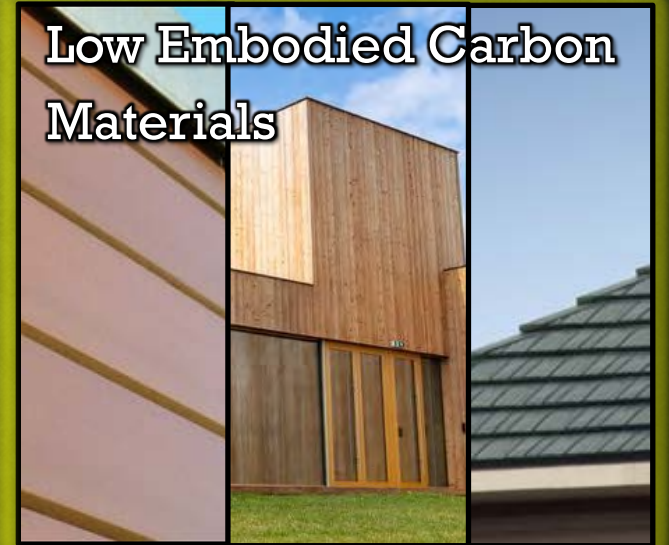
Bird Friendly Glass



Energy Efficiencies



Low Embodied Carbon Materials



# WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II POTENTIAL SUSTAINABILITY FEATURES





Shelter



Water



Structure



Seating



Food



Natural Form



# WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II WILDLIFE GARDEN AND PLAZA





Prairie Restoration



Interpretive Sign Concepts



Healthy Ecosystems



Habitat & Wildlife Identifications



Wetland Restoration



Enhanced Footpath



Stream Restoration



Limestone Trail Modifications

# WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II INTERPRETIVE TRAIL







Designated Areas  
Blended with Landscape



Less Developed



More Developed



Live Feed  
Video/Picture Cameras



Restoration



# WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II WILDLIFE OBSERVATION AREAS







# WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II OUTDOOR CLASSROOM







Recovery



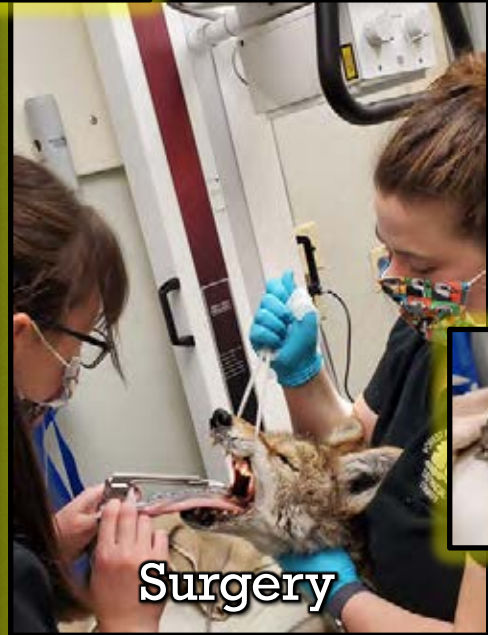
Release



Humane Euthanasia



Examination



Surgery



Make Rehabilitation Process Transparent  
Not All Animals Can Be Saved



Treatment



X-Ray

# WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II INDOOR REHABILITATION



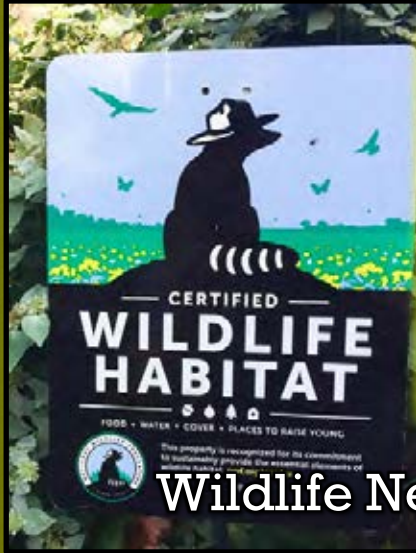


99.8% of endangered animals are sensitive to climate change

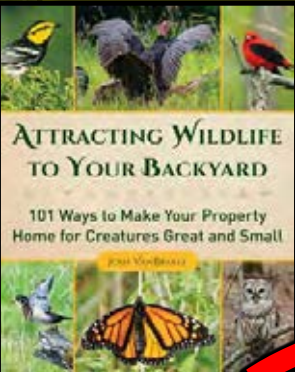


FPDDC Captive

Rearing Programs



Wildlife Needs



Know When to Take Action and How to Avoid Creating Impacts



Live Video Feed Into Rehabilitation Enclosures



Art and Science of Wildlife Rehabilitation



# WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II INDOOR EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES



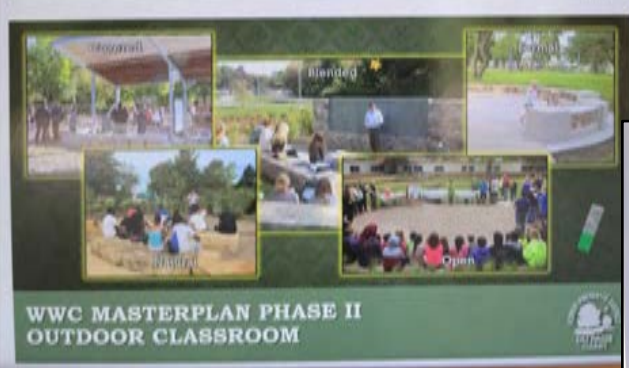




**Comments**  
Education of public is KEY!  
Wow



**Comments**  
As long as staff is ok, I think it's a great idea.  
Wow

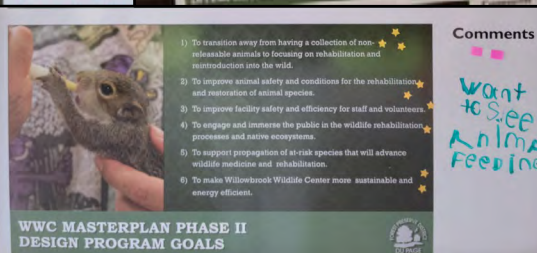


**Comments**  
I like the blended options.

**EXCELLENT SITE PLAN!**  
A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD A 1ST CLASS REHAB FACILITY. I HOPE THE BUILDING WILL BE DESIGNED/BUILT WITH THE UNIQUE + SPECIAL NEEDS OF WILDLIFE MEDICINE & CARE. THANK YOU!



**Comments**  
I like the garden and plaza idea.



**Comments**  
Want to see animal feedings

- Public feedback has been overwhelmingly positive in supporting the program, plan, and amenities. Positive comments regarding potential cost exceed negative comments.
- There is a strong desire for wildlife rehabilitation and education to be the priority focus over sustainability and environmental topic.
- There are concerns that the District should manage nuisance and common species effectively and humanely. Avoid over expansion to take in too many animals.
- Public desires to see animals on exhibit in some manner with efforts to make less stressful and in more natural habitats.
- More educational opportunities are desired for people of all ages.
- Concern that too much expansion could increase traffic through the neighborhoods adjacent to the preserve disturbing the peace and quiet of the community.

# WWC MASTERPLAN PHASE II PUBLIC COMMENT – KEY TAKEAWAYS

