

Calgary's new Central Library
IN THE NEWS

Library, zoo upgrades approved by council

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A plan to spend \$102 million on a new downtown library and local attractions was approved by city council Monday, as some aldermen raised red flags about how one group may spend the money.

Several aldermen were concerned that the Calgary Zoo could bring in ocean animals as part of its expansion plans. But before the debate even got off the ground, Ald. Joe Ceci said it was unfair to debate the topic without input from the zoo. "If we are going to have a debate about any particular exhibit, perhaps we should have both sides of the story," he said. "If there is a debate to be had, we should talk to all the parties involved." Zoo officials said they were taken aback by the comments, since their plans are still in the early stages.

Sherry Rainsforth, director of communications, education and research with the zoo, said there are three major projects that the zoo is hoping to tackle: improve the elephant building, upgrade the conservatory and finish off the Canadian Wilds with an aquatic facility. "One of the things we have promised to Calgarians over the years was to bring back polar bears and seals," she said. "We'd like to keep that promise."

Rainsforth said, however, that they are still in the exploratory phases of planning future exhibits.

All five groups receiving funding as part of the so-called community investment fund will be required to bring their plans back to council for final approval.

The zoo will receive \$30 million from the fund, while the library will get \$40 million and the science centre will receive \$20 million. Heritage Park will get \$10 million, and another \$2.1 million is slated for Fort Calgary.

Monday's approvals will see the projects receive 10 per cent of the funds in order to get started on their projects. Council also decided not to disband a special committee formed to deal with the fund.