

More Ideas to Build on the Zoo Project

I am going to suggest some ways in which the project might be extended/expanded through collaborations with humanities and social sciences departments. First, economics and public policy students can study the real impact of the zoo on the city and neighborhood: how many out-of-towners come to Jackson because of the zoo? How much do they spend? Where? What are the real economic impacts of the zoo and the local economy that it creates and the micro-local area around it? This data, along with the scientific data gathered so far can inform lobbying efforts by political science students, pre-law students and again public policy students. This will consist of neighborhood outreach, increasing citizen awareness, voter registration, lobbying the city council and mayor to reduce the zoo's rent, etc. Communications students can produce PSAs and citizen advocacy sites to increase awareness and the profile of the issues. They can also explain the data and its importance to the community. They—and composition students—can create flyers and other documents to spread the word. Crowd-sourcing campaigns can help generate revenue and defray costs. Public health students can gather data about the hazards generated by the leak.

Probably it's too much to take it all on, and I'm not necessarily recommending it for this particular project. I'm just imagining other ways to that projects like this can integrate social sciences and humanities to increase the learning opportunities, collaboration among academics/departments/students, and the civic impact on the problem. The more skillsets we can get involved, the more everyone benefits.