



## BIG CHANGES ON THE WAY FOR YOUR ZOO:



Join in the excitement! After over two years of design, Mesker Park Zoo & Botanic Garden is ready to begin construction on the groundbreaking new exhibit: AMAZONIA: Forest of Riches. In AMAZONIA our guest will be immersed in a 10,000 square foot piece of the South American rainforest. And the wild-life viewing will be fantastic! Tree top views of monkeys and colorful birds, close encounters with tapirs,

under water views of fish and caiman and maybe even a nose to nose meeting with a jaguar! Then there are the plants. From towering palms to beautiful orchids, AMAZONIA will showcase the dazzling diversity of plant life in the rainforest. The Amazonian rainforest is home to one quarter of the world's living species and this exhibit will illuminate our need to understand its importance. It will also give visitors a chance to get involved in rainforest conservation.

But wait, that's not all! A brand new entry complex with expanded parking will also greet our visitors on Mesker Park Drive. Modeled after historic Evansville architecture, this beautiful facility will house the River Country Grill and the Two Rivers Trading Company, our new concession and

gift shop. A large brick plaza with interactive fountains and seating will give folks a place to relax and orient themselves. A modern restroom building will also be conveniently located near the entrance.

So when does it happen? We've allowed a two-year schedule for completion of this large, complex project that will begin in March. Over this time visitors will be able to observe the construction from special viewing areas. From the ground up, it will be a fascinating process to watch!



Left: Fig Trees - Above: Palm Tree.

## Where We Stand

- We have completed the blueprints for the new Entry Complex and Amazonia and the project is now officially out for bids by contractors.
- The plans were available for pickup by interested bidders on Dec. 21, 2005. Sealed bids will be opened publicly at the Parks Board meeting scheduled for Feb. 15, 2006.
- Zoo staffers and the design team of Torre Design Consortium and the engineering team from PCI have been working and refining these plans for almost two years. We have gone over them with the proverbial fine-toothed comb on many occasions. We have refined, redone, reduced, removed, redrawn, researched and reviewed them so many times that most of us have memorized pretty much all 365 pages of blueprints.
- Since this is financed by a bond issue, funds are limited. In order to get ready for this project, we have, in a period of approximately 30 months, created a Master Plan, prepared plans to support the bond issue, hired architects, hired engineers, visited numerous zoos, built two greenhouses, hand picked thousands of plants, remodeled the Veterinary complex, made arrangements to obtain animals in the future, obtained price checks on numerous items and spent most of our waking hours getting ready for Feb. 15, 2006. We have worried that the costs of materials will go up due to hurricane Katrina and made adjustments for that. We are confident that we have done all that we can. We must now wait. We will continue to pace. We will keep our fingers crossed. Feel free to do the same.