

IDAHO REPTILE ZOO

Project: Reptile Zoo – Garden City, Idaho

To: Garden City Planning and Zoning Commission

Thank you, Commissioners, and thank you to staff for your time, review, and thoughtful recommendations.

We appreciate the City's commitment to ensuring that new and existing projects support Garden City's long-term vision for safety, accessibility, and aesthetic quality. Our team shares these goals and has worked to create a project that enhances the property while introducing a unique, family-friendly, and educational use to the community.

1. Use Classification and Conditional Use Permit

We understand the City's challenge in classifying this use, as the Reptile Zoo is not specifically listed in Garden City Code 8-2B-2. Because of that, the project routed through a Conditional Use Permit process to review.

It's important to clarify, however, that the CUP is required solely because the City does not currently define this specific use, not because the project is incompatible or high-impact. Functionally, the Reptile Zoo operates as a commercial entertainment and educational facility, not an animal care or veterinary service. It does not involve housing or treating the public's animals — its purpose is educational engagement and community recreation, consistent with other permitted commercial entertainment uses within the C-1 district.

This same site previously operated under a CUP for an axe-throwing facility, which received a certificate of compliance. That use had comparable operating characteristics in terms of, parking, visitor traffic. And in the Zoo's case more neighbor friendly hours. Substantial site improvements were completed at that time, and our proposal further enhances the site with updated design, safety, and accessibility features.

Had the Reptile Zoo been categorized under *Commercial Entertainment* rather than processed through a CUP, there would have been no new triggers for additional site or frontage improvements beyond what was already completed. We respectfully ask that the Commission recognize that the CUP here is procedural — a path for classification — not an indication of increased intensity or impact.

2. Streetscape and Landscaping Improvements

Regarding staff's recommendation for enhanced streetscape and landscaping improvements, we want to emphasize that the proposed site plan already meets current City Code standards. The design includes quality landscaping, pedestrian accessibility, and visual enhancements beyond what existed with the previous tenant. While we remain open to discussing reasonable refinements, we believe additional conditions would have limited benefit and could impose unnecessary costs that are disproportionate to the scale of the project.

3. Chinden Boulevard Frontage and Access

With regard to improvements along Chinden Boulevard, we acknowledge staff's observation that two of the three approaches are subject to closure under the ITD Access Management Plan. These access points and associated curb cuts predate the current proposal and were previously reviewed under the prior CUP for the axe-throwing facility. At that time, measures were implemented — including paint striping and “No Parking” markings — to restrict access in coordination with ITD.

We understand staff's desire for a more permanent solution; however, the current project does not intensify use or generate new traffic demand that would justify full reconstruction of the frontage. The property already includes an existing sidewalk that provides safe pedestrian connectivity and functions adequately within this corridor's existing context.

We respectfully request that the Commission consider a proportional approach to frontage improvements — one consistent with what was approved for the previous use and comparable businesses along Chinden Boulevard. More cost-effective alternatives, such as refreshed pavement markings, updated signage, or placement of planters or removable barriers, could achieve the same safety and visibility objectives without imposing unnecessary reconstruction costs.

Conclusion

In summary, the Reptile Zoo proposal:

- Meets existing landscaping and design standards;
- Represents a continuation of a previously approved entertainment use, not an intensification;
- Aligns with Garden City's goals for safety, accessibility, and economic vitality; and
- Requests only that improvement requirements remain reasonable and proportional to the nature of the project.

We are committed to working collaboratively with City staff to ensure this project operates safely, responsibly, and as a vibrant, educational addition to Garden City.

Thank you for your consideration.

Idaho Reptile Zoo

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