LOS ANGELES ZOO & BOTANICAL GARDENS
FREE SPEECH POLICY AND RULES

I. POLICY & PURPOSE

It is the policy of the City of Los Angeles Department of the Zoo to allow for members of the public to engage in free speech activity in the Front Entry Plaza of the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens, in a manner that does not interfere with the Zoo's operations or the health and safety of Zoo guests, employees, and animals.

The Front Entry Plaza is the Zoo's main thoroughfare and congregation space for guests purchasing tickets and entering or exiting the Zoo. The purpose of these rules is to establish reasonable and viewpoint- and content-neutral time, place, and manner regulations to balance the rights of those engaging in Free Speech Activity in the Front Entry Plaza with the protection of Zoo guests, employees, and animals and to ensure safe and orderly Zoo business.

These rules are promulgated pursuant to Los Angeles City Charter Section 506(b) and supersede all previous Department free speech policies and rules. The adoption of this policy and rules in no way affects enforcement of the California Penal Code, the Los Angeles Municipal Code, or any other applicable law.

II. DEFINITIONS

"Department" means the City of Los Angeles Department of the Zoo.

"Front Entry Plaza" means the exterior, unticketed area in front of the Zoo's main entry gates and includes ticketing booths, queuing lines, walkways, and designated Free Speech Zones. A map of the Front Entry Plaza is attached to these rules as Attachment 1.

"Free Speech Activity" means protesting, picketing, speech-making, leafletting, demonstration, petition circulation, distribution of non-commercial expressive items, and similar activities that communicate ideas, opinion, or information to others. For the purpose of these rules, this definition does not include the wearing of expressive articles of clothing or objects like buttons.

"Free Speech Zone" means an area designated by the Department where members of the public may engage in Free Speech Activity.

"Interior Zoo Grounds" means the interior area of the Zoo that requires a ticket for entry.

"Noisemaking Device" means and includes any horn, bell, buzzer, whistle, thunder stick, rattle, musical instrument, air horn, siren, or other similar noisemaker.

"Sound Amplifying Device" means and includes any system of electrical hookup or connection, loud speaker system or equipment, sound amplifying system, or any apparatus, equipment, device, instrument, or machine designed for or intended to be used for the purpose of amplifying the volume of the human voice, musical tone, vibration, or sound wave.

"Zoo" means the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens.

III. RULES GOVERNING FREE SPEECH ACTIVITIES AT THE ZOO

A. Time

The Zoo is open daily from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, and closed on Thanksgiving Day and December 25. Occasionally the Zoo is open before 10:00 am or after 5:00 pm for special events and member events.

Free Speech Activity at the Zoo must be conducted in conformance with these rules starting one hour before the Zoo opens and ending one hour after the Zoo closes, including special event and member event hours.

B. Place and Manner

1. Front Entry Plaza

   (a) Members of the public may engage in Free Speech Activity in the Front Entry Plaza only within the designated Free Speech Zones. No Free Speech Activity shall occur in the Front Entry Plaza or on the sidewalk in front of the Children's Discovery Center, except within the designated Free Speech Zones. Each Free Speech Zone shall be clearly marked and positioned in a location that provides those engaging in Free Speech Activity with reasonable exposure to guests entering or exiting the Zoo.

   (b) A map indicating the locations of currently designated Free Speech Zones in the Front Entry Plaza is attached to these Rules as Attachment 1. The Department reserves the right to temporarily modify the size and location of the Free Speech Zones based on operational needs and to protect the health and safety of Zoo guests, employees, and animals.

   (c) The Free Speech Zones are available for Free Speech Activity on a first-come, first-served basis. The number of individuals allowed in each Free Speech Zone shall not exceed a level that jeopardizes safe occupancy of the areas. No individual shall act in a manner that infringes on the rights of others to engage in Free Speech Activity in a Free Speech Zone.
   (d) No individual shall use any Sound Amplifying Device or Noisemaking Device in a manner that:

i. Produces sound that exceeds 95 decibels as measured by a calibrated decibel level meter at a distance of 18 feet from the source of the sound;

ii. Produces sound that exceeds 85 decibels as measured by a calibrated decibel level meter from the front entry gates;

iii. Unreasonably disturbs, impairs, or endangers the comfort, health, or safety of other persons or Zoo animals; or

iv. Unreasonably interferes with the Zoo's operations, including but not limited to the ability of Zoo staff to hear or communicate with customers, security screening, or announcements; or

v. Violates any applicable Federal, State, or City law.

(e) Individuals engaging in Free Speech Activity shall not obstruct the ingress or egress of other individuals, act in a manner that is harmful to other individuals or animals, or unreasonably interfere with or obstruct Zoo operations.

(f) Individuals engaging in Free Speech Activity shall not follow, pursue, surround or continue to address any person who, verbally or nonverbally, declines to listen to, converse with, accept any items from, or otherwise engage with those engaging in Free Speech Activity, or indicates that they wish to be left alone.

(g) No person shall use signs, objects, or displays, or pass out or show literature that employs fighting words, criminal threats, or obscene matter as defined under California Penal Code Section 311.

(h) Leaflets, pamphlets, and other expressive materials shall not be left unattended, placed on vehicles, or handled in a manner that results in the materials being blown away or discarded in locations other than designated waste or recycling receptacles.

(i) No signs, posters, placards, banners, or other items shall be affixed or fastened to any gate, wall, partition, pole, planter, sign, or other fixture at the Zoo, or left unattended, whether affixed, fastened, or not, or placed in a manner that creates a safety hazard.

(j) No person shall write, paint, spray, chalk, etch, or otherwise apply any unauthorized inscription, word, figure, design, or other marking on Zoo property, whether permanent or temporary.

(k) No tables, shade structures, booths, or other similar objects are permitted in the Free Speech Zones.

(l) No person shall engage in the sale of food, services, or products, or engage in other commercial activity of any kind in the Free Speech Zones.

(m) Individuals engaging in Free Speech Activity shall comply with all applicable Department rules and Federal, State, and City laws.

2. Interior Zoo Grounds

(a) The Interior Zoo Grounds constitutes a non-public forum and requires paid admission for entry. Due to crowd congestion, limited ingress and egress, animal welfare concerns, and complicated nature of the Zoo's operations, no Free Speech Activity is permitted in the Interior Zoo Grounds, unless authorized as ancillary to a Zoo-sponsored event or special event rental approved by the Zoo Director or their designee.

C. Compliance and Enforcement of Rules

1. A violation of these rules may result in removal from the Zoo property, and/or administrative or criminal penalties. Enforcement may be based on these rules and any applicable Federal, State or local laws including, but not limited to, California Penal Code Section 602.1 and Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 63.133.

2. No person shall be subject to adverse action under these Rules based on the content or viewpoint of their expression. Enforcement decisions shall be based solely on conduct and applicable rules and laws.

IV. SEVERABILITY

If any provision of these Rules, or the application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held to be unconstitutional or otherwise invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such determination shall not affect the validity of the remaining provisions of these Rules.

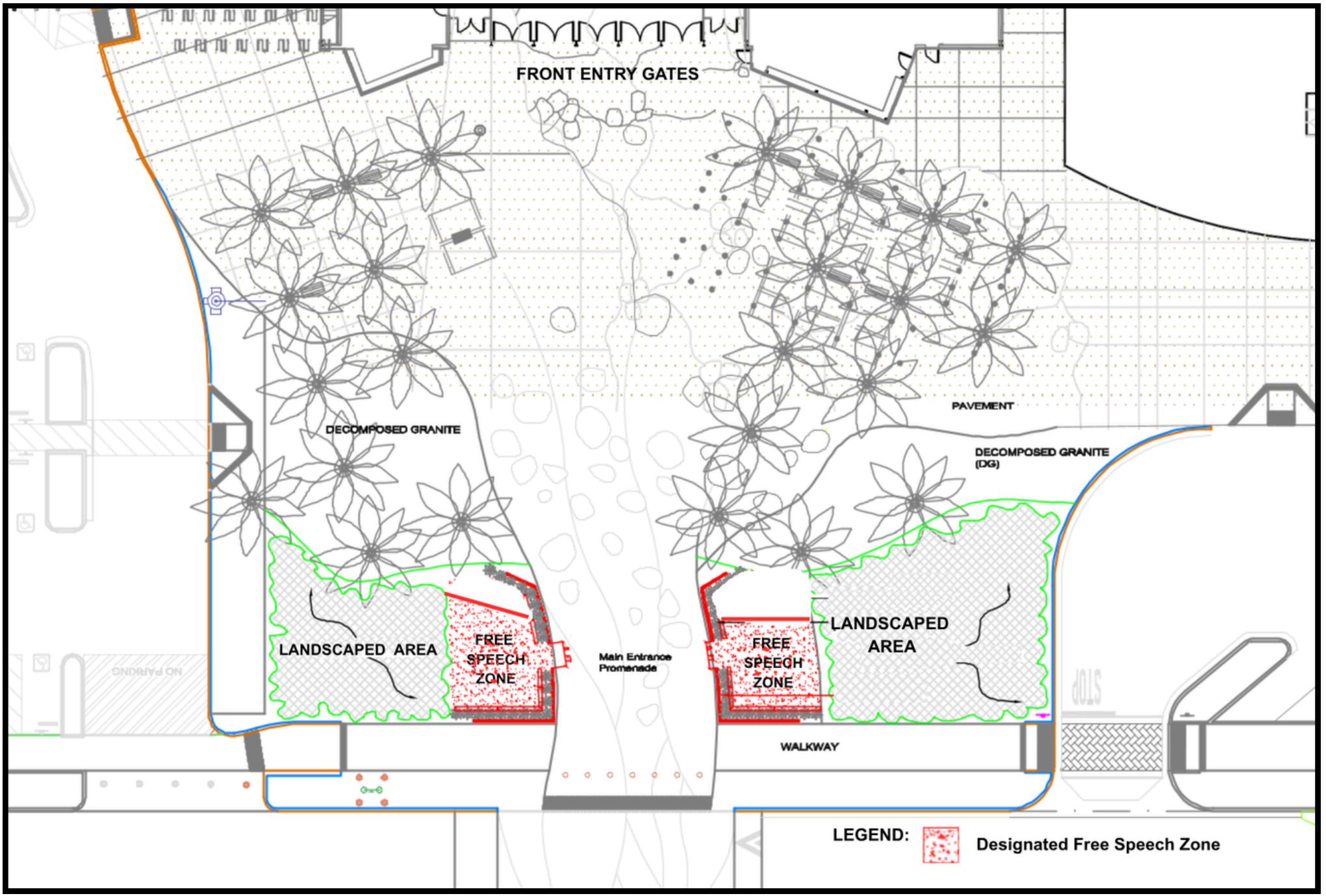
Adopted by Order of the Zoo Director

Denise Verret
_____

Denise M. Verret
Zoo Director

Date October 9, 2026

Free Speech Policy
Attachment 1
Front Entry Plaza Map



October 2026