

# Economic Impact of the Salisbury Zoo



**2024**



**BEACON**  
Business Economic and Community Outreach Network  
At Salisbury University

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## Executive Summary

The Business, Economic, and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) of the Franklin P. Perdue School of Business at Salisbury University partnered with the City of Salisbury to conduct a comprehensive economic impact study of the Salisbury Zoological Park (Zoo) on the City and Wicomico County. BEACON collected data from visitor surveys, calls with key individuals, and city records to estimate the annual impact of the Zoo. The study estimates that in 2024 the Zoo produced a total impact of over \$13.4 million in Wicomico County, as calculated by the IMPLAN analysis. The Zoo had over 368,000 visits in the past year, with an estimated thirty-nine percent from outside of the region.

The impact of the Zoo stretches beyond just its impact as calculated. As a valued amenity for residents and visitors, it impacts the quality of life for individuals and families. It adds to the reasons that people choose to live and relocate to Salisbury. It provides a venue that visitors find attractive and adds to the reasons they choose to visit the area.

The study also provides the Zoo with information on the views of its patrons. This includes both the amenities they enjoy and areas that could be improved. It allows the Zoo to look at ways it can leverage its strengths to attract travelers to Salisbury. It also provides insights into how similar zoos operate.

BEACON has also calculated a range of expected impacts of the zoo under three scenarios: likely, pessimistic and optimistic. The likely projected impact on Wicomico County in 2029 is \$ 18.9 million and in 2034 it is \$23.6 million.

## **Introduction**

The Business, Economic, and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) of the Franklin P. Perdue School of Business at Salisbury University has partnered with the City of Salisbury and its Zoo to conduct a comprehensive economic impact study of the Salisbury Zoological Park. This report analyzes the Zoo's contributions to the local economy using operational data from the most recent fiscal year.

BEACON employed a multifaceted approach to evaluate the economic significance of the Salisbury Zoo. The study included a thorough review of the Zoo's current budget and operations, a comparative analysis with similar zoological institutions, and the collection of visitor data through electronic surveys. BEACON developed an impact analysis model to calculate the effects of Zoo operations and visitor spending, supplementing survey data with publicly available information as appropriate. This report details the direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts of the Zoo.

## **Background Information**

The Salisbury Zoological Park, founded in 1954, is a cherished community institution situated within the scenic City Park of Salisbury, Maryland. Encompassing 12 acres along the banks of the Wicomico River, the Zoo is renowned for its naturalistic habitats that house over 100 animals representing species from North, Central, and South America, as well as Australia. Notable Zoo residents include bears, red wolves, spiny-tailed iguanas, and wallabies. The Zoo offers a variety of educational programs such as school field trips, summer camps, and community outreach initiatives aimed at fostering environmental stewardship and wildlife appreciation among visitors of all ages.

The Salisbury Zoo plays a pivotal role in conservation efforts by participating in Species Survival Plans and collaborating with other institutions to protect endangered species. Its accessible location and free admission policy make it a popular destination for both residents and tourists, contributing significantly to the local economy and community well-being.

Salisbury is the county seat of Wicomico County, which lies on Maryland's Eastern Shore. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Wicomico County has a population of approximately 103,000 people. The county's demographics are diverse, with about 65% identifying as White, 25% as African American, 6% as Hispanic or Latino, 2% as Asian, and smaller percentages representing Native American and other ethnic groups. The area combines urban and rural elements, featuring a mix of agricultural lands, residential communities, and growing commercial centers. The median household income is around \$55,000, and the county faces both opportunities and challenges related to economic development, education, and healthcare.

The presence of institutions like the Salisbury Zoological Park reflects Wicomico County's commitment to community enrichment, education, and environmental conservation. The Zoo not only serves as a hub for recreational and educational activities but also symbolizes the region's dedication to preserving natural habitats and promoting biodiversity. Through its programs and initiatives, the Salisbury Zoo fosters connections between people and wildlife.

## Comparative Analysis of Similar Zoological Parks

The **Salisbury Zoological Park** in Salisbury, Maryland, spans 12 acres and offers free entry to over 300,000 visitors annually. Specializing in species native to North and South America and Australia—such as Andean bears and North American river otters—the Zoo sets itself apart with its unique focus. It sustains its operations through donations, events, and gift shop sales, and is deeply integrated into the community via educational programs, volunteer opportunities, and partnerships. Although the Zoo temporarily lost its AZA<sup>1</sup> accreditation in 2020 due to the absence of a full-time veterinarian, it is actively working to regain this status in the coming years.

In comparison, the **Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo** in Gainesville, Florida, covers 10 acres and also emphasizes education and community engagement. Unlike Salisbury, it charges an entry fee and maintains AZA accreditation, featuring species like bald eagles and Asian small-clawed otters. The zoo supports local businesses and offers hands-on training opportunities for students.

The **Erie Zoo** in Pennsylvania is slightly larger at 15 acres and aligns closely with Salisbury in terms of visitor numbers and community involvement through educational programs and events. Previously AZA-accredited but currently not—similar to Salisbury—it charges an entry fee yet generates significant local economic impact.

The **Cape May County Park & Zoo** in New Jersey is considerably larger, encompassing 85 acres, and also offers free entry. Attracting over 500,000 visitors annually, it showcases species in naturalistic enclosures and engages the community through extensive events and educational programs. Like Salisbury, it significantly supports local tourism through its economic impact strategies.

Overall, the **Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo** and **Erie Zoo** share key similarities with Salisbury Zoological Park in size, community engagement, and educational focus, while differing in accreditation status and revenue models. The Cape May County Park & Zoo stands out due to its larger size but aligns with Salisbury in offering free entry and fostering high community involvement.

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<sup>1</sup> **Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)** is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and recreation. AZA represents more than 235 facilities in the United States and overseas, which collectively draw more than 200 million visitors every year.

## Visitor Survey Results

A comprehensive 11-question survey was administered to Zoo visitors through a variety of channels, including social media platforms, yard signs throughout the Zoological park, targeted emails to individuals subscribed to the Zoo's newsletter, and direct engagement by Zoo staff with visitors on-site.

A total of 1,360 survey responses were received; however, 63 were removed due to suspicions of being bot-generated, likely influenced by the incentive prize offered for completing the survey. Survey bots are automated programs that mimic real users and submit invalid or nonsensical data. All suspected bot-generated responses originated from the social media survey links. Consequently, the following analysis is based on the remaining 1,297 responses after excluding these entries.

The survey question on participants' ZIP codes indicates that most visitors were from Maryland, with 782 responses. This was followed by Delaware (235 responses), Pennsylvania (94 responses), Virginia (53 responses), and New York (22 responses). An additional 103 responses came from various other states or from individuals who chose not to answer.

Among Maryland respondents, the largest group—59%—resided in Wicomico County, while 10% were from Worcester County, 5% from Somerset County, and 5% from Dorchester County. The remaining counties each accounted for 3% or fewer of the responses.

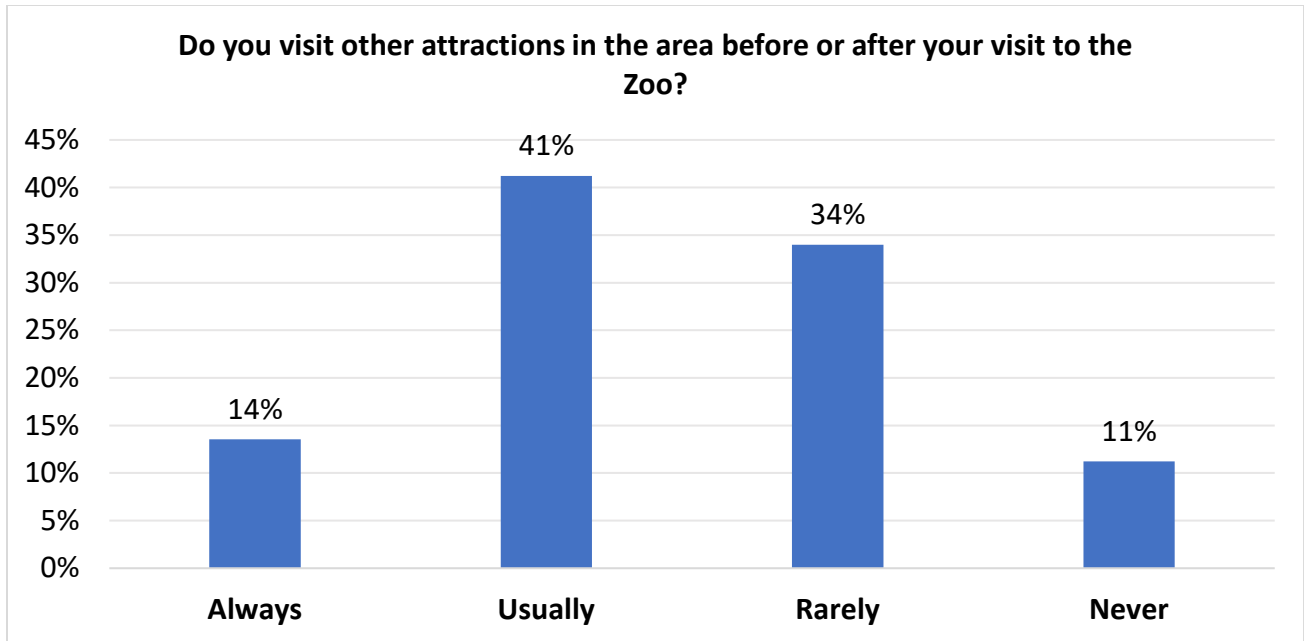
The survey results indicate that the majority of visitors, 41.27% (532 individuals), attended the Zoo in groups of four or more people. This is followed by 31.42% (405 visitors) who came in pairs and 19.86% (256 individuals) who visited in groups of three. Solo visitors constituted the smallest segment, with only 7.45% (96 individuals) visiting alone.

The survey results on paid lodging in Wicomico County show that most respondents, 87.94% (1,138 individuals), did not stay in paid accommodations during their visit. Of these, 51.08% (661 individuals) were non-residents who did not use paid lodging, while 36.86% (477 individuals) were local residents who did not require paid lodging. The remaining 12.06% (156 individuals) reported staying in paid accommodations within Wicomico County.

The survey results show that the most common frequency of visits to the Salisbury Zoo is 1-2 times per year, with 33.08% of respondents (428 individuals) choosing this option. About a quarter of respondents (26.35% or 341 individuals) visit 3-5 times annually, while 17.23% (223 individuals) visit more than 10 times per year. Additionally, 13.68% (177 individuals) visit 6-10 times annually, and 9.66% (125 individuals) indicated that they never visit the Zoo. This data suggest that most visitors come to the Zoo occasionally, with a smaller percentage visiting frequently.

Responses indicate that most Zoo visitors tend to explore other attractions in the area. Specifically, 41.21% (532 respondents) said they "usually" visit nearby attractions in addition to

the Zoo, while 13.56% (175 respondents) "always" do so. Meanwhile, 34.00% (439 respondents) "rarely" visit other attractions, and 11.23% (145 respondents) "never" visit additional sites. This suggests a strong tendency for Zoo visitors to engage with other local attractions, with a smaller portion choosing to focus solely on the Zoo.

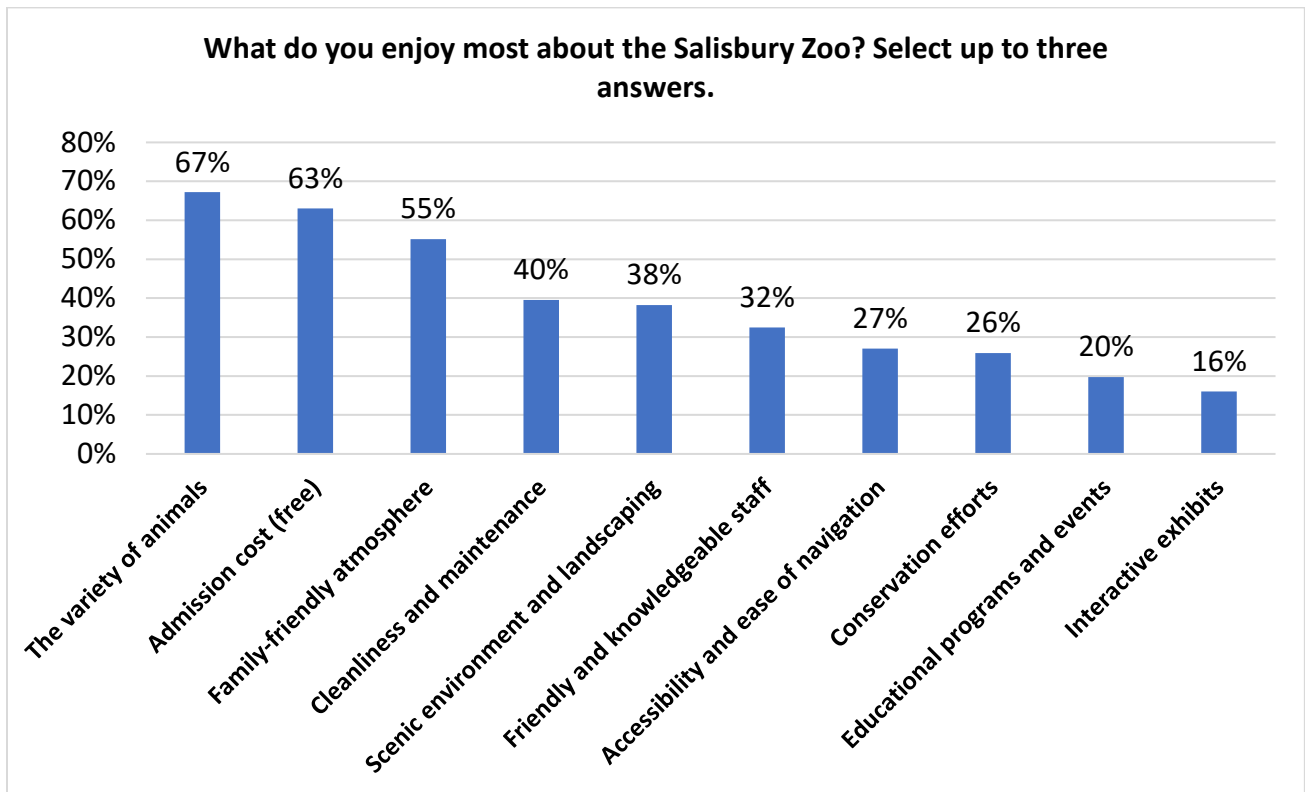


Results show that a majority of Zoo visitors also frequent local restaurants or shops in the area. Over half of the respondents, 52.17% (674 individuals), "usually" visit these establishments, and 17.18% (222 individuals) "always" do so. In contrast, 23.61% (305 individuals) "rarely" visit local restaurants or shops, and only 7.04% (91 individuals) "never" make these stops. This data suggests that Zoo visits are often accompanied by patronage of nearby dining and shopping options, indicating a strong complementary relationship between the Zoo and local businesses.

The survey results show that most Zoo visitors choose to donate when they visit. Specifically, 35.04% (451 respondents) "usually" donate, while 29.84% (384 respondents) "always" contribute. In contrast, 24.48% (315 respondents) "rarely" donate, and 10.64% (137 respondents) "never" donate. Among those who do donate, the most common contribution amount is between \$5 and \$10, selected by 43.26% (558 respondents). Additionally, 22.40% (289 respondents) typically donate less than \$5, 12.71% (164 respondents) give between \$11 and \$20, and a smaller group, 5.43% (70 respondents), donates more than \$20. Another 16.20% (209 respondents) chose "Not Applicable / Prefer not to Answer." These findings suggest that most Zoo donors contribute modest amounts, with a significant portion giving between \$5 and \$10 per visit.

The survey reveals that visitors enjoy several key aspects of the Salisbury Zoo. The top attractions are the variety of animals, chosen by 67.21% (861 respondents), and the free admission, appreciated by 63.08% (808 respondents). Additionally, 55.19% (707 respondents)

value the family-friendly atmosphere, while 39.58% (507 respondents) appreciate the cleanliness and maintenance of the Zoo. The scenic environment and landscaping are enjoyed by 38.25% (490 respondents), and 32.47% (416 respondents) highlight the friendly and knowledgeable staff. Other popular features include accessibility and ease of navigation (27.09%, 347 respondents), conservation efforts (25.92%, 332 respondents), and educational programs and events (19.75%, 253 respondents). Interactive exhibits were noted by 16.08% (206 respondents), and 58 respondents selected “Other” to specify additional reasons.



The additional comments from visitors highlight several aspects of the Salisbury Zoo that are particularly appreciated. Many visitors expressed admiration for the staff and volunteers, describing them as friendly and dedicated to the animals' well-being. Specific animals, like Theodore the Crow, the ocelots, and the flamingos, were mentioned as favorites. The Zoo's peaceful, shaded environment and accessibility are valued, with several people noting it as an ideal place for a relaxing walk, exercise, or visiting with family members, including those with limited mobility.

The Zoo's layout, free admission, and the presence of shaded paths and a playground were also frequently noted. Some visitors enjoy the Zoo as a local, community-focused resource and value its accessibility to residents. Others appreciate specific features such as the metal art, the playground, the Halloween events, and the Christmas lights.

A few visitors mentioned that they grew up going to the Zoo or enjoy tracking the lives of particular animals, like the Andean bear, Pinocchio. There were also comments about the

benefits of wide walkways for wheelchair users and the enjoyment of simple outdoor activities for kids.

Overall, the Zoo's affordability, welcoming atmosphere, and community presence appear to be strong points of attraction, though a few visitors did express minor disappointments, such as layout concerns.

Visitors provided feedback across various aspects of the Zoo experience, starting with animal exhibits and variety. Many expressed a desire for a wider selection of animals, specifically mentioning otters, sloths, more mammals, and exotic species like big cats. There was disappointment over empty or closed exhibits, which visitors felt diminished their experience, and some suggested pairing solitary animals, such as monkeys, with companions to enhance their social well-being.

In terms of animal welfare, visitors raised concerns about enclosure sizes, noting that some appeared too small or insufficient for animals like bears and eagles. They suggested larger and more enriching habitats could improve animal welfare. Observing signs of stress, such as pacing, visitors recommended creating more natural and stimulating environments.

Regarding Zoo grounds and exhibit maintenance, cleanliness and upkeep were frequently mentioned, with calls for more regular trimming, weeding, and cleaning of enclosures and landscaping. Improved signage was also requested to help identify animals, mark pathways, and indicate temporarily empty exhibits.

For educational programs and interactivity, visitors proposed adding hands-on exhibits, scheduled animal talks, feeding sessions, and interactive learning stations. They also expressed a desire for more frequent interactions with staff and educators near exhibits to enhance their educational experience and answer questions.

Visitor amenities received considerable attention, with comments about the snack bar often being closed and a desire for healthier, more consistent, and diverse food options. More seating areas, benches, and accessible pathways were requested to accommodate strollers and wheelchairs. Additionally, many visitors wanted a printable or digital map on the website, along with a clearer physical layout of the Zoo.

Events and community engagement were appreciated, with respondents praising existing Zoo events and suggesting more seasonal offerings, such as Halloween and Christmas events, family nights, movie nights, and educational workshops. There were also calls for increased fundraising and partnerships with local businesses and schools, possibly integrating community service and volunteer opportunities.

Regarding hours of operation and accessibility, visitors suggested extended hours during the summer and later afternoons to allow working families to visit in the evening. Improved accessibility was recommended, with smoother pathways, stroller rentals, and enhanced handicap access throughout the Zoo.

Donations and funding suggestions included adding QR codes or digital payment options for easy donations, and some visitors proposed a small admission fee to fund improvements. Sponsorship opportunities, exhibit-specific donation boxes, and more branded merchandise in the gift shop were also suggested.

Concerns about accreditation and quality were raised, with some visitors worried about the Zoo's loss of accreditation, which they felt affected animal welfare, exhibit quality, and the Zoo's ability to attract new animals. They noted that reaccreditation could improve the Zoo's reputation and attract more visitors, acknowledging recent improvements but suggesting further updates.

Finally, digital and social media presence recommendations included using social media more actively to inform the community about Zoo events, animal updates, and conservation efforts. Suggestions for website features included adding feeding schedules, active animal times, and interactive educational content to enrich the online experience.

## **Key Informant Calls**

BEACON curated a list of key stakeholders to participate in Key Informant (KI) interviews for the Salisbury Zoo Economic Impact Study. These individuals were selected based on their expertise in Zoo operations, community engagement, tourism, and local economic development. The goal of these interviews was to gain insights into the Zoo's role as a regional attraction, its contributions to the local economy, and its future growth potential.

Scheduling of KI interviews was conducted via email, providing participants with background information on the study, the approximate number of questions, and the expected interview duration. Follow-up emails were sent to confirmed participants with additional details about the interview process. A total of seven individuals were contacted to participate in these conversations, and three responded to schedule interviews. All participants were asked the same five questions, and interview notes were summarized based on themes that emerged across conversations.

The Salisbury Zoo has been a community staple for over 70 years and remains a key driver of tourism on Maryland's Eastern Shore. In recent years, the Zoo has implemented a strategic rebranding, introducing a new logo and tagline: "Experience a World of Wild on the Eastern Shore." This rebranding, accompanied by significant investments in marketing, has expanded the Zoo's visibility across regional tourism markets, including Ocean City Maryland, Baltimore Maryland, Virginia Beach, and areas of Delaware. Strategies include rack cards, brochures, social media engagement, and targeted tourism collaborations. The Zoo's presence in visitor itineraries is reinforced through tourism materials and regional print publications. The Salisbury Zoo also attracts significant inquiries from tourists, especially from Ocean City visitors seeking

additional attractions during their stay. A recent incentive program offers a 10% discount on gift shop purchases, increasing visitor spending within both the Zoo and downtown Salisbury.

The Zoo plays a vital role in Salisbury's economy, attracting an average of 350,000 visitors annually, with peak attendance from Memorial Day to Labor Day. As a free-admission attraction, it drives high visitor traffic, indirectly benefiting local restaurants, hotels, and businesses. Visitors frequently seek recommendations for local dining and accommodations, further boosting economic activity in Salisbury.

Additionally, the Zoo has fostered strong partnerships with over 30 local businesses and organizations, including Wicomico County Public Schools, Salisbury University, the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore, and the City of Salisbury's Arts, Business & Culture Department (ABCD). The Zoo has taken on leadership roles in sustaining community programs when partnering organizations were unable to uphold them. These collaborations enhance tourism, create fundraising opportunities, and strengthen local economic ties with its surrounding business community.

The Salisbury Zoo is undergoing significant transformation guided by a 5-year strategic plan focusing on expansion, infrastructure improvements, and strengthened community engagement. Despite strong regional recognition, Zoo leadership acknowledges that local residents sometimes overlook its presence. To address this, a top priority is regaining accreditation from the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), which will unlock new funding opportunities, enhance the Zoo's ability to attract unique animal species, and enhance educational programming. Upcoming developments include a state-of-the-art Indian Bear exhibit, upgrades to the spider monkey and sloth exhibits, and the launch of new events such as the "Wild Vibes," a music festival targeted at adults. These efforts aim to increase attendance and solidify the Zoo's role as a major regional attraction and economic asset for the City of Salisbury. With strategic expansion, new exhibits, and enhanced programming, it is well-positioned to further strengthen its economic impact and community roles in the years ahead.

## **Economic Impact**

### **IMPLAN Analysis**

BEACON calculated the impact of the Zoo on Wicomico County. The aggregate annual economic impact of the Salisbury Zoo in FY 2024 was estimated to be \$13,427,359 (consisting of \$9,094,623 in direct impacts, \$2,283,477 in indirect impacts, and \$2,049,259 in induced impacts<sup>2</sup>) and supports 109 local jobs.<sup>3</sup> The economic impact of the Salisbury Zoo is produced by three primary spending channels: 1) the operation of the Zoo, including personal and other operating expenditures, 2) the capital spending on the Zoo facility, and 3) the spending by visitors from outside the area who visit the Zoo, then spend at restaurants and lodging in the county.

In addition to the economic impact as calculated, the Zoo's activities have an impact on taxes locally, for the state of Maryland, and at the federal level. The Zoo's operation contributed a total of \$2,163,871 in taxes. The total tax impact includes \$291,435 in taxes generated for Wicomico County and its subdivisions, \$706,841 for the State of Maryland, and \$1,165,595 in federal taxes.

The analysis does not capture impacts in the surrounding counties, which could be significant. Each level of impact experiences "leakage," where money spent on external vendors or by employees who live outside the region and spend their salaries elsewhere does not contribute to the local economic circulation. Additionally, the spending by visitors who spend in other counties is not included.

### **Assumptions**

BEACON based its analysis on data collected from visitor surveys. Data on overall visitor numbers for 2024 were provided by the Salisbury Zoo. Information contained in the Zoo's 2024 operating budget and data contained in the Zoo's 2024 five-year capital projects list were used to estimate the spending impact of the Zoo.

Many of the assumptions underlying the tourism impacts are based on a visitor survey conducted by BEACON from June until October 2024. Available via QR Code in the Zoo, this survey collected information including the respondent's zip code, details of their visit, opinions

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<sup>2</sup> Direct, indirect, and induced impacts are defined by the Minnesota IMPLAN Group, Inc as follows: Direct impact is the impact created by the money from the defined activity entering the economy. The indirect impacts are determined by the amount of the direct effect spent within the study region on supplies, services, labor, and taxes. The induced effect measures the money that is re-spent in the study area as a result of spending from the indirect effect.

<sup>3</sup> The jobs total includes those currently employed by the Zoo as well as the additional jobs in the community supported by the activities of the Zoo. Jobs as reported by IMPLAN include all full-time, part time, and temporary positions.

about the Zoo, and purchasing habits when visiting. BEACON received 1,294 responses to this survey.

Data from survey respondents was used as a basis for modeling the estimated purchasing behavior of visitors. Lodging rates are based on the average hotel rates for Salisbury, Maryland found at Hotels.com. The food expenditures are based on the State of Maryland per diem rates.

The study did not include the impacts of visitor spending at other venues or at retail outlets. These dollars could increase the total impact, but we do not have sufficient data to create an accurate value or direct relationship to the Zoo visit and the spending activity.

All of the output impact totals are reported in 2024 dollars.

## Summary Impact Tables

### Total Impact Summary

Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	Output
1 - Direct	85.7	\$3,690,384	\$5,629,018	\$9,094,623
2 - Indirect	11.0	\$697,098	\$1,309,988	\$2,283,477
3 - Induced	12.7	\$630,058	\$1,192,185	\$2,049,259
<b>Total</b>	<b>109.3</b>	<b>\$5,017,540</b>	<b>\$8,131,191</b>	<b>\$13,427,359</b>

### Total Fiscal Impact Summary

Tax Impact	Sub County	County	State	Federal	Total
1 - Direct	\$50,585	\$133,916	\$445,436	\$841,054	\$1,470,991
2 - Indirect	\$17,064	\$40,896	\$141,459	\$170,289	\$369,708
3 - Induced	\$14,295	\$34,679	\$119,946	\$154,252	\$323,172
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$81,944</b>	<b>\$209,491</b>	<b>\$706,841</b>	<b>\$1,165,595</b>	<b>\$2,163,871</b>
	<b>Total County and Sub County</b>	<b>\$291,435</b>			

### Methodology

The economic impact of the Salisbury Zoo was assessed using the IMPLAN software package, developed by Minnesota IMPLAN Group, Inc. This model, based on Input-Output (IO) theory (for which Wassily Leontief received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1973), calculates total economic output and employment, including direct, indirect, and induced (ripple effect) impacts. The IMPLAN model incorporates local data from 2022, adjusted to 2024 dollar values, and uses state and county-specific data. Its Social Accounting Matrices provide multipliers to estimate further economic and employment effects.

Economic and employment impacts are categorized into three types: direct, indirect, and induced:

- **Direct impacts** are the immediate effects of an economic activity or event, such as the output, employment, or income generated directly by the Zoo.
- **Indirect impacts** result from the supply chain response to the direct impacts. They reflect the business-to-business transactions required to support the direct activity.
- **Induced impacts** arise from the increased household spending due to income earned from the direct and indirect activities when employees spend their wages on goods and services in the local economy.

## Future Impacts

BEACON also projected the future economic impact of the Salisbury Zoo. This analysis was based on historical operating data, visitor volumes, projected capital investments, and local trends. We conducted several scenario models to estimate a range of possible outcomes, including a likely scenario, a pessimistic (low) scenario, and an optimistic (high) scenario.

The scenario analysis drew on trends from the past ten years, excluding the three years impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. BEACON estimated potential changes in the Zoo’s operating and capital budgets, as well as visitor numbers, to assess their impact over five- and ten-year timeframes. These scenarios were modeled using the same IMPLAN methodology applied in the 2024 impact analysis.

All projections are presented in 2024 dollars and may vary in future years due to inflation.

<b>Impact of the Salisbury Zoo Under Three Projected Scenarios</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>Upper Bound</b>	<b>Lower Bound</b>
2029 Total Annual Economic Impact	\$18,860,367	\$20,237,254	\$12,845,544
2029 Local and State Tax Impact	\$1,345,883	\$1,405,955	\$945,600
2029 Total Tax impact	\$2,982,056	\$3,254,387	\$2,082,477
2034 Total Annual Economic Impact	\$23,622,949	\$30,814,643	\$15,089,670
2034 Local and State Tax Impact	\$1,681,997	\$1,995,738	\$1,039,334
2034 Total Tax impact	\$3,736,573	\$4,995,786	\$2,335,734

While the projected impact is based on the best available information, it may change depending on future developments. An expansion of activities or exhibits could attract more out-of-town visitors, while a reduction could decrease attendance. Similarly, the operating budget may increase with major facility upgrades or decrease due to local or national events.

## Conclusion

The study of the impacts of the Salisbury Zoo on Wicomico County show that the investment in the Zoo's operations and facilities have a significant impact on the area. The Zoo provides a valued amenity that attracts visitors to the area and is appreciated by locals and visitors alike.

The feedback from the survey shows the Zoo has a strong usage by individuals from outside of local area, with thirty-nine percent of the respondents to our survey coming from outside the region.

The study took a conservative approach to spending by visitors. The measurement of the total economic and employment impact of a public amenity is challenging. The spending by visitors from the region, but outside of Wicomico County, is difficult to measure. Even more difficult is measuring the economic impact of amenities that contribute to the quality of life in an area. When people are choosing to relocate, the public infrastructure and activities are part of their decision matrix. What we do not know and cannot accurately quantify is how much the presence of the Salisbury Zoo has factored into their decisions.

We also are not able to accurately measure the impact that the Zoo has on a visitor's decision to stay in the area longer. We are limited to gleaning as much information as we can from our survey and other studies. Because of this, we purposely excluded these spending patterns from our calculation.

This cautious and conservative approach leads to economic and employment impact estimates that are, more than likely, lower than what they are in reality. Our calculation still shows that the Salisbury Zoo's annual impact on Wicomico County is over \$13.4 million. This provides a strong return on the investment in its facility and operations.

## Appendix A: Salisbury Zoo Visitor Survey

The Business, Economic, and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) at Salisbury University is working with the City of Salisbury and the Salisbury Zoological Park to study the economic impact of the Zoo. Your input will help us understand how the Zoo affects our local economy and identify ways to improve it.

Completing this survey should take approximately five to eight minutes. Rest assured that all responses will remain confidential. The results will be analyzed as a group, with no individual identification being disclosed.

Upon completing the survey, you will have the opportunity to enter to win a \$250 gift card. Your participation is greatly appreciated and essential in helping us support and enhance the Salisbury Zoo.

**1. Are you 18 years or older?**

- a. Yes

- b. No (Disqualified)
- 2. What is the ZIP code of your primary residence?**
  - 3. Including yourself, how many people were your party when you visited today?**
    - a. 1
    - b. 2
    - c. 3
    - d. 4 or more
  - 4. Did you stay or are you currently staying in paid lodging in Wicomico County for this visit?**
    - a. Yes
    - b. No, even though I do not live in Wicomico County
    - c. No, because I currently reside in Wicomico County
  - 5. How often during the year do you visit the Salisbury Zoo?**
    - a. Never
    - b. 1-2 times
    - c. 3-5 times
    - d. 6-10 times
    - e. More than 10 times
  - 6. Do you visit other attractions in the area before or after you visit the Zoo?**
    - a. Always
    - b. Usually
    - c. Rarely
    - d. Never
  - 7. Do you visit local restaurants and/or shops in the area before or after you visit the Zoo?**
    - a. Always
    - b. Usually
    - c. Rarely
    - d. Never
  - 8. Do you donate when you visit the Zoo?**
    - a. Always
    - b. Usually
    - c. Rarely
    - d. Never
  - 9. If you choose to donate, how much do you typically donate during your visit to the Zoo?**
    - a. Less than \$5
    - b. \$5 - \$10
    - c. \$11 - \$20

- d. More than \$20

**10. What do you enjoy most about the Salisbury Zoo? Select up to three answers.**

- a. The variety of animals
- b. Educational programs and events
- c. Cleanliness and maintenance
- d. Friendly and knowledgeable staff
- e. Family-friendly atmosphere
- f. Scenic environment and landscaping
- g. Interactive exhibits
- h. Conservation efforts
- i. Accessibility and ease of navigation
- j. Admission cost (free)

**11. Do you have any suggestions or comments regarding the Zoo?**

## Appendix B: Key Informant Questions

1. How do you position the Zoo as a key local or regional attraction in marketing efforts? What strategies have been effective in increasing its visibility?
2. From your experience, do visitors often ask about the Zoo at tourism or information centers? How prominent is the Zoo in guiding tourist plans?
3. How does the Zoo's presence influence nearby businesses and the overall local economy, especially during peak tourism seasons?
4. Are there any partnerships between the Zoo and local businesses or government initiatives that have enhanced economic growth in the area?
5. How do you foresee the Zoo's economic role evolving over the next 5-10 years, particularly in terms of expansion, community engagement, or regional economic development?

