

THE GENEVA CITY COUNCIL

JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

JUNE 14, 2016 – 6:00PM

Presiding – Deputy Mayor Greco
Present – Matt Horn, City Manager

1. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Clr. Hagerman, Clr. Camera, Clr. Gramling, Clr. Valentino, Clr.
D'Amico, Clr. Marino, Clr. Eddington

ABSENT: Mayor Alcock

2. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

City Manager Horn encouraged everyone to submit additional comments to Sage Gerling by June 20, 2016.

As noted, City Manager Horn told the group the Ontario County Planning Board voted unanimously to recommend adopting the plan, as no modifications is suggested. The City of Geneva's Planning Board will meet again on June 20th and have asked for their comments by that time. The Tools for Social Change did a very comprehensive review and have made some recommendations inside the Plan. As per attached, City Manager Horn said we did receive multiple public comments.

City Manager Horn said our values are our "DNA" – the core elements of what makes up Geneva, noting the Steering Committee and the public put a ton of time into this. He said from our DNA, we project forward what we want our City to look like in 20 years at the conclusion of this document planning framework. He said the five highlights that are reflective of all efforts include Beautiful, Prosperous, Equitable, Connected and Sustainable.

He said Part 1 of the Plan refers to applying Geneva's values is a tool to help you understand the Plan and not to meant to be an exhaustive list of every policy action that we will take, but more of a reference that will guide you in your decision-making processes moving forward. He said we know what our values are (DNA) our vision (20 year goal post) and we will use our planning principles as a filter to make judgment calls on ideas. Priorities are the broad category areas that we are going to focus on over the next 20 years to get to our vision. He added initiatives are specific things that we see today, given existing conditions in the community that can really solidly influence or trajectory toward our vision.

The following are some concerns/comments that were addressed:

- The committee members didn't feel there should be many changes to what was put together
- Question about how we apply questions regarding poverty, multi-cultural inclusion in specific projects, priorities and planning principles
- How do we create a plan that addresses poverty – develop an Economic Opportunity Task Force
- Environmental enhancements, to be more explicit about what we mean when we say environmental stewardship
- Plan has to address vulnerability in our community (school district), referring to Comment 9 (2); how do we support the school without getting into the schools - Pages 19 and 21 addresses (riots, shootings, etc.)
- Pg. 22 – Boost Access to the City's Lakefront. Important to note to and from access to the Lakefront (economic opportunities by inviting some boating tourism into the City)
- Page 19 – How do we protect and make vital the expansion of rich and fertile countryside that surrounds Geneva with limited jurisdiction. We need to actively collaborate with the Town, as well as other County partners that have the same interest. Perhaps engage in a regional planning effort for Ontario County to establish agricultural zones.
- Page 19, 3rd Section – Work to combat false negative perception of Geneva and their neighborhoods. Marketing effort – we should rewrite that in a positive way
- Page 25 – Residential-Commercial Exemption (Section 485-a). Why not do that now.
- Page 30 – Median Construction on Hamilton Street. Should continue down on the lower level of Rts. 5 & 20
- Page 29 – Zero-tolerance approach to blight. Prefer “Focus-approach to blight” instead of “zero-tolerance approach to blight”
- Work more closely with school district to enhance relationship, as it is an important part of our overall vision of trying to attract the higher end of the socio-economic ladder.
- Invite the Town to join in on this compact as another resource
- What can we do to protect our lakefront – the biggest asset Geneva has to offer that other cities do not
- Separate things that require money from those things that do not require money
Page 36 – 37, “C’s” are things the City can do without writing a check for; except Economic Opportunity Task force
- Address the high, middle and low end housing spectrum, including stricter code enforcement

Again, City Manager Horn asked that all comments be submitted to Sage Gerling no later than June 20, 2016. He added we anticipate a draft will be circulated within the next two weeks.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Deputy Mayor Greco adjourned the meeting at 7:00pm so that Council members could attend the LGBTQ Vigil, relative to the Orlando, Florida shooting.

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Hagerman; seconded by Clr. Eddington

MOVED THAT this meeting be adjourned at 7:00pm.

ROLL CALL: Aye – Clr. Hagerman, Clr. Gramling, Clr. Valentino,

Clr. D'Amico, Clr. Marino, Clr. Eddington,

Deputy Mayor Greco

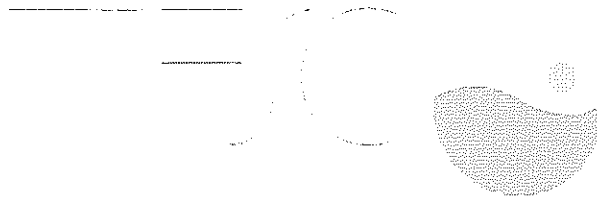
Nay – Clr. Camera

Absent – Mayor Alcock

MOTION CARRIED

City of Geneva Comprehensive Plan Comments Received from Community
From May First Draft

- 1. Ontario County Planning Board (June 8, 2016):** Voted anonymously to recommend adopting the plan. No modifications suggested.
- 2. City of Geneva Planning Board:** Group comments may be completed at the June 20th meeting.
- 3. Tools for Social Change Letter and chart:** Letter and chart included next. Committee members met with Tools for Social Change on May 24th.
- 4. Comments sent via email or phone to Sage Gerling:** Included at the end as Comment 1, 2, etc.



May 22, 2016

Sage Gerling
Director of Neighborhood Initiatives
47 Castle St.
Geneva, NY 14456

Dear Sage and the Comprehensive Planning Committee,

We write on behalf of *Tools for Social Change* (TFSC) to offer feedback on the draft of Geneva's new comprehensive plan. There are several parts of the plan that we are excited about, as they seem to reflect the conversations and recommendations that came out of the TFSC "Big Talks in the Little City" data set. There are also several gaps or absences in the comprehensive plan that we see as missed opportunities for engaging with the Big Talks data set. Finally, the comprehensive plan also contains some troubling rhetoric, assumptions and emphases that we consider to be fundamentally at odds with the Big Talks data set, as well as with the perspectives and goals of TFSC overall. Below we describe these consistencies, gaps, and conflicts respectively.

Consistencies

We believe the plan to connect the lakefront to the rest of the city (page 32, part 1) is largely consistent with the Big Talk data set, which suggests that the lakefront is a public space that is utilized and valued by residents and visitors across lines of social difference. We see that traffic calming and paths of connection, especially to the East Lakeview Neighborhood and to downtown, have the potential to significantly improve access to the lake for disadvantaged residents of Geneva. These connections are especially important for those who do not own their own vehicles, as well as those whose mobility is limited by disability, small children, age or other factors (though please also see Gaps comments below regarding making such social justice benefits explicit). We are disappointed, however, to not see plans made toward a safe, accessible, and inexpensive swimming beach for all residents. This need is illustrated in the Big Talk data, and it is something that could help to make the lakefront more accessible and user-friendly for low-income residents. Since the lakefront is widely considered an important and valued public space, a safe swim area could help to further connect Geneva residents across lines of social difference.

We also believe that the visions and values section in Part 1 is largely consistent with the Big Talk data set (though also see Gaps comments below regarding integration of this section). We agree that the stated values and visions are important to Geneva's present and future, and we agree with most of the policies and actions that articulate how to put these values and visions into

practice. We feel especially that it is important to “identify and mitigate structural or historical conditions that hinder any residents’ ability for full participation in civic and political life” (page 19, part 1). Other policy/action points that resonate with the Big Talk data set include especially:

- WE WILL: Facilitate, via policy, quality housing opportunities for all stages of life
- WE WILL: Foster a climate of skills sharing and skills building for residents
- WE WILL: Grow the economic status of Geneva’s residents, including expanding opportunities to increase the livelihood of low-income workers employed within the Geneva area
- WE WILL: Improve accessibility to public spaces and recreational amenities for residents and visitors
- WE WILL: Provide traditionally underrepresented groups meaningful opportunities for engagement
- WE WILL: Engage in inclusive interactions and transparent decision making processes
- WE WILL: Engage youth in being active citizens and demonstrate their importance in our community
- WE WILL: Make certain that patterns of development reinforce our capacity to stay close and connected
- WE WILL: Protect Seneca Lake and continue efforts to physically and civically connect Geneva with the lake
- WE WILL: Create accessible connections to our natural resources
- WE WILL: Understand each other’s differences, engage in dialogue, and listen
- WE WILL NOT: Support conditions that limit the economic and social mobility of Geneva’s lower income households.
- WE WILL NOT: Ignore language barriers that impede resident access to City services, amenities, and programs
- WE WILL NOT: Ignore the needs of residents to find suitable spaces to recreate and enjoy their neighborhoods
- WE WILL NOT: Tolerate nepotism, racism, or arbitrarily exclusionary practices in public processes, programs, or services.

Gaps

One of the most widespread gaps in the comprehensive plan seems to be the almost complete failure to integrate any of the vision policies/actions (listed above) into the planning priorities and subsequent initiatives. In fact, this absence is so notable that the document currently reads as two separate proposals (one ending on page 19, part 1, the other beginning on page 20), rather than one cohesive plan. We see this as a missed opportunity to specify exactly how the proposed priorities and initiatives dovetail with the (social justice oriented) visions and values of Geneva. Without this integration, the latter part of the plan reads as totally devoid of content that is applicable to the Big Talks data set. Furthermore, social equity then becomes simply an afterthought, tacked on via a brief mention of the “Economic Opportunity Task Force,” rather than something that is embedded in the whole of the plan. We have some specific ideas for how to translate the visions and values into concrete priorities, actions and initiatives. Below are a few examples, and we also look forward to discussing additional ideas with you on Tuesday, May 24th at the next TFSC meeting (6-8pm at Mount Olive Baptist Church).

Geneva's Planning Principles

"Geneva's Planning Principles" (page 20, part 1) only briefly mentions social equity – as an "ideal" situation, but not a principle to strive for. Given that this section is to be considered "the most important" (page 7, part 1) and "the way we will make decisions" (page 20, part 1), this absence is particularly concerning. Instead, we highly recommend integrating the objectives and operation of the Economic Opportunity Task Force (EOTF) directly into Geneva's "Planning Principles". This would ensure that the intent of the EOTF, "to address the City's high poverty rates by employing best practices in aligning poverty services, education, and job training to advance upward mobility," (page 23, part 1) would become integrated into all planning initiatives and future decision-making. More specifically, we suggest deleting the second "pay our own way" (page 20) Planning Principle, which makes little sense for Geneva and is arguably counter-productive to poverty reduction, and replacing it with a principle that instead embeds the EOTF goals into the planning process itself. The text on page 20 could read: **Geneva must acknowledge and strengthen the capacity of its low-income residents** "We must explore best practices for reducing poverty and aligning education, training, and other services to develop a ready workforce for Geneva's thriving industries."

The corresponding text on page 21 could read as follows: WE WILL: look for opportunities to draw upon and enhance the strengths and skills of Geneva's low income residents, including through entrepreneurial incubator programs that could support, for example: a commercial kitchen project, expansion of food trucks and outdoor vendors, buying co-ops or neighborhood markets, and/or other such creative endeavors; align poverty services, education and job training to advance upward mobility; work to improve accessibility to resources, including food, transportation, and quality fair housing; continue to expand opportunities for fair representation in public decision-making. WE WILL NOT: pursue planning projects that push out or diminish the capacities and creative potential of Geneva's low income residents; ignore barriers to upward mobility within Geneva's low income population, including those related to language, discrimination, food access, transportation, housing instability, and job-training.

We further recommend that in order to accomplish the above, the EOTF, which would be charged with the large task of ensuring this principle is considered in all planning decisions, needs to be given larger attention in the budget allocation on pages 36-37 of the plan. Even as a community coalition, the EOTF needs a budget that is more than "marginal coordination costs." The Geneva community cannot be counted on to continue to offer free labor to the City. An effective task force of this kind would require at least paid support staff if not also professional poverty experts. It would also need to adhere to specific diversity requirements for staffing in order to ensure adequate representation of disenfranchised groups. Finally, the EOTF would also require a physical space in which to operate.

Priorities, Initiatives, and Projects

The priorities, initiatives, and projects are themselves full of missed opportunities for elaboration on their social justice implications (as well as other connections to the visions/values section of the plan). Below we offer just a few examples of how to identify and remedy these gaps, but we look forward to discussing with you further how to specifically translate the visions/values section into concrete actions, priorities, and goals.

1. The priorities and initiatives mention concern over the quality of the housing stock, yet there is a lack of attention to rental property, including especially the problems of sub-standard rental units and “slum lords.” In fact, most of the corridor plans focus solely on external features like beautification, or removal of blight, but fail to mention the importance of dealing with internal code violations. Dealing with these internal code violations is very important to ensuring the housing security of low-income residents, which may subsequently allow such residents more opportunities for engagement in the local economy, as well as success in the workforce. This prospect seems very much inline with the stated goal of helping to “advance upward mobility.”
2. The focus on blight and beautification, widespread in the initiatives/projects, suggests that aesthetic issues are the only concerns that matter for future planning decisions. This focus on aesthetics, without any connection to the social justice-oriented values and visions in the plan, is troubling. In addition to the specific language and goals that detail processes of beautification, we suggest considerable attention be paid to concretizing the visions and values section into other tangible plans and actions. (Again, we look forward to discussing more of these specifics with you on Tuesday, May 24th). In addition, however, it is worth noting that we do not generally disapprove of aesthetic enhancements. We acknowledge that even aesthetic enhancements themselves can lead to other improvements: they can act as enticements for further business development, such as a much-needed grocery store in the East Lakeview Neighborhood; and they can improve quality of life for disadvantaged residents, including by increasing connectivity and accessibility to Geneva’s natural and social assets. Aesthetic enhancements could also encourage more mixed-income housing opportunities, thereby disrupting patterns of economic segregation and encouraging more connectivity among residents. However, none of these benefits are stated or elaborated in the plan. We believe it is very important for the plan to contain specific language regarding the social justice goals of the initiatives/projects, whether focused aesthetically or otherwise.
3. The corridor plans mention medians, bike lanes (except disconcertingly not on Hamilton St, where they are most needed!), traffic slowing, pedestrian crosswalks, and more. But there is no mention of how and why this is important for helping to ameliorate some of the transportation issues that Geneva’s low-income residents face, especially for those who do not have access to a vehicle. We would like to see much more attention paid to the transportation difficulties of low-income residents, as the Big Talk data shows that this is important to the plan’s goal of “advancing upward mobility.” Moreover, several initiatives mention improved signage and crossings, but they do not discuss the importance of accessible signage, improved crossings, and other accessibility enhancements in terms of the specific accessibility and mobility needs of Geneva residents. How will this improve access to the lake/colleges for older residents, or residents with small children, residents with disabilities, or even simply residents without access to vehicles? We strongly believe that the transportation, mobility and accessibility needs of Geneva’s disadvantaged residents need to be detailed specifically in the initiatives/projects section of the plan.
4. In terms of the Castle St corridor initiative particularly, there is concern at TFSC over the loss of the laundromat – which is used by many, though is labeled simply (again) as a “blight” in the plan. Instead of focusing primarily on aesthetic and other concerns that seem to only benefit wealthier residents in this area, why not specifically discuss how the initiative could

improve quality of life for low-income residents, encourage a well-functioning, mixed-income residential neighborhood, expand opportunities for recreation, enhance accessibility to downtown, the public library, and more? And why not provide a provision for keeping a laundromat in this neighborhood, and perhaps for encouraging some other mixed-use and commercial development as well? These questions could equally apply to other corridor initiatives; it is important to include in all plans opportunities for growth and development that low-income communities can specifically benefit from, and rally behind.

In addition to these missed opportunities, we believe that the comprehensive plan still suffers from a “positive politics” approach in some places. That is, there is a tendency to describe Geneva as what we wish or imagine it to be, rather than acknowledging the current realities, which are not all so positive. For example, Geneva is not currently “connected” in many places. In fact, as the Big Talk data show, there is a fair amount of economic and racial segregation in both residential and commercial spaces. Rather than acknowledging such experiences of segregation, the plan seems to claim connectivity as a reality, rather than a goal. Similarly, our multi-cultural heritage is certainly a source of pride for some, and is indeed something to be celebrated. However, racism and xenophobia are also lived realities in Geneva that remain under-acknowledged. While celebrating diversity is important, it is also important to specifically discuss how such a celebration can take place – for example, by writing policy that ensures inclusion and representation in civic and political life. Without such specifics, pride in Geneva’s diversity remains simply an imaginary hope. And lastly, in regard to accessibility, while the plan does generally mention the importance of accessible spaces, this word also remains undefined and under-specified in the plan. Experiences of inaccessibility are real and specific in Geneva – involving difficult street crossings, (a lack of) public seating and benches, transportation difficulties (such as unsafe biking and walking areas, or places to wait for infrequent busses), and also a desire for inexpensive access to safe swimming areas by the lakefront. As has already been noted, these experiences are not reflected explicitly in the plan – even though they could be seen as important rationales for at least some of the initiatives mentioned above.

Finally, it is important to mention that the plan’s “uniquely urban” rhetoric, while not in and of itself problematic, is not adequately defined in this plan, and is thus confusing and vague at best. We believe it would be worth explicitly defining “uniquely urban” in a way that acknowledges the strength and engagement of Geneva’s low-income residents as well as the importance of diversity to the City’s uniquely urban identity.

Conflicts

In addition to the above gaps, there are a few aspects of the plan that we feel are at odds with not only the TFSC Big Talk data, but also with the goals of social justice and equity that underpin our work at TFSC. These conflicts tend to center around a tendency – widespread in the comprehensive plan draft – to view low-income neighborhoods as fundamentally “weak” and thus incapable of contributing to the future success of Geneva. We reject this notion and instead suggest that it is misguided and counter-productive to ignore the strength, creativity, connectivity and capacity of Geneva’s low-income residents. It is well documented that low-income residents frequently build close-knit social networks and community cohesion in even the poorest communities (see, for example, Masuda and Crabtree 2010). And, indeed, the Big Talk data suggests that Geneva’s low-income residents are not only connected to one another, but also involved in creative, uplifting endeavors throughout the City. Furthermore, low-income residents,

in comparison to middle-income, tend to spend a much higher percentage of their incomes locally, and thus are invaluable assets to the local economy. They are clearly strong, not weak, economic actors – limited only by structural forces in the community like housing instability, job insecurity, language barriers, transportation difficulties, racism and more. Thus, while mixed-income housing is perhaps a path towards Geneva’s financial stability, we must be careful to not assume that middle-income residents are the only way to “save” low-income communities. And, we must be sure that pursuing mixed-income residential development does not disrupt what is currently working in low-income neighborhoods in Geneva. (It is also worth noting that there is little in the plan that even hints at mixed-income development and the upward mobility of low-income residents as priorities or planning goals. The plan seems to advocate gentrification much more than either integration or support, perhaps especially in its refusal to ever consider deploying funds on a “worst first” basis, which suggests a trickle down economic model.)

Following this critique, we feel that the current plan sets up a disturbing dichotomy in which middle-income families have much to offer Geneva, but low-income families do not. The language of “strong” versus “weak” and “healthy” versus “unhealthy” furthers this dichotomy, which – while perhaps appropriate in certain market discussions – becomes inappropriate and insulting when wielded frequently and without discrimination in any mention of low-income residents. Furthermore, the tendency to reduce Geneva’s residents to solely a monetary market-based descriptor is both disturbing and misguided. There are, in fact, many ways to think about economic success that do not revolve only around market value. For example, it is important to recognize the importance of additional, community-based economic systems that expand beyond, and run parallel to, the capitalist market system. These “alternative” economies (which include, for example: sharing, gift giving, bartering, care giving, cooperatives, hunting and gathering, community gardening, borrowing, collective ownership, self-employment, and much more) are particularly important to the stability, success, and connectivity of low-income communities (see Gibson-Graham 2006). The point is: these communities have capacity and strength, and it would be a huge mistake to not recognize and encourage this capacity and strength as part of the plan for Geneva’s future.

Some historical context on the rhetorical links between poverty, race, and pathology (i.e. healthy versus unhealthy) is also important here in order to highlight the dangerousness of this plan’s linguistic and philosophical impulse. Historians like Daryl Michael Scott (1997), and political scientists like Adolph Reed (1999), have written extensively on how white contempt for African Americans has long been couched in the language of pathology (that is, healthy and unhealthy, or weak and strong), especially when outright racism has been tabooed. In his *Stirrings in the Jug* (1999), Reed identifies how the creation of a fictive, pathological urban underclass has underwritten the rise of a middle class custodial politics and marginalized the voices of working class voters in minority communities since the Civil Rights Movement. In these conditions, a vague sickness or pathology has often been attributed to poor people of color in order to avoid overtly racist language, as well as to justify middle class power and authority in urban decision-making. There are, however, other models of community-engaged planning that do not marginalize disenfranchised residents, and do not replicate a language and philosophy couched in racism and class hierarchy. Participatory action research, community asset mapping, and other collective strategies have been successfully employed in communities seeking alternatives to gentrification (Sherman 2016). TFSC has actively and effectively implemented these research and planning strategies since the launch of the Big Talks in December of 2015. We suggest,

therefore, that this work is not only possible but also functional and desirable for the City of Geneva. Accordingly, we believe that community-engaged planning should become incorporated directly into decision-making processes that are specified in the comprehensive plan. That is, as Geneva looks to break ground on the planning projects and initiatives detailed in the plan, community-engaged planning should be advocated and employed as a strategy for further decision-making.

To respond to the above critiques, the plan needs to:

1. Avoid all language of weak versus strong, or healthy versus unhealthy, and replace it with language that recognizes the productive capacities and collective strengths of both low income and middle class residents (as understood and determined both within and beyond the capitalist market economy).
2. Invite capacity building and offer support (e.g. job training, language assistance, housing stability, adequate transportation, etc.) and economic opportunity for low-income communities as part of a goal to encourage “upward mobility” as well as to support those unable to rise to the middle class.
3. Reverse the refusal to ever deploy scarce resources on a “worst-first” basis (page 20, part 1). At times, this strategy may be appropriate. However, when living conditions severely limit the capacity and strength of low-income residents, these barriers to growth and success also need to be taken into account.
4. Incorporate community-engaged research into the future planning processes of all specified priorities and initiatives in order to better understand and respond to the assets, strengths, and needs of disenfranchised residents in Geneva.

Sources cited in this section:

Gibson-Graham, Julie Katherine. *A postcapitalist politics*. U of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Masuda, Jeffrey R., and Alexis Crabtree. “Environmental justice in the therapeutic inner city.” *Health & place* 16.4 (2010): 656-665.

Reed, Adolph L. *Stirrings in the jug: Black politics in the post-segregation era*. Choice Publishing Co., Ltd., 1999.

Scott, Daryl Michael. *Contempt and pity: Social policy and the image of the damaged Black psyche, 1880-1996*. Univ of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Sherman, Danya. “How community engaged design is changing development.” *Next City*. Online at <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/what-is-community-engaged-design>, May 18, 2016

In Summary:

We ask for the following changes to the comprehensive plan:

- Integrate the “visions and values” language into the rest of the document, especially through making the concrete, social justice implications of the initiatives explicit.
- Where appropriate, acknowledge and name the social justice and equity concerns that currently exist in Geneva (e.g. accessibility, transportation, segregation, etc.) and respond to these concerns with tangible, specific planning details.

- Replace the middle planning priority of “paying our own way” with one that encourages economic opportunity through the EOTF; staff this taskforce appropriately and fund accordingly in the proposed budget for this plan.
- Change the widespread wording and assumptions that view low-income residents as “weak” and devoid of value; instead, support a tangible, explicit commitment to recognize, draw upon, and enhance the capacity of low-income communities through specific planning initiatives and policies, and through community-centered decision-making protocols.

We thank you sincerely for your continued work on this plan, and we hope that you will see the value of these recommendations. We look forward to your visit on Tuesday, May 24th, and to working with you further to improve this document.

Respectfully,

Jessica Hayes-Conroy, Jeremy Wattles, Janice Loudon, Jim Meaney, and Kathryn Slining Haynes
on behalf of Tools for Social Change

Concrete Actions that Translate Vision/Values into Planning Initiatives

Vision/Value Policies	Concrete Action/Planning Initiative
WE WILL: Identify and mitigate structural or historical conditions that hinder any residents' ability for full participation in civic / political life	- Support the EOTF as a planning principle, ensure it is funded appropriately, given physical space, and staffed by residents and experts according to specific diversity requirements
WE WILL: Facilitate, via policy, quality housing opportunities for all stages of life	- Increase housing stability by passing a local ordinance prohibiting landlords from discriminating via income
WE WILL: Foster a climate of skills sharing and skills building for residents	- Provide physical space and bi-lingual support for skill sharing and building within disadvantaged neighborhoods
WE WILL: Grow the economic status of Geneva's residents, including expanding opportunities to increase the livelihood of low-income workers employed within the Geneva area	- Include initiatives that seek to improve transportation and housing for low-income residents, enhance quality of life, and ensure access to food/resources (e.g. market in 'food desert') - Lift the food truck/vendor ban and organize a co-operative commercial kitchen space in order to encourage food-based entrepreneurial opportunities (in innovation hub?)
WE WILL: Improve accessibility to public spaces and recreational amenities for residents and visitors	- Specify in initiatives how accessibility will be improved for low-income residents and residents with mobility disadvantages (e.g. connecting Castle St. to library and downtown; improving seating downtown and transit stops, ensuring pedestrian / bike safety along Hamilton St, etc.)
WE WILL: Provide traditionally underrepresented groups meaningful opportunities for engagement	- Provide accessible physical space with adequate transportation for community events and gatherings in low-income areas - Actively recruit underrepresented populations to serve on city agencies and run for city office
WE WILL: Engage in inclusive interactions and transparent decision making processes	- Offer business grants and entrepreneurial support that is accessible (including bi-lingual) to disadvantaged residents - Utilize a bi-lingual, community-engaged planning process for all future planning decisions to engage a diverse population
WE WILL: Engage youth in being active citizens and demonstrate their importance in our community	- Ensure safe areas for play, swimming and recreation at the lakefront and City parks - Offer connection to civic and political life via youth internships and committee seats
WE WILL: Make certain that patterns of development reinforce our capacity to stay close and connected	- Encourage diverse participation at City events through bilingual advertising and attention to venue's physical and cultural accessibility (e.g. food options)
WE WILL: Protect Seneca Lake and continue efforts to physically and civically connect Geneva with the lake	- Provide access to safe swimming at the lakefront - Connect lakefront to East Lakeview neighborhood and other disadvantaged neighborhoods
WE WILL: Create accessible connections to our natural resources	- Provide seating, safe crossings, and enhanced transportation to the lake and City parks
WE WILL: Understand each other's differences, engage in dialogue, and listen	- Actively recruit and support under-represented persons to serve on city agencies and offices, and in future planning decisions - Use bi-lingual communication whenever possible
WE WILL NOT: Support conditions that limit the economic and social mobility of Geneva's lower income households.	- Enforce internal code violations to eliminate sub-standard rental properties and "slumlords" - Provide physical space and bi-lingual logistical support for a tenants rights association
WE WILL NOT: Ignore language barriers that impede resident access to City services, amenities, and programs	- Provide Spanish-language options for communication, documents, signage, advertisements, job training and city programs whenever possible
WE WILL NOT: Ignore the needs of residents to find suitable spaces to recreate and enjoy their neighborhoods	- Provide physical spaces (indoor and out) for safe recreation and gathering within disadvantaged communities - Ensure adequate transportation options for travel in the City
WE WILL NOT: Tolerate nepotism, racism, or arbitrarily exclusionary practices in public processes, programs, or services.	- Employ a community-engaged process for decision-making - Allow the EOTF and/or GHRC oversight of business grant processes to ensure fairness; provide both with enough resources to effectively investigate discrimination complaints

Comments Received via email or phone

Comment 1

It seems there are an increased number of rentals in Geneva. Could there be a moratorium placed on the creation of rental properties? I see a huge number of rental properties. Landlords do not live there and see disinvestment and have transient populations. Often rental properties end up to have more people. One of the things about rentals is I think some people do not know what the rules are. Isn't it possible to educate people about what the rules are? What procedures for renting in the City?

The railway is very unattractive especially along the lake. The appearance is detrimental to the neighborhoods. Perhaps planter boxes could dress them up. For the railway, could be much more attractive. Can we do anything to help to clean-up? In other communities, the railway is cute. I have seen parks, flowers and benches. I do not why we have to have the railway look the way it does. Development overlooking the water on the downtown side.

Bicentennial Park there was an awful amount of money. Part of it is lack of shade. It is not a pleasant place to sit.

Comment 2

I was reading the article about the comp plan in tonight's FLT, and it struck me immediately that XXX and I fit the demographic of "middle income people who have flown the coop" perfectly. As I read through the article, and reviewed the strategies for attracting and retaining that middle-income group, I realized that the reasons we left Geneva were only alluded to, and not addressed directly. In fact, there was no direct mention of it at all in the article (and seemingly in the plan itself).

Simply put, we left because, despite significant effort on the parts of many, the Geneva City School District was unable to meet our needs as a family. In Geneva, it's never a great political move to talk about the fact that the school system often fails its students for a variety of reasons. As soon as you head down that road, there is a contingent of cheerleaders who want to equate the extraordinary efforts of teachers with meaningful results. Unfortunately, despite incredibly hard work, there are several performance areas that the schools simply don't measure up in, and nearly *all* of those areas are the direct result of the increased percentage of students living in poverty based circumstances (hence the fact that I see the comp plan only tangentially addressing this major issue). The increase in amount of time spent dealing with behavior problems are consistent with larger urban areas. The shrinking tax base contributing to the school coffers coupled with the ridiculous allocation of state and federal funding have put Geneva in a position where the district is chronically understaffed, lacks the funding for specialized programs to meet the needs of the ever changing student population, and will be unable to retain quality teachers/administrators/support staff who *will* leave for greener (read: suburban, wealthier, and invariably less diverse) pastures.

When XXX and I moved to Fairport, we anticipated a significant increase in our overall cost of living, and were willing to accept that in exchange for an improved academic experience for our kids. We certainly did achieve an improvement in the overall academic experience. The variety and quality of options available at the three schools we've experienced since moving here has been nothing short of astonishing. What we didn't anticipate was that our

total cost of living in Fairport, despite a significantly more expensive home, increased only marginally (for a variety of reasons including tax rates/Fairport municipal electric/etc.).

To compare Geneva and Fairport schools is completely unfair in many regards. Tax base. Overall funding. Lack of poverty. Level of parental support and involvement. I could go on and on talking about the unfair advantages that Fairport has compared to my hometown. But none of those reasons make any difference whatsoever when it comes to making a decision about where to raise your family. Geneva is in direct competition for families with communities like Fairport, Victor, Farmington, and Canandaigua. Even Penfield, Webster, and Honeoye Falls-Lima, are within reasonable commuting distance from Geneva. My sense is that all of those districts are *perceived* as higher performing, and come with less baggage than Geneva.

It's not just XXX and me. I've had multiple conversations with families who are recent Geneva-Fairport transplants (it's amazing when you run into so many Geneva connections at the Rt. 31 Wegmans!). Every single one of them with children has said the exact same thing. It's all about the schools. That's why they left. And that's why they won't return-if at all-until their kids have graduated.

When you bring up these points in Geneva, it seems that you almost always experience a couple things. First, you're vilified for having the audacity to criticize some of Geneva's hardest working, most well-established people, the teachers (which I'm not doing in any way, to be clear). Then secondly, you'll get hit with a long list of what's *good* about Geneva schools-and it's a long and valid list. There are several positive things going on. But the bottom line truth is that despite the presence of those positive things, Geneva City Schools are underperforming, have more behavior problems in the classroom, and in short, experience all of the problems of more urban districts. That's in sharp contrast to the other districts that I mentioned above. Those differences are clearly enough to sway the opinions of potential (and current) residents.

I recognize that the City and the school district are distinctly separate entities. But it seems to me that the City of Geneva should be the district's most vocal ally when it comes to advocating for the needs of its students. The Mayor/City Manager/Council should be in regular contact with the State DOE, acting as a thorn in their side until appropriate funding is offered to insure a higher quality experience for Geneva families. Being the proverbial squeaky wheel has the potential to lead to results, and put simply, the Geneva schools need all the help they can get in that regard.

I strongly suggest that the comprehensive plan be expanded to include information and strategies to improve not only the actual quality of student experience in the Geneva schools, but to identify a role that the city can play in the following areas:

1. Formal methods of advocacy with the state Department of Education, the Commissioner, and federal representatives who have impact on the funding streams.
2. How to utilize city resources to increase the level of family and parental involvement in the schools, perhaps by increased cooperation between the schools and the city Rec Dept (which has always done a great job of working with the schools-we just need more of the same, with increased funding, and increased recognition of the positive economic and social impact of investing more heavily in those programs).

3. If it's not already happening, increased cooperation and assistance with regard to grounds and/or facilities maintenance. For example, should the city have to pay to insure that the school's lawns are mowed on a regular basis? Of course not. But when a prospective family drives by the elementary school and the already overburdened facilities staff haven't been able to get to the 6" deep lawn? That's a problem for Geneva in general, not just the schools.

4. Increased/regular communication between the schools and City Council. It would behoove the Mayor to request that the superintendent or other administrative representative provide a general report to City Council on a regular basis (live, in person, at Council meetings). Included in that report should be student achievements that are worthy of celebration by all, with direct recognition by Council of individual students when appropriate.

I'm sure there are several other areas where increased cooperation and communication between the City and the schools could/would be beneficial. But I suppose my primary objective is to insure that city planners understand that the reputation of the schools is a massive factor in any families decision on where to live, and that right now, Geneva does not stack up well in comparison to competing districts.

Comment 3

The most hopeful thing I left with was the idea of an economic task force. I could see its value if a task force was used to develop jobs AND address the barriers that keep people from working, those barriers being transportation, child care, housing needs, training, etc. If a task force coordinated services to make all those pieces come together, city residents would benefit.

I'm seeing that happening in Yates County where there is a High School Equivalency class for FLCC. The Workforce Development Office provides students with a caseworker who counsels them with personal issues, sends them to trainings, helps them develop resumes, sets them up with jobs in the community with their salaries paid by the county, and offers incentives to come to class. The WF office itself also employs some students and trains them. I'm see the value of that kind of holistic approach, and I'm not sure if that's happening in Ontario County.

With regard to training, FLCC has a new president. It might be worthwhile to approach him - - introduce him to the city and talk about partnering with the city to offer more training programs here. As you know, the college has a program in Seneca County that trains machinists onsite, and in Victor, there's a mechatronics tech program. Geneva has the CNA program. I feel Geneva would benefit immensely from having more training programs here, particularly if the trainings were done in coordination with a particular industry.

The machinists program, for example, is offered onsite at different manufacturing facilities, and I believe 100 percent of the graduates were offered jobs, many of them at the sites where they trained. Perhaps those sites will no longer need to hire so many machinists and FLCC could partner with a site here?

Comment 4

I read with interest today's [Finger Lakes Times](#) article of the proposed City of Geneva's comprehensive plan. Consultant Lombardi did a fair job of categorizing the city's strengths

and weaknesses but failed to mention the 500 lb gorilla that continues to obstruct the small gains the city has made in the last few years- The City of Geneva's tax rate, approximately \$17.50 per thousand is one of the compelling reasons that the middle class is leaving the City and why middle class house hunters are choosing other towns and villages in Ontario County. Not only a little less in taxes but a lot less. Seven years ago, the OC BOS changed the sales tax formula that greatly benefitted the City of Geneva. The change from distributing sales tax revenue from 100% property assessment to a formula of population and property assessment resulted in the City receiving millions of dollars more to operate. It was the golden opportunity to reduce the city's property tax but instead Geneva City council for years patted themselves on the back for "keeping taxes flat" while sticking their heads in the proverbial sand as people continued to leave for the town of Geneva and other places.

The good news is that it might not be too late to make the hard choices as sales tax revenue continues to stay steady and may actually increase slightly. These choices will remain difficult, contentious, and possibly unpopular but very little of the proposed plan will matter unless the City tax issue is addressed. It takes political will. It took twenty (20) years for the City to finally realize that the 911 system should go the County. Twenty years! Finally it will be done and it's noteworthy that the County will invest about \$1.5 million to take over the City's dispatch. Just imagine the savings if this was done many years ago.

Comment 5

Waste of money- a city staff person could have done that

Comment 6

Not enough in the plan addressing social inequality

Comment 7

Language of the plan does not reflect social justice

Comment 8

Some questions and suggestions for the City of Geneva Comprehensive Plan.

Geneva's share of poverty:

According to the report in the plan Geneva has 12% of Ontario County's population, but has 25% of the county's residents who live in poverty. This is not tenable. What do Canandaigua and other cities do to keep their poverty rate below 10%? If Geneva maintains the poverty rate at such a high level, or even increases it, it will reach the point of no return. Before the city does anything else, in my opinion it should address the question of how to decrease the poverty rate to below 10%.

Some suggestions for this:

- a) the city of Geneva should restrict welfare eligibility based on length of residency: e.g. 1, 1 ½ or 2 years of residence before becoming eligible for welfare,
- b) limiting welfare to a 3 year term, with a possible review.
- c) Welfare could be conditional on some sort of return service.

Housing: Affordable prices, very high taxes. 60% of the city properties are off the tax roll. Some suggestions:

- d) Put properties back on tax roll
- e) Negotiate payments for road use, water and sewage use, use of the Geneva Police Department, Fire Department, etc.
- f) Require some return services in lieu of taxes.

Lake Front access:

To make Geneva a destination, the lake front has to have uninhibited access. This could be achieved by rerouting transient truck traffic to Pre Emption Road – Rt 96 – Rt 318 – Rts 5&20. For passenger car traffic installing roundabouts at Elizabeth Blackwell Drive and Lake St and limiting speed to 15 mph between them. Pedestrians should have uninhibited access to the lake front between the two roundabouts.

Set up a city owned building immediately East of the Visitors Center for a Bistro like restaurant with an outside beer garden, and another at the East end of the lake front where the State Park begins, also rental as a pastry shop and ice cream parlor, also with outside sitting with tables ,chairs and umbrellas.. This may ensure human traffic at the lake front. This kind of arrangement works in some American and most European cities, and would also bring in revenues.

Comment 9

These are some roughly written suggestions:

1. Make every effort possible to reduce City of Geneva Taxes! They are very high compared to the Town of Geneva, as well as other cities that people are choosing to move to. We do not get the visible/identifiable benefits of such high taxes, that other locations might have.
2. Tighten discipline in the Geneva City Schools, and raise academic standards. There is a "reputation" that needs an extra lot of effort to rebuild, even though we have made much progress, on and off, through the years.

We also do not have as many BIG scholarships to college as other surrounding schools. (Real Estate Agents will tell you that Geneva Schools and Taxes are the biggest killers for home sales here.)

3. Stop expanding housing for low income. This sounds cruel, but we are overwhelmed with the challenge to help so many needy in our County.
4. Put many more picnic tables within the lake view, and maintain them. I went to the Trout Derby and found our gazebo and lake area in need of cleaning. There were very few benches and no picnic areas by the tent that they brought the trout to weigh.
5. Offer many more "advantages" for city of Geneva residents to feel they are getting more for their tax dollars and for choosing to live in and contribute to their city. Ideas: even loser rates for classes at the Rec. Dept, at the Library, use of rooms at the Community Center, entry to festivals, local restaurant discounts...etc etc. for CITY RESIDENTS. Have

an ID that we can carry and get benefits from...issued when we pay our taxes each year, maybe.

6. Tighten the housing mandates/zoning rules, etc. to put pressure on residents to keep up the exterior of their properties. Maybe incentives that are positives could work. Try contests to beautify, with prizes such as \$100 gift certificate to a restaurant in Geneva for the nicest garden, or the most attractive porch, or???

7. If there is any way, stop the continuous increase in the number of rentals in the City of Geneva. Can we regulate the number of people that can live in a certain square footage? or live in basements and attics? ..those who are renting "under the radar"? those rentals that are "legal" but not doing anything to increase the value of our community. Just one example is the increase in fences that give the neighborhood the feeling of separation and lack of neighborly relations. Maybe we can have a neighbor to neighbor counseling service for residents who need help negotiating over issues of noisy, messiness, animals, privacy, etc.

8. Teach swimming free to all city residents and offer the use of our pools for exercise to all city tax payers. I encourage more city resident use of the swimming pool at Geneva High School and at Hobart. Seniors citizens have to drive to the Chiropractic College or Midlakes School pool. Physical therapists in Geneva say that water aerobics are so good for weight management and orthopedic rebuilding, but the YMCA is too expensive and too small for the needs we have in Geneva.

9. Put more pressure on LANDLORDS to maintain their properties to a higher level of quality care, BOTH indoors and outdoors!!

10. Is there any possibility that more utility wires can be buried underground to help beautify the city? It is so much prettier to not have trees cut with big holes or trimmed on one side to keep them from growing into the wires that line our streets.

11. Annex South Lake Neighborhood to the Town of Geneva.

Seek answers as to how to get more people to WANT to move to Geneva and those who do own homes here, to continue to live in Geneva. What advantages can we say there are to living in the CITY OF GENEVA? (rather than the Town or in Canandaigua or Victor or????)

I am sure with brainstorming, there can be many more creative approaches.