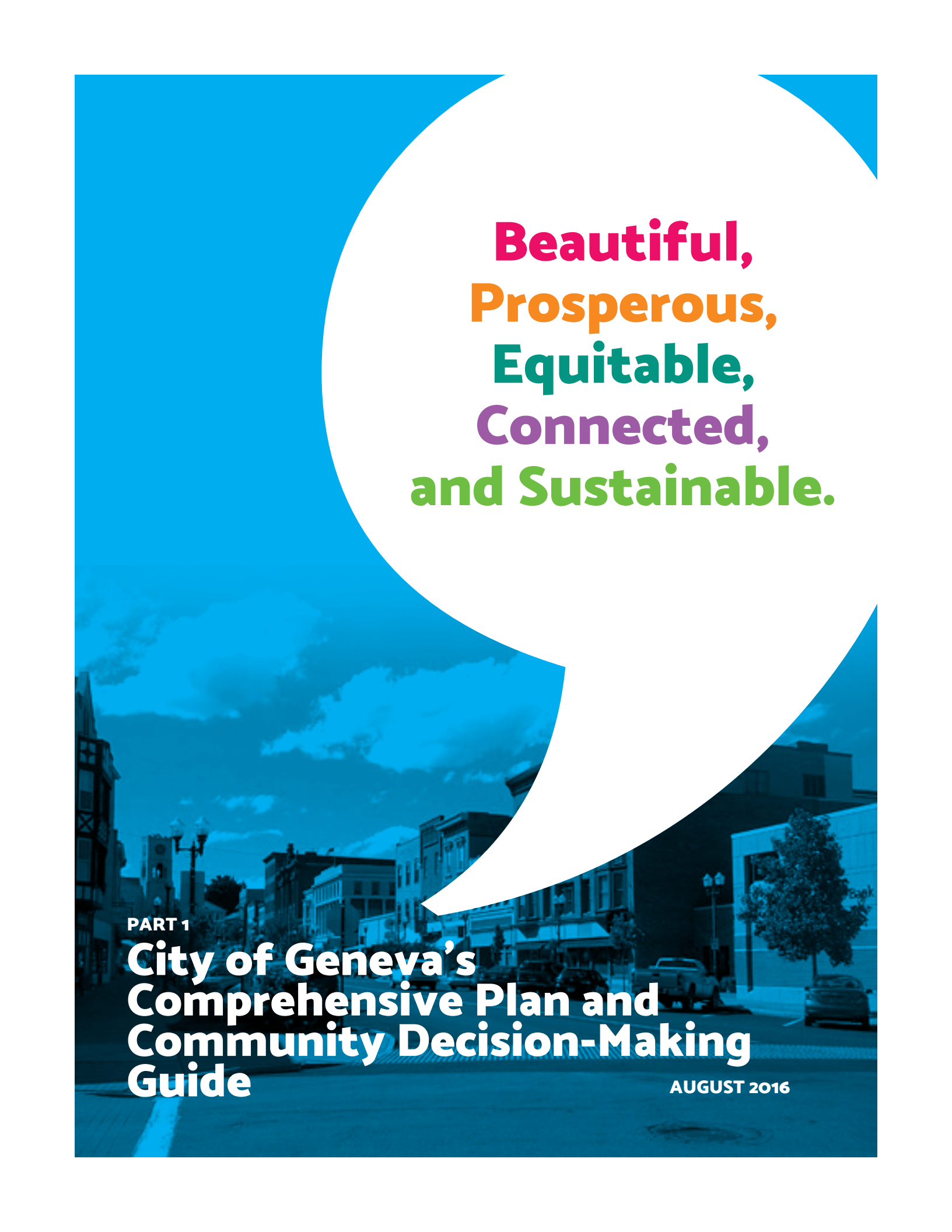


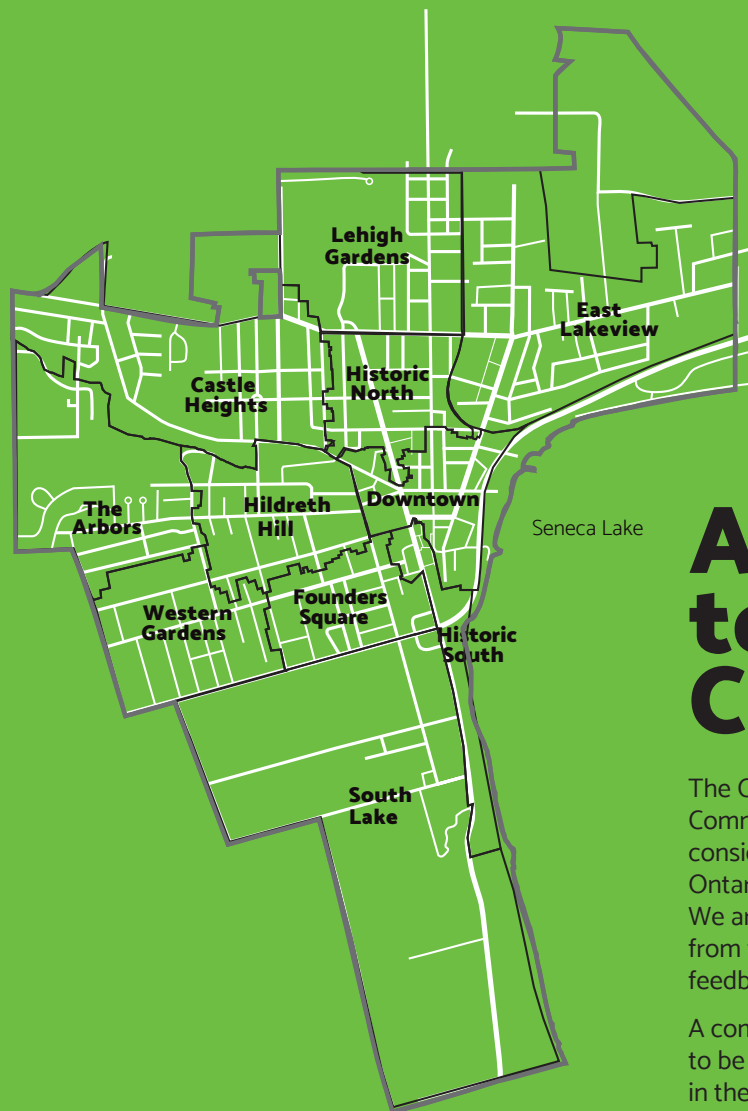


**Beautiful,
Prosperous,
Equitable,
Connected,
and Sustainable.**

PART 1

**City of Geneva's
Comprehensive Plan and
Community Decision-Making
Guide**

AUGUST 2016



A Letter to the Community

The City of Geneva's Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee is proud to present this draft for careful consideration by City Council, the City Planning Board, Ontario County Planning Board and community members. We are grateful for the resident input and volunteer efforts from the survey, community dialogues, meetings, and the feedback forthcoming on the draft plan.

A comprehensive plan is as much a visioning of a future yet to be realized as it is a diagnosis of the issues that stand in the way of achieving that vision. For Geneva, the vision of an equitable, prosperous, sustainable, and beautiful city is attainable. The challenge this committee faced was discovering and seeing the ways in which we fail to attain those ideals, identifying the stumbling blocks we have the power to remove, acknowledging where we need assistance from others, and presenting a strategic, effective plan for positive growth in Geneva.

The committee is fully aware of the financial constraints facing the City and the high tax burden on property owners, and this plan takes that under consideration. We feel strongly that this plan provides a broad framework for decision making to assist City Council, local decision-making entities, and community members in making positive actions to move Geneva forward.

We have work ahead of us to make Geneva an excellent place to live for all residents. Our most serious challenge is the City's high and growing poverty rate. While this plan presents a broad strategy for achieving greater levels of income diversity and economic opportunity within Geneva, additional steps will be required to fully address this issue. We call for an Economic Opportunity Task Force that will explore best practices for reducing the negative impacts of poverty and aligning education, training, and other services to develop a ready workforce for Geneva's present and future thriving industries.

Lastly, from the beginning of this process, we have understood that our work will not be finished with the adoption of this plan. The committee members are dedicated to be strong advocates for the measures outlined in this plan and will meet annually to review progress and offer guidance in forwarding the plan's vision, values and principles. We hope that you will join us in helping to make the vision of an equitable, prosperous, sustainable and beautiful city a reality.

Sincerely,

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

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CITY OF GENEVA

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PART 1
City of Geneva’s
Comprehensive Plan
and Community
Decision-Making Guide

Table of Contents



PART 2 of the plan, a separate document, provides more detailed analysis of market, demographic, and housing conditions, as well as a review of the city’s fiscal condition, land use and zoning, and of recent and ongoing planning initiatives, and sustainability goals.

How to Use this Plan

Every day, decisions are made that have an impact on Geneva's long-term vitality and quality of life. Some of these decisions are made in City Hall, but many are made by civic organizations, not-for-profits, businesses, groups of neighbors, and many others who have an impact on where the community's resources and energies are directed.

On what basis are these decisions made – and toward what end? On matters big and small, how can we be sure that the choices we are making reinforce one another and result, collectively, in a stronger Geneva?

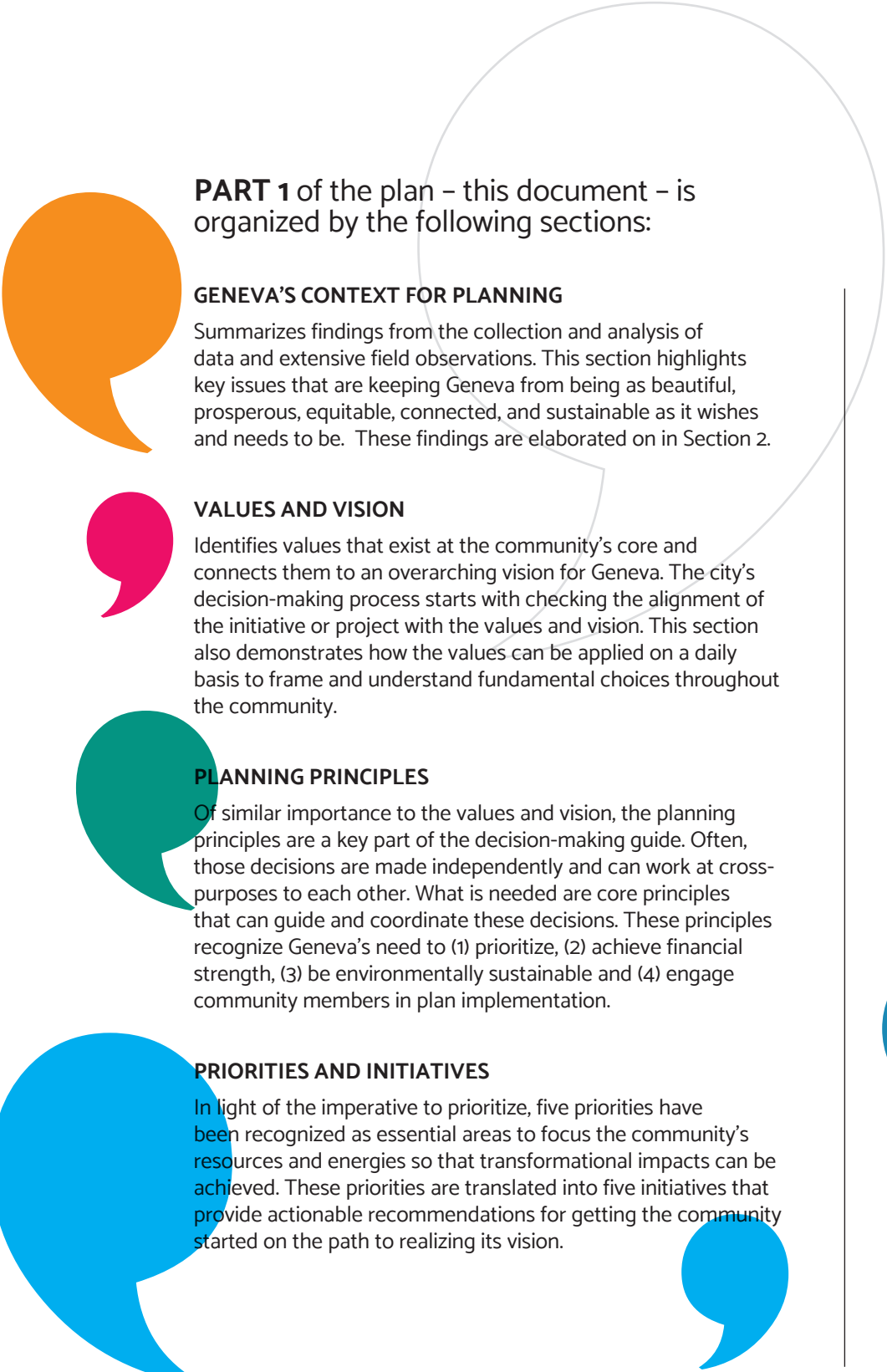
This comprehensive plan, more than anything else, is a guide for good decision-making. It provides a framework for choosing how to deploy limited resources – and how to do so in ways that align with the community's values and vision. And it is rooted in the belief that Geneva is a great and special place, but a place that can and should be even better.

- Geneva today is one of the most picturesque cities in the United States, and its beauty is a reason many people come to Geneva and choose to put down roots. This plan provides a framework for making Geneva even more beautiful than it already is.
- Geneva is a vibrant community of entrepreneurs, physicians, professors, waiters, hotel desk clerks, police officers, nurses, school teachers, students, wood workers, retirees, and hair stylists. This plan provides a framework for making Geneva even more prosperous, engaged and creative than it is now.
- Geneva is striving to be a just and equitable community. The city's housing stocks are affordable. Many community organizations in Geneva make it possible to participate and contribute. This plan provides a framework for making Geneva the community of choice where all feel welcome and have opportunities to thrive.
- For many, Geneva is a close-knit community and a place of walkable distances. Residents and business owners know one another and one another's children. It is decidedly urban but not the big city. It is in a rural setting but it is more than a crossroads or a village. Some residents, however, experience isolation and physical disconnection. This plan provides a framework for making Geneva more connected, civically and physically, than it is now.
- Geneva is as environmentally committed as it is fiscally prudent, and is willing to oppose forces that threaten the city's environmental quality. The city is innovative with renewable energy and cautious with public funds. This plan provides a framework for making Geneva truly and measurably sustainable.

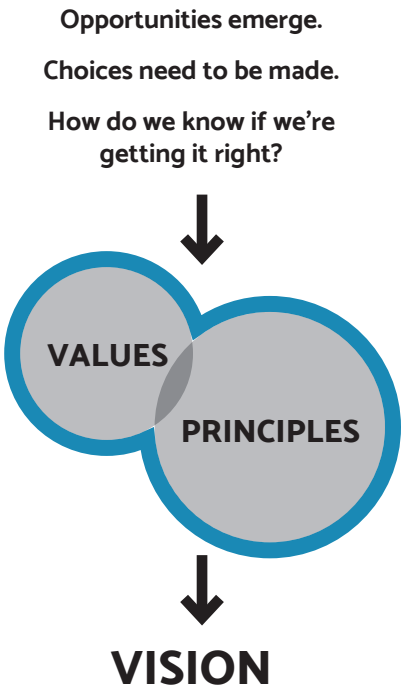
Geneva is a great and special place – but a place that can and should be even better.

Beautiful,
Prosperous,
Equitable,
Connected,
and Sustainable.

When decisions are made about how to direct public and civic resources, they should be made in such a way that the results make Geneva more beautiful, more prosperous, more equitable, more connected, and more sustainable than it is today.



Putting the plan into action is simple and straightforward. It involves embracing the findings, aiming for the vision, rigorously applying the values and principles as filters for decision-making, and pursuing projects that advance the priorities. When the unexpected arises or as new conditions develop, we must formulate and implement new strategies while always applying the values and principles.



Geneva's Context for Planning

Geneva is a small city with an uncommon collection of assets- not the least of which is one of New York State's most scenic cityscapes.

These assets, among others, provide the city with a strong foundation for a competitive future – to be a city that people and businesses of all kinds are drawn to for its high quality of life – a uniquely urban city.

Innovative and high-quality public education delivered by Geneva City Schools and exemplified by its Geneva 2020 effort.



A charming and growing downtown, with a well-loved farmers' market, an expanding number of restaurants and small businesses, and cultural anchors such as the Smith Opera House.

An affordable city, where 66% of homes are affordable to households making \$35,000 per year.



A built environment with extraordinary history and character, including three historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places with nearly 250 contributing properties.



State-of-the-art health care services from a variety of providers including Geneva General Hospital.



A rich and productive agricultural hinterland of wineries and small farms that has looked to Geneva for innovation and leadership, through Cornell University's NYS Agricultural Experiment Station, since 1882.

Colleges that reflect a long history of learning and service, including the historic and scenic campus of Hobart and William Smith Colleges and the new Geneva Campus Center for Finger Lakes Community College.



Growing levels of neighborhood identity and pride stimulated by resident leadership and coordination from the Geneva Neighborhood Resource Center.

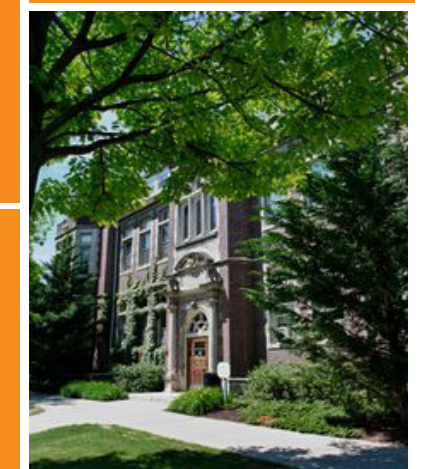


Photo by Maribela [CC-BY-SA-3.0], via Wikimedia Commons

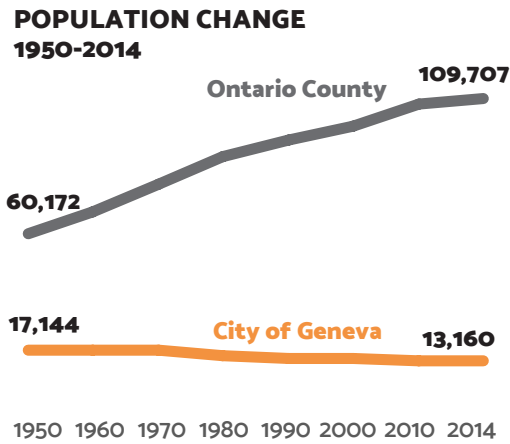
Geneva’s assets and quality of life are endangered, though, by long-term trends and socio-economic forces that hinder the city’s capacity to invest in itself and to compete in the 21st Century.

Fewer Genevans amid a growing region.

Like most of its small-city peers in New York, the City of Geneva has experienced population loss for decades and is now more than 20% smaller than it was in 1950. While losses have been more gradual than in other cities and have slowed in recent decades, a troubling fact remains – the Geneva that was built to house 20,000 or more people has just over 13,000 today. And while some of that shrinking can be attributed to regional outmigration during a prolonged period of economic change, a major factor has been a simple redistribution of population within Ontario County, which has grown by 82% since 1950. This trend of households choosing other communities in the region poses a significant threat to Geneva’s fiscal stability and the health of its neighborhoods – and it’s a threat that has only been heightened by six decades of creeping disinvestment due to imbalances of supply and demand. Between 2000 and 2014, Census Bureau estimates show that the number of families in the City of Geneva fell by 450 – a 15% drop at a time when the overall population fell by just 3%. This indicates that families may be sensitive to signals of disinvestment and disorder.

NY’s SMALL SHRINKING CITIES	
CITY	POP. LOSS, 1950-2010
Amsterdam	-42%
Binghamton	-41%
Elmira	-41%
Olean	-37%
Corning	-37%
Lackawanna	-34%
Gloversville	-34%
Watervliet	-33%
Ogdensburg	-31%
Dunkirk	-30%
Jamestown	-28%
Glens Falls	-25%
Auburn	-25%
Poughkeepsie	-24%
Cohoes	-24%
Geneva	-23%
Watertown	-21%
Oswego	-20%
Rome	-19%
Kingston	-17%
Lockport	-16%
Fulton	-15%
Batavia	-13%
Newburgh	-10%

Source: US Census Bureau.



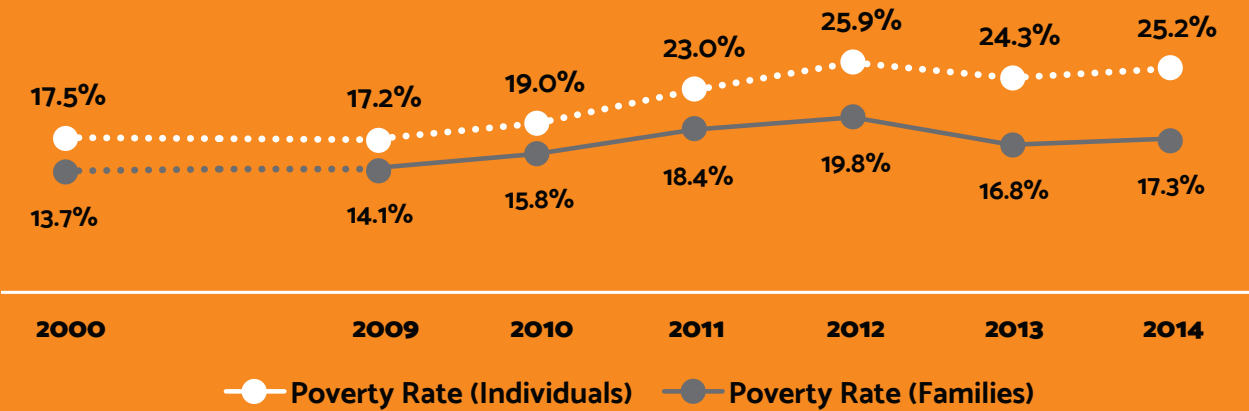
Source: US Census Bureau.

Poverty levels that are high, rising, and concentrated.

The decline in family households since 2000 occurred alongside a sharp rise in the City of Geneva’s poverty rate. In 2000, 17.5% of Geneva’s residents lived below the poverty line, a rate that was three percentage points higher than the statewide rate. But by 2014, the rate in Geneva rose to over 25% – almost 10 points higher than the state average. This rise coincided with the Great Recession but has remained stubbornly high. Just as troubling as the swift rise in the city’s poverty rate is the fact that Geneva has become entrenched as a high-poverty community in a region with otherwise normal levels of poverty. This concentrating effect – which is a significant limiting factor on the upward-mobility of low-income households – has resulted in Geneva being home to 25% of individuals living in poverty in Ontario County, despite the city having just 12% of the county’s total population.

In 2014, Geneva had 12% of Ontario County’s population but was home to 25% of county residents living in poverty – more than twice the city’s proportionate share.

POVERTY RATE TRENDS IN GENEVA, 2000-2014



Source: US Census Bureau

Losing ground in attracting, retaining and growing middle income households.

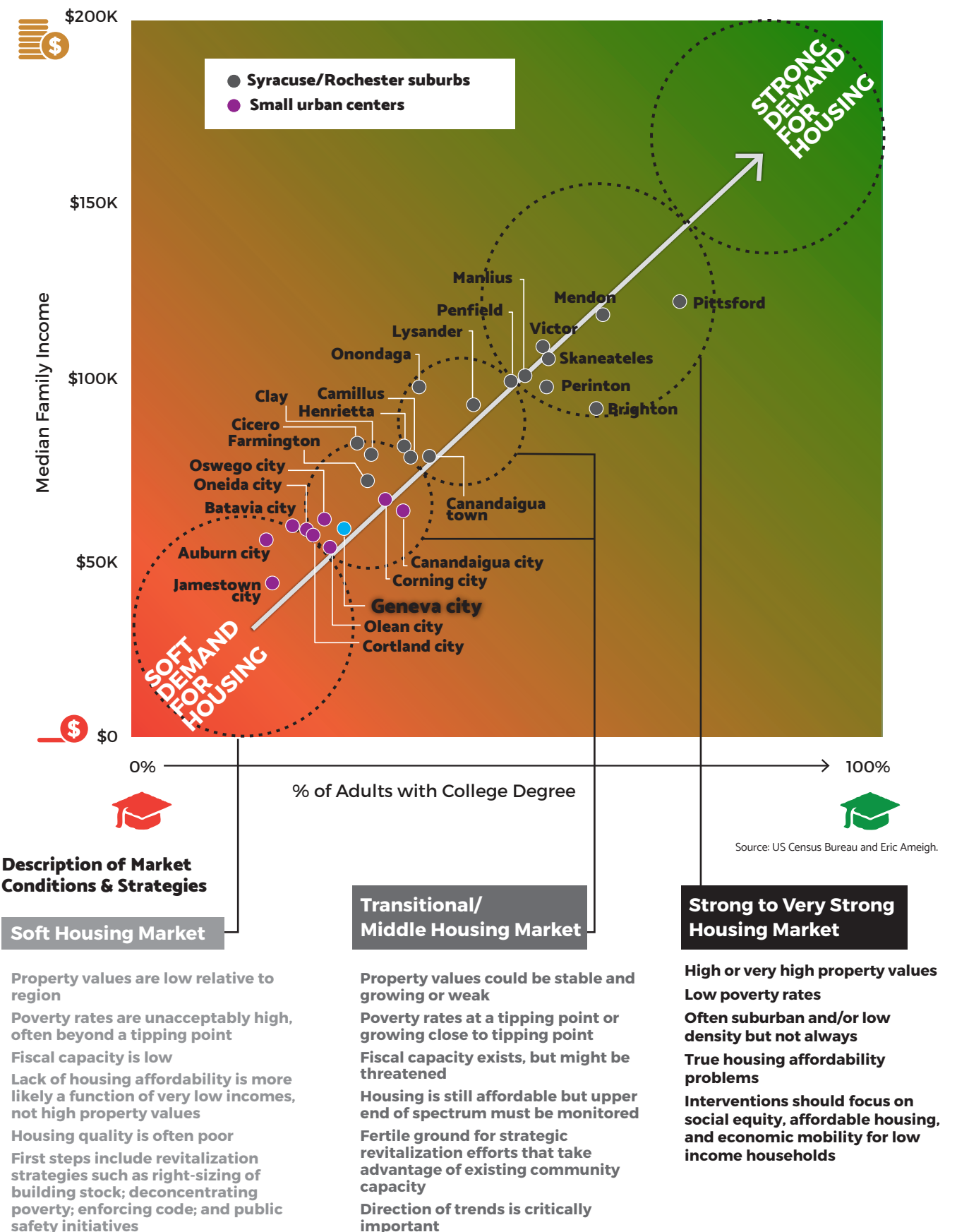
The concentration of poverty and the loss of families since 2000 is a reflection of choices being made in Ontario County and the Finger Lakes region that have reinforced housing market issues in Geneva and similar communities while bolstering the market strength of many other communities.

In the accompanying chart that uses median family income and educational attainment as proxies for housing market health, Geneva and many of its peer cities sit within the transitional or middle market range. While these cities remain important job centers for their counties and often host large student populations – including 2,400 in Geneva – they have not competed well for middle income families, whose decisions to locate elsewhere only accelerates the concentration of poverty in urban centers and diminishes the capacity of cities to provide the services and amenities that they need to compete.

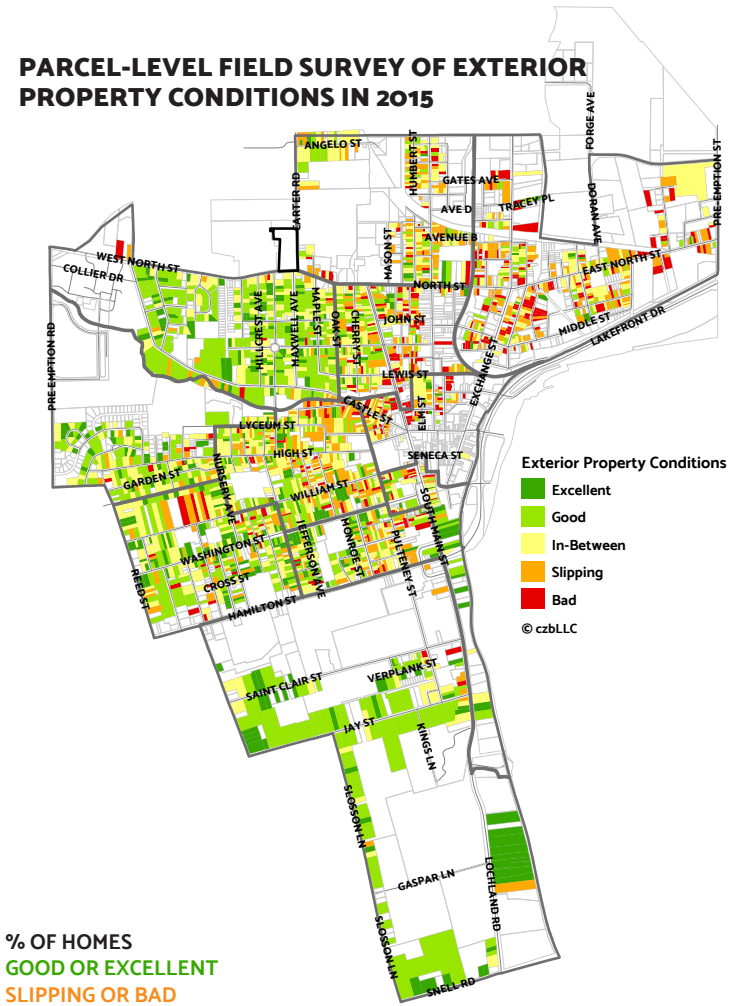
Families with access to good jobs – by way of education – and healthy incomes exist by the tens of thousands in the region. And, by and large, these highly mobile households locate in city and suburban neighborhoods that offer the amenities and predictability they seek.

A significant portion of Geneva's workforce lives outside the city. Attracting them to city neighborhoods will strengthen the city's fiscal capacity while improving quality of life and economic opportunities for current residents.

SPECTRUM OF HOUSING MARKET STRENGTH IN CENTRAL AND WESTERN NEW YORK



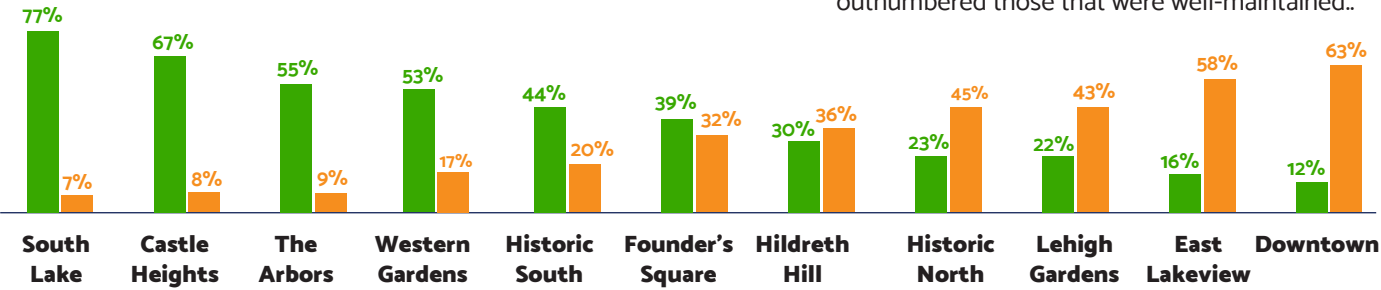
PARCEL-LEVEL FIELD SURVEY OF EXTERIOR PROPERTY CONDITIONS IN 2015



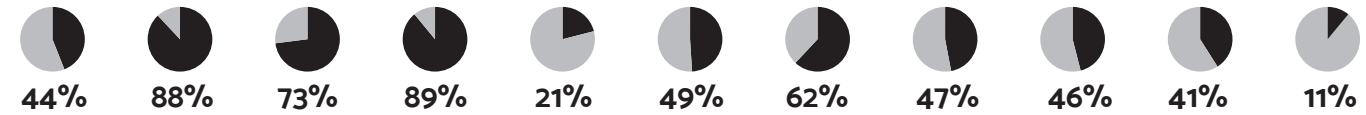
Uneven conditions and reinvestment needs from neighborhood to neighborhood

The survey of exterior conditions described on this page, as well as the other real estate data, provides a baseline for measuring change and progress in all neighborhoods over time. While several of Geneva's neighborhoods retain a high degree of market strength and stability due to architectural charm and steady reinvestment by property owners, starkly uneven conditions act as an overall damper on the city's residential marketplace. While more than half of homes surveyed in April 2015 in South Lake, Castle Heights, The Arbors, and Western Gardens were in excellent or good condition, there were also five neighborhoods where the number of homes needing moderate or significant reinvestment outnumbered those that were well-maintained..

% OF HOMES
GOOD OR EXCELLENT
SLIPPING OR BAD



% OWNER OCCUPIED



AVG. SALE PRICE, 2005-2014



% OF HOUSING UNITS ABANDONED, 2010



HOUSING MARKET DEMAND



Source: czbLLC and US Census Bureau.
Note: Data for exterior conditions in Downtown do not include units above storefronts in mixed-use structures.

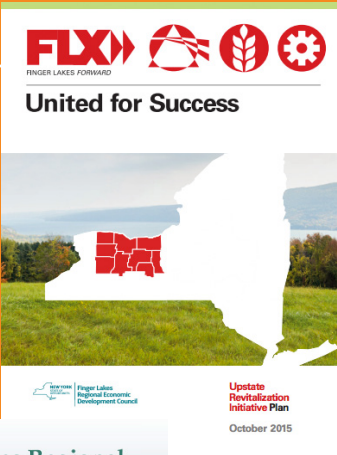


IMPLICATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Geneva is at a critical juncture. The city and a variety of partners have made substantial investments to the downtown area, the lakefront, to neighborhood improvement efforts, and to a wide range of social and cultural endeavors over the past few decades. It is undeniable that parts of Geneva, including its downtown, have made considerable strides – and that Geneva has one of the strongest collection of assets of almost any small city in New York.

But hard, focused work remains to fundamentally change the city's trajectory – to nurture the conditions that will be necessary for Geneva to realize its vision. This means positioning the city to retain and attract for businesses and households that, over time, will result in lower and less concentrated poverty, more jobs, more stable neighborhoods, and the revenue needed to ensure high levels of services and amenities for all city residents.

Through this plan, the City of Geneva is committing itself to this course and to being a leading agent for prosperity in the region. The Finger Lakes Regional Sustainability Plan, the Strategic Plan of the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council, and the Finger Lakes Forward Upstate Revitalization Plan – which garnered \$100 million in state support for economic development in 2015 – provide a regional framework within which Geneva can prosper if it positions itself carefully.



Geneva's Values

We value and will work to protect and strengthen our natural setting and resources; our “uniquely urban” character and sense of community; our multi-cultural heritage; our arts, architectural, and recreational assets; and our economic prosperity.

Our values are the community’s most deeply held beliefs and they explain, and in many ways are, the basis for the vision. They answer the question, “Why is that your vision?” For example, it is our vision in Geneva that Seneca Lake becomes less physically separated from city life by the rail line and the roadway presently between downtown and the lakefront. Why? Because we cherish the lake as a part of our daily lives and are willing to go to any length to bring downtown and the lakefront together for all to enjoy.

Our vision is what we are working towards, the kind of community and place we want Geneva to become after years of hard work, sacrifice, and collaboration.

Through planning and the daily work of implementation – prioritizing, acting, evaluating, re-evaluating, re-prioritizing, resourcing, acting again – our vision answers the question, “What are Genevans ultimately trying to achieve?”

We are stewards of our special natural setting.

Our “uniquely urban” character and sense of community are at the core of who we are.

Our multicultural heritage is a point of pride.

Our arts, architectural and recreational assets are important to us.

It is important to us that our economy is strong.

Geneva's Vision

CONNECTING OUR VALUES TO OUR VISION

Beautiful, Prosperous, Equitable, Connected, and Sustainable.

This is the Geneva we want to leave to our children.

With our richly textured history, uncommon lakeshore setting, civic pride, architectural heritage, and cultural diversity, we Genevans feel justifiably lucky. Our small city is a great place to raise a family and to be connected within a community of caring neighbors. We come together for community events, at high school commencements, for coffee downtown, along the lake, at church, in city council sessions, in the stands of our ballfields to cheer, and at the grocery store. We know and care for one another. We love Geneva. Though we are a small community, we are urban. And because we possess a collection of assets few other places in America have, we are unique.



Applying
Geneva’s
Values for
Decision-
Making

We are stewards of our special natural setting.

Our visually beautiful and ecologically sustainable environment should be celebrated and protected within the city and surrounding area.

Our “uniquely urban” character and sense of community are at the core of who we are.

We are defined by our city’s physical context and the people who live here. We benefit from the energy that comes from a diverse population and from visitors, residents and businesses pursuing a variety of interests. We know one another, we worship together, and we attend school and play ball, sail, and run together and see each other at the grocery store. We take citizenship seriously and we take action together.

Our multi-cultural heritage is a point of pride.

We are a community rich in diverse identities, traditions, customs, and histories that warrant celebration.

Our arts, architectural and recreational assets are important to us.

Our small city on a pristine lakeshore with established institutions, a beautiful downtown, and historic homes in equally historic and livable neighborhoods sets us apart in the region.

It is important to us that our economy is strong.

If we are economically prosperous, we can maintain and improve our city.

WHEN MAKING POLICIES AND TAKING ACTIONS WE WILL:



- Help protect and make vital the expanse of rich and fertile countryside that surrounds Geneva,
- Encourage business growth that leverages the surrounding agricultural resources,
- Protect Seneca Lake through fostering water quality enhancement efforts and continuing initiatives to physically and civically connect Geneva with the lake, and
- Create accessible connections to our natural resources and
- Increase recycling and landfill diversion rates.

- Make certain that patterns of development reinforce our capacity to stay close and connected while remedying experiences of isolation and physical disconnection,
- Creatively solve problems through collaboration and partnership,
- Engage in inclusive interactions and transparent decision making processes,
- Partner with the Geneva City School District and other community partners to engage youth in being active citizens and demonstrate their importance in our community, and
- Protect and encourage our position as the regional hub of life in the Finger Lakes.

- Understand each other’s differences, engage in dialogue, and listen,
- Celebrate our diverse heritages,
- Provide traditionally underrepresented groups meaningful opportunities for engagement,
- Identify and mitigate structural or historical conditions that hinder any residents’ ability for full participation in civic and political life, and
- Work to combat false, negative perceptions of Geneva and its neighborhoods,
- Actively recruit underrepresented residents to serve on city agencies and run for office.

- Promote the arts and other creative resident-led initiatives,
- Protect and enhance our physical form, our architectural heritage, and how our built environment supports our community and nurtures us civically,
- Prioritize the preservation of our historic and architectural assets and integrate them wisely with new development,
- Activate downtown as a center of activity,
- Connect cultural and architectural assets to the neighborhoods and to each other,
- Enhance opportunities to play and recreate within the City,
- Improve accessibility to public spaces and recreational amenities for residents and visitors,
- Be conscious of design and livability standards for the City’s housing stock, including expanding code enforcement initiatives.

- Grow the economic status of Geneva’s residents, including expanding opportunities to increase the livelihood of low-income workers employed within the Geneva area,
- Protect and enhance the vibrancy of civic and economic life in our downtown,
- Encourage entrepreneurial efforts within our vibrant business districts, using creative ideas and technological advancements to maintain and grow an educated, skilled, and industrious workforce,
- Facilitate, via policy, quality housing opportunities for all stages of life,
- Ameliorate poverty levels by encouraging mixed-income housing and improving public transit routes.
- Foster a climate of skills sharing and skills building for residents,
- Reinforce our long-term financial objectives based on community priorities, and
- Cultivate the City’s position in the Finger Lakes region’s renaissance.

WE WILL NOT



- Take actions that undermine the agricultural and natural environment in which we are located, such as ignoring run-off issues to the lake or supporting mining or landfill expansion in the City or surrounding area.
- Take any actions that fail to both protect and enhance the ecological state of Seneca Lake while also improving accessibility and attractiveness of lakefront amenities for residents and visitors.

- Ignore evidence-based challenges to public policy proposals, or
- Approve development that undermines our “uniquely urban” character, whether through physical form or location.

- Ignore language barriers that impede resident access to City services, amenities, and programs, or
- Tolerate nepotism, racism, or arbitrarily exclusionary practices in public processes, programs, or services.

- Permit development that physically disconnects the lakeshore from downtown, the college campuses from the surrounding neighborhoods and downtown, and the neighborhoods from one another, or
- Ignore the needs of residents to find suitable spaces to recreate and enjoy their neighborhoods.

- Let circumstances undermine the ability for existing and new households to put down roots, stay, and invest,
- Deploy failed or unworkable strategies for economic revitalization,
- Ignore conditions that threaten our residents’ investment and security in their homes and neighborhoods,
- Pursue projects providing immediate City financial gain that do not align with community priorities, or
- Support conditions that limit the economic and social mobility of Geneva’s lower income households.

Geneva's Planning Principles

This is the way we will make decisions; this is how we will evaluate the known challenges we face, as well as what's not foreseeable today, so that we will make progress towards our vision. We have to become financially strong and resilient. We must become genuinely sustainable from an environmental perspective. And on all things we must take a balanced approach where collectively, over time, projects and initiatives address the values and aims of the plan.

These four guiding principles for planning in Geneva should be applied using a balanced approach. Ideally, all projects will always be completely good for the environment and good for the economy in equal measure, while also being good for the city's fiscal position and just as socially equitable.

Realistically, though, not all projects or initiatives can address all values and aims. However, while each specific project will be scrutinized against the values and aims contained in this plan, the city should measure the progress of the plan's vision, value and principles by looking at all projects and initiatives as a collective whole.

Geneva must prioritize.

We understand that the work of positioning Geneva to succeed is expensive and time-consuming and that prioritization is a necessity and that we will have to make choices that align with our value and vision.

Geneva must be financially strong.

The City of Geneva will be fiscally responsible and public financial decisions will align with our vision and values.

Geneva must be environmentally sustainable.

We in Geneva conserve and protect our natural resources by rigorous deployment of the precautionary principle.

Geneva must leverage the creativity and strengths of all of Geneva citizens in implementing the plan.

We will create and maintain a process that engages the community and provides a voice to all members.

Ideally, all projects will always be completely good for the environment and good for the economy in equal measure, while also being good for the city's fiscal position and just as socially equitable. Ideally, all projects will achieve goals regarding our small town setting, our cultural heritage, and our prosperity.

But reality has a way of intruding on theory and will dictate that a long-term intention to achieve a balance of our values and principles is what will help us obtain our vision.

While each specific project will need to be scrutinized against the values and aims contained in this plan, the larger objective is portfolio balance and trend impact.

WHAT THIS MEANS

WE WILL MAKE POLICIES AND TAKE ACTIONS THAT



Orient scarce resources toward rebuilding the middle market from both current and potential residents and towards preservation of our core assets: downtown, our colleges, our hospital, our lakefront, our rich architectural heritage.

Encourage the growth of the economic status of Geneva's residents including exploring best practices for reducing poverty and aligning education, training, and other services to develop a ready workforce for Geneva's thriving industries.

Stabilize our public finances;

Maintain control of the City's finances by paying for infrastructure and amenities with city resources or with outside funding that aligns with the plan;

Ensure we have a healthy fund balance to be able to tackle unanticipated problems as they arise;

Expand opportunities to increase the livelihood of workers employed within the Geneva area to support the local economy and the city's fiscal health; and

Assess the impact of increased cooperation with the Town of Geneva or other municipalities in achieving our respective plans.

Reduce our environmental footprint; and

Shift the entirety of the burden to developers to prove any new proposal will do no harm.

Engage residents in robust, participatory planning efforts in plan implementation that provides equal access and involvement.

Build on neighborhood association structure to work on specific issues, achieving goals, and participate in the solutions; and

Value the talents and contributions of all residents.

IT MEANS WE WILL NOT



Deploy scarce resources on a "worst" first basis instead of strength-based approach, whether in catching up or keeping up with the challenges of managing Geneva.

Divert resources to projects that undermine our vision and values.

Seek support from outside entities that come with programs, rules, and restrictions that undermine our values and visions; and

Support conditions that limit the economic and social mobility of Geneva's lower income households.

Approve projects for economic gain only; or

Approve projects with known detrimental impacts on the environment.

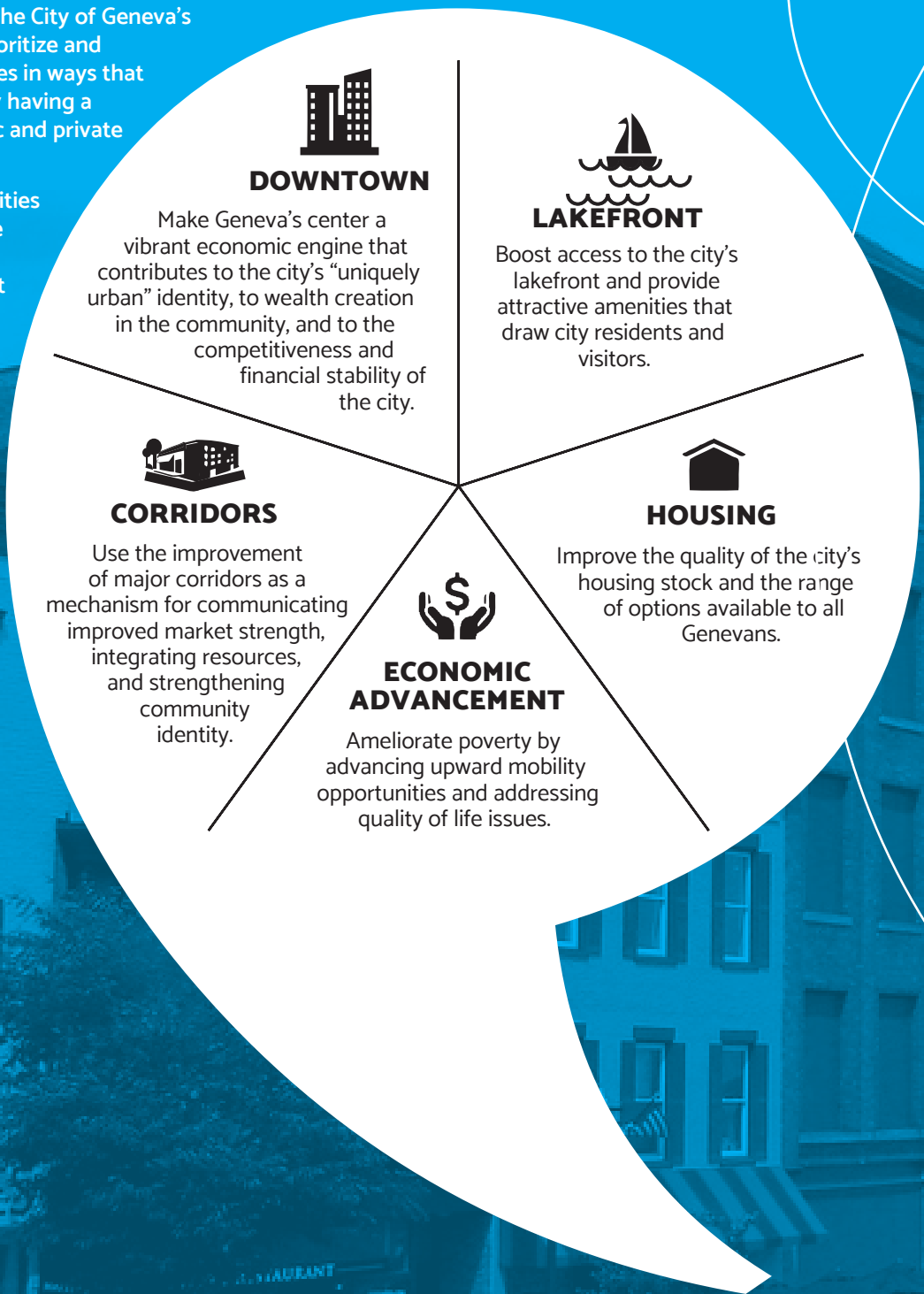
Perpetuate exclusionary practices.

HOW WE'LL GET THERE

Geneva's Priorities

To make progress toward the City of Geneva's vision, it is necessary to prioritize and focus – to channel resources in ways that are likely to yield results by having a positive influence on public and private investment behaviors.

Five broad, long-term priorities have been identified by the Steering Committee as essential areas of work that require attention if Geneva is to realize its vision.



INITIATIVES

To convert these endeavors into an actionable set of projects, five inter-related initiatives have been structured, each with a set of recommended actions that are aligned with the community's values:

Downtown Critical Mass

Build on the strong revitalization work of recent years by the cultivating the critical mass of quality public space and residential and business activity needed to solidify downtown Geneva as one of the region's most vibrant economic and cultural centers.

Exchange Street and Hamilton Street Gateway Corridors

Improve conditions along the busy gateway corridors of Exchange Street and Hamilton Street to instill greater pride in the adjacent neighborhoods, boost quality of life, and create a more positive experience for residents and visitors.

Great Geneva Amenities

Make the lakefront and other key amenities more present in the life of the city by integrating them into the fabric of adjacent neighborhoods and ensuring high levels of maintenance. Proactively oppose present and future external threats to these amenities.

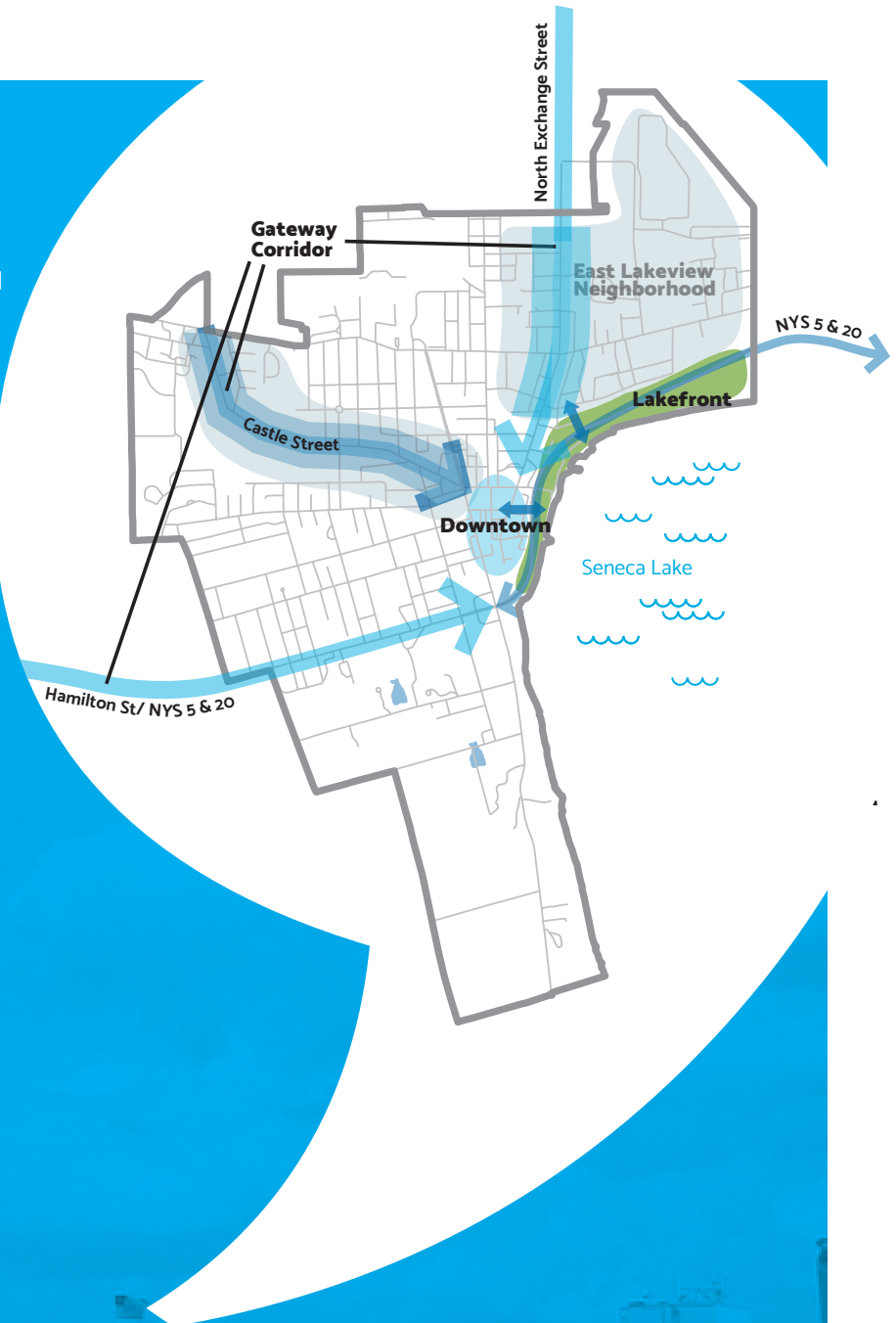
Castle Street Residential Corridor

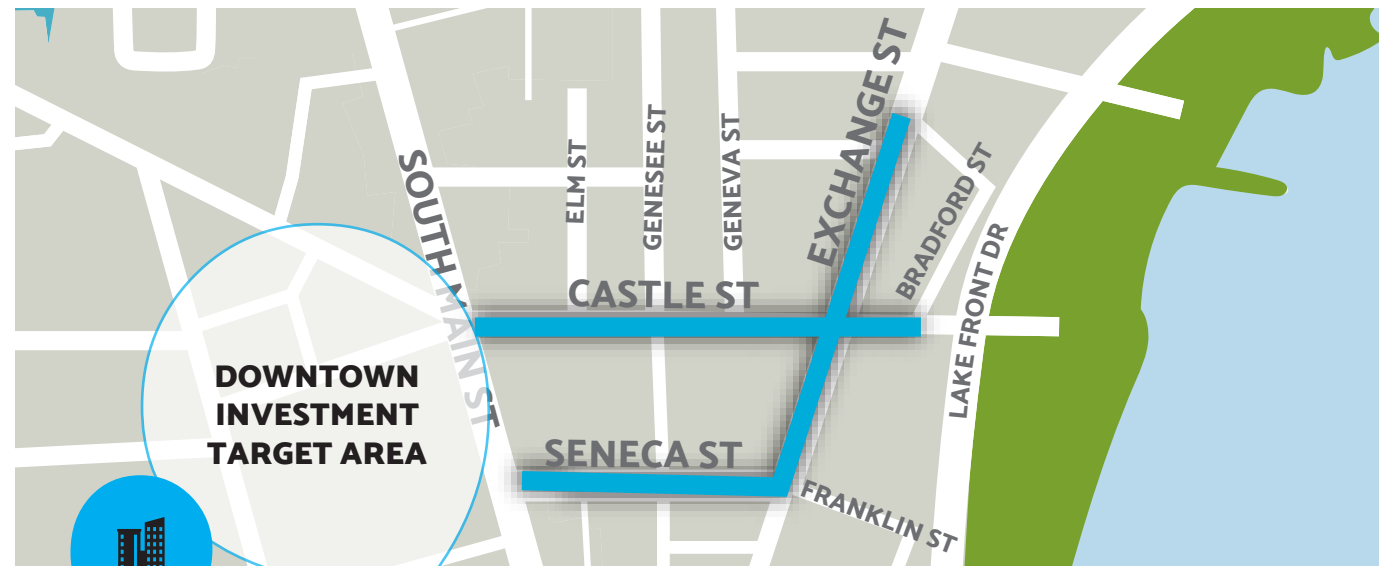
Promote reinvestment and community pride by addressing urban design opportunities, connecting assets, and reinforcing Castle Street's strong residential character.

Economic Opportunity Task Force

Address the city's high poverty levels in a more coordinated manner by convening an Economic Opportunity Task Force to explore best practices in aligning poverty services, education, and job training to advance upward mobility and improve residents' quality of life.

This plan also recommends that Zoning Reform be a policy priority for the city in order to provide the levels of guidance and flexibility that are needed to ensure that future development helps Geneva achieve its vision.





INITIATIVE Downtown Critical Mass

WHY IT MATTERS

Geneva's remarkably intact downtown is the city's crown jewel – an asset whose quality and charm sets Geneva apart from most communities in the region. A vibrant downtown economy will be vital for the city to attract, retain and grow entrepreneurs and households that are the key to a fiscally stable, economically diverse, and socially sustainable city. Creating more mixed-use and mixed-income development opportunities downtown provides environmental benefits such as lowering automobile usage and development of surrounding lands.

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

Substantial progress has been made in recent years to improve the health of downtown Geneva. Streetscape design and maintenance are generally strong and mixed-use renovations to the city's historic building stock have set an excellent example for adaptive reuse. But there are still too many underutilized spaces that collectively inhibit downtown's magnetism to businesses and customers. In short, downtown Geneva still lacks the critical mass of business and residential activity needed to make it a powerful economic engine for the city.

To move forward, Geneva must continue what it has been doing, but with greater intensity and in a tighter geography – a **Downtown Investment Target Area**. Within this focused zone, the following actions will help downtown Geneva achieve its critical mass.

PROJECTS

Package and Aggressively Promote Building Renovation and Rehabilitation Incentives

Continue to Invest in High Streetscape Standards and Public Amenities

Create a Building Renovation Task Force to Facilitate Mixed-Use Projects

Leverage the Geneva Entrepreneurial Lab to Grow New and Existing Businesses

Improve Downtown Project Coordination Capacity

Package and Aggressively Promote Building Renovation and Rehabilitation Incentives

To become ever more vibrant and competitive, downtown Geneva needs to attract more residents and businesses. And to do this, it needs to have a sufficient and appealing supply of mixed-income housing and updated commercial space.

While downtown Geneva's historic building stock is part of its appeal and its competitive advantage, it is also a barrier to furnishing a ready supply of high-quality space. Simply put, rents – even for improved space – are currently too low to compel enough property owners, developers, and lenders to take on costly renovations to older properties. The “math” of downtown development needs to work for the private sector to efficiently revitalize Geneva's historic building stock.

Making the math work requires a set of financial tools that reduce risk and ensure that property owners have time after a project is finished to stabilize tenancy and generate sufficient cash flow. Two particular tools should be packaged and marketed in a way that helps property owners and developers understand and utilize them to their fullest potential:

Historic Preservation Tax Credits

The 2014 listing of the Geneva Downtown Commercial Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places made 83 buildings in the downtown area eligible to use tax credits to assist with renovations. For substantial renovations to income-producing properties that meet historic preservation standards, project investors are eligible to receive federal income tax credits worth 20% of qualifying project costs and an additional 20% state income tax credit. On small projects, generally under \$1 million, local investors who have large tax liabilities can pool their resources to provide local project capital. On larger projects, tax credits can be syndicated to provide a lump sum of working capital.

The City of Geneva, together with the Geneva Business Improvement District, should work to assemble a go-to list of legal, accounting, and design resources needed to facilitate the use of these tax credits.

Residential-Commercial Exemption

New York State allows local governments to provide property tax relief for projects that convert older commercial properties into mixed-use structures. After a qualifying project is completed, the owners will continue to pay taxes on the pre-renovation value of the property for a period of eight years. Then, between years nine and 12, the assessed value of the property gradually rises to its full market value, thus giving the property owner a period to stabilize tenancy.

To enact what is known as a Section 485-a exemption, the City Council must pass a local law – in tandem with the county and school district – to provide the exemption on all three levels of local taxation.

PROJECT EXAMPLE



Three-story commercial building in downtown Geneva
15,000 sq.ft.
Current assessed value of \$150,000

Two local doctors own the building and are exploring a mixed-use renovation with retail on the first floor, office space on the second floor, and four apartments on the third floor. They can commit \$300,000 to the project.

historic tax credits and 485-a exemption

WITHOUT



Cost estimate is \$800,000 for mixed-use renovation.

Projected gross income per year at full tenancy and market-rate rents is \$74,000.

BUT ... property taxes will rise from \$7,100 to \$38,000 per year, and payments on a \$500,000 commercial loan will be \$54,000 per year.

PROJECT NOT FEASIBLE

WITH



Cost estimate is \$850,000 for mixed-use renovation that meets historic preservation standards.

Projected gross income per year at full tenancy and market-rate rents is \$74,000.

Federal and state historic tax credits contribute \$340,000 in working capital, reducing the loan to \$210,000 and annual loan payments to \$22,600.

Property taxes stay at \$7,100 for 8 years after project completion.

PROJECT FEASIBLE

Continue to Invest in High Streetscape Standards and Public Amenities

Create and maintain an aggressive five-year capital plan for downtown streetscape maintenance and improvements, prioritizing work in the Downtown Investment Target Area. Investments in downtown’s public realm should continue to enhance accessibility by improving pedestrian, bicyclist, and public transit infrastructure, as well as reinforcing the quality of assets such as the Farmer’s Market. Consider landscaped medians and pedestrian refuge islands for heavily used intersections.

Create a Building Renovation Task Force to Facilitate Mixed-Use Projects

Adaptive reuse is challenging work. Building and fire codes can be especially difficult to address in a cost effective and sensible way. This requires that the city and building owners work as partners on each project – finding solutions that pave the way for successful outcomes.

A task force of city officials, engineers, and architects should be assembled to advise code enforcement staff and project developers on major sticking points – and to ensure that lessons learned on previous projects provide cumulative know-how as more and more projects occur. Such a task force should also advise the city on potential building code reforms that follow modern best-practices for downtown development and promote energy efficiency programs and projects.

Leverage the Geneva Entrepreneurs Lab to Grow New and Existing Businesses

Establish the Geneva Entrepreneurial Lab on Castle Street as an anchor for the proposed Food and Beverage Innovation District. The Lab will help cultivate and incubate new food- and beverage-related businesses in the city, as well as other small enterprises. As those businesses mature, they should be encouraged to become occupants of downtown storefronts and office space in order to help form a true economic cluster of supportive and economically vibrant businesses. Develop small business programs specifically to address barriers for low-income and underrepresented residents.

Expand support for new and existing small businesses

A close working relationship between the Geneva Entrepreneurs Lab, the Small Business Development Center at Finger Lakes Community College, Hobart and William Smith Entrepreneurial Studies Program, and other partners will be critical to providing a high level of technical and financial assistance to new and existing businesses. This may include fine-tuning to business plans, access to financial capital for expansion, and educational programming on best marketing practices.

Improve Downtown Project Coordination Capacity

To ensure that developers and businesses have streamlined communications with city government – on matters ranging from code enforcement to technical assistance with renovation incentives – the city and the business improvement district should designate a point person whose job it is to promote downtown redevelopment opportunities and connect building and business owners with resources and answers.



Rosé Soirée on Linden Street



INITIATIVE

Exchange Street and Hamilton Street Gateway Corridors Initiative

WHY IT MATTERS

As the two most heavily traveled streets into the center of Geneva, Exchange Street (Route 14, including N. Exchange) and Hamilton Street (Routes 5 and 20) have a significant impact on how Genevans and visitors feel about the city and its overall direction. They help set the tone for the community, influencing the mental checklist that households and businesses make when deciding whether to locate to or stay within the city limits. And for residents who live along and adjacent to these corridors – including East Lakeview, Downtown, Western Gardens and Founders Square – they have a considerable influence on neighborhood quality of life and pride.

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

Both Exchange Street and Hamilton Street have weak points that need to be addressed for these corridors to provide a graduated sense of celebratory arrival as drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists make their way from the city's edge to downtown. Exchange Street has numerous residential properties in need of reinvestment. Housing improvements along these corridors, including the creation of mixed-income opportunities, can be replicated in surrounding neighborhoods, as can improvements to air quality and property values from concerted tree planting.

To move forward, Geneva must intervene at strategic points along each corridor to ensure that they reflect the justifiable pride that Genevans have in their city. The following actions will help the city and its partners intervene in an effective manner.

PROJECTS

- Exchange Street Housing and Streetscape Enhancements
- Hamilton Street De-suburbanization

Exchange Street Housing and Streetscape Enhancements

A comprehensive survey of residential property conditions undertaken in March 2015 revealed that over 30 residential properties on Exchange Street and North Exchange Street – a majority of the properties along this corridor – exhibited several signs of distress due to disinvestment and poor maintenance. To improve the living conditions of residents along and adjacent to the corridor – and to prevent these few properties and blocks from continuing to serve as a drain on the market value of the city and the surrounding blocks – the city should take the following approach outlined below. In addition, recommendations from the 2014 North End Brownfield Opportunity Area Nomination should be pursued, including improving access to high quality food and pedestrian connections to the lakefront from East Lakeview.

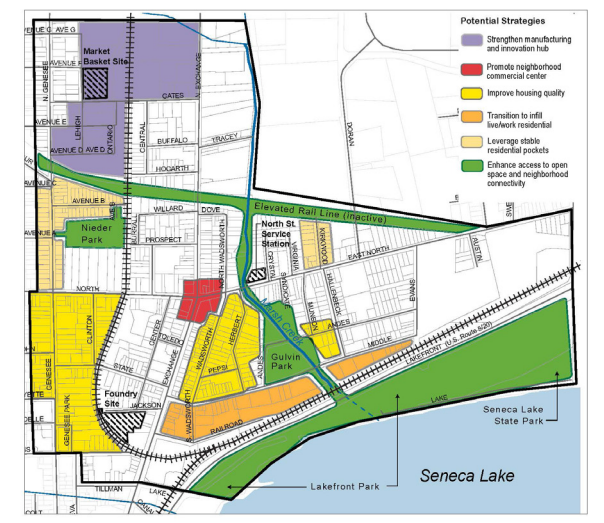
Cooperative code enforcement to stimulate investment:

The city should pursue targeted code enforcement along this corridor and directly engage property owners. For homeowners and landlords who have code violations and maintenance issues, offer priority access to home improvement loans and small grants to address specific concerns. If the owner is unresponsive, receive court permission for the city to address issues on its own and place a lien against the owner when possible. For properties that are delinquent on property taxes or entering the foreclosure process, the city should take title to the property and assess best future use or demolition. Throughout the surrounding neighborhoods, code enforcement efforts should aim to improve quality of life for residents

Flexible land use and better design:

For this corridor to be transformed into an attractive urban gateway, zoning modifications should be enacted to facilitate this transformation. This plan recommends that this take place as part of a comprehensive overhaul to the city's existing zoning code, which should follow either a form-based or hybrid approach (see page 38) – both of which place a heavier emphasis on design than use. Regulations that would be part of a new zoning code include:

- Mixed uses, including multi-family mixed-income residential and low-impact business uses
- Building setbacks of no greater than 20 feet
- Minimum building height to discourage single-story structures
- Street-facing building entrances with a walkway to the public sidewalk
- Building mounted and pedestrian oriented signage rather than pole or pylon signage



- Parking located behind or to the side of the principal structure and covering no more than 50% of parcel, including residential properties
- Maximum limits on parking spaces to avoid an oversupply of off-street parking
- Minimum pervious lot coverage of 30% and encourage on-site stormwater management
- Site amenities such as attractive outdoor lighting (dark skies compliant), seating, landscaping, and street trees

Streetscape improvements:

Simultaneously, the city should continue to work with NYSDOT to implement streetscape improvements and “complete street” measures along Exchange Street and North Exchange Street to improve the street's safety and appeal. The existing curb-to-curb space should be re-allocated to create travel lanes no wider than 11 feet, although a 10 foot lane is preferred. This travel lane adjustment is consistent with the 35 mile per hour speed limit and promotes motorists sharing the roadway with bicyclists and pedestrians. The excess pavement width should be reallocated to the shoulders. This would create room for bike lanes. Street trees should be planted in areas with a tree lawn of at least 5 feet. This will provide shade, create a sense of enclosure, and improve air quality. These changes can improve the ability of bicyclists and pedestrians to comfortably use the street. In addition, the City should consider installing pedestrian-scaled lighting and amenities including benches, bus stop shelters, waste receptacles, and bike racks in key locations including along E. North/North Street. Adding bus shelters as well as expanding bus routes should be done to provide better access to basic amenities and jobs for residents from the surrounding neighborhoods.



GATEWAY CORRIDORS

Hamilton Street De-suburbization

The 2015 reconstruction of Hamilton Street did much to improve the street’s overall function and safety – especially the installation of a center turn lane and the widening and extension of sidewalks. Development patterns along much of the street, however, remain strictly suburban in character, with large expanses of pavement and single-use development.

A combination of policy reforms and infrastructure modifications will be necessary, over time, to make Hamilton Street less suburban in character, improve quality of life for residents, and provide a more distinctive gateway to the City. These include:

Modified zoning: Many of the suburban-style properties along Hamilton are now decades old and redevelopment is on the horizon. The city should replace its current zoning with a new form-based or hybrid code that would include the elimination of minimum parking standards and allow mixtures of commercial and residential uses along this corridor. This will provide developers with greater flexibility as opportunities for retail pad redevelopment occur and will gradually change the form and character of the street.

Mixed-use off-campus and senior housing: As a demonstration of mixed-use redevelopment along Hamilton Street, Hobart and William Smith Colleges could partner with a developer to build off-campus housing that mixes apartment-style housing with retail space that caters to the needs of students and the adjacent neighborhoods. A similar mixed-use scenario could also work for the development of housing units that cater to senior citizens seeking small, modern apartments in proximity to commercial services. Providing denser housing options near amenities will decrease daily auto usage and suburban style residential growth. In addition, adjacent, off-street pedestrian and

bicycle paths and public transit accommodations should be improved to address safety issues and provide recreational opportunities and options for getting to work.

Celebratory features: Numerous opportunities exist to celebrate the Geneva community along Hamilton Street, including enhanced gateway signage at White Springs Road, enhanced landscaping, street trees and signage alongside the college campus, beautification of NYSDOT’s South Main Street overpass, and neighborhood identification banners at intersections such as Pulteney Street.

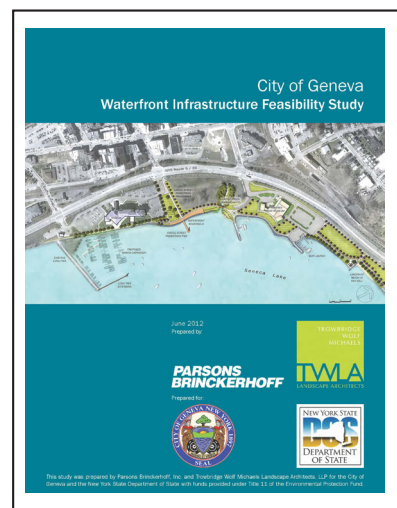
Median construction: Although a center turn lane now extends along most of the street’s length, there are large sections where no left turns are possible. The city should work with NYSDOT to take another look at the feasibility of planted medians in these areas, which would do much to beautify and soften the street and to improve pedestrian, bicyclist and motorist safety. Such areas would also be ideal for mid-block crosswalks, especially alongside the college campus where crossings are few and far between.



The campus of Hobart and William Smith Colleges



INITIATIVE Great Geneva Amenities



WHY IT MATTERS

The Seneca Lake waterfront is one of several amenities in Geneva that need to be accessible and excellent to provide all residents with a high quality of life and for the city to successfully compete for businesses and strong households.

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

Significant strides have been made in recent years to improve Lakefront Park and to forward policies and projects from the **1997 Local Waterfront Revitalization Program**, but it still feels like an asset that is isolated from the rest of the city, including the adjacent downtown area. This puts tremendous pressure on Lakefront Park to be seen as a star attraction in its own right – a role it can't realistically play – rather than an asset that ties together a broader package of connected amenities. To move forward, Geneva should continue pursuing activities under the 1997 Local Waterfront Revitalization Program policies and projects and take the following actions to improve and reinforce its amenities and address accessibility issues for all.

PROJECTS

Routes 5 and 20 Traffic Calming and Beautification for Lakefront Access

Connective Greenways and Streets



Routes 5 and 20 Traffic Calming and Beautification for Lakefront Access

The city should continue to work with NYSDOT to implement the reconfiguration of Routes 5 and 20 alongside Lakefront Park that was proposed in the **2010 Lakefront/Downtown Connectivity Study**. Scenarios in the study identified a reduction in lanes and lane width, installation of landscaped medians, enhanced crosswalks, and other improvements as keys to reducing the mental and physical chasm that exists between downtown and the Lakefront. Extend landscaped median along E. Castle to visually connect the downtown and the lakefront. These “road diet” techniques have been applied by NYSDOT across the state over the past decade and have done much to calm traffic and improve pedestrian access in downtown and waterfront areas.

Together with Gateway Corridor improvements to Exchange Street recommended by this plan, this calming and beautification work will also do much to facilitate access to Lakefront Park from the East Lakeview neighborhood by providing residents with a safer and more pleasant experience along a pedestrian and bicycle route that would utilize Exchange Street and the enhanced lakefront intersections. Funneling pedestrians and cyclists onto these well-defined and high-visibility corridors will reinforce efforts to boost vitality and foot traffic at the core of the city – and increase safety by making drivers more accustomed to and respectful of non-automotive traffic. In addition the city should work with the Finger Lakes Railway and Norfolk Southern Corporation to create an at-grade crossing at Pre-Emption Street to allow pedestrian access to the lakefront from East Lakeview and to reroute truck traffic. A truck



impact study should first be conducted for all the corridors, including South Main, to determine action steps to reduce truck traffic. The city should also encourage Finger Lakes Railway to relocate the rail yard outside of the city to open up additional lake access points and potential opportunities for mixed-use and/or mixed-income residential development.

Create or Improve Greenways and Trails to Connect Amenities

Using Geneva's 11 neighborhoods as units of analysis, identify parks and other amenities and the best connecting routes between them – which could be existing multi-use trails and sidewalks, or new pathways. Then, as a supplement to a 10-year capital plan for park investments, develop a plan for the improvement or development of those connecting routes along with route signage.

Additional accessible restrooms, covered picnic areas, a swimming area, and food amenities should be considered for the lakefront. The overall goal for this work is to communicate the presence and proximity of key amenities to city residents and visitors – and to foster greater utilization of those amenities and pathways by pedestrians and bicyclists.

Examples of potential paths to create include a Castle Creek greenway, which would involve uncovering and restoring sections of the creek to connect the lakefront to several neighborhoods along a riparian path. But the bulk of attention should be centered on using “complete streets” methods to turn targeted streets into safe, attractive, accessible, and well-defined connectors.



INITIATIVE Castle Street Residential Corridor

WHY IT MATTERS

Although Castle Street handles much less traffic than Exchange Street or Hamilton Street, it serves several important functions. It connects the lake and downtown Geneva to the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station along a diverse urban transect. It serves as a spine for the Castle Heights and Downtown neighborhoods. It contains several historic and cultural assets, including the public library. And the 5-point intersection with North and South Main Streets is a key and dramatic gateway to downtown for thousands of city residents.

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

Castle Street has several weak spots and missed opportunities that need to be addressed to realize the full potential of assets adjacent to the corridor. To move forward, Geneva should consider this corridor a testing ground for new strategies designed to strengthen stable neighborhoods while aggressively pursuing the following actions.

PROJECTS

[Transformation at 5-point entrance to downtown](#)

[Housing Improvements](#)

[Castle Creek exposure and greenway](#)

[Public space improvement at the Agricultural Experiment Station property](#)

[Target zone for healthy neighborhoods programming](#)

Transformation at 5-point entrance to downtown

The intersection of Castle Street, North and Main Street, and Milton Street provides an opportunity to better connect to the Finger Lakes Community College, the Geneva Public Library, and adjacent neighborhoods, to beautify, and to highlight several Geneva assets. It provides a dramatic overlook into downtown Geneva, frames the foot of median-lined North Main Street into the Historic North neighborhood, and serves as a front lawn to the city's historic library.

Currently, this intersection is a visual mess – a poorly organized expanse of asphalt and concrete with a large gas station and convenience store occupying a key piece of real estate. The city should explore design options that will make the intersection safer and serve as a fitting entryway for downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods. The city should also work closely with property owners during any renovation plans to ensure proposed designs complement the intersection.

Housing Improvements

Nearly 20 homes line the north side of Castle Street between the library and Mill Street, and the 2015 survey of property conditions revealed that most of them show numerous signs of distress. The city should pursue strict code enforcement in this area to improve existing housing conditions for residents, as well as acquisition and demolition of the most neglected of these properties and replace with mixed-income homes – an effort that will reinforce the edge of Downtown as well as the Castle Heights, Historic North and Hildreth Hill neighborhoods.

Castle Creek exposure and greenway

The plaza and parking lot at Castle Street and Oak Street was constructed on top of Castle Creek. Redeveloping this plaza has the potential to initiate several improvements for this corridor: (1) Providing commercial amenities through mixed-use development, including mixed-income homes, (2) uncovering the urban environmental asset in Castle Creek, and (3) creating an opportunity to better connect city residents to the creek via a greenway trail. Greenways improve transportation issues and provide recreational

opportunities for residents. A long-term goal would be to connect the greenway along Castle Creek from Pre-Emption Road to the lakefront.

Green space improvements at Agricultural Experiment Station

With food and beverage businesses now viewed as a key piece of the city's and region's economic strategy, the campus of Cornell's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station is a considerable asset along the Castle Street corridor. The property, however, has an ambiguous relationship to the surrounding neighborhood. The city should work with Cornell and neighborhood leaders to develop a strategy to better integrate the campus with its Castle Street neighbors – including the potential to create a green space on the lawn facing Castle Street that bears a relationship to the activity on the campus, such as a garden of edible and ornamental plants.

Target zone for “Healthy Neighborhoods” programming

Healthy neighborhood programming builds on the strengths of a neighborhood to stimulate changes that restore and sustain neighborhood pride and confidence by working with residents, landlords, and tenants to focus on restoring confidence, encouraging reinvestment, and strengthening civic involvement. The approach works to have a ripple effect with positive change into areas needing more assistance. Residential streets along the Castle Street corridor – including parts of Castle Heights, Historic North, and Hildreth Hill – contain homes that are generally in excellent or good condition – making this an ideal area to pursue strategies designed to leverage the reinvestment capacity of strong and stable blocks. The city, through the Geneva Neighborhood Resource Center, should consider a package of special programs for this area, including the reactivation of the Great Geneva Neighborhood Challenge, sidewalk and street improvements, and initiatives to promote good landscaping and home design. The city should view this area as an opportunity to hone existing and new programs for adoption in other neighborhoods.



INITIATIVE

Economic Opportunity Task Force

WHY IT MATTERS

Geneva's poverty rate is increasing at a faster rate than other Ontario County municipalities and the increase does not correlate with any noticeable uptick in unemployment within the City. In fact, the number of current jobs in the City exceeds the number of employed residents. In addition, poverty is concentrated on the eastern end of Ontario County and residents living in poverty experience reduced access to the educational and economic structures that might allow for upward mobility. To change this current trend in the poverty rate in Geneva, barriers to accessing local jobs must be eliminated and attention towards quality of life issues is needed.

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

To address the City's high poverty levels in a more coordinated manner, an Economic Opportunity Task Force should be established with a dedicated person responsible for overseeing implementation, coordination, and collaboration between local government agencies, service providers, employers and educational institutions.

The task force, unlike any previous effort in Geneva, will take a very comprehensive view of economic opportunity and the factors that promote or diminish upward mobility – education, transportation, housing, and workforce development. The Task Force should be charged with guiding the implementation of programs and initiatives that provide economic opportunity for low-income residents and meet current economic development efforts and needs in Geneva and the surrounding area. This effort will initiate a process that will:

Understand barriers to employment, such as transportation and housing, as well as training and educational needs, and develop strategies to overcome barriers for low-income residents in the Geneva area.

Map existing programs and service providers, including resources they possess and outcomes they've achieved.

Identify emerging best practices and gauge the extent to which current programs and services in Geneva are aligned with those practices (or if they, in themselves, represent best practices).

Look at cities that are role models for coordinating programs and services that relate to upward mobility.

Work with local service providers and partners to identify needed changes to services and service provision in Geneva and establish a framework for implementing those changes and tracking progress.



Coordinate current workforce development efforts to create additional linkages between workforce development agencies, major employers, local educational institutions, the City School district, downtown businesses, and job seekers.

Provide advice and oversight for ensuring that application for and implementation of programs, grants and initiatives are fair and equitable.

Develop communication methods to inform and assist low-income residents and entrepreneurs, especially those from underrepresented groups, to take advantage of programs, grants and initiatives within the Geneva area.

Getting Started

First and foremost, this plan is about applying clear principles and strategic thinking when deciding how to allocate limited resources. As such, the projects and actions summarized below, which are recommended to advance Geneva's four priority initiatives, should not be treated as a static checklist but as a "pattern book" for implementation that identifies strategies and projects that, under current conditions, represent a high degree of fidelity to the plan's principles and the community's values. As conditions change, so too should the slate of strategies and projects.

When?

Implementation Horizon

S (Short-term): 1 year

M (Mid-term): 3 years

L (Long-term): 5 years

O (Ongoing): 1 year and ongoing

How Much?

Cost Range

\$\$\$\$: \$5m+

\$\$\$: \$1m-\$5m

\$\$: \$0.25m-\$1m

\$: Under \$0.25m

C: Marginal coordination costs



Downtown Critical Mass



Gateway Corridors



Great Geneva Amenities



Castle Street Residential Corridor



Economic Opportunity Task Force

What?

When?

Who?

How Much?

Adopt 485-a mixed-use exemption	O	City, County, School District	C
Historic Preservation Tax Credit promotion and technical assistance	O	City, BID	C
Five-year capital plan for downtown streetscape maintenance	O	City	\$\$\$
Assemble a building renovation task force	O	City and BID	C
Open the Geneva Entrepreneurial Lab and leverage for downtown business expansion	S	City	\$
Support for new and existing businesses	O	City, Small Business Development Center, BID	C
Improve downtown coordination capacity	O	City and BID	C
Targeted code enforcement and housing improvements on Exchange Street	O	City	\$\$
Exchange Street streetscape enhancements	M	City and NYSDOT	\$\$\$
Celebratory features	M	City, GNRC, NYSDOT	\$
Median construction on Hamilton Street	L	City, NYSDOT	\$\$\$
Route 5/20 redesign for Lakefront accessibility	L	City and NYSDOT	\$\$\$\$
Strategy for greenways and connecting corridors	M	City	\$\$
5-point intersection redesign	M	City and NYSDOT	\$\$\$
Focus on distressed properties	O	City	\$
Castle Creek exposure and greenway	L	City	\$\$\$
Green space improvements at Agricultural Experiment Station	M	Cornell and GNRC	\$
"Healthy Neighborhoods" targeted programming in adjacent neighborhoods	O	GNRC	\$
Economic Opportunity Task Force	O	Community coalition	\$\$

Land Use and Zoning Recommendations

To advance Geneva’s priority initiatives and modernize its development regulations, this plan recommends that Geneva’s Planning Board and City Council either develop a form-based code, which emphasizes design over land use, or move toward a hybrid code, which blends characteristics of traditional zoning with form-based features.

Develop a Form-Based Code

Form-based codes address the relationship between buildings and the public realm, the relationship of buildings to one another, and the scale and types of streets and other public spaces. Regulations are presented in both diagrams and words and are typically based on a regulating plan that designates development types rather than land-use districts, as is found in typical Euclidian zoning. Rather than prioritizing land use, form-based codes prioritize design and form. This does not mean land use is ignored. It just means that it is not the priority. Formed-based codes can often be costly to develop and implement because they represent an entirely new framework. However, they do bring a high level of design certainty to urban areas.

OR

Develop a Hybrid Code

Hybrid zoning takes the design emphasis of form-based codes and combines it with elements of traditional Euclidian zoning. Rather than focusing primarily on land use (e.g. Euclidian zoning) or primarily on form (e.g. form-based zoning), the hybrid approach looks to find balance between the two. It often uses much of the organizing framework found in Euclidian zoning codes but includes additional design standards with regard to building and site development. These are articulated and supported with both diagrams and words. Hybrid codes are easier to implement because they resemble traditional Euclidian zoning but they do not provide the design certainty that form-based codes do.

A form-based or hybrid code would address several issues with the existing zoning code that either undercut the priority initiatives outlined in this plan or run contrary to modern best practices. These issues, which are covered in greater detail in the land use and zoning analysis in this plan’s Part 2 document, include the following:

- Geneva’s Traditional Urban Design District Overlay (TUDD) currently offers design guidance in the downtown area but should be made mandatory to ensure consistently high-quality design.
- Properties along Exchange Street, North Exchange Street, Hamilton Street, and other busy corridors are currently zoned in a manner that inhibits mixed-use redevelopment. As these areas evolve, land use flexibility combined with better design will be crucial to their success.
- Minimum parking requirements should be removed and possibly replaced with maximum parking requirements, thus limiting the amount of space that is often needlessly dedicated to parking.
- Minimum area regulations for upper-story apartments should be reduced to allow more flexibility for adaptive reuse projects.
- Allow accessory dwelling units by special permit so that the breadth of housing types can be expanded.
- Allow home occupations by right in single family residential districts to reflect modern conventions.
- Require bicycle parking in commercial districts to better accommodate a mixture of travel modes.
- Review Geneva’s list of “prohibited industrial uses” for appropriateness in modern contexts.

3.2.5 COMMERCIAL BLOCK



Form-Based Code

These explanatory diagrams come from the Buffalo Green Code, an example of a form-based code that is on its way to adoption in 2016.

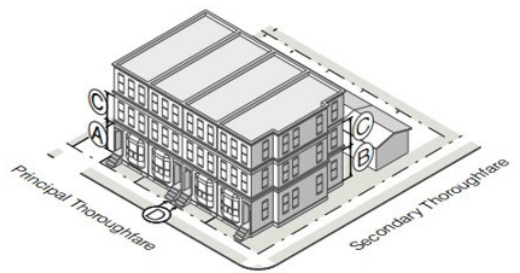
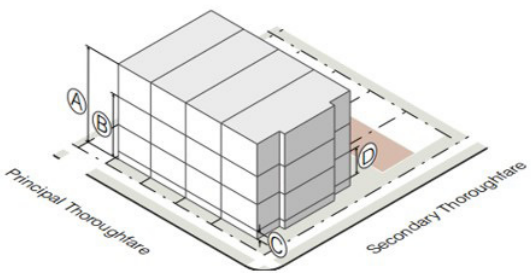
A. Description

A commercial block is a multi-story building designed to facilitate a vertical mix of uses, with pedestrian-friendly ground floor retail or service uses and upper floor residential, hospitality, or office uses. A commercial block makes up the primary component of a neighborhood main street or downtown main street, therefore being integral to creating a walkable, mixed-use environment.

B. Frontage Elements

The following frontage elements are allowed for the commercial block building type, subject to the requirements of Section 3.3:

- Arcade
- Awning
- Balcony
- Canopy
- Forecourt
- Plaza
- Porch
- Sloop



Building Height

(A)	Building height (max)	
	N-1C, N-1S, N-2E	4 stories
	N-2R	3 stories ¹
	N-3E, N-3R	3 stories
(B)	Building height (min)	
	N-1C, N-1S	3 stories
	N-2E, N-2R, N-3E, N-3R	2 stories

Supplemental Standards

1. If located along a high frequency transit route, or within 1,320 feet of a Metro Rail Station, a maximum building height of four stories is permitted.

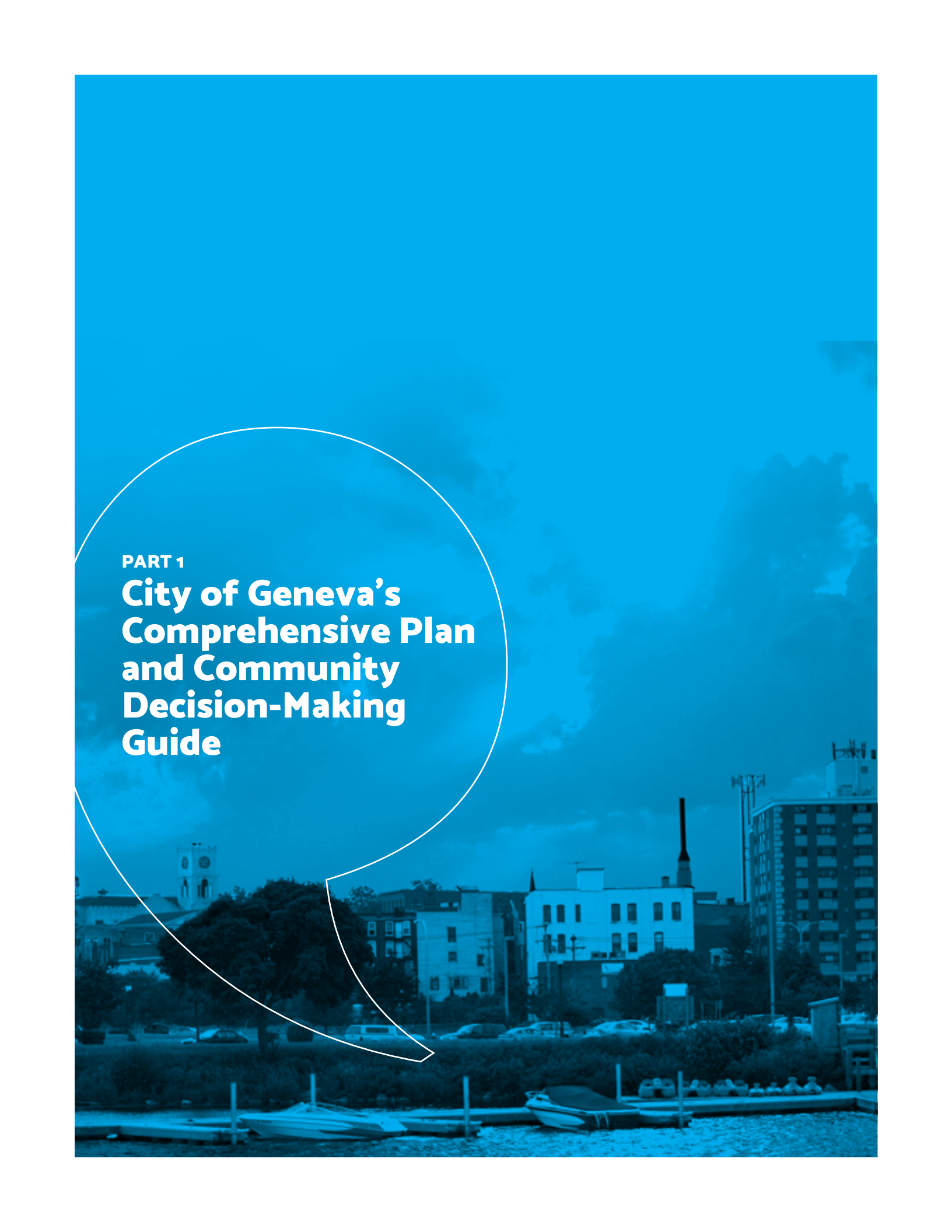
Transparency

(A)	Ground floor transparency, front facade (min)	20%
(B)	Ground floor transparency, corner side facade (min)	20%
(C)	Upper floor transparency, front and corner side facades (min)	20%

Pedestrian Access

(D)	Main entrance location (required)	Front facade
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PART 1

City of Geneva's Comprehensive Plan and Community Decision-Making Guide