

Geneva ACE Report Summary

April 18, 2016

The ACE Community Assessment was held on October 21 and 22. The ACE Team consisted of 10 members representing different facets of community life. On the first day, there was an informal review of Geneva by the ACE team, followed by a meeting with Mayor Carter, Lisa Johnson, the ACE Local Coordinator, and several community leaders. The ACE Team and local leaders went on a community windshield tour which included public facilities, the hospital, parks, neighborhoods, downtown, and commercial developments. That evening following the community tour, the assessment team was invited to dinner with a local contingency of leaders.

The next morning a two-part community assessment meeting was held at the First United Methodist Church. The assessment meeting began with an overview of the ACE program and assessment team members followed up an activity with participants on the assets and opportunities for Geneva. Following the group activity, the community leaders and participants dispersed to small group discussions lead by individual assessment team members on the eight ACE study areas. These study areas include:

- Community Development
- Planning
- Leadership Development
- Economic Development
- Healthcare
- Tourism/Visual Assessment
- Historic Preservation, and
- Education

From the community assessment meeting activities, citizen comments, and individual research and interviews, ACE team members were able to prepare the Geneva ACE Assessment Report, which covers each of the topic areas. This report has been reviewed with Mayor Carter and Lisa Johnson. You each have a copy in your package. The following are highlights from the report.

General Observations:

Assets

- Choctawhatchee and Pea Rivers are a key resources
- Infrastructure is adequate
- Good parks and recreation resources
- Good quality of life: industrial base, retail, healthcare, cultural diversity
- Good emergency response teams
- Decent commuting routes

Concerns

- Poor accessibility
- Property maintenance
- Local non-profit structure
- Drainage infrastructure improvements
- Vacancies in downtown

General Recommendations:

Common recommendations from all study areas include the following:

- Make Geneva a destination!
- Strengthen the local non-profit structure.
- Develop a citywide wayfinding system.
- Continue corridor and streetscaping improvements.
- Improve services to low-income, elderly and indigent populations.
- Establish an historic district; develop a Main Street program.
- Establish a Leadership Program.
- Strengthen the Geneva Chamber of Commerce and partnerships.
- Continue to develop Career Tech resources to support industry and retail.
- Build arts education resources.
- Develop a welcome center and visitor brochure.
- Increase tourism by making recreation improvements to include: residential sidewalks, Wiregrass Rail Trail, canoe trails, bicycle-pedestrian linkages.
- Utilize topographical challenges as recreational resources.
- Go forth with strategic and comprehensive planning processes.

Study Area Recommendation Highlights in Addition to General Recommendations:

Community Development

- Pocket-park opportunities
- Centralized non-profit center
- Improve street signage
- Develop a farmer's market

Economic Development

- Develop marketing package
- Develop community preparedness plan

Healthcare

- Establish prescription drug assistance program
- Healthcare education program
- Pursue provision of more specialty care

Historic Preservation

- Conduct a historic resource survey
- Pursue National Register listing
- Consider Certified Local Government and Main Street Programs

Community Leadership

- Develop adult community leadership program
- Determine how Warren Beck Youth Leadership Program can complement adult leadership program

Education

- Explore options for additional career tech opportunities
- Increase opportunities for student arts education

Tourism/Visual Assessment

- Develop and operate a full-service RV park to augment tourism efforts
- Develop sidewalk/complete streets plan
- Work with local organization/non-profit on streetscaping and beautification improvements

Community Planning

- Address gateways, corridor improvements and wayfinding
- Include visual clues to river assets in physical development plans
- Ensure compliance of zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations with new comprehensive plan
- Investigate need/solution for additional rental housing opportunities
- Provide youth activities/opportunities to increase retention of younger population