

GENEVA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Approved by the
City of Geneva Planning Commission
July 6, 2017

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INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan describes the overall strategy for how Geneva will shape itself, through public and private investment, over the next twenty years. The city prepared this plan as a guide to making decisions regarding capital improvements, city services, growth management and economic development efforts. The plan gives Geneva residents, property owners, merchants, builders and developers a reasonable expectation of the city's future so that they may invest in the community with confidence. The plan is long-range, general, and focused primarily on the physical and economic development of the community. It will be a living document whose relevance will continue even as circumstances change over time.

Through the Geneva Comprehensive Plan, city officials wish to:

- Illustrate the ways in which the city should develop over time.
- Coordinate land use recommendations with those for transportation and other infrastructure improvements.
- Provide a guide to development decisions and a basis for making and revising zoning and other regulations.
- Ensure that as development occurs, the city's most significant natural and historic features will be conserved and enhanced, while property values are protected.
- Provide a pattern for land use and development that strives for a sustainable community with a diversified tax base to support necessary and desired facilities and services.



In response, the City of Geneva will continually refer to this document to:

- Visualize what can reasonably be expected to occur in Geneva—to provide some assurance and security regarding development investment decisions.
- Review and evaluate development proposals and rezoning requests in the context of Geneva's vision.
- Provide guidance on improving and updating the City's development policies and regulations.
- Identify priorities and strategies for making infrastructure investments.

The Geneva Comprehensive Plan recognizes the value of the city's underlying natural resources, history and community values. The plan will guide development to balance growth with the conservation of important natural resources. For example, activity centers—where infrastructure is in place and private investment is already occurring—function as magnets for economic growth. This approach reinforces existing businesses, optimizes use of existing roads and infrastructure, while avoiding encroachment into neighborhoods and environmentally sensitive areas. And, development will be supported and encouraged by the City of Geneva to foster efficiency, stability, entrepreneurial activity and a strong quality of life and community image.

USING THE PLAN

- The Comprehensive Plan is a combination of vision, maps and development policies—a framework for guiding public and private decisions that will affect new development and reinvestment in existing neighborhoods and business areas. The plan is based on the community's vision for its future. The plan looks ahead, focusing on the physical form of the city, and strives to shape Geneva's future development in a fiscally responsible pattern consistent with the community's vision.
- The plan is a general, long-range *guide* to assist public officials and private citizens as they consider investments that may have long-term impacts on the community. To do this, the plan must be continuously reviewed and updated as changes occur in physical, political and economic conditions.
- The plan will be implemented through actions by city staff, the City Council, the Planning Commission and other boards and commissions and by those of developers and private citizens. Major public actions in support of plan implementation will include adoption, revision and enforcement of the city's development regulations, capital improvement planning and budgeting, and decisions regarding development proposals and annexation. Guidance provided by this monitoring and renewal process will assist the city refine the Comprehensive Plan through consideration of amendments as may be needed over the years.
- The Geneva Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a living document, to evolve and grow in response to changes in community values and to market and physical conditions. Only through continuing use, evaluation, detailing, and updating can the plan fully serve Geneva.
- Geneva draws to it more people, businesses and private investment every year. The underlying question is *how* growth should be channeled. That is the role of Geneva's continuing planning process and the task of this Comprehensive Plan—to assure growth and change is compatible with the vision the people of Geneva have set for their community.

Comprehensive planning is a systematic process to identify and document a citywide vision for the future, to set long-range goals for its physical and economic development and to devise policies, programs, and projects to move the city toward fulfillment of those goals. A key part of this process is dialog between citizens and city officials to reach consensus on policies, programs, and projects relating to that physical character and to the responsibilities and areas of influence of city

GENEVA TOWN MEETING

The planning process got underway when residents, property owners, developers and city officials came together to discuss the future of the city during the Town Meeting on December 1, 2016. Attendees were asked questions to shape the vision for Geneva. What follows is a summary of the responses.

Assets

Those attending the Town Meeting were asked what they consider to be Geneva's assets—special features they hold in especially high regard and that set the community apart from other places.

Geneva has several positive attributes enjoyed by other small towns. Schools are strong; the people are friendly; and the community is generally clean and safe. The cost of living and of doing business is low. And, while there is plenty of space—especially along the outskirts, which are mostly farming and undeveloped land—neighborhoods, business areas, churches and other community destinations are close together.

Assets that make Geneva unique include its location at the junction of the Choctawhatchee and Pea Rivers. It is county seat and home to the Wiregrass Medical Center. Located near the Florida state line, Geneva enjoys an exceptional climate and is within a 100-mile radius of several military bases.



Issues

Town Meeting participants were asked to identify physical conditions in Geneva that are not up to their own personal standards.

While being a small town has its benefits, it also has disadvantages. Geneva is no different. A top concern among residents is the lack of industry and thus limited job opportunities for residents. The number of businesses (retail, restaurants and entertainment) is modest, which causes residents to shop and eat in other cities nearby. Recreational programs and other activities for children are limited. And, there are no major roads connecting Geneva to other places (Interstate 10 is almost 20 miles away and US 84 is over 16 miles from town).

Geneva's riverside location also has its downside. While significant improvements have been made to address flooding, there are still significant areas of the city located in a floodway or a designated floodplain. Stormwater drainage in some areas of the city can also be a problem after heavy rains.

Some participants felt that the city's waning economy has caused community pride to suffer. Together, these issues have resulted in an overall lack of maintenance and reinvestment. Some areas of the city project an unsatisfactory image of the community.

Other issues that were noted: street conditions, particularly unpaved streets; communication; and animal control.

Outside Forces

There are always factors not subject to local control—including those that operate at county, regional, state or national levels—that affect every community, each in its own way. Local residents noted both positive and negative forces that impact Geneva.

Federal policies and actions in support of globalization and trade have contributed to the loss of jobs in Geneva and other small towns. Plans for nearby Ft. Rucker, which are decided by a federal commission through the Base Realignment and Closure process, can have a significant positive or negative impact on Geneva and many other communities in the Wiregrass. Larger cities tend to have more political influence and are able to draw federal and state funds to them, sometimes to the disadvantage of smaller communities. Plans to widen AL Highway 167 to improve access to I-10 will be beneficial to Hartford and Enterprise but to a lesser degree to Geneva.

Geneva is part of a multi-county economic development partnership. This enhances Geneva's opportunities to recruit industry but the successes of the partnership may benefit others more directly than Geneva.

Purpose of the City: Why People Choose to Live/Work/Invest in Geneva

When those at the Town Meeting were asked to share their reasons for living, working or investing in Geneva, responses illustrated the community's small town character—it is a safe place to raise kids. Current residents have long family roots in Geneva. Many consider it “home” even after they have moved away. Others highlighted its' proximity to Florida, Georgia, Mississippi and Louisiana; great internet service; and its potential to grow.

Sacred

Meeting attendees were asked what about Geneva is sacred. What should not be changed or not changed too much? Responses recognized the importance of its small town environment, including its churches, schools and traditional events—particularly the annual homecoming celebration, 4th of July Parade and Christmas Parade. Arguably the most sacred place in Geneva is the junction of the rivers and the grand Live Oak tree. Participants also noted the importance of keeping the Wiregrass Medical Center.

Visions for Geneva

Building upon these discussions, Town Meeting participants were asked to imagine Geneva as they would like it to be in twenty years. Afterward, each person was asked to name one physical aspect of that future community that is not present in Geneva today.

The people of Geneva envision an economy strengthened through industrial development, a lively downtown and recreational tourism. A local technical college will prepare residents for well-paying jobs in home-grown and other industries. A stronger, diversified economy and population growth will enable the community to improve and build new public buildings, schools, and parks and recreation facilities. Continued investments in sewer, power and other utilities and infrastructure will help Geneva to be more resilient and prosperous. Residents and tourists alike will enjoy more activities at the river and will be able walk and bike on trails that interconnect the river and city neighborhoods and business areas.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Early on in the planning process, residents participated in an online survey. The focus of the survey was two-fold: to gauge how residents perceive the community today and what issues they believe are fundamentally important to improving the city's future.

Respondents

Roughly two-thirds of survey responses came from people who have lived in Geneva for more than 20 years. 85% of respondents live in their own home and about two-thirds live in homes served by Geneva's sewer system. Nearly half of those responding work in Geneva, 30% work outside Geneva, and 14% are retired.

Geneva Today

Survey respondents rated a number of community services and facilities ranging from water and sewer to library and rescue services. While most categories received a positive rating from 58% or more of the respondents, road conditions, parks and recreation and medical services received the lowest scores. Schools and sanitation services received the highest ratings from participants.

The survey also asked what types of businesses residents frequent in town versus those they patronize out-of-town. Not surprisingly, most residents use local grocery stores, drugstores and banks. Most out-of-town travel is for retail shopping and restaurants. Despite the presence of the Wiregrass Medical Center and related services in town, nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated they obtain healthcare services outside Geneva.

In addition, respondents were asked about downtown Geneva. Over half of those responding indicated they visit downtown about once a week or more, while 23% travel downtown less than once a month. Restaurants and banks are the main attractions for those visiting downtown. Others noted they visit downtown for auto parts and services or to pay their water bill at City Hall.

Geneva Tomorrow

When asked about the issues most important to Geneva's future, there is considerable agreement around economic development. 60% of respondents highlighted industrial development and 58% highlighted business development. Responses also emphasized schools, workforce training and recreation and cultural amenities.

Respondents were also asked to describe what they felt would have the most positive impact on Geneva in the future. The top three recurring themes fall under the broader category of economic development: jobs, more business activity and industrial development. Other notable responses included recreation and community appearance.

BACKGROUND

The City of Geneva was incorporated in 1875 and is the county seat of Geneva County. Geneva lies along the Choctawhatchee River, which flows for 141 miles from Barbour County to Choctawhatchee Bay along the Gulf of Mexico. The town's postmaster Henry Yonge named the town after Geneva, Switzerland, the birthplace of his wife Mary Ellis. Today, Geneva extends to within less than a mile from the Florida-Alabama state line. It has been the largest city in Geneva County since 1940 and has a population of about 4,450.

The original settlement was located on a stagecoach line between Pensacola and Tallahassee, Florida. Early on the surrounding Wiregrass area and its sandy soils were considered ill-suited to farming. Turpentine and lumber industries

grew quickly in the area. The Choctawhatchee River proved an important way to transport lumber and other goods until railroads were built in the 1890s. Clearing of the pine forests by lumber companies opened up the area for other farming of cotton, corn and sugar cane.

The largest cities nearest Geneva are Enterprise, with a population of 27,775, and Dothan, 68,001. Nearby communities are Hartford (2,643), Samson (1,925). Fort Rucker, the primary flight training base for the US Army, is located just over 20 miles northeast of Geneva and has been a major economic influence in the modern Wiregrass region of Alabama.

By the Numbers

The following are demographic highlights and comparisons captured from decennial US Census data and annual census estimates from the American Community Survey. Socioeconomic and housing data for Geneva were compared to the state, Geneva County and nearby communities—Enterprise, Hartford and Samson.

People

- The median age in Geneva is 37.7 years, which is lower than that of the state (38.4), Geneva County (42.2) and nearby Hartford (41.1). However, Geneva's median age is slightly higher than Enterprise (36.5) and Samson (33.9).
- There are a total of 1,615 households in Geneva. 71% of households are married-couple or other family households. 86% of nonfamily households are people living alone.
- Approximately 78% of residents (25 years and older) have at least a high school diploma (or equivalency), which is lower than the state and Enterprise but similar to that of the county and higher than in nearby Samson and Hartford. 12.9% of residents have a bachelor's or higher level degree, which is higher than other parts of the county but lower than the state (23.5%) and Enterprise (30.2%). Notably, Geneva residents between the ages of 35 to 44 are much more likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher level degree than other age groups.
- The median income for workers with high school diploma/equivalency was estimated at \$15,263 in 2014. This is considerably lower than earnings of those with same educational attainment at the statewide and county level and in nearby cities. However, Geneva residents with some college tended to earn better wages than in Hartford and Samson. And, those with a bachelor's degree had higher earnings on average than similarly educated people at the statewide and county level and in nearby cities.

Housing

- The average household size in owner-occupied homes is 2.77 and the average in renter-occupied homes is 2.51. In nearby cities, household size in rental homes tends to be slightly higher than in owner-occupied homes.
- Almost 80% of the city's housing stock is single-family detached housing. About 20% of housing units are manufactured homes, a higher rate than seen in the state and in nearby cities but lower than the Geneva County rate (29.5%).



- 36.8% of Geneva's occupied housing is rented, a large portion of that being single family and manufactured homes.
- Geneva's median housing value for owner-occupied homes is \$85,600—considerably lower than at the statewide level (\$125,500) but higher than in the county and in Samson. Median monthly rent is \$557, which is similar to rents paid in the county and in Hartford and Samson but lower than in Enterprise (\$766) and statewide (\$717).
- Geneva's vacant housing stock is relatively low at about 6.6%. Rental vacancy is estimated at under 1%, indicating high demand for rental housing in the community.
- Only about 10.8% of Geneva's housing stock was built since 2000. Three out of four homes were built between 1950 and 2000.

Economy

- The median household income in Geneva (\$29,912) is higher than in Hartford and Samson but lower than in the county (\$36,024) and statewide (\$43,623).
- 30% of Geneva's population lives below the poverty line, which is a higher rate than the county (23.2%) and state (18.8%) but lower than in Hartford and Samson.
- Geneva's estimated unemployment rate (14.9%) is slightly higher than county (11.2%) and state (9.3%) rates but lower than in Hartford and Samson.
- Approximately 30% of Geneva workers have service occupations and 24% have management, business, science and arts occupations. Statewide the top occupations are management, business, science and arts (33.3%) and sales and office jobs (24.1%).
- In Geneva, the top three industries in which residents are employed are: educational services, health care and social assistance (21.9%); arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services (18.0%); and manufacturing (12.0%). The top industries statewide are: educational services, health care and social assistance (22.5%); manufacturing (13.9%); and retail (12.0%).



VISION + GOALS

The comprehensive plan is built on the following goals, which represent recurring themes that emerged from community meetings and the community plan survey. Under each goal are objectives intended to further inform future city efforts and decisions. These goals and objectives are reinforced through land use, transportation and economic development strategies described later in the plan.

GOAL 1: Industrial and Business Development

Recruiting Industry

- Continue, enhance and develop additional economic development partnerships. To pursue local economic development opportunities, the City currently works with the Wiregrass Economic Development Corporation, which serves local and county governments in Coffee and Geneva Counties. To strengthen economic development efforts, the City should take advantage of and create relationships with existing state economic and industrial development agencies (Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, Department of Commerce, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, Economic Development Association of Alabama, Auburn University's Economic Development Institute and University of Alabama Center for Economic Development).
- Provide a skilled workforce through technical education programs. In 2015, the National Guard armory was slated for closure along with several others throughout the state. But, through an agreement between the Alabama National Guard, the state's community college system and Geneva County and City schools, the armory is being converted into a career technical education facility. The move will allow the city-county CTE program to expand course offerings to better support local businesses and industries. Job training programs for older residents would be an important complement to this effort, providing assistance to those who are unemployed or transitioning from one type of work to another.
- Establish a local economic/industrial development authority to lead key industrial development goals. Funded in part by the local government, a development authority issues tax-exempt bonds to incentivize development and improvement of existing facilities. Development authorities include a board of directors selected by the local government. A development authority can also apply for industrial development grants from the Department of Commerce/State Industrial Development Authority.
- Acquire land for, plan and develop an industrial park. In this effort, the city or its development authority must first evaluate potential sites and evaluate their appropriateness: topography; transportation access; access to water, sewer and other utilities; environmental hazards; size and shape; etc. The city, with assistance from an engineering consultant, has already performed some analysis of potential sites. Sites evaluated include properties on West Magnolia Avenue and on Highway 52 east of the city limits.
- Inventory and market available properties and buildings for economic development. In concert with commercial real estate representatives, the City should develop detailed portfolios for each site/building and share with partnering economic development agencies and broadcast available properties through online commercial real estate sites.

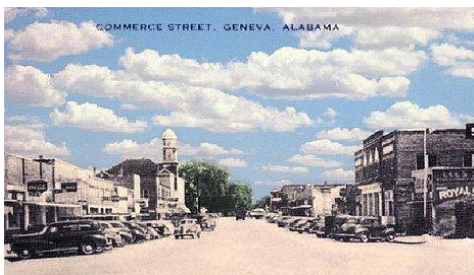
Business Development

- Increase effectiveness of the Chamber of Commerce. Chambers of commerce represent the interests of local businesses, facilitate business-to-business networking, sponsor business education programs, help attract businesses to a community and engage in promotional and charitable activities. Assistance from the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama and Business Council of Alabama may help the chamber to better align its efforts with local needs and simultaneously grow the membership it needs to be successful.
- Create business training and knowledge-sharing opportunities. The chamber of commerce, area community colleges and other groups can host programs to provide training on financing, management and other business issues to help small businesses succeed. Also, successful local business leaders can share their knowledge and experience with other area businesses.
- Support local businesses. National studies indicate that existing businesses provide 80% of all new jobs in communities. To support the creation of new local businesses and expansion of existing ones, the City can work with its Chamber to understand the needs of local businesses and facilitate change to meet those needs. Local businesses can take advantage of SBA loans administered through the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission (SEARPD). SEARPD and state economic development agencies can also provide small business owners and prospective owners with market research, GIS mapping and other forms of technical assistance.

Development of a Farmer's Market is one strategy that has been considered by the community to support local farmers, generate more activity downtown, and make it easier for residents to purchase fresh, locally-grown produce. The popularity of farmer's markets exploded over the last fifteen years in cities large and small. In addition to fresh produce, a lively atmosphere, food and nutritional education programs, entertainment, food vendors and special events have helped to make farmer's markets successful.

- Encourage entrepreneurs. One of the ways cities encourage entrepreneurs is by helping fund space for and/or the operation of a business incubator program. Business incubators are programs in which multiple start-up businesses can lower the cost of entry into the marketplace by sharing space and equipment. Once a business has established itself, it "graduates" from the incubator and typically rents or builds its own space.

Pop-up programs have also been helpful to start-ups in testing their business model and generating publicity. Pop-up business programs typically involve promotional events in which start-up businesses set up shop for a short time period in a high visibility location, sometimes for only 2-3 days. Crowds are drawn to a promotional



event through special advertising and activities where pop-up shops sell food and other products or otherwise market themselves.

During planning meetings, it was noted that while Geneva has several local restaurants, the city does not have a "destination" restaurant that regularly draws patrons from outside the city. A destination restaurant open for lunch and dinner can draw

customers from 30-45 minutes away and provide spillover business to local merchants. While providing a local option that keeps residents in town for dining out, it could also serve visitors the community attracts as part of its recreational tourism efforts.

GOAL 2: Community Appearance

The economy of the city is tightly linked to its physical character, and its image must be enhanced to remain competitive. Geneva's gateways and image corridors should be treated as assets to be enhanced and taken advantage of.

- Improve city gateways. Maintaining a good first impression is a crucial part of promoting a positive community image to prospective businesses and residents, tourists and other visitors. City gateways should be enhanced through attractive monument signage and landscaping along major roads. These gateway enhancements do not need to be at the city limits. The locations should be selected strategically to create a strong sense of arrival, such as at major intersections, a bridge or where there is some other notable transition or change in the landscape. The character of surrounding development or the natural landscape should also be considered to provide an attractive backdrop to gateway improvements.
- Maintain attractive image corridors. The design and condition of major roadways and development alongside them can support or detract from the image of the city. In addition to public improvements at gateways, the city should also take care to keep its major roads in good condition, both functionally and visually. Attractive street signs, lighting and landscaping, particularly in close-in locations, help dress up roadways and communicate to visitors that the community invests in itself and cares about its image.
- Support beautification and clean-up programs. While the city is responsible for public property—including gateways and roadways—property owners are responsible for the condition of private land and buildings. City regulations can impact property upkeep only to a point. Volunteer beautification programs promoted by the City, chamber or other groups encourage property owners to maintain and improve the appearance of homes and businesses. Public and private organizations can also hold monthly or seasonal clean-up activities to focus on one street, block or neighborhood at a time. With the involvement of property owners and privately raised funds and materials, clean-up programs can include beautification and minor repair work on individual properties while public resources are focused on area streets and public properties.
- Develop attractive, effective wayfinding signage. The City can enhance its image and support tourism by developing public wayfinding signage at key points along major roads to assist visitors in finding their destinations easily. Attractively designed wayfinding signage used with consistency can integrate city branding in high visibility locations.

Wayfinding signage is primarily directed at visitors unfamiliar with Geneva. Destinations that should be considered for inclusion in a future wayfinding system include, among others:

- The Junction/Robert Fowler Park
- Downtown Geneva
- Golf Course
- Sports Complex
- Wiregrass Medical Center

To implement a wayfinding system for Geneva, a master plan should be developed identifying wayfinding routes and decision points; the types of signs to be used and their design; destinations to be listed on signage; and a phasing strategy.

GOAL 3: Recreation and Tourism

Recreation and tourism have become closely related in many communities, in part because of the rising popularity of travel sports, but also because they frequently focus on natural assets that residents and visitors value mutually. Geneva's location at the junction of the Choctawhatchee and Pea Rivers is the perfect example of this convergence. Together, the Constitution Oak, Robert Fowler Park and the rivers form a local asset enjoyed by residents that is exceptional enough to also attract out-of-towners. But, there must be other amenities to serve the community adequately and to better draw and keep visitors in town longer.

- Develop more parks and recreation facilities. Parks and recreation was an issue raised in community meetings and in the community survey. Generally, there are too few parks in Geneva. Robert Fowler Park is the gem of the city's parks system and the levee trail is a nearby amenity with the potential to create a stronger connection between the river, park and Downtown Geneva. Chapman Memorial Park, home to the city's baseball and softball fields, is prone to flooding.

The city should develop a recreational center or multipurpose building able to accommodate indoor sports, arts education, after-school programs, etc. With an auditorium for performing arts and related support spaces, the building could function as a civic center and host concerts, plays and musicals for the enjoyment of residents and visitors.

The ballfields at Chapman Memorial Park should be relocated in an effort to develop a sports complex capable of hosting tournaments. Youth sports tournaments have become a revenue generator for several small- and mid-sized towns that have built adequate facilities with convenient access to dining and shopping areas.

There is only one public "passive" recreational spaces in Geneva—Fowler Park. Passive park space includes open space that can be used with flexibility for picnicking, wildlife observation, walking and bicycling, pick-up games, and simple outdoor relaxation. Passive parks often include seating areas (covered or not), children's playgrounds and shade trees. To better serve the overall community, some passive park space should be added on the west side of town—a space that can be enjoyed by children and families in nearby neighborhoods and that could serve as a convenient lunch spot for those who work in nearby businesses. Such a space *could* be part of the relocation of the sports complex.

- Continue to develop Fowler Park. The city should continue to invest in Fowler Park, both physically and in terms of broadening the activities and events held there. Water-based activities and events are always popular draw in the South. Bringing a commercial campground operator will create lodging opportunities for those who may be traveling through the area to stay overnight and patronize local businesses. A location near the junction would be ideal. Improving connections between the park and downtown will benefit activity at both.
- Support development of the Wiregrass Trail. The proposed Wiregrass Trail would stretch 43.8 miles from Andalusia to Geneva. The tracks have already been removed from the CSX railroad on which the trail would be built to accommodate walking, bicycling and possibly horseback riding. Connecting the trail to downtown and to the Junction will create a stronger recreational tourism destination that could put visitors in downtown businesses.

GOAL 4: Infrastructure

The City has worked steadily over the years to improve its stormwater, roads and utilities infrastructure to provide a safe environment for residents and strengthen the community's foundation for growth. In the coming years the City will continue to invest in its infrastructure to make the community more resilient and increase its opportunities for economic growth.

- Continue efforts to resolve stormwater and flooding problems. Flooding has been an issue for Geneva since it was founded. After a major flood in 1929, when most of the town was submerged for days, the Federal government built a levee to protect the community from rising waters. But in 1990 flood waters rose over the levee and into downtown. Following this the levee was improved and a flood buyout allowed residents regularly impacted by flooding to move to other, higher parts of town. While the levee greatly reduced the potential for damage to downtown from floods, there are still developed areas of the city that lie in either a floodway or floodplain. During the planning process, residents noted there remain locations in the city where stormwater drains poorly after heavy rainfalls.
- Expand sewer infrastructure strategically. A considerable portion of the city is connected to the municipal sewer system. However, some areas of the city that could be valuable for future industrial development have limited or no sewer access currently. Currently, there is no sewer service east of the Choctawhatchee River, which poses high costs for extending the system, though industrial development opportunities on the city's east side may make such investments worthwhile. In recent years, the city extended a force main north of Double Bridges Creek to provide service to a local industry. This connection may prove valuable to growing additional industries on the north side of town.
- Improve road conditions. Road conditions were another issue of concern highlighted by participants during planning meetings. Throughout the city there are streets in need of re-paving, some without curb and gutter and others that are altogether unpaved. Maintaining and updating a street maintenance and improvements plan helps guide the Streets and Sanitation Department in working through the varied needs among Geneva's street network. Streets that remain unpaved in central parts of the city should be a priority for improvement in the coming years.
- Increase internet access. 92% of residents have access to internet service through two wired providers. However, residents and business representatives suggest there are limitations within the coverage and speed of the available services. Such issues can be an impediment to economic development given the degree to which businesses rely on internet access today.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Creating and seizing upon opportunities community-wide begins with the core elements of the city's physical development today—its downtown, commercial and industrial hubs, neighborhoods, major institutions and infrastructure. The strategy for Geneva's continuing development presented here supports commerce, industry, recreation and institutions in locations that will be accessible to people living and working in the community and its trade area. It protects the city's neighborhoods while acknowledging areas for improvement through public and private investment. And, the strategy recognizes the need to expand city services and facilities as Geneva grows.

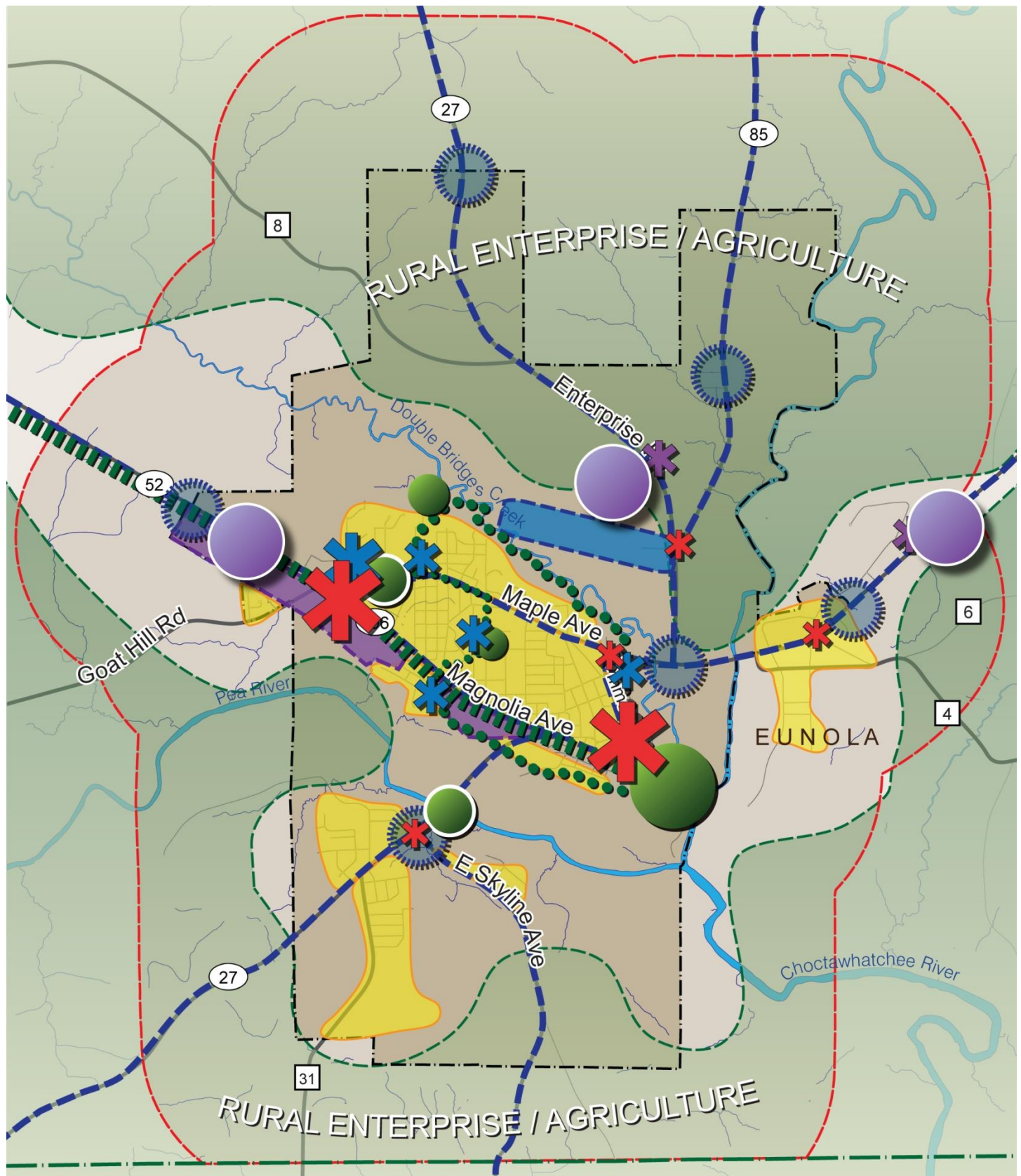
The intent of the Strategic Development Concept is to capitalize on Geneva's resources, to build on its history, traditions and institutions and the physical advantages of the city. The concept expresses the citywide vision that emerged from community meetings and sets out a foundation for the Comprehensive Plan. It provides an overall strategy:

- to accommodate and encourage development while conserving natural systems and rural areas
- to guide new development in ways that maintain and strengthen the community's character and quality of life;
- to direct public and private investments in a fiscally responsible and sustainable fashion; and
- to improve the city's growth regulations and decision-making processes in accord with the community's vision.

This is a general, long-range plan. The locations of certain proposed activity centers and community facilities shown on the Strategic Development Concept map are not meant to be precise. These locations should be considered "placeholders" until more specific planning may be undertaken to determine detailed needs and locations for each.



In 2010, Auburn University professor Cheryl Morgan led a charrette in Geneva to identify ways to revitalize downtown. The resulting proposal suggested a stronger connection between the town center, Fowler Park and the river as well as a multipurpose community center between Commerce St and the levee.



Strategic Development Concept

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The people of Geneva take their natural environment seriously and understand the mutual impacts of development and natural resources on one another. The community's natural areas together form a green infrastructure—a network of scenic areas, habitats and land areas and waterways that perform critical environmental functions.

Geneva's environmental resources affect the economy and quality of life of residents. If the city's green infrastructure is not respected, the health, safety and quality of life in the community may suffer. Natural resources have limits, and development decisions typically affect far more than the property's owner and immediate neighbors, because the type



and intensity of development ultimately affect the surroundings, and depending upon the approach to development, the land can present varying opportunities and hazards.

When slopes are graded, natural drainage systems are altered, which can have impacts well beyond the site. As floodplains are filled in and built upon, flooding is shifted to other locations. Once cut, forests may take decades to return. Wetlands, when filled and paved, are likely gone forever, and extinct species cannot be replaced.

Green Infrastructure Policies

Conserve natural features and systems

The city enjoys a diverse natural landscape featuring rivers, stream corridors and floodplains, woodlands and farmland. Development should be planned and arranged so that changes to natural drainage patterns and other environmental functions are avoided or minimized.

Organize development to capitalize on open space

Important natural resources and scenic locations should be reserved for public and semi-public open space, greenways, parks, or simply conservation areas. These should be linked together as much as possible into a citywide open space system.

Housing and other types of development typically enjoy higher property values when they are located adjacent to open spaces. When buildings in a development are arranged to look into parks or other types of open space—rather than backing up to them—property values are enhanced, not only for the buildings nearest the open space, but for neighboring properties as well.

Preserve or create new green infrastructure elements through new development

Development ultimately displaces natural features. In lower intensity development, it is possible to avoid or reduce disruption of slopes, wetlands and other natural features and functions. But with high intensity development, it is difficult to avoid these impacts. In these cases, man-made green spaces should be incorporated—parks and tree-lined streets, for example—to make these areas feel more “green,” to absorb storm water, reduce heat islands, and help mitigate pollution like natural open spaces do.

ACTIVITY CENTERS

Concentrations of commercial, industrial and mixed-use development are designated in this plan as *activity centers*. These include continued development and reinvestment in existing nodes—commercial centers, Downtown Geneva, and industrial centers as well as desired new development areas.

Commercial Centers

The Strategic Development Concept proposes strengthening of Downtown Geneva and other commercial areas through infill development and reinvestment in existing businesses. New development may expand the footprint of the West Magnolia Avenue commercial district and the smaller neighborhood commercial centers:

- Hwy 27 and Skyline Ave
- Enterprise Road and Daleville Road
- East Maple Avenue



Industrial Centers

Most new industrial development should be steered towards locations where there already is an industrial presence. These areas typically will have utility access on which new industries will depend. These areas include:

- West Magnolia Avenue where undeveloped land provides the most flexibility for new industrial development
- The older industrial corridor on Magnolia Avenue near downtown, where there are opportunities for infill development as well as adaptive reuse or redevelopment of vacant industrial properties.
- Enterprise Road (near the airport and Reliable Products) has the potential for additional industrial development. Reliable Products is connected to the municipal sewer system through a line that crosses Double Bridges Creek.
- East Maple Avenue (near Outdoor Aluminum and county offices) offers land for industrial development though the area is outside the city limits and is not connected to the municipal sewer system. Costs to extend the sewer system across the river are the primary constraint to industrial development on the east side of Geneva.

Activity Center Policies

Concentrate commercial development around important intersections

To maximize visibility and access, commercial activity centers are located along major roads, ideally at intersections with other major roads. Retail, services and lodging (where appropriate) are most successful when concentrated at the center's core. Offices, business support uses and high-density residential may flank the core or may be located in upper stories of buildings.

Commercial areas should not stretch out continuously along major roads. Linear commercial areas tend to develop issues with traffic congestion, poor aesthetics, and oversupply and vacancy of commercial property. However, as demand for commercial development increases over time, it is appropriate to expand activity centers outward.

Like uses should face like across a street

To assure cohesiveness and minimize land use conflicts, like uses should face one another across streets. This applies in activity centers as well as throughout the community. It is easier to mitigate incompatibilities through buffers along rear lot lines than between front doors. This also results in more comfortable transitions between business areas and neighborhoods.

Encourage shared access

Interconnecting local streets, shared driveways, alleys and interconnected parking lots allow local traffic to flow within and around activity centers without bogging down through traffic on major streets. Vehicular access should be designed to allow motorists access to adjacent centers and neighborhoods, yet discourage through traffic in adjacent residential areas.

Geneva's activity centers vary in function and size, but most should display at least several of the following characteristics:

- **Anchor or focus of activity:** Regardless of its type, every center contains some activity or function with which it is primarily associated in the region, community or neighborhood.
- **Intensively developed core:** There is a relatively high concentration of those uses for which the center exists, toward the center and less toward the edges.
- **Vehicular accessibility:** Each center is readily accessible by vehicle. Commercial centers have a degree of access due to their location along major roads.
- **Internal vehicular circulation:** A driver can get to other locations within the center on the same side of a major street without having to re-enter that street.
- **Pedestrian and bicycle accessibility:** With some exception, activity centers are accessible by pedestrians and cyclists from surrounding areas. Activity centers are planned and designed for walkability. Downtown Geneva and neighborhood centers reflect the highest integration of pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Industrial centers will tend to have the least.
- **Positive sense of place:** The visitor has a good feeling about the overall character of the center—overall image, feeling of safety, and positive sense of arrival.
- **Legibility:** Things fit together—buildings, signage, landscaping, parking and driveways.
- **Well-defined edges:** The arrangement of uses and the design of the streetscape, buildings and landscaping make it clear where each activity center begins and ends.

Design activity centers for walkability

Good planning and design can greatly influence the number of people willing to walk (or ride a bicycle) as an alternative to driving. This is especially true in Downtown Geneva and neighborhood activity centers. Sidewalks and on-street bicycle accommodations and other pedestrian (and/or bicycle) linkages between neighborhoods and nonresidential areas are highly recommended. Excessive distances between sidewalks and business entrances should be avoided. The arrangement of buildings, lighting and landscape design should contribute to the safety and comfort of those walking in a commercial activity center.

Create discernable, compact activity centers

Each activity center should have a “sense of place” that binds it together and differentiates it from other business areas in the community. Activity centers should be densely developed and their edges well-defined. Building setbacks, height, scale, materials, landscaping and signage should be consistent within each center. And, there should be a clear, comfortable and intentionally-planned transition between activity centers and neighborhoods.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Though the two rivers have impacted the way the city has developed over time, Geneva has a well-interconnected street network, particularly in the heart of the city between Maple Avenue and Magnolia Avenue. Appropriately, the rural edges of the city are served by only a few major roads and local streets. Several of the north-south highways that traverse the county are used seasonally for beach access. A limitation that should be noted is that there are no 4-lane highways within Geneva County—some area highways have 4-lane segments but these tend to narrow to two lanes away outside of towns and cities in the region. This is considered an impediment to attracting more industrial development, which relies on a strong surface transportation system.

Regional Transportation

The Southeast Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO) represents the transportation needs of Barbour, Coffee and Covington Counties and portions of Geneva, Dale, Henry and Houston Counties to the Alabama Department of Transportation. Regional priorities are identified by the RPO, documented in their Long Range Transportation Plan and submitted for inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). One highway project identified in the LRTP that would directly affect Geneva is the proposed four-laning of Alabama Highway 52 from Geneva to Dothan. Other regional projects that would indirectly benefit Geneva are a long-discussed I-10 connector, the alignment of which is not settled, and four-laning of Highway 167 from Troy to the Alabama-Florida State Line. Both of these projects are expected to improve economic development opportunities in eastern Geneva County, which could translate to more jobs for Geneva residents.

The current STIP includes funding for improving Highway 52 from Malvern to Slocomb and maintenance and safety widening of Highway 52 from Hartford to Geneva. The RPO’s long range plan is currently being updated.

Local Transportation

Several local streets are in need of improvements including paving and re-paving, installation or repair of curb and gutter, and other maintenance. No issues of traffic congestion were reported during community meetings that would require additional lanes, changes to signalization or other mitigation measures.

There are a number of city streets that are unpaved. Recently the City has improved some of the more central streets. These efforts should continue. City streets should meet minimum standards to assure ease of access for residents but also to ensure that road conditions do not impede emergency responders and other service vehicles. The presence of unimproved streets in the center city can also reflect poorly on the community to prospective investors and other visitors. These improvements will also likely encourage private reinvestment in properties alongside them, including housing construction on vacant lots. However, some unpaved streets have lots that only face cross streets. In such cases, it may be more appropriate to designate these as alleys and improve them accordingly.

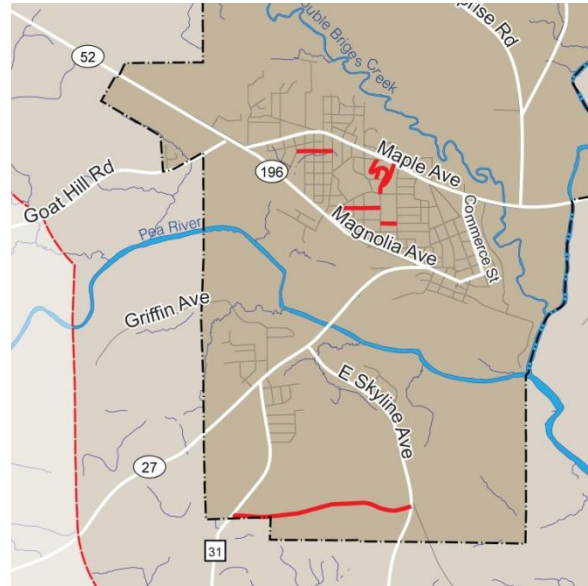
Centrally-located streets that should be prioritized in the next several years for improvement are:

- Hart Avenue
- Valley Avenue
- Fleming Avenue
- N Forrest Avenue
- N Choctaw Avenue

Improving Franklin Avenue on the south side of the river would also be beneficial long-term as it would provide better east-west access between Skyline Avenue and CR 31/Ward Street and could spur future residential development. Similarly, paving of Simmons Avenue north of the airport should be viewed as a long-term project, with consideration of the possibility for future development of that area.

Improvements should be considered along Town Avenue and portions of Magnolia and Maple Avenues to correct access management issues and enhance the appearance of these major roads to project a stronger, more positive image to visitors in the way that Commerce Street does. Improvements would include closing obsolete curb cuts and replacing/installing curb and gutter, upgrading street lights and adding landscaping. Banners and wayfinding signs may be appropriate in select locations.

To create a stronger physical connection between Downtown Geneva, the Junction, and the River Oaks Golf Course, the south end of Commerce Street should be improved and re-aligned so that it provides a direct connection to Westville Avenue. The existing railroad trestle may need to be repaired. The trestle should remain to connect the planned rail-to-trail to the levee trail and the Junction.



Pedestrian and Bicycle Access

Safe accommodations for walking and bicycling are essential to providing an environment that is safe for children and families. And, walkability is becoming increasingly recognized as a competitive advantage for communities looking to attract residents. Recent studies show that people are willing to pay a premium to live in a walkable neighborhood that features sidewalks and where schools, parks and neighborhood businesses are within a 5-10 minute walk. Given Geneva's relatively dense center, schools, churches, and business areas are only a short distance away from most neighborhoods.

Only a very few streets in Geneva have sidewalks—these are mostly in the Downtown area and along streets in the adjacent historic neighborhood. Sidewalks are especially important near schools, especially when they are within or adjacent to neighborhoods, as is the case with Geneva's schools. In these locations there tends to be a concentration of children walking to school from nearby homes as well as buses and family vehicles coming from other parts of town all within a short window of time. This is an issue that needs to be addressed for the safety of students walking to school. In new development areas in the center city, sidewalks should be required.

From the high school, you can go virtually anywhere in the center city—the area northwest of the rivers—in ten minutes by bike.

There are no designated bicycle facilities in Geneva today. Bike facilities include on-street, separated bike lanes, "sharrows" (lanes shared with motorists) or off-street multipurpose paths—10 ft wide paths used by pedestrians and cyclists. The proposed Wiregrass Trail will provide a strong linkage along the southern edge of Geneva's core. A loop could be created to serve the center city by spurring off the Wiregrass Trail along W Maple Avenue then turning south near the High School and connecting back to the main trail near Purvis Avenue. Another strategic opportunity to improve walking and biking infrastructure is development of a greenway trail along the south side of Double Bridges Creek. This route would provide a connection along the north side of the center city from the Levee Trail to Chapman Memorial Park and the elementary school.

Transportation Policies

Mobility and Connectivity

Mobility is the degree to which motorists are impeded (or not) by traffic signals or congestion. It is also a function of interconnectivity within the street network. Limited street connectivity often requires drivers to increase the length of their trip and travel more on higher order roads to travel only short distances. This, in addition to poor access controls, can congest arterial and collector roads unnecessarily.

Most streets should connect to at least two others. This disperses local traffic, reducing congestion on major roads and thereby preserving their capacity. This also minimizes delays in emergency response by providing more direct routes to various parts of the city and multiple ways to get to any one location. An excessive number of cul-de-sac and dead-end streets reduces connectivity, which increases congestion on major roads and can delay emergency response vehicles. Dead end streets should be avoided, except where necessary due to steep slopes, waterways, railroads and other constraints. Moreover, internal connections should be provided within developments. Developers should be required to plan for and effectively address the need for internal connections between adjacent land uses, including residential subdivisions and commercial developments, to provide primary *and* secondary means of emergency access. Mobility planning and design should incorporate the following strategies for new streets and improvements to existing streets:

- Require street connections between new and existing developments to create an interconnected roadway system throughout the community.
- Landscape the edges and medians of major roads to provide an attractive setting for development and establish a strong image for the community overall.
- Require streets be planted with street trees appropriate to the function of the street and the type of development alongside it.
- Discourage non-residential traffic from travel on primarily residential streets. This is best accomplished through proper land use planning, street network planning and street design techniques that slow vehicular speeds and discourage through traffic where it is not intended.



Access Management

An essential way to maintain safe and reliable access and street capacity is to manage access to properties along arterials and major collectors. Approached properly, an access management program can enhance property values while safeguarding past and future infrastructure investments. Accessibility and access management should incorporate the following strategies for retrofitting and constructing new major roads:

- **Separate conflict points:** The distance between intersections of arterials and collectors and driveways should be regulated. Generally, driveways should be located as far from intersections as practicable.
- **Restrict turning movements at unsignalized driveways and intersections:** Full directional, unsignalized streets and driveways should be limited. Full movement intersections should serve multiple developments through shared driveways or cross access easements. Landscaped medians can improve safety and road capacity along arterials and collectors while also enhancing their visual character.
- **Establish and implement design standards:** Design standards that address access spacing, the length of turn lanes and tapers and driveway dimensions should be developed for use on arterials and collectors.
- **Traffic signal spacing:** Signals should only be installed when appropriate studies indicate their spacing and interconnection can be accomplished without significant impacts on corridor capacity.
- **Turn lanes:** Left and right turn lanes should be required for all collector and arterial streets and major access points to activity centers.
- **Shared driveways and/or inter-parcel access:** Shared or “joint use” driveways and inter-parcel interconnections, including alleys, should be used to avoid the proliferation of driveways to preserve the capacity of the corridor.

Traffic Calming

Residents are often concerned with speeding traffic. The potential for cut through traffic and speeding increases when street networks are not planned and managed properly to address these issues from the outset. Often, stop signs or speed bumps are requested to address these problems after a new street or street connection has been completed or when a new development occurs in an area that increases traffic on local streets. Stop signs are high-level traffic control devices and should only be used where warranted by traffic volumes and/or extenuating roadway geometric

factors. Stop signs should not be used for speed control. Overuse of stop signs leads to general public disregard of stop signs. City policy should adhere to applicable provisions of the Federal Highway Administration Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (latest edition).

The most effective means of reducing speeds and cut-through traffic on local roadways is planning, design and engineering of the street network and the individual street. Motorists tend to drive faster on long, straight and flat streets. Short block lengths, subtle curves and offset intersections help reduce speeding and cut-through traffic. However, offset intersections are generally only appropriate for local streets and offset distances should be in keeping with access management guidelines.

Motorists also tend to drive at higher speeds on wide streets. When a new street is designed, its width should be kept to the minimum necessary, taking into account lane requirements, sight distance issues, dimensional requirements of emergency response vehicles, and whether bicycle facilities or on-street parking are included. Buildings built close to the street, on-street parking, vertical curbing, sidewalks, street trees, and other streetscape elements provide visual cues that encourage motorists to drive more cautiously and at slower speeds. These elements are most appropriate in medium and higher density neighborhoods and in activity centers. In lower density neighborhoods and rural areas, not all of these streetscape elements are appropriate and therefore other measures, such as network configuration, must be used to calm traffic behavior.

For existing streets, greater enforcement and traffic-calming interventions may be required. Proper posting of the speed limit and enforcement is generally the most effective means of reducing speeding. But, it is not feasible to enforce the posted speed limit at all times of the day on a consistent basis. To overcome this, traffic calming devices may be installed to limit vehicle speeds and reduce cut-through traffic. This involves changes in street alignment, installation of barriers, and other physical measures such as: roundabouts and neighborhood traffic circles, diagonal diverters, medians, bulb-outs and speed tables.

Develop a safe, convenient citywide street network

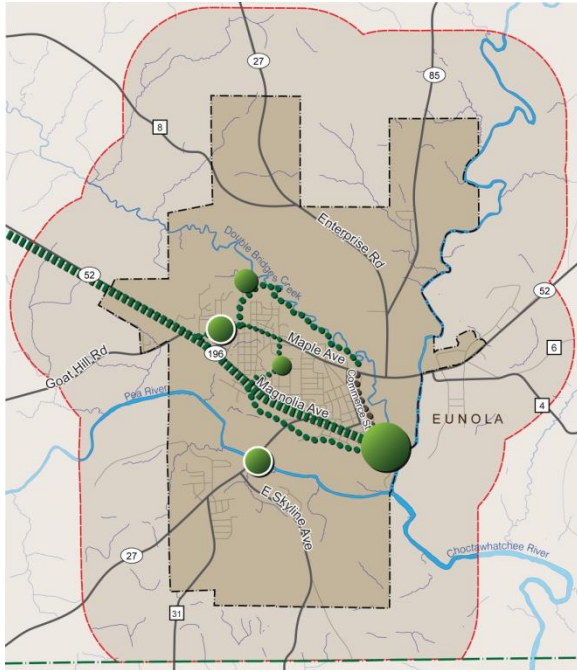
Residents and visitors should be able to travel *conveniently* throughout their community without being limited to one or two main roads. The central portion of the city benefits from an interconnected street network. New development on the west side should extend this level of street connectivity. Understandably, the less dense and often rural areas north of Double Bridges Creek and east and south of the rivers depend on a few main roads and bridges for access into the heart of the city. Where denser residential development occurs, a strong street network should be provided.

Provide route alternatives

There should be multiple ways in and out of larger subdivisions to disperse traffic and support emergency response. Similarly, residents should be able to accomplish local errands with as little travel on major roads as possible. This requires street connections between neighborhoods and nearby activity centers to create localized street networks.

Design neighborhood streets to connect but calm traffic

Street networks in subdivisions should, *by design*, discourage through traffic while still providing a reasonable level of connectivity. Cul-de-sacs are the typical approach to discouraging through traffic; but a preponderance of dead-end or cul-de-sac streets funnels traffic to a few major roads and can increase response times for fire and police services. There are several planning and design techniques that can be used to balance connectivity goals with the desire to calm traffic in neighborhoods.



PARKS AND RECREATION

During the planning process, community participants indicated a need for more recreational facilities. Existing parks and recreation facilities in Geneva include Robert Fowler Park, the Levee trail and Chapman Memorial Park. The city also owns a community center building rented for special events and that is used primarily by the Boys & Girls Club. Several city sports programs utilize school facilities for either practice or games. Soccer and football use the outfield of a baseball field at Chapman Memorial Park for games and practice, respectively.

Chapman Memorial Park is Geneva's baseball complex. It is located in a floodplain on the south side of Double Bridges Creek and floods frequently. While it is not uncommon for cities to locate parks and recreation facilities in flood zones, the regularity and severity of flooding at Chapman Park is a

problem the city intends to resolve by relocating the complex. This would allow the City to re-program the park for passive recreational use, potentially maintaining a portion of the property for soccer and football programs.



Robert Fowler Memorial Park located at the Junction is the gem of the city's parks. Fowler Park provides a boat landing and canoe ramp, RV sites, a playground, pavilion, and picnic tables enjoyed by residents and visitors. The City intends to grow activity at the park and attract a commercial campground operator to encourage tourism.

The city should consider development of a multipurpose building, possibly in or adjacent to downtown, with accommodations

for community events, conferences, concerts and other performances, arts programs and indoor recreation. This facility could be co-located with a proposed farmers market.

A pocket park is recommended to provide leisure space for businesses and residents on the west side of town. Amenities that should be considered: a playground or play space for children, fountain or similar water feature, benches, picnic tables, a small pavilion, flower garden and shade trees. The space could serve as a lunch spot for hospital and other business workers during weekdays and for children and families weekday afternoons and weekends.

Parks and Recreation Policies

Reserve usable open space in new developments

As new development occurs, especially large residential projects, *usable* open space should be reserved and provided for the recreational use of residents. Land areas that are too steep, wet or inaccessible or that have inadequate sizes or shapes should be avoided for neighborhood recreational space, although they may be appropriate for conservation purposes or to complement community open spaces.

Provide parks convenient to neighborhoods

There should be a park within walking distance of *most* neighborhoods. This can be achieved by reserving land in new residential development for recreational space, and in some cases for city parks. Passive recreational uses are the most advantageous function for environmentally sensitive areas, particularly land located in floodplains. Parks should be connected to neighborhoods by sidewalks and trails.

Connect community destinations with greenways and trails

Greenways and trails created through public investment and future private development support conservation while also increasing recreational opportunities and connectivity between neighborhoods, activity centers, parks, schools and other destinations. Key components in this plan are development of the Wiregrass Trail and development of additional multipurpose paths, including a greenway trail along Double Bridges Creek.

LAND USE

The physical and functional organization of the city has been carefully considered throughout the planning process. The major land use and transportation recommendations result from analysis of existing land uses, environmental and man-made conditions, Geneva's vision and the principles embedded in the Strategic Development Concept. Different land uses and densities require different levels of transportation and utilities infrastructure. Changes in land use and density can impact issues such as street design and capacity, property access, connectivity and pedestrian facilities.

The Future Land Use map illustrates *generally* how different parts of the community should function and relate to one another. The map portrays a pattern of various activity centers, their relationships with each other and with the city's neighborhoods. Building on this structure, Geneva intends to invest, reinvest and develop so that new growth is suited to the capacity of the land and to the city's ability to economically provide infrastructure and quality services and facilities.

LAND USE CONCEPT

The land use concept is built around the following principles:

- Arrange uses to minimize incompatibilities that can harm property values.
- Provide comfortable transitions from uses of higher intensity/density to those of lower intensity/density.
- Arrange uses so that traffic from industrial, commercial and other traffic generators is not funneled through residential areas.
- Treat commercial areas as centers or hubs around which residential, institutional and other community elements are arranged.
- Locate higher density residential uses close to commercial hubs and major roads and lower density residential areas further out from commercial hubs and major roads.
- Designate environmentally sensitive areas for recreational uses or development types with low impact on waterways and associated flood plains.
- Place industrial uses along or near major transportation corridors.
- Face similar uses across streets. Arrange uses so that transitions occur mostly along rear lot lines. Transitions along side lot lines should be considered on a case by case basis.

LAND USE PLAN

The purpose of the Land Use Plan is to identify the range of development types that may be allowed in a given area—should changes occur in the future—to support orderly growth and avoid incompatibility between neighboring uses that can harm property values. The Plan represents a *desired pattern* of land uses. It is not suggested that existing uses, which do not correspond with future uses, *must* change—but if they do, then those changes should be consistent with the overall pattern established in the Land Use Plan.

The Land Use Plan is used by the City for a variety of purposes. One of the most common of these is in reviewing development requests, such as zoning and subdivision applications. The Land Use Plan should be reviewed in these cases to assess the appropriateness of the requests. The Future Land Use map is *not* a zoning map but a guide to how the zoning map may change.

The Land Use Plan is also useful in planning ahead for expansion and new development of public facilities and utilities to serve the growing community because it represents a reasonable picture of the future state of the community.

The Future Land Use map is not intended to be static and unchanging. There will likely be instances when otherwise highly appropriate development requests will not adhere exactly to the plan as it is depicted in the Future Land Use map. At those times it may be necessary for the City to consider updates or other adjustments to the Land Use Plan or map.

The designation of land uses on the Future Land Use map should not be interpreted to propose, approve, deny nor preclude any specific action without full consideration of all policies, principles, standards or intentions expressed in this plan and the city's development regulations. Specific site conditions, such as topography, geology, soils and hydrology, must be considered when choosing sites for new developments, especially those of larger scale, and planning and designing their uses and densities. These realities, plus attitudes toward development on the part of public officials, other agencies, area residents, property owners and developers will play a large part in determining appropriate development location and design. Similarly, adequate community facilities and infrastructure – streets, parks, fire protection services, and water and sewer systems, should be assured before making any significant development proposals or decisions.

Activity centers identified in the Strategic Development Concept are intended to serve as magnets for the types of development described in the Future Land Use Plan.

Land Use Types and Characteristics

Open Space and Recreation

Includes land permanently reserved as open space and/or recreation including City parks, state and federal parks, land trust properties and cemeteries.

Agriculture and Rural Enterprise

Includes very low density rural housing, crop farming, timbering, raising of livestock and some agriculturally-related business uses that involve a low ratio of building to land area.

Residential

Includes, traditional detached single-family housing, townhouses, manufactured housing and multifamily residential uses. Low intensity institutional uses, parks and open spaces are also included within this category. Residential uses are shown in the Future Land Use map in four categories—low density single family residential (less than 3 dwelling units per acre), medium density single family residential (3–5.8 dwelling units per acre), high density residential (more than 5.8 dwelling units per acre, including multifamily) and manufactured housing.

Low density residential uses are single family detached houses on lots at least 15,000 sf in size that vary in character from suburban to more rural housing areas. These areas are located where transportation and other infrastructure are limited. Green space is incorporated through generously-sized yards.

In the case of new subdivisions, trails or other pedestrian facilities are recommended to provide a minimum level of walkability within the neighborhood and to connect to any schools, parks or other destinations nearby. Streets may include vegetated swales, valley gutters or raised curbs for stormwater purposes.

Medium density residential uses include single family detached homes with lot sizes ranging from 7,500 to 15,000 square feet. Single-family housing on the higher end of this range should be in close-in locations, such as near activity centers. Green space is provided in common open spaces and in the streetscape.

In new medium density neighborhoods, five foot wide sidewalks are recommended on at least one side of the street (and on both sides of collector streets). Sidewalks are set back from the curb by a buffer strip planted with street trees. Streets serving the lower end of this density range may have swales, valley curbs or curb and gutter for stormwater purposes.

High density residential uses are residential developments with lot sizes less than 7,500 sf including garden homes and townhouses and any development in which multiple units are located within the same structure. They are generally intended to develop within or at the edges of the activity centers. This provides a logical transition in density between activity centers and medium and low density neighborhoods. Green space is provided in common open spaces and within the streetscape.

Sidewalks are provided on both sides of the street and are separated from the street by a buffer strip planted with street trees. Streets feature vertical curb and gutter for stormwater purposes. Mid-block alleys or private drives provide access to internal parking areas.

For townhouses, alleys or shared driveways provide access to the rear of lots, which provides a discrete location for parking, utilities and garbage pick-up. Due to the narrowness of townhouse lots, front driveways are discouraged. Parking can instead be provided in common parking areas or along the rear of individual lots.

Manufactured housing includes manufactured home parks and manufactured home subdivisions. Streets serving future manufactured home subdivisions should be designed based on the density of the development (consistent with the descriptions above). The street segment on which a manufactured home park fronts should be consistent with adjoining segments in terms of sidewalks, street trees, curbing, etc.

Commercial

Retail, office, dining, entertainment and lodging accommodations. These are to be concentrated in regional, community and neighborhood-serving commercial activity centers identified in the Strategic Development Concept. Shopping and dining uses should be concentrated at the heart of each commercial center with other business uses located in upper stories of buildings or flanking the core uses. High density residential uses may be appropriate at the edges of commercial activity centers and in upper floors of buildings. Institutional uses may also be appropriate in commercial areas.

New commercial development, particularly community- and neighborhood-serving business areas, should feature sidewalks on both sides of the street to provide pedestrian access throughout the district and to connect to adjoining neighborhoods. Generally, local streets in commercial areas have vertical curb and gutter.

Mixed-use

Includes a variety of commercial, residential, recreational and institutional uses mixed horizontally or vertically in a relatively concentrated pattern. This category is applied to Geneva's downtown area. Future infill development and redevelopment is intended to be compatible in scale and density to existing downtown development similar to that seen along Commerce Street.

Institutional

Includes government facilities, schools, places of worship, medical, and community service uses and lands. NOTE: Only existing institutional uses are shown. Large churches and schools, hospitals and other higher intensity institutional



uses, which tend to comprise larger buildings and draw larger amounts of traffic, should generally be located in high visibility places where access is suitable and adjacent land uses are compatible. Less-intense institutions, which range from small churches to elementary schools, may be appropriate in or adjacent to neighborhoods provided traffic does not interfere with the enjoyment of the neighborhood.

Industrial

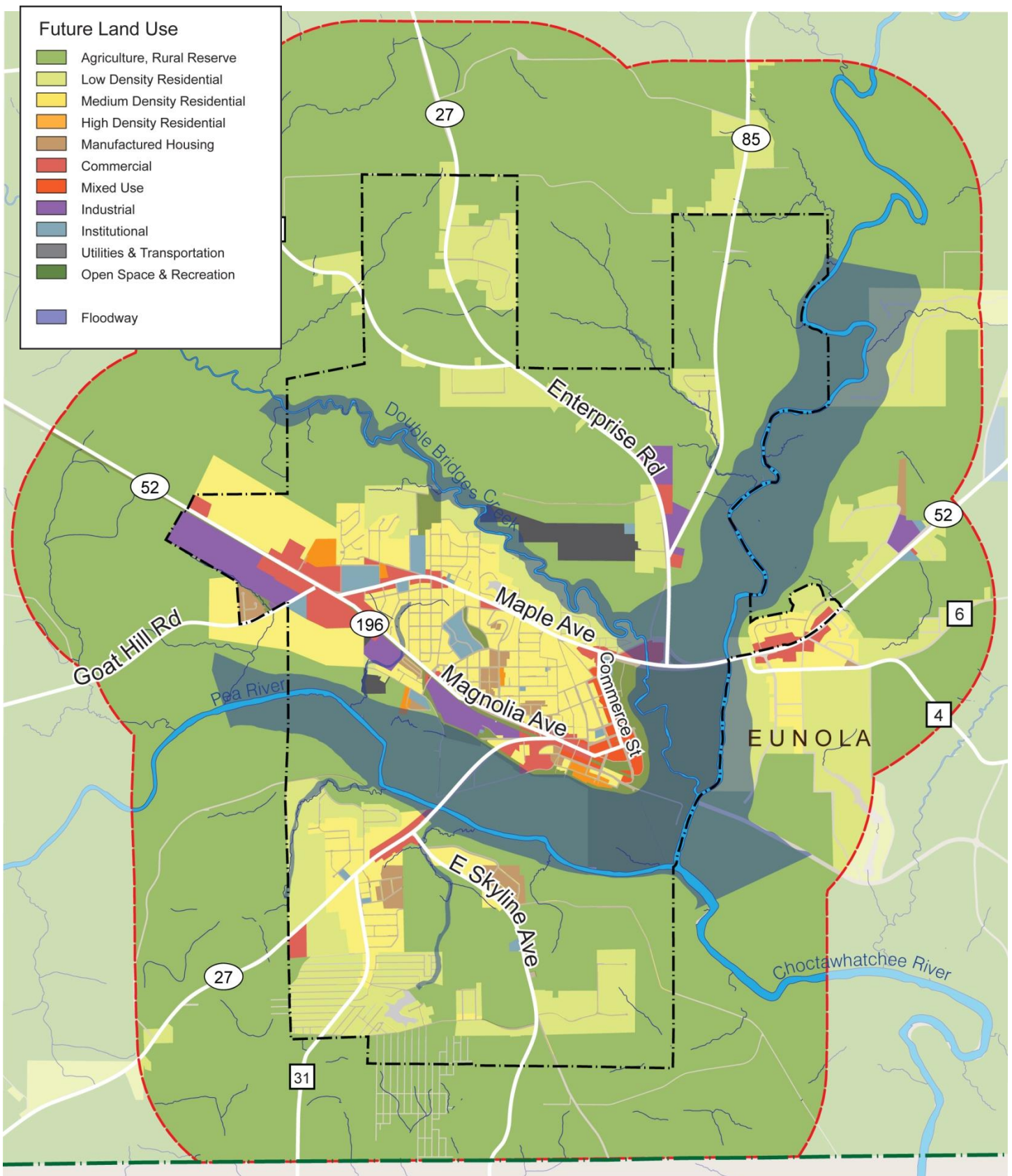
Includes warehousing and distribution, light and heavy manufacturing, industrial and technology parks, mining and extraction, and similar uses.

Light manufacturing, storage, research laboratories and similar uses that tend to be less land intensive and more compatible with non-industrial uses may be appropriate in relatively central locations and can provide transitions between heavy industrial areas and activity centers. Resource extraction, heavy manufacturing and other industrial operations that are land intensive and that generate excessive noise, smoke, odor or dust are considered heavy industries. These uses should be located away from commercial activity centers and neighborhoods.

Industrial areas need not have sidewalks except as determined by context. Context may also determine whether streets are lined with swales, valley curbs or curb and gutter.

Utilities and Transportation

Includes public and privately held properties containing utilities, railroad and telecommunications facilities. Only existing transportation and utilities properties are shown. Land for future transportation and utility facilities is not identified in the Future Land Use map.



Future Land Use Map

DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREAS

Downtown Geneva

Downtown Geneva, which comprises primarily business areas along Commerce Street and Magnolia Avenue (to Water Avenue, roughly), is designated as a “mixed-use” area. This designation acknowledges that, in addition to businesses, the downtown area contains a substantial number of public and private institutions and some existing homes. In addition, there is potential for future investment—through infill development, adaptive reuse and redevelopment—to accommodate additional housing, cultural and recreational uses. As an example, redevelopment of the former shirt factory site presents varied opportunities to bring new vitality to downtown, ranging from retirement housing to a public multipurpose facility.

Industrial Development

There are several locations where manufacturing and light industrial uses may develop, either by expanding existing industrial areas, reinvestment in vacant and underutilized areas, or starting new locations. Existing locations with potential for expansion are West Magnolia Avenue in the vicinity of the Sysco facility and along Enterprise Road near Reliable Products. Older industrial sites along Magnolia Avenue between Maple Avenue and downtown are appropriate for reinvestment, though businesses of a light industrial character are preferable due to the proximity to adjoining neighborhoods and businesses. Creation of a new industrial hub could occur on the east side of the Choctawhatchee River, especially if the sewer system can be expanded eastward.

Commercial Development

In addition to Downtown Geneva, the city has several locations where retail, service, office and other commercial uses are already established. In these areas there is land available to strengthen these areas for business activity through infill development and expansion. These vary in purpose from regional commerce (e.g., along West Maple and West Magnolia Avenues around Wal-Mart and the Wiregrass Medical Center) to neighborhood commerce (around the intersections of Skyline Avenue and Highway 27; Enterprise Road and Highway 85; and East Maple Avenue and CR 4).

Residential Development

Areas for new residential development vary based on the desired density of future developments. Availability of sewer service enables development of medium and higher density residential whereas un-sewered areas will be limited to slightly larger lot sizes (15,000 sf or more). Sewer access on the west side of the city, south along CR 31, and north of the airport lends flexibility for housing development in these locations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Geneva will promote prosperity through continuing efforts to support and grow local business and industries and recruit new ones. To inform the city's economic development strategies, an evaluation of Geneva's trade area was conducted and opportunities identified, taking into consideration growth trends, geographic considerations, local and regional characteristics and other criteria.

Because the drawing power and relative proximity of Dothan and Enterprise limit the size of the geographic area which Geneva dominates, a five-mile radius around the city was identified to be an appropriate trade area for analysis purposes. This five-mile area around the city contains an estimated population of roughly 6,700.

Where a city's retail sector is weak there are relatively straightforward remedies to attempt to recruit new firms to the area. However, the Geneva area retail sector appears to be as strong as can be expected given its location. As shown in the following two tables, household expenditures for retail products match up well with performance of the retail merchants supplying the population.

The issue for Geneva appears to be that residents of the trade area have to commute long distances for employment. Only 46.3% of the 2,500+ workforce commutes less than fifteen minutes to work. Over 15% drive between fifteen and thirty minutes to work, and over 35% of workers commute more than thirty minutes. Geneva residents working outside the city are likely to patronize businesses during the day—and to some extent after work—near their jobs. Geneva needs additional employment opportunities within its five-mile trade area.

Labor Force Characteristics		
Description	Value	% Total
Population (1/1/2016)	6,569	
OCCUPATION (16 and up)		
Total Civilian Employment	2,518	
Management, Business, and Financial Operations	329	13.1
Professional and Related	500	19.9
Service	300	11.9
Sales and Office	594	23.6
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	74	2.9
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance	301	12
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving	420	16.7

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

There are five specific opportunities that appear to combine three important assets which Geneva can bring to the table: location and access, workforce, and inexpensive land and existing structures. Together, these assets help provide a stable future for Geneva with solid projected employment and economic growth.

- Manufacturing of sustainable building materials for markets both domestic and abroad to meet the needs of firms responding to growing consumer interest in sustainable and energy-efficient products.
- Serving a wide variety construction and manufacturing sectors within a 50-mile radius of Geneva with outsourced business services, transportation, wholesaling, subcontracting, and any other requirements which could be provided from a base in Geneva.
- Serving the important automotive, aerospace, and shipbuilding industries which have begun to dominate the industrial economy of the Southeast and the Gulf Coast, specifically within a 150-mile radius of Geneva.
- Serving the rapidly growing age-specific market for nursing care and psychiatric care services which has already become a huge growth industry centered in the Gulf Coast region of Alabama and North Florida. This opportunity is analyzed for the 100-mile radius of Geneva.
- One or a cluster of related Specialty Care Facilities focusing on the needs of Veterans.

It was also noted during the planning process that there are five major military installations within a 150-mile radius of Geneva. This underscores some of the opportunities highlighted during the analysis, particularly where there are gaps that Geneva businesses can fill. Needs already being met by existing suppliers will be more challenging for new businesses to break into though Geneva's location may prove a competitive advantage.

Opportunity 1: Manufacturing of sustainable building materials

An uptick in US construction activity and growing consumer interest in sustainable and energy-efficient products, nationally and internationally, is fueling growth of manufacturing of sustainable building materials. Estimated to be a \$36 billion market in the US, the sustainable building materials sector manufactures renewable products for all types of buildings that help reduce use of water, energy, and other resources and are more efficient than traditional products for the way they reduce pollution and waste.

Startups will need deep knowledge of architectural design and green building construction, and should be able to manufacture a diverse range of products for different customers. They will have to develop the required technologies and processes to produce sustainable materials profitably. The industry is estimated to have grown 11.8% in 2015, and is expected to grow at an average rate of 10.6% annually, to \$59.79 billion, by 2020, according to IBISWorld, a global business intelligence firm specializing in industry market research.

Technological advances have also facilitated a rise in demand for sustainable materials. For example, synthetic products used to mimic wood, stone or other natural resources have decreased in cost and are easier to install and maintain than traditional materials. These products frequently boast a lower price tag and durability relative to their traditional counterparts. As a result, demand for sustainable materials has increased dramatically over the past five years.

The industry is anticipated to experience exceptional growth over the next five years. Revenue is forecast to increase at an average annual rate of 4.1% to \$65.5 billion. Demand from residential and commercial construction projects to

produce LEED-certified buildings will drive the use of sustainable materials, as property owners, developers and regulators put a greater emphasis on cost savings, environmental protection and energy conservation. Moreover, technology will continue improving the performance and relative cost of sustainable materials, further spurring demand.

Geneva is well situated to begin manufacturing of sustainable building materials. The industry is new enough to not have large barriers to entry, the major supplying industries (Laminated Plastics Manufacturing, Plastic and Resins Manufacturing, and Sawmills and Wood Production) all exist in quantity in the region, and the Gulf Coast region is expected to grow more rapidly than other parts of the US in terms of both residential and commercial development.

Potential Wholesale Customers within a 50-Mile Radius of a Sustainable Building Material Manufacturing Facility in Geneva				
Company Name	Primary NAICS	Primary NAICS Description	Employees	Location
West Point Home	423220	Home Furnishing Merchant Wholesalers	43	Chipley, FL
Williams Brothers Trucking Inc.	423310	Lumber, Plywood, Millwork/Wood Panel Merchant Wholesalers	48	Cottondale, FL
Plum Creek Timber Co	423310	Lumber, Plywood, Millwork/Wood Panel Merchant Wholesalers	75	Dothan
Wholesale Wood Products	423310	Lumber, Plywood, Millwork/Wood Panel Merchant Wholesalers	107	Dothan
Dry Creek Loggers Inc.	423310	Lumber, Plywood, Millwork/Wood Panel Merchant Wholesalers	229	Elba
Rex Lumber LLC	423310	Lumber, Plywood, Millwork/Wood Panel Merchant Wholesalers	275	Graceville, FL
Whitfield Timber Co Inc.	423310	Lumber, Plywood, Millwork/Wood Panel Merchant Wholesalers	301	Marianna, FL
Southern Timber Co	423310	Lumber, Plywood, Millwork/Wood Panel Merchant Wholesalers	338	Ozark
Lingo Sand Co	423320	Brick, Stone/Related Construction Material Merchant Wholesalers	130	Dothan
South Alabama Brick	423320	Brick, Stone/Related Construction Material Merchant Wholesalers	169	Dothan
Whatley Supply Co	423320	Brick, Stone/Related Construction Material Merchant Wholesalers	170	Dothan
Jenkins Brick Co	423320	Brick, Stone/Related Construction Material Merchant Wholesalers	171	Dothan
North Florida Rock LTD	423320	Brick, Stone/Related Construction Material Merchant Wholesalers	310	Marianna, FL
Red Bay Sand	423320	Brick, Stone/Related Construction Material Merchant Wholesalers	344	Ponce De Leon, FL
ABC Supply Co	423330	Roofing, Siding/Insulation Material Merchant Wholesalers	129	Dothan

Opportunity 2: Business Services to the Construction and Manufacturing Sector

This opportunity involves providing outsourced business services to the wide variety of construction and manufacturing sectors within a 50-mile radius of Geneva. Outsourced business services include administrative, technical, waste management, transportation, wholesaling, subcontracting, and other related business services that can be provided from a base in Geneva.

According to IBISWorld, the Outsourced Business Services (OBS) market continues to be aided by several economic and market trends, including:

- Companies seeking ways to better manage their costs, looking to outsource non-core services
- Lower unemployment rates and better economic conditions that are motivating companies to invest in growth and consumers to spend more, perpetuating a growth environment.

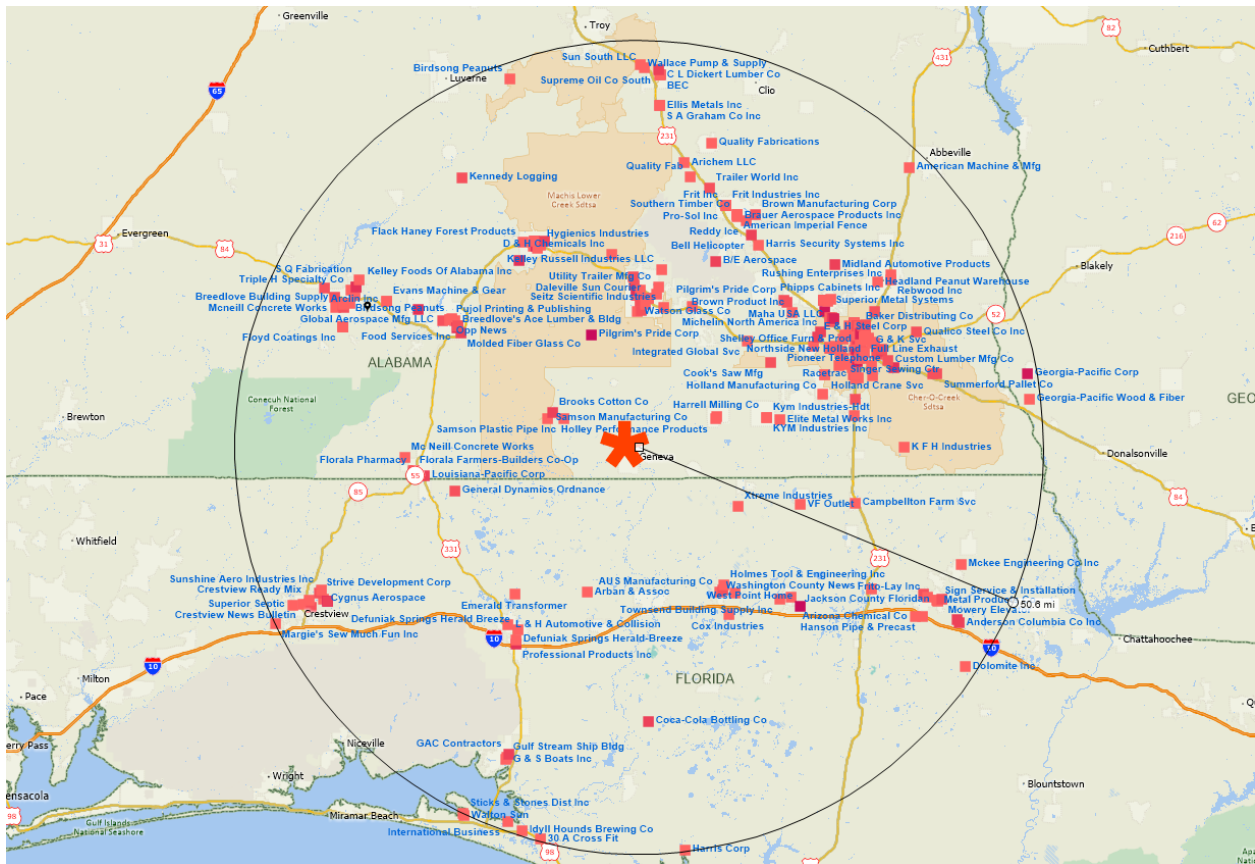
Once identified, these businesses can be contacted directly to determine what outsourced business services are currently or potentially purchased and what the purchasing process requires of a potential supplier.

The **Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services** sector comprises establishments that perform professional, scientific, and technical activities for other businesses. These activities require a relatively high degree of expertise and training. The establishments provide services to clients in a variety of industries and, in some cases, to households. Activities performed include: legal advice and representation; accounting, bookkeeping, and payroll services; architectural, engineering, and specialized design services; computer services; consulting services; research services; advertising services; photographic services; translation and interpretation services; veterinary services; and other professional, scientific, and technical services.

In the **Administrative and Support Services** subsector are businesses that support the day-to-day operations of other organizations. The processes employed in this sector (e.g., general management, personnel administration, clerical activities, cleaning activities) are often integral parts of the activities of establishments in all sectors of the economy. The establishments classified in this subsector have specialization in one or more of these activities and can, therefore, provide services to clients in a variety of industries and, in some cases, to households.

In the **Waste Management and Remediation Services** subsector are businesses engaged in the collection, treatment, and disposal of waste materials. This includes establishments engaged in local hauling of waste materials; operating materials recovery facilities (i.e., those that sort recyclable materials from the trash stream); providing remediation services (i.e., those that provide for the cleanup of contaminated buildings, mine sites, soil, or ground water); and providing septic pumping and other miscellaneous waste management services.

Given Geneva's location and relatively rapid access to markets within a 50-mile radius, new startups or existing firms offering cleaning and janitorial, landscaping, security, and waste treatment services should be able to compete for the business of firms who are increasingly outsourcing these services. A list of potential customers in the Construction and Manufacturing sector for whom business services can be provided by local establishments is included in the report *Economic Development Insights for Geneva*.



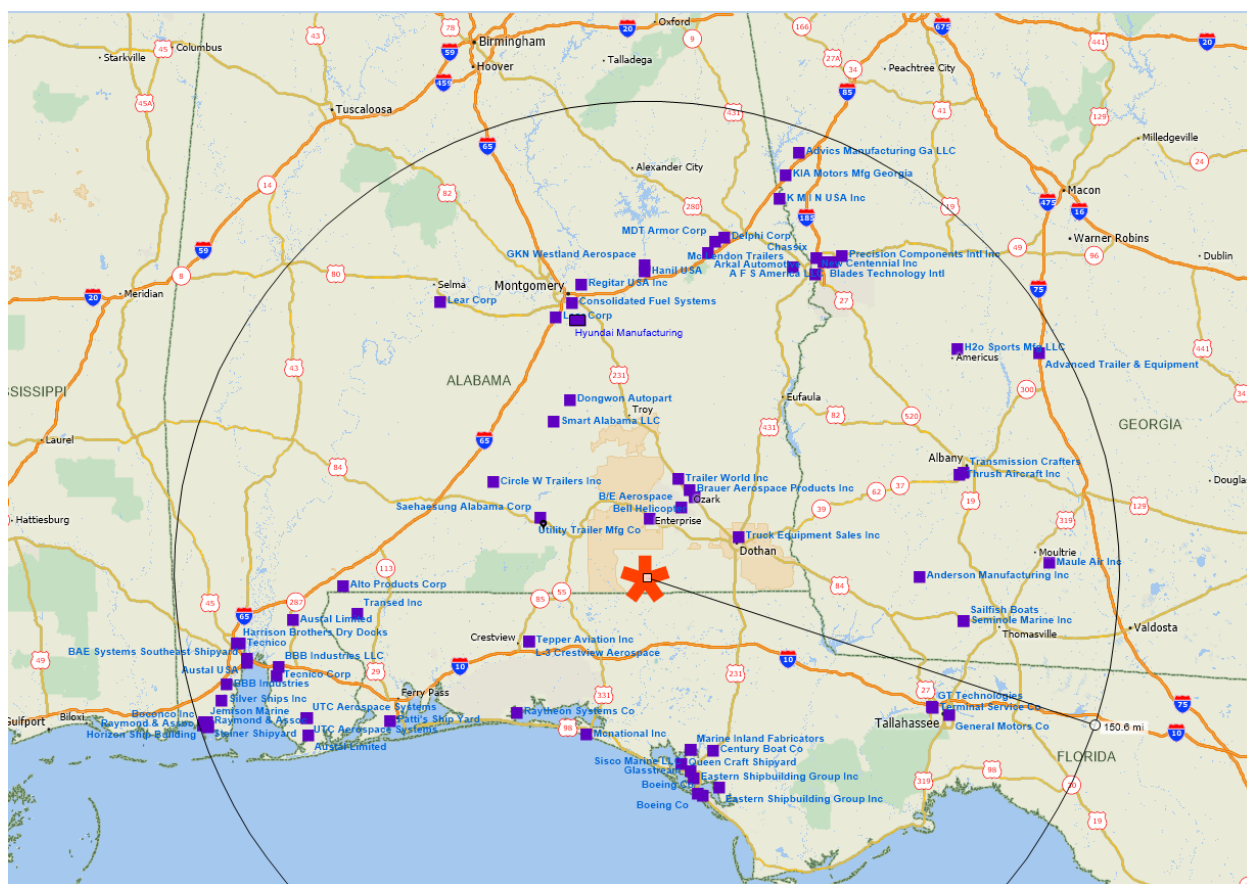
Potential Construction and Manufacturing Customers (with over 10 employees) within 50-mile radius

Opportunity 3: Services to the automotive, aerospace, and shipbuilding industries

This opportunity involves exploring the unique needs of the rapidly growing transportation and defense sectors currently expanding throughout the Gulf Coast region. Suppliers and sub-suppliers to these manufacturing sectors are increasingly moving closer to the large manufacturing complexes such as Mercedes in Tuscaloosa, Kia in Georgia, Hyundai in Montgomery, and Airbus in Mobile.

These suppliers and sub-suppliers have the same needs for business services, transportation, subcontracting, and any other outsources business services as other manufacturers. However, there is an additional opportunity for attracting a sub-supplier to the Geneva area or identifying a special need such as a particular type of wholesaling which could be supplied from a base in Geneva. The opportunity exists primarily because *the structure of the supply chain to these new industries is not yet in equilibrium*, and every addition to the capacity of the plants adds new potential for businesses in the area.





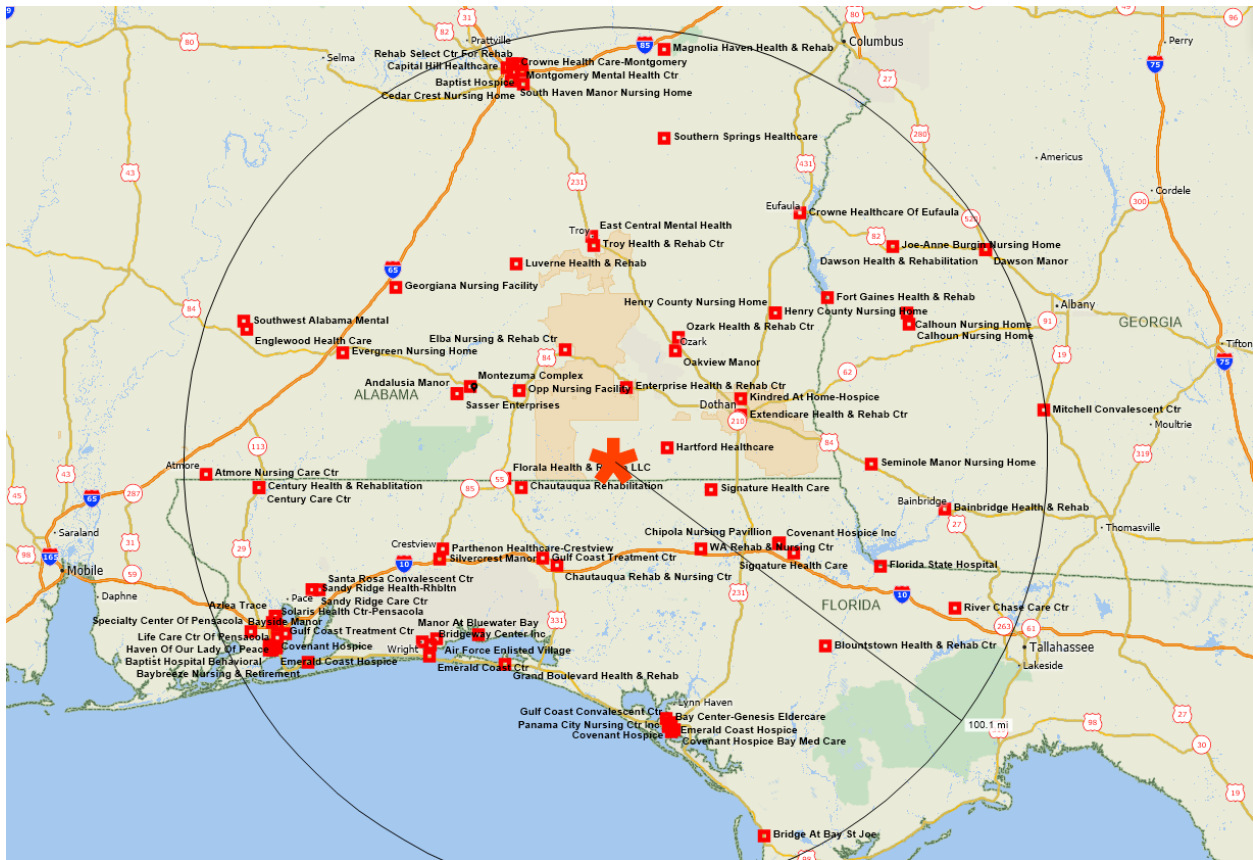
Aerospace, Automotive, Marine Manufacturing Facilities (with over 20 Employees) within 150 miles

Opportunity 4: Services to nursing and psychiatric care facilities

Nursing care and psychiatric care services is a huge growth industry in the Gulf Coast region of Alabama and North Florida and represents a unique opportunity for Geneva-based businesses to serve these facilities within a 100-mile radius. According to new data from Economic Modeling Specialists Intl., CareerBuilder's labor market analysis arm, among the industries that are projected to add at least 10,000 jobs and experience at least 15 percent growth in employment over the next five years are two that Geneva is well poised to be able to tap into:

- Continuing-care retirement communities are projected to see 112,901 jobs added; 24% increase.
- Psychiatric and substance abuse facilities are projected to see 21,045 jobs added; 18% increase.

This is yet another opportunity for local businesses to provide goods and services to established and future facilities in a rapidly growing market. It is possible for nursing and psychiatric care facilities to locate in Geneva as well. These types of facilities will grow with the aging of the US baby boom population, the increased need for care for veterans, and the government's role as well as the role of insurers in financing health and rehabilitation for these populations. A list of potential customers in the nursing care and psychiatric care industry in a 100-mile radius of Geneva is included in the report *Economic Development Insights for Geneva*.



Nursing Homes and Psychiatric Care Facilities (with over 50 employees) within 100 miles

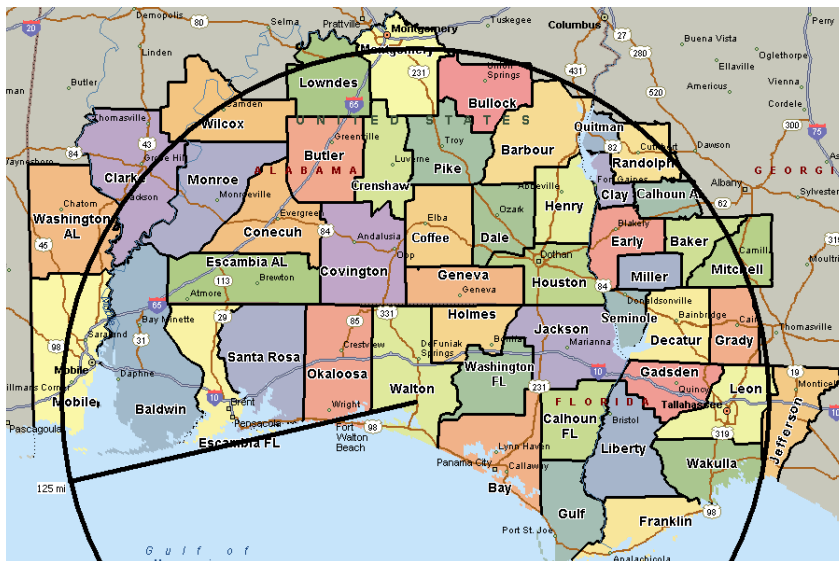
Opportunity 5: Specialty Care Facilities for Veterans

A unique opportunity exists for creating a facility in or near Geneva to specialize in a range of psychiatric, medical, rehabilitation, and counseling of veterans. Nearby Dothan and Enterprise are home to large numbers of armed services personnel, veterans, and retirees. The Gulf Coast attracts large numbers of veterans as well. Currently, there are massive issues involved in treating recently discharged veterans with physical and emotional handicaps. The following is an excerpt from a feasibility report by consulting firm Sage Age Strategies for veteran-specific services in the Alabama / Florida Gulf Coast Region:

There appears to be a legitimate and ongoing need for additional resources to appropriately serve our veterans and return them to a level of functional capacity that will enable them to re-enter society as healthy, well-adjusted and productive citizens. The alarming rates of veteran suicide, unemployment and homelessness are symptomatic of a system in need of additional resources and innovations to respond to the multiple and increasingly complex needs of our returning veterans.

Homelessness is on the rise among veterans across the United States. Suicide rates increased 80 percent from 2004 to 2008. There are 2.4 million Gulf War II era veterans and the unemployment rate among those ages 18 to 24 is 29 percent. By 2020, the number of veterans is expected to increase by 1.2 million.

The Sage Age market assessment area is defined as a set of counties in northwest Florida and southern Alabama as shown below. Within that assessment area, there live an estimated 267,788 veterans, 42% of whom are in need of physical and or mental healthcare services.



2014 Market Assessment Area for a Veteran's Facility in Freeport, Florida

Also, within that assessment area, there live an estimated 33,056 active duty personnel who could benefit from healthcare services. A facility in Geneva which specializes in the mental and physical care of veterans would be able to meet a desperate market need and also undoubtedly garner national attention. The veteran population within a 50-mile radius of Geneva is estimated at 54,090, roughly 11% of the area population.

CONCLUSION

There are several opportunities for existing businesses in the Geneva area to expand their markets and increase employment. In addition, opportunities exist for entrepreneurs to start businesses to serve the market opportunities described previously as well as existing businesses to move or expand into Geneva. There are several locations available for new development and reinvestment in older commercial and industrial building and sites to accommodate new enterprises. Taking advantage of these opportunities will involve:

- recruiting through regional and state partnerships
- marketing available buildings and sites
- establishing a speculative business/industrial park
- entrepreneurial support (financing, training and incubator programs)
- technical and workforce education programs

IMPLEMENTATION

The major theme of this Comprehensive Plan is to take charge of growth and the character of the city. The city has prepared this plan to guide decisions regarding land use, development and conservation, zoning and capital improvements. The plan is also intended to help residents, property owners, merchants, builders, and developers invest in the city by providing a reasonable expectation of its future physical layout and character.

The Comprehensive Plan is to be carried out through a combination of public and private investment, decisions by the City Council, Planning Commission and other public boards and commissions. The plan's recommendations will continue to be translated into action through revision and enforcement of the city's development regulations; through transportation improvements and access management programs in cooperation with County roads and transportation departments (county roads) and the Alabama Department of Transportation (state highways); through city budgeting and capital improvement programming and through public and private decisions in support of planned, cost-effective annexation.

Geneva is a municipal corporation, formed under powers granted by the State of Alabama. The city has used this police power to enforce local ordinances and development regulations. The city has used its taxation power to plan for and implement a budgeting system that includes capital investments for infrastructure facilities and services that it uses to help shape growth and development. All of these tools will continue to be used together to shape Geneva in accord with this Comprehensive Plan.

PUBLIC INVESTMENTS

Throughout the planning process, the need for specific public investments to support implementation has been reinforced. These public investments include: gateway and image corridor enhancements; sidewalks, multipurpose paths and other bike-ped facilities; parks and recreation facilities; municipal facilities and services; and road network improvements. Following are brief descriptions of the overall intent for each category and a list of the specific actions to be taken. These lists should be updated regularly for use during the City's annual budgeting process.

Gateways and Image Corridors

Physical improvements are recommended at the entrances into the community as described in the Strategic Development Concept. Attractive gateway signage and landscaping improvements along major entryways into the community will have an immediate positive impact. So too will maintenance, repair and other improvements along the major roads entering the community.

Transportation Facilities

Recommended city investments in its road system generally deal with paving several unimproved central streets, replacement of deteriorated street signs, and other street maintenance and repair work. In addition, the city will likely benefit from more substantial transportation projects carried out at the regional level and funded mostly through ALDOT.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

The city has few sidewalks and must act strategically to begin developing a pedestrian system. Priorities must be established to facilitate construction of sidewalks, initially, that will have the greatest benefit, such as sidewalks adjacent to the schools. These should be planned, costs estimated and funding set aside annually (including to leverage state and federal grant funds) to develop sidewalks in phases. Other bike-ped recommendations include the regional Wiregrass Trail, a multipurpose path on Maple and Purvis Avenues, and a potential greenway trail along Double Bridges Creek. Meanwhile, streets built as part of new subdivisions and commercial developments should be required to include sidewalks when they are of medium or higher density and/or are located close to activity centers, schools or parks.

Municipal Facilities and Services

Geneva's municipal facilities include city hall, the library, fire station, parks and recreation facilities, and the street and sanitation department's facility on Clark Street. Geneva's police department and rescue squad operate out of City Hall and adjoining buildings on Commerce Street.

Fire Department



Photo: Don Colin

A volunteer municipal fire department provides fire protection services to the community from its centrally located fire station on Magnolia Avenue. An Insurance Service Organization (ISO) rating determines fire insurance rates for property owners. That rating is determined by a fire department's staffing, training, equipment and vehicles, coverage and related factors. The community must continue to invest in the fire department to provide the highest level of fire protection for property owners and lower insurance rates.

Water and Sewer Utilities

Water and sewer facilities maintained by Geneva Water Works Board are well distributed and have adequate supply to accommodate growth. In cooperation with the Water Works Board, Geneva will extend water and sewer utilities strategically to support the types and intensities of development described in the Land Use Plan.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

As the population grows, the community will need more parks and open space for passive recreation and sports. The Strategic Development Concept identifies areas of the city where parks facilities should be considered as those areas develop. As development occurs, the city should coordinate with those subdividing land for development to set aside land for park space. This will help provide well-distributed parks facilities throughout Geneva.

PRIORITIES

The following is a summary of the various tasks to be undertaken to improve the community over the next twenty years, to diversify and grow Geneva's economy and improve the quality of life of its citizens.

PRIORITY/PHASE This represents a combination of the relative importance of the task to the community and the likely duration necessary to complete related actions: short (1-5 yrs), mid (6-10 yrs), and long (11+ yrs). Tasks referred to as "long-term" may be extraordinarily important to the community but will likely take a considerable amount of time to complete because of costs or other complicating factors. Initial steps for some mid- and long-term tasks may need to be taken relatively soon to assure they can ultimately be accomplished within a ten or twenty year horizon.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS These are local and state entities whose involvement—which may vary from political support to technical assistance—may be essential in pursuing and completing the task. The City of Geneva is assumed to be the lead organization in most actions. Additional partners, such as private foundations, may also be available depending on the nature of the action.

POTENTIAL RESOURCES These are funding sources and organizations that typically offer funding or other types of assistance relevant to the particular task. Some tasks may also be eligible for funding from foundations and other private sources.

	Action	Priority/Phase	Potential Resources	Potential Partners
Community Image	Improve city gateways with signage, landscaping	Short	n/a	City, civic organizations
	Improve lighting, landscaping, etc. on Town Avenue	Mid	TAP (ALDOT)	City, civic organizations
	Improve lighting, landscaping, etc. on Magnolia Avenue	Mid	TAP (ALDOT)	City, civic organizations
	Improve lighting, landscaping, etc. on Maple Avenue	Mid	TAP (ALDOT)	City, civic organizations
	Develop loan program to encourage repairs, upgrades to business properties in high visibility locations	Short	n/a	City/development authority, area banks
	Develop funding/program to assist homeowners with repairs/renovations	Short	CDBG (ADECA), Habitat for Humanity	City, Habitat for Humanity
Infrastructure	Widen Hwy 52 (east) to 4-lanes	Long	ATRIP (ALDOT)	Geneva County, City, ALDOT, SEARPC, Wiregrass EDC
	Widen Hwy 167 from Troy to Florida state line	Mid	ATRIP (ALDOT)	Pike, Coffee and Geneva Counties, City, ALDOT, SEARPC, Wiregrass EDC
	Improve Hart Avenue (unpaved)	Short	CDBG (ADECA) Competitive Fund	City

	Action	Priority/Phase	Potential Resources	Potential Partners
	Improve Valley Avenue (unpaved)	Short	CDBG (ADECA) Competitive Fund	City
	Improve Fleming Avenue (unpaved)	Short	CDBG (ADECA) Competitive Fund	City
	Improve N Forrest Avenue (unpaved)	Mid	CDBG (ADECA) Competitive Fund	City
	Improve N Choctaw Avenue (unpaved)	Mid	CDBG (ADECA) Competitive Fund	City
	Install sidewalks on neighborhood streets adjacent to Elementary School	Mid	TAP (ALDOT)	City, GCS
	Install multipurpose path along Purvis Avenue	Mid	TAP (ALDOT)	City, GCS
	Install multipurpose path on Maple Ave from Purvis Avenue to Magnolia Ave	Mid	TAP (ALDOT)	City
	Develop greenway trail along Double Bridges Creek	Long	RTP (ADECA)	City
	Replace/install new street signs	Ongoing	n/a	City
	Improve stormwater drainage issues	Ongoing	CDBG (ADECA) Competitive Fund	City
	Extend sewer system east of Choctawhatchee River	Long	CDBG (ADECA)	City, Waterworks Board, Geneva County, Wiregrass EDC
	Work with service providers to improve internet access, reliability	Short	n/a	City, Chamber, Wiregrass EDC
Recreation and Tourism	Recruit hotel	Mid	n/a	City, Chamber, Wiregrass EDC
	Expand promotion of the Junction as tourist destination	Short	AL Tourism Dept.	City, Chamber
	Recruit commercial campground operator	Short	n/a	City, Chamber
	Develop sports complex	Mid	CDBG (ADECA) Community Enhancement Fund	City
	Construct Wiregrass Trail	Mid	RTP (ADECA)	City, Geneva Co, Coffee Co, Andalusia, Covington Co, SEARPC

	Action	Priority/Phase	Potential Resources	Potential Partners
	Add recreational and entertainment amenities/programming to Fowler Park	Short	CDBG (ADECA) Community Enhancement Fund	City
	Host special events to draw visitors to city	Ongoing	varies	City, Chamber, other civic organizations
	Plan and install wayfinding signage for tourist destinations	Mid	AL Tourism Dept.	City, Chamber
	Develop public park on west side	Mid	CDBG (ADECA) Community Enhancement Fund	City
	Develop multipurpose/civic center in Downtown	Mid	CDBG (ADECA) Community Enhancement Fund, State Council on the Arts	City
	Improve vehicular and pedestrian connection between Downtown and the Junction	Short	TAP (ALDOT), RTP (ADECA)	City
Industrial and Business Development	Strengthen Chamber of Commerce	Short	n/a	City, Chamber, State Assn. of Chambers, local businesses
	Recruit industry through countywide partnership	Ongoing	n/a	City, Geneva Co., Wiregrass EDC, EDPA, AL Dept. of Commerce
	Acquire land and develop business/industrial park	Short	CDBG (ADECA) ED Fund	City, Geneva Co., SEARPDC, Wiregrass EDC
	Develop technical and workforce education programs	Short	n/a	City, GCS, ALSDE
	Inventory and market available industrial buildings and sites	Short	n/a	City, Wiregrass EDC, Chamber
	Redevelop shirt factory site	Mid	varies	City, Wiregrass EDC, Chamber (varies)
	Construct Farmers Market Downtown	Mid	CDBG (ADECA)	City, ACES, Chamber
	Recruit destination restaurant to Downtown	Short	RLF or similar (SEARPDC)	City, Chamber, SEARPDC

DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

The city's growth management system includes the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations and flood damage prevention ordinance. These regulations address land use, density, the size and location of buildings and other structures, street standards and signage. They are intended to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community. Each must also respect the principles of due process, non-discriminatory application, profitable use of land, freedom of speech, and the balancing of individual costs against anticipated public benefits.

Zoning Ordinance and Map

Geneva enforces a Zoning Ordinance to regulate the types of uses that may be permitted within various zoning districts, as well as, building heights and setbacks, residential densities, parking and other development characteristics. The Comprehensive Plan and its Future Land Use Map should not be confused with the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map. The Comprehensive Plan has been prepared as a *guide* to public and private investment in land development and infrastructure. In contrast, the Zoning Ordinance is a *regulatory tool* used by the city to influence and direct development in ways that reflect the desired direction and form of growth described in the Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive Plan	Zoning Ordinance
Provides general policy guidance	Provides specific regulations
Describes conditions desired in the long term – not necessarily existing ones	Describes what is and what is not allowed today
Includes recommendations that involve other agencies and groups	Deals with development issues under city control
Intentionally flexible to allow responses to changing conditions	Fairly rigid, requires formal amendment to change
General land use categories	Zoning districts
General land use locations	Parcel-specific designations

There is an important relationship between the land use plan and zoning ordinance. The following is a list of the land use categories in the land use plan together with the existing zoning districts to which they are most comparable. It should not be assumed that a property designated within a particular future land use category is automatically eligible for rezoning to one of the “comparable” zoning districts. Rather, the city, in reviewing development requests, will consider all other related policies and practices in this plan, together with the Future Land Use map and an evaluation of the particular site and its surroundings, to make decisions regarding rezoning and other types of permitting.

Future Land Use Category	Comparable Zoning District
Agriculture and Rural Enterprise	AG-1 Agricultural District
Parks, Recreation and Open Space	varies
Low Density Residential	R-1 Residential District
Medium Density Residential	R-2 Residential District
Multifamily Residential	R-3 Residential District
Manufactured Housing	varies
Commercial and Mixed-Uses	B-1 Local Shopping District B-2 General Business District
Institutional	varies
Industrial	M-1 Light Industry District M-2 General Industry District
Transportation and Utilities	varies

Geneva intends to revise the Zoning Ordinance to better respond to current development practices and to align with the policies of this plan. The following recommended changes will improve the functionality of the Zoning Ordinance and better align it with this plan's land development policies:

- Update use regulations to address uses not identified in the current ordinance, resolve conflicts and vagueness
- Create an institutional district
- Modify policies and regulations on manufactured homes that strikes an appropriate balance between housing affordability and protecting property values in established neighborhoods
- Include a “conservation subdivision” option in residential districts for properties partially located in floodplain or floodway
- Establish landscaping requirements for non-residential developments and standards for buffers between incompatible uses
- Create a stand-alone article addressing parking and loading; update parking requirements
- Update terminology and definitions

Subdivision Regulations

The Land Use Plan recommends standards for public improvements suited to the land uses, densities and locations within the city – whether the development is centrally located and relatively “urban” like Downtown Geneva or whether it is further out and relatively rural. For example, in the case of street networks, the right-of-way width, alignment, number and size of the travel lanes and edge treatments – including drainage improvements, lighting, sidewalks and planted buffers between the sidewalk and street – should vary according to differences in land use, intensity and location. Similarly, street connectivity may be assured in new development through standards calibrated to the type of development and its location within the community.

The following elements are recommended to enhance the Subdivision Regulations to better implement the land development policies of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Encourage street connectivity in new development to disperse traffic and assure adequate routes for emergency response
- Conserve natural drainage patterns to reduce the need and added costs of earthwork, clearing and drainage improvements
- Require sidewalks in commercial activity centers and medium or higher density housing developments and in development close to parks, schools or other community destinations.
- Plan and design streets to discourage speeding
- Address access management concerns to preserve street capacity and improve safety



KEEPING THE PLAN UP TO DATE

Comprehensive planning is often viewed as an occasional activity overseen by the Planning Commission, while preparing the city budget is an annual responsibility of the City Council. As a result, the comprehensive plan can become less useful as a guide to city budgeting if not reviewed and updated over time. This can be avoided by coordinating plan updates with budgeting processes every year or so.

Coordinated updates may help the Mayor and Council better determine capital budget priorities, consider plan and development regulation amendments, and coordinate public investments toward reaching the vision set out in the plan. To coordinate plan policies and their implementation, each city department, board and commission (and non-city

groups that may be eligible for city funding assistance) should review the comprehensive plan and submit a report to the city that would include the following:

- All tasks essential for accomplishing elements of the comprehensive plan during the coming year that are or should be the responsibility of the respondent.
- Suggested changes in city programs – including but not limited to regulations, capital investments, operation and maintenance, and intergovernmental coordination – that the respondent feels to be in the best interests of overall plan implementation.
- Suggested changes in city policy toward growth and development as described in the comprehensive plan.
- Suggested changes in the respondent's responsibility or authority that would better enable implementation of any parts of the comprehensive plan.
- A preliminary budget proposal, including capital equipment and investments needed to deal with the above, and the portion of those costs it is requested that the city bear.

The mayor's office would collect this information for consideration in drafting a capital budget and suggested plan amendments for the coming year. After discussions with department heads and others, the mayor's office would forward a draft capital budget and suggested plan amendments to the Planning Commission, who would review it in light of the comprehensive plan. The Planning Commission would report to the mayor's office the findings of its review of proposed capital investments, recommendations for plan amendments, and adjustments to development regulations.

The mayor's office would prepare and present a proposed capital budget and revenue forecast to the City Council. The Planning Commission would take action regarding any recommended changes to the comprehensive plan and/or subdivision regulations and suggest zoning ordinance amendments, as needed, to the Council.

Prepared by the City of
Geneva with assistance of:

KPS Group, Inc.

Allaway Consulting

Funded in part through a
grant from the United
States Department of
Agriculture (USDA)

GENEVA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

City of Geneva, Alabama

