

**2017-2020 Strategic Plan  
(Community Needs Assessment  
and Library Response Plan)**

**Geneva Public Library  
1043 G Street  
Geneva, Nebraska**

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## **Geneva Public Library Strategic Plan**

The Geneva Public Library staff, board members, and patrons assisted in the development of this strategic plan. This plan will be reviewed annually and as otherwise needed by the Geneva Public Library Board of Trustees and the Library Director.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Geneva Public Library is to maintain and improve the quality of life for all citizens of the community by providing resources and materials that enhance and contribute to individual knowledge, enlightenment, and enjoyment; through a variety of formats and options. We especially recognize our responsibility to serve as a place for children to discover the joy of reading and the value of libraries.

The vision of the Geneva Public Library is to be both a physical and virtual location that provides materials and information for people of all ages to fulfill education and entertainment needs.

### **Community Profile**

Geneva is the county seat of Fillmore County. Located in southeast Nebraska, the city is served by U.S. Highway 81 and Nebraska State Highway 41. Geneva is located 53 miles east of Hastings, 72 miles southwest of Lincoln, and 35 miles north of the Kansas/Nebraska state line (Google Inc., 2017).

## **Population**

The population of Geneva is 2,217 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015) with the population of the legal service area totaling 2,131 (Nebraska Library Commission, 2016). The overall population of this area is almost equally split between nonworking and working-aged residents. Of the total population, 47 percent are adults in their prime employment years between age 20 and 64. The other half of the population includes adults age 65 and over, and children age 19 and under, composing 24 and 28 percent of the population respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

## **Education**

The Fillmore Central Public School District began in 2000 with a consolidation of several community schools throughout the county. The elementary school, in Geneva, houses pre-Kindergarten through grade 4, with a total of 245 students. The middle school, located in Fairmont, houses grades 5 through 8, with a total of 142 students. The high school, in Geneva, houses grades 9 through 12, with a total of 162 students. This Class 3 public school district has a total enrollment of 549 students and approximately 52 full-time equivalent staff (Nebraska Department of Education, 2015-2016, pp. 18, 35). A school library can be found at all three Fillmore Central locations.

Grace Lutheran Elementary is a nonpublic school located in Geneva, for preschool through grade eight with 22 students and 2 full-time equivalent staff (Nebraska Department of Education, 2015-2016, pp. 18, 46). A small library can be found in the classroom at Grace Lutheran.

The State of Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services operates a Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC) for young women in Geneva. The education

portion of this state operated school is referred to as the Geneva North School. There are 46 students and 8 full-time staff equivalents, at this facility. YRTC provides a library on site for all young women at the Center (Nebraska Department of Education, 2015-2016, pp. 18, 48).

### **Language and Ethnicity**

Approximately 96 percent of residents in the service population area speak only English. Of all other languages spoken, Spanish prevails with 2.5 percent, or 52 individuals (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Slightly more than 96 percent of the Geneva population is of White race, with less than two percent each, classifying themselves as Black or African American, American Indian, Asian, or with two or more races. Hispanic or Latino ethnicity is found in 2.1 percent of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

### **Work Life and Household Economics**

As stated above, 47 percent (or 1,046 Geneva residents) are adults in their prime employment years between age 20 and 64, but almost 62 percent (or 1,117 residents) of the population aged 16 and over is in the labor force. The unemployment rate is 4.6 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). In comparison, the Nebraska unemployment rate as of July 2017 was just 2.8 percent (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017), and the national rate was 4.3 percent (United State Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

Households in Geneva have an average annual income of \$61,181, with a median annual *household* income of \$48,750 as calculated with 2015 inflation-adjusted dollars. The average *family* income is \$65,203, with a median annual *family* income of \$55,417 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). A conflicting annual income report notes that average annual income is only \$34,944 across all industries (Lemke, 2015) which suggests a much lower income across households.

While the average and median incomes are solidly middle class, there appears to be a disparate number of households and families with substantially lower incomes and with no full time employment. During interviews and discussions, many people commented on the number of people in Geneva who do not work and seem to live around the poverty line. The American Community Survey five year estimates supports this in the percentage of families whose income is below the poverty level. Eleven percent of all families in Geneva fall into this category, and in single mother families with children under five years, the percentage grows to 63 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

The Fillmore Central public school system reports 37 percent of their students, between all three building sites and across grades pre-Kindergarten through twelfth, are eligible for the free or reduced lunch program. Grace Lutheran school reports 48 percent of their students are eligible; and as a state-owned facility, Geneva North High School does not publically report these numbers (Nebraska Department of Education, 2017). While current data is not available at state and national levels, these percentages are near the Nebraska average (43 percent) and the national average (48 percent), as reported for the 2010-2011 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

The majority of households in Geneva have working parents. In families where the children are under six years of age, 94 percent of both parents are in the labor force; and in families with school-aged children, 82 percent of both parents work (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). This translates into many school-aged children with no adult supervision after school nor the majority of summer days.

## **Economic Characteristics**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's economic census, the top three employment industries in Geneva are educational services/health care/social assistance at almost 30 percent, manufacturing at 10 percent, and retail just short of 10 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The top three employers whose main branch is located in Geneva are Fillmore County Hospital and Medical Center with 110 employees, Heritage Crossings nursing facility with 98 employees, and Fillmore Central Public Schools with 85 employees (Fillmore County Development Corporation, 2017). These three employers are categorized in the first industry listed above.

The Geneva area has a strong background in agriculture, but is also building and growing in several different avenues. Fortigen, an anhydrous ammonia manufacturing plant, broke ground in March 2016 (Fillmore County Development Corporation, July 2016). This \$75 million fertilizer plant expects to begin production in the fall of 2017. In January 2017, Flint Hills Resources, an ethanol producer, announced a \$50 million expansion and a new \$3.9 million Geneva Aquatic Center was opened to the public in May 2017 (Fillmore County Development Corporation, July 2017). There were six businesses started in 2016 (Fillmore County Development Corporation, December 2016), with at least that many in 2017.

## **Cultural Characteristics**

The City of Geneva offers entertainment venues at the new family aquatic center, a large City park, four neighborhood 'mini parks' with playground equipment, a pond open to youth for fishing, a middle school recreation center, two full size tennis courts, bandshell, ball field, basketball courts, and a volunteer-run movie theater. The Parks and Recreation

Department also coordinates 25 different programs for the public ranging from youth soccer and CRP/First Aid training.

In addition to these City operated recreation opportunities, Geneva has other locally owned and operated entertainment opportunities: skeet shooting range, two Legion ball fields, county fairgrounds, country club with golf course, and campground. The community also boasts nearby attractions such as automobile racing fifteen miles north in McCool Junction, bowling 25 miles north in York, and water-based recreation 20 miles southeast at the Little Blue Natural Resource District's Lone Star Recreation Area.

Geneva has a wide variety of civic groups and organizations which offer an array of entertainment and community options to residents, a few of which include Boy Scouts, Chamber of Commerce, Fillmore County Cinema Association, Fillmore County Visitor's Committee, Genealogical Society of Fillmore County, Geneva Arts Council, Girl Scouts, Lion's Club, American Legion, Rotary, and GFWC Women's Club.

Geneva has eight churches of various denominations, within the city limits. The Fillmore County Ministerial Alliance is a partnership of these churches and others that work together to provide emergency assistance to residents and visitors. The churches also work together to support the community, such as offering Vacation Bible School, the Christmas Store, Community Thanksgiving Dinner, and Community Christmas Dinner, in addition to their religious leadership.

Geneva is fortunate to offer many sources of medical services. Fillmore County Hospital is a 20-bed critical access hospital, which includes Touchstone Orthopaedic Center; and the Integrated Health Pavilion, a 10-bed, inpatient psychiatric unit, with outpatient and pediatric

services (Fillmore County Hospital, 2017). Fillmore County Medical Center is also attached to Fillmore County Hospital, providing a higher level of care and services to the public. Other health services in Geneva include an optometrist and dentist, as well as physical therapy, massage therapy, and other mental health services.

Geneva's sources for public communication include a variety of social media outlets, through two local telecommunication/internet providers plus two additional internet-only providers. The city has a local weekly newspaper, *The Nebraska Signal*, which provides print and e-edition advertising and local information to 1,750 subscribers. Newspapers from York, Hastings, Lincoln, and Omaha are also delivered and available in Geneva. Television stations carrying local news are available from Hastings and Lincoln channels, and several radio stations are available from York, Milford, Fairbury, Hastings, Lincoln, and Lexington. Geneva is also served by a U.S. Postal Service office and the United Parcel Service (UPS).

## **Community Needs**

### **Community Need Number One**

Housing opportunities in Geneva, and even throughout Fillmore County, have been an increasing problem over the last two years. Fillmore County Development Corporation employed Hanna:Keelan Associates, P.C., a community planning and research company from Lincoln, Nebraska, to conduct a county-wide housing study in 2016. In their research, they noted a “housing vacancy deficiency... [which] results in a lack of housing supply, limiting choice by both current and future residents” (Hanna:Keelan Associates, P.C., 2016, p. 2).

### **Goal**

In an effort to parallel Goal 1, Action Step 3 of the County-Wide Housing Goals and Action Steps (Hanna:Keelan Associates, P.C., 2016, p. 2), Geneva Public Library will increase the number of resources and programs offered to elderly and home-bound residents, year round, in order to meet the interests and needs of the population.

### **Objectives**

**1.1.** The library will establish a Home-Bound Resident Delivery Program, with a minimum of three residents outside the Heritage Crossings facility, within the next three years.

**1.2.** The library will market the availability of extended checkout and regular home delivery to elderly and home-bound residents in a minimum of two notices in print media per year, in addition to four annual advertisements through Fillmore County Senior Services and Fillmore County Transit.

## **Goal**

In conjunction with Goal 3, Action Step 4 (Hanna:Keelan Associates, P.C., 2016, p. 6), Geneva Public Library will take a participatory role in community clean-up activities.

## **Objectives**

**1.3.** The library will promote annual or biannual community clean-up activities in Geneva through the use of social media and in-library displays.

**1.4.** The library will acquire a maximum of ten pieces of damaged or useless electronics discarded by individuals at community clean-up activities once each year, to utilize in library youth programs related to STEM-based learning projects (electronic dissection).

## **Goal**

Through interviews and community discussions, the ability to identify rental housing, and to identify utilities and amenities to new and current residents has been realized. There is not a consistent and up to date source of information for residents.

## **Objectives**

**1.5.** The library will work in cooperation with City of Geneva staff to create a minimum of one webpage, updated monthly, with resources identifying utilities and services available to residents. This list will include, but not be limited to, gas, electric, garbage, water, sewer, telephone, and internet providers that service the Geneva community.

**1.6.** The library will work in cooperation with real estate agents and private individuals taking on the role of lessor or landlord, to create and maintain a clearinghouse of information related to the renting or leasing of residential property within the Geneva community. The library will update this information a minimum of once per month, online and in a print format.

**1.7.** The library will coordinate and arrange a minimum of one seminar, open to the public, for community members to learn more about owning rental properties, such as, but not limited to, how to become a lessor or landlord, or legal- and accounting-related information, in an effort to pique interest in providing additional rental opportunities in Geneva.

### **Goal**

The building technology section (specifically the Dewey area 690's) of the library's adult nonfiction collection is small and quite outdated, making up 1 percent of the entire adult nonfiction and only 4 percent of the 600's. Of the titles in this section, copyright dates range between 1973 and 1998, plus two books from in the early 2000's. While some aspects of construction are timeless, the use of synthetic materials and newer building practices are not reflected in the current collection. To provide support to the community and encourage personal construction and do-it-yourself projects, the library should provide a more current selection of materials.

### **Objective**

**1.8.** The Geneva Public Library will discuss with a minimum of one local contractor per building topic, their preferences and recommendations for current resources.

**1.9.** The library will update a minimum of 1 percent of their total collection each year, providing at least two resources on each of the building technology areas: general building, masonry, carpentry, roofing, plumbing, heating/air conditioning, and painting.

### **Community Need Number Two**

Childcare in Geneva has experienced great fluctuations in the last year, with several child care facilities experiencing high waiting lists, shortage of staff, and high staff turnover

rates. There have been several child care locations, both in-home operations and larger care facilities, open and close within the last 12 months.

### **Goal**

The Geneva Public Library will play an active role in supporting child care locations throughout the community. The library will provide resources for child care providers to supplement their activities and to promote literacy to all ages. Child care providers often cannot travel to the library with their charges, due to safety and space requirements, so library staff will endeavor to bring the library to the provider, serving the child care provider in what best fits their needs.

### **Objectives**

**2.1.** Library staff will create a minimum of six resource crates with the next three years, which feature print and nonprint materials appropriate for children under age 13. These crates will be made available to child care providers for extended check out periods. These materials will promote literacy and reading skills, and provide alternative sources of books and materials to enhance a facility's own collection.

**2.2.** Library staff will provide outreach opportunities to child care providers, offering a minimum of one delivery to the child care provider, per month, during the school year (August through May).

### **Community Need Number Three**

Several organizations and businesses throughout Geneva have a calendar showcasing their own events throughout the year, and a few have attempted a community-wide event calendar with little to no success. Several sources of information exist but conflicts of interest

and awareness of activities are sometimes limiting, resulting in various levels of promotion and attendance. The community needs a centralized location for collecting information about events in and near Geneva - a community calendar clearinghouse.

### **Goal**

The Geneva Public Library will expand the use of the City of Geneva online calendar module at *www.GenevaNE.org*, and coordinate an online community calendar of events.

### **Objectives**

**3.1.** The library will create one new calendar in conjunction with the City, Library, and Parks & Recreation department activity calendars, specifically to organize events and activities taking place in and around Geneva, year round. The library will also ensure any member of the public can submit information about their event to the website calendar on their own.

**3.2.** The library will promote the availability of a community calendar by (A) contacting or speaking to a minimum of two community groups, businesses, and/or organizations each month for the first year, and (B) providing more information about the community calendar online and through social media.

## Library S.W.O.T. Analysis

### Internal Strengths

**S1.** Comparing Geneva Public Library (GPL) to libraries in Nebraska with the same population service area results in the following rankings (Nebraska Library Commission, 2016).

A list of these peer libraries can be found in this document's appendix. GPL ranks highest for:

- Total operating revenue.
- Number of videos held.
- Circulation of adult print materials.
- Circulation of adult print and electronic downloadable materials combined.
- Young adult summer reading participants.
- Adult summer reading participants.

Due to aggressive weeding after decades of nonexistent weeding, GPL holds the highest rank for number of books withdrawn as well. Other GPL rankings of note include:

- Second highest number of public internet computers.
- Third highest circulation of electronic materials.
- Third highest number of audio materials.
- Third highest number of children's programs.
- Third highest number of library visits.
- Fourth highest number of public service hours annually.
- Fourth highest number of young adult programs.
- Fourth highest total number of materials held.
- Fifth highest number of books held.

GPL and the City of Geneva recognizes the value of quality library employees. Among this set of peer libraries, GPL is one of only two libraries with an ALA-MLS librarian on staff. GPL pays out the third largest amount (third highest expenditure rank) for staff earnings and the second highest amount for continuing education.

**S2.** The library has a dedicated, helpful, and friendly staff, with a small town atmosphere. The library staff know the majority of the residents by name, and vice versa. Throughout interviews, this is always the first strength noted.

**S3.** Geneva Public Library has three meeting rooms of varying size, available for use by the public, and due to the architecture and security measures of the building, the two larger meeting rooms are available for use during hours the library is not open.

**S4.** The library has a large, open floor plan which accommodates a large collection, compared to the population service area. The main portion of the library is almost twenty years old while the original Carnegie portion is over one hundred years old. The new architecture matches the old to provide continuity to a beautiful and well-maintained building.

**S5.** As of September 2017, the library has eleven public internet computer stations; three staff computers; and provides a widespread, high speed, wireless hot spot to residents and nonresidents alike. Access is not restricted through the use of a password and available throughout the building and for a short distance outside.

**S6.** The library provides a wide range of hours of operation to meet the needs of the populace, including two late evenings per week plus Saturday hours.

**S7.** Many Geneva residents donate to the library, either financially, with books of varying age, or with donations during the library's annual book sale.

**S8.** The library provides a large and up-to-date collection of feature-length, box office movies for circulation that is extremely popular with patrons.

**S9.** The library offers a variety of programming throughout the year, to a broad range of ages, with a majority of programs serving youth under age 15.

## **Internal Weaknesses**

**W1.** The library has no external signage designating it as the public library along the roadways or streets, and no permanent signage on the entrance side of the building. (Note: the word 'library' is etched in stone above the door of the original Carnegie entrance.)

**W2.** The library has little parking available. Currently there are seven marked parking stalls plus one handicap stall immediately outside the east library entrance that patrons use. Approximately 40 other parking stalls are available along the streets to the east and north, but are unofficially designated for employees of neighboring businesses or their customers. When the library is host to one or more meetings, all nearby parking locations are full.

**W3.** The library's original Carnegie entrance on the city's main street on the north side of the building, is locked and unused. The entrance has a vestibule with beautiful woodwork and stairs but without a more useable locking mechanism and handicap accessibility, it is not used except as an emergency exit or during special events.

**W4.** The library does not provide automatic door openers for handicapped patrons. A doorbell mounted on the exterior of the building allows people to ring for assistance.

**W5.** The library does not have a consistent brand identity. This includes letterhead, envelopes, business cards, website, social media, fliers, advertisements, marketing and promotional materials, and staff uniforms.

**W6.** Few residents know the extent of library resources and services.

**W7.** Several residents view the library as a free daycare, which is unappealing to older patrons who wish to visit the library, and can make it difficult for library staff to maintain a level of peace yet assist other patrons.

## **External Opportunities**

**O1.** Geneva offers economic opportunities to businesses and business owners looking for a place to develop.

**O2.** The Fillmore Central school district provides an Apple laptop to each student in high school for individual educational use during the school year.

**O3.** The community is close knit and strongly supports local businesses and organizations.

**O4.** There are many local civic organizations to partner with for mutual benefit.

**O5.** Geneva is considered a safe place to raise a family with a strong interfaith community.

**O6.** Geneva is home to several businesses which draw people from a wide area into town, including the an all-volunteer movie theater which shows one movie every Saturday and Sunday, providing inexpensive entertainment; the Wellness Center; and the Fillmore County Hospital campus, which provides a wide array of premium services.

**O7.** Job opportunities abound, with many businesses looking for educated employees, for new or expanding businesses.

## **External Threats**

**T1.** Young people graduating high school tend to move out of small hometowns and not return because of a lack of job opportunities.

**T2.** The housing market in Geneva is very tight, with inadequate options for renters or homebuyers.

**T3.** The City of Geneva contracts its police force through the Fillmore County Sheriff's Department but there is no local law enforcement.

**T4.** There is a high turnover rate in minimum wage, or low education jobs.

**T5.** Supporting local businesses means spending more money for goods that could be purchased for lower prices just thirty miles away. Residents are not able to purchase groceries and household items at reasonable prices and businesses have to decide whether to save on their bottom line or support the local commerce that in turn, supports them.

**T6.** There are several empty buildings and houses throughout the community, which does not reflect a positive or growth-related image.

**T7.** There are few non-sport-related activity options for teens.

**T8.** There is no consistent leadership with the Chamber of Commerce.

**T9.** The dissemination of information from the school district and a wide variety of community groups is lacking. It is extremely difficult for new residents (anyone moving to Geneva within the last ten years) to know what is going on and how to proceed.

### **Evaluation Plan**

Library staff will record for each objective above on a timeline appropriate for the objective. Library staff will accept the majority of the responsibilities required by the goal objectives, and library board members will be given options for which responsibilities they can facilitate. Library staff will review current performance and assess the future steps of each objective every six months. The Director will review the status of objectives at each September (end of the fiscal year) and March board meeting. This periodic review will encourage all staff and board members to be actively involved in meeting the library's objectives and thereby increasing library use and the public's knowledge of the library and its services.

Biannual evaluation of the library's objectives must include if any portion, or all, of the objective has been met or on track. If steps toward the object, or the objective itself, have not

been met, library staff and board members will evaluate why, and determine if the objective is unreasonable in the time originally allowed, not feasible, or not attainable. In reviewing of objectives, the library will also consider if the library's use has increased, both in visits and circulation counts; and how staff and board members were able to facilitate the objective. If further scrutiny of completing, or working toward the completion of, an objective shows a direct relationship to a decrease in library use, evaluations may be undertaken between the sixth month review periods.

### **Summary**

The Geneva Public Library has a strong desire to aid in the success of its community wherever possible, as well as increase the overall knowledge about, and use of, the library and its services. In an effort to move forward, the library staff aspire to raise awareness of community needs and the library's steps toward meeting those needs; as well as providing more education and entertainment opportunities to, and with, the community. The library should be at the heart of the community, serving that population's needs on a daily basis, with a positive attitude and an inviting atmosphere.

## Appendix

### Peer Libraries

These peer libraries were designated by the Nebraska Library Commission through data provided by the 2016 Public Library Survey.

Library Name	Location	Local Population Service Area	Comparative Percent $\pm$
Dundy County Library	Benkelman, NE	1,799	18.45%
Dvoracek Memorial Library	Wilbur, NE	1,870	13.95%
Gibbon Public Library	Gibbon, NE	1,879	13.41%
Superior Public Library	Superior, NE	1,884	13.11%
Dakota City Public Library	Dakota City, NE	1,906	11.80%
Syracuse Public Library	Syracuse, NE	1,993	6.92%
Garfield County Public Library	Burwell, NE	2,028	5.08%
Lied Imperial Public Library	Imperial, NE	2,056	3.65%
Webermeier Memorial Library	Milford, NE	2,107	1.14%
Geneva Public Library	Geneva, NE	2,131	
Valley Public Library	Valley, NE	2,330	-8.89%
St. Paul Public Library	St. Paul, NE	2,358	-9.63%
Madison Public Library	Madison, NE	2,371	-10.12%
Kimball Public Library	Kimball, NE	2,405	-11.39%
Ord Township Library	Ord, NE	2,423	-12.05%

### Planning and Discussion Members

The following people and organizations were involved throughout the planning process.

#### Geneva Public Library Board of Trustees

Debbie Bullock, President  
 Troy Berggren, Vice President  
 Stan Meyer, Secretary  
 Sally Miller  
 Deb Novak

#### Geneva Community Members

Elise Frook  
 Jolene Frook  
 Angie Hafer  
 Karla Jacobsen  
 Angela Ruhl  
 Jill Schmidt

#### City of Geneva/Library Staff

Kyle Svec, Administrator  
 Jill Swartzendruber, Clerk  
 Molly Carbonneau  
 Joseph Chapman  
 Shannon Johnson

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