

2014-2017 Strategic 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 semi-annually and as otherwise needed by the Geneva Public Library Board and Library Director. The committee for the plan consisted of two library staff members, two library board members, and one community resident.

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 place 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 50 miles east of Hastings, 65 miles west of Lincoln, and 35 miles north of the Kansas border (Fillmore County Development Corporation, 2013, p. 3).

Population

The population of Geneva is 2,172, with the population of the legal service area totaling the same (Nebraska Library Commission, 2013) and made of residents paying property taxes in the City of Geneva. Almost 33 percent of the population is preschool or school age youth, at 134 and 495 individuals, respectively. Approximately 25 percent of the city is over 65 years of age, or 542 individuals (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Education

The Fillmore Central Public School District has its headquarters in Geneva. The elementary school and high school are located in Geneva with the middle school located ten miles north in Fairmont. The public school district has an approximate enrollment of 577 students from preschool through grade twelve. Grace Lutheran Elementary is a parochial school located in Geneva, for preschool through grade eight with approximately 20 students. The State of Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services operates a Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC) for young women in Geneva, which can house up to 82 girls and provides an accredited education program (Fillmore County Development Corporation, 2013, p. 24). Each of the five school locations provide a library to its students.

Language and Ethnicity

Approximately 96 percent of Geneva Public Library's service population area speak only English. Of all other languages spoken, Spanish is predominate at 3.6 percent of the 4.4 percent of the population who speak a language other than English. Approximately 99 percent of the population area are of one race, and of those, white is predominant. Hispanic or Latino ethnicity is found in 3.1 percent of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Work Life

The majority of households in Geneva have working parents. In families where the children are under six years of age, 93 percent of both parents are in the labor force and in families with school-aged children, 96 percent of both parents work (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This translates into many school-aged children on their own after school and most of the day during the summer. A small subset of this group of youth regularly spend their time in the library.

The average travel time for adults in the labor force is just over ten minutes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This brief commute time does not lend itself to utilizing audiobooks as a way to pass the travel time.

Household and Family Economics

Households in Geneva have an average annual income of \$54,712, with a median of \$43,750. That said, the income bracket with the highest count of households (23.4 percent) is the \$50,000-\$74,999 range, and the second most common income bracket (18.2 percent) is the \$25,000 to \$34,999 range (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The unemployment rate for Geneva is a low 2.8 percent, but 12.8 percent of the population is below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Another indication of the relatively poor income levels in Geneva is the number of free and reduced priced meals fed to school-aged children. The Fillmore Central public school system reports 36 percent of their students, and Grace Lutheran school reports 52 percent of their students, are taking part in this program (Nebraska Department of Education, 2014). Taking into consideration the number of residents at or below the poverty line and the

number of youth utilizing the free/reduced lunch program, there is a large population of residents with low or no disposable income, making the library's resources even more valuable.

Economic Characteristics

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's economic census, the top three employment areas in Geneva are retail trade at 16 percent, health care and social assistance at 15 percent, and manufacturing at 11 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

The Geneva area has a strong background in agriculture, but is also home to growing industrial companies and small businesses. In the past five years, two new industries have relocated in Fillmore County with an investment of more than \$155 million, six industries have expanded both in capital investment and employees, more than 25 new small businesses have opened, six small businesses have expanded, and four businesses have transitioned to new ownership. These businesses and companies consist of clothing retail shops, restaurants, auto parts stores, grocery stores, factories, farm equipment stores, and a variety of others. Geneva is also home to Fillmore County Hospital and Clinic, which provides several more employment opportunities in the community (Fillmore County Development Corporation, 2013, p. 4).

Cultural Characteristics

Geneva offers a community swimming pool, six public parks with playground equipment, one campground, a city pond open to youth and senior citizens for fishing, the county fairgrounds, and volunteer-run movie theater. The Geneva Activity and Education Department (GAED), managed as a city department, provides over thirty different programs for the public ranging from youth soccer and Hunter Education to CRP/First Aid training and

Jazzercise. GAED also operates a recreation center for middle school youth, open a few nights each week.

In addition to these city-run recreation opportunities, Geneva has a local skeet shooting range, private golf course, and hunting opportunities. 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 Development Corporation, Genealogical Society of Fillmore County, Geneva Arts Council, Girl Scouts, Lion's Club, Rotary, and VFW (Fillmore County Development Corporation, 2013, p. 29).

Geneva has eight churches of various denominations. The churches work together in several ways to support the community in addition to their religious leadership.

Geneva's sources for public communication include Facebook and Google Plus social media outlets, through three local telecommunication/internet providers plus two additional internet-only providers. The city has a local weekly newspaper, *The Nebraska Signal*, which provides print advertising and local information to 3,500 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 (45 miles), Hastings, Lincoln, and Lexington (130 miles).

Geneva is also served by a U.S. Postal Service office and the United Parcel Service (UPS) (Fillmore County Development Corporation, 2013).

Community Needs

Community Need Number One

Geneva needs youth-centered, non-sports-oriented programming options and a central location for youth to visit, a location outside of school and home. There are several sports-oriented activities available through the school system and the Geneva Activities and Education Department, but this does not serve a portion of the area youth. The new Youth Recreation Center (YRC) is available only to middle school students, which is only 31 percent of the school-aged population, excluding 69 percent of school-aged youth who also need a 'third place' (Elmborg, 2011). The YRC is also open only a few hours each week, still leaving several hours and days each week for the community to need a 'third place'. The large number of youth home alone due to working parents also shows a need for after school and summer programming that allows school-aged children a safe alternative.

Goal

Geneva Public Library will increase the number of programs offered to school-aged children throughout the year, through a variety of program types, in order to meet the interests and learning types of the population.

Objectives

The library will increase the number of volunteers connected to the library by at least ten percent each year. Library staff will collectively become involved or connected to at least

one other group/organization in the community within one year. Both of these actions will be to build support and enthusiasm for the programs offered.

The library will establish a Teen Advisory Board with a minimum of three youth ages 13 to 19, within the next two years, to allow teenagers to be recognized as essential and influential parts of the community and to play a key role in identifying topics and areas of interest to their peers. The library will facilitate programming options, based on the Teen Advisory Board's suggestions, offering a two percent increase each year in the number of teen programs offered.

The library will initiate cooperative projects and programs in conjunction with the Youth Recreation Center to help provide resources and support for middle school oriented programs throughout the community.

The library will openly communicate at least twice each year with local preschools, day care facilities, and school personnel to keep abreast of the needs those staff members see from their respective youth-centered occupations.

The library will continue to develop a Summer Reading Program and have a five percent increase in the number of active participants each year.

Community Need Number Two

The downtown area of Geneva is the heart of the city and the location of approximately 75 percent of the community retail businesses. Various aspects of downtown revitalization are consistently listed as one of residents' top ten concerns in community needs surveys (City of Geneva, 2011). The city has received revitalization grants to assist in improving the downtown area that originated more than 120 years ago. Major renovations in the downtown area have

occurred numerous times in the last twenty years, with additional support underway (Nebraska Department of Economic Development, 2009).

In conjunction with the downtown revitalization, residents have a strong desire to recruit and retain new businesses to empty downtown buildings and attract travelers and residents within fifty miles to shop and play in Geneva (City of Geneva, 2011).

Goal

The Geneva Public Library will play an active role in supporting and improving the physical attractiveness as well as the business and entertainment opportunities of Geneva. The library will enhance the appearance of the community's downtown area, provide resources for potential and current business owners, and promote community events and services.

Objectives

As part of the downtown area, the library will work in conjunction with the Secret Garden committee and with City officials to maintain the Secret Garden, lawn, landscaping, and library building with a clean and pleasant appearance. Library staff will conduct basic trash removal daily, and assist with clean up and maintenance of the Secret Garden in conjunction with the committee at least twice annually. City personnel will assist in maintenance by mowing a minimum of once a week during the growing season, and will conduct regular maintenance and cleaning year round. Members of the library staff and board will play an active role in the Secret Garden committee and will financially assist the Secret Garden with their fiscal year budget amount.

Within the next five years, the library will provide business-specific print and electronic resources, make technological hardware and software available, and offer physical space to

potential and current business owners to assist them in business planning, reference, and/or maintenance, as well as the education of the business owners and/or employees. The library will continue to provide free computer and internet access to support local business. The library will provide meeting rooms with equipment, for continued education, public meetings, employee gatherings, or other purposes, at no cost, and available almost any hour of the day and day of the week. The library will create in-depth meeting room use policies within six months and require the responsible party reserving the meeting room to sign a brief contract agreeing to the policies. The library would like to see meeting room use by local businesses increase ten percent within the next three years. Free will donations would be accepted for the use of the facilities. The library will also better utilize state resources to provide more electronic and print materials for local business reference.

The library will play an active role in promoting community events through the library's social media channels, print, and various regional media outlets, in addition to promotions inside the library. The library will increase its participation in community events by ten percent within the next five years, to benefit the library and/or its image.

Community Need Number Three

Approximately one quarter of Geneva's residents are over the age of 65, 15 percent are over age 75, and 6 percent are over age 85. The needs of the city's senior citizens are partially met by Fillmore County Senior Service through social, educational, and recreational programs (Fillmore County Senior Services, 2010). Also based in Geneva, Heritage Crossings offers skilled nursing care, adult day care, assisted living facilities, and other services for the elderly (Vetter

Health Services, Inc., 2014). There are additional programs and opportunities to promote the well-being of Geneva's older residents.

Goal

The Geneva Public Library will develop and coordinate programming specifically for older persons living independently as well as those living in assisted or skilled care facilities, and will be a positive, accessible, social location for able-bodied persons to visit.

Objectives

The library will create, conduct for a minimum of six months, and evaluate an outreach program to Heritage Crossings, to provide print and audio materials to the residents of both the assisted living facility and the skilled nursing facility.

The library will promote and assist residents in utilizing the Nebraska Library Commission's Talking Books and Braille Service.

The library will conduct regular discussions, a minimum of two per year, with the Fillmore County Senior Service to coordinate programming to independent senior citizens.

The library will provide and/or coordinate meeting space, technological resources, and/or instruction for senior citizen activities, ranging from exercise sessions to computer lessons. The number of programs that appeal to senior citizens will increase ten percent over the next five years.

Library S.W.O.T. Analysis

Internal Strengths

Comparing Geneva Public Library (GPL) to libraries in Nebraska with the same population service area (2,172 ± 10 percent, or seven libraries) results in the following rankings:

GPL is the only one with an ALA-MLS librarian on staff, GPL ranks third for highest total revenue, fifth for print material expenditures, first for electronic materials expenditures, first for other material expenditures, third largest print materials collection, top ranked audio units, top ranked video units, second highest total circulation, second highest in library visits, and third highest for the number of users on public internet computers (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2012).

The library has a small, dedicated, and friendly staff, with a small town atmosphere. Collectively, the library staff know the majority of the residents and the public know the library staff by their respective names.

Geneva Public Library has three different sized meeting rooms available for use by the public, and due to the architecture and security measures of the building, the meeting rooms are available for use during hours the library is not open.

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 mixture of old and new architecture continues to provide a beautiful and well-maintained library.

As of May 2014, the Geneva Public Library has nine new public internet computer stations, three new staff computers, and provides a wireless hot spot to residents and nonresidents alike.

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

Many Geneva residents donate to the library, either financially, with newly released books, or with donations to support the library's annual book sale.

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

Internal Weaknesses

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

Geneva Public Library provides virtually no programming outside a few, small summer reading activities.

The library has not been an active member of the community in the past. Previous library directors, or those employed as Director previous to 2012, have not been known for their enthusiasm to serve the public, to embrace new technology, nor inviting.

The Geneva Public Library does not have any type of Foundation or Friends of the Library organization to support the library from a non-profit standpoint.

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 primarily use. There are twelve parking stalls on the north side of the building along the street, but are primarily used for parking by the employees of the grocery store across the street. There are a total of eleven parking stalls across the street to the north, directly in front of the grocery store, and fourteen parking stalls across the street to the east, directly in front of a hardware store, that could be used for library patrons. There are a few unmarked places along the street that

patrons can park, but when the library is host to one or more meetings, all nearby parking locations are full and library patrons do not have direct access.

Geneva Public Library's original Carnegie entrance on the north side of the building, is locked and unused. This door is on the city's main street, does not provide handicap accessibility. The entrance does have a vestibule with beautiful woodwork and stairs but no one sees it with this area blocked off.

The library does not provide automatic door openers for handicapped patrons, although there is a doorbell mounted on the exterior of the building that allows people to ring for assistance. The library also does not provide amenities such as baby changing facilities in the restrooms.

Geneva Public Library does not have a consistent look across its products. This includes letterhead, envelopes, business cards, website, social media, fliers, advertisements, marketing and promotional materials, and staff uniforms.

Not many people in the community know the extent of resources and services available through the library.

External Opportunities

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

The Fillmore Central school district provides an Apple MacBook to each student in grades 9 to 12 for individual educational use during the school year.

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

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

The use of technology continues to be on the rise, with more people using personal devices such as tablets, other reading devices, and multipurpose cell phones. Many people are unaware of the possibilities of their device nor how to utilize locally available resources in conjunction with these devices.

A tight local job market and high local poverty rates necessitates households do more with less money. Several households in the Geneva area cannot afford personal computers nor basic internet service.

External Threats

The local coffee shop, Geneva Java, is a popular location for people to socialize, but the business is for sale with no hints of potential buyers. This was the only location in town serving different types of coffees and cold beverages.

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

The housing market in Geneva is very tight, not offering many options to low or middle class home buyers.

It is difficult to find high paying jobs in the area.

Supporting local businesses means spending substantially 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.

Evaluation Plan

Library staff will record data of programs and activities listed for each objective above, on a weekly or monthly basis, dependent upon 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, nor 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 increase the overall knowledge about, and use of, the library, by the residents of Geneva and the surrounding townships. In an effort

to move forward, the library staff aspire to raise awareness and circulation by 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.

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