

LAKE GENEVA STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

About the Project

The City of Lake Geneva Strategic Action Plan project will produce the City's first ever Strategic Action Plan that will guide decision-making for the next 5 years.

The project is a robust, inclusive, and forward-looking community planning process. The Strategic Action Plan is intended to guide the City's future and assist the Common Council with assessing and prioritizing needs and projects to ensure the most efficient and effective use of City time and resources as well as the development of a governance process that is reflective of current best practices for municipal operations. The strategic planning process will begin with the creation of a Community Vision for Lake Geneva. The Community Vision will set the stage and provide the foundational strategic pillars of the Strategic Action Plan. Public involvement and input will be critical components of the strategic planning process and stakeholders will be provided both in-person and online opportunities to engage with this project.



LAKE GENEVA STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN THINK-TANK WORKSHOP

The Lake Geneva Think-Tank Workshop was conducted over two highly participatory workshop sessions on January 8 and January 10. Approximately 60 individuals participated in the Think-Tank.

The scenario-planning workshop facilitated the understanding of future trends and drivers that may impact Lake Geneva looking out to 2035. The scenario narratives and descriptions were developed by the participants, and the axes reflect the drivers and themes generated at the Think-Tank.

To get involved and to stay up to date on the Lake Geneva strategic action planning project, visit the project portal at:

tinyurl.com/LakeGenevaSAP



CITY OF LAKE GENEVA, WISCONSIN STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PROCESS



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SCENARIOS OF THE FUTURE: SUMMARY SNAPSHOT | LAKE GENEVA STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

SCENARIO A: LAKE GENEVA DEFINES ITS DESTINY

This scenario forecasts a future where Lake Geneva strives to maintain a development approach that manages its growth selectively. Strategic investments prioritize the tourism industry, with visitor-generated revenue helping to offset increasing infrastructure and service demands. The community works hard to strike a careful balance between the needs of both year-round and seasonal residents. The City of Lake Geneva functions primarily as a destination community that highly values its greatest asset – the Lake. Environmental regulations are enacted to protect the Lake and access is limited. The City seeks to build strong relationships with nearby municipalities to defray the growing demands on local infrastructure and Lake preservation. Single-family homes, short-term rentals, and tourist accommodations continue to dominate the housing market and competition rises with an influx of seasonal residents and retirees. Escalating housing costs discourage young families and moderate-wage workers from settling in the City, contributing to declining school enrollment. Over time, the population ages, and the community's sense of year-round cohesion gradually weakens.

SCENARIO SNAPSHOT – FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- Demographics shift to an aging population as retirees are attracted to the City.
- There is tension between year-round residents and tourists as the demand for seasonal occupancy increases and affordable housing decreases.
- Visitor revenue helps to support infrastructure construction as demands increase.
- School enrollment declines as families leave.
- The City collaborates with regional entities to work together on infrastructure initiatives to defray costs.
- Trust in local institutions decreases when the focus is on tourist needs over resident needs.
- Historic assets are protected, but Lake health suffers with gradual overuse.

SCENARIO B: LAKE GENEVA – THE HAPPY PLACE

This scenario forecasts a future where Lake Geneva sustains a vibrant year-round population that fosters a strong sense of community and shared purpose. Development and growth are intentionally paced and shaped with the long-term health of the Lake a priority. Through strong regional partnerships and targeted economic diversification, the City reduces its reliance on seasonal tourism and builds a more resilient local economy. The City sustains a vibrant year-round population, strong civic culture, and a resilient small-business ecosystem. Visitors are welcome, but resident wellbeing guides decision-making. Policies around housing, short-term rentals, and land use are coordinated and widely supported. The City manages its approach to housing, short-term rentals, and land use to increase affordability through a wider range of housing types, including mixed-use developments, duplexes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Mobility and transportation options are expanded, especially in the areas of walkability, bikability, and connectivity. Access to the Lake is enhanced for both residents and visitors, while strong environmental protections ensure the Lake remains a treasured and sustainable community asset.

SCENARIO SNAPSHOT – FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

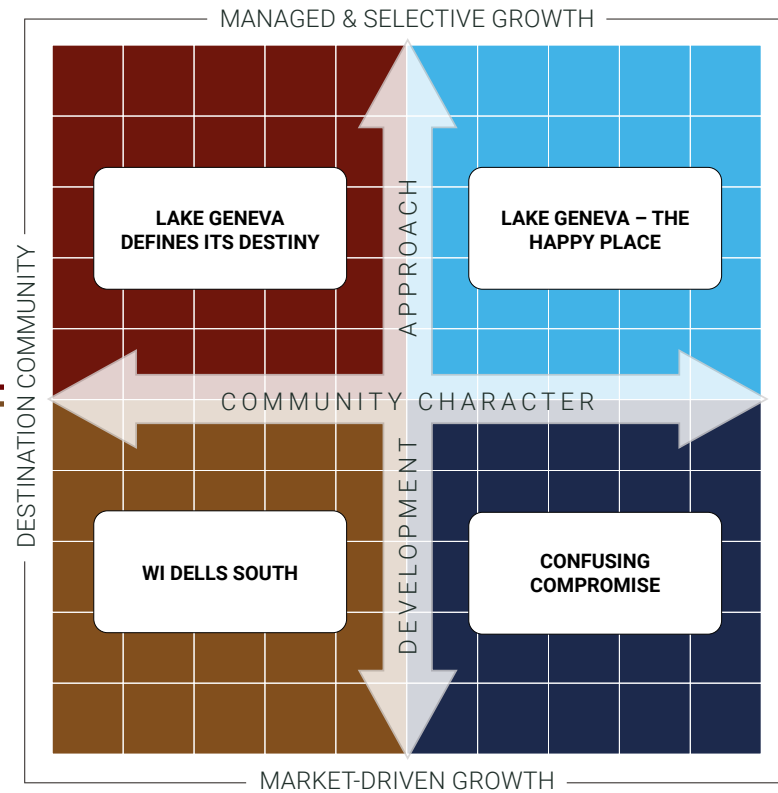
- Lake Geneva is a vibrant, welcoming, year-round family-friendly community.
- City communications are improved and a strong sense of belonging emerges.
- Health of the Lake is prioritized with appropriate environmental regulations and development planning.
- Mobility options are expanded; especially walkability and bikability.
- Affordable housing and mixed-use development is increased to accommodate young families and workers.
- The City focuses on regional alignment in its growth plan.
- The school system is vibrant and grows consistently.
- Population growth occurs across all demographics.

SCENARIO D: WI DELLS SOUTH

This scenario forecasts a future where Lake Geneva fully embraces its identity as a destination community. The City adopts a largely market-driven approach to growth, with public and private sectors aligned around expanding the tourism economy. Seasonal residents, visitors, and retirees come to dominate the population, while year-round residents struggle to maintain a sense of community and belonging. Priority is placed on maximizing tourism activity and supporting a lifestyle-oriented economy centered on the Lake. Investment flows heavily into short-term rentals, lakefront homes, high-rise developments, and visitor-focused amenities. As competition for tourism dollars intensifies with surrounding communities, regional collaboration diminishes. Increasing density and activity around the Lake prompt efforts to limit overuse and pollution, resulting in managed access that favors those who can afford it. Rising housing and living costs displace young families and workers, accelerating population turnover and decline in school enrollment. Over time, education services are outsourced, and trust in local institutions erodes as year-round residents feel left behind in a City shaped primarily for visitors.

SCENARIO SNAPSHOT – FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- A market-driven tourism economy dominates growth and economic development in the City.
- Year-round population Lake Geneva declines while seasonal population increases.
- Retirees are attracted to the community and the population ages.
- School enrollment declines and education is outsourced to surrounding communities.
- As density increases, efforts are made to protect the Lake from overuse and pollution. Access is limited to those who can pay.
- Regional collaboration is strained with competition for tourism dollars.
- The City struggles to communicate and engage with more transient residents.



SCENARIO C: CONFUSING COMPROMISE

This scenario forecasts a future where Lake Geneva is committed to fostering open communication, community engagement, and improved livability throughout the community. However, these aspirations are undermined by a development approach that allows market-driven forces to dominate decisions about where and how growth occurs. As a result, policies intended to support community goals are often unclear or inconsistent, leading to confusion and misalignment over time. Growth in Lake Geneva is shaped primarily by external market pressures, investor interests, visitor demand, and broader regional trends. This approach conflicts with residents' desire for more intentional planning that supports small businesses, neighborhood character, and quality-of-life amenities needed to sustain a vibrant year-round population. Shared mobility options expand to accommodate new development, and the City adopts emerging energy technologies such as solar power and electric vehicles. At the same time, sustained demand for real estate and tourism places increasing strain on housing, infrastructure, and public services. Short-term rentals increase, and the City struggles to balance its appeal as a destination with the well-being and stability of its year-round resident community.

SCENARIO SNAPSHOT – FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- The average age of residents increases as retirees move to Lake Geneva.
- School enrollment declines as affordability shifts.
- The City invests in third spaces/gathering spaces to foster sense of community.
- High demand for real estate and tourism development place pressure on local systems and infrastructure.
- Lack of space to expand forces local businesses to leave the area and national chains to move in.
- The Hillmoor property becomes the 'Central Park' Lake Geneva.
- Public services (fire and police) increase to support public safety.
- Short-term rentals increase in the City.

