



Revised August 3, 2026



LAKE GENEVA STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN REPORT

WISCONSIN, USA

JULY 2026





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This strategic planning process was designed to identify focus areas and actions that are important to the community over the next five years. This is a significant step for Lake Geneva as its new Strategic Action Plan.

Stakeholder engagement was a priority element, and the desire was to gather extensive input in an open and transparent manner. The engagement work has included stakeholder interviews, two surveys, a two-day Think-Tank, focus group sessions, a Community Update and Future Summit, work sessions with the Common Council and City Staff, and a strategic planning homeroom session with Seniors at Lake Geneva High School. There have been regular community updates via e-newsletters, social media, and a utility bill mailing. The findings from this planning process can be used to help inform future priorities for the City and the Council. Over the coming years, this will help shape City goals and objectives and will provide guidance on new investments and planning decisions.

This reports and the associated data analysis are available on the project portal:

<https://lab2.future-iq.com/lake-geneva-sap/>

REPORT PREPARED BY:

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This Strategic Action Plan was developed with considerable input from the community and stakeholders. It presents a framework for future direction, and a set of strong focus areas and objectives. The plan aims to strengthen the community value proposition. It includes a strong focus on building strong community engagement and communication systems, and enhancing core values and attributes. Highlights of the report include:

Lake Geneva is a place where a lot of good things are already happening. This creates the momentum to move forward and tackle the next set of challenges and big ideas with a new Strategic Action Plan that represents the preferred vision for the community.



PRESERVING LAKE GENEVA'S UNIQUE CHARACTER WHILE MANAGING GROWTH

Throughout the engagement process, residents repeatedly emphasized the importance of maintaining the community's identity, charm, and quality of life. There was strong support for proactive approaches that guide future development in ways that reinforce community character while accommodating changing needs.



A STRONG DESIRE TO PROTECT NATURAL ASSETS AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Lake Geneva's lakes, open spaces, parks, and natural environment were consistently identified as defining community assets. The community recognizes that environmental stewardship is fundamental to maintaining both quality of life and the area's long-term economic vitality.



BUILDING A VIBRANT YEAR-ROUND COMMUNITY

Stakeholders frequently discussed the importance of strengthening Lake Geneva as a year-round community rather than primarily a seasonal destination. There was broad support for initiatives that diversify economic activity, strengthen local business opportunities, and create amenities and experiences that benefit residents throughout the entire year.



ADDRESSING HOUSING AND WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

The availability and affordability of housing emerged as one of the most significant issues facing the community. Participants identified workforce housing, attainable housing for young families, and housing options for older adults as critical needs. Community members recognized the relationship between housing availability, workforce attraction, economic development, and long-term demographic sustainability.



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Residents consistently expressed the importance of maintaining strong community connections and creating opportunities for people to gather, engage, and participate in community life. There was support for investments that enhance recreation, cultural opportunities, public spaces, walkability, and overall community well-being.



RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Many of the issues facing Lake Geneva extend beyond municipal boundaries. Stakeholders identified the importance of strengthening partnerships and collaboration across the region to address shared opportunities and challenges. There was strong support for Lake Geneva continuing to play a leadership role in convening partners and advancing regional solutions.

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

In October 2025, the City of Lake Geneva embarked on its new strategic planning process to deliver a 5-year Strategic Action Plan.

The objective of the strategic planning process was to build on Lake Geneva’s current success and incorporate new actions to maintain this success over the next 5 years. The City of Lake Geneva expressed a desire to have extensive community and stakeholder engagement and input in the creation of this plan. This engagement was very successful with approximately 1,126 individuals participating in the process over the eight-month planning period. This engagement work explored stakeholder sentiments, and examined where Lake Geneva is today, and where it could evolve to by 2035. The planning process explored the future from an economic, environmental, governmental, societal and community level.

The strategic planning process began in October 2025 and ended in July 2026, with the production of this final City of Lake Geneva Strategic Action Plan. This report represents the analysis of the research and engagement outcomes and outlines how the extensive accumulated stakeholder data has informed the identification of a preferred future and key strategic action areas for the future development of Lake Geneva.

For a complete account of the City of Lake Geneva Strategic Action Planning process and reports, please see the [project portal](#).



CITY OF LAKE GENEVA, WISCONSIN STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PROCESS



1.1 | OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

The City of Lake Geneva embarked on creating this Strategic Action Plan for the 2026-2030 period. The objective of the strategic planning process is to build on the City's current success and incorporate new actions to maintain this success over the next 5 years.

One of the overarching principles in the planning process was to create a community-driven process, where ideas and thoughts could be drawn into identifying a community vision and future strategic direction.

This planning process had a specific and deliberate focus on community and stakeholder engagement. The intention was to provide residents and City staff with numerous opportunities to contribute to the creation of the plan and to help identify and prioritize key strategic actions. A key focus of the Strategic Action Plan process has been to engage a wide range of stakeholders. This has been done to ensure that the plan reflects the 'voice of the people'. This is part of the larger commitment to create meaningful collaboration and communication between the City and the Lake Geneva community. Some of the specific steps through the planning process were:



Understanding key drivers and existing conditions that are shaping the future of Lake Geneva. This included examining emerging trends, current conditions, evolving developments and shifts in societal expectations and desires.



Exploring different plausible future scenarios and examining their implications for the future. This allowed residents to consider what represented their preferred future and to gather insight into the appetite for change.



Formulating key strategic themes, which were presented as Strategic Pillars. These represent the broad focus areas that the community identified as important in shaping the future direction of the community.



Identification and prioritization of a range of strategic actions that support the Strategic Pillars. This was intended to identify new actions or priority areas that the community judged as having the greatest impact on shaping the preferred future.



Future Insights

- The City of Lake Geneva leadership team recognized the importance of strong stakeholder engagement, with residents, staff and other partner organizations. Over the eight-month planning cycle, people were offered numerous opportunities to contribute ideas and help shape the actions. This makes the plan stronger and more reflective of the community's aspirations and priorities.
- Lake Geneva is adjacent to the important metropolitan regions of Milwaukee and Chicago. Considering the future strategic positioning of Lake Geneva within this regional context was an important topic that was explored throughout this planning process.

1.2 | ROLE AND PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Action Plan is one of the key planning documents for the City. It helps define the medium term (3-5 years) focus areas, priorities and key initiatives.

This plan was developed by identifying future-shaping focus areas that will help the City accelerate work on important innovations and actions. The Strategic Action Plan has a relationship with other planning tools and will help shape the immediate budget and operational plans. The Strategic Action Plan highlights priority areas identified by the community which are in addition to the core functions that the City provides such as public safety, emergency services and essential infrastructure.

This Strategic Action Plan is a potent document, that identifies high priority objectives over the coming five years, and lays out a framework for areas of innovation in the City operations and programs.

Purpose: Establishes short-term Departmental plans, that reflect annual budgets and immediate priorities.

**Operational
Plans & Budget**
1 - 2 YEARS

Focus: Creates short-term DEPARTMENTAL PLANS AND BUDGETS for City Department operations and identifies SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES and INITIATIVES.

Purpose: Sets the medium-term priorities and focus areas, plus helps determine the speed and scale of actions.

**Strategic
Action Plan**
3 - 5 YEARS

Focus: Identifies medium-term FOCUS AREAS, PRIORITIES and KEY INITIATIVES for the City, that will help fulfill on the vision and long-term direction. Includes STRATEGIC OUTCOMES and CORE METRICS for implementation.

Purpose: Provides policy and investment focus for target areas, and key infrastructure and development items.

**Small Area
Plans and Capital
Improvement Plans**
5 - 10 YEARS

Focus: Provides long-term PLANNING AND POLICY DIRECTION on specific locations, and priorities for CAPITAL INVESTMENT in key areas.

Purpose: Lays out long-term land use and policy framework that guides development patterns and scale.

**Comprehensive
Master Plan**
10 - 20 YEARS

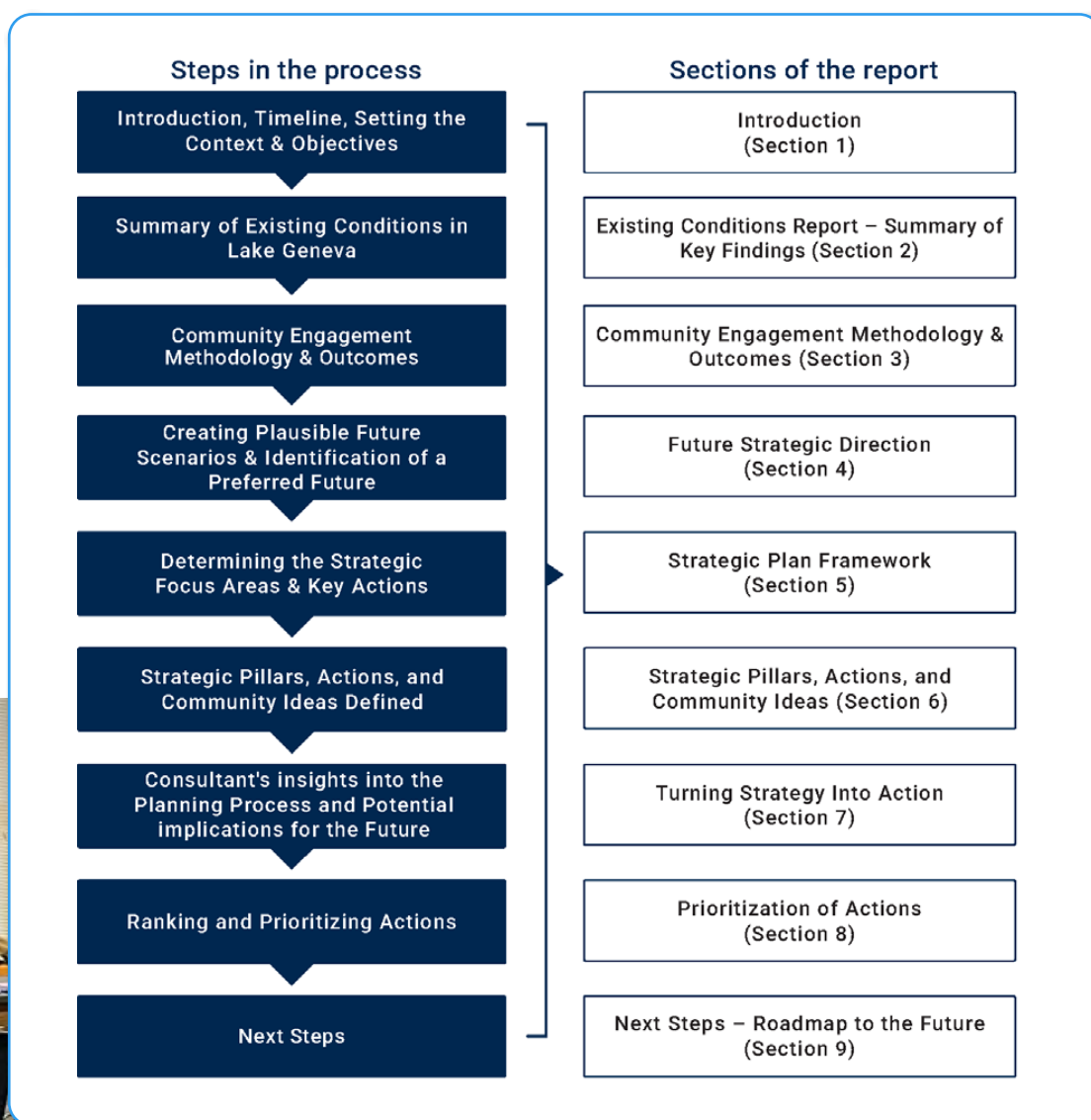
Focus: Sets the overall LAND USE DESIGN and long-term community direction. This provides a foundation for the development trajectory and infrastructure in the City.

1.3 | HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

This report lays out the findings from each key step in the Strategic Action Planning process. The process moved from background analysis and exploration to identifying key priority actions.

The planning process has included extensive research and in-depth community and stakeholder engagement that focuses on the future of Lake Geneva looking out to 2035.

This work represents robust 'future thinking' where stakeholders and community members considered possible future directions and the probable impacts and consequences on the City of Lake Geneva in 2035. The process and this Strategic Action Plan report then drilled down deeper into what people saw as the optimal or preferred future. This understanding helped lay the groundwork for illustrating how the preferred future can be reached. The preferred future identified through this process presents a compelling and enticing vision for how Lake Geneva could evolve looking out to 2035. However, a vision needs actions, and this report identifies those priority actions for the next five years.



2.0 | EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT - SETTING THE CONTEXT

The complete
Existing
Conditions Report
may be found on
the [project portal](#).

The Lake Geneva strategic planning process blends vision setting and engagement with a data-driven approach, balancing qualitative aspects and sentiment of the community with specific metrics to quantify the City's economy and future opportunities. For the purposes of this strategic planning process, Lake Geneva was benchmarked to three communities: Port Washington, WI; Baraboo, WI; and Galena, IL. Key findings from the 2026 Existing Conditions Report include:



Lake Geneva's population grew from 7,685 (2010) to 8,443 (2023), with its sharpest increase during the pandemic period (+4.85% in 2020). This growth coincides with a pronounced aging trend. Residents aged 50+ now account for 46% of the population, up from 34% in 2010. The median age increased from 39 to 47.2 years in just over a decade.



Lake Geneva remains the most racially diverse among its peer cities, with 85% White (Non-Hispanic) residents compared to 90–95% elsewhere. The Hispanic/Latino population represents 10% of residents, but declined in absolute numbers (1,323 to 874 residents since 2010). Meanwhile, the Multi-Racial population more than quadrupled (66 to 276 residents).



Educational attainment improved sharply in the City, with residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher rising from 28.9% to 44.8% since 2010. Yet labor force participation is just 62%, the lowest among peer cities, and unemployment is the highest (5.1%).



Only 24% of residents both live and work in Lake Geneva, while 76% commute out of the City daily.



The City added approximately 860 housing units between 2010 and 2023 (4,225 to 5,086 units). Despite this growth, affordability pressures have intensified. The median home value reached \$323,000 and median rent \$1,250, is the highest among peer cities. Housing values have risen faster than incomes, pushing the income-to-home-value ratio to 23%, well above the state average of 18%.



Median household income increased by over \$25,000 since 2010, reaching \$73,199 in 2023. Still, 32% of households earn under \$50,000, and the poverty rate, though improved, remains the highest among peers at 12.7%.



Tourism dominates the local economy, with 18.6% of jobs in accommodation and food services, more than any peer city. After collapsing in 2020, visitor spending rebounded to a record \$549 million in 2024, while tourism employment exceeded pre-pandemic levels (4,847 jobs vs. 4,655 in 2019). Nearly 60% of visitor spending is concentrated in lodging and food.



Lake Geneva's overall livability score (56) exceeds the U.S. median but trails leading peers. Broadband access is strong (91.4% of residents connected), with 1 in 10 residents lacking access. Health access challenges persist, with 2,290 residents per primary care physician and 10% food insecurity.



3.0 | COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY AND OUTCOMES

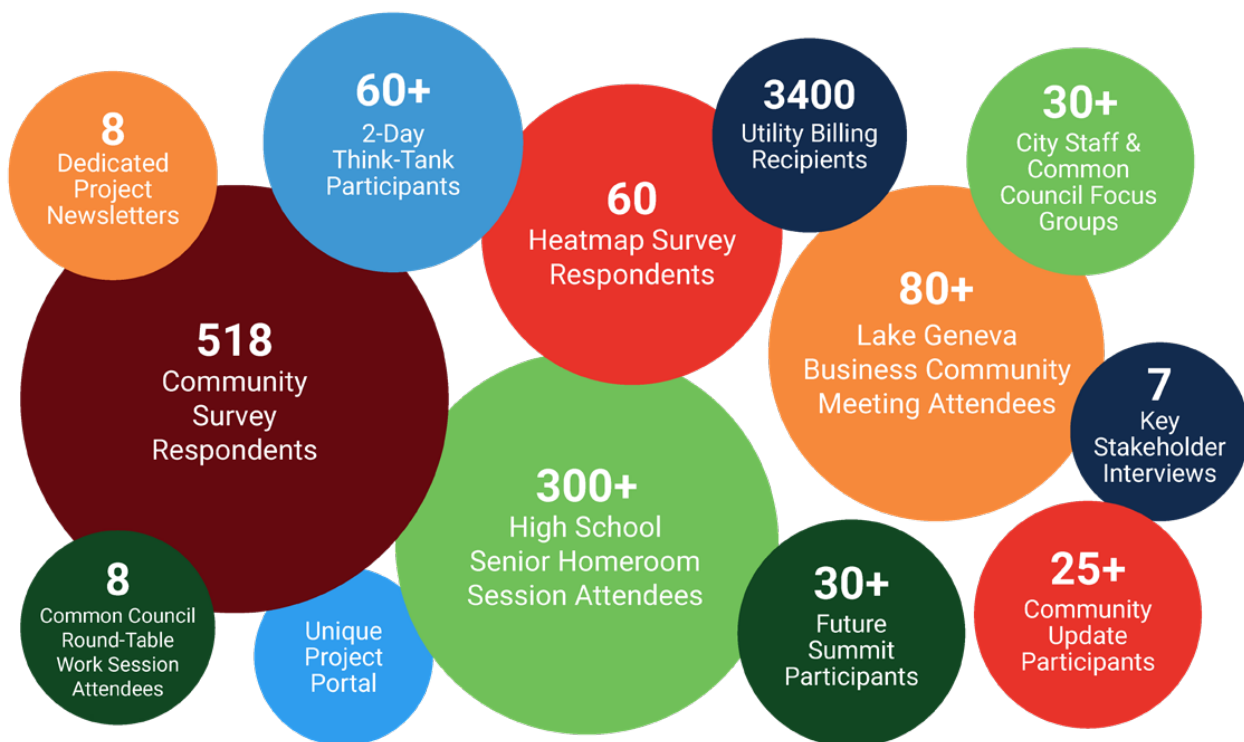
The City of Lake Geneva Strategic Action Plan was shaped through a broad, inclusive, and transparent engagement process with the Lake Geneva community, City staff, and the Common Council.

3.1 | COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METRICS

The City of Lake Geneva Strategic Action Plan was built on extensive community and stakeholder input. This engagement was an integral and central design feature of the planning process.

The engagement approach explored future vision and direction and created a high-level roadmap. It was characterized by a bottom-up approach that focused on community, City staff and Common Council Member input. Stakeholder engagement aimed for deep and diverse engagement, with multiple methods such as surveys, Think-Tank, Community Update, Focus Groups, Future Summit and youth session at the High School.

These engagement opportunities were also supported by a robust communication effort, with a dedicated project website portal, regular e-newsletters and social media posts.



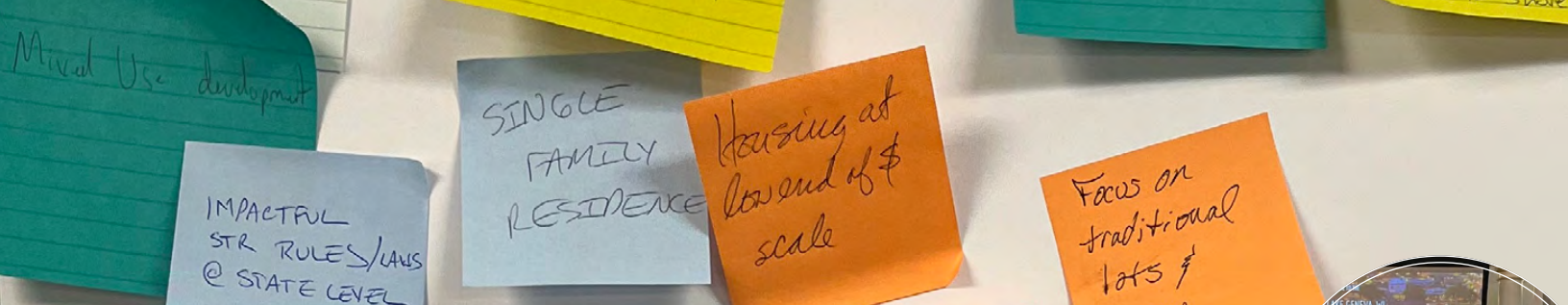
Data Insights

- In total, approximately 1,126 people had input into this planning process. This included significant resident and staff input in both online surveys and in-person sessions.
- People were able to offer input into the planning process in a variety of ways, including online surveys, workshops, interviews, Think-Tank sessions, Community Update, and Future Summit. This was complemented by more informal sessions through a visioning session with high school students and an information session with Visit Lake Geneva members.
- Overall, people were excited to participate and to provide input into this new Strategic Action Plan for Lake Geneva.

3.2 | COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STEPS

A key element of the strategic planning process is community engagement. This project included numerous opportunities for community members to help shape the vision, pillars, and actions of the plan. The engagement process was intended to create consensus and buy-in for the community vision that serves as the foundational support for the Lake Geneva Strategic Action Plan.





3.3 | FUTURE THINK-TANK AND COMMUNITY UPDATE

The initial part of the in-person engagement methodology was the Think-Tank held in early January 2026. This significant stakeholder engagement event ‘kicked off’ the exploration about the future direction of the community.

To explore the future of Lake Geneva, stakeholders and community members participated in the two-day scenario-planning future Think-Tank conducted on January 8 and 10, 2026. Approximately 60 people attended including key business, education, government, non-profit stakeholders, and community members. Think-Tank participants worked through the scenario planning process to produce four plausible futures for Lake Geneva, looking out to 2035. More information on the content and outcomes can be viewed in the [Think-Tank Report](#). This work examined these plausible futures and their implications and consequences.

Following on from the City of Lake Geneva Future Think-Tank, a Community Update session was held on February 17 with approximately 25 participants. This session was designed to share the outcomes of the Think-Tank and ask people to contribute their additional thoughts on the preferred future. The Heatmap Survey distributed at the Think-Tank was also conducted with Community Update participants and the compiled results are on the [project portal](#).

Key Insights from the Think-Tank and Community Update

- The Think-Tank process highlighted several key future splitting themes. One of these was around how tourism development is managed and guided. There was a recognition that the intensity of tourism development has the potential to reshape the character of the community, and there is a strong desire to find an intentional balance between the tourism economy and the impact on the community.
- The Heatmap Survey results from both the Think Tank and the Community Update showed strong alignment around a preferred future for Lake Geneva. The findings also revealed a notable appetite for change among participants, indicating broad support for initiatives and investments that will support the community's future vision and implementation of the strategic action plan.
- The community recognizes its important role as a steward of the Lake and is committed to its long-term protection. During both the Think-Tank and Community Update sessions, participants emphasized the importance of preserving the Lake while ensuring it remains accessible for residents and visitors to enjoy.



The scenarios that emerged from the Think-Tank became a ‘testing ground’ for stakeholder discussion throughout the planning process.





3.4 | CITY OF LAKE GENEVA COMMUNITY SURVEY

The City of Lake Geneva Strategic Plan Community Survey ran from December 2025 through the beginning of March 2026. The survey received 518 responses.

This survey was intended to offer the community and stakeholders an opportunity to have detailed input into shaping the direction of Lake Geneva. The survey was designed to build on the work in the Think-Tank and to further explore the key themes that were developed in that workshop. There were 31 questions with a mix of scale and open-ended questions. This survey also explored community and stakeholders' views on the following topics, including:

- **Satisfaction with living/working in Lake Geneva**
- **Lake Geneva's current direction**
- **Lake Geneva's ability to adapt to change**
- **Strategic positioning for Lake Geneva**
- **Lake Geneva community dynamics**

The response rate and completion rate on the survey were good, providing a good sample of high-quality data points. The full Community Survey results are on the project portal and can be filtered and analyzed by categories like age groups, how long people have lived in Lake Geneva, and which Aldermanic district people live in Lake Geneva

The Community Survey gathered excellent information about the community's appetite for change and the importance of various topics. The sample size was large enough to gather meaningful insights.

"I like living in Lake Geneva because I think that is a great community. During the week you can walk down the street and say hi to people, and it's great. I've lived in Lake Geneva my whole life, and the community is one thing that I have always loved."

Community Survey Respondent

Key Insights from the Community Survey

- The majority of Survey respondents indicated they were happy living and working in Lake Geneva, with 24% indicating they were very happy and 4% indicating they were very unhappy. This was especially true for those aged 30 and older. 6% of those 29 and younger were neutral.
- The Community Survey results show that people are more satisfied (35.5%) than not (28.12%) about the current direction of the City, with a comparable percentage (28.57%) as neutral. Similarly, the question about the ability to adapt and create new opportunities revealed the same pattern.
- For the questions about strategic positioning, a clear majority of survey respondents consider it very important for Lake Geneva to identify and develop a key strategic position and value proposition, with 33% identifying this as very important. Similarly, the majority of respondents consider it important for the City to build intercity/governmental collaborations with regional partners such as the Town of Linn fire service agreement.
- There is a clear desire and priority from the community to ensure safety and security for its residents, and to continue support for quality schools.





3.5 | HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR HOMEROOM SESSION

An outstanding feature of the community engagement work for this process was the Lake Geneva High School Session, where students were given the opportunity to learn about the results from the Think-Tank and participate in the Community Survey.

Analysis of preliminary Community Survey results revealed a lack of responses from a younger demographic. To address this, the City reached out to the High School to request student involvement in the planning process. Future iQ was invited to present about the City's strategic planning process to Lake Geneva High School seniors during their Homeroom period on February 16, 2026. The students learned about visioning and the strategic planning process and then were encouraged to take the Community Survey to add their voices to the process.

Youth engagement was a key feature of the planning process, and it helped to ensure that community voices of all ages are included in the final Strategic Action Plan.



"...remember that even though a lot of your profit comes from the people with the most money of the older generation, you have people like myself who love this town; however, there is not much for us to do. So as you go about your decisions, remember that the younger generation is your future"

-Community Survey Respondent

Key Insights from Youth Respondents

- Where more respondents under the age of 19 indicated they were excited about the current direction of Lake Geneva, 15% were neutral, and there were consistent requests for more opportunities for young people.
- The high school students were able to grasp the concepts of the different future scenarios and work through the implications. This highlights the usefulness of the scenario-planning work as a tool to help imagine and think about different options for the future.
- The high school seniors took the survey assignment very seriously as they understood that this was a significant opportunity to take part in planning for the future of their community. As a result of their participation, approximately 37% of Community Survey respondents were under the age of 19 years.



3.6 | STRATEGIC ROUND-TABLE AND FOCUS GROUPS

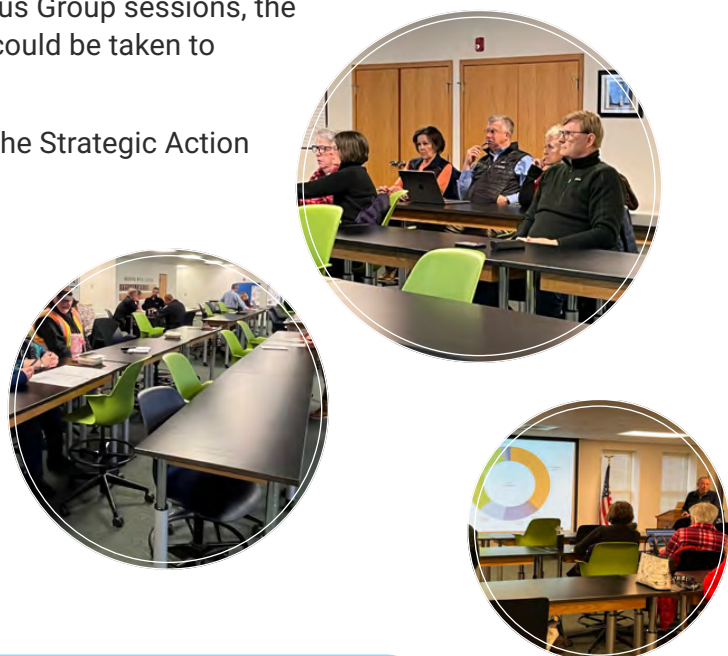
Lake Geneva City Staff and Common Council Members were important participants in the strategic planning process.

Using information compiled from the Think-Tank and Community Survey to date, the Common Council met for a Round-Table discussion on February 17 to come to a consensus on the Strategic Pillars for the Lake Geneva Strategic Action Plan. Six topics were identified as being critical to the future of Lake Geneva. These topics were further explored and defined during Focus Groups with City Staff and Common Council members on March 11. During these two hour Focus Group sessions, the groups worked on actions under each strategic pillar that could be taken to achieve the preferred future for Lake Geneva.

The six critical topics that became the Strategic Pillars of the Strategic Action Plan were identified as:

- **Managing residential development**
- **Supporting strategic economic diversification**
- **Optimizing tourism economy impact**
- **Elevating the culture of preservation and stewardship**
- **Enhancing community livability and connection**
- **Creating a balanced community demographic**

The Strategic Round-Table and two Focus Group Sessions helped to inform the final six Strategic Pillars for this Strategic Action Plan.



Key Insights from City Staff and Common Council Members

- The Strategic Round-Table and Focus Group Sessions helped identify key issues, objectives, and actions under each of the Strategic Pillars. The discussions were very productive and surfaced actionable ideas and highlighted points of tension about the future direction of the community.
- During these working sessions Common Council Members identified several strategic governance issues important to the community. These are explored in the Section 7 of this Strategic Action Plan.





3.7 | COMMUNITY FUTURE SUMMIT

To conclude the in-person engagement phase of the strategic planning process, a public Future Summit was held at The Riviera on March 11, 2026, following the Focus Group Sessions.

Approximately 30 people attended the Future Summit. During the event, attendees were presented with the draft framework of the plan, including an overview of the six strategic pillars that form its foundation, followed by a question-and-answer session. After the presentation, participants were invited to contribute ideas for actions that would help achieve the preferred vision outlined in the Strategic Action Plan, organized under each of the strategic pillars. These contributions have been incorporated into the plan, with a selection of participant ideas included within each Strategic Pillar section of this document.

The public Future Summit on March 11 concluded the public in-person events for the strategic planning process.

Key Insights from the Community Future Summit

- The Future Summit provided the final in-person opportunity for the community to weigh in on the Strategic Action Plan framework. As the community's new Strategic Action Plan, participants showed particular interest in how the plan would be implemented and how progress will be measured. It will be important for the Common Council to provide regular updates to the community on the plan's progress over the next 5 years.
- Residential development and housing emerged as one of the key areas of tension during community discussions. Participants expressed strong support for expanding housing options, particularly for younger families, young professionals, retirees, and residents seeking to downsize. At the same time, many noted that increasing demand for vacation and second homes is placing additional pressure on the local housing market, making it more difficult for year-round residents to find attainable housing. There was broad recognition that the City will need to carefully balance these competing pressures, ensuring that future growth supports housing needs while preserving community character and protecting the interests of local residents.



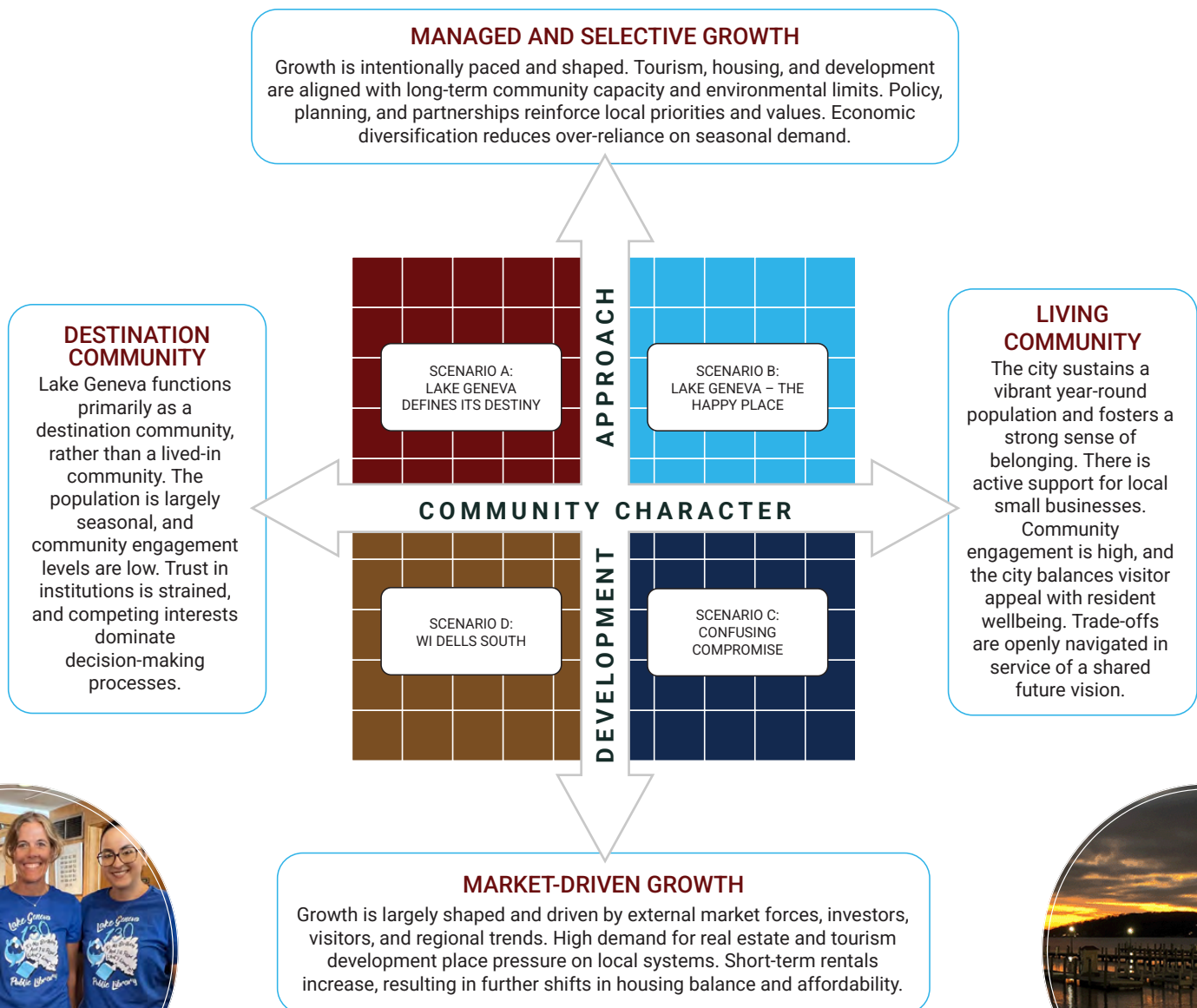
4.0 | CREATING THE SCENARIO FRAMEWORK

4.1 | SCENARIOS OF THE FUTURE – A FRAMEWORK FOR EXPLORATION

The scenarios developed during the scenario planning process at the Think-Tank were used as a framework to discuss future possible outcomes and implications for strategies for the City of Lake Geneva.

The scenario framework built during the Think-Tank created four different future scenarios for 2035, with varying degrees of change and trajectory. The scenarios were created using the scenario matrix framework, which was built around the two macro themes of Development Approach and Community Character. This framework was used through the community engagement work and survey to identify a preferred future and help inform the Strategic Action Plan. For more details on the City of Lake Geneva Strategic Action Plan Think-Tank, please refer to the published in-depth [Think-Tank Report](#).

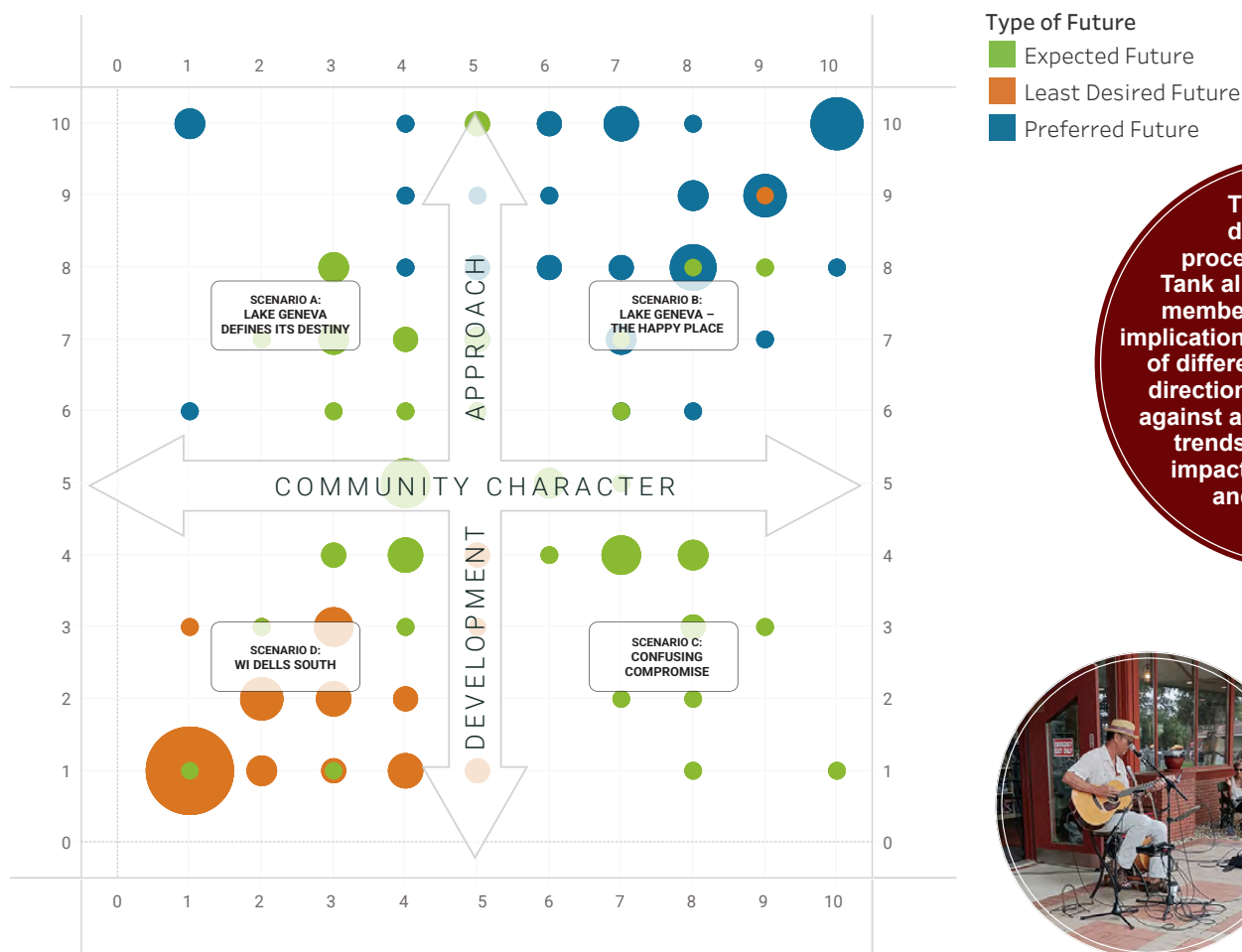
The scenario development at the Think-Tank allowed stakeholders to examine the implications and consequences of different and plausible future directions for Lake Geneva looking out to 2035.



4.2 | IDENTIFYING AND VALIDATING THE PREFERRED FUTURE

The scenario framework was used in multiple ways to explore the concept of the least desirable, expected and preferred futures.

Think-Tank participants and Community Update attendees were asked to plot their least desirable, expected and preferred future for Lake Geneva in 2035 in relation to the scenario matrix using a 100-grid diagram. The results from each participant formed heatmaps that show the preferences by color coding and size of bubble denoting how many people chose each section of the grid. The chart below shows the combined heatmaps from 60 people. For more details on the Lake Geneva Strategic Action Plan Think-Tank, please refer to the [Think-Tank Report](#).



The scenario development process at the Think-Tank allowed community members to examine the implications and consequences of different plausible future directions for Lake Geneva against a backdrop of macro trends and key drivers impacting the City now and looking out to 2035.



Data Insights

- The size of the circle denotes the number of responses in that square of the grid. The larger the circle, the more responses.
- The Least Desirable Future was firmly based in Scenario D – WI Dells South. The bottom left-hand side of this quadrant has the most responses regarding this being the least desirable future for Lake Geneva.
- Throughout the planning process, the majority of participants have identified the upper right quadrant (Scenario B – Lake Geneva – The Happy Place) as the preferred future. The preferred future has been validated in multiple ways through the engagement process to ensure it is reflective of community aspirations.

4.3 | THE PREFERRED FUTURE FOR LAKE GENEVA IN 2035 – ‘LAKE GENEVA – THE HAPPY PLACE’

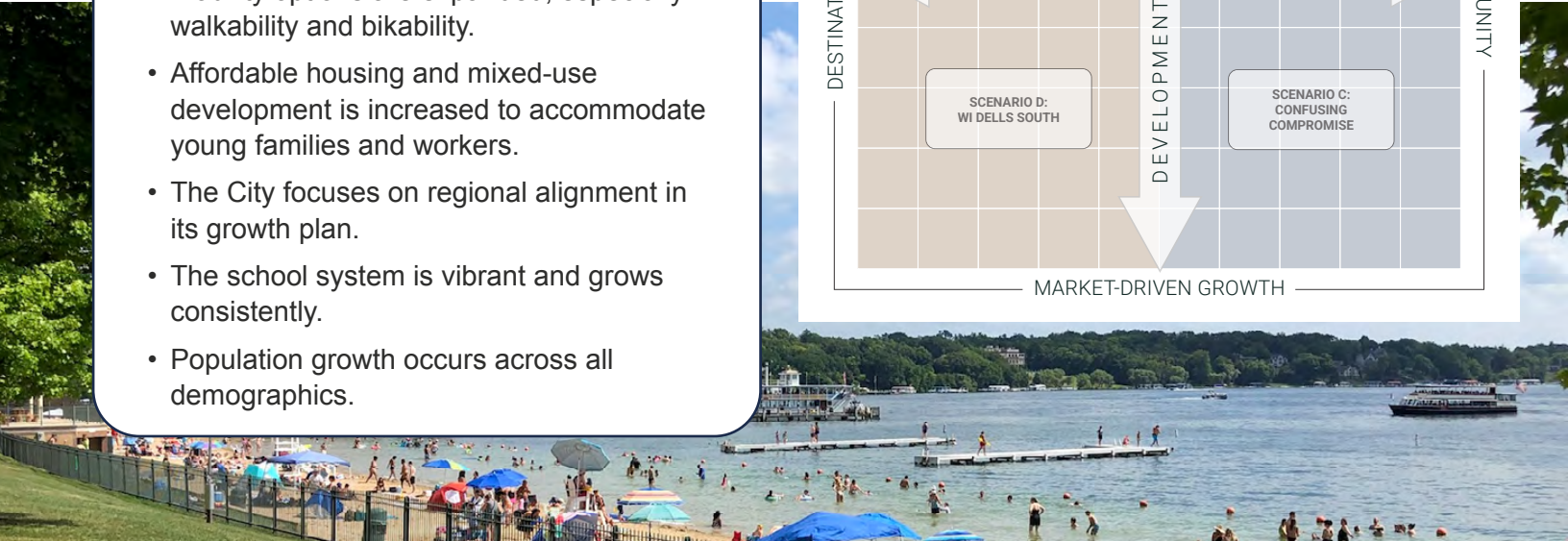
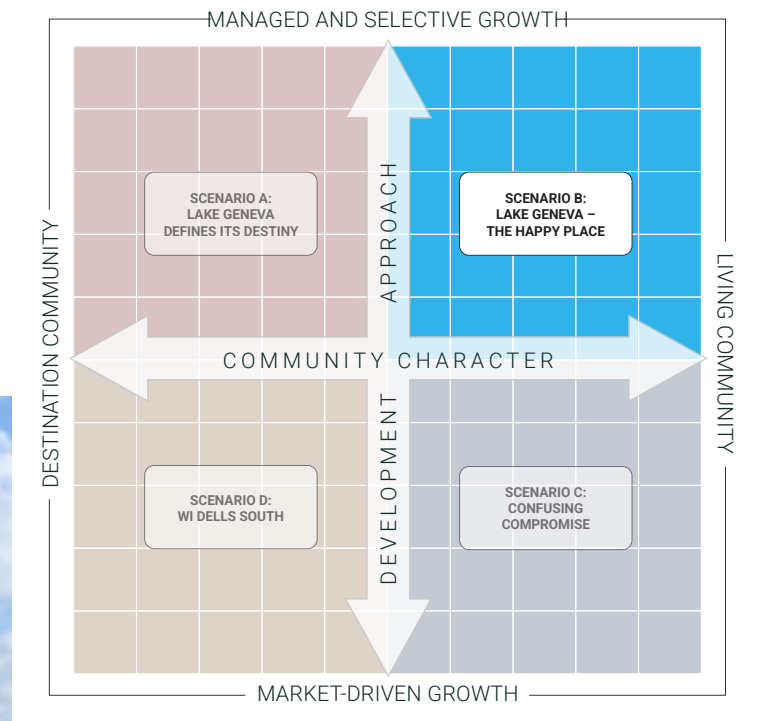
The preferred future generated from the work carried out in the Lake Geneva Think-Tank was Scenario B – Lake Geneva – The Happy Place. This scenario forecasts a future where Lake Geneva sustains a vibrant year-round population that fosters a strong sense of community and shared purpose.

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.

The ‘Lake Geneva – The Happy Place’ scenario conveys a future in which Lake Geneva becomes a model community - successfully balancing people, place, and prosperity while sustaining a high quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

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.



5.0 | STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

The preferred future was used to help define the key strategic focus areas that will make that future a reality. These key focus areas are called the Strategic Pillars.

Each of the Strategic Pillars are supported by a series of key actions that can be achieved in the short to medium term and will produce long-term results. They are intended to produce systemic and catalytic shifts that will drive the future economic growth, community experience, and the reputation and character of Lake Geneva. These actions have been designed to build the future pathway to the preferred future. The timeframe for the Strategic Pillars and Actions was 2030. This creates five years of actions that support the longer 2035 vision established in the Think-Tank process.

The Strategic Pillars are the primary focus areas identified through the community and stakeholder engagement work. Lake Geneva residents and stakeholders helped to shape these focus areas and their supporting actions.





OBJECTIVE:

Create a sustainable housing and demographic mix that supports workforce needs and long-term community vitality tied to economic drivers.

IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Housing emerged as one of the most significant issues throughout the strategic planning process. Community survey respondents consistently expressed concern about housing affordability, the availability of workforce housing, increasing real estate prices, and the impact of short-term rentals on neighborhood character. The Think-Tank identified workforce housing, housing affordability, and demographic shifts as among the most influential drivers shaping Lake Geneva's future. Participants highlighted concerns that young families, workers, and first-time homebuyers are increasingly unable to establish roots within the community. The Existing Conditions Report reinforced these concerns. While approximately 860 housing units were added between 2010 and 2023, housing affordability pressures intensified, with Lake Geneva recording the highest median home values and rental rates among its peer communities. At the same time, the community has experienced a significant increase in median age, creating challenges for workforce attraction, school enrollment, and long-term economic vitality.

Managing residential development is therefore critical to ensuring that Lake Geneva remains a living community rather than becoming primarily a seasonal or retirement destination. Strategic housing decisions over the next five years will influence the community's demographic balance, workforce availability, economic competitiveness, and overall quality of life.



Future Insights

- The preferred future identified through the Think-Tank process, "Lake Geneva – The Happy Place," reflects a community that intentionally manages growth while maintaining a vibrant year-round population. Achieving this future will require a broader range of housing options that meet the needs of young families, workforce residents, retirees, and future generations.
- Across North America, communities like Lake Geneva are facing increasing housing pressures driven by migration patterns, aging populations, and rising construction costs. Communities that proactively plan for diverse housing options and create housing policies aligned with economic needs are generally better positioned to attract workers, support businesses, and maintain community vitality. Residential development in Lake Geneva is not viewed simply as a land use issue, but as a long-term economic and community sustainability strategy.

The Key Action Areas for this pillar have been drawn from the Community Update, Future Summit, Focus Group discussions, and aggregate ideas shared by the community in surveys and workshops.

ACTION 1.1: Collaborate with County to implement a city-wide housing strategy

A comprehensive housing strategy will provide a coordinated framework for addressing current and future housing needs, and help encourage affordable workforce housing, multi-family housing, and missing-middle housing. The strategy should identify housing gaps, establish measurable targets, and align development opportunities with workforce demands. Missing-middle housing formats such as duplexes, triplexes, cottage courts, and townhomes can provide attainable options for workers, young professionals, and aging residents seeking to remain in the community. Collaboration with County partners will be essential to leverage funding opportunities and ensure alignment with broader regional housing initiatives.

ACTION 1.2: Incorporate placemaking and design standards into future residential development standards throughout the City.

Community members consistently expressed the desire to preserve the unique character and charm of Lake Geneva. Future residential growth should therefore reinforce community identity rather than diminish it. Design standards, neighborhood-scale planning, and placemaking principles can help ensure that new development contributes positively to the community while respecting existing neighborhoods. This approach supports growth while maintaining the qualities that residents value most.

ACTION 1.3: Refine and strengthen zoning ordinances and development policies

Current and future housing needs require greater flexibility within zoning regulations while maintaining community standards. Updating zoning policies can create opportunities for a wider range of housing types, support infill development, and remove barriers to workforce housing. Modernized development policies will help align future residential growth with community goals while providing clarity and predictability for residents, developers, and investors.

ACTION 1.4: Advocate for greater local control of short-term rentals and housing regulations

The rise of short-term rentals was repeatedly identified during community engagement as a factor influencing housing availability and neighborhood dynamics. Working with State and regional partners to pursue greater local authority would allow Lake Geneva to better balance tourism accommodations with residential housing needs. Enhanced local flexibility could help preserve neighborhood character, support workforce housing objectives, and maintain a healthy balance between visitor and resident interests.

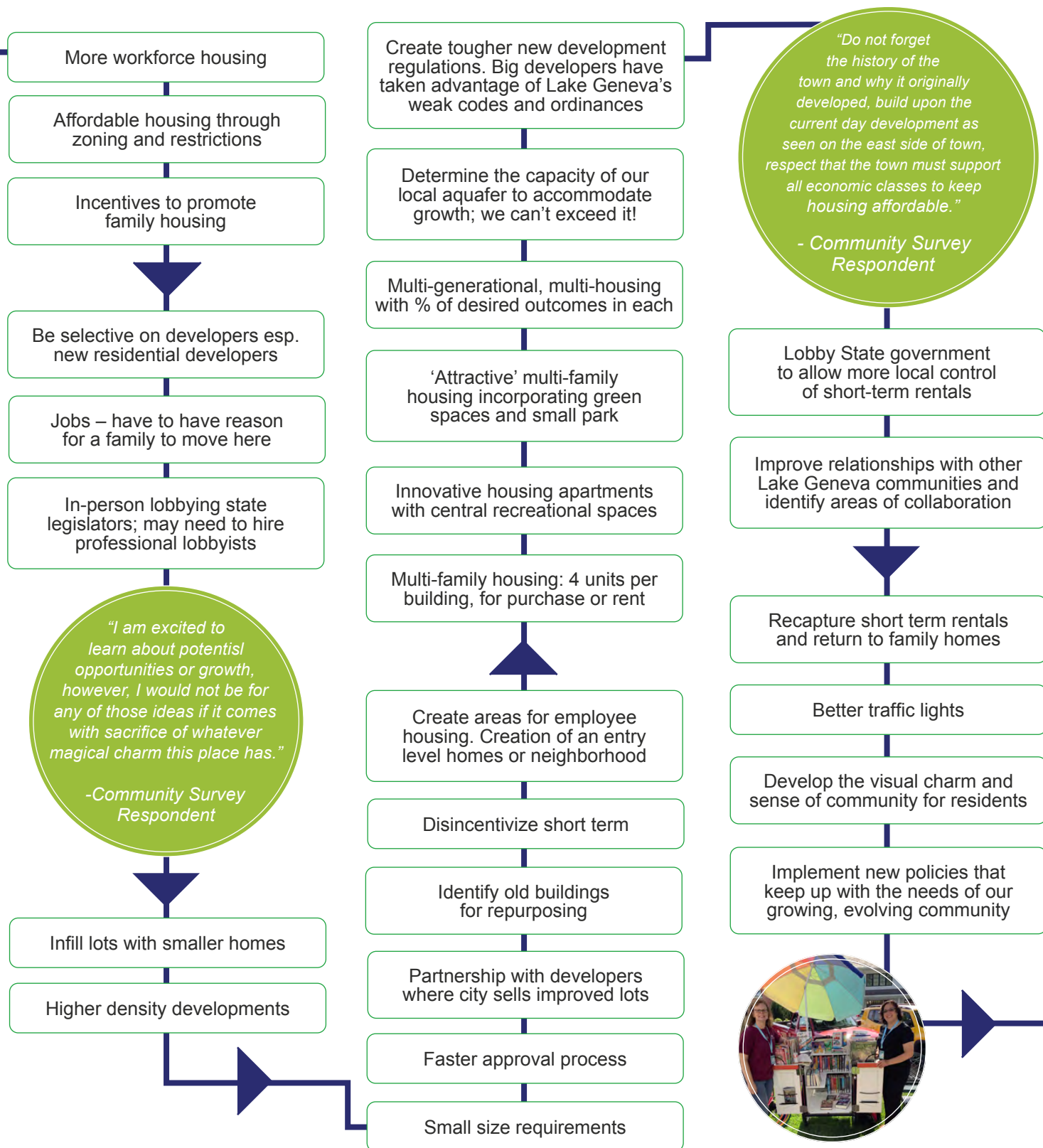
Aspirational Strategic Outcomes

- By 2035, Lake Geneva will have a more balanced and sustainable housing ecosystem that supports residents at all life stages. A broader mix of housing options will allow young professionals, workforce employees, families, and active retirees to live within the community, strengthening school enrollment, supporting local businesses, and improving workforce availability.
- Residential growth will be intentional and aligned with community character, ensuring that development enhances rather than diminishes the qualities that residents value most. The outcome will be a stronger year-round population base that contributes to economic vitality, community stability, and long-term sustainability.

5.1.2 | IDEAS FROM THE COMMUNITY

Pillar 1 Managing Residential Development

The following are ideas for actions that emerged during the engagement process. Community Survey respondents and stakeholders were asked about their aspirations for the future of Lake Geneva, and Focus Group participants and Future Summit participants were asked for specific ideas on actions that could be taken to achieve the preferred future, 'Lake Geneva – The Happy Place'. Below are their original ideas.



5.2 | PILLAR 2: SUPPORTING STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Pillar 2
Supporting
Strategic
Economic
Diversification

OBJECTIVE:

Diversify the local economic drivers, build regional partnerships, attract innovation, and supporting local and downtown business.

IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTING STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Lake Geneva benefits from a strong tourism economy; however, the community engagement process revealed widespread recognition that overreliance on a single economic sector creates vulnerability.

Survey participants, Think-Tank attendees, and focus group participants consistently emphasized the importance of diversifying economic drivers, supporting entrepreneurship, and creating more year-round economic opportunities. The Existing Conditions Report highlighted that 'accommodation and food services' account for a significantly larger share of employment than in peer communities. While tourism remains a critical economic asset, participants expressed concern about seasonal fluctuations, workforce challenges, and the need for more career-oriented employment opportunities. Strategic economic diversification can help strengthen economic resilience, attract talent, support local businesses, and provide greater stability during economic disruptions.



Future Insights

- The future competitiveness of smaller seasonal destination communities increasingly depends on their ability to balance tourism with innovation, entrepreneurship, remote work opportunities, and emerging industries. Advances in technology, changing workforce expectations, and the growth of hybrid work models are creating new opportunities for communities like Lake Geneva to attract knowledge-based workers and small business entrepreneurs.
- The preferred future identified during the Think-Tank envisioned a more resilient economy with a stronger year-round economic base. Diversification does not mean reducing tourism; rather, it means building additional economic strengths that complement tourism while creating broader opportunities for residents and businesses.

The Key Action Areas for this pillar have been drawn from the Community Update, Future Summit, Focus Group discussions, and aggregate ideas shared by the community in surveys and workshops.

ACTION 2.1: Create a targeted economic diversification strategy

A targeted strategy should identify emerging sectors, local strengths, and opportunities for year-round economic activity. The strategy should focus on enhancing economic resilience while building on existing assets. By diversifying economic drivers, Lake Geneva can reduce vulnerability to seasonal fluctuations and create a more stable economic environment for residents and businesses.

ACTION 2.2: Develop more small business-friendly policies and processes

Small businesses contribute significantly to Lake Geneva's unique character and economic vitality. Streamlining regulations, improving permitting processes, supporting business incubation efforts, and exploring innovative funding mechanisms can encourage entrepreneurship and strengthen the local business ecosystem. Supporting small businesses also helps maintain the distinct community identity that residents and visitors value.

ACTION 2.3: Support county and regional workforce development initiatives

Workforce shortages were repeatedly identified as a challenge throughout the planning process. Strengthening partnerships with educational institutions, employers, workforce organizations, and regional economic development agencies can improve workforce attraction and retention. These efforts will support local employers while helping attract younger workers and families to the community.

ACTION 2.4: Evaluate feasibility of a co-working and innovation hub

Flexible work environments and entrepreneurship centers are increasingly important economic development tools. A co-working and innovation hub could provide space for startups, remote workers, networking activities, training opportunities, and business incubation. Such a facility would help position Lake Geneva as a destination for innovation while supporting local economic diversification goals.



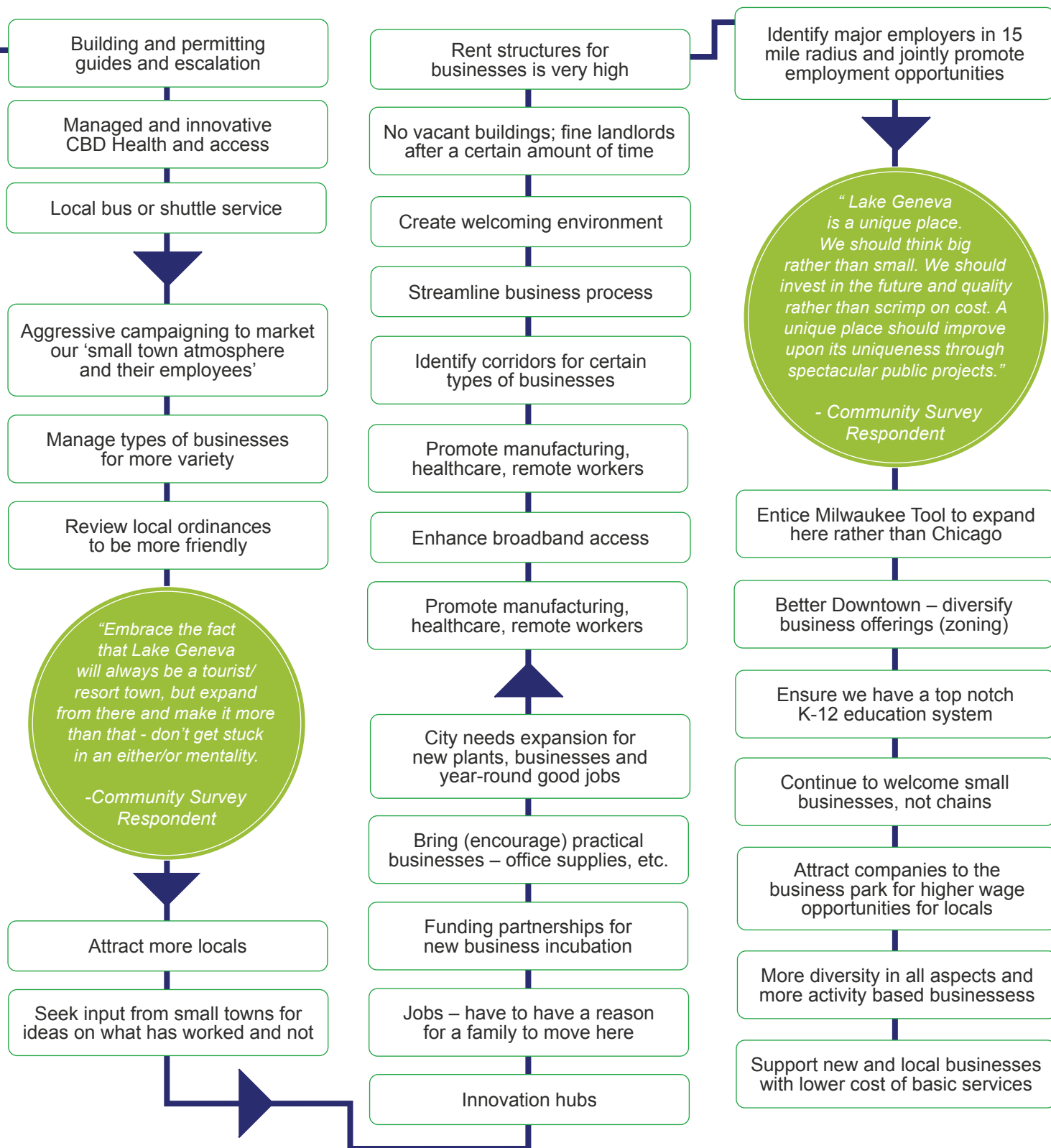
Aspirational Strategic Outcomes

- By 2035, Lake Geneva will have a more resilient and diversified economy that complements its tourism strengths while reducing dependence on seasonal economic activity. New business opportunities, entrepreneurship, innovation, and workforce development initiatives will expand economic options for residents and create greater year-round stability.
- A thriving small business environment, supported by strong regional partnerships and a culture of innovation, will strengthen local prosperity while preserving the unique identity and character of the community. Economic growth will be more balanced, adaptive, and capable of responding to future changes and opportunities.

5.2.3 | IDEAS FROM THE COMMUNITY

Pillar 2 Supporting Strategic Economic Diversification

The following are ideas for actions that emerged during the engagement process. Community Survey respondents and stakeholders were asked about their aspirations for the future of Lake Geneva, and Focus Group participants and Future Summit participants were asked for specific ideas on actions that could be taken to achieve the preferred future, 'Lake Geneva – The Happy Place'. Below are their original ideas.



5.3 | PILLAR 3: BALANCING THE IMPACT OF THE TOURISM ECONOMY

Pillar 3
Balancing the
Impact of the
Tourism
Economy

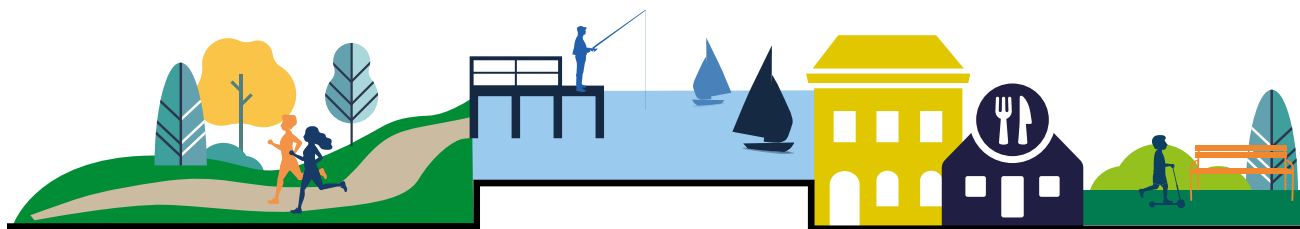
OBJECTIVE:

Optimize the balance between a vibrant tourism economy and the needs of year-round residents

IMPORTANCE OF BALANCING THE IMPACT OF THE TOURISM ECONOMY

Throughout the strategic planning process, community members consistently recognized the significant benefits tourism brings to the local economy, including employment opportunities, visitor spending, business growth, and tax revenue.

However, the engagement process also revealed a strong desire to better manage the impacts of tourism growth and ensure that tourism continues to enhance, rather than diminish, community quality of life. The Think-Tank identified tourism management as one of the defining issues shaping Lake Geneva's future. In fact, the distinction between the preferred future ("Lake Geneva – The Happy Place") and the least desirable future ("WI Dells South") largely centered on how tourism growth is managed. Participants expressed concern about congestion, parking shortages, traffic impacts, pressure on infrastructure, and the potential erosion of community character if tourism growth becomes unmanaged. The Existing Conditions Report further demonstrated tourism's importance, noting that visitor spending exceeded \$549 million in 2024 and that tourism-related industries account for a larger share of employment than in peer communities. This pillar is therefore focused on achieving a balance between maintaining a thriving tourism economy while preserving the livability, identity, and quality of life that make Lake Geneva an attractive destination in the first place.



Future Insights

- Destination communities across North America are increasingly shifting from growth-focused tourism strategies toward destination management models. These approaches emphasize quality over quantity, focusing on visitor experience, longer stays, economic value, and sustainable growth rather than simply increasing visitor numbers.
- The preferred future identified through the Think-Tank process reflects this emerging model. Participants envisioned a community where tourism remains a vital part of the economy but is intentionally managed in ways that support residents, businesses, and environmental stewardship. Future success will depend on balancing visitor needs with resident priorities while ensuring that investments in tourism also strengthen community assets and infrastructure.

The Key Action Areas for this pillar have been drawn from the Community Update, Future Summit, Focus Group discussions, and aggregate ideas shared by the community in surveys and workshops.

ACTION 3.1: Transition towards a sustainable tourism destination management approach.

Lake Geneva has the opportunity to position itself as a model for sustainable destination management. This collaborative approach shifts focus from being an open tourism market that maximizes visitor volume to maximizing community benefit and visitor value. Destination management strategies should emphasize longer visitor stays, year-round visitation, quality experiences, and alignment with community priorities. This transition can help reduce pressures associated with peak tourism periods while maintaining strong economic outcomes.

ACTION 3.2: Support tourism events that serve both locals and visitors.

Community members expressed strong support for events that strengthen local quality of life while also attracting visitors. Activities such as arts festivals, outdoor recreation events, bike-tourism, family-focused programming, and cultural celebrations can create shared experiences that benefit residents and visitors alike. Establishing community impact measures for City-supported events will help ensure that public investments align with broader community goals.



ACTION 3.3: Develop and implement traffic mitigation plans.

Traffic congestion was repeatedly identified as one of the most visible challenges associated with tourism growth. Implementing proactive traffic management strategies, including support for Highway 50 mitigation efforts and other transportation improvements, will help improve mobility and visitor experiences while reducing frustrations for residents. Long-term transportation planning should focus on improving efficiency during peak visitation periods while supporting broader community mobility objectives.

ACTION 3.4: Create comprehensive parking and mobility strategy.

Create comprehensive parking and mobility strategy to alleviate downtown congestion through approaches such as construction of a parking structure, shuttles and smart parking systems.

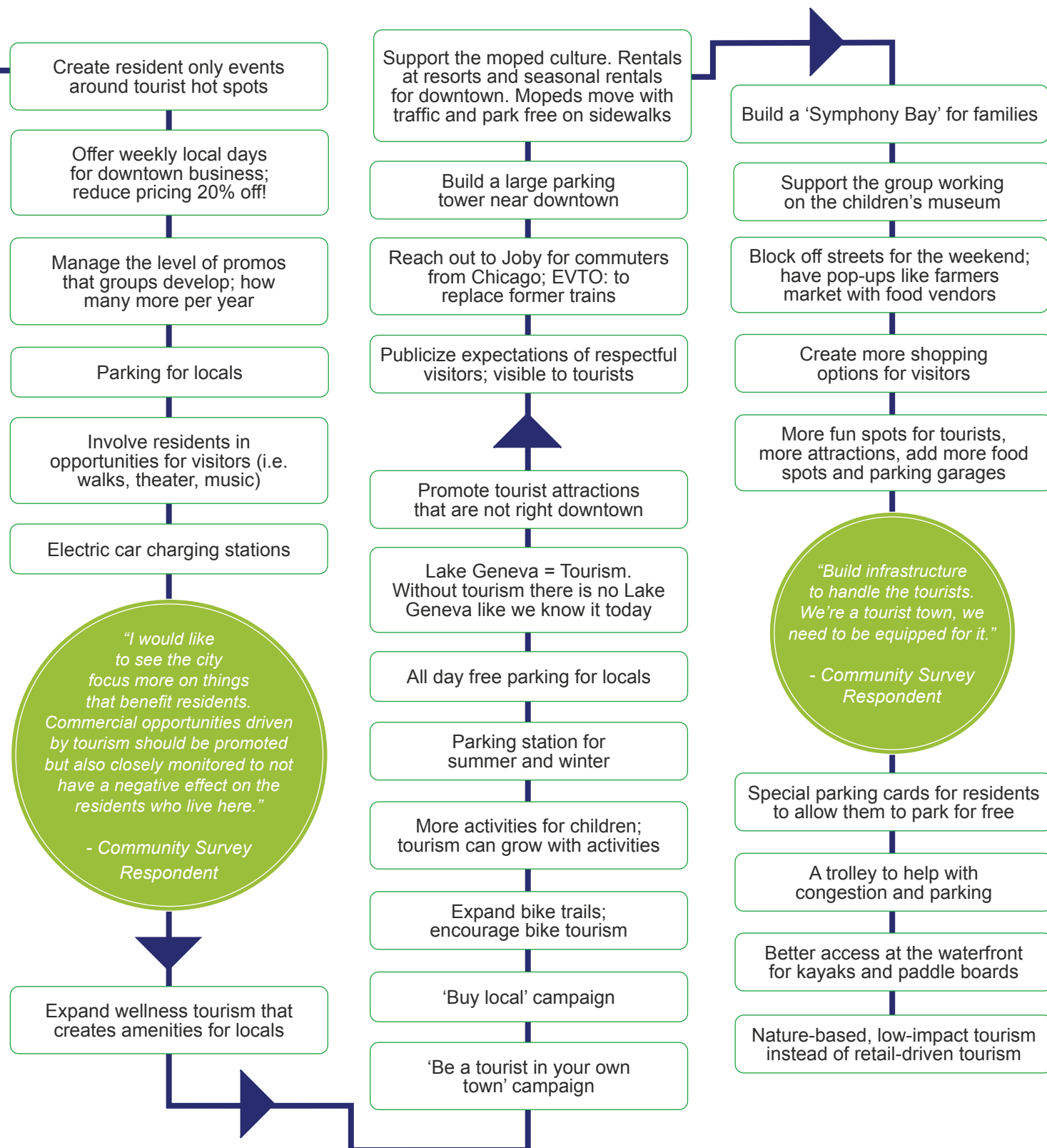
Aspirational Strategic Outcomes

- By 2035, Lake Geneva will be recognized as a model destination community that successfully balances visitor experiences with resident quality of life. Tourism will continue to serve as a critical economic driver, but growth will be managed through intentional destination management strategies that prioritize sustainability, community benefit, and long-term value creation.
- Improved mobility, transportation, and visitor management systems will reduce congestion and enhance experiences for both residents and visitors. The outcome will be a tourism economy that strengthens community prosperity while preserving the distinctive character, charm, and livability of Lake Geneva.

5.3.2 | IDEAS FROM THE COMMUNITY



The following are ideas for actions that emerged during the engagement process. Community Survey respondents and stakeholders were asked about their aspirations for the future of Lake Geneva, and Focus Group participants and Future Summit participants were asked for specific ideas on actions that could be taken to achieve the preferred future, 'Lake Geneva – The Happy Place'. Below are their original ideas.



5.4 | PILLAR 4: ELEVATING THE CULTURE OF PRESERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP

Pillar 4
Elevating the
Culture of
Preservation
& Stewardship

OBJECTIVE:

Protect and enhance the core community assets of the lake, green spaces and historic neighborhoods

IMPORTANCE OF ELEVATING THE CULTURE OF PRESERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP

The preservation of Lake Geneva's natural, environmental, and historic assets emerged as one of the strongest and most consistent themes throughout the strategic planning process.

Community survey participants repeatedly identified the lake, natural environment, parks, open spaces, and historic character as the defining features that make Lake Geneva unique. The Think-Tank similarly identified environmental stewardship, natural resource management, and preservation of community character as critical drivers influencing the future of the City. The Existing Conditions Report and community engagement activities highlighted the reality that future growth and development will place increasing demands on environmental systems, infrastructure, and community assets. Participants consistently expressed the belief that preserving the lake, green spaces, and historic neighborhoods is essential not only for environmental reasons but also for maintaining economic vitality, tourism appeal, and community identity. The preferred future envisions a community where growth and preservation work together rather than compete. Stewardship is therefore not simply about protecting assets; it is about actively investing in the long-term health, resilience, and attractiveness of the community.



Future Insights

- Across the country, tourism dependent communities with strong environmental and preservation identities are increasingly using stewardship as a competitive advantage. Residents, visitors, businesses, and investors are placing greater value on environmental quality, sustainability practices, walkable neighborhoods, and access to natural amenities.
- Lake Geneva's lakefront, parks, open spaces, and historic character represent assets that cannot easily be replicated. The future value of these assets will continue to increase as environmental quality and authenticity become more important factors in community competitiveness. Communities that proactively invest in preservation today are likely to experience stronger economic, environmental, and social outcomes in the future.

The Key Action Areas for this pillar have been drawn from the Community Update, Future Summit, Focus Group discussions, and aggregate ideas shared by the community in surveys and workshops.

ACTION 4.1: Expand and support environmental and sustainability initiatives.

Protecting the lake, watershed, green spaces, beaches, and aquifer requires ongoing commitment and investment. Expanding sustainability initiatives and policies can help improve water quality, reduce environmental risks, increase resilience to changing climate conditions, and preserve natural resources and green spaces for future generations. These efforts should be integrated into broader planning, development, and infrastructure decisions.

ACTION 4.2: Engage the community in local stewardship and preservation activities.

One of the strongest messages from the engagement process was the community's willingness to become active participants in protecting local assets. Community clean-up events, native planting initiatives, environmental education programs, and volunteer stewardship opportunities provide meaningful ways for residents to contribute. These activities also strengthen community pride and create stronger connections between residents and the places they value.

ACTION 4.3: Boost fundraising and grant development capabilities.

Many preservation and stewardship projects require resources beyond what local budgets can provide. Developing stronger grant-writing capacity, cultivating partnerships, and pursuing external funding opportunities can significantly expand the City's ability to implement environmental and preservation initiatives. Increased fundraising capacity can accelerate projects while reducing financial pressures on local taxpayers.



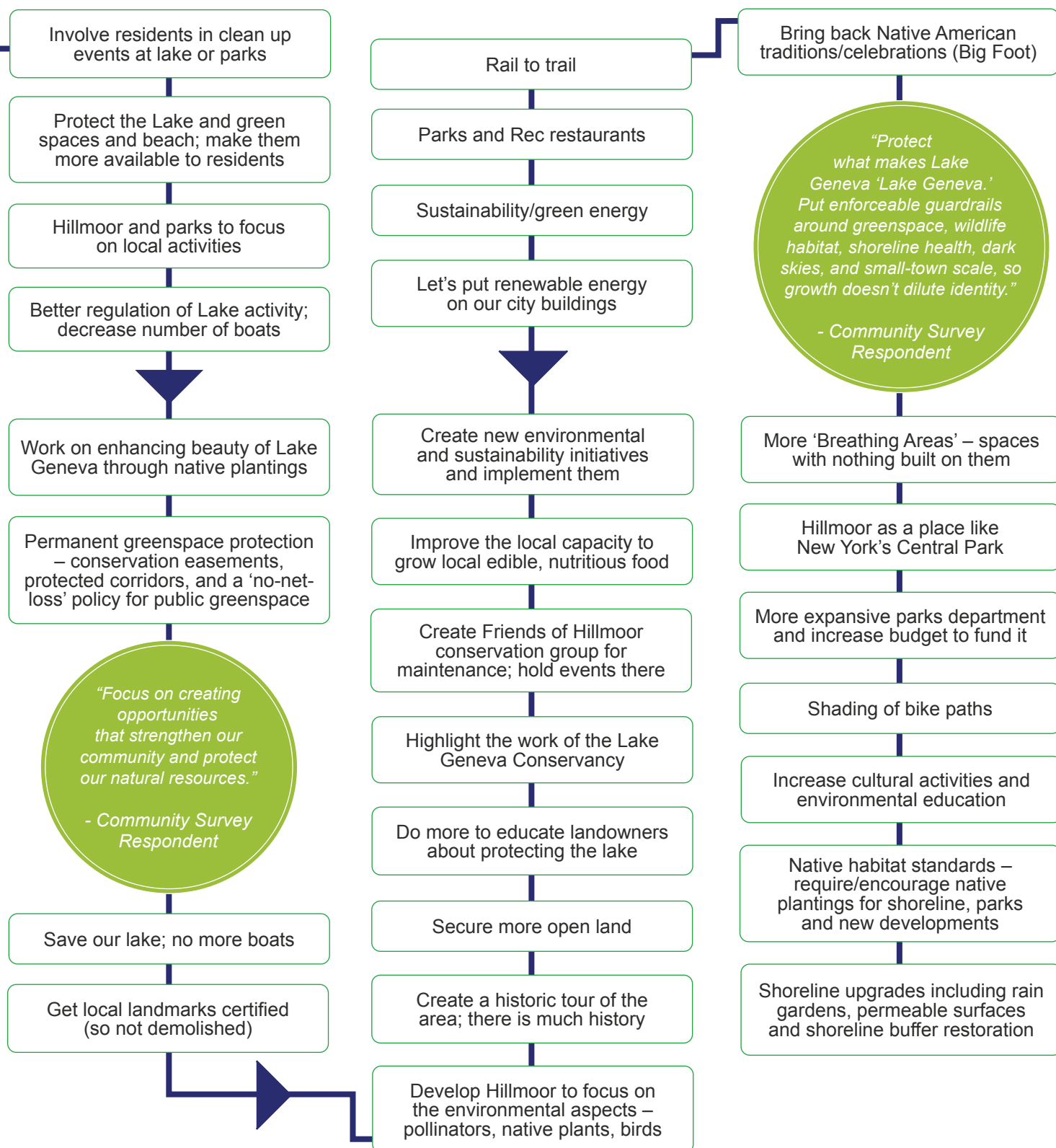
Aspirational Strategic Outcomes

- By 2035, Lake Geneva will strengthen its reputation as a community that values and actively protects its natural and cultural assets. The lake, green spaces, historic neighborhoods, and environmental resources will remain defining features of the community and continue to support both resident wellbeing and economic success.
- Through community stewardship, strategic investments, and proactive preservation initiatives, Lake Geneva will demonstrate how growth and conservation can work together to create a sustainable future. The result will be a healthier environment, stronger community pride, and enhanced resilience for future generations.

5.4.2 | IDEAS FROM THE COMMUNITY



The following are ideas for actions that emerged during the engagement process. Community Survey respondents and stakeholders were asked about their aspirations for the future of Lake Geneva, and Focus Group participants and Future Summit participants were asked for specific ideas on actions that could be taken to achieve the preferred future, 'Lake Geneva – The Happy Place'. Below are their original ideas.



5.5 | PILLAR 5: ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIVABILITY AND CONNECTION

Pillar 5
Enhancing
Community
Livability and
Connection

OBJECTIVE:

Build on the community livability, connectivity and communication, and sense of belonging

IMPORTANCE OF ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIVABILITY AND CONNECTION

Throughout the engagement process, residents consistently emphasized the importance of maintaining Lake Geneva as a community where people feel connected, informed, engaged, and proud to live.

While survey results showed strong satisfaction with living in Lake Geneva, they also revealed concerns regarding communication, community cohesion, gathering spaces, transportation connectivity, and opportunities for community engagement. The Think-Tank identified community engagement, communication, social infrastructure, and sense of community as critical drivers shaping future success. The Existing Conditions Report highlighted several factors influencing livability, including aging demographics, workforce challenges, transportation limitations, and disparities in access to services. Participants repeatedly emphasized that creating a stronger sense of belonging and improving opportunities for connection are essential to sustaining a healthy year-round community. The preferred future identified through the planning process describes a vibrant living community characterized by strong social connections, active community participation, and a shared sense of purpose. This pillar directly supports that aspiration.



Future Insights

- Research increasingly shows that successful communities are defined not only by economic performance but also by social capital, community trust, and quality of life. Communities with strong social networks, active public spaces, and effective communication systems tend to be more resilient, adaptable, and attractive to residents and businesses.
- As society becomes increasingly digital and fragmented, the importance of physical gathering spaces, civic participation, and community connection continues to grow. Future competitiveness will increasingly depend on a community's ability to foster belonging, engagement, and quality experiences for residents of all ages.

The Key Action Areas for this pillar have been drawn from the Community Update, Future Summit, Focus Group discussions, and aggregate ideas shared by the community in surveys and workshops.

ACTION 5.1: Expand community programming in the areas of arts, recreation and culture.

Community programming creates opportunities for residents to connect, celebrate shared identity, and participate in community life. Expanding arts, cultural, recreational, and educational offerings can strengthen community cohesion while enhancing quality of life. These activities also support tourism, economic vitality, and resident wellbeing.

ACTION 5.2: Invest in a structured public information system.

A recurring theme throughout engagement activities was the desire for stronger communication and transparency. A modern public information system can improve awareness of City initiatives, encourage participation, build trust, and ensure residents remain informed about decisions affecting the community. Effective communication strengthens relationships between residents and local government.

ACTION 5.3: Improve walkability, bikability and connectivity.

Transportation and mobility challenges extend beyond vehicle traffic. Residents identified the need for safer pedestrian routes, improved bicycle infrastructure, and stronger connections between neighborhoods and destinations. Investments in active transportation infrastructure support public health, environmental sustainability, community accessibility, and overall livability.

ACTION 5.4: Invest in city beautification, placemaking, parks and gathering spaces.

Community members consistently highlighted the importance of public spaces that bring people together. Investments in parks, plazas, public gathering areas, beautification projects, and neighborhood identity initiatives can strengthen community pride while creating opportunities for social interaction. These investments contribute directly to the quality-of-life outcomes that residents identified as priorities throughout the planning process.



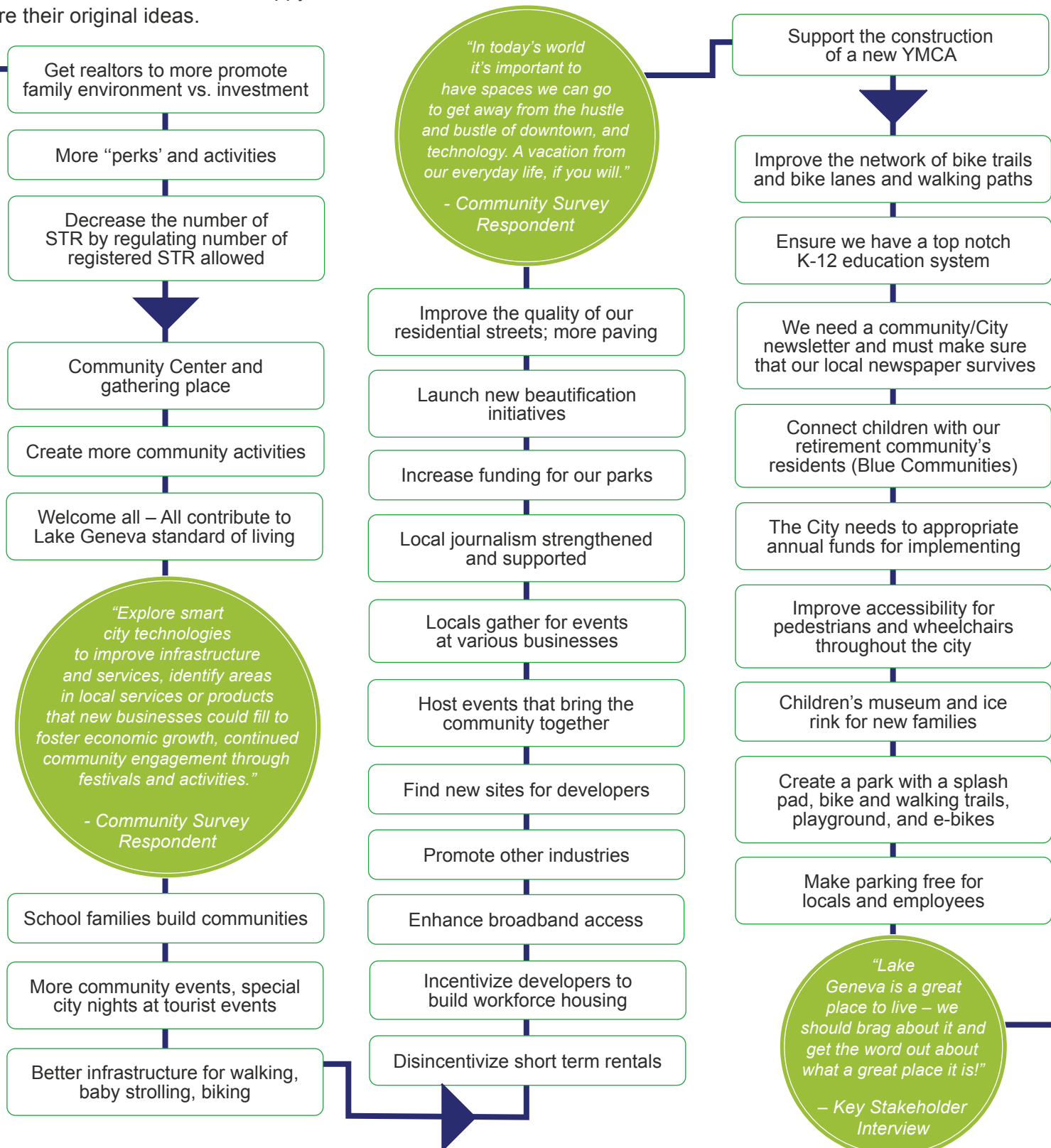
Aspirational Strategic Outcomes

- By 2035, Lake Geneva will be an even more connected, engaged, and welcoming community where residents feel informed, involved, and invested in the future. Enhanced communication systems, expanded community programming, improved connectivity, and high-quality public spaces will strengthen social bonds and foster a stronger sense of belonging.
- Residents of all ages will have greater opportunities to participate in community life, creating a vibrant year-round culture that supports wellbeing, civic engagement, and community resilience. The outcome will be a stronger social fabric that underpins the long-term success of the City.

5.5.2 | IDEAS FROM THE COMMUNITY



The following are ideas for actions that emerged during the engagement process. Community Survey respondents and stakeholders were asked about their aspirations for the future of Lake Geneva, and Focus Group participants and Future Summit participants were asked for specific ideas on actions that could be taken to achieve the preferred future, 'Lake Geneva – The Happy Place'. Below are their original ideas.



5.6 | PILLAR 6: CREATING A BALANCED COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHIC

Pillar 6
Creating a
Balanced
Community
Demographic

OBJECTIVE:

Attract and retain year-round residents and school aged families, as well as active retirees.

IMPORTANCE OF CREATING A BALANCED COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHIC

One of the most significant findings from both the Existing Conditions Report and community engagement process was the demographic transformation occurring within Lake Geneva.

The community is experiencing population growth alongside a substantial increase in median age. Residents over the age of 50 now represent nearly half of the population, while the proportion of younger residents and families has declined. Concerns regarding declining school enrollment, workforce availability, housing affordability, and long-term community sustainability were frequently raised throughout the planning process. Think-Tank participants identified demographic change as one of the most influential drivers shaping the future of Lake Geneva. Community members recognized the importance of attracting and retaining families, young professionals, workforce residents, and entrepreneurs while continuing to welcome active retirees. Participants emphasized that a healthy community requires demographic balance and opportunities for residents across all stages of life. This pillar focuses on ensuring that Lake Geneva remains a vibrant, intergenerational community capable of sustaining schools, businesses, civic organizations, and community life well into the future.



Future Insights

- Many destination communities throughout the United States face similar demographic challenges. Rising housing costs, aging populations, and workforce shortages are placing increasing pressure on community sustainability. Communities that successfully attract and retain younger residents tend to demonstrate stronger economic resilience, healthier labor markets, and greater long-term stability.
- The preferred future identified through the Think-Tank process envisioned Lake Geneva as a thriving year-round community with strong schools, active neighborhoods, and a diverse mix of residents. Achieving this future will require coordinated efforts across housing, economic development, community engagement, and workforce initiatives.

5.6.1 | KEY ACTION AREAS

The Key Action Areas for this pillar have been drawn from the Community Update, Future Summit, Focus Group discussions, and aggregate ideas shared by the community in surveys

Pillar 6
Creating a
Balanced
Community
Demographic

ACTION 6.1: Promote Lake Geneva as a year-round community.

The City has an opportunity to expand its identity beyond tourism and retirement appeal by promoting itself as a desirable place to live, work, raise a family, and build a career. Marketing and community branding efforts should emphasize quality of life, educational opportunities, community amenities, natural assets, and economic opportunities. Positioning Lake Geneva as a year-round community can help attract new residents who contribute to long-term community vitality.

ACTION 6.2: Improve economic opportunities for young people and families.

Economic opportunity is one of the most important factors influencing where people choose to live. Partnerships with employers, educational institutions, workforce organizations, and regional economic development agencies can help create pathways for workforce attraction and retention. These efforts support local businesses while strengthening the community's ability to attract younger residents and working families.

ACTION 6.3: Strengthen community partnerships and volunteer initiatives.

Strong communities are built through relationships, participation, and civic engagement. Supporting volunteerism, community organizations, family-oriented events, and local partnerships can strengthen social connections while creating an environment that attracts and retains residents. These efforts

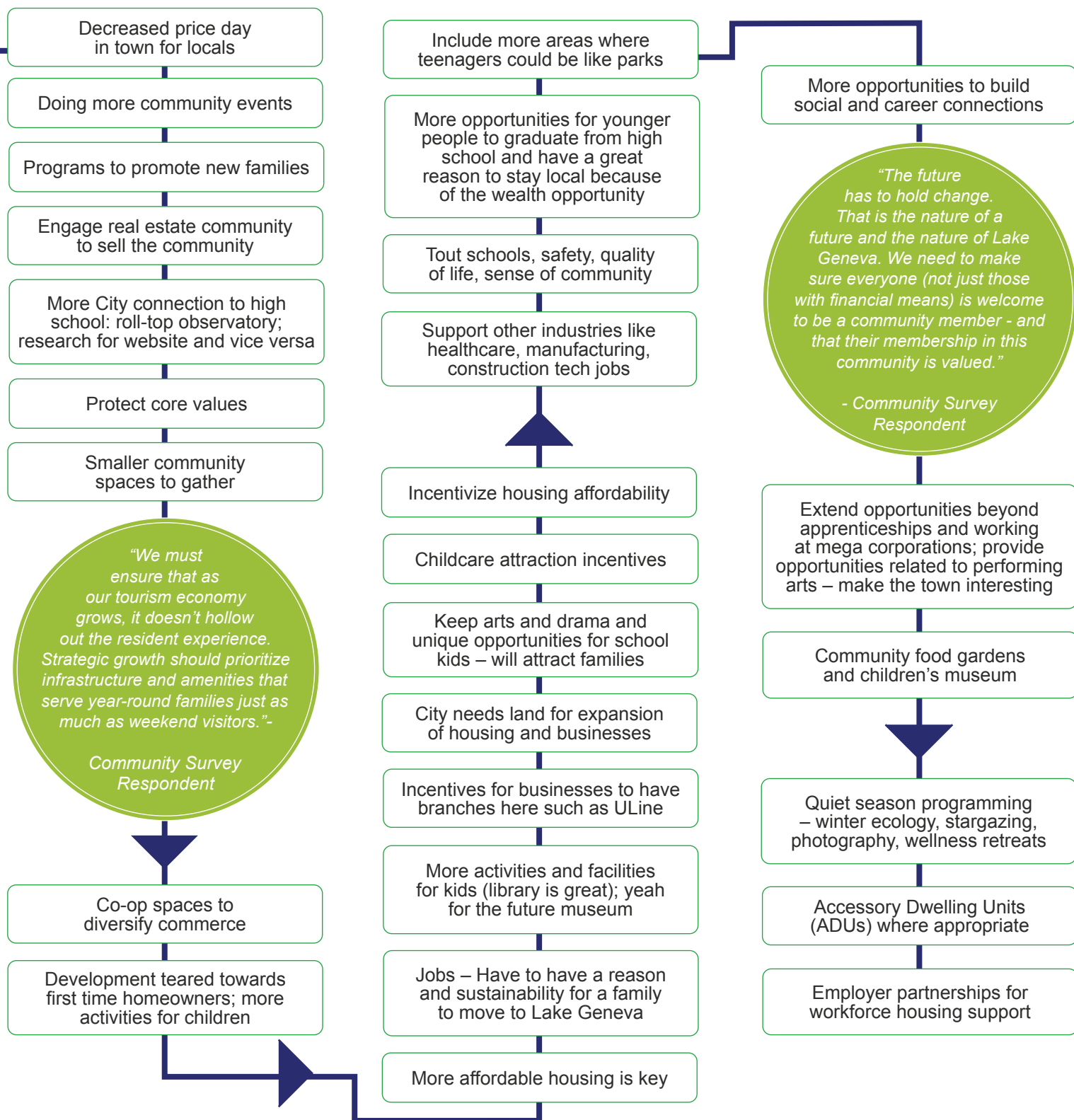


- By 2035, Lake Geneva will have achieved a healthier demographic balance that supports workforce needs, educational vitality, economic competitiveness, and community sustainability. The community will attract and retain families, young professionals, entrepreneurs, and active retirees, creating a vibrant multi-generational population.
- Increased economic opportunity, improved housing choices, and stronger community connections will make Lake Geneva an attractive place to live, work, and raise a family. The result will be a thriving year-round community with the human capital, leadership, and social capacity needed to support future success.

5.6.2 | IDEAS FROM THE COMMUNITY

The following are ideas for actions that emerged during the engagement process. Community Survey respondents and stakeholders were asked about their aspirations for the future of Lake Geneva, and Focus Group participants and Future Summit participants were asked for specific ideas on actions that could be taken to achieve the preferred future, 'Lake Geneva – The Happy Place'. Below are their original ideas.

Pillar 6
Creating a
Balanced
Community
Demographic

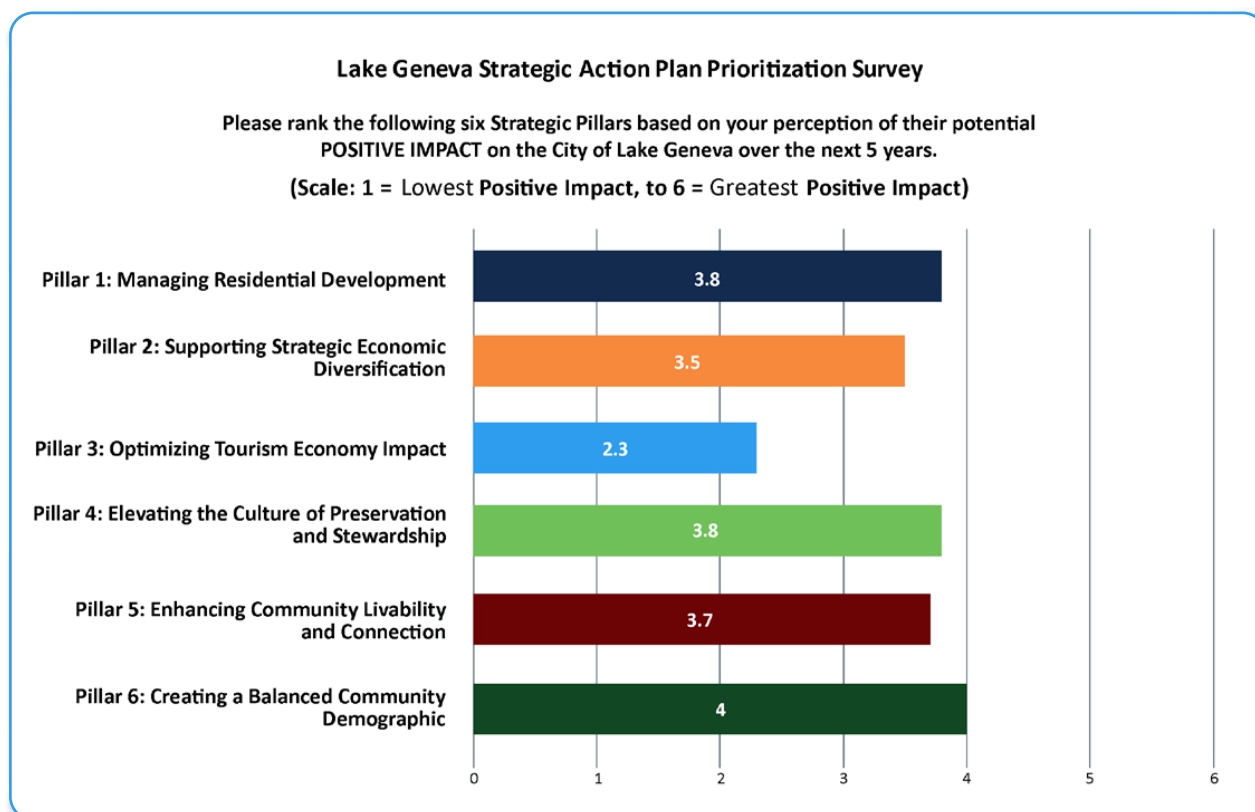


6.0 | DYNAMIC SYSTEMS-THINKING APPROACH

The framework for action developed through the strategic planning process has identified a set of six key Strategic Pillars that will help the City of Lake Geneva pivot its trajectory towards the 'Lake Geneva – The Happy Place' scenario. This framework is the culmination of engagement and input via survey, in-person events and deliberation by the focus groups. The resulting overall framework creates the basis of the roadmap to the future and the guiding vision that will inform future planning efforts by the City of Lake Geneva.



Ranking of pillars based on their potential positive impact on Lake Geneva over the next five years. Scale: 1 = Lowest Impact, to 6 = Highest Impact



7.0 | TURNING STRATEGY INTO ACTION

The Strategic Action Plan establishes a long-term direction for Lake Geneva and identifies six Strategic Pillars that will help guide decision-making, investments, partnerships, and community priorities over the coming years. While the Strategic Pillars identify what the community wants to achieve, successful implementation will depend on the City's ability to align governance, operations, resources, and partnerships to deliver meaningful outcomes.

- **Governance as a Catalyst** - The City's governance structure should serve as a facilitating framework that helps coordinate activities across departments, align resources, remove barriers to implementation, and maintain focus on long-term outcomes. This may require better aligning committees to address priorities of the Strategic Action Plan.
- **Operational Excellence and Modern Governance** - The City should continue to modernize operational systems, improve service delivery, and strengthen organizational effectiveness. This includes leveraging technology and data systems, improving transparency and public communications, modernizing policy development processes, and ensuring staff capacity aligns with strategic priorities.
- **Fiscal Sustainability and Resource Alignment** - Achieving the aspirations outlined in this Strategic Action Plan will require careful alignment of financial resources with community priorities. The City should continue to strengthen long-term financial planning by linking operating budgets, capital investments and improvement plans, infrastructure priorities, and external funding opportunities to the Strategic Pillars.
- **Leadership, Collaboration and Community Partnerships** - Many of the issues identified through this planning process cannot be solved by the City acting alone. Implementation will require a collaborative approach that engages regional organizations, educational institutions, business leaders, County, tourism partners, community organizations, and residents. The City can play an important convening role by bringing stakeholders together around shared priorities, facilitating dialogue, and helping coordinate action.
- **Accountability and Measuring Progress** - To maintain momentum and build public confidence, implementation should be supported by a clear accountability framework. The City should establish performance measures and progress indicators that align with each Strategic Pillar and regularly communicate progress to residents.

The Strategic Action Plan should be viewed as a living framework that evolves over time while maintaining focus on the long-term vision established through the community engagement process.

Future Governance Insights

- From a Governance perspective, it is recommended that Council restructure the length of Alder terms. The norm is trending more long-year term, to provide more continuity and stability.
- This work could also include reassessing the form of government, and consideration of moving to a Council – Manager form of Government.
- Continue the transition to an appointed City Attorney rather than an elected position.

8.0 | PRIORITIZATION OF ACTIONS

Prioritization of Actions – All Data

The 22 actions below were prioritized against ‘Relative Importance of Actions,’ ‘Urgency in Implementing the Actions,’ ‘Boldness in Implementing the Actions,’ and ‘Relative Return on Investment of Each Action.’ The darker the color, the higher the average score. This provides a way to sort the highest priority actions. The Prioritization Survey was taken by City Staff and all Common Council Members. Scale: Low (0-6.9), Medium (7.0-7.9), High (8.0-10.0), (* = Priority Action)

Pillar	Action	Importance	Urgency	Boldness	Investment	
Pillar 1: Managing Residential Development	1.1 Collaborate with the County to implement a city-wide housing strategy.	8.1	7.6	7.3	6.9	*
	1.2 Incorporate placemaking and design standards into future residential development.	7.7	6.8	7.2	6.5	
	1.3 Refine zoning ordinances and development policies.	8.2	7.6	7.3	7.2	*
	1.4 Advocate for greater local control over short-term rentals and housing regulations.	8.4	7.5	7.8	7.3	*
Pillar 2: Supporting Strategic Economic Diversification	2.1 Create a targeted economic diversification strategy.	7.1	6.7	7.0	6.6	
	2.2 Develop more small business-friendly policies and processes.	7.6	7.1	6.9	6.6	
	2.3 Support county and regional workforce development initiatives.	7.8	7.2	7.2	6.6	
	2.4 Evaluate the feasibility of a co-working and innovation hub.	6.3	5.8	6.1	5.7	
Pillar 3: Balancing the Impact of the Tourism Economy	3.1 Transition toward a sustainable tourism destination management approach.	7.1	6.3	7.0	6.7	
	3.2 Support tourism events that benefit both residents and visitors.	7.5	6.6	6.5	6.4	
	3.3 Develop and implement traffic mitigation plans.	8.2	8.2	7.6	7.6	*
	3.4 Create a comprehensive parking and mobility strategy.	8.7	8.3	8.2	8.1	*
Pillar 4: Elevating the Culture of Preservation and Stewardship	4.1 Expand and support environmental and sustainability initiatives.	8.8	8.2	8.2	8.3	*
	4.2 Engage the community in stewardship and preservation activities.	7.8	7.0	7.2	6.9	
	4.3 Boost fundraising and grant development capacity.	7.8	7.2	7.3	7.2	
Pillar 5: Enhancing Community Livability and Connection	5.1 Expand community programming in arts, recreation, and culture.	7.6	6.7	7.3	6.9	
	5.2 Invest in a structured public information system.	8.1	7.7	7.7	7.6	*
	5.3 Improve walkability, bikability, and connectivity.	8.6	7.8	7.7	8.1	*
	5.4 Invest in beautification, placemaking, parks, and gathering spaces.	7.7	7.3	7.5	7.5	
Pillar 6: Creating a Balanced Community Demographic	6.1 Promote Lake Geneva as a year-round community.	8.1	7.2	7.7	7.2	*
	6.2 Improve economic opportunities for young people and families.	8.3	7.6	7.8	6.9	*
	6.3 Strengthen community partnerships and volunteer initiatives.	7.3	6.6	7.7	6.6	



9.0 | NEXT STEPS – ROADMAP TO THE FUTURE

The findings from this planning process can be used to help inform future priorities for the City and the Common Council. Over the coming years, this will help shape City goals and objectives and guide new investments and planning decisions.

The Strategic Planning process was designed to identify priority focus areas and actions that are important to the community over the next five years. It has successfully accomplished this aim. Some of the ways this planning framework can be used over the coming years will include:

- Identifying new initiatives and focus areas for City staff and Council members' attention and deliberation.
- Informing future planning decisions and helping to refine planning priorities, guidelines, and approaches.
- Guiding future Common Council goals, objectives, and informing investments and budget priorities.
- Reframing the role of tourism and its impact and importance to the community.

Community members have identified that they have appetite and interest in bold and innovative solutions on a number of high impact areas that are seen as urgent to address. The investment in this first ever Strategic Action Plan for the City of Lake Geneva is a bold commitment to the future and to the community.



"My hope for this process is that we move forward with a clear, shared trajectory for what Lake Geneva can be. By focusing on community-wide synergy, we can bridge the gap between our historic legacy and our future potential. When our residents feel heard and our goals are realigned, we create a plan that isn't just a document on a shelf, but a living roadmap for a thriving, unified community"

-Community Survey Respondent

Community members have shown a healthy appetite for well-managed change going forward. This is the first step toward the preferred future, 'Lake Geneva – The Happy Place,' that will guide the City's future planning efforts.





»»»» 10.0 | ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Community members have engaged in this visioning and planning process with great enthusiasm. Their passion and interest have ensured discussions are open, thoughtful, and reflective of the myriad of perspectives that exist within Lake Geneva. This dedication is also reflective of the deep commitment participants have to the future of the City.

We would like to thank The Riviera for hosting the first Session of the Think-Tank on January 8, 2026, as well as the Future Summit on March 11. We would also like to thank the Lake Geneva Middle School for allowing us to use the cafeteria for the second session of the Think-Tank on January 10, 2026.

Additionally, our appreciation is extended to the Common Council Members, and in particular to Mayor Todd Krause, City Administrator David De Angelis, Building Inspector and Zoning Administrator Renee Hanlon, and Chris Bennett, Assistant City Administrator, who met on a weekly basis with the Future iQ project team to help guide this project. Their time and dedication are greatly appreciated.

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»»»»» 11.0 | FOR MORE INFORMATION

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»»»»» 12.0 | ABOUT FUTURE IQ

Future iQ specializes in applying innovative tools and approaches to assist municipalities, organizations, regions and industries shape their economic and community futures. With nearly two decades of experience, the company has a global clientele spanning three continents. To learn more about Future iQ, and our recent projects visit www.future-iq.com or by email at info@future-iq.com.

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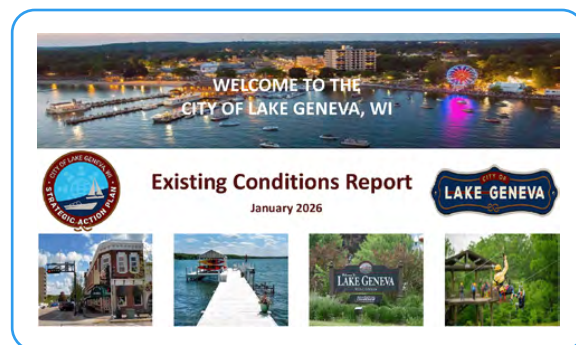
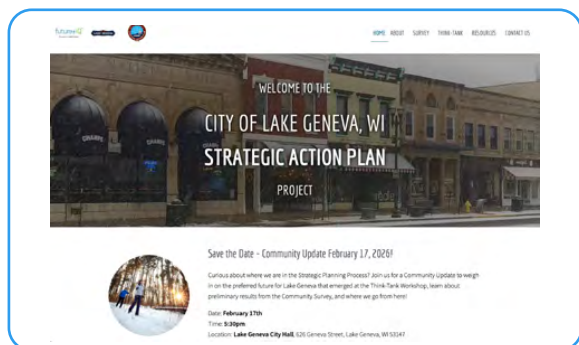


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LAKE GENEVA

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN REPORT

WISCONSIN, USA

JULY 2026