

“The Taj Mahal of Geneva”: Economic and Financial Stability of the Geneva Community Center

Gemyra Greggs, Melissa Moore, Niame Traore, Divine Wing, and HWS Professor of Sociology Jack Harris
HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES

BACKGROUND

The Geneva Community Center:

A \$6 million dollar “palace” that prides itself on youth development and community engagement. Unfortunately, it is in financial trouble due to its inability to upkeep the yearly \$1-2 million dollar maintenance costs. Working with the Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Club of Geneva and the GCC, Chris Lavin, we seek to understand the GCC’s role, what activities people would like to have at the center, and how members of the community would take advantage of the large facility.

Financially-strained communities cannot invest in social programming and organizations that facilitate youth development solely through public funding: it is up to local businesses and other community partners to collaborate to ensure that spaces like GCC continue to exist because of its positive impact on the community. Through in-depth phone interviews with other community centers in cities comparable to Geneva and online surveys with various organizations in Geneva, we assess programming and/or financial models that could be implemented at GCC, and gauge whether the various organizations in Geneva have needs that align with the mission of GCC.

Mission Statement of GCC:

“Dedicated to bringing together the full diversity of our community in a safe and welcoming environment, and to supporting collaborations and relationships that link organizations, services, neighborhoods, and age groups to enrich our community.”



PURPOSE AND HYPOTHESIS

The purpose of our research was to assist the Executive Director of the Geneva Community Center to recover from its financial instability, primarily by improving the center’s marketing strategies.

Additionally, we sought to find potential clients from around the area whose services and/or organizations could be housed in the GCC.

Research Hypothesis: The Geneva Community Center’s financial crisis is salvagable, and with the right use of the space it offers it can be financially revitalized, profitable, and most importantly, sustainable.



MATERIALS AND METHODS

Survey



We administered a survey for key informants in the Geneva community and distributed these surveys via email. The survey allowed us to better understand the needs of future collaborative partners and how the Geneva Community Center can help achieve these needs. Some examples of these key informants will be: daycare owners, charter Schools, HWS club sport teams, senior citizens, and food vendors.

Organization Leaders Survey:

1. Are you in need of a space to run your business or hold activities (early hour daycares, charter schools, sport teams etc.)?
2. What type of organization, activity or business do you run?
3. How long will you want to use the space for?
4. How much space will you need to maintain your organization, activity or business?
5. How much will you be willing to pay to use the space?
6. If early hours do not work for you to use the space, would you be interested in using the space during later hours of the day?
7. (Optional): Do you know of anyone else who may want to use and pay for the space?



Phone Interview Questionnaire

We conducted phone interviews with other community centers that are comparable to the GCC, in order to gain a better understanding of how to help keep the community center financially stable and how to best utilize the space that the GCC offers.

Phone Interview Script:

1. What is your affiliation with the community center?
2. What are the hours of your community center?
3. What opportunities do your community center offer?
4. How do you occupy the space of the community center?
5. How do you draw members to the community center?
6. How do you find funding to keep the community center?
7. Is your community center free of membership or what is your membership fee for your community center?
8. Could you refer us to two more community centers?



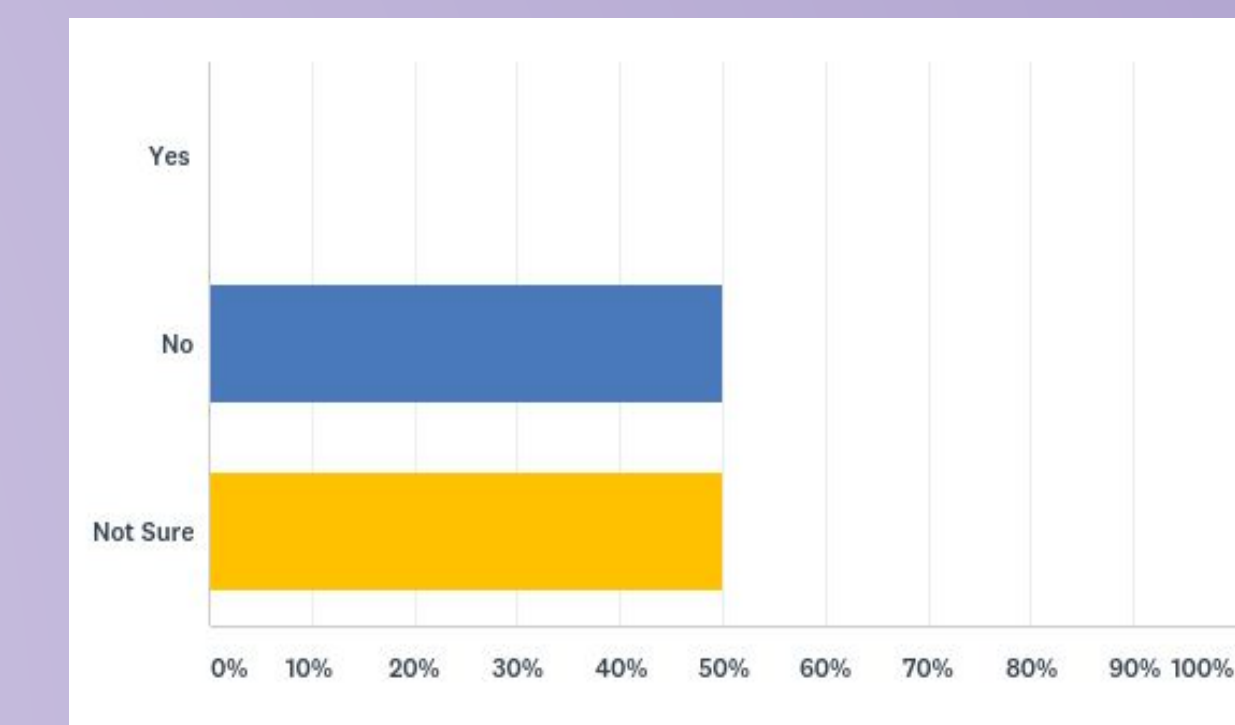
RESULTS

Even though our results were relatively limited, we were able to determine through our surveys and our phone interviews that traditional organizations are not interested in using the building. This shows the divide between what the community needs and can logistically give back to the center.

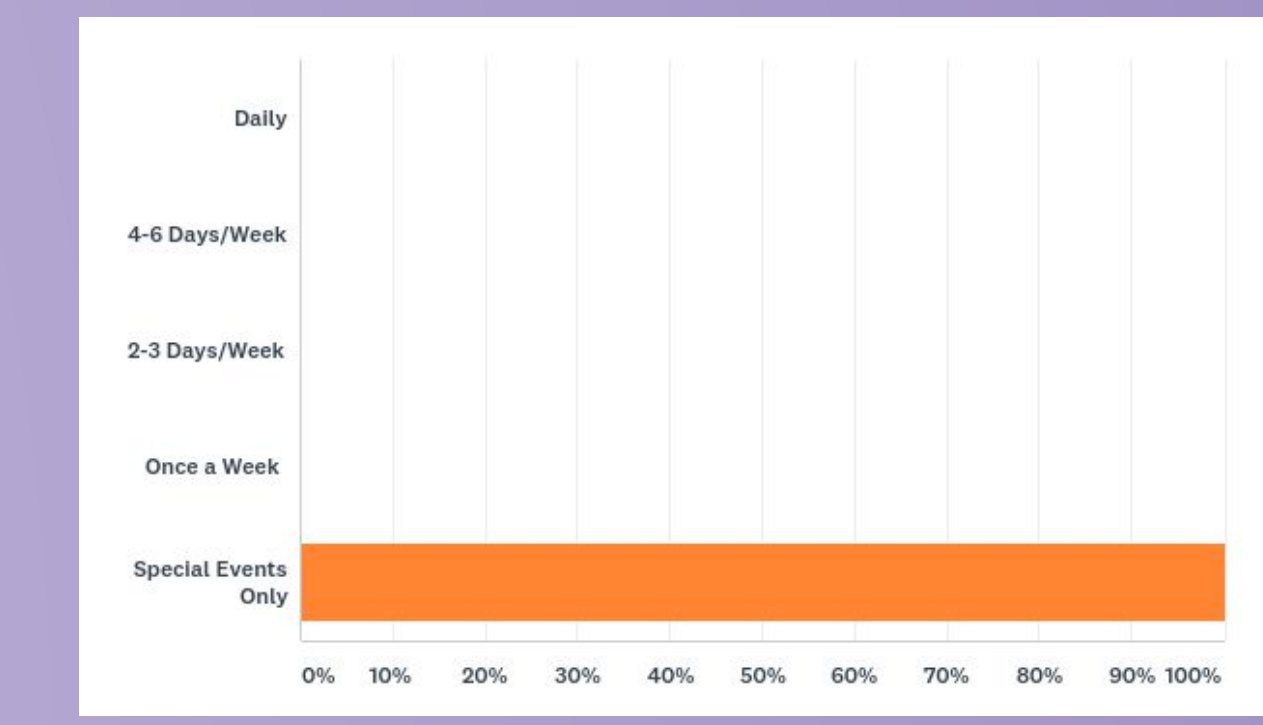
Our interviews show that other community centers have been able to get support from their communities through active recruiting and social media/website usage.

The connections between communities and their centers are most important in maintaining a “Community Center” that is financially sustainable.

Are you in need of space to run your business or hold activities (early/late hour additional services, recreational activities, food services etc.)?



How often throughout the week do you need additional space?



RECOMMENDATIONS

The GCC was constructed with the hopes that it would be utilized and valued as a central community institution for recreation, education, and other social purposes.

In order to be utilized more, we suggest that the GCC:

- Create a comprehensive financial plan
- Develop creative and attractive programming
- Increase community and social media presence
- Explore reliable streams of funding

Survey and phone interview results support our recommendations that it is crucial for the GCC to increase its marketability through these four measures. We believe this will change perspectives on the center as a valuable place for business, recreation, youth development and education, community gathering, and more.

Community members must value the GCC as an integral part of this city’s vision of an equitable and prosperous future for all its residents.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Chalker, C. S., & Stelsel, K. (2009). A fresh approach to alternative education: USING MALLS TO REACH AT-RISK YOUTH. Kappa Delta Pi Record.
- Tonn, J. (2003). The Functions, Financing, and Control of Community Centers: Issues for the National Movement. In Mary P. Follett: *Creating Democracy, Transforming Management* (pp. 235-252). New Haven; London: Yale University Press.
- “Boys and Girls Club of Geneva.” *Boys and Girls Club of Geneva*, In House Graphic Design Inc., bgcgenewa.org/.
- “Geneva Recreation.” *Geneva Recreation*, City of Geneva, cityofgeneva.com/recreation/.
- “Geneva Community Center.” *Geneva Community Center*, genevacommunitycenter.org/.
- “The Geneva Family YMCA.” *The Geneva Family YMCA*, The Geneva Family YMCA, www.genevafamilyymca.org/.
- “Lyons Community Center.” *Lyons Community Center*, Lyons Community Center, www.lyonscommunitycenter.org/.
- “Phelps Community Center.” *Welcome to Phelps NY*, Phelps Community Center, www.phelpsnyc.com/community-center/.



HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH
COLLEGES

