



2018-2028 Comprehensive Plan

Submitted to: Regional Commission & Department of Community Affairs
By: The City of Cornelia in August 2018



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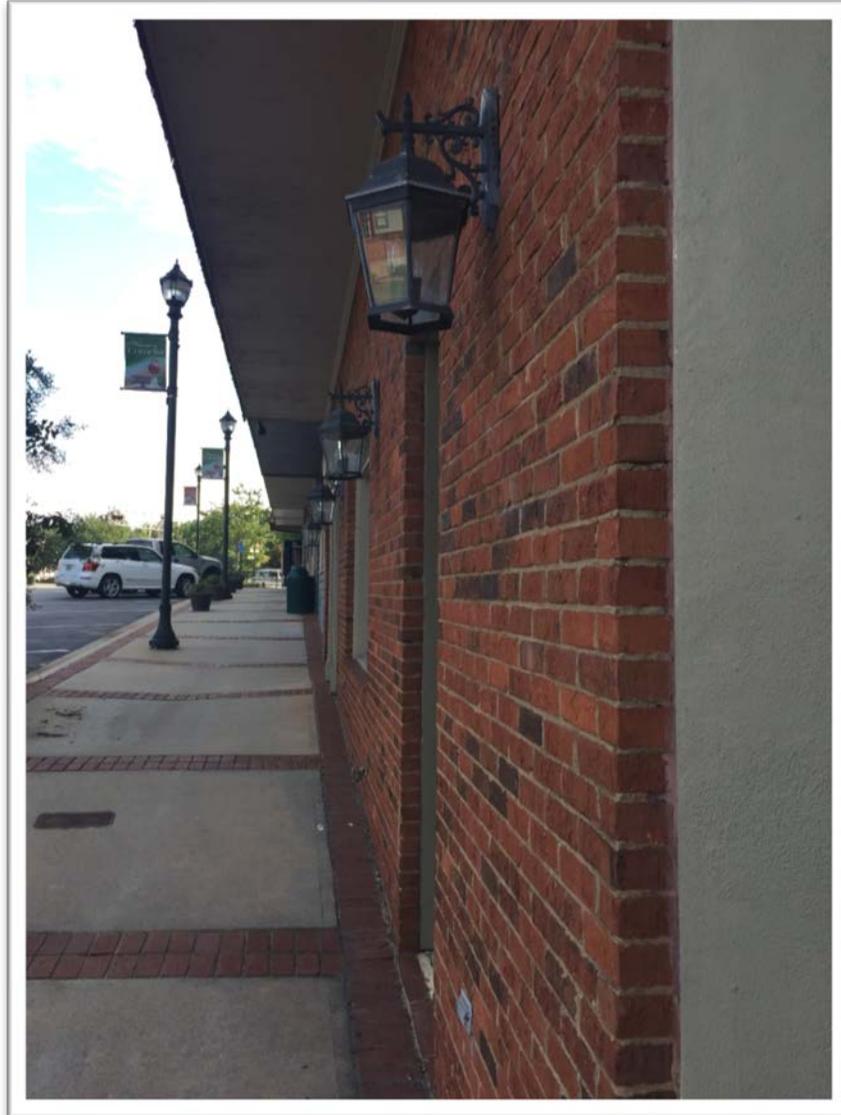
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Background

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) administers the rules and regulations for Comprehensive Planning in the State of Georgia, effective on March 1, 2014. The purpose of these standards is to provide governmental entities a framework for the development, management and implementation of local comprehensive plans because vibrant places are essential to the State of Georgia's overall economic prosperity.

Producing and maintaining a Comprehensive Plan is a way for a local government to understand the relationship between the various issues and opportunities within the community. Understanding these trends gives community leaders a basis for establishing implementation activities and policies. The Comprehensive Plan creates an understanding of the future vision for the community inclusive of businesses, industries, investors, property owners, tax payers, and the general public.

O.C.G.A 50-8-1 established authority for the DCA to define minimum standards and procedures for developing comprehensive plans for local governments in the State of Georgia. These standards and procedures are designed to help the City prepare a plan that identifies immediate needs within community and looks for opportunities to help the City reach its vision for the future. An adopted Comprehensive Plan allows the City to maintain its "qualified local government status," which makes the City eligible for selected state funding and permitting programs.

The City of Cornelia addressed the elements required based on the DCA's minimum standards and procedures and exceeded these requirements by conducting additional analysis on other planning elements. The following required elements are included in the City's 2018 Comprehensive Plan:

- Community Goals
- Needs and Opportunities
- Community Work Program

As a community that has adopted a Zoning Ordinance, the City of Cornelia Comprehensive Plan is required to address land use. In addition, the City has also completed an assessment of transportation, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, and intergovernmental coordination throughout this document.

Setting the Stage

History of Cornelia

Much of the growth in Cornelia has occurred slowly over time, being mainly attributed to the geographic proximity to the North Georgia mountains. The small town feel, quality of life, and the sense of place associated with the City make it a unique and desirable place to live and these values will play a significant role in achieving the future vision and goals of this plan.

The Beginning

At the close of the Civil War in 1865, the area where Cornelia is located was a typical mountain forest. The spot was so well secluded that a moonshine still was operated without interference at the site of what is now the center of downtown. Cornelia was first a settlement around 1870. It was situated near the old boundary line between the Cherokee and Creek Indian tribes.

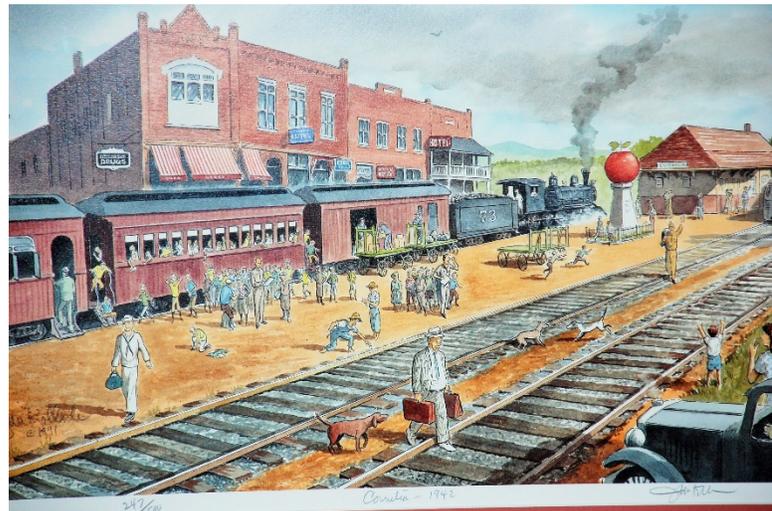
Railroad

In 1872, workers of the Charlotte-Airline Railroad (later Southern Railway) invaded the virgin forest. A roadbed was cleared and graded, and tracks were laid from Gainesville to Toccoa. In 1882, the Blue Ridge and Atlantic Railroad opened a line that extended northward from the Charlotte-Airline to Clarkesville and Tallulah Falls. The Tallulah Railway, as it came to be called, carried passengers and freight from Cornelia to Franklin, North Carolina. Many of the passengers rode to view Tallulah Gorge, which was one of the most scenic spots in northeast Georgia. Later, the railway served a more utilitarian purpose until after World War II when the line was discontinued.

Big Red Apple

The Big Red Apple stands on the railway depot grounds in downtown Cornelia. The replica of the North Georgia apple is 7 feet high and 22 feet in circumference. It weighs 5,200 pounds and is painted in natural colors.

The apple is constructed of steel and concrete and was molded in Winchester, Virginia, in 1925. It is erected on a concrete pedestal 8 feet high and 6 feet square at the base. The monument was donated by Southern Railway, and for many years the City has held a celebration of the apples grown in the area. Cornelia has since been touted as "The Home of the Big Red Apple."





People of Cornelia

In support of the Comprehensive Plan, a demographic study was performed to identify trends in population, housing, employment, transportation, community health, and other data trends. The full demographic study, which is summarized here, can be found in the Data Assessment Addendum included with this Comprehensive Plan.

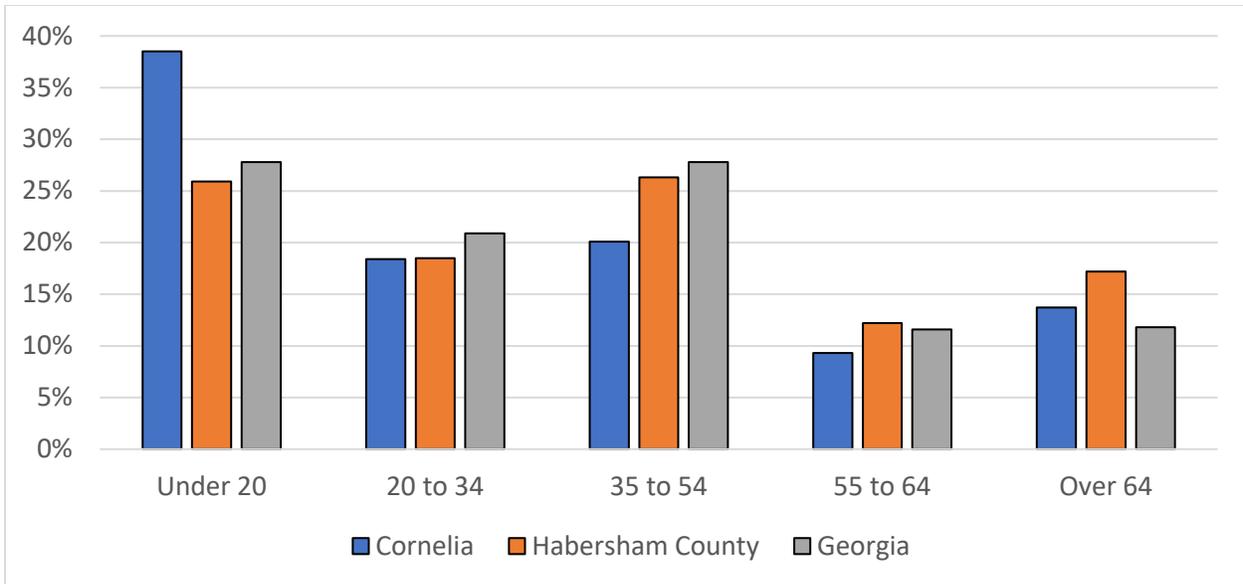
Cornelia experienced a slow rate of population growth since the decennial census in 2000 as the City grew from a population of roughly 3,700 to nearly 4,200 in 2015. The majority of this growth occurred from 2000-2010 when the population increased 13.2%, which was still less than the growth rate in Habersham County and Georgia during the same period. From 2010-2015, the State of Georgia experienced a slower rate of growth, increasing by only 3.3%, which exceeded the rate of growth in Habersham County and Cornelia.

Jurisdiction	2000 (Census)	2010 (Census)	2015 (Estimate)	% Change 2000-2010	% Change 2010-2015
Cornelia	3,674	4,160	4,199	13.2%	0.9%
Habersham County	35,902	43,041	43,527	19.9%	1.1%
Georgia	8,186,453	9,687,653	10,006,693	18.3%	3.3%

While growth in the City of Cornelia has been relatively limited, many of the incorporated areas of the County have experienced tremendous growth since the year 2000. Despite the rapid growth that occurred in other cities in the County, Cornelia remains the largest incorporated area and contains nearly 10% of the total population in Habersham County. Growth rates between 2010-2015 have leveled off county-wide, with the notable exception of Clarksville, which still had a growth rate over 10% during that period.

Jurisdiction	2000 (Census)	2010 (Census)	2015 (Estimate)	% Change 2000-2010	% Change 2010-2015
Cornelia, City	3,674	4,160	4,199	13.2%	0.9%
Alto, Town	876	1,172	1,165	33.8%	-0.6%
Baldwin, City	2,425	3,279	3,467	35.2%	5.7%
Clarksville, City	1,248	1,733	1,937	38.9%	11.8%
Demorest, City	1,465	1,823	1,842	24.4%	1.0%
Mount Airy, Town	604	1,284	1,233	112.6%	-4.0%
Tallulah Falls, Town	164	168	90	2.4%	-46.4%
Unincorporated County	25,446	29,422	29,594	15.6%	0.6%

The City of Cornelia is experiencing an increase in the average household size and as well as the number of people between the ages of 20-54. The American Community Survey (ACS) published by the Census Bureau estimates the average household size for the State of Georgia to be 2.73 people. The estimate for Cornelia is 3.08, which is consistent with the City’s reputation as a community of younger adults with children. The same data also indicates that the City of Cornelia has seen decreases in people aged over 62 and 65 despite the fact that the State and County estimates show increases in population for these same age cohorts.

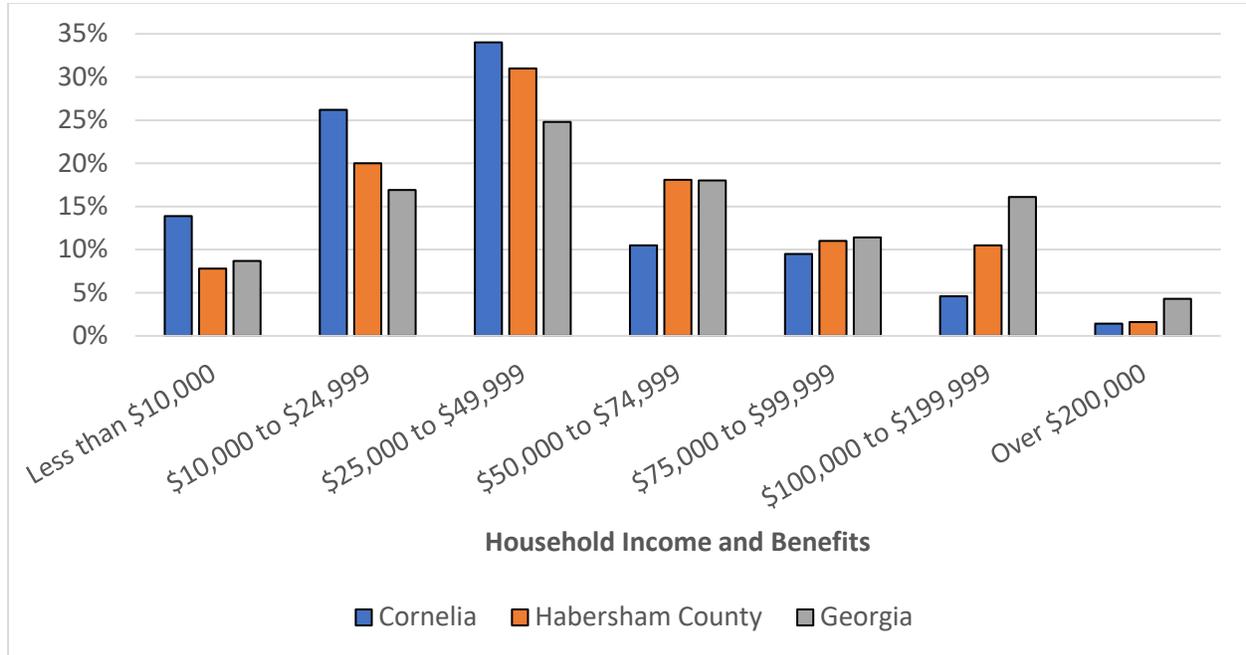


One metric of household income inequality is defined as the ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to that at the 20th percentile. This ratio, calculated with data from 2011-2015, is presented on a county level for Habersham County and its neighboring counties. The lower the ratio of the 80th percentile to the 20th percentile of household income, the lower the inequality in household income. The lower the ratio, the higher the County was ranked.

- Habersham County was ranked as one of the better counties in the state at 39th
- Although the County was ranked 39th, two of its neighbors were ranked in the top 20.
- Habersham County’s ratio of 4.3 (\$80,898 / \$18,883) was better than the state average (5.0).
- Overall, Habersham County has less division between the top and bottom ends of the income spectrum compared with the state average and 75% of Georgia’s counties.

County	Household Income Inequality Ratio (80 th /20 th Percentile)	Rank out of 159 Counties in Georgia
Habersham County	4.3	39 th
Banks County	4.2	34 th
Franklin County	5.0	86 th
Hall County	4.3	41 st
Rabun County	6.1	142 nd
Stephens County	4.9	84 th
Towns County	4.1	18 th
White County	4.1	20 th
State Average	5.0	N/A

In looking at household income data specific to Cornelia, the City has a larger percentage of groups with incomes below \$50,000 than the state and County distributions. Cornelia was consistent with Habersham County for income between \$50,000 and \$74,999, and with both County and statewide numbers for the \$75,000 - \$99,999 range. In all other categories, the City fell below County and Statewide numbers.



Characteristics for a variety of health-related topics are available through the County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Program, and rankings are also presented by county. County Health is categorized into two major headings – Health Outcomes and Health Factors. Health Outcomes are a measure of how long people live (Length of Life) and how healthy people feel while alive (Quality of Life). Health Factors represent what influences the health of a county’s population, and they are an estimate of future health. These ranks are based on four types of measures: Health Behaviors, Clinical Care, Social and Economic, and Physical Environment factors. Each of these factors have multiple measures used to calculate the county’s health, and a select number of these factors are presented below to show strengths and weaknesses of the health of Habersham County’s population. Results from the two primary categories (Health Outcomes and Health Factors) for Habersham County and neighboring counties displayed in the table below.

County	Health Outcomes Rank in Georgia’s 159 Counties	Health Factors Rank in Georgia’s 159 Counties
Habersham County	19 th	38 th
Banks County	53 rd	37 th
Franklin County	139 th	66 th
Hall County	25 th	21 st
Rabun County	40 th	39 th
Stephens County	93 rd	50 th
Towns County	44 th	16 th
White County	11 st	15 th

As a note, the results presented from this source describe the County as a whole and not necessarily Cornelia individually. However, with about 10% of the County's population, Cornelia has a considerable impact on the Habersham County results.

Employment and economic development data have been reviewed and analyzed for the City of Cornelia, Habersham County, and the State of Georgia. The major employment categories for the civilian labor force are manufacturing (29%), arts, entertainment, recreation, and food services (13%), and retail trade (12%).

According to the Development Authority of Habersham County, the following are the County's major employers (with approximate number of employees in parentheses):

- Fieldale Farms (2,500 employees) – privately owned poultry production facility.
- Habersham County Board of Education (1,100 employees).
- Mount Vernon Mills (700 employees) – diversified and integrated manufacturer of textiles and chemicals for the apparel industry.
- Habersham County Medical Center (600 employees).
- Ethicon (600 employees) – part of Johnson & Johnson supply chain, produces surgical equipment and medical devices.
- Georgia Department of Corrections (550 employees) – Arrendale Correctional Institute.
- Windstream Communications (350 employees) – telecommunications company that operates a regional support center.
- TenCate (230 employees) – manufactures composite textiles for industrial, commercial and government customers.
- Piedmont College (220 employees).
- GlobalTech (200 employees) – contract candle manufacturer.
- Scovill Fasteners (200 employees) – produces metal fasteners such as buttons, snaps, washers, and zippers for the apparel industry.
- Habersham Metal Products (120 employees) – metal fabricator specializing in detention products, bullet resistant assemblies, and hurricane rated products.
- Steel Cell of North America (50 employees) – metal fabricator specializing in the production of prefabricated modular detention cells.
- Piedmont Automotive (50 employees) – produces electronic components for the automotive industry.

It is noteworthy that two of the top five employers are located within the City of Cornelia.

Future economic development and workforce development have been identified as goals for the future of Cornelia. The current demographic trends in terms of population, age distribution, income, and the other intangible factors appear to have set the stage for future growth and economic prosperity.

Plan Coordination

Habersham County Comprehensive Plan

Habersham County as well as the other incorporated areas (Clarksville, Alto, Mt Airy, and Demorest) are also in the process of completing a comprehensive plan. Since many of the goals, needs, and opportunities typically identified during the planning process may not follow municipal boundaries, it is important that coordination between governments occur to achieve the shared vision for the region.

Georgia Mountains Regional Commission: Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy & Regional Plan

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission covers a 13-county area with 38 municipalities (including Cornelia) and a population of roughly 675,000 people. Similar to a Comprehensive Plan, the Economic Development Strategy (EDS) looks at demographic trends for the area to understand the baseline conditions and forecasts future projections. The EDS also includes an assessment of major planning elements to identify goals, issues, opportunities, and strategies. While far-reaching in its scope, the City of Cornelia attempts to maintain consistency with the vision of the EDS and Regional Plan.

City of Cornelia Redevelopment Plan for Community Development Area

The City of Cornelia adopted an Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) in 2009 and adopted a resolution in 2016 stating support for the continued implementation of this plan. The Urban Redevelopment Act (OCGA 36-61-1) was adopted in 1955 by the Georgia General Assembly as a tool to support the development of public/private partnerships for community revitalization efforts. The Urban Redevelopment Act (the Act) provides local governments in Georgia with specific powers to rehabilitate, revitalize, conserve, and develop designated “slum areas” as defined within the Act. Cornelia’s URP has identified a target area that includes the downtown area as well as some of the residential areas adjacent to the downtown core. The URP defines the geographic boundaries, the needs, the city’s approach to address blight within this area, and potential funding sources and/or partnerships. The URP is also required to demonstrate consistency with the City’s Comprehensive Plan, which is detailed in Section 8. The goals of the URP and this Comprehensive Plan remain consistent and activities identified in the Workplan herein continue to focus on addressing blight within the City.

City of Cornelia Masterplan: A Plan for Process and Community Design

The City of Cornelia Masterplan was originally completed in 2001 and was updated in 2013 to reflect changes in development patterns, goals, and overall vision for the community. The Masterplan is structured in a manner that allows it to be used as a marketing tool to give perspective developers and/or investors an understanding of the City’s vision. Focusing mainly on downtown Cornelia, the Masterplan identifies a list of projects that include streetscape enhancements, landscaping, sidewalks, multi-use





trails, infill development opportunities, and preservation of historic structures. Potential funding sources have been identified and include the agency as well as a description of the program. Elements from the Masterplan have been closely reviewed and coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan.

Part V Environmental Planning Criteria

The City has adopted the Environmental Planning Standards for Wetlands and Water Supply Watersheds, which are the only planning measures applicable to the City. None of the city falls within the boundaries of groundwater recharge zones, protected river corridors, or protected mountains.

Habersham County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Habersham County and its incorporated cities, including the Cornelia, are in the process of updating the countywide Hazard Mitigation Plan. The purpose of this document is to evaluate various hazards that have the potential to impact the region in order to prevent, prepare, respond, and recover more effectively. The ultimate goal is to take the necessary steps to reduce or eliminate risk to people and property to the greatest extent possible. The Hazard Mitigation Plan includes background information about the County, a profile of hazards, strategies that mitigate the impact of each hazard, and implementation strategies and plan maintenance. The City of Cornelia has coordinated implementation strategies identified in the Hazard Mitigation Plan and included appropriate activities in the Community Workplan.

Future Municipal Complex

The City acquired property as a potential municipal complex that would include a new City Hall, fire station, police station, adjacent commercial uses, and a variety of recreational amenities. A concept plan of the proposed complex is shown in below.

Community Engagement

The DCA minimum standards and procedures require two Public Hearings and the identification and implementation of a public participation program that offers various opportunities for community engagement. The following chapter provides a summary of the public involvement opportunities provided throughout this planning process, including public hearings, a Stakeholder Committee, educational handouts, community open house, the web-based Community Opinion Survey, and the interactive mapping applications. Summary materials from public involvement undertaken during this process can be found in Appendix B.

Public Hearings

The Department of Community Affairs minimum planning standards require that two public hearing be held throughout the comprehensive planning process; one at the beginning of the process and one toward the end.

Public Hearing #1. The City of Cornelia held a public hearing on August 1, 2017 at a regularly scheduled City Commission meeting. The City's consultant delivered a presentation that introduced the comprehensive planning process, the purpose of updating the plan, and what the City hopes to gain by going through this process. The presentation discussed the minimum planning requirements as defined by the DCA, the general benefits of planning, and opportunities the City will use to engage and involve residents and other key players in the community. The presentation also highlighted some of the key issues in Cornelia, current development trends, demographics, and how these factors collectively fit into the planning process.

Public Hearing #2. The second public hearing was held on June 5, 2018 at the regularly scheduled City Commission meeting. A presentation was given to the City Commission that summarized the activities undertaken during the planning process. Needs, opportunities, and community goals identified by residents and stakeholders were presented to the commission and discussed. The future land use map and community workplan were also presented to Commission for discussion and comment.

Stakeholder Committee

The City of Cornelia formed a stakeholder committee as a way to facilitate the public involvement process and to provide feedback to the City about various planning topics. The stakeholder committee consisted of a variety of community players and City Staff. The City Commission each appointed one stakeholder to the committee with remaining members being selected based on knowledge of certain topics or areas the City felt important.

Stakeholder Committee Members

- Brent Cody, Commercial Construction (appointed)
- Ken Morris, Business Owner (appointed)
- David Zavala, Real Estate (appointed)
- Audrey Davenport, Graphic Designer (appointed)
- Jessie Owensby, Downtown Development Agency
- Caesar Torres, Banker
- Heath Barrett, Insurance
- Amy McCurdy, Board of Education

- Willy Wong, Business Owner
- Tim Lee, Economic Development Council
- Dee Anderson, City Manager
- Mona Painter, City Staff

The stakeholder committee met 5 times during this process. Meeting topics are summarized below.

Meeting 1: August 2, 2017. The first meeting kicked off the Comprehensive Planning process with a presentation on the Comprehensive Planning requirements, the purpose of completing the plan, the benefits of planning, and the role and expectation of the stakeholders throughout the process. This meeting also included a discussion and development of the strategy and schedule for public involvement. Lastly, the schedule was reviewed to highlight some of the milestone dates to help the stakeholder committee better understand the how the City intends to move through the process.

Meeting 2: September 9, 2017. A project update was provided to the stakeholder committee that discussed the data assessment and the community snapshot. Community involvement activities were also discussed based on feedback and strategies defined at the previous stakeholder meeting. The group reviewed the community survey questions and identified topic areas of interest and the best way to frame questions related to these topics. The second part of this meeting focused on Community Character Areas. The stakeholder committee reviewed the character area map developed during the 2008 comprehensive planning process and determined how this map should be amended. The group also reviewed and revised the descriptions, vision, and future land use strategy for each area.

Meeting 3: November 15, 2017. This meeting consisted of a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis. The proposed Future Land Use map was generated based on the Community Character Area map and was presented to the group.

Meeting 4: February 7, 2018. A presentation summarizing the results of the Community Survey was given to the stakeholder committee, and Various topics from survey were discussed. The group also identified topic areas where additional analysis of the survey data was needed. The results of the SWOT analysis completed during the second meeting were re-grouped as either a need, and opportunity, or a goal. The stakeholders reviewed these and identified additional items that may have been overlooked. Lastly, a visioning exercise was completed to come up with a new vision for the community.

Meeting 5: May 3, 2018. A final stakeholder meeting was held to review the draft Comprehensive Plan and to provide additional feedback prior to presenting the plan to the City Commission. Comments received from the group at this meeting were incorporated into the document to create the final draft.

Open Houses

November 14, 2017 and May 3, 2018. The City held two (2) public open houses to reach out to the general public as a way to get additional feedback from the community. The Open Houses were widely advertised using signs, social media, email blasts, and other methods typically used by the City to notify the public. The Open Houses were held at the Cornelia Community House and consisted of a series of planning stations to get input on various topics. The following stations were setup at the November Open House:

- Land Use
- Demographic Trends
- Needs and Opportunities
- SWOT

The May Open House provided an opportunity for attendees to comment on the draft Plan and had maps of the Character Areas and Future Land Use for public viewing.

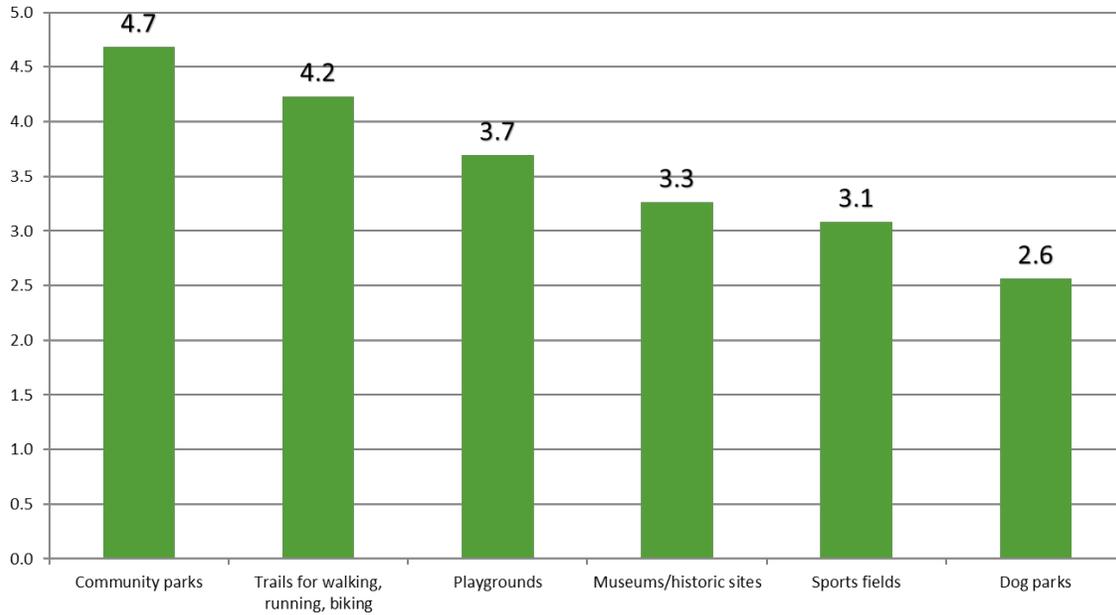


Community Snapshot

The City developed a community snapshot fact sheet to provide citizens with background information on current trends within the City. The snapshot includes a demographic summary of population, gender, age, and racial composition within the City. It summarizes housing and economic trends including the number of households, household size, housing values, ownership characteristics, earnings, and the distribution of income throughout the City. The existing land use composition of the City was also included in the snapshot to provide some insight when considering future needs and goals.

Community Survey

The City developed a community survey to gain feedback from residents, business owners, and other interested parties. The survey provided opportunities for participants to offer opinions on topics such as land use, economic development, city services, community aesthetics, priorities, housing, quality of life, and other planning related topics. The survey was published in English as well as Spanish to try and encourage participation from the Hispanic population that accounts for a significant portion of the City. Nearly 300 people responded to the community survey, which equates to a 95% confidence level +/- 5%. The chart below illustrates how survey participants responded when asked to rank the importance of various recreational facilities in the City.

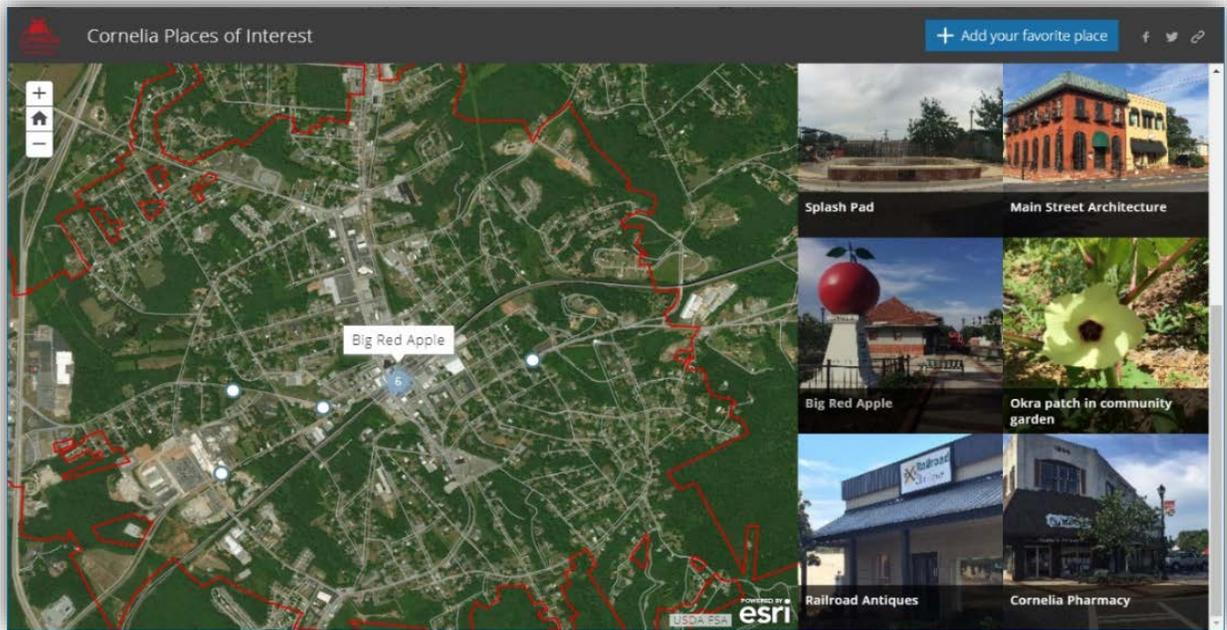
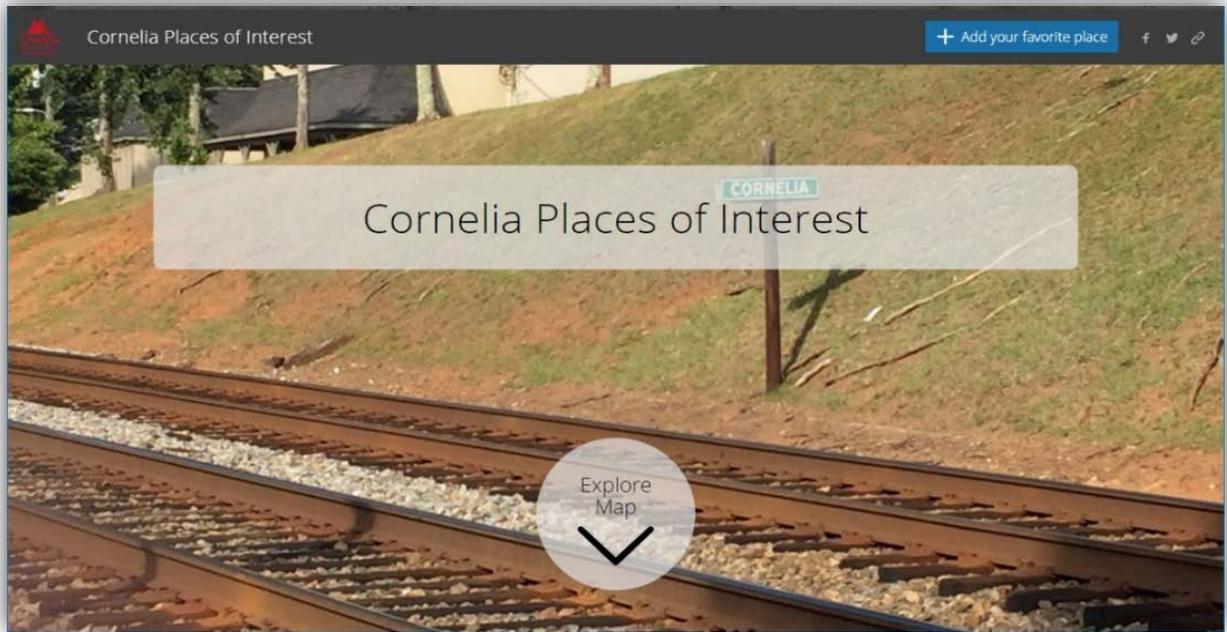


Social Media

The City of Cornelia utilized social media (Facebook, twitter) to advertise meetings, the community survey, and other opportunities for public involvement in the planning process. The response rate on the community survey can be attributed to the social media push made by the City. Public hearings and how the public can review and/or comment on the draft plan were also broadcast using social media outlets.

Interactive Mapping App

The City’s consultant created a mapping application for hand-held devices that allowed people to take pictures of “places of interest” throughout the City of Cornelia. The app included a mapping feature that allowed the user to take a picture, record the location on a map, and to write a short note about what they love about this location or community feature. The points recorded using the points of interest app included historic structures, unique architectural features, parks, landscape scenes, and desirable residential and commercial developments.



Cornelia Strategic Vision

The City of Cornelia developed a community vision through the public involvement process. A group of community stakeholders collectively discussed current trends, community issues, and future needs within the community at a public meeting in February 2018. The group reviewed the vision established during the 2008 comprehensive planning process and crafted a new vision based on changing trends as well as accomplishments within the City.

The City’s vision, values, and priorities recognize how future development patterns will impact the existing character of the community. While growth and development pressure are likely to continue, this section communicates the City’s commitment to quality of life, the importance of history, and the need to have a plan for the future.

Vision Statement

“The City of Cornelia wishes to promote a clean, safe economically viable community while maintaining its home town heritage, supporting a vibrant downtown, providing access to the outdoors, and maintaining a high quality of life.”

OUR VALUES

- Diversity in our community
- Sense of security
- Connectivity
- Protection of natural resources
- Quality city services
- Quality education
- Recreational facilities

OUR PRIORITIES

- Smart and efficient growth
- Optimizing existing infrastructure/infill development
- Varied residential options
- Supporting economic development
- Creating and maintaining a strong workforce
- Revitalizing the historic downtown



Community Goals

The purpose of the community goals section is to layout a road map for the community’s future based on the results of the various public involvement activities. The goals are arguably the most important part of the plan because they represent the value the community places on various quality of life issues. The goals are used to determine the direction the City should pursue based on feedback from people that are most invested in the community. The following major goals have been identified and will be the basis of the recommended policies:

- Economic development
- Expand recreational activities and opportunities
- Downtown redevelopment and rehabilitation

Quality Community Objectives

The following 10 objectives were adopted by the DCA from generally accepted community development principles to fit the unique quality of communities in Georgia. The list of items was intentionally crafted with significant areas of overlap to recognize the relationships between the various community objectives and the impact one aspect has on others. The DCA goals associated with each element are summarized in italics. The City of Cornelia completed a self-assessment based on these quality community objectives.

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>DCA Goals</i>	<i>Cornelia Assessment</i>
	<p><i>Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community.</i></p>	<p>In an effort to facilitate economic prosperity, the City of Cornelia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes commercial development along appropriate corridors. • Utilizes zoning overlays to control the aesthetics of development. • Has adopted an opportunity zone and has received a rural zone designation from the DCA to promote redevelopment in the downtown area.
	<p><i>Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community.</i></p>	<p>Cornelia does the following to address resource management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educates residents about water reduction and how to reduce consumption. • Participates in the WaterFirst Program. • Develops trails for recreational use. • Promotes open space and recreational amenities in new subdivisions.

Economic Prosperity

Resource Management

Objectives

DCA Goals

Cornelia Assessment



Efficient Land Use

Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community.

The City of Cornelia ensures that adequate infrastructure is in place to accommodate future growth and has identified areas of the City where growth is likely to occur.



Local Preparedness

Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve.

The City has done or will do the following to better prepare for future growth:

- Developed a comprehensive plan and future land use map to assist with land use decisions.
- Developed overlays and policies to protect the unique features in the community from unrestricted development.
- Update the Zoning Ordinance to make it more user friendly.



Sense of Place

Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities.

Sense of place is achieved by maintaining the family-friendly atmosphere in the City, holding events that have a regional draw, and marketing the city's unique cultural and recreational amenities.

Objectives

DCA Goals

Cornelia Assessment



Regional Cooperation

Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs.

The City works with neighboring jurisdictions on mutual aid agreements for emergency services and participates with the County where appropriate.



Housing Options

Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource efficient housing in the community.

The City has a well-rounded and diversified housing stock and accommodates the needs of mixed incomes, sizes, and types of housing for residents.



Transportation Options

Address transportation needs, challenges, and opportunities of all community residents.

Multi-use trails and connectivity are currently in place, but expansion of these systems is needed. The City is also working to improve sidewalks and connectivity along roads (Level Grove) and community access points.

Objectives

DCA Goals

Cornelia Assessment



Educational Opportunities

Make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or pursue life ambitions.

The City is exploring ways to offer college level courses by developing a relationship with Piedmont College and North Georgia Technical College.



Community Health

Ensure that all community residents have access to critical goods and service, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good work opportunities.

The City supports health food options and does its part to address community health by creating walkable communities and providing various options for recreation within the City.

Land Use Analysis

The City of Cornelia analyzed development patterns, land use, and zoning districts to develop a baseline for development of the Community Character Areas and the Future Land Use Strategy. The existing land use makeup gives a good indication of likely development within various areas of the City. Existing zoning designations reveal what is currently allowed within various areas of the City by right, meaning that a development project is permitted under the existing zoning ordinance without requiring any special review or public hearing. Analyzing development trends will help the City formulate a future land use strategy that is realistic and consistent with the existing demand and trends within the City. Additionally, the future vision for areas may indicate that a zoning ordinance revision or update may be required to achieve that vision.

Existing Land Use

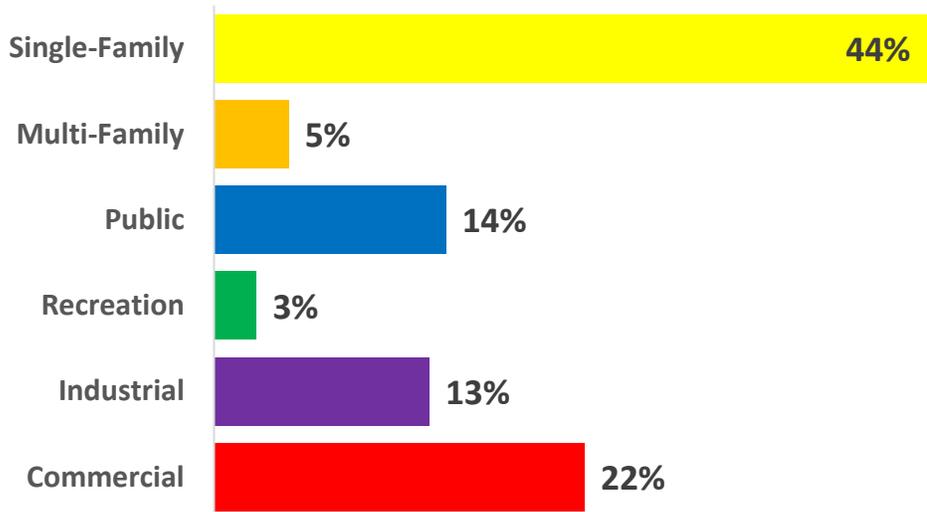
The City created an existing land use map in the Summer/Fall of 2017 using desktop GIS practices and field verification via a windshield survey. The table below summarizes the current land use breakdown in the City by percent. A land use map has also been created to illustrate the geographic breakdown of land uses within the City.

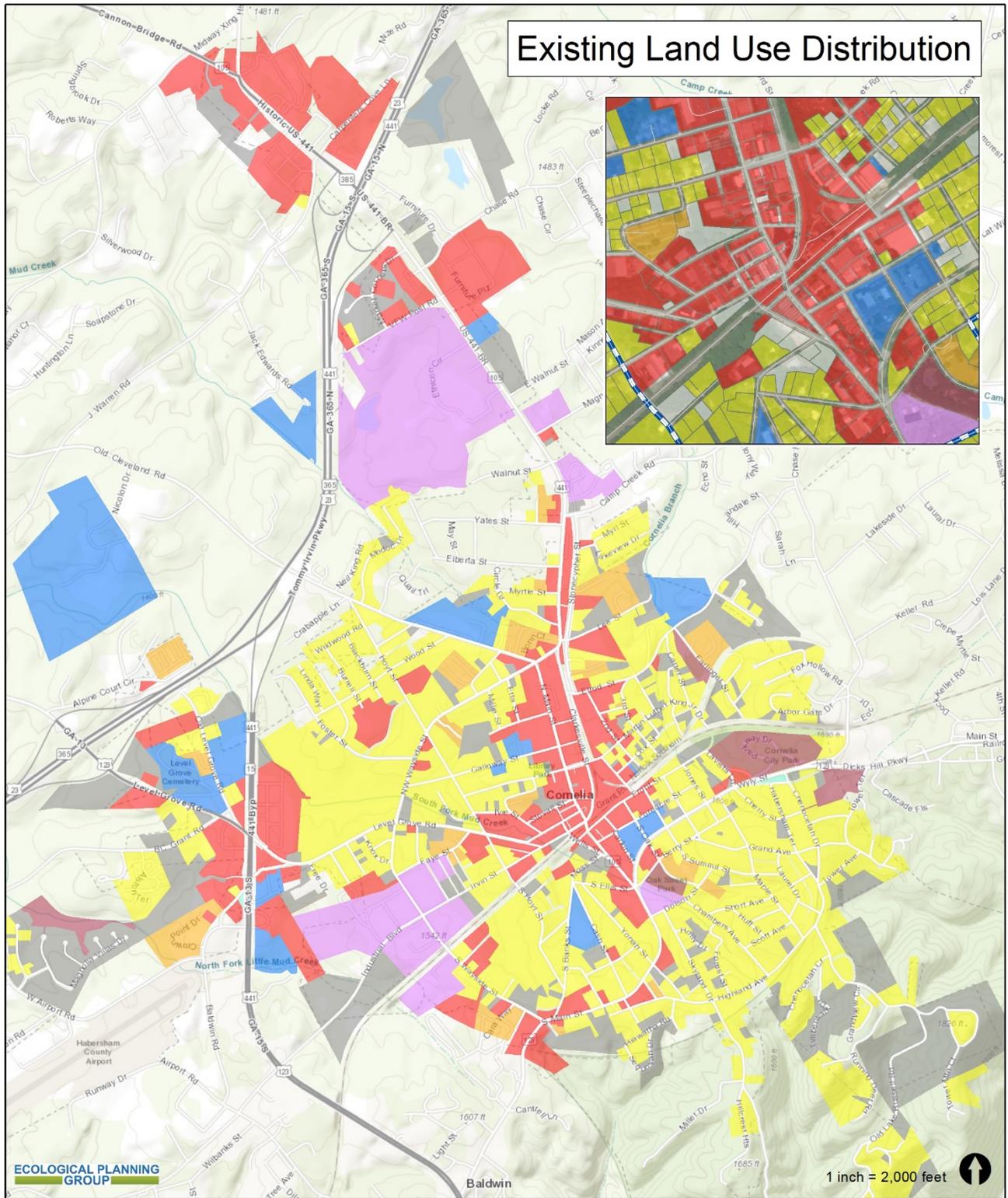
Land Use Category	Percent of City
Commercial	18%
Industrial	10%
Parks / Recreation / Conversation	2%
Public / Institutional	11%
Residential Multi-Family	4%
Residential Single-Family	35%
Transportation / Communication / Utilities	0%
Undeveloped	20%

When analyzing land uses as a whole, it is clear that single family residential is the most prominent use within the City. There is also a significant percentage of land area currently undeveloped (20%). To further analyze current trends regarding land use, undeveloped acreage was excluded and only the developed land area evaluated. The percent developed is illustrated on the figure below. Single-family residential accounts for the largest share of developed land area in the City at 44%. Residential growth has mainly taken place in south downtown and east and west of the downtown area. While the opportunity for infill residential development exists in these areas, the availability of land in the northern part of the city is a likely place for future growth to occur.

Commercial and public/institutional uses also make up a significant portion of developed land area within the City, accounting for 22% and 14% respectively. Commercial development has been concentrated in the downtown area and along major road corridors (Hwy 441), with the highest concentration of new commercial development near the intersection of these two arterials. Additional commercial development is occurring on Level Grove Road. The trend for future commercial development is likely to occur along these same corridors. The downtown area offers the greatest opportunity for infill development and revitalization of older buildings.

Industrial development has been isolated to limited locations throughout the City, but due to the size of the industrial sites, accounts for a notable percent of the developed land area (13%). Limited industrial growth is anticipated, but expansion of these important employers in the City is possible and would be beneficial to the City in terms of expending future workforce.





Existing Land Use Distribution

ECOLOGICAL PLANNING GROUP

1 inch = 2,000 feet

Legend

- Agriculture / Forest
- Parks / Recreation / Conservation
- Residential Single-Family
- Commercial
- Public / Institutional
- Transportation / Communication
- Industrial
- Residential Multi-Family
- Undeveloped



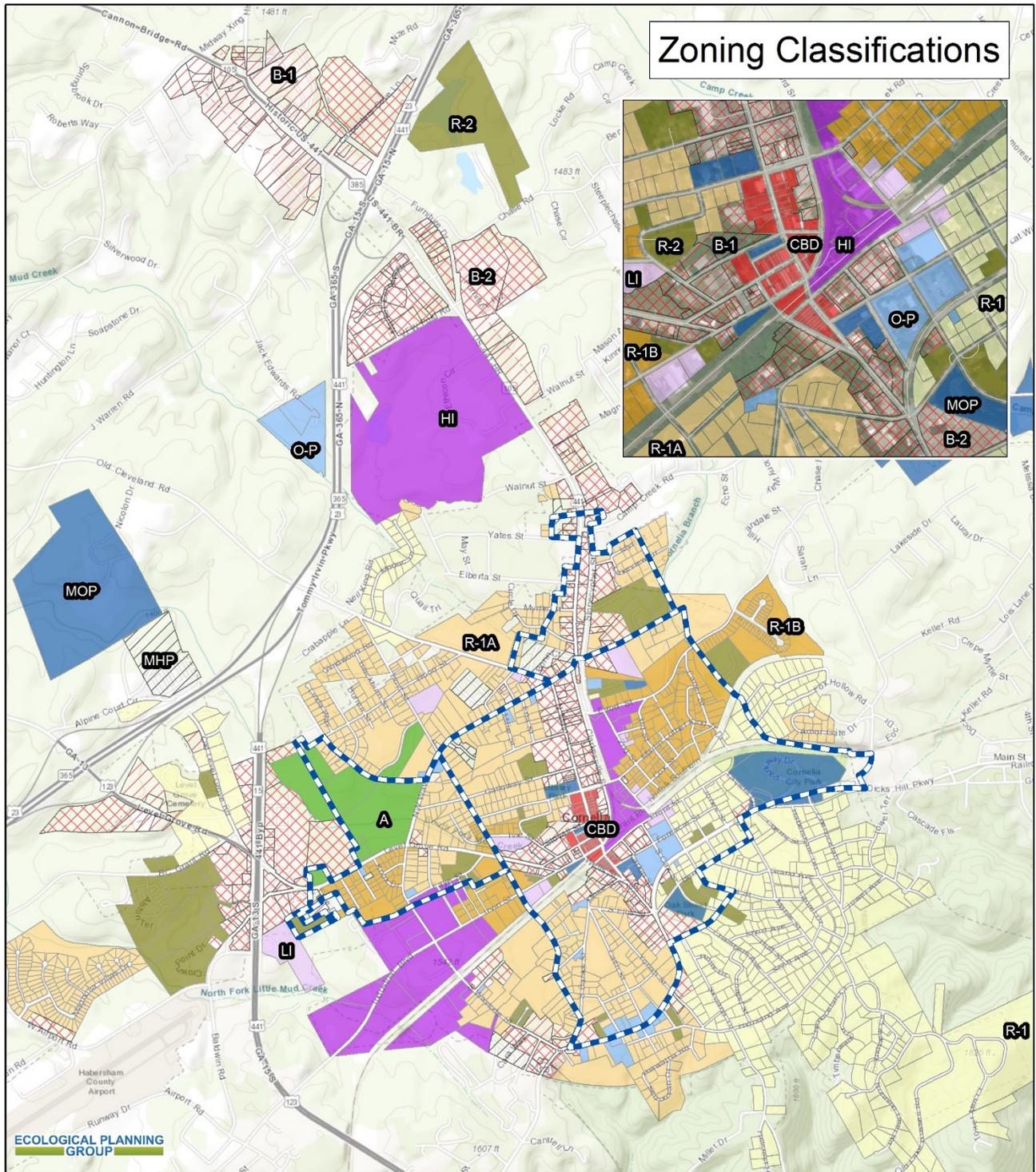


Existing Zoning

The City of Cornelia’s Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 2005. The purpose of this update was to simplify the development process by making the requirements and uses clearer. The table below summarizes the zoning categories defined in the zoning ordinance based on the percent area they account for within the City. As illustrated in the table, the residential categories account for the largest percentage in the City at nearly 50%.

District	Name	Percent of City	% Developed	% Undeveloped
A	Agriculture	2%	100%	--
B-1	Neighborhood Business	5%	72%	28%
B-2	General Business	13%	85%	15%
CBD	Central Business District	0%	99%	1%
HI	Heavy Industrial	10%	89%	11%
LI	Light Industrial	1%	100%	--
MHP	Mobile Home Park	2%	100%	--
MOP	Municipal Owned Property	17%	99%	1%
O-P	Office Professional	2%	93%	7%
R-1	Single-family Residential	20%	74%	26%
R-1A	Single-family Residential	17%	81%	19%
R-1B	Single-family Residential	5%	72%	28%
R-2	Multi-family Residential	6%	52%	48%

Recognizing the difference between land use and zoning, the City examined the percent of land area within each zoning category currently developed versus undeveloped. This analysis shows the total area currently available for future development within each zoning category and provides a quick snapshot the City can use to measure how existing zoning supports or contradicts the community vision.



ECOLOGICAL PLANNING GROUP

Legend

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| R-1, Single Family Residential | O-P, Office Professional | LI, Light Industrial |
| R-1A, Single Family Residential | B-1, Neighborhood Business | MOP, Municipal Owned Property |
| R-1B, Single Family Residential | B-2, General Business | A, Agriculture |
| R-2, Multi-Family Residential | CBD, Central Business District | Out Parcels |
| MHP, Mobile Home Park | HI, Heavy Industrial | Zoning Overlay Areas |

1 inch = 2,000 feet





Community Character Areas

Through input received from Stakeholder Committee meetings as well as the public, the City of Cornelia has identified “character areas” within the community that illustrate existing conditions and desired development patterns. These areas can contain a mix of different land uses that share similar characteristics or a desired future vision.

The City of Cornelia has chosen to use a Character Area approach to formulate a Future Development Strategy that is consistent with the Community Vision. The Community Character Area map provided the foundation for the Future Land Use map and will provide guidance during future updates to the City’s Zoning Ordinance. Furthermore, the Character Areas will be used by staff and elected officials to make decision regarding new development and redevelopment.

The following Character Areas have been identified by the community, and are shown in the map on the following page:

⇒ Developing Residential	⇒ Gateway Corridor
⇒ Stable Neighborhood	⇒ Downtown
⇒ Revitalization Area	⇒ Education Center
⇒ Historic Area	⇒ Industrial
⇒ Commercial	

Each character area description includes a summary of existing land patterns, current zoning classifications located within the character area, and the future land use strategy for the area.

Developing Residential

These areas are developed with single-family residences and/or are likely to experience suburban style residential development in the future.

Land Use Trends:

Over 50% of land within this character area is currently developed as residential. 40% of existing land area is undeveloped.

Zoning Suitability:

The following zoning categories are currently found in the Developing Residential character area:

- A, Agriculture
- B-1, Neighborhood business
- B-2, General business
- LI, Light industrial
- R-1A, Single-family residential
- R-1B, Single-family residential
- R-2, Multi-family residential

Most land in this character area is currently zoned for future residential (29% R-2, 24% R-1A, 12.4%, R-1B). Roughly 25% is also zoned agriculture, which could be rezoned for future residential development.

General business (B-2) zoned property accounts for almost 10% of land within this character. A mix of small-scale commercial is in line with the vision for this area, but the B-1 category of neighborhood commercial zoning might be more consistent.



Future Development Strategies

- Consider amending lot size requirements to allow higher density residential development in appropriate areas close to the historic downtown core.
- Promote open space preservation, trails, sidewalks, and connectivity in new residential developments.

Stable Neighborhood

This area represents existing stable residential neighborhoods. Most of the city’s parks are located in these areas.

<p>Land Use Trends:</p> <p>The current distribution of land use in this area is mainly residential (65%) and undeveloped (25%).</p>	<p>Zoning Suitability:</p> <p>The following zoning categories are currently found in the Stable Neighborhood character area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B-2, General business • MOP, Municipal owned • R-1, Single-family residential • R-1A, Single-family residential • R-1B, Single-family residential • R-2, Multi-family residential <p>Over 90% of land area is currently zoned residential. Less than 3% is zoned general business and is already developed with a commercial use.</p>
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Future Development Strategies

- Maintain the character of these areas by ensuring infill development is consistent with the existing neighborhood fabric.

Revitalization Area

These areas represent some of Cornelia’s older neighborhoods. There is a small amount of commercial property in these areas but the majority of the structures are single family residences, which have become rental properties.

Land Use Trends:

This area is generally residential in character with single-family and multi-family uses accounting for a combined 80% of the total land area.

Zoning Suitability:

The following zoning categories are currently found in the Revitalization Area character area:

- A, Agriculture
- B-2, General business
- HI, Heavy industrial
- LI, Light industrial
- MHP, Mobile home park
- R-1, Single-family residential
- R-1A, Single-family residential
- R-1B, Single-family residential

Over 85% of the land in this character area is currently zoned residential. This area also contains small sections of industrial (5%) and commercial (2%) zoned property. To protect the desired residential makeup of this area, industrial development should be appropriately buffered from the residential areas. Commercial development should be isolated to major road corridors at a neighborhood level scale to serve the surrounding residences.



Future Development Strategies

- Utilize urban redevelopment plan to encourage infill development within the specified target areas.
- Improved and consistent code enforcement regulations.
- Encourage infill development by approving smaller lot sizes.

Historic Area

This area includes the historic residential area located south-east and south-west of the railroad tracks adjacent to the downtown district.

Land Use Trends:

Relatively small in terms of total acreage, the historic area is primarily residential (72%), with a mix of commercial, public uses, and undeveloped.

Zoning Suitability:

The following zoning categories are currently found in the Historic character area:

- B-2, General business
- LI, Light industrial
- O-P, Office/professional
- R-1, Single-family residential
- R-1A, Single-family residential
- R-1B, Single-family residential
- R-2, Multi-family residential

Most residential property in this area is zoned single-family (R-1A). This area also provides the opportunity for transitional commercial uses along the major downtown access corridors. 10% of property is zoned B-2, general business and 4% O-P, office/professional.



Future Development Strategies

- Preserve the historic residential character of these neighborhoods.
- Consider development of a historic district.
- Develop design guidelines for residents wishing to develop or improved property in these areas.

Commercial

This area abuts Historic 441 and Highway 365; it currently houses large-scale retail such as Wal-Mart, K-Mart, and Lowes.

Land Use Trends:

This character area is currently developed with slightly over 50% of land classified as commercial. 25% of land within this area is currently undeveloped, which provides a suitable location for future commercial development.

Zoning Suitability:

The following zoning categories are currently found in the Commercial character area:

- A, Agriculture
- B-1, Neighborhood business
- B-2, General business
- LI, Light industrial
- MHP, Mobile home park
- R-1, Single-family residential
- R-2, Multi-family residential

Two-thirds of land is currently zoned commercial. However, it is almost evenly split between the B-1 and B-2 zoning categories. In evaluating the type of development more suitable for this area, the general commercial category appears to be more appropriate in most cases.



Future Development Strategies

- Review the B-1 & B-2 zoning categories and rezone property to be more consistent with the surrounding land uses and development trends for each category.
- Consider development of a new zoning category, if needed, to better achieve the desired commercial development aesthetics.
- Revise design guidelines for commercial zoning categories.

Gateway Corridor

These areas are the entrances to downtown that currently have a variety of uses, both commercial and residential.

Land Use Trends:

This character area contains a variety of land uses and is envisioned as a transitional stretch that leads from the higher intensity commercial uses into the neighborhood scale uses on the periphery of the downtown area. Currently, almost 50% of land in this area is commercial. Residential and undeveloped account 20% and 17% respectively, with industrial totaling 12%.

Zoning Suitability:

The following zoning categories are currently found in the Gateway Corridor character area:

- A, Agriculture
- B-1, Neighborhood commercial
- B-2, General commercial
- MHP, Mobile home park
- O-P, Office/professional
- R-1, Single-family residential
- R-1A, Single-family residential
- R-1B, Single-family residential
- R-2, Multi-family residential

The majority of property along this corridor is currently zoned B-2, general commercial (60%). Only 10% is currently zoned neighborhood commercial (B-1), which would make for a more desirable transition of uses as you get closer to the downtown area.



Future Development Strategies

- Improve the aesthetics of community access points to let visitors know they have arrived in Cornelia.
- Explore streetscape projects, façade improvements, and other opportunities to cleanup commercial property along these corridors.
- Examine the commercial zoning along this corridor for consistency with desired development

Downtown

This area is known as the “Central Business District” and is made up of historic buildings dating back to the 1890s. Renovation and redevelopment of the historic structures in this area is needed to rejuvenate the downtown area.

Land Use Trends:

The downtown area consists of a mix of commercial (75%), residential (13%), public/institutional (6%), and undeveloped (7%). The large percent of commercial space in the downtown area can be a catalyst for redevelopment and economic development goals. Currently, there is a significant amount of vacant buildings scattered throughout the downtown area.

Zoning Suitability:

The following zoning categories are currently found in the Downtown character area:

- B-1, Neighborhood business
- B-2, General business
- CBD, Central business district
- HI, Heavy industrial
- LI, Light industrial
- MOP, Municipal owned
- O-P, Office/professional
- R-1, Single-family residential
- R-1A, Single-family residential
- R-2, Multi-family residential

Nearly 60% of the property in the downtown area is currently zoned commercial or CBD. The general business (B-2) accounts for the largest percent at 39%. CBD and HI account for 11% and 10% of land in the downtown area.



Future Development Strategies

- Expand the downtown overlay district.
- Review and modify the extent of the CBD and B-2 zoned properties in the downtown area
- Utilize the opportunity zone and rural zone designation as a tool for revitalization and economic development downtown.
- Utilize the Blight Tax to encourage redevelopment and/or sale of downtown properties
- Implement beautification and safety measures such as better lighting, streetscape improvements, crosswalks, and landscaping to create a more pedestrian inviting environment



- Renovation and revitalization of existing structures to maintain the historic character of the downtown
 - Promote the adaptive reuse of buildings downtown to create a flexible environment for small businesses growth and entrepreneurs
-

Education Center

This area currently houses the elementary school and the BOE property off Elrod Street.

Land Use Trends:

All land in this area is currently being used for education related activities.

Zoning Suitability:

The following zoning categories are currently found in the Education Center character area:

- R-1A, Single-family residential

Zoning and use changes are extremely unlikely in this area since there are no known plans for re-siting the school.



Future Development Strategies

- Continue to participate in the Safe Routes to School program.
- Expand and improve sidewalks to connect neighborhoods to schools.

Industrial

This area currently houses the City’s Water/WWTP, Ethicon, Fieldale Farms along with some smaller industries.

Land Use Trends:

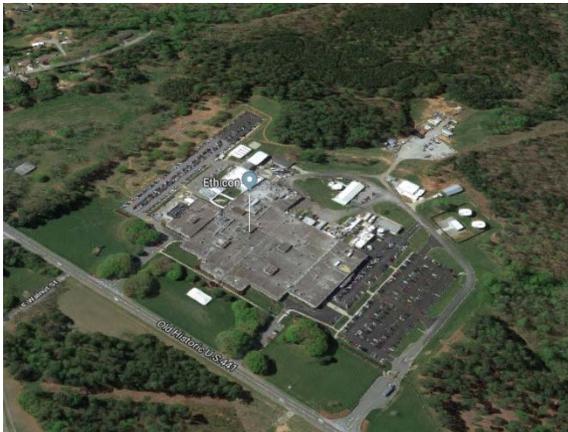
This area contains primarily industrial land, the majority of which is occupied by the City’s two major industrial players; Ethicon and Fieldale Farms. Public/institutional also has a large percentage (33%) of area due to the City’s water/wastewater treatment facilities. Undeveloped (10%), commercial (7%), and a residential (4%) are also found in this area.

Zoning Suitability:

The following zoning categories are currently found in the Industrial character area:

- B-2, General business
- HI, Heavy industrial
- MOP, Municipal owned
- O-P, Office/professional
- R-1A, Single-family residential
- R-1B, Single-family residential

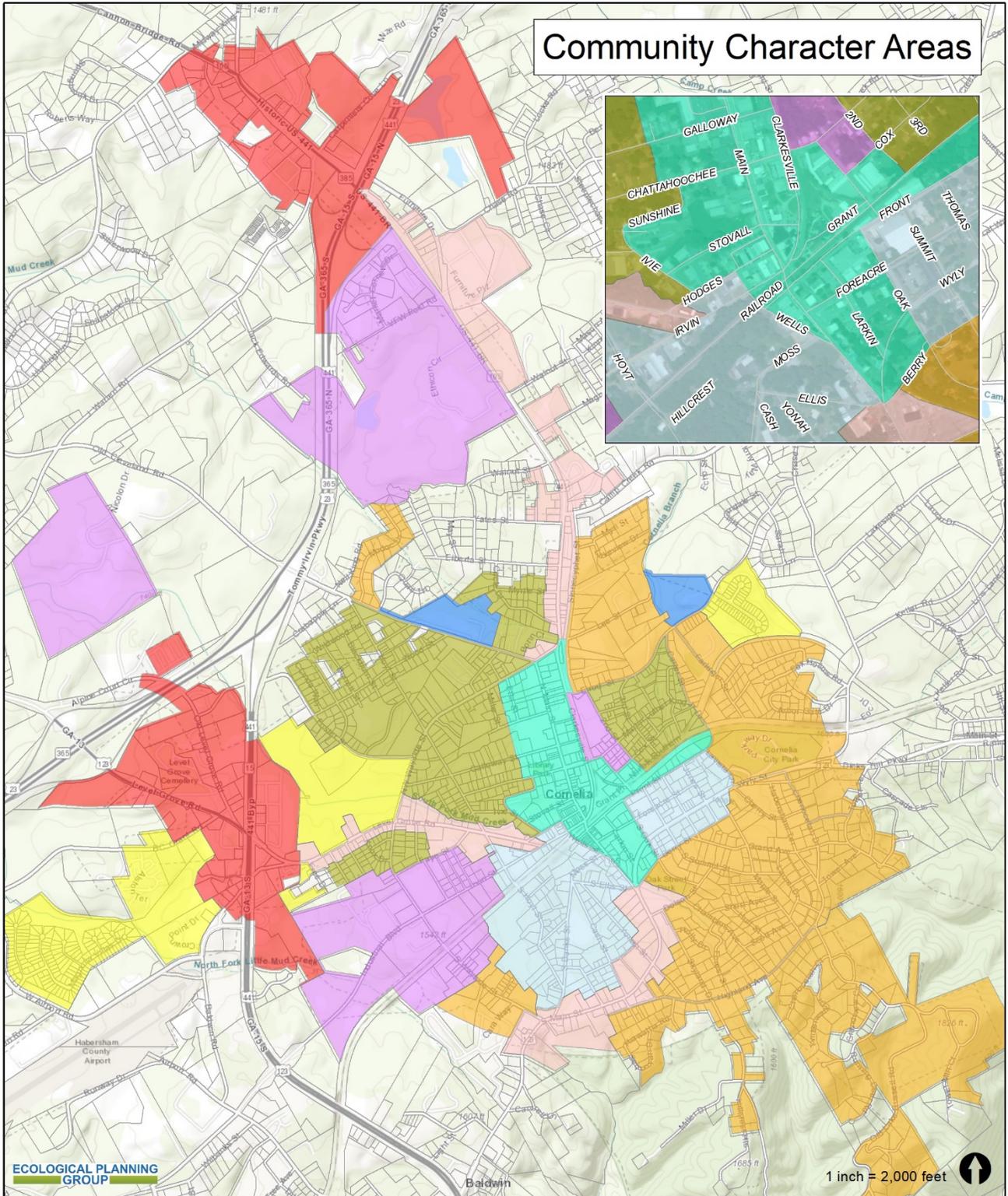
The MOP zoning category accounts for roughly 50% of total land in this character area. Heavy industrial (HI) accounts for another 35%. General commercial, single-family residential, and office/professional collectively makeup less than 10% of the remaining area. Expect this area to continue to house the more intense industrial uses.



Future Development Strategies

- Work with industries on expanding opportunities for workforce training.
- Identify locations for workforce housing near the industrial centers.

Community Character Areas

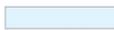
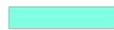


ECOLOGICAL PLANNING GROUP

1 inch = 2,000 feet



Legend

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
|  Developing Residential |  Historic Area |  Downtown |
|  Stable Neighborhood |  Commercial |  Education Center |
|  Revitalization Area |  Gateway Corridor |  Industrial |





Future Land Use Strategy

The City of Cornelia utilized the Community Character Area approach to identify the unique land use composition of the City. The Character Areas include a variety of land use in most cases, each of which play an important role in contributing to the uniqueness of the area. The City developed a parcel-based Future Land Use Strategy that includes specific land use categories for each property in the City. The Future Land Use Map us included below and was based on the Community Character Areas defined previously.

Low Density Residential

This category includes most of Cornelia’s single family residential neighborhoods. It also includes areas throughout the City where single family development is likely to occur in the future. Some instances of smaller lots and townhouses may occur within this area, generally closer to the downtown are or as part of a larger planned subdivision with open space being set aside.

Moderate Density Residential

This area was established to provide for a variety housing types at moderate densities to allow infill development in and around the downtown area or to provide a mix of housing in new developments.

Parks and Open Space

This area refers to undeveloped land and environmentally sensitive areas generally not suitable for development. The goal here is to preserve these areas as open space and/or passive recreational amenities.

Public / Institutional

This refers to government properties, schools, and other public property not likely to turn over in the foreseeable future.

Downtown Commercial

This refers to the downtown area and is established to promote a mix of commercial and residential uses with the potential for infill residential and commercial in the future. The goal of this area is to protect and revitalize the traditional, small-town character of Cornelia’s historic downtown core.

Commercial

The commercial area is intended primarily to accommodate a range of retail and service uses serving the broader needs of the community and the motoring public. Contains larger-scale retail, businesses and similar uses and should provide a transition between from the highway commercial areas to the downtown.

Highway Commercial

This commercial area is designed to provide service related uses related to the major arterials roads that intersect the City. Uses in this area will be auto-oriented when compared to the other commercial areas in the City.



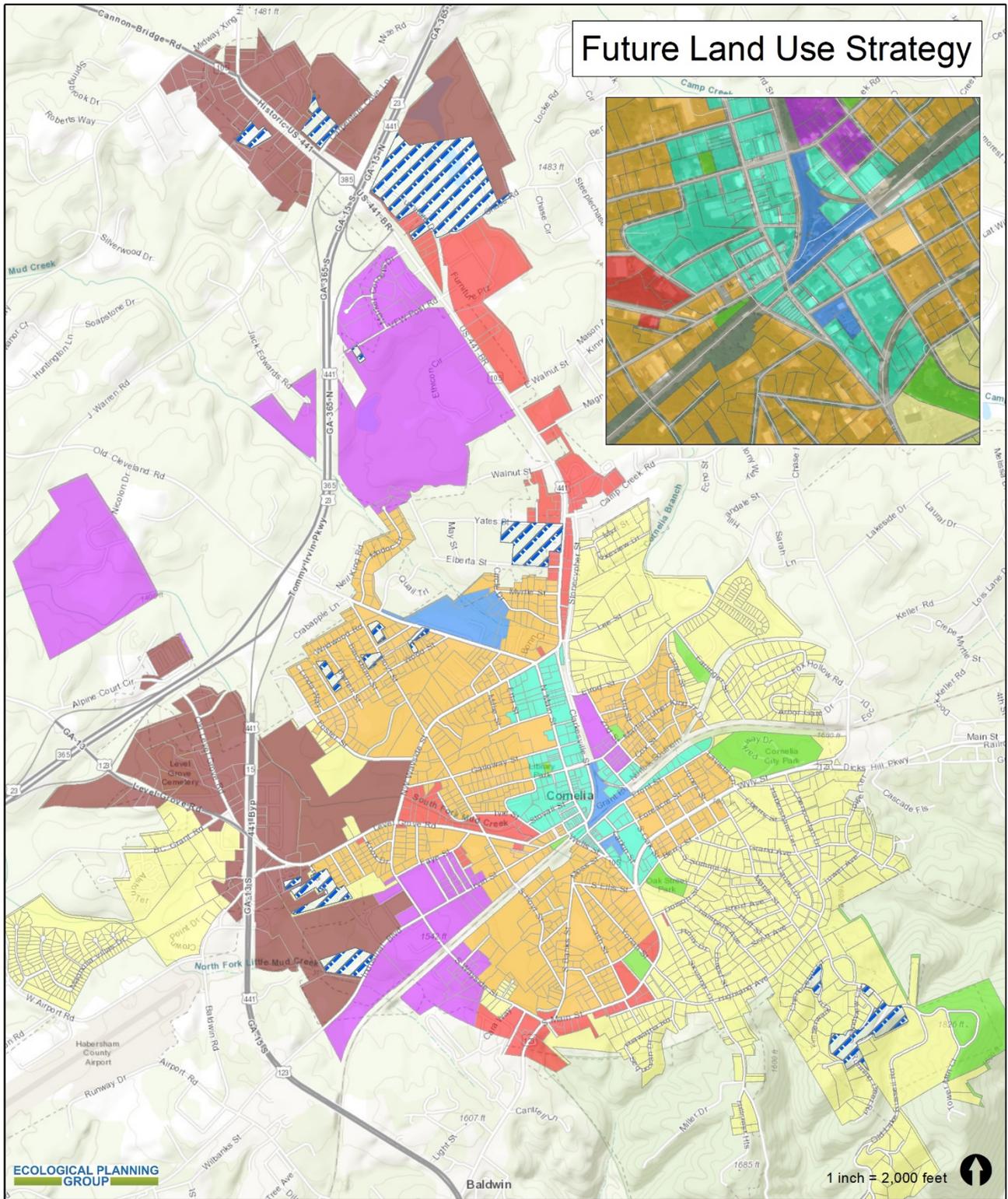
Industrial

This land use category is established to accommodate industrial and related facilities that provide jobs for citizens of the community and surrounding area and create a sustainable tax base to the city.

Annexation Considerations

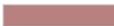
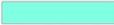
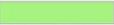
Annexation is the incorporation of land from an unincorporated county into a City. Georgia State law recognizes the importance of growing cities to the economic health of the state and states that, “municipal corporations are created for the purpose of providing local governmental services and for ensuring health, safety, and welfare of persons and the protection of property. Currently, only about 7% of the State’s land area falls within an incorporated City. However, 40% of the population lives within these cities.

The purpose of the annexation considerations category on the City of Cornelia’s Future Land Use Map is to recognize where unincorporated islands exist within and directly adjacent to the existing City boundary. Annexation is typically driven by property owners that wish to be incorporated to receive the benefits of a heightened level of municipal services provided by the jurisdiction. For this reason, the unincorporated islands have been identified because it makes logical sense for these areas to be part of the City and in many cases, this City already provides many services to these locations.



Future Land Use Strategy

ECOLOGICAL PLANNING GROUP

- Legend**
-  Commercial
 -  Highway Commercial
 -  Moderate Density Residential
 -  Downtown Commercial
 -  Industrial
 -  Parks / Openspace
 -  Public / Institutional
 -  Low Density Residential
 -  Potential Annexations Areas



Transportation

Road Network

The City of Cornelia contains roughly 60 miles of streets and roadways. The majority of the transportation system in the City is local roads. Major arterials and transportation corridors that bisect the City are State US Highway 441, which runs along the City's western boundary. According to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), this segment shows an average daily traffic (AADT) count over 33,000 vehicles with nearly 10% of that being truck traffic. Old Historic 441 is another major transportation corridor that runs north-south through the City with average traffic county at or above about 11,000 trips per day north of the center city and about 6,500 trips per day south of the City. Level Grove Road is another major access point to the center city with AADT of nearly 9,000. Generally speaking, traffic counts are relatively low and congestion is not perceived to be a major issue in the City.

Alternative Modes

The City provides opportunities for alternative modes of transportation by maintaining a vast sidewalk system. This system provides pedestrian movement through neighborhoods and along some of the major roadways. Expansion and better connectivity of this system has been identified as a goal by the City and a preliminary sidewalk inventory is being proposed in the Community Workplan. The City also has a trail system and parks that are well utilized by residents and visitors.

Parking

The availability of public parking is not perceived to be an issue within the City. In 2016, the City released a public opinion survey specifically related to the downtown district, current zoning, and preferred development types for this area. One question asked if parking downtown was an issues and participants overwhelmingly responded no (94%).

Outside of downtown, the majority of commercial development has occurred along the US 441 with ample on-site parking. Parking throughout the City is primarily surface parking lots designed to serve the immediate location only.

Railroads

Much of the history of Cornelia is attributed to the major rail line that bisects the center of the downtown. Currently, the former railroad depot is a museum and office location for the Downtown Development Authority. The rail line remains active today, providing freight connection from Gainesville to Toccoa and beyond.



Needs and Opportunities

This section evaluates needs and opportunities within the City that require consideration in order for Cornelia to achieve the vision and future land use strategy defined within this plan. To begin the process of identifying needs and opportunities, the City conducted a SWOT analysis with community stakeholder and at the Open House. This analysis provided residents and stakeholders a chance to evaluate both positive and negative characteristics within the community.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis was completed by the Cornelia Stakeholder Committee. The City also has a SWOT station setup at the community open house. The purpose of this exercise was to engage the stakeholders and community members by facilitating a process where they could provide local knowledge on current issues and trends from the perspective of the community.

The full results of the SWOT analysis have been broken down in to major planning elements and are summarized below based on objectives,

need and opportunities, and policies. Each element was also analyzed to see which of the DCA’s Quality Community Objectives best aligned with the items listed for each element. The information contained within this section will be used to development specific activities for the City’s Community Workplan.

S.W.O.T.

The following general trends were identified during the SWOT Analysis

<p><u>Strengths</u> Downtown Geographic location Sense of place Affordability Quality Parks</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u> Vacancies in downtown buildings Property maintenance Local road conditions Dilapidated housing People living in poverty</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u> Diversification of dining options Façade improvements Capitalizing on existing regional tourism More activities, arts, and eateries Additional employment opportunities</p>	<p><u>Threats</u> Loss of Community Character Increases in major crimes</p>



Economic Development

Objectives:

- Downtown revitalization
- Increase commercial development
- Redevelopment of vacant buildings
- Attract more tourism
- Expansion of employment options



Needs and Opportunities:

- Diversify the availability of jobs
- Ensure that growth does not occur in a manner that brings unforeseen negative impacts on the City (increased crime, traffic, etc.)
- Change the negative perception associated with blue collar jobs and trades
- Explore programs to incentivize façade improvements and redevelopment of older commercial structures
- Work with private developers and potential investors to renovate and revitalize the underutilized historic structures in the downtown core
- Utilize and update the vacant and historic buildings inventory to identify projects and properties that could be prioritized for redevelopment
- The City has identified 50-100 properties in the downtown area in need of redevelopment
- Develop an economic development program to help draw higher paying jobs to attract a younger skilled workforce
- Expansion of existing commercial corridors
- Explore tax abatement and other programs to assist with economic development initiatives

Policies

- Use incentives to attract and retain businesses and industries
- Encourage redevelopment and reuse of existing commercial and industrial space
- Incentivize redevelopment and reuse of buildings in the historic area of downtown
- Undertake the annexation of unincorporated islands within the City and areas that currently receive city services
- Streamline the development process to make Cornelia a desirable and easy place to do business

Quality Community Objectives

- Economic Prosperity
- Efficient Land Use
- Local Preparedness
- Sense of place

Transportation

Objectives:

- Manage traffic along 441 and other major corridors
- Improve local road and sidewalk conditions
- Expand multi-use paths and non-motorized connectivity throughout the City



Needs and Opportunities:

- Better connectivity between commercial areas and adjacent residential neighborhoods
- Improve existing sidewalks
- Expand sidewalk and trail system
- Prioritize areas for street repaving
- Explore opportunities for grants for trail design and construction
- Provide connection of cul-de-sacs through the use of trails

Policies

- Improve and maintain the transportation system
- Promote connectivity within the road, sidewalk, and trail network
- Support investment in alternative modes of transportation
- Explore funding opportunities for transportation projects
- Support programs and projects that address alternative modes of transportation

Quality Community Objectives

- Transportation Options
- Economic Prosperity
- Efficient Land Use
- Local Preparedness
- Community Health
- Regional Cooperation

Housing

Objectives:

- Provide a mix of housing types and price points
- Provide housing options for young families, first-time home buyers, and millennials
- Eliminate dilapidated housing



Needs and Opportunities:

- Develop a better understanding of housing needs within the City
- Encourage infill residential development in and around the downtown area
- Factor in tree canopy and open space preservation in new housing developments
- Better understand the condition of the existing housing stock
- Explore ways to address code enforcement issues in different neighborhoods around the City

Policies

- Encourage development of a range of housing options
- Encourage infill housing development in older established areas of the City
- Allow mixed residential / commercial development projects in the downtown area
- Support mixed use housing projects
- Allow for housing on smaller lots
- Support programs that provide assistance to elderly / disabled people in need of property maintenance

Quality Community Objectives

- Housing Options
- Economic Prosperity
- Efficient Land Use
- Resource Management
- Local Preparedness
- Sense of place

Land Use

Objectives:

- Diversify land use distribution within the City
- Provide a mix of land uses to support the retail, service, and professional needs of residents of the City
- Protect the existing quality of life within the City



Needs and Opportunities:

- Address property maintenance issues throughout the City
- Identify areas for infill commercial and residential development
- Reserve land for future industrial and commercial growth
- Explore innovative uses for large undeveloped sites in the City
- An inventory of vacant, dilapidated, and under-utilized structures throughout the City
- Revise the B-1 and B-2 zoning categories
- Proximity to 441 provides numerous options for commercial and industrial development
- Allow for smaller lots and increased residential density to support downtown revitalization

Policies

- Revise zoning ordinance to address lot size limitations and the use table
- Refer to the future land use map to ensure land use decisions are consistent with the vision for this plan

Quality Community Objectives

- Economic Prosperity
- Efficient Land Use
- Local Preparedness
- Resource Management
- Sense of place

Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources



Objectives:

- Attract more tourism
- Protection of natural, cultural, and historic resources
- Increase/expand the availability of recreational opportunities within the City

Needs and Opportunities:

- Utilize the Big Apple and railroad history to draw visitors to the City
- Continuing holding festivals and other events that have a regional draw and bring people into the City
- Explore ways to connect the City with Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest
- Utilize the City’s proximity to numerous outdoor recreation options as a draw
- Expand and improve current City parks
- Explore the opportunity for exercise stations throughout the downtown area and with existing parks

Policies

- Use incentives to encourage protection of historic resources
- Promote preservation and protection of open space in new developments
- Support partnerships with private property owners to help protect natural, cultural, and historic resources
- Support eco-tourism and other innovative approaches to drawing visitors

Quality Community Objectives

- Economic Prosperity
- Efficient Land Use
- Sense of place
- Resource Management
- Educational Attainment

Facilities and Services

Objectives:

- Expand and improve water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure
- Provide high quality recreational facilities and activities to residents
- Expand sidewalks and trails



Needs and Opportunities:

- Make improvements to city-maintained infrastructure
- Improve pedestrian crosswalks at busy intersections
- Improve lighting in downtown area
- Provide more youth activities
- Increase public awareness of city facilities and activities
- Improve drainage in flooding hotspot areas
- Improve aesthetics of community gateways

Policies

- Follow the capital improvement program for needed upgrades to various infrastructure components
- Provide and expand sidewalks, trails, parks, and other City services

Quality Community Objectives

- Economic Prosperity
- Efficient Land Use
- Local Preparedness
- Sense of place

Governance / Intergovernmental Coordination

Objectives:

- Transparency
- Coordination with other agencies



Needs and Opportunities:

- Work with other governmental authorities to minimize the duplications of services
- Improve cooperation between the City and County

Policies

- Support the sharing of resources and information between the City and County where appropriate
- Consider an intergovernmental approach to addressing shared concerns and issues
- Leverage the Comprehensive Plan as a guidance document to communicate the community vision with other agencies
- Coordinate with County on Service Delivery Strategy
- Make a commitment to achieving the goals identified in this plan

Quality Community Objectives

- Economic Prosperity
- Efficient Land Use
- Resource Management

Implementation Strategy

The implementation strategy demonstrates and defines the action items the City of Cornelia will undertake to achieve the community vision, address the community goals, encourage compliance with the Future Land Use map, and address the needs and opportunities. A proposed schedule, responsible party, and potential funding source are outlined within this plan. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs requires that cities complete an implementation plan as well as a report of accomplishments, which is a status update summarizing the previous work plan. Included below are the 2018-2022 Community Work Plan and the 2013-2017 Report of Accomplishment:

Community Work Program

The Community Workplan includes the following information for each listed action item:

- Action Item: Brief description of the activity
- Timeframe: The timeframe for initiating and/or completed each action item s broken into four categories: 1) Ongoing (currently in-progress), 2) Immediate (1-2 years), 3) Short-term (2-5 years), and 4) Long-term (5-10 years). Items identified for immediate and/or short-term should be viewed as having a priority status.
- Priority: With an understanding that the City has limited resources to dedicate to implementation of the CWP, the City has assigned a priority status to each action item in an effort to assist with identification of the most urgent, necessary, and/or desired programs. However, it is important to recognize that all action items included herein relate to needs and opportunities identified in the plan. The four priority levels are: 1) Current/in-Process (C), 2) High (H), 3) Medium (M), 4) Low (L).
- Responsible Party: Parties identified as being responsible for implementation of the action items include city departments, agencies, and authorities. The responsible parties identified within the CWP as listed by the following acronyms:
 - PZ – Planning and Zoning
 - CM – City Manager’s Office
 - PW – Public Works
 - PU – Public Utilities
 - FD – Fire Department
 - PD – Police Department
 - DDA – Downtown Development Authority
 - DNR – Department of Natural Resources
 - GDOT – Department of Transportation
- Funding Source: The City has identified the potential or recommended funding source. It may be a specific city fund, grant, loan, or other source.

<i>Cornelia Community Work Plan</i>				
<i>Action Item</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Funding Source / Cost</i>
Economic Development				
Rehabilitation of the old Bank building in downtown	Short-term	H	DDA	General Fund, Grants Cost: To be determined
Acquire façade and signage grant for downtown area	Short-term	M	DDA	General Fund, Grants Cost: Staff Time
Implement activities identified in the Urban Redevelopment Plan	Ongoing	M	PZ	General Fund Cost: Variable
Develop an economic development plan to help diversify the availability of jobs at different income ranges	Long-term	L	PZ, DDA	General Fund Cost: \$25,000
Utilize the Opportunity Zone and Rural Zone designation from DCA as a way to encourage downtown development / redevelopment	Ongoing	H	PZ, DDA	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Enforce the Blight Tax to get properties revitalized, redeveloped, and occupied	Ongoing	H	PZ	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Implement the Apple Tree Ally Streetscape and façade improvement project	Short-term	M	DDA	General Fund, Grants Cost: \$650K
Coordinate with the Economic Development Council on activities listed in the Regional Plan	Ongoing	L	DDA	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Develop promotional materials and marketing campaign the bring small businesses to downtown	Ongoing	M	DDA	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Maintain an inventory of vacant and underutilized buildings in the downtown area that could be marketed for renovation / redevelopment	Immediate	H	DDA	General Fund Cost: \$20,000
Maintain an inventory of vacant and underutilized commercial properties throughout the City	Immediate	M	PZ, DDA	General Fund Cost: \$20,000
Implement activities defined in the DDA workplan	Ongoing	M	DDA	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Transportation				
Streetscape project on Main Street from Front Street to Wylly	Ongoing	M	PW	General Fund, SW Utility, LMIG



<i>Cornelia Community Work Plan</i>				
<i>Action Item</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Funding Source / Cost</i>
				Cost: \$150K-\$300K
Sidewalk improvements on Level Grove / Wayside	Ongoing	M	PW	General Fund, Stormwater Fund, LMIG Cost: \$2M-\$3M
Improve aesthetics at community access points	Long-term	L	PW	General Fund Cost: \$125K
Complete a sidewalk inventory and condition assessment	Immediate	M	PW	General Fund Cost: \$35,000
Work with GA Power to improve lighting downtown	Long-term	L	DDA, PW	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Improve pedestrian crosswalks to improve safety and encourage walkability downtown	Short-term	M	PW, GDOT	General Fund Cost: \$50,000
Implement Safe Routes to School Program	Ongoing	H	PW	General Fund, Grants Cost: Staff Time
Expand and improved connectivity between existing sidewalk and trail system	Long-term	L	PW, PZ	General Fund Cost: To be determined
Study and prioritize areas where ADA compliant sidewalk improvements can be completed	Short-term	M	PW, DDA	General Fund Cost: To be determined
Develop a brochure and/or online map showing trails and connected roads for runners and walkers	Short-term	L	DDA	General Fund Cost: To be determined
Resurface local roads based on a prioritized list	Ongoing	M	PW, GDOT	LMIG Cost: Variable
Implement streetscape projects and other improvements defined in the Masterplan	Ongoing	M	PW	General Fund, Grants Cost: Variable
Rehabilitation of the Mud Creek Greenway and construction of sidewalks to connect greenway to existing trails, facilities, and businesses	Short-term	M	PW	General Fund, Stormwater Fund, Grants Cost: To be determined
Explore opportunities for more consistent and reliable ride sharing (eg. Uber, Lift, etc.)	Long-term	L	DDA	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Housing				
Develop an Infill Development Plan	Short-term	M	DDA	General Fund Cost: \$40,000



<i>Cornelia Community Work Plan</i>				
<i>Action Item</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Funding Source / Cost</i>
Utilize the URP as a way to address abandoned structures in the Target Area	Ongoing	M	PZ, DDA	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Revise zoning ordinance to allow smaller lot residential infill development	Immediate	H	PZ	General Fund Cost: \$30,000
Explore programs to assist people in need with property maintenance	Long-term	L	PZ	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Determine if there is a market for tiny houses and if so, consider amending zoning to accommodate	Long-term	L	PZ/DDA	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Promote mixed use housing in downtown (ie. commercial downstairs, residential upstairs)	Short-term	H	DDA	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Natural & Cultural Resources				
Extend the Trail project from the Depot to Veterans Memorial Drive	Long-term	L	PW	General Fund Cost: To be determined
Establish and nominate members to the Historic Preservation Commission	Immediate	L	CM, PZ	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Create an inventory of historic structures	Short-term	M	PZ	General Fund Cost: Staff Time / \$15,000
Apply for National Historic District designation	Long-term	L	DDA	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Continue holding festivals to draw in tourism	Ongoing	H	DDA	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Implement rails to trails project to provide connection between Cornelia and Mt. Airy	Long-term	L	PZ, PW	General Fund Cost: To be determined
Implement Multi-use trail projects and greenway identified in the Cornelia Masterplan	Long-term	M	PZ, PW	General Fund Cost: Variable
Complete stream bank restoration and stormwater improvements for the South Fork of Mud Creek	Short-term	M	PW	Stormwater Funds Cost: \$125K-\$175K
Community Facilities and Services				
Design and develop mixed use development at old Bank building	Short-term	H	DDA	General Fund Cost: To be determined
Build new Municipal Complex	Short-term	H	CM	General Fund Cost: \$2M-\$3M



<i>Cornelia Community Work Plan</i>				
<i>Action Item</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Funding Source / Cost</i>
Purchase and upgrade fire protection equipment and vehicles	Ongoing	H	FD	General Fund Cost: \$400K-\$600K
Purchase new fleet vehicles	Ongoing	H	FD, PD, PW, PU	Enterprise Funds Cost: Variable
Design and construct composting facility	Long-term	L	PW, PU	Enterprise Funds Cost: \$350K-\$500K
Purchase a new multi-purpose tractor or similar piece of equipment	Long-term	L	PW	Enterprise Fund Cost: \$50,000
Implement a program converting leaves and debris to wood chips	Ongoing	L	PW	Enterprise Fund Cost: Staff Time
New garage to house vehicles	Short-term	M	FD	General Fund Cost: \$50,000
Complete new fire station design and construction on south end of the City	Short-term	M	FD	General Fund Cost: \$750K
New fire suppression engine truck	Short-term	M	FD	General Fund Cost: Variable
SCBA/air packs	Short-term	M	FD	General Fund/SAFER grant Cost: \$75,000
Exhaust system for the engine bays at the north station	Short-term	M	FD	General Fund Cost: \$50,000
Fire suppression engine to replace current one	Short-term	M	FD	General Fund Cost: \$300K-\$400K
New extrication tools	Short-term	M	FD	General Fund/SAFER grant Cost: \$50,000
Complete meter replacement and upgrades	Ongoing	M	PU	Water/Sewer Fund Cost: Variable
Construct new reservoir for water	Ongoing	M	PU	Water/Sewer Fund Cost: \$500K-\$750K
Upgrade hydrants, valves, and other water related infrastructure	Ongoing	M	PU	Water/Sewer Fund Cost: Variable
Complete upgrades to the wastewater treatment plan	Ongoing	H	PU	Water/Sewer Fund Cost: Variable
Complete pump station upgrade and replacements	Ongoing	H	PU	Water/Sewer Fund Cost: Variable
Maintain/replace sewer lines and infrastructure	Ongoing	H	PU	Water/Sewer Fund Cost: Variable
Perform proactive drainage maintenance	Ongoing	H	PW	Stormwater Fund Cost: Variable



<i>Cornelia Community Work Plan</i>				
<i>Action Item</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Funding Source / Cost</i>
Implement and update the Stormwater CIP	Ongoing	H	PW	Stormwater Fund Cost: Variable but defined in CIP
Governance / Intergovernmental Coordination				
Review the Community Work Plan annually at a Commission Retreat to facilitate implementation	Ongoing	H	CM	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Coordinate with the County on Service Delivery	Short-term	H	CM	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Make brochures and update webpage to better educate residents and business community on what types of activities require permits	Short-term	M	DDA/PZ	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Implement appropriate mitigation action items identified in the Hazard Mitigation Plan to make the city more prepared and resilient to potential hazards	Ongoing	H	CM	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Explore opportunities for shared services between Habersham County and neighboring jurisdictions	Long-term	M	CM	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Participate in the NFIP program	Ongoing	H	CM	General Fund Cost: Staff Time
Explore benefits of participating in the Community Rating System program for floodplain management	Short-term	L	CM	General Fund Cost: Staff Time / \$20,000
Revise the zoning ordinance to make the use table clearer and more user friendly	Immediate	H	CM, PZ	General Fund Cost: \$30,000
Examine and consider rezoning of B-1 and B-2 properties to better fit the character of the area	Immediate	H	CM, PZ	General Fund Cost: Staff Time



Report of Accomplishments

The following report of accomplishments summarizes activities completed since the 2013 Comprehensive Plan Update. Items that are Completed have been finished within the 5-Year reporting period prior to this Comprehensive Plan Update. Items that are Underway/Continuing have been initiated or have had partial progress made and have been carried over into the new Community Workplan. Items that are Postponed are still priorities for the community and have been in the new Community Workplan. Items marked Cancelled are activities no longer prioritized by the City.

Activity	Status	Comment
<i>General Administration</i>		
Main Streetscape (Hodges to Chattahoochee)	Completed 2015	This project was completed in 2015
Streetscape project on Main Street from Front Street to Wily	Underway	Completed to Moss/ Wells St. intersection
Cultural Arts Center	Canceled	This project was canceled, but the City is exploring alternative options for the redevelopment of the site this was originally planned for
Safe Routes to School Travel Plan Implementation	Completed	The City received a grant from GDOT that resulting in the installation of sidewalks as well as some other outreach
Property Acquisition for new Municipal Building	Underway	Most acquisition complete
New Municipal Building	Underway	This project will be replaced with a New City Hall
Telephonics upgrade	Completed	
Computer software upgrade	Completed	
New signs at the entrances to the City	Completed	
South Main Street sidewalk project	Completed	
Level Grove/Wayside Street sidewalk project	Postponed	This project has been postponed until grant funding becomes available. It will be renamed Wayside St. Phase I.
<i>Public Works</i>		
New garage to house vehicles	Postponed	This project has been postponed due to funding concerns.
Composting facility	Postponed	This project has been postponed until grant funding becomes available.



Activity	Status	Comment
Community House Floor	Completed	
Community House Roof	Completed	
Depot Back Room Renovation	Completed	
Street resurfacing priority plan	Completed	Updated 2017
New multi-purpose tractor	Postponed	This project has been postponed until grant funding becomes available.
<i>Sanitation</i>		
New compactor truck	Completed	Purchased 2016
New scooter truck	Not Completed	Changes in sanitation operations eliminated the need for this vehicle.
Implement composting of leaves and wood chips	Postponed	This project has been postponed until grant funding becomes available.
<i>Planning Department/Downtown Development</i>		
New downtown parking lot	Canceled	Parking at New City Hall eliminates need for this project.
Façade and Sign Grants for Downtown	Underway	This is an annual grant program.
Complete Revitalization Plan	Completed	
Develop Infill Development Plan	Postponed	Some work on this has taken place, but will be included in future community workplan
Revitalization Phase I	Completed	Renamed Urban Redevelopment Phase I
Revitalization Phase II	Completed	Renamed Urban Redevelopment Phase II
Revitalization Phase III	Completed	Renamed Urban Redevelopment Phase III
<i>Recreation</i>		
Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan	Completed	<i>This project is currently being completed through a TE Grant from DOT.</i>
New restroom at City Park	Completed	
Gateway Park Project	Not Completed	This project has been eliminated from the City's priorities due to cost.
City Park trail project	Completed	
Trail project from Depot to Veterans Memorial Dr.	Underway	This project is being completed in conjunction with new construction and road improvements. The Wal-Mart segment has been completed. The remainder of the segment to Veterans Memorial Dr. is planned in association with future road improvements by DOT.



Activity	Status	Comment
New park at Hodges & Level Grove	Completed	This project was replaced with the Mud Creek Greenway project- completed 2014.
Recreation Center	Not Completed	This project has been eliminated from the City's priorities due to cost.
Skatepark	Completed	This project was completed in 2013.
<i>Public Safety</i>		
Replace 6 patrol cars	Completed	
Replace 6 patrol cars	Completed	
New snorkel truck (Replaced with the purchase of an aerial fire truck).	Completed	This task will be replaced with the purchase of an aerial fire truck. The aerial fire truck (ladder truck) was purchased in 2016- \$632,000
New Extrication tools	Completed	
New fire suppression engine truck	Postponed	plan for 2019-2020
SCBA/ air packs	Postponed	\$75K- FEMA SAFER grant application in- hopefully, 2019
Exhaust system for the engine bays at the north station.	Postponed	2020 Approx. \$50,000
fire suppression engine to replace aging current one	Postponed	2019/2020 Approx. \$350,000
New fire station for the south end	Postponed	2018/2019- cost not yet established
Second Fire Station on North End of Town	Completed	Purchased 2011, construction completed 2014. Addition/ engine bays completed 2016
New Extrication tools	Postponed	planning to get some more in the 2019-2020
<i>Water</i>		
Plant upgrade and expansion of water treatment plant	Underway	New water plant is in progress.
Reservoir dredging	Underway	This task has been included in the development of the new Reservoir expected to be complete 2019
Water tank rehabilitation	Completed	
New elevated storage tank on North end of City	Canceled	Fire pump made this unnecessary



Activity	Status	Comment
Meter replacement	Underway	At present, AMI upgrades/ meter replacement are in process.
Old Cleveland/Hoyt water line replacement	Completed	CDBG Phase I completed 2012 (AKA Revitalization Phase I/ Renamed Urban Redevelopment Phase I)
Reservoir overflow improvements	Underway	This task is included in new Reservoir project currently under construction and scheduled for completion in 2019.
Booster station at Fieldale	Not Completed	Fieldale plant expansion eliminated need for booster station by city.
<i>Sewer</i>		
Yates Street water & sewer project	Completed	
Install sewer lines/lift station to serve the Camp Creek	Completed	
Stormwater infiltration project	Completed	
Plant expansion	Underway	This project is in the design phase. Completion expected in 2018/2019.
Gravity Line from Habersham Hills to Wally World Drive	Canceled	Determined that there was not an immediate need
Level Grove Lift Station upgrade	Completed	Replaced pumps, which allowed the station to handle more sewer capacity
Tower Mountain sewer upgrade	Underway	The is underway, due to be completed in October 2018
South J. Warren lift station upgrade	Completed	
North J. Warren lift station upgrade- renamed Pump Station Replacement/Upgrades.	Completed	This project will be implemented during the upcoming 2018- 2022 STWP/ CWP. It will be renamed Pump Station Replacement/Upgrades.
Alpine lift station update (Replaced with upsized Force Main).	Completed	This project will be implemented during the upcoming STWP. Replaced with upsized Force Main.