

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
CORNELIA MAIN STREET PROGRAM
2022 STRATEGIC WORK PLAN



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December 2021



Greetings,

It has been our great pleasure to partner with the Cornelia Main Street Program to create its *2022 Strategic Work Plan*.

Cornelia is fortunate to have highly talented leaders who are engaged and willing to do the heavy lifting of economic development for the Cornelia downtown community. To plan for this work, the Main Street staff and the planning specialist firm, *Georgia Downtowns*, gathered input from the community and downtown leadership to identify those projects that will have the greatest impact on downtown economic prosperity. Specifically, partners identified the plan's "community transformation" strategies – strategies that serve as the overarching themes and are backbone of the work – and developed each strategy's goals, assessment, and tasks. These components will have a great impact on Downtown Cornelia's economic revitalization.

The "Community Transformation" Strategies are:

- Businesses and Amenities to Serve Residents and
- Beautification Initiatives and Design.

The identified Goals are:

- Retain, Expand, or Recruit businesses for the downtown district (retail, arts/entertainment) and
- Improve the appearance of private and public downtown properties.

While the above are not the *only* issues and projects identified during the planning process, they were ranked to be the most important and transformational, that is, the achievement of these priorities will have a positive, high impact, and long-lasting effect on the economic prosperity of the Cornelia Downtown District.

As evidenced in this Executive Summary, executing the strategic work plan will require an engaged and enthusiastic community and a set of leaders who are committed to working with all of its stakeholders and partners. We know Cornelia has what it takes to achieve this work.

It is with pleasure and excitement, that *Georgia Downtowns* presents the *Downtown Cornelia 2022 Strategic Work Plan*.

Joel Cordle, Principal

Definitions

Strategic Plan. An effective strategic plan guides staff and the board as they prioritize their work, choosing those projects that will most effectively transform downtown. That is, the plan presents the work needed to revitalize downtown and increase its economic prosperity.

As recommended by the National Main Street Center, Cornelia's 2022 Main Street Program Strategic Plan is based on current data and community and downtown leadership input and, as required by the Georgia Main Street Office, it is organized using a new work plan template. A Main Street strategic plan uses community input to allow downtown leadership to best understand what stakeholders need and want. It uses market data to discover downtown's current economic trends and patterns.

The plan is organized under what the National Main Street Center and Georgia Main Street Office identify as "transformation strategies" and employs the Four Points of Main Street: design, organization, promotion, and economic vitality, to ensure the plan is comprehensive.

The strategic plan also lays out important goals, with measures for success, key partnerships, goal leader, and detailed and measurable tasks. Each task is assigned a due date, person responsible for completion, and budget.

Community Transformation Strategies are designed to serve as the backbone for what drives a Main Street Program. They are intended to function as an overarching theme to rally volunteers, inspire investors and serve as a catalyst for growth over a period of years. At their core, strategies should be comprehensive, based on data, concise, goal-oriented, and visionary.

"Wildly Important" Goals are simply stated and reflective of Community Transformation Strategies. Each strategy should have no more than two or three goals. Goals should be action-oriented, measurable, and important for the success of the program.

Definition of Success is the measured outcome of each goal. To decide what success "looks like," think in terms of "how much" (percentage) or "how many" (units), and "by when" (calendar days).

Tasks are the actions to be completed to achieve the goal. Tasks use action verbs.

(Adapted from the [Georgia Main Street Office definitions](#).)

Need for Planning

Both the National Main Street Center and the Georgia Main Street Office require each certified local Main Street to operate with an up-to-date strategic work plan. The plan is developed through an annual planning session and is key to successful downtown revitalization. Community and downtown leadership input are key to creating a plan. The data gathered from stakeholders and downtown leaders allows the staff and board to set economic development goals, develop a vision for downtown, and present a plan that is transformative and successful.

Downtown Leadership Input Survey

- Seven respondents
- Anonymous
- Eight questions: six close-ended questions and two open-ended questions
- A complete set of survey data accompanies this summary.

Respondents had a strong vision for Downtown Cornelia; their ideas included:

- Food and retail
- Community events
- Businesses, activities, people
- Kid-friendly
- Nice landscape, historic façade intact, all buildings with something in them
- Commercial buildings full.
- Restored buildings, clean, shops and restaurants

Process for Planning

Between August and December 2021, Cornelia Main Street Program director Jessie Owensby communicated with *Georgia Downtowns* partners Joel Cordle and Alice Sampson to begin and confirm the process for creating an annual strategic work plan.

Specifically, *Georgia Downtowns*...

- * Designed two surveys: Community Input and Downtown Leadership;
- * Collected, organized, and presented results from the community and leadership surveys,
- * Planned with staff and used recent data to facilitate an annual retreat, and
- * Delivered a strategic work plan that drives the work for economic revitalization (summarized in this document).

Vision

In 2032, Downtown Cornelia is lively and thriving - offering its residents and visitors an attractive center that is clean and well-maintained. People are visiting, shopping, and dining in a walkable, safe environment. Downtown's interconnected pedestrian system includes rails to trails, sidewalks, and a pedestrian bridge connecting both sides of the tracks. Downtown is bustling with activities and entertainment that attract young families. All buildings are filled with a diversity of restaurants and retail stores and a new corner market. New residential options attract permanent residents of all ages. Downtown Cornelia is a great place to live, work, shop, and play.

The Strategic Work Plan

The complete strategic work plan includes transformation strategies and each strategy's goals.

The trends that emerged from the community and downtown data and are guided by the plan's vision. The plan's vision is realized through the plan's transformation strategies, each strategy is assigned a set of goals. For each goal, there is a "definition for success," a goal leader, and a developed set of tasks. Each task within a set is assigned a due date, person responsible, and budget. With staff assistance and support, the board determines the pace for success in achieving the plan and staff sets the budget.

To read the strategic work plan, contact the Cornelia Main Street office.