

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER/GEORGIA REGISTER NOMINATION

1. Name: Cornelia Commercial Historic District

2. Location: The district is in the city of Cornelia in Habersham County, centered around the intersection of Main St. & Irvin St.

3a. Description: The Cornelia Commercial Historic District is in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of northeast Georgia. The city of approximately 4 square miles rises 1,519 feet above sea level, and the landscape is defined by rolling wooded hills. The Cornelia Commercial Historic District is adjacent to the railroad tracks that brought industry and tourists to the city. The railroad's importance to Cornelia is demonstrated by its prominent depot and the tracks' central location within the development of the city. An informal grid was established by the perpendicular crossing of Main Street over the railroad and the development emanating from that intersection. The commercial buildings fronting on Irvin and Hodges streets have rectangular lots approximately 85' – 110' deep, and approximately 20' – 33' wide. The built environment of the Cornelia Commercial Historic District is almost entirely composed of commercial buildings. These historic buildings are turn-of-the-century to mid-20th century, one- and two-part commercial block buildings that range from one- to two-stories in height. The district contains examples of architectural styles popular in America from the late 19th century into the mid-20th century including Colonial Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Craftsman. However, the majority of commercial buildings in the district do not have a distinct style, rather they feature elements of contemporaneous architectural styles. The Cornelia Commercial Historic District possesses integrity in the areas of location and setting as all buildings and streets are in their original location and the city is still a medium-sized urban center in rural Georgia. The district possesses integrity in the areas of design and materials, as all but ten of the 56 historic buildings in the district are identifiable as a building type determined significant in Georgia architecture and all historic buildings in the district do retain at least some historic materials. Finally, the district possesses integrity in the area of feeling and association, as the relationships between turn-of-the-century and 20th-century commercial buildings that are common in medium-sized urban centers in Georgia remain intact.

3b. Period of Significance: 1887-1971

3c. Acreage: Approximately 19.42 acres

3d. Boundary Explanation: The proposed boundary includes the historic, intact, and contiguous properties in the downtown commercial core of Cornelia within the original city limits.

4a. National Register Criteria: A and C

4b. National Register Areas of Significance: Transportation, Community Planning & Development, Commerce, and Architecture

4c. Statement of Significance: The Cornelia Commercial Historic District meets National Register Criterion A in the area of transportation and community planning and development, because of the district's ability to convey the impact of rail and later the automobile on the physical development of Cornelia, and as a representative example of a cross-rail town. As a cross-rail town, Cornelia developed around pre-existing railroad tracks, with its main street perpendicular to the rail line. The district is also significant in the area of commerce as a commercial center for Habersham County and for the surrounding rural families from the late 19th through the mid-20th centuries. The early years of the 20th century saw significant growth in Cornelia and, despite a fire in 1903, the city and its population continued to expand. The boom continued until mid-20th century when Cornelia, like other cities throughout Georgia, began to experience a decline in business in its city center. The Cornelia Commercial Historic District is also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture because its buildings are excellent representative examples of commercial building types built in small towns throughout Georgia in the first decades of the 20th century. Despite historic and non-historic alterations to storefronts and primary elevations throughout the district, buildings are identifiable by type and many historic architectural details remain intact. These alterations reflect the national trend of modernizing historic storefronts in an attempt to revitalize declining downtown commercial districts in the mid- to late-20th century.

4d. Suggested Level of Significance: The Cornelia Historic District is being nominated at the local level of significance for its excellent representative examples of commercial building types built in small towns throughout Georgia in the first decades of the 20th century and as a representative example of a cross-rail town, as defined in *Georgia Community Development and Morphology*.

4e. National Register Status: Irvin General Merchandise Store NRIS #84001113

5. Sponsor: The nomination is sponsored by the city of Cornelia, and nomination materials were prepared by Ray, Ellis & LaBrie Consulting.