



A Community-Driven Vision for Crawford County

December 2010



***Our deepest gratitude
to the nearly
600 Crawford County
community members
who participated
in this process
– people who generously
gave their time
and insight
to shape this initiative.***

Acknowledgements

Crawford: 20/20 Vision is a community-driven initiative to plan and implement strategies that will guide and reshape Crawford County over the next decade.

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Special thanks to the members of the CCEDP Strategic Planning Committee and Crawford: 20/20 Vision Steering Committee for donating time and thoughtfulness to help guide and direct the development of this initiative:

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* Denotes CCEDP Strategic Planning Committee members

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About the Crawford County Economic Development Partnership (CCEDP):

CCEDP is a not-for-profit corporation organized to enhance the economic conditions in this county of 44,000 residents. The partnership was formed in 2006 and the 19-member board of trustees is composed of both private and public sector representatives. State and local government financial support and private sector contributions fuel this work.

The CCEDP is the first county-wide economic development effort in Crawford County, formed to tackle much of what has been described in the Crawford: 20/20 Vision. CCEDP founders early on identified the need for a unified effort to reverse some challenging trends in Crawford County. The need sparked the formation of the CCEDP and has since allowed Crawford: 20/20 Vision to take shape and grow into this model of a county-wide initiative for positive reform.

The organization's priorities are:

- Support retention and expansion of existing businesses
- Continue development of a local quality workforce
- Attract new business and industry
- Support the development of high-growth entrepreneurs

The partnership employs and encourages a comprehensive county-wide approach to economic and community development in Crawford County. One of the goals of the partnership is to bring together business, government and citizen constituencies to develop a plan to address the community's needs and challenges.

Crawford: 20/20 Vision is an unprecedented, ambitious, collaborative initiative managed by the Crawford County Economic Development Partnership that is designed to develop an action plan to guide the future of Crawford County for the next decade.

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**To download a copy of this report, go to
www.crawford2020.org**



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Forward

We began by thinking that we are all probably familiar with the status of our local economy. We anticipated that we, like most local residents, had a pretty good grasp of the situation. The research during our investigation revealed more startling details than most anticipated in terms of job loss and people leaving the region, levels of poverty and educational attainment, and our capacity to grow and attract new jobs.

And, one of our greatest fears was that many have come to expect – and even possibly to accept – that things will not change for the better in Crawford County.

Crawford: 20/20 Vision is an initiative formed by Crawford County Economic Development Partnership (CCEDP) after asking the question: If we had unlimited resources, how would we re-create our county from the ground up?

Of course, unlimited resources are not possible; funds for new projects and initiatives are scarce. And building from the ground up is not necessary; there are vast numbers of people in the county already working hard to make a difference – county officials, township trustees, mayors, council members, employers, social service agencies, philanthropic organizations, churches, schools and other entities. Crawford: 20/20 Vision is meant to challenge the people and organizations of Crawford County to think ambitiously about what they would like their county to be, and then plot a course for making it happen.

Heading into the initiative, we know that funding and resources for new projects will be a major issue – and yet, we do not want to limit our ambitions unnecessarily. As a result, our major emphasis must be strategic, focusing on building collaboration and alignment among key groups in the county; engaging all members of the county's communities in the process of improving our economy, and developing leaders for tomorrow. We see these as the primary means for gaining consensus on the approaches and solutions that can improve our county's future. We also see these as the means for promoting resource sharing and conservation.

Readers of this planning document will see that there are excellent and ambitious projects included that will require tremendous efforts to accomplish. It is our hope that readers will



view these with a sense of optimism – saying, “We can do these things if we all pull together and put our minds to the task.”

In this plan, which was largely conceived by the citizens of the county, we set the wheels in motion – creating a blueprint to bring the people of Crawford County together to tackle our toughest issues. The intent is to create a collaborative initiative that draws on the strengths in our community. Through this planning and visioning initiative we have all learned how passionate Crawford County residents are about their homes and schools, churches and businesses. We now know that we can expect more and demand more: We will not accept “business as usual.” We can and will create a brighter future for our county - and for our children. We encourage all citizens of Crawford County to find a way to become involved.

Sincerely,

David Williamson
Executive Director CCEDP

Annie Carter, President, CCEDP
President, Carter Machine

**Submitted on behalf of the
Crawford County Economic Development Partnership
Board of Trustees:**

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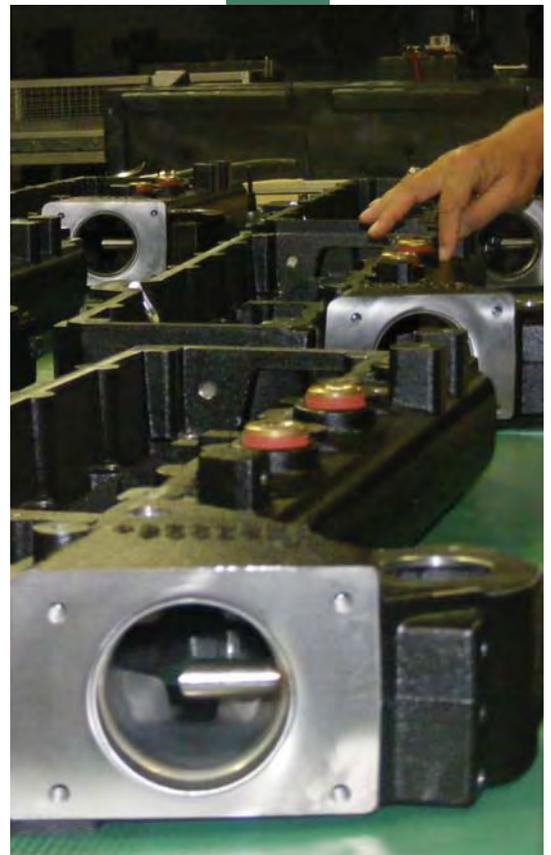
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PART 1

Crawford: 20/20 Vision – A Means for Enhancing Collaboration

Background

Within the context of the strengths and challenges facing our county, Crawford: 20/20 Vision is an effort to bring us together to envision our future. The principal purpose of the initiative is to enhance collaboration among jurisdictions and organizations that will lead to strategies for driving our county forward.

The initiative started when the Crawford County Economic Development Partnership (CCEDP) brought together a consortium of private funders in Fall 2009 to create Crawford: 20/20 Vision. A year later, following a community-driven planning process that is described below, the initiative has created an “actionable” plan for the county that starts with a vision and then establishes a blueprint for driving change, including goals, strategies and projects to positively impact county trends. It spells out two, five and ten-year milestones.

Recognizing that funding is limited within the county, the plan seeks to help “connect the dots” or align the good work currently happening in organizations throughout the county as well as create opportunities for new collaborative initiatives and strengthen the capacities within the county to promote future economic growth. **Crawford: 20/20 Vision did not utilize any public dollars to fund this extensive effort.**



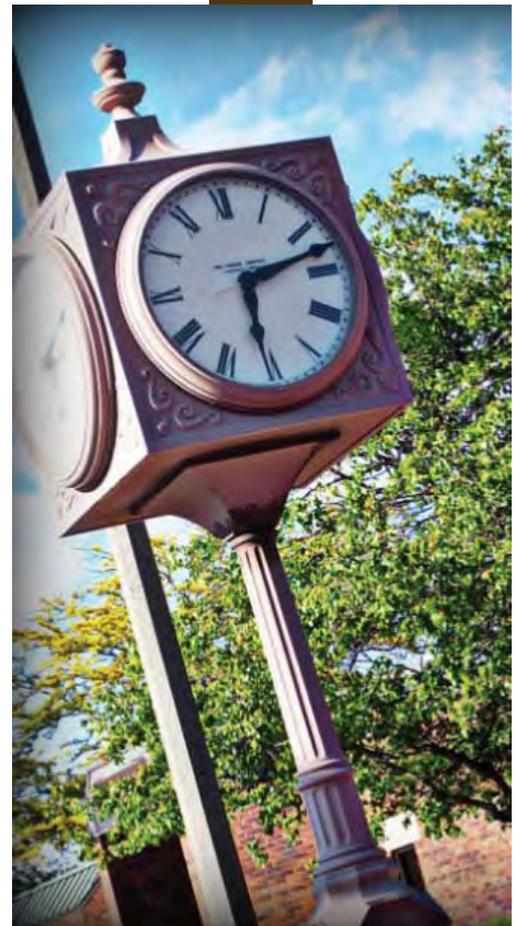
Process

To create this planning document, a Visioning Committee was assembled by CCEDP, composed of private citizens and local leaders assigned to guide and advise the initiative. In the development of this plan, the Visioning Committee followed a two-stage process:

1. **Take stock of where we are.** Assemble a concise picture of the county's economic situation by reviewing available data and holding a series of public meetings through which members of the public can provide input on their perceptions of the challenges and opportunities in the county. Additionally, online polls and comment boards were implemented using the initiative's website (crawford2020.com) and Facebook page.
2. **Envision actions to move us forward.** After "key issues" had been distilled in the first stage, the Visioning Committee brought together key leaders and experts from the county with specific content knowledge of the key issues into Solutions Meetings. These leaders outlined action steps for addressing the county's challenges.

Throughout the process, a primary emphasis has been to involve the public. Tremendous efforts have been made to publicize the project and invite input from a wide range of individuals, including private citizens, elected officials, business leaders, school officials, law enforcement officials and many others.

The remainder of this document lays out the findings from the community engagement process and provides a plan for addressing the county's key issues through collaboration.



PART 2

A Review of Data and Public Input

Crawford County continues to undergo economic changes that are spawning new challenges for our communities, businesses and residents. Employment is declining in important manufacturing and agricultural industries while new jobs with comparable wages are scarce in other sectors. Driven by this decline in employment, the county is losing population, especially younger working people, leaving behind an aging workforce, increasing poverty and declining tax base. Exacerbated by these trends, public sector budgets are tight and efforts to enhance efficiency and resource-sharing are politically difficult. The challenge for the county is to find new ways to reverse these trends while at the same time stay true to its values.

A few key Crawford County data elements

- **Our population is declining.** The total population of the county (currently approximately 44,000) has declined 6 percent since 2000 and 12 percent since its highest level in 1970. All declines are among younger residents, those under 45. The 45 and the over demographic is growing. Simply put, the county's population is aging. (*U.S. Census Bureau*)
- **Our businesses are declining.** The total number of private sector businesses fell by 68, approximately 6 percent, from 1998 to 2008. (*Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages*)
- **Employment is declining.** Businesses in the manufacturing sector have been struggling to maintain historical employment levels. Some have closed their doors or moved in response to global competitive factors, and many others have invested in new technologies and machines that have replaced workers. Total private sector employment declined by 2,650 jobs, approximately 16 percent, between 1998 and 2008. The manufacturing sector accounted for over half (nearly 1,700 jobs) of these losses. (*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages*)
- **Total annual private sector payroll** fell by over \$140 million from 1998 to 2008. (*Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages*)



- **Postsecondary educational attainment lags behind** neighboring counties and Ohio as a whole.
- **The toll from drug abuse is high.** Crawford County ranks fifth in the state with an average of 19.8 unintentional overdose deaths per 100,000. (*Ohio Department of Health, 2010*)
- **Food stamp reliance is climbing.** Between 2007 and 2009, food stamp use went up 66 percent in the county; 17 percent of county residents are now using food stamps. (*The New York Times, Nov. 28, 2009*)

(For more information on Crawford County's data and trends, see Appendix A of this report.)

If these trends continue, by 2020:

- there will be over 2,000 fewer jobs in the county;
- there will be nearly 70 fewer businesses in the county;
- total annual private sector payroll in the county will decline by more than \$100 million, undercutting tax collection and budgets for local government services including schools, police, and sanitation;
- overall population will decline by more than 2,500 people, but the over-65 population will grow by 500.

Community Strengths

Despite these negative economic and demographic trends, the county has many strengths. Amid the economic turmoil there is a genuinely positive spirit among the residents of the county: community pride, a widely-held belief in the resourcefulness of its people, and a tenacious sense that the legacy left by the county's proud past will provide a path to the future. There are numerous assets that contribute positively to the economic and social viability of the county:

- **Manufacturing is still a large and competitive sector.** Despite the declines in manufacturing sector employment over the last decade, this sector remains the largest employer in the county accounting for more

than one-third of the county's jobs. The manufacturing sector, which has become leaner and more technology-driven, is a globally competitive sector. Surviving manufacturers in the county have, on balance, invested in processes and technologies to stay competitive. Collectively, they possess vast resources and impressive knowledge about global manufacturing markets.

- **Route 30 is an accessible transportation route.** The recent redevelopment of Route 30 with several interchanges in Crawford County vastly improves the county's accessibility. There is much land abutting Route 30 that is available for commercial use and may represent an asset for future growth as the county looks to grow and attract new companies and new jobs.
- **Agriculture is a large and tremendously innovative sector in the Crawford County economy.** While this sector is not a large employer, it produced more than \$130 million in sales in 2008, and represents nearly 90 percent of the county's acreage. Agriculture businesses make a significant civic contribution through their tax contributions and responsible natural-resource stewardship. Furthermore, many agriculture businesses are innovating new products in fields such as bioscience and energy.
- **The faith-based community has strong capacities for mobilizing people and resources for important causes.** Crawford County has a rich faith-based tradition, with many churches facilitating a culture of giving. The network of faith-based organizations has demonstrated its willingness and capacity to collectively address key issues in the county such as poverty and drug abuse. This network will continue to be an important resource in addressing critical social issues.
- **The schools are strong.** The six school districts in the county are solid performers on their state "report cards." They are beginning discussions on ways to collaborate in the delivery of services to their districts. Lower educational attainment data for the county is largely the result of those with higher educational levels out-migrating and little in-migration to offset the losses.
- **The cost of living is affordable in the county.** Housing costs and property taxes are significantly lower in Crawford County than nearby metropolitan areas such as Columbus and Cleveland.



- **Some economic sectors are experiencing employment growth.** The two most prominent sectors with growing employment are health care and financial services, which together added nearly 400 jobs in the county in the decade from 1998 to 2008.
- **Residents of the county are ready to help** in the effort to make the county better.

Overview of Public Input

Public input was solicited during the first stage of the project with nearly 500 people offering their opinions on the key challenges and opportunities in Crawford County. At each of the initiative's eight public meetings and in the initiative's online venues, participants were invited to use electronic voting technology to select their top two most important concerns from a list of options. The leading vote-getters are depicted in the chart on Page 14. Additionally, participants were invited during open discussion sessions to provide comments, which were recorded and incorporated into subsequent planning.

Key Observations from the Public Meetings:

In conversations with participants during the first stage, the following important points emerged:

- **Many local organizations are working to improve the county.** Crawford County is characterized as having many resources, but they are often not well-aligned or coordinated. While some collaboration has occurred, jurisdictions and organizations within the county recognize that during these times of tight budgets, collaboration and resource sharing is critical. However, spurring collaboration has been a challenge. Even as the county's population has declined, making collaboration more necessary, strong community pride – sometimes called a “letter-jacket mentality” – occasionally hinders successful collaboration. Nevertheless, collaboration among organizations within the county will be a critical element moving forward.
- **The citizens of the county have the power to make a difference.** While CCEDP is working to overcome the county's economic challenges, it alone does not possess the resources to drive vast economic improvement. Broad-based citizen buy-in and engagement of key networks of public and private agencies and organizations are necessary to drive change in the county. This requires creating a mechanism for

Crawford: 20/20 Vision Public Meetings

March 4, 2010

Crawford County Fairgrounds
(Two events co-sponsored by Bucyrus Chamber of Commerce)

March 16, 2010

Galion Middle School

March 30, 2010

Buckeye Central High School and Bucyrus High School
(student participants)

March 30, 2010

Crestline Public Library

May 17, 2010

Crawford County Fairgrounds

May 18, 2010

Col. Crawford Middle School

June 16, 2010

Wynford High School
(focus on agricultural & rural issues)

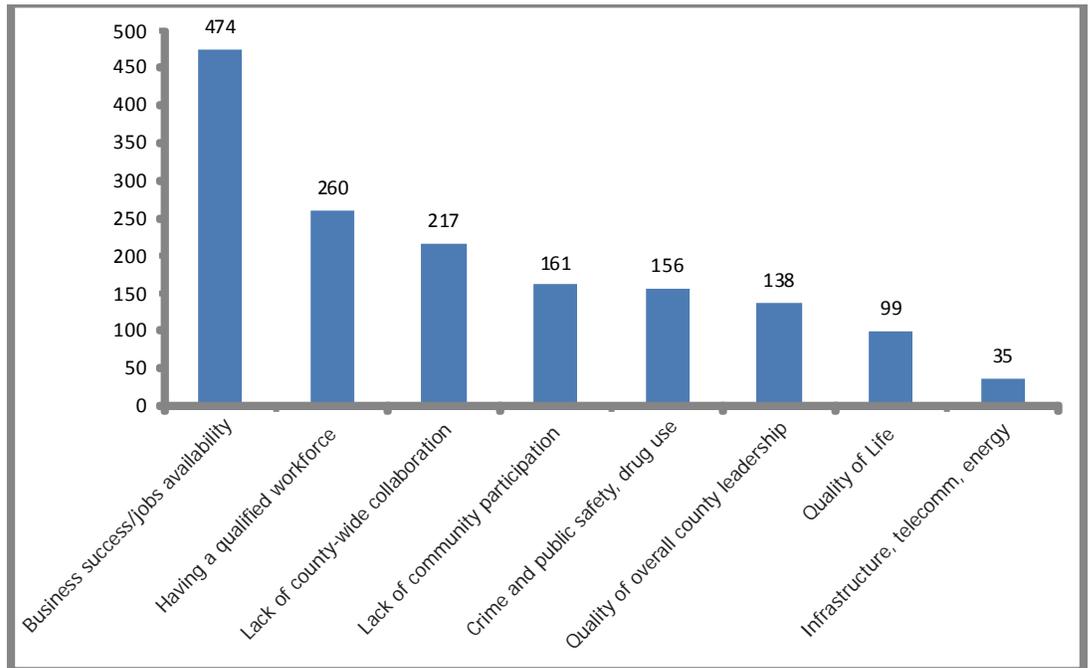
empowering county citizens to contribute, based on their own interests and values, and has become a key component of Crawford: 20/20 Vision.

- **Leadership in the county is strong but needs to be sustainable.** The current county, municipal, and township leaders are dedicated to improving the county as it moves into the future. There is a need to create more leaders and encourage younger leaders to become involved in public service. Development of new leaders and activists within the county to envision and drive change is essential.

Summarizing the County’s Key Challenges as Identified by the Constituents

The Crawford: 20/20 Vision process including polling of residents who participated in the process by attending meetings or going to the crawford2020.com website. More than 500 people responded to the poll, which asked participants to identify their top two concerns for the county. The following chart shows the results:

Polling results from Public Meetings and Online Polls



The poll results show that a single concern, “Business Success and Job Availability,” is by far the most important issue. “Having a qualified workforce” is the second largest concern.

To better understand and address these concerns, they can be broken into two categories: “**project-driven**” and “**cross-cutting**.”

A “**project-driven issue**” is one that is more easily defined and can be addressed by existing organizations in the county. For example, drug-related issues are within the purview of law enforcement, health care providers, faith-based organizations and drug treatment and recovery groups.

A “**cross-cutting issue**” is one that affects nearly all aspects of the county’s social and economic vitality; it also represents an issue that no current organization or entity within the county is explicitly addressing. These issues can be thought of as “pre-conditions” or foundational elements that make carrying out projects possible. For example, there are no organizations that reach into the community to identify and develop new leaders for public service, yet having a strong and sustainable pipeline of new leaders is critical to the county’s future. Segmenting the challenges into these categories is important because the plan approaches solutions to these problems differently.



Cross-Cutting Issues

- Collaboration among jurisdictions and organizations
- Communication with and engagement of citizens
- Leadership development

Project-Driven Issues

- Business success and job availability
- Workforce preparation and education
- Quality of life
- Public Safety / Drug Use

PART 3

Articulating a Vision and Making a Blueprint for Change in the County

Drawing on the observations and input gathered during the first stage of the initiative, a clear vision for Crawford County was crafted.

Crawford County will become a sustainable place in which individuals and families seek to live and work, businesses succeed, and public and private sector organizations collaborate effectively to meet the needs of citizens.



Supporting the Vision by Addressing the Cross-Cutting Issues

To support Crawford County's future economic and social vitality, the Crawford: 20/20 Vision initiative must tackle the cross-cutting issues first, since they will bring in the existing resources and expertise in the county and are the foundation for future projects and initiatives. Crawford: 20/20 Vision is well-positioned to address the following goals and strategies:

- Promote collaboration among county stakeholders to carry out projects
- Improve citizen engagement
- Initiate a process for developing new leaders

To meet those goals, three strategies will be employed.

Strategy 1: Promote collaboration by creating a structure that enables public and private leaders to come together to address county challenges and attracts funders to support county initiatives.

Actions within two years:

- Create a Crawford: 20/20 Vision Leadership Committee within CCEDP that promotes collaboration and expands capacity to carry out key projects in the county.

The initiative will be organized using a collaboration structure, depicted below, comprised of “Action Teams” of participating organizations and volunteers that develop and carry out projects addressing key challenges. The Action Teams will be overseen by a Leadership Committee; a Project Manager within CCEDP will staff the initiative.



The committee structure is detailed below:

- **Leadership Committee.** The Leadership Committee will be the oversight group for the initiative within CCEDP. It will be composed of at least ten members representing the public and private sectors, key funders within the county, and the various regions and jurisdictions of the county. Additional operating details of Leadership Committee are described on page 39.

The Leadership Committee is responsible for:

- Final project decisions, based on recommendations from the action teams
- Final fundraising and grant-pursuit decisions, based on recommendations from the action teams
- Development of grant-writing capacity to support fundraising
- Oversight of the leadership development program (more details on this in sections below)
- Overall initiative communications and public outreach
- Review of the 20/20 Vision plan as the need for review and adjustment arises
- Issues related to government efficiency and collaboration that are not overseen by the other action teams

- **Action Teams.** There will be four action teams, associated with the four project-driven challenges: Business Success and Job Availability, Workforce Preparation and Education, Quality of Life and Public Safety/ Drug-Abuse. Each Action Team will consist of three permanent members who volunteer to serve two-year terms. Additional members of the teams will be recruited by the permanent members to serve on a per-project basis or as needed. The Action Teams will seek to align their work (and possibly their membership) with other key initiatives in the county. For example, the Workforce Preparation and Education Team will align its work with CCEDP's Business Education Advisory Council. The action teams will be responsible for:

- Recommending projects to the Leadership Committee
- Recommending project resourcing strategies to the Leadership Committee, including grant opportunities and in-kind resources
- Working to ensure that each team's work does not overlap with the other Action Teams and leverages the work of other teams wherever possible



- Assigning responsibility for project activities and overseeing project progress
- Monitoring project progress
- **Project Manager.** A project manager will be located at CCEDP and will report to the CCEDP Executive Director. The individual will be guided by the Leadership Committee and Action Teams responsible for the management of the initiative. The responsibilities of the individual include:
 - Reporting to the Leadership Committee on the actions and progress of the initiative
 - Facilitating Leadership Committee and Action Team meetings
 - Carrying out communications and outreach strategies
 - Facilitating grant writing and fundraising strategies
 - Hiring and contracting with additional staff capacity as budget permits
 - Reporting to external funders
 - Collaboration with groups inside and outside the county
 - Facilitating performance measurement and evaluation
 - Responding to research and technical assistance needs for projects as needed
 - Facilitating a continuous improvement process

Actions within two years:

- Form a “funders collaborative” composed of organizations from within Crawford County that have the capacity to either contribute direct funds to Crawford: 20/20 Vision operations and projects or leverage their resources to support projects.
- Raise \$150,000 to support Crawford: 20/20 Vision operations including management, grant writing and technical assistance.
- Identify grant writers and grant opportunities in order to pursue external funding opportunities.

Actions within five years:

- Raise \$500,000 to support Crawford: 20/20 Vision operations including management, grant writing and technical assistance.

Actions within ten years:

- Raise \$1 million to support Crawford: 20/20 Vision operations including management, grant writing and technical assistance.



Strategy 2: Improve capacity to communicate with the county's citizens and organizations

Actions within two years:

- Establish a community-driven online resource that provides an opportunity for individuals and groups to connect resources to needs online. This could resemble the WIKI (internet-based) resource identification effort in Richland County, OH.
- Enhance the Crawford: 20/20 Vision website to ensure that citizens have a venue for gathering news about the initiative and also have a way to provide input to the initiative on resources and programs available in the county relevant to projects and strategies.

Actions within five years:

- Create and/or encourage the creation of an online announcement/news site that is populated by citizen contributors. The site will offer current events, press releases, announcements and citizen-contributed articles for the general consumption of Crawford County readers.

Strategy 3: Develop future leaders in the county

Actions within two years:

- Establish a county wide leadership development program that, at a minimum, familiarizes participants with the various functions and processes of public service throughout our county. Develop curriculum, scheduling, marketing and funding for a stand-alone program that will improve the leadership strengths in the county and bring more residents forward with the passion and skills to lead in both public and private sectors, whether elected, appointed, volunteers or paid professionals. Enroll citizens from all walks of life in the classes offered by the program and establish linkages with existing youth/teen leadership programs, expanding them as needed. Strongly suggest enrolling the 20/20 Leadership Committee and Action Team members to enhance their understanding of the 20/20 Vision.



Key First Steps:

Building the Crawford: 20/20 Vision organization is a large undertaking and will need to be approached in small steps. The order of activities for building the initiative during the first six months is described below:

Within first month:

- Convene a funders' collaborative. Present the Crawford: 20/20 Vision concept to funders within the county. Ask for funds to support the operations of the initiative during the first two years.
- Establish the Leadership Committee and recruit members. Ensure they understand the depth and duration of their commitment to the initiative.

Within first three months:

- Hire a Project Manager. Hire a proactive, entrepreneurial individual who can be an effective manager and spokesperson for the initiative.
- Establish Action Teams and recruit members. Ensure they understand the depth and duration of their commitment to the initiative.
- Review potential grant opportunities. Identify and research potential grant opportunities with the intent of working towards multiple grant applications within the first year of operations.
- Enhance grant-writing capacity. Identify grant writers and facilitators with a track record of success for the purposes of shepherding grant development processes.

Within first six months:

- Establish online community resource for matching needs to resources
- Establish leadership development program.
- Convene key county public officials, city councils, mayors and other key stakeholders to brief them on the progress of the initiative.

Throughout first six months:

- Project Manager attends key meetings in the community of organizations that align and support Crawford: 20/20 Vision such as SPARC, Workforce Investment Boards, Ohio Skills Bank, etc.

Supporting the Vision by Addressing Project-Driven Challenges

The Crawford: 20/20 Vision structure builds capacity within the county for improving collaboration, public engagement and leadership development. Once these cross-cutting needs are established, the initiative seeks to address the other key challenges described as “project-driven” challenges. The initiative has identified four goals based on public input:

1. Business Success and Job Availability

Create a prosperous county economy in which businesses thrive and good jobs are available and lead to success in today’s economy.

2. Workforce Education and Preparation

Enhance the county’s educational system and postsecondary opportunities so that individuals have the skills and education necessary to succeed.

3. Quality of Life

Have vibrant communities in which people of all ages want to live, work and socialize.

4. Public Safety/Drug Abuse

Support the county’s efforts to be safe and drug-free.

During the second stage of the planning process, Crawford: 20/20 Vision held a series of four “Solutions Meetings” – one for each of the above goals – in which nearly 100 key public and private sector leaders participated in a facilitated session to recommend and prioritize projects and solutions for this document. See Appendix B for a list of Solutions Meeting participants.

The participants were specifically invited to attend based on their expertise and experiences in a field relevant to one or more of our four goals. For example, the fourth goal above addresses public safety and drug use; individuals who participated in the Solutions Meeting on that topic included the sheriff, law enforcement officers, social service agencies, clergy, school superintendents, and other community-based organizations.



The strategies and activities detailed below emerged, in large part, from the Solutions Meetings. While there are many worthy projects and initiatives that deserve consideration to be part of this plan, the following projects were selected based on their alignment with the goals of the plan, expectations for short-term results, ambition for long-term impact, and consensus among our community participants.

It is assumed that over time this initiative will be dynamic and that strategies and projects may change as conditions or opportunities emerge in the county. Procedures for amending the strategies and projects are described in the “Continuous Improvement” section of this document.

It is also assumed – based on the broad nature of the issues selected – that there are interrelated aspects of the projects which may overlap. For example, county efforts to curb drug abuse will no doubt positively impact the schools, curb workplace drug abuse, and mitigate crime. The inter-related nature of many of the projects provides the opportunity for collaboration among the action teams. It will be incumbent upon the Project Manager and the Action Team members to maximize collaboration wherever possible.

This section of the plan will present two primary components:

- 1) a more detailed description of the challenges identified by county stakeholders during the planning phase; and
- 2) a comprehensive set of strategies and projects for the county to undertake in two, five and ten-year time frames.



Goal 1

Create a prosperous county economy in which businesses thrive and good jobs are available and position county residents for success in today's economy.



Intended outcome: Reverse the net outmigration of jobs from the county

Responsibility: Business Success and Job Availability Action Team

Key challenges identified during the planning process:

- The manufacturing industry is experiencing declines in employment, and replacement jobs in other industry sectors are scarce.
- Administrative barriers originating in the public sector sometimes make doing business a challenge in Crawford County.
- The county is limited in how it sells or markets itself to prospective in-migrant companies.
- The ongoing competitiveness and survivability of existing companies is critical to the sustainability of the county economy.
- Small businesses and start-ups sometimes lack the financing or administrative expertise to successfully launch or expand.
- The county needs to promote more entrepreneurial development.

The following strategies and actions are planned to address these challenges during the next two, five and ten-year intervals.

Strategy 1.1: Promote county-wide business development by streamlining public administrative services.

Actions within two years:

- Make it easier for new businesses to take root in the county by improving the way government interacts with businesses, especially new businesses. Improve customer service of government personnel; make information regarding permits and regulations accessible to businesses; cross-train government workers so they can properly instruct or direct businesses to the correct resource regarding their questions or concerns.



Actions within five years:

- Support small businesses establishment, growth and survival by offering enhanced small-business development support services. The services will help small businesses and entrepreneurs access financing and receive professional assistance in business planning, financial management, personnel management and other key areas; these services also help small businesses and entrepreneurs navigate government and can build upon the efforts mentioned directly above.

Strategy 1.2: Through collaboration of business service organizations in each jurisdiction, promote economic growth by supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Actions within two years:

- Support small-business establishment, growth and survival by convening a forum of business-services representatives from each jurisdiction to discuss ways to pool resources for supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs. Incorporate this discussion into the planning for small-business development support services mentioned above in Strategy 1.2.

Actions within five years:

- Support small business establishment and growth by leveraging the Business Entrepreneurial Center at North Central State College (Mansfield, OH) and various other similar programs that are available to serve our region. Enhance small business growth by developing better “virtual” small-business incubators and on-line technical assistance to help launch small businesses.
- Recruit small business entrepreneurs from outside the county by promoting the assets and resources in Crawford County that are available for entrepreneurs.

Strategy 1.3: Promote collaboration among economic development support systems to strengthen the competitiveness of existing manufacturing and agriculture businesses in the county.



Actions within two years:

- Support existing manufacturing and agriculture businesses by engaging outside expertise to assess the needs of agricultural and manufacturing businesses in the county and provide technical assistance to help adapt, innovate, and diversify in the global economy. For example, MAGNET, TechSolve, or Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) could provide some of these services. Develop a technical assistance program based on the needs assessment.
- Help existing manufacturing and agriculture businesses by working in collaboration with county businesses and chambers of commerce to organize a seminar series that introduces innovation strategies and technical assistance opportunities to manufacturing and agricultural businesses. Utilize technical assistance resources leveraged in the above action.

Actions within five years:

- To support existing manufacturing and agriculture businesses implement the county-wide technical assistance strategy developed above based on the needs assessment for the manufacturing and agriculture sector. Seek to drive innovation and diversification in the sectors through the technical assistance strategy.

Actions within ten years:

- To support new and existing businesses expand CCEDP's access to loan fund to make business capital more available for Crawford County businesses.

Strategy 1.4: Develop a well-rounded strategy for communicating Crawford County's assets to residents as well as new or expanding businesses.

Actions within two years:

- To improve how the county presents itself to potential new or expanding businesses and residents, create a county-wide communication plan that promotes the assets in Crawford County. Enhance CCEDP's website for county business development to include all information businesses need to open, expand or relocate within the county.



Actions within five years:

- As potential tools to be used in business development strategies, conduct inventory of existing assets including zoning, infrastructure support and site development.

Strategy 1.5: Create and attract new bio-agriculture business opportunities based on emerging and market-ready technologies.

Actions within two years:

- Create formal and informal alliances that can intrinsically drive opportunities to the County (e.g., OARDC, OSU Extension, OSC, PolymerOhio).
- Conduct public awareness campaign consistently through several means (e.g., traditional, speakers network, demonstration days, student engagement).
- Identify where Crawford County should position itself in the bio-agriculture supply chain.
- Begin discussions with emerging, funded and existing business and industry leaders in bio, bioproducts, polymer and other related industries.
- Create "best-practice" forums and events to specifically invite and draw attention to Crawford County regionally, nationally and globally.
- Assess workforce needs; work collaboratively to create appropriate coursework at the secondary, career technical center and community college levels.

Actions within five years:

- Develop strategic land use plan that balances community with bioagriculture development.
- Assess needed worker population to address industry requirements.
- Actively market the opportunity to reside, play and/or work in Crawford County -Continue public awareness campaign.

Actions within ten years:

- Create succession plan of knowledge.
- Create a possible road map of 50 years that creates the infrastructure to allow the County to embrace emerging technology.



Goal 2



Enhance the county's educational system and postsecondary opportunities so that individuals have the skills and education necessary to succeed in today's economy.

Intended outcomes: *Improve postsecondary attainment in the county; reduce employer workforce skill deficiencies*

Responsibility: *Workforce Preparation and Education Action Team*

Key challenges identified during the planning process:

- The workforce education and training system needs to include more alignment and collaboration among employers, education and training institutions, and economic development efforts.
- Many workers lack the foundational skills needed in the workforce – dependability, teamwork, work ethic, for example – and employers struggle to identify workers that have these skills. These are defined as “employability” skills.
- Laid-off or unemployed workers struggle to regain work with suitable wages.
- Postsecondary attainment in the county falls short of surrounding counties.
- Kindergarten through 12th grade schools could be more in tune with the needs of the private sector. School system resources are scarce and discussions of collaboration and resource sharing are warranted.
- A culture driven by multi-generational poverty generates counter-productive work values in some individuals.

Strategy 2.1: Continue efforts to promote collaboration among all education and workforce training institutions in the county to:

- address and adapt to the changing needs of employers
- enhance job placement and retention opportunities for non-traditional and dislocated workers
- increase educational attainment rates in the county



Actions within two years:

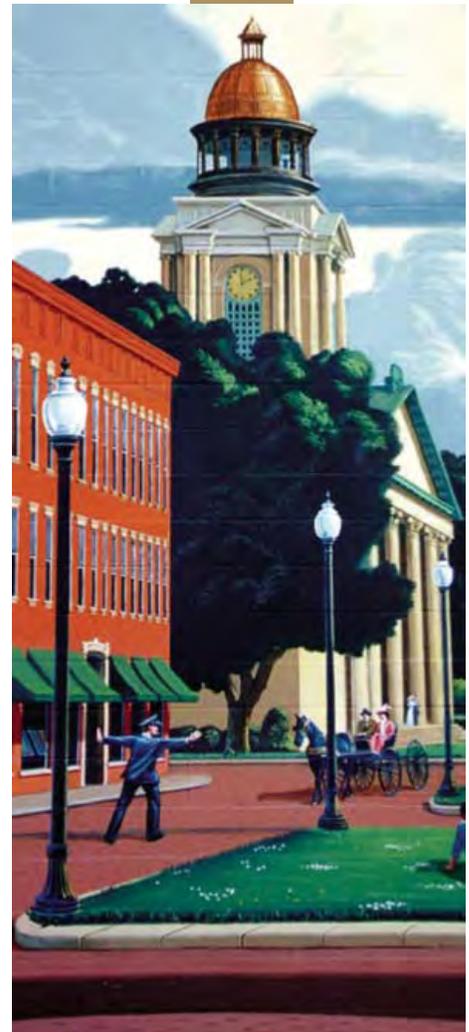
- Utilize Succeed and Prosper through Education: Ashland, Richland and Crawford (SPARC) to initiate a gap analysis and examine SPARC data collected to date. Write an action plan addressing county educational collaboration. Use SPARC to conduct asset mapping and gap analysis of the workforce and education system including an analysis of employer needs, challenges faced by education and workforce training providers and challenges faced by individuals in the county.
- Enhance employability skills of the unemployed and ensure opportunities for our youth to return to the county for career opportunities by creating a Crawford Opportunity Fund. Through this fund, adults, particularly non-traditionals, and high school and college students will have the opportunity for apprenticeships, internships (both credit and non-credit, paid and unpaid), co-ops and other work/study experiences. Mobilize the Crawford County Economic Development Partnership's Education and Workforce Development Committee & CCBEAC to help coordinate the fund.

Actions within five years:

- Help employers identify workers with basic employability skills by building a consortium of education, workforce training providers and employers to implement the National Career Readiness Certificate, which is an assessment tool and certification used by employers verifying an individual's baseline employability skills and characteristics.

Actions within ten years:

- Enhance alignment among education and training providers and promote postsecondary educational attainment by designing pathways that lead to careers in key sectors of the county economy such as manufacturing and agriculture.
- Establish a Crawford County Learning Center to offer postsecondary classes that may range from adult education to advanced degree and professional programs.



Strategy 2.2: Continue efforts to promote collaboration among all educational institutions, including the six kindergarten through 12th grade districts in the county.

Actions within two years:

- Promote collaboration by convening all six school boards and begin discussions of how the districts can better work together for improved efficiencies; transportation and food services may be places to start the discussion. Support curricular innovation across the districts such as Partnership for 21st Century Skills (infuses critical thinking and problem solving, information and technology skills and communication skills) to produce students more equipped for today's workforce.

Strategy 2.3: Address generational poverty issues faced by the community

Actions within two years:

- Assist organizations to address multi-generational poverty by developing a series of workshops on the culture of poverty and professional development opportunities.

Actions within five years:

- Assist organizations to address multi-generational poverty by adopting the multi-faceted Bridges Out of Poverty and/or similar strategies for working with impoverished individuals to promote the value of work and education among individuals living in multi-generational poverty.



Create vibrant communities in which people of all ages want to live, work, and socialize.

Goal 3



Intended outcome: *Curb the outmigration of individuals under 45 years old.*

Responsibility: *Quality of Life Action Team*

Key challenges identified during the planning process:

- Dining and entertainment options are limited within the county.
- The heritage, culture and rich history of Crawford County are underappreciated.
- More activities and events for young families are needed.
- Natural resources and public park space are underutilized.
- More emphasis is needed on preservation – both of historic downtown areas and rural and natural resources.

Strategy 3.1: Promote collaboration among county groups and organizations to create more social and cultural vibrancy.

Actions within two years:

- Promote the use of parks and create more community activities by establishing a collaboration among parks districts in the county and organizing more events that include music, food, nature, history, and arts and crafts events

Actions within five years:

- Enhance preservation by creating a historic district revitalization committee to examine downtown land use and promotion of downtown building usage



Strategy 3.2: Invest in Crawford County's quality of life "infrastructure."

Actions within two years:

- Enhance resource preservation by creating a task force to investigate the viability of county-wide zoning as a means for enforcing sanitary, safety and appearance standards within the county. Tie this effort to the needs assessment in Strategy 1.1.

Actions within five years:

- Establish arts & cultural districts -- branded destinations where county artists, artisans and creative individuals open shops and sell their work.

Actions within ten years:

- Create more activities for families and jobs for Crawford workers by developing an all-year sports complex near Route 30 to host sporting activities, classes and other events to draw in regional revenue and tourism spending and promote county fitness.

Strategy 3.3: Improve visibility and create a distinct brand for Crawford County to attract tourism and support from those inside and outside the county.

Actions within two years:

- Enhance efforts to bring visitors and tourists to the county by creating a county-wide tourism bureau.

Actions within five years:

- Enhance efforts to bring visitors and tourists to the county by developing a distinct marketing and branding identity for Crawford County targeted at visitors.



Support the county's ability to be safe and drug-free.

Goal 4



Intended outcome: *Reduced drug use and put an end to drug-related deaths and addiction-related tragedies in the county*

Responsibility: *Public Safety/ Drug Use Action Team*

Key challenges identified during the planning process:

- Drug abuse is devastating to individual drug users, the families and friends of drug users and the communities in which they live.
- Drug activity impacts the ability of our businesses to hire and keep good workers.
- The policing of drug-related crimes are resource intensive for law enforcement officials.
- Drug abuse prevention, law enforcement and recovery groups in the county have the opportunity to enhance existing collaborations; faith-based organizations possess valuable resources that are available to assist in collaborative efforts.
- Drug treatment and recovery resources are very limited in the county and regionally.
- There is a lack of information and awareness among members of the public regarding drug abuse and available resources.

Strategy 4.1: Promote county-wide collaboration by empowering the Crawford: 20/20 Vision Action Team for Public Safety and Drug Use to be the "Take Back the Community" Task Force through which education, faith-based, community-based and enforcement organizations collaborate on drug-related initiatives.

Actions within two years:

- Engage and charter the organizations, individuals and groups that attended the August 17, 2010 Crawford: 20/20 Vision Solutions Meeting for Public Safety and Drug Abuse to come together as the Action Team to organize and undertake this work.
- Enhance collaboration and promote resource sharing by jointly constructing a long-term collaboration plan



specifically for combating the county's drug problem, including an asset map that identifies existing resources, partnerships and initiatives.

Actions within five years:

- Expand resources by implementing a fundraising campaign for prevention, enforcement and recovery initiatives. Tie the fundraising campaign to the plan mentioned above.

Strategy 4.2: Integrate the efforts of faith-based and community-based entities to concentrate investments for prevention, enforcement and recovery.

Actions within two years:

- In partnership with community faith-based organizations, develop a drug recovery program and facility (similar to the Harvey House Project, a community drug treatment facility based in Chicago).

Actions within five years:

- Promote prevention by investing in after-school programs delivered by partnerships between schools and community groups.

Actions within ten years:

- Promote recovery by opening a drug treatment center that serves current and recovering drug users.

Strategy 4.3 Engage the public in a county-wide "Take Back the Community" campaign against drugs.

Actions within two years:

- Promote prevention, enforcement and recovery by designing and executing a multi-faceted communications and media campaign including efforts to:
 - educate parents about warning signals;
 - educate doctors about prescription abuse;
 - enlist employers in the effort to reduce drug use in the workplace

Actions within five years:

- Promote enforcement by implementing public safety volunteer programs, including neighborhood watch programs.



PART 4

Aligning Current County Initiatives with Crawford: 20/20 Vision

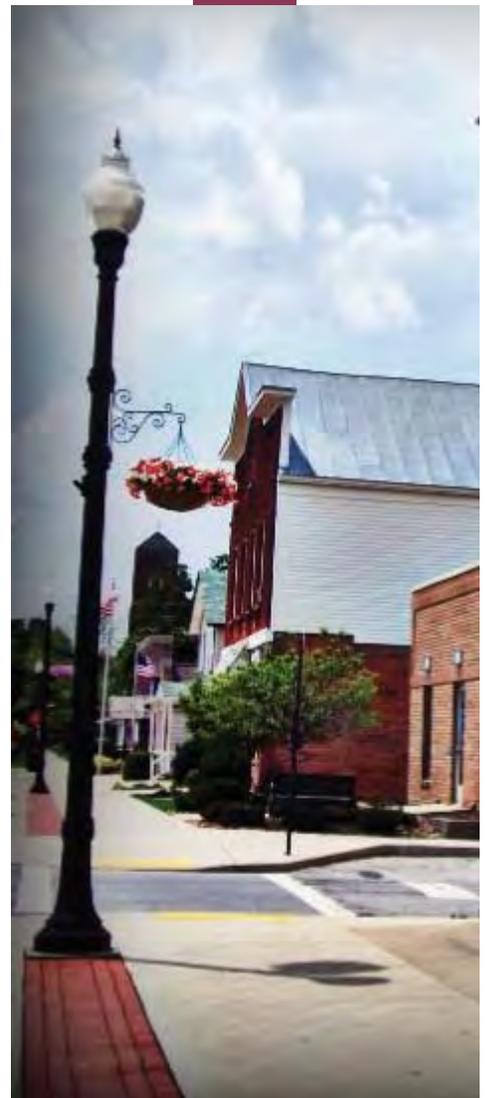
The intent of Crawford: 20/20 Vision is to support and supplement the good work already under way in the county rather than duplicate it. As such, it is important that the Project Director and the Action Teams be aware of other activities and organizations active in the county. A few examples of existing initiatives include:

- Succeed and Prosper Through Education: Ashland, Richland and Crawford (SPARC) –a pre-kindergarten through grade 16 initiative.

- Crawford County Economic Development Partnership (CCEDP)
 - Merging the work of Crawford County Development Board (CCDB) Crossroads Project with CCEDP
 - Leading a four-county redevelopment effort with over \$200,000 state and federal grant to help revitalize the region as result of the Ontario GM Plant closing in the first half of 2010.

- Crawford County Economic Development Partnership – Education and Workforce Development Committee of CCEDP has initiatives:
 - Crawford County Business Education Advisory Council (merged recently to include Family & Civic Committee)
 - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) / Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training and youth programming in collaboration with Crawford County Job & Family Services

Crawford: 20/20 Vision would like to provide support and value for these – and other – already established initiatives, many of which have been in existence for years. Crawford: 20/20 Vision sees its role as a resource, convener and support system to ensure existing efforts are moving forward. The role of Crawford: 20/20 Vision might include grant-writing support or other resource identification.



Following is a process that will help ensure that Crawford: 20/20 Vision is building from and leveraging current initiatives.

Aligning Current County Initiatives with Crawford: 20/20 Vision Plan Process & Projects

Current County Initiatives

- CCEDP Education and Workforce Development Committee
- SPARC
- TANF / WIA Training Program
- Crawford Promise / Challenge / Opportunity
- CCEDP Leadership Development Program
- Crawford College Connection
- Other initiatives

20/20 Action Teams

- Identify current organizations across county working on Vision-related initiatives
- Identify leaders from existing organizations
- Convene organizations and 20/20 Action Team

20/20 Action Team Collaboration Review

- Identify mission and purpose of current initiatives
- Identify alignments with existing groups and Vision 20/20 Action Teams and projects
- Determine which existing initiatives support 20/20 projects in whole or part.
- Identify other stakeholders

20/20 Project Implementation

- Integrate current initiatives with identified 20/20 projects

The most important element in the process outlined above is convening organizations working on current initiatives to identify which parts or elements will best support the projects undertaken and identified by Crawford: 20/20 Vision. This is to ensure that there is alignment and collaboration between current efforts and the projects identified by Crawford: 20/20 Vision.

The communication between current initiatives and Crawford: 20/20 Vision projects listed above will be the responsibility of the Crawford: 20/20 Vision Project Director.

PART 5

Financing the Initiative

Clearly, financing these initiatives will be the largest challenge to the success of this plan. The intent of this planning exercise was to think ambitiously about what is needed to shape a brighter future for the county, but at the same time to be realistic. As such, some of the activities in the plan – such as forming Action Teams, enhancing communications and developing new leaders can be done relatively inexpensively – whereas other activities in the plan will require significant fundraising. Financially supporting the most ambitious projects and initiatives that emerged through the community engagement process will require a thoughtful and well-executed strategy.

Not all funds to support initiatives under Crawford: 20/20 Vision need or ought to be controlled by the initiative itself. Funding can be conceptualized in two ways: (1) pooled funds, or funds that Crawford: 20/20 Vision has discretionary control over, and (2) leveraged funds, or funds that remain under the control of other organizations but which are used to support some or all parts of the Crawford: 20/20 Vision initiatives.

The primary strategy will be to pursue funds from a variety of sources including private donors, foundations, state and federal grant programs, and local public funds. The pursuit of leveraged support is also highly important and necessary. Many of the projects in the plan will need their own individualized funding strategies. While funding may seem like a daunting challenge, there are many communities that have been successful in garnering funds to promote community and economic development. The difference between those communities that have received funding and those communities that have not, in many cases, was the willingness to identify funding opportunities and try!

Assembling funds will need to be pursued in a step-wise fashion – first, developing the internal capacity to pursue grant opportunities, followed by the actual pursuit of grants and then more sophisticated methods of assembling resources.



An outline of the funding structure of Crawford: 20/20 Vision initiative is described below:

- Assemble a funders' collaborative under the Leadership Committee comprised of local funders. An immediate goal of raising \$75,000 should be set to cover the costs of a project manager, grant writing and technical assistance to the project manager during the first year (\$150,000 during the first two years).
- Begin researching and pursuing external grant opportunities within three months of project launch. Grants opportunities should be evaluated based on the relationship of the grant to the strategies outlined in the plan – only pursuing grants that align with the goals and strategies within the plan.
- Hire an external fundraising expert. Work with an external organization that specializes in long-term fundraising for public initiatives.
- Set longer-term goals for raising funds for capital projects. Recognizing that several longer-term, capital-intensive actions have been included in the plan, Action Teams will need to begin planning early. Funding will need to come from federal, state, local public and private sources. Action Teams may need to consult technical assistance groups in order to lobby for and raise funds accordingly.

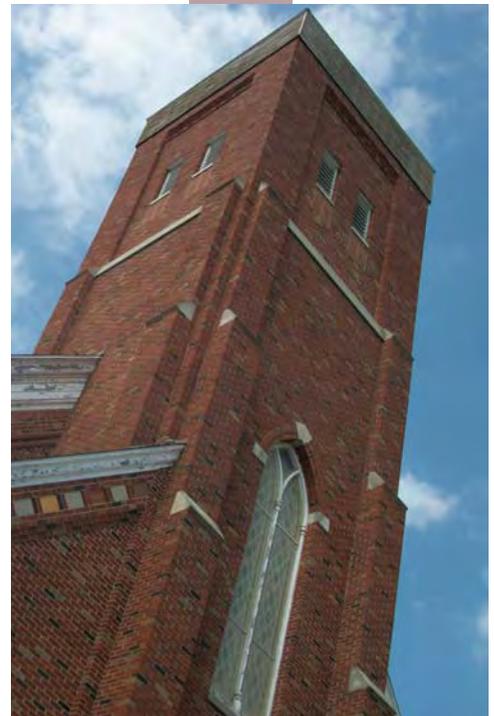


PART 6

Continuous Improvement of the Initiative

Crawford: 20/20 Vision is intended to be a living initiative that is continually updated and addresses the most pressing problems in the county. As such, there are several tenets that are included in the plan to help the initiative stay fresh:

- The plan is very dependent on public engagement. Vision 20/20 should sponsor and convene a public briefing at the end of the first year. This meeting could communicate initiative progress, key collaborations, and other project wins. Through this session, on-going challenges are also communicated to county residents.
- The Chair of the Leadership Committee changes annually in order to enhance the leadership pipeline in the initiative and minimize the commitment on individuals who volunteer to serve as Chair.
- Leadership Committee members serve only two-year terms. They may serve consecutive or multiple terms at the discretion of the Chair.
- The goals and strategies established in the plan are reassessed every five years, at a minimum. This is to ensure that they remain relevant to the issues facing the county. Any new or adjusted goals and strategies must be approved by a majority vote of the Leadership Committee.
- The actions established in the plan are reassessed every two years. Again, this is to ensure that they remain relevant to the issues facing the county. Any new or adjusted actions must be approved by a majority vote of the Leadership Committee.
- The actions carried out by the plan must be evaluated every two years to determine their progress and effectiveness.



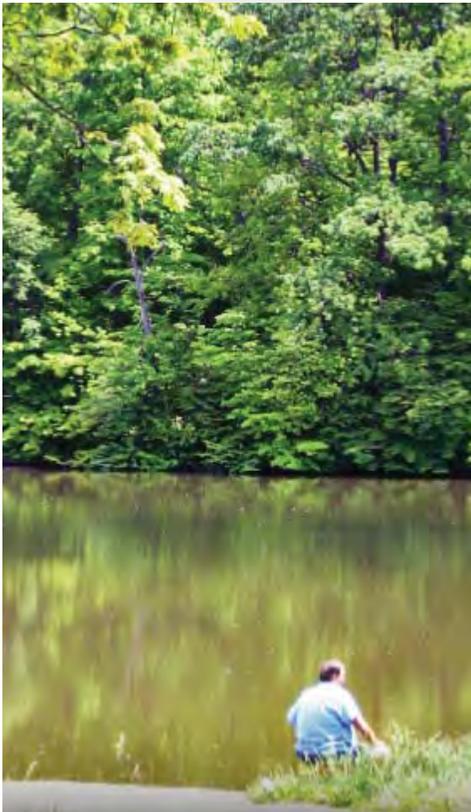
PART 7 Conclusion

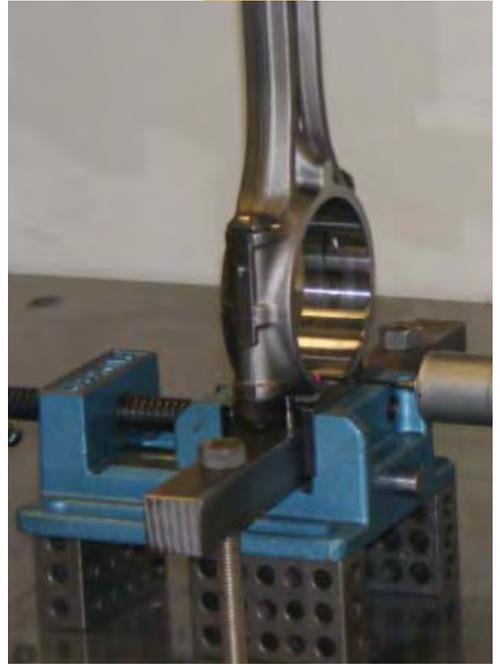
Crawford County has been affected by challenges like those in other rural communities in Ohio. Economic and demographic trends within the county leave businesses, residents and public officials seeking a more promising new direction for the future. What sets this county apart is the willingness to ACT. There is strong determination in Crawford County to tackle tough challenges and one thing is for certain: There is no shortage of hardworking, caring people with good ideas for moving the county forward!

This document presents a blueprint – drawn primarily by the people of Crawford County – for bringing people and organizations together to tackle the county’s toughest challenges. The intent is to create a support system for collaboration so that big projects can become a reality.

It is the hope of the original Visioning Committee that as Crawford: 20/20 Vision moves forward it becomes a living initiative. This plan is not written as a stagnant document; rather it is a business plan that establishes a new capacity within the county for taking on challenges and responding with bigger and better ideas. This plan is only the start – implementation of the key projects will be critical over time. Crawford: 20/20 Vision is intended to be a citizens’ organization – one in which everyone can share in the lifeblood and vitality of the county.

With Crawford County’s strength and energy, it can and will succeed!









appendices

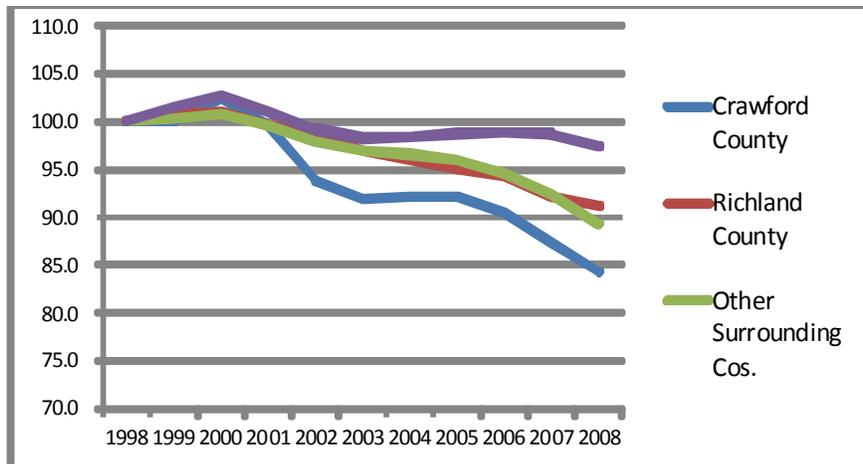
Appendix A:

Snapshot of Crawford County, Data Review

Crawford County's economic and demographic trends echo what has happened in Ohio in the last decade. Trends have been slightly more severe in this county than surrounding areas. Detailed below, several indicators give a sense of what is happening in the county:

- Total employment in the county declined more than Richland County, all other surrounding counties (grouped), and the rest of Ohio from 1998 – 2008. The largest component of this decline – accounting for nearly three quarters of the decline – was the manufacturing sector, which lost nearly 1,700 jobs or 26 percent over the decade.

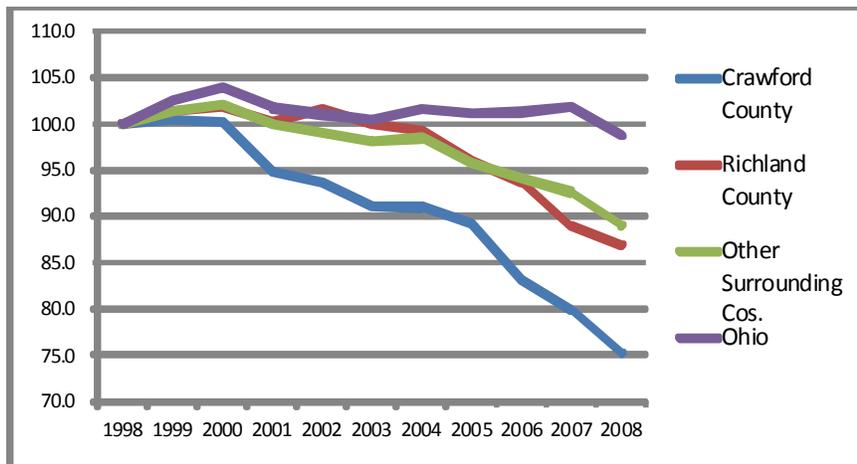
Ten-Year Employment Trend, Percentage Change, 1998 - 2008



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

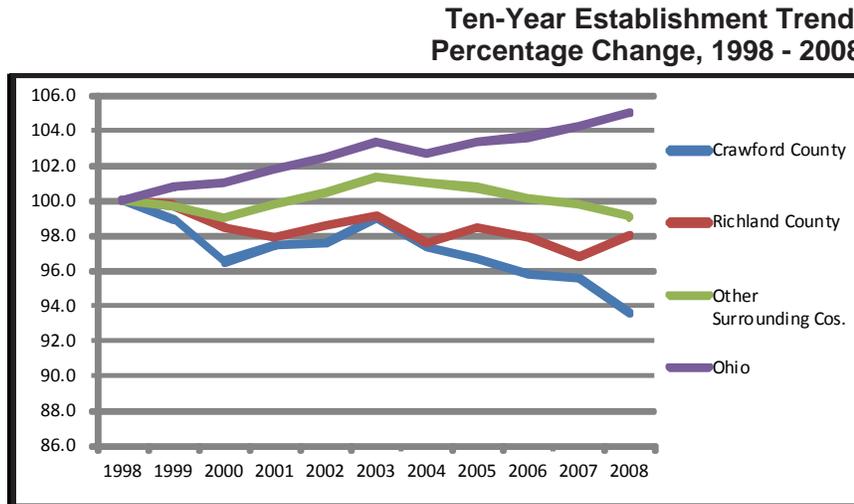
- Total payroll in the county declined more than Richland County, all other surrounding counties (grouped), and the rest of Ohio from 1998 – 2008. Payroll decline in the manufacturing sector accounted for nearly 100 percent of the loss.

Ten-Year Payroll Trend, Percentage Change, 1998 - 2008



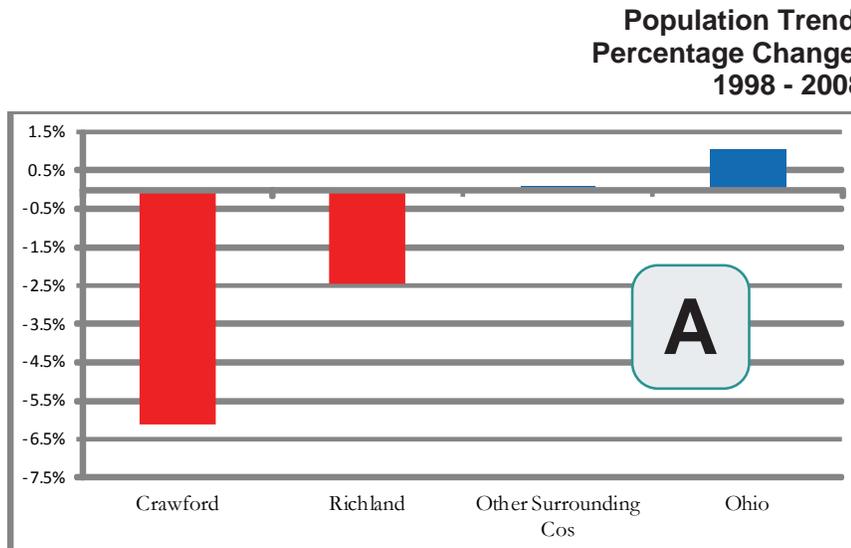
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

- The total number of establishments in the county declined more than Richland County, all other surrounding counties (grouped), and the rest of Ohio from 1998 – 2008.



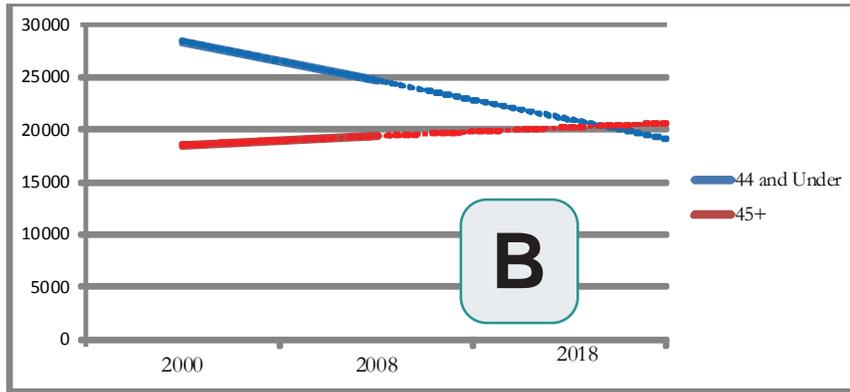
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

- The total population in the county declined faster than Richland County, all other surrounding counties (grouped), and the rest of Ohio from 2000 – 2008 (See Graph A below). All of this loss comes from the Under 45 demographic (See Graph B on following page). If the current trend continues, there will be more people 45 and over than under 45 within the next ten years.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

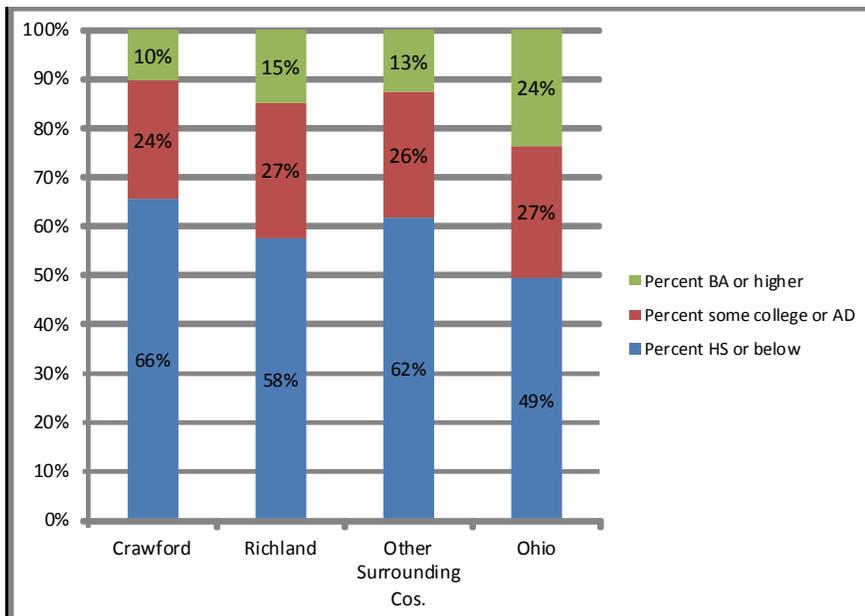
**Population Trend,
45 and Over compared to 44 and under,
1998 - 2008**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

- Postsecondary educational attainment in Crawford County trails neighboring counties and Ohio. Thirty-four percent of Crawford residents have at least some college compared to 51 percent in Ohio, 42 percent in Richland County, and 39 percent in all other surrounding counties.

**Educational Attainment in
Crawford County, Neighboring Counties, & Ohio**



Data related to drug use in Crawford County

- Unintentional overdoses were the second most prevalent cause of death in Crawford County last year.” (*Bucyrus Telegraph Forum, June 8, 2010*)
- “Drug investigations, overdoses, and prosecutions have significantly increased in the County over the last ten years which has resulted in additional financial pressure on the County’s budget.” (*State of the County Report, February 2010*)
- Crawford is one of only 11 counties in the state with more than 10 unintentional overdoses per 100,000 people from 2000 – 2007. (*The Columbus Dispatch, March 28, 2010*)
 - Crawford County ranks fifth in the state with an average of 19.8 unintentional overdose deaths per 100,000. (*Ohio Department of Health, 2010*)

Appendix B:

List of Attendees at Solutions Meetings

Business Success and Job Availability

Craig Miley
Marilyn Miley
Paul Blackford
Steve Crall
Curt Walter
Susan Albright
Glen McMurray
Glen Feichtner
Steve Prochaska
Jerry Niese
Steve Niese
Deb Pinion
Herm Stine
Dave Williamson
Tim Bowersock
Gary Miller
Mike McBeth
Mike Jacobs
Steve Pifer
Dave Crokier
Scott Kibler
Joe Kleinknecht

Workforce Skills and Education

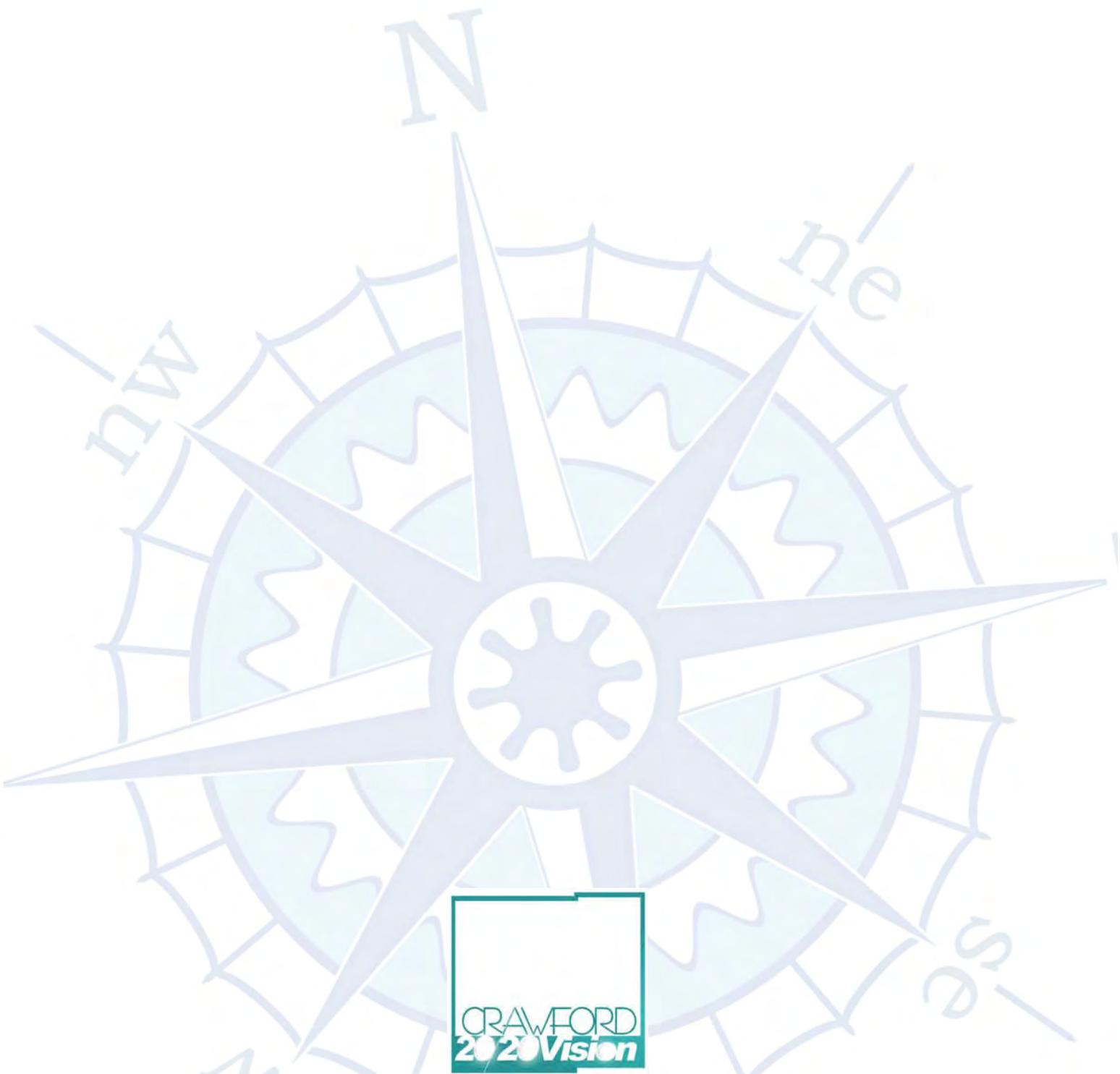
Don Plotts
Tom Kluding
Nancy Kukay
Jay McCreary
Tom O'Leary
Paul Johnson
Marianne Williamson
Leanna Giesige
Mark Stock
Joseph Shadeed
Dan Phillip
Roger Miller
Margaret Thornton
Chanel Hipp
Traci Oswald
Tara Meyerink
Pat Hargis
Janel Hord
Joe Kleinknecht
Robin Hildebrand

Public Safety and Drug-Related Issues

Jody Demo-Hodgins
Cindy Fitz
J.C. Church
Mary Jean Hensley
Bernie France, Pastor
Su Rowles
Sally Weithman
Joseph Cole, Pastor
Ronny Shawber
Ken Teets
Brian Saterfield
Todd Nichols
Bob Laipply
Tim Flock
Sean Leuthold
Gene Toy
Marianne Williamson
Cheri Kaple
Ginny Utz
Deb Pinion
Chrystina Waller

Quality of Life

Mike McBeth
Deb Pinion
Dan DeGreve
Dawn Ratliff
Jeff Funigiello
Matthew Hoover
Pamela Dawson
Josh Dyer
Su Rowles
Cindy Snyder
Matthew Ross
Janet Pry
Bill Fisher
Donna Bauer
Peg Wells
Lace Williamson
Jan Maddy
Sally Weithman
Debbi Gifford
Glenn Cheesman
Missy Harris
Nate Roshon
Pastor Bill Strader
Ben Weithman
Gary Cole
Pat Rondon
Hannah Wurm



For more information about this report, please contact:

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112 East Mansfield Street – Suite 208
Bucyrus, Ohio 44820
419-563-1809

David Williamson, Executive Director
davidw@crawford-co.org

To download a copy of this report: www.crawford2020.org