



Crawford
County
Planning

ANNUAL REPORT

2022





Chair's MESSAGE

Conneaut Valley Borough's Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan Outreach Event

Cultivating a Future Together

I am pleased to submit, on behalf of Crawford County Planning, the 2021-2022 annual report. This report summarizes our agency's ability to implement *Cultivating Crawford - Growing a Community*, the 2014 comprehensive plan for the county. We've witnessed changes across our county. Some of it we've cultivated through hard work while other changes were not in our plans. Regardless, one thing is for sure, change is inevitable. We can plan for the future of our communities or just live in the places that happen around us. As chair of the Crawford County Planning Commission, I find it important that we take an active role in planning for our future. I invite you to read about the progress we've made in 2022 regarding our seven focus areas.

Housing: In the realm of housing, we prepared and submitted an Affordable Housing Proposal to the County Commissioners in August 2022. The proposal outlines the steps needed to address blight prevention, blight remediation, and the historic conservation of our housing stock. To implement the County Housing Plan, the proposal identifies 13 actions the County should undertake to improve housing throughout the county.

Planning & Government Services:

Over the past year the planning office began a realignment of staffing capacity and revising the organizational structure of operations. These efforts are intended to align work with organizational roles to ensure that the priorities of the comprehensive plan are addressed. Additionally, the Commission began to evaluate its committee structure and roles. This work will likely continue through the upcoming comprehensive plan update.

Commerce and Economic Development:

Many of the community development projects completed over the past year lead to improvements in our commerce and economic development. However, one of the more significant ones was the deployment of broadband fiberoptics to the Keystone Industrial Park in Greenwood Township. Our efforts to partner with the private sector, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Economic Progress Alliance of Crawford County to establish this critical infrastructure will lay the groundwork for future investments for years to come.

Another partnership initiative was the development and kickoff of a county-wide branding campaign to attract tourists and visitors. The Convention and Visitor's Bureau worked in partnership with the County to establish the "There's a Story Here" campaign, which will highlight all of the wonderful attractions and amenities Crawford County has to offer. A key part of this was the design and deployment of a mobile application available at <https://visitcrawford.org/mobile-app/>.

Agriculture: Since agriculture is a major part of our citizens' livelihood and the culture of the county, we worked to lay some of the groundwork for investing in agricultural operations and prime farmland.

An impactful initiative was the development of soil data in the our geographic information system (GIS). Doing so enables the Crawford County Conservation District to expedite and enhance their permitting and grant work across the county.

We continued our tradition of holding an annual clean-up day and education session at the Crawford County Forest. Students from Titusville High School, along with members of the Planning Commission, staff, Commissioners, and general public helped to remove trash while enjoying presentations from the PA Game Commission, Crawford County Conservation District, and forestry experts from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Recreation: This year proved to be a successful one for recreation planning and implementation across Crawford County. Through partnerships and coordination, Crawford County Planning leveraged funding from the Northwest Commission (our Regional Planning Organization (RPO)) to conduct two trail feasibility studies, Ernst Trail Connection & Linesville to Conneaut Lake Connection Study and the Erie to PA Trail Gap Feasibility Study, along with one trail intersection safety study, the Mount Pleasant Road and Ernst Trail Safety Study. These reports will help to further the development of the Erie to Pittsburgh trail and the Ernst trail, which are priority trails for the County. Additionally through administration of a local community's CDBG funds, we made the first of a multitude of investments to Roche Park in Vernon Township.

I am excited with our success in implementing *Cultivating Crawford*. However, I am also equally as excited to embark on a process to work with our residents, businesses, and communities to revisit our vision for Crawford County. The upcoming comprehensive planning process will be data driven, outreach oriented, leverage expert recommendations, and most importantly reflecting the desires of our citizens for their future. Our work program for the remainder of 2022 and 2023 will encompass the preparation and creation of the county's new comprehensive plan.

Transportation: To ensure the movement of goods and people within the county, we undertook initiatives aimed at increasing mobility, accessibility, maintenance, and options in our transportation system.

- We partnered with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) District 1 to repurpose the historic Messerall Bridge for use as part of the Pymatuning State Park Spillway Trail.
- Another historic bridge, South Perry Street, was removed and demolished after a six year effort to address the structurally deficient infrastructure. PennDOT District 1 managed the project on behalf of the County.
- Over \$200,000 of federal funding was leveraged to improve roadways with paving in the City of Meadville as well as removal of architectural barriers at four local municipal buildings (Veron Township, Beaver Township, Steuben Township, and Richmond Township).

Land Use: To help local elected officials and planning commissions manage land use and development pressure in alignment with *Cultivating Crawford*, we provided technical support for current planning by reviewing development proposals and ordinance amendments. In support of long-range planning, the Conneaut Valley Borough's Multi-Municipal Plan was packaged and sent to the three communities of Conneautville, Linesville and Springboro for formal action. Staff played a critical role in collecting data, facilitating the process, synthesizing information, and preparing the plan for these communities. I wish to acknowledge the local steering committee who made the planning process a success. To learn more about project and the proposed plan, visit <https://conneaut-valley-plan-crawfordcountypa.hub.arcgis.com/>.

Comprehensive Plan Report Card

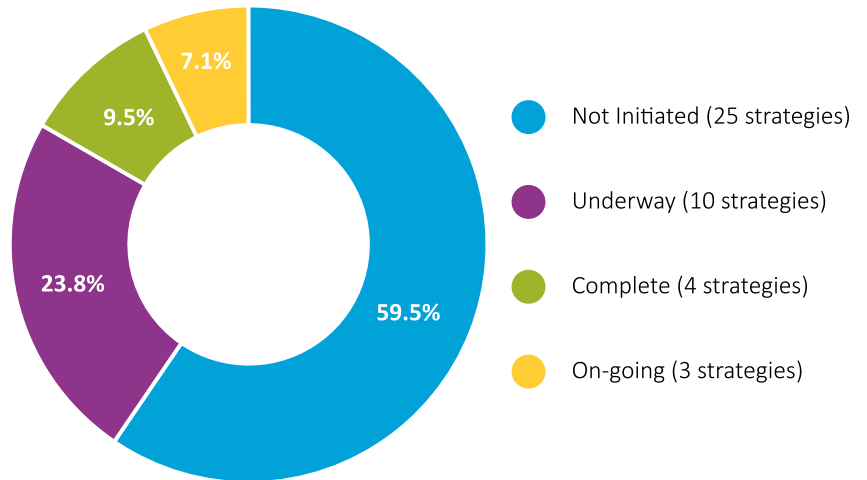
Agricultural Security Area in South Shenango

Implementing the Plan

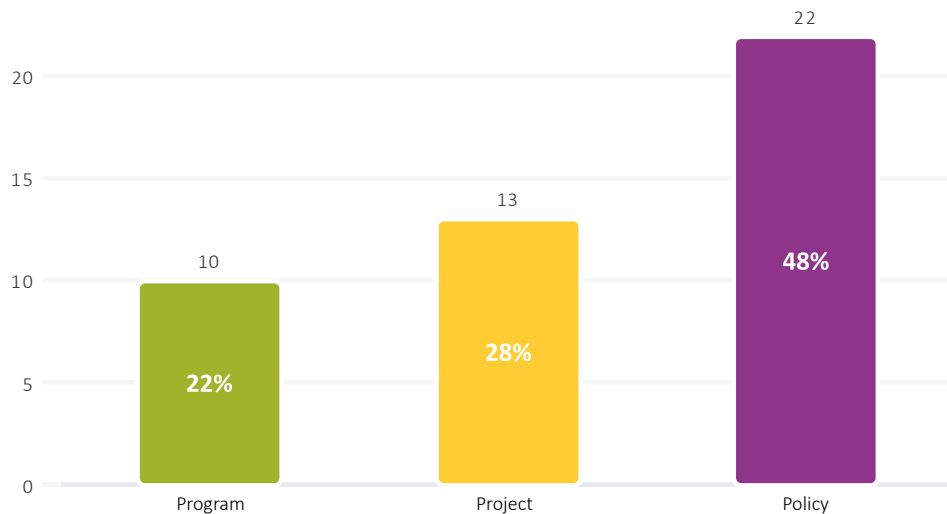
Crawford County Planning's work program is directed and guided by *Cultivating Crawford*. The plan sets the policy objectives and action strategies used to achieve the vision for the future of the county. This is organized into seven categories: Housing, Commerce & Economic Development, Agriculture, Transportation, Recreation, Land Use, along with Planning and Government Services.

To track our Plan implementation, a report card was developed in 2017 and is updated annually. The 2022 comprehensive plan report card includes new analysis of the action strategies including a breakdown by strategy type, by category, and completion status.

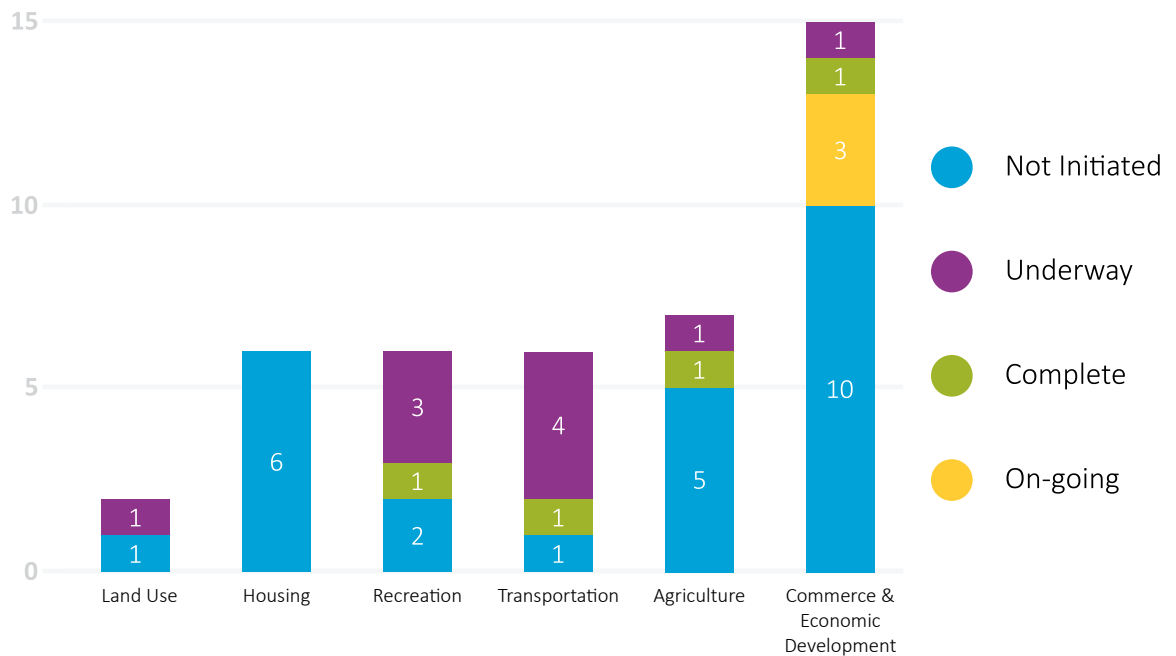
Strategies by status



Strategies by type



Strategies by category & status



Developing Consistency with the Plan

The concept of undertaking projects and enacting policies that are “consistent” with the comprehensive plan is commonly misunderstood by officials, administrators, and even planners. What good is it to engage the public for the purpose of forming a desired vision for the future if it is difficult or even impossible to determine if the subsequent acts of state, county, and local governments are consistent with the plan? Over the past year, Crawford County Planning has been working to make the concept of “consistency with comprehensive plans” easier for everyone to understand and determine. Part of this effort has been to set new internal policies such that the County’s review of proposed zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance amendments are looked at within the context of the county’s comprehensive plan. That is to say that the planning agency will review the proposed policies and actions of the state, county, and local government in the context of whether such items advance the goals and objectives of the plan or otherwise detract from it. Such reviews will focus on citing the facts of any given proposal and examining their relationship to plan objectives. As a part of our county comprehensive plan update, Crawford County Planning will work with local officials and citizens to establish a clear framework of planning practices and policies that work toward creating the type of place we can agree we want to achieve.

Over 90% of development pressure occurred in western and central Crawford County.

Over the past year, Crawford County Planning reviewed 18 proposed zoning ordinance amendments and one (1) subdivision and land development ordinance proposal. These proposals included regulations for solar developments, short-term rentals, zoning map revisions, and more. Furthermore, staff provided reports on 164 development reviews until our August 1, 2022 policy change that temporarily ceases such reviews (SALDO applications must still be filed with Crawford County Planning prior to local approval). Over the past year, 90% of development activities observed by Crawford County Planning have taken place within the central and western portions of Crawford County while activities within the eastern section have declined from prior years. Beyond local development activities and proposed municipal amendments to land use regulations, Crawford County Planning has responded to comprehensive plan consistency requests by state and federal agencies to inform those entities of how their programs impact the county.

Partnering with Municipalities

To ensure the county’s vision and strategies are implemented, Crawford County Planning works at the local level with partners from the public and private sector. The map below illustrates our efforts to implement the plan through technical assistance, which can vary from a phone call or email to preparing reports. Additionally, Crawford County Planning provided direct assistance to communities undertaking community development and long-range planning initiatives. Within the last year, Crawford County provided at least 65 hours of in-person, phone, or email communication with citizens and municipal officials.



Beaver, Richmond, and Steuben’s removal of architectural barriers at voting precincts and one municipal building increases the accessibility of essential government facilities for senior citizens and individuals with disabilities.



- Municipalities who completed a project with Crawford County Planning aid.
- Municipalities who received technical assistance or support for planning and development efforts.



Union’s feasibility study at Mout Pleseant Road and Ernst Trail provides five design alternatives which the Township can seek funding to improve safety and mobility for non-vehicular users.



*The Conneaut Valley Borough’s Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan is a long-range vision that is strongly advocated for in **Cultivating Crawford**.*



Summit’s zoning amendment for solar development leveraged a map overlay to protect prime farmland and ecologically sensitive areas identified in the 2008 Natural Heritage Inventory for Crawford County.

Director's MESSAGE



Building a Culture of Planning

Those who are familiar with the Crawford County Planning Commission and Planning Office have likely noticed numerous changes over the past few years. Many of these changes aim to streamline and simplify our operations. However others are focused on helping communities “fish for themselves” instead of “fishing for them”. Regardless, we are working toward building a culture of planning in Crawford County. So what do we mean by “culture of planning”?

Many folks likely are not familiar with community planning. Due to its broad nature it is difficult to pin down a single definition; however, one of the most common ways to describe what planners do is in comparison to architects. Planning focuses on communities like architects focus on a buildings, making it more attractive and prosperous for the people who use it. Additionally, planning at its core is forward thinking, meaning it attempts to address the future. Therefore, we refer to the concept of building a culture of planning as working to establish a mindset among our citizens and leaders that focuses on addressing the needs of our communities, in a logical and coordinated manner, to make them more attractive and prosperous in the future.

Over the last year our planning staff have worked diligently to build the culture of planning and address the needs of our citizens. From managing million dollar grants and construction projects to helping prepare a vision for the Conneaut Valley Boroughs, we’ve been working in and with our community champions every step of the way. As we continue through the next year, I believe our partnerships with community stakeholders and elected officials will grow and prosper. Specifically as we aim to review and establish a shared vision for the future of Crawford County. In an effort to engage our citizenry, community groups, business leaders, and elected officials, we have an opportunity to define a shared vision that will shape the future of this county for years to come with our comprehensive plan. As we begin to roll up our selves, we’re excited to announce the creation of a Community Revitalization Program (CRP), which will support the development and redevelopment of our communities through focused financial aid. We aim to kickoff this program in early 2023.

I believe if we build a culture of planning we will establish the roadmap needed to acheive the future we all want here in Crawford County.

Zachary Norwood
Planning Director

Major Initiatives Anticipated in 2023

- Comprehensive plan update
- Significant trail construction & design
- Model subdivision and land development ordinance creation
- Community revitalization program launch
- Broadband internet deployment initiatives
- Planning educational trainings & publications

Budget

Expenditures	2020	2021	2022*
Personnel Services	\$300,071.41	\$316,196.14	\$185,471.26
Operations	\$33,474.51	\$55,855.67	\$69,636.56
Miscellaneous	\$1,201.59	\$824.80	\$6,312.18
Total	\$334,747.51	\$372,876.61	\$261,420.00

Revenues	2020	2021	2022*
Federal	\$37,939.93	\$ 65,212.70	\$ 55,021.41
State	\$-	\$-	\$-
Local	\$5,537.77	\$20,901.97	\$4,720.44
Review Fees	\$11,725.00	\$12,953.18	\$6,850.00
Miscellaneous	\$1,014.96	\$2,020.23	\$919.41
Total	\$56,217.66	\$101,088.08	\$67,511.26

* Figures as of 8/30/2022.

Crawford County Planning

Our Mission:

We are committed to providing solution oriented services through community development and planning to facilitate the growth of the local economy, enhance the quality of life, and preserve the natural environment for current and future generations.

Crawford County Planning
903 Diamond Park
Meadville, PA 16335
814-333-7341

Email

Planning@co.crawford.pa.us

Web

www.crawfordcountypa.net
www.crawfordcountypa.net/planning

Are you social? We are! Follow us

Facebook - Crawford County Planning

LinkedIn - Crawford County Planning

Our Core Values:

We work to achieve our mission through our five core values.

Communication: We strive to reach as many people as possible by utilizing every possible media available to us to connect with residents, elected officials, appointed boards, and community groups.

Community: We promote places that have an identity and inspire a sense of belonging, which often stems from the physical character of a place as well as the people who live there.

Engagement: We aim to include everyone in the planning process since multiple perspectives lead to a more diverse conversation and successful result.

Integrity + Ethics: We are driven to conduct our business with the highest standards of professional behavior, which include transparency, honesty, and respect in all our interactions.

Sustainability: We encourage and support projects that maintain or improve the economy, environment, and equity of Crawford County.

Board of Commissioners:

Eric Henry, Chair
Francis Weidersphan Jr., Vice Chair
John Christopher Soff, Secretary

Crawford County Planning Commission:

Maria Dreese, Chair
Katie Wickert, Vice Chair
Ron Mattocks, Secretary
John Lawrence, Treasurer
John Frye
Jessica Hilburn
Austin Rock
Scott Sjolander
Travis Palmer
Dick Astor*

Crawford County Planning Office:

Zachary Norwood, Planning Director
Thomas Gilbertson, Assistant Director for Community Planning
Jenny Tompkins, Assistant Director for Community Development*
Peter Grella, Land Use Planner*
Samantha Travis, Community Development Specialist
Debra Frawley, ARPA Program Manager
Ann Knott, Office Manager

* Former