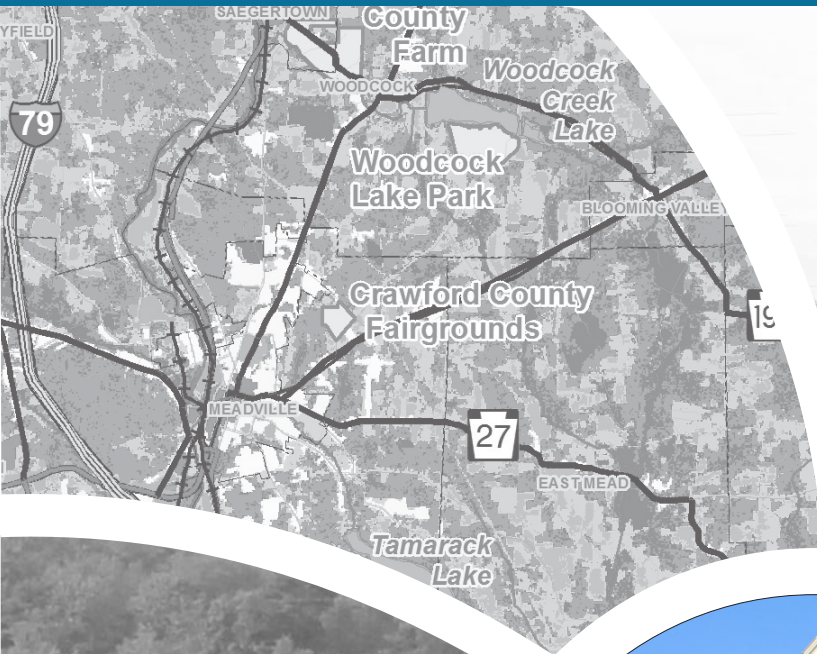


addendum

# PLANNING & GOVERNMENT SERVICES



THE CHAMBER  
GOOD BUSINESS  
TITUSVILLE AREA  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE





# PLANNING & GOVERNMENT SERVICES

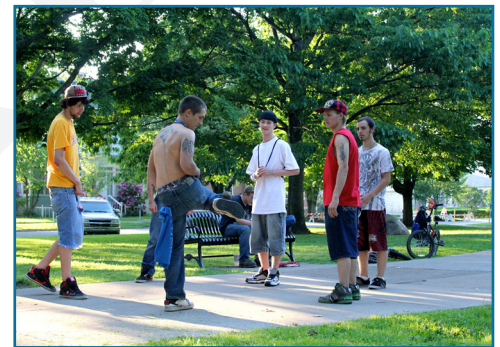
## Optimizing the County's Capacity for Planning

The contents of this comprehensive plan represent the future that Crawford County has articulated for itself through public input, the professional opinions of the county's planning department staff, and the thoughtful perspectives of the elected county commissioners and appointed members of the planning commission. The comprehensive plan doesn't stop at that, however, and neither should Crawford County. This section of the plan proposes the next steps that the county's planning bodies should take to marry their efforts with the work that needs to be done.



## Aligning County Planning with Strategic Goals

**Effectiveness grows from targeting specific efforts toward specific goals.** This comprehensive plan represents the collective preferences of Crawford County's citizens, its elected and appointed officials, and its professional planning staff. As such, it supplies an extensive and ambitious strategic plan for growth, development, preservation and quality of life in the county. It also breaks that plan into its components, specifying the tasks that need to be done to reach the goals and achieve the vision that the county has for itself. For the work to proceed effectively, however, the county's planning bodies must distribute the tasks in the plan to individuals, and align individuals' roles with the tasks in the plan. In other words, the work set for in the comprehensive plan needs to be distributed in such a way that the responsible parties – the planning commission and planning staff – are organized to handle the efforts both efficiently and effectively.



Some guys play hacky sack at Meadville's Diamond Park on a summer evening.

## Rationale for Making Structural Changes

**Organizational alignment is defined by the work that needs to be done.** To achieve the overall vision of Crawford County as presented in this comprehensive plan, the best chance of success comes from aligning the structure of the planning commission and staff to the work that needs to be done. This assumes that the goals of the comprehensive plan are of great importance to all involved because they were developed through a process that incorporated input from the public, elected officials and the people who might well care the most about results – the planning commission and staff. It assumes that implementing the strategies in the plan is the aspiration of all involved, and that everyone working in support of the plan will shift or adjust their work focus as necessary to support the goals enumerated in the plan. (To do the reverse, and adapt the work to the organization, diminishes the importance of the goals.) In summary, this is all about conducting work in the public interest as defined by the plan.

The changes pair people with tasks. The planning commission will change its lineup of standing committees to match the chapters of the comprehensive plan, in order to be in support of the plan's vision. The planning staff will redefine individual responsibilities so that each chapter of the plan has a primary and secondary champion watching out for it, driving its progress, and providing energy, professional guidance and support.

Organizational alignment fosters the development of expertise, consistency and accountability. When





an organization's structure and duties shift to match the demands of the work, good things happen:

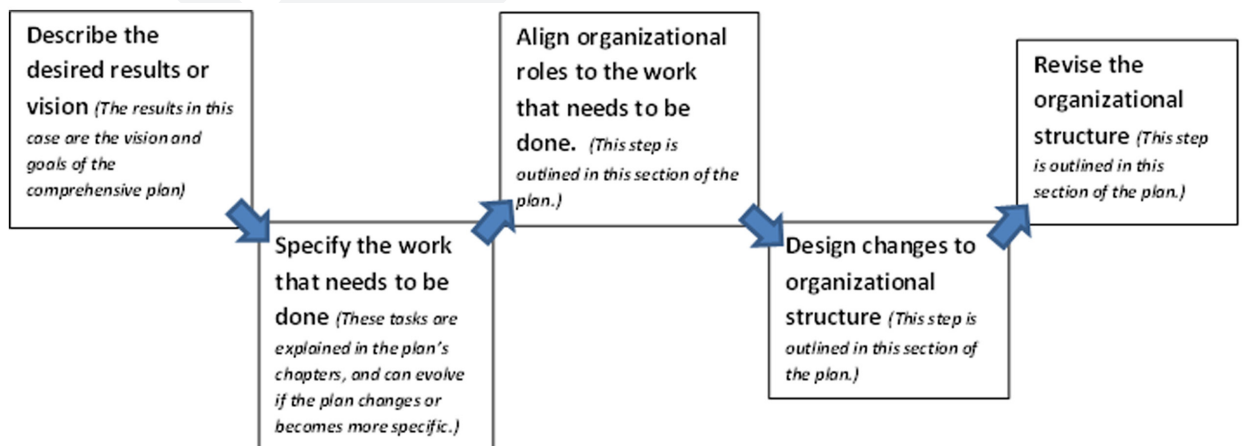
- Members of the planning commission and planning staff develop new or additional expertise. As individuals strive to implement the strategies outlined in this comprehensive plan, they typically educate themselves or each other on their focus topics (transportation, agriculture, recreation, etc.) and become the go-to resources for colleagues and voting members of the commission.
- Planning commissioners and staff members provide consistency. Comprehensive plans usually take the long view (approximately 10 years), and are expected to be implemented incrementally but steadily. During that time, public interest may wax and wane. What remains consistent, however, is oversight by and professional attention from the appointed commissioners and professional staff, as they work in collaboration with the County Commissioners. Members of the planning commission and staff provide the follow-through that creates results.
- Progress – and results – are visible. With committees on the planning commission devoted expressly to the chapters of the plan and planning staff members working to enact strategies, the public can see progress toward the goals set forth in the plan. Whether in the private sector or public realm, this method provides accountability for the agreed-upon work.
- The work is defined and conducted in the public interest. The comprehensive plan's implementation is less likely to be interrupted or derailed when responsibilities are clear and accountability measures are in place. Therefore, the structure propels the vision articulated by members of the public and their elected and appointed officials.



Volunteerism and public service is found throughout the county.

## Steps Forward

Aligning the planning organization's structure to the work at hand may not happen overnight, but it also doesn't have to take months and months, particularly in a situation such as this, in which several steps are already completed. Here are the steps for this kind of organizational change:



The flow chart above starts with the overall vision of what Crawford County wants its future to “look like” – the goals and strategies presented in the chapters of this comprehensive plan. The plan reflects the various ways Crawford County has defined what it wants to see happen within its boundaries over the coming years, how it wants its future to unfold. The other blocks in the flow chart issue from that most important element, support it and give it the best chance of actually happening.



**Describe the desired results or vision.** Members of the public, the county commissioners, the planning commission and the planning staff seek the implementation of the comprehensive plan. The chapters of the plan covering Housing, Commerce & Economic Development, Agriculture, Transportation, Recreation and Land Use each includes a vision statement and specific goals that define the vision. These elements are the “desired results” for each aspect of community life in Crawford County. They summarize what we citizens and public servants want our county to be or become over time. The vision statements and goals stand as the overarching direction for the planning commission and staff. As shown in the flow chart, all steps toward aligning the organization to the work begin with the vision and goals of the plan.

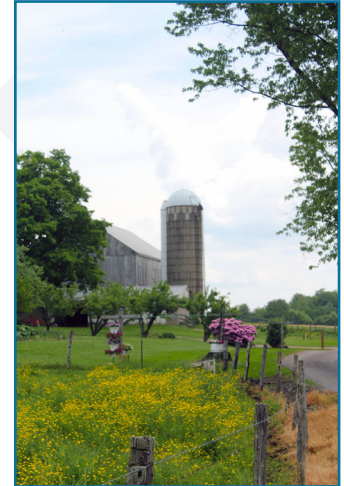
**Specify the work that needs to be done.** Each of the plan’s six chapters includes strategies for implementing the goals. These strategies reflect the best thinking of those involved in preparing the plan as of its date of publication. But of course conditions can change, and it is the expectation that the plan should evolve to meet new challenges or circumstances, and especially that new strategies can be added and others further refined as time goes on. The implementation strategies in each chapter stand as a master list of work to be done on the way to achieving the goals. The implementation strategies each could be broken down into smaller steps by the people working on them.

To provide an example, in the Agriculture chapter, one strategy to achieve the goal “Linking Farmland Preservation and Land-Use Planning” is: Create and maintain an inventory of active agricultural lands in the County. In this case, the professional working on the Agriculture goals, could decide that the smaller steps for this strategy would include:

- Developing a clear understanding of why the strategy is important and the ways an inventory of agricultural lands can help the county and its residents;
- Collecting the data – determining who will collect the data, what technological support these individuals might need, where the inventorying will begin, and setting interim benchmarks for the inventory;
- Assembling the data in a usable form – ensuring that users can easily access the information that was collected and that it is understandable;
- Storing the data – finding a system to host the data that is linked easily to those collecting the data and those utilizing it;
- Keeping the data current over time - establishing a system for updating the information at regular intervals and potentially automating these processes;
- Providing the data, which is public information, to people who request it; and
- Seeking new uses for the data that could enhance conditions for Crawford County and its residents. This might include examining the data’s importance or relevance to the initiatives of other planning groups.

The planning staff professional(s) responsible for the Agriculture section of the plan would define the smaller steps and a timeframe for completing the work so that, as planned, the county implements the strategy, and ends up with an inventory of active agricultural lands and the ability to put that inventory to good use. Staff members charged with implementing other parts of the comprehensive plan would have similar responsibilities for those priorities.

**Align work with organizational roles.** As stated previously, the work of the county’s planning organization (the commission and professional staff) should be aligned to the priorities set forth in the comprehensive plan. Therefore, each high-priority aspect of life in the county – Housing, Commerce & Economic Development, Agriculture, Transportation, Recreation and Land Use – will have a dedicated committee on the planning commission comprising at least two members. Each committee will also include primary and secondary point persons from the planning staff who drive progress toward implementation of the strategies. (At least two people are



Active agricultural land in southwestern Crawford County.

needed from each branch for each topic to share ideas, share the work, and also to ensure that knowledge about a topic does not reside solely with a single individual, as that puts institutional competency at risk in the event of that person's absence.) The planning commission comprises nine members when all positions are filled. Newer members could be placed on a committee with a more tenured appointee to add institutional depth. The planning staff includes a planning director, assistant director, land use planner, grant administrator, two planning assistants and a secretary. The assistant director, land use planner, grant administrator and planning assistants should each take one or more primary and secondary roles on the committees.



A map analyzes transportation corridors in Crawford County.

**Design changes to organizational structure.** The suggestion here for revisions in the organizational structure and individual responsibilities includes the following:

**Planning commission committees:** Each committee will have at least two members. Some members, however, could be on just one committee if the commission believes that a given committee will be a particularly demanding one. In the best-case scenario, planning commission members would volunteer for their choice of topic areas, bringing a willingness to be flexible so that each person is able to capitalize on current expertise and/or work in an area of particular interest. Discussion should include expected workloads as well as opportunities for collaboration or cross-pollination of ideas. In addition to the committees aligned with each topic area in the comprehensive plan, the commission should also retain its personnel committee.

**Planning staff:** The planning director will oversee the work of planning staff professionals, providing guidance and assistance, but will not act as a primary or secondary representative to any committee. The planning department professional staff members each will have primary responsibility for work on at least one topic area of the comprehensive plan and secondary responsibility for at least one other topic area. The topic areas seen as the most demanding may have one primary and two secondary assignees. In the best-case scenario, the planning director would tap particular enthusiasm for different topic areas on the part of each staff member, recognizing that flexibility by the staff will be necessary. Discussion should include expected workloads as well as opportunities for collaboration among roles and cross-pollination of ideas.

**Implement the realignment.** During the time that responsibilities for committee membership are established within the planning commission, the planning director should complete the realignment of duties within the planning staff. Some likely steps in this process could be to assess current and anticipated workloads and possibly redistribute some established or anticipated duties. (For example, it is recommended elsewhere in this comprehensive plan that the county planning director will identify a point-person for oil and gas industry matters, which may not be a time-intensive job now but could become so in the future.) In addition, the planning director would probably wish to identify and address potential obstacles to aligning staff responsibilities to the comprehensive plan's priority areas. Some likely steps in this process could include providing effective communication to explain the changes; providing training and staff development opportunities for individuals who may currently lack specific skills or topic knowledge; helping get current projects completed so all staff members are in a position to take on new responsibilities; or identifying tasks or duties that the department can stop doing because they are no longer as important as they may have been at a previous time, thus freeing up staff availability.

It should be noted that this suggested realignment of duties may not involve more work for the staff than currently is the case. After all, the planning staff is already actively at work on matters related to housing, land use, agriculture, transportation, commerce & economic development and recreation.

Thus, it is likely that this realignment is more like shuffling the deck than adding more cards. Still, changes in current practices usually create anxiety and concern for those involved, so the final suggestion offered here is for the planning director and staff to listen well to each other in order to understand goals and develop ways to surmount obstacles; to operate transparently and with candor; to provide a means for staff members to state their preferences (as appropriate and possible) about their committee-related assignments, and to communicate regularly and fully about these changes.

DRAFT



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