



QUALITY OF PLACE & WORKFORCE ATTRACTION PLAN

Crawford County,
Indiana

2025



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Crawford County is at a pivotal moment of opportunity to revitalize its economy, strengthen its workforce, and improve quality of life for current and future residents. This Quality of Place & Workforce Attraction Plan offers a unified vision and roadmap to elevate the county's competitiveness and livability over the next five years.

The plan outlines targeted investments in childcare, housing, workforce development, broadband, and community amenities. It is built on local insights, regional best practices, and the urgent need to retain and attract skilled workers. Through strategic partnerships, aligned funding, and community engagement, Crawford County can create a thriving rural economy anchored in opportunity, equity, and growth.

HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

This plan was developed through a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection, including:

- Employer and stakeholder surveys (ROI Employer Survey, 2024)
- Youth services data from the Boys & Girls Club of Crawford County (2023–2025)
- Public planning documents and community engagement efforts via the Community Foundation of Crawford County and CCEDC
- Broadband expansion reports from Purdue Center for Regional Development
- State and federal funding program analysis
- Workforce and migration data from Indiana Department of Workforce Development and WorkOne
- Public input session and community workshop
- A community survey developed to collect broad public feedback

This data-driven process ensures the plan reflects the county's lived challenges and practical opportunities, with an emphasis on youth services, rural equity, and sustainable economic development.





STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Support working families through expanded childcare, early learning, and youth activities.
2. Address housing shortages by adding workforce units and rehabilitating existing structures.
3. Advance broadband and infrastructure to support remote workers and digital businesses.
4. Build and retain workforce talent via trades education, apprenticeships, and relocation support.
5. Enhance community identity and quality of life by increasing access to local retail/grocery, healthcare, and recreational amenities.

COMMUNITY SURVEY INSIGHTS

Crawford County Community Input Survey

In developing this plan, community input was solicited through an 8-question survey. In total, 103 responses were collected online via Google Forms' survey tool. An analysis of the results produced key insights to inform the development of this plan.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

- What do you love most about living in Crawford County?
- What is the biggest challenge facing your family or neighbors right now?
- Which of the following would most improve your quality of life? (*Multiple choice + text box*)
- How would you rate the current availability of good jobs in Crawford County?
- What kinds of businesses or services do you wish we had in Crawford County?
- If you could improve just one thing Crawford County, what would it be?
- Would you or someone you know benefit from more job training or workforce programs nearby?
- Do you hope to remain in Crawford County long-term?
- Anything else you'd like to share?

Community Strengths

Residents overwhelmingly value:

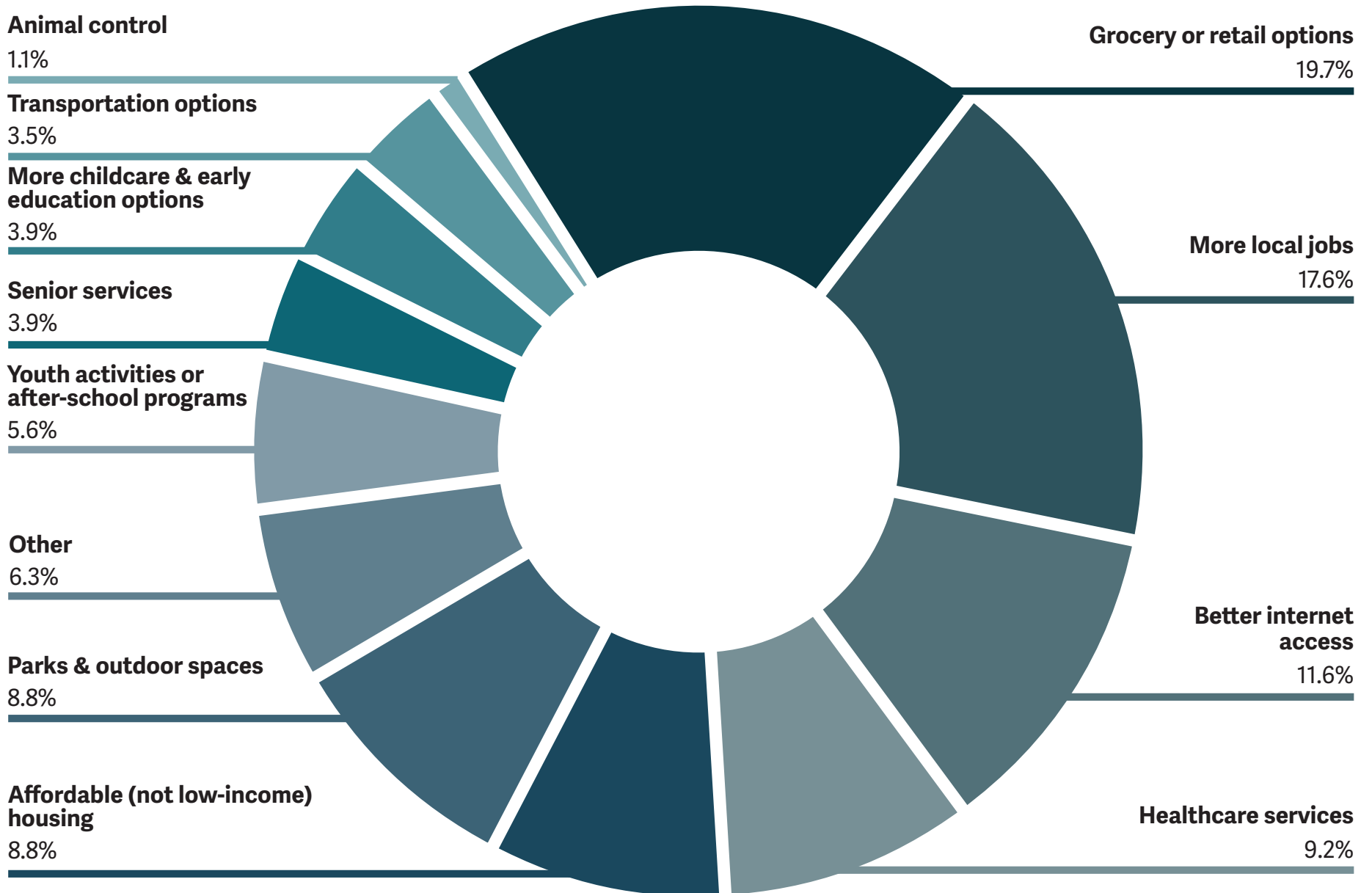
- Natural beauty and rural character: peace, quiet, scenic views, and space to roam.
- Tight-knit community with strong belonging and support.
- Low crime and a slower, family-friendly pace of life.

Top Challenges

The most pressing issues facing families and neighbors include:

- Lack of good-paying jobs and local employment opportunities.
- Rising costs, especially property taxes, healthcare, and basic goods.
- Poor internet access.
- Limited access to healthcare, child care, and elder care services.
- Lack of local retail options, requiring long drives for groceries, dining, and shopping.
- Road/infrastructure conditions (potholes, maintenance, traffic safety).

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD MOST IMPROVE YOUR QUALITY OF LIFE? (PICK UP TO 3)



Key Priorities to Improve Quality of Life

Respondents were asked to select up to three improvements. The most frequent responses were:

- More better paying jobs
- Grocery and retail options
- Better internet access
- Affordable (not low-income) housing
- Healthcare services
- Youth activities, parks, and after-school programs

Desired Businesses and Services

Residents would like to see:

- Full-service grocery stores (e.g., Aldi)
- Sit-down restaurants, coffee shops, and retail stores
- Urgent care and medical facilities
- Entertainment options (movie theaters, skating rinks, bowling alleys)
- Childcare centers and elder services
- Animal control and humane society support

Job Training and Workforce Development

Many residents expressed support for job training programs, especially in skilled trades, manufacturing, and technology.

Respondents see local job creation as key to retaining youth and reducing poverty.

Long-Term Residency Outlook

A majority plan to stay in Crawford County, but many noted that decision depends on job availability and quality-of-life improvements.

Some respondents expect to leave due to limited services, high costs, or lack of opportunity.

Additional Themes and Concerns

Property taxes are a widespread concern, particularly among retirees and fixed-income residents.

Respondents desire transparency and strategic direction.

There is interest in revitalizing vacant buildings, improving zoning enforcement, and increasing county pride and cleanliness.

Several respondents called for better communication and inclusion in county decision-making processes.

DETAILED ACTION FRAMEWORK

Year 1: Foundation & Quick Wins (2025-2026)

<p>Establish a Childcare Action Task Force</p>	<p>Led by CCEDC, BGC, schools, local churches, and employers. Focus on aligning local needs with FSSA, Early Learning Indiana, and OCRA grants.</p>
<p>Expand Pre-K Micro-Sites in Schools</p>	<p>Support schools and the Boys & Girls Club in launching in-school preschool classrooms with fast-tracked licensure support.</p>
<p>Conduct Housing Market Needs Assessment</p>	<p>Partner with IHCD to gather data on affordability, demand, and blight. Use results to guide incentive policies and land use.</p>
<p>Launch County-Wide Awareness Campaign</p>	<p>Promote Crawford County's affordability, lifestyle, and outdoor assets through digital, social, and local branding efforts. Partner with Ivy Tech, Visit Indiana, and local media.</p>
<p>Document Broadband Gaps</p>	<p>Collaborate with ISPs and the Indiana Broadband Office to complete last-mile coverage mapping and promote 2027 fiber targets.</p>
<p>Host Trades & Apprenticeship Career Fair</p>	<p>Coordinate with Ivy Tech, unions, and local employers to expose students and job seekers to technical career paths and training.</p>
<p>Initiate Community Engagement Dashboard</p>	<p>Launch a simple, publicly accessible dashboard with quarterly updates on jobs, housing, and childcare expansion metrics.</p>

DETAILED ACTION FRAMEWORK

Year 3: Growth & Alignment (2027–2028)

Elevate Boys & Girls Club to Level 3 Quality	Support BGC’s professional development and facility upgrades to meet Paths to QUALITY Level 3 standards, expanding daycare seats.
Expand Workforce Development	Partner with Ivy Tech to introduce virtual training and certification opportunities in high-demand careers for high schoolers.
Break Ground on Workforce Housing	Leverage IHEDA and Rural Housing funds to construct a 10–15 unit affordable development. Engage local builders and town redevelopment commissions.
Launch Blight-to-Housing Program	Identify 5+ abandoned or underused structures and convert them into livable units or child care facilities using CDBG funds and local tradespeople.
Start Workforce Relocation Incentive Program	Offer \$2,500–\$5,000 relocation bonuses for skilled tradespeople or remote workers. Consider partnering with local employers for a match.
Reach 90% Broadband Coverage	Complete final broadband gaps with Indiana Connectivity Program and public-private ISP partnerships.
Begin Trail/Greenway Construction	Launch multi-use trail connecting towns and outdoor sites using DNR’s Next Level Trails grant, regional volunteers, and tourism dollars.

DETAILED ACTION FRAMEWORK

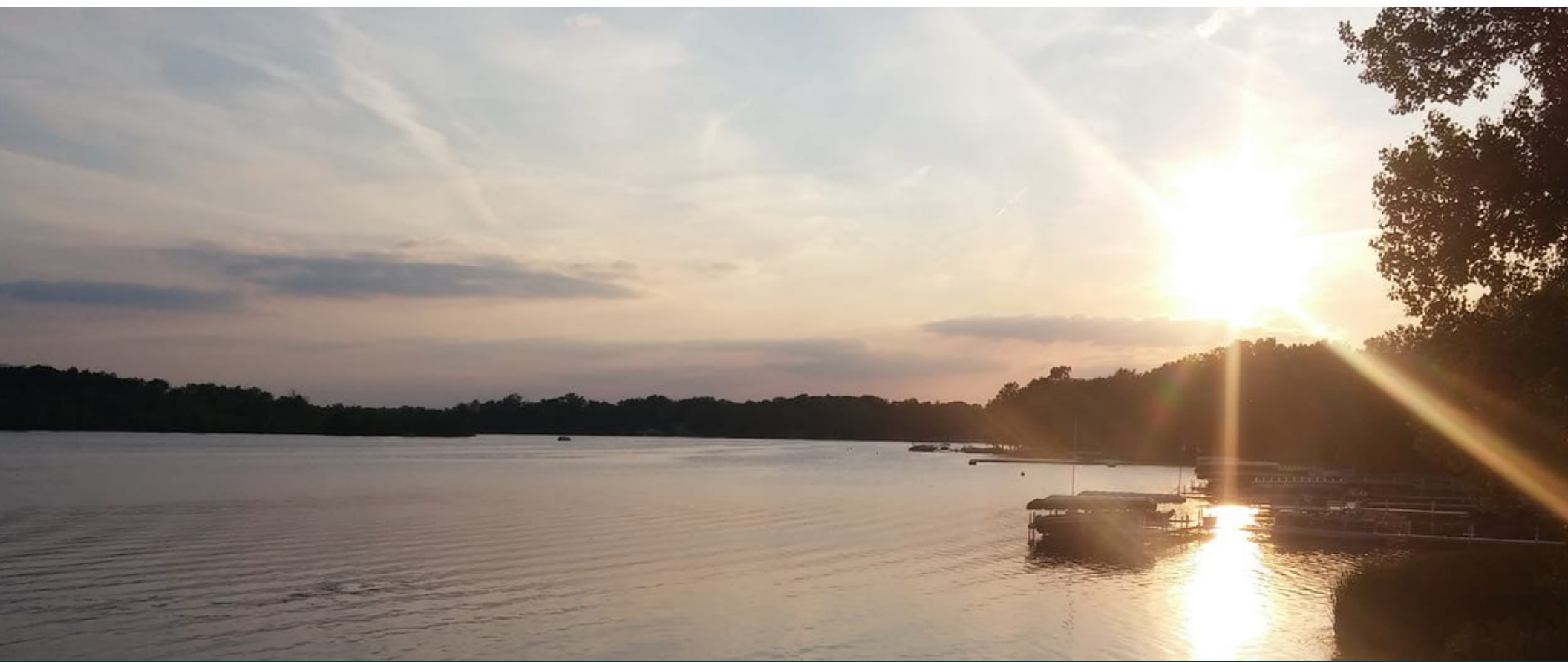
Year 5: Sustainability & Talent Retention (2029-2030)

Reach 80% Childcare Access Goal + Create Affordability Fund	Ensure 4 out of 5 children in need are served by licensed childcare. Launch a fund supported by United Way, employers, and philanthropy to offset costs for low-income families.
Activate Two Major Outdoor Assets for Tourism	Build new lakefront, trail, or camping amenities tied to Patoka Lake, Hoosier National Forest, or Sycamore Springs. Partner with Indiana Destination Development Corporation and local tourism boards.
Annual Signature Festival	Support the expansion of the Sorghum Festival and support the growth of annual event attendance.
Construct 100 New Workforce Housing Units	Scale construction with a mix of rehab, new development, and land banking. Incentivize developers via LIHTC, HOME funds, and tax abatements.
Reduce Out-Commuting by 10%	Track employment migration data. Expand incentives for local job creation and support for remote work options.
Establish a Permanent Quality of Place Commission	Form a governing advisory board to review progress, align partners, and adjust implementation. Include diverse public and private leaders.
Implement Annual Grant Strategy	Develop a grant calendar and pipeline team. Apply for funding annually through EDA, USDA, OCRA, IDDC, and Indiana READI 2.0.

PERFORMANCE METRICS BY 2030

OBJECTIVE	TARGET OUTCOME
Licensed Childcare Access	80% of children in need served
Broadband Access	95%+ of county with fiber coverage
Workforce Housing	100 new housing units completed
Job Retention / Commuting	10% reduction in net out-commuters
Business & Employer Growth	25% increase in employer presence
Population Growth	Net positive in-migration
Public Engagement & Transparency	Quarterly dashboard + annual update





This plan prepared for the Crawford County Economic Development Corporation
and the Community Foundation of Crawford County.



Created by Jamie Medlock & Rachel Lott