

Crowley County



2017 CEDS

**Prepared by Crowley County & Southeast Colorado Enterprise Development
for the benefit of
Southern Colorado Economic Development District
1104 North Main Street
Pueblo, CO 81003
719-545-8680**

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SUMMARY BACKGROUND

Crowley County was established by the Colorado legislature in 1911 and was named after Legislator John H. Crowley. Its original inhabitants, decades earlier, were Native Americans, more Cheyenne than other tribes at the time the western expansion of the U.S. arrived.

Crowley County is one of Colorado’s best places to relax and unwind. Fishing, camping, boating, jet skiing, bird watching, bicycling, you name it. In many ways, Crowley County is Colorado as it was intended to be. Crowley County’s 802 square miles feature rolling prairies, wooded glades, farm fields and ranchlands. Expansive lakes and streets lined with shade trees make the area a popular place to visit and settle down.

Crowley County is a rural community. Residents are a blend of ranchers and farmers, those involved in government and education and many are employed by correctional industries. Due to the mild climate, easy lifestyle and low cost of living, a number of retirees have recently selected Crowley County as their place of choice.

Crowley-based companies ship merchandise across the region and the nation. Trucks leave the area every day carrying appliances, millwork, plants and cattle.

The four towns in the area act as county hubs where residents gather to conduct business and cheer on the community. Every July, people come to Ordway’s Conestoga Park from all over the region for a week-long Crowley County Days celebration.

Crowley County encompasses the following towns and municipalities, with their following respective populations:

Crowley	164
Olney Springs	322
Ordway	1,011
Sugar City	240
Unincorporated	3,802

The County’s open spaces appeal to visitors from around the region. Serene lakes, reservoirs and nearby grasslands attract water sports enthusiasts, fishermen, hunters, campers and bird watchers.

County Commissioners:

Tobe Allumbaugh
Gary Gibson
Frank Grant

Legislative Districts:

Congressional District: 4
Senate District: 2
House District: 63

County Seat: Ordway

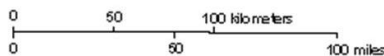
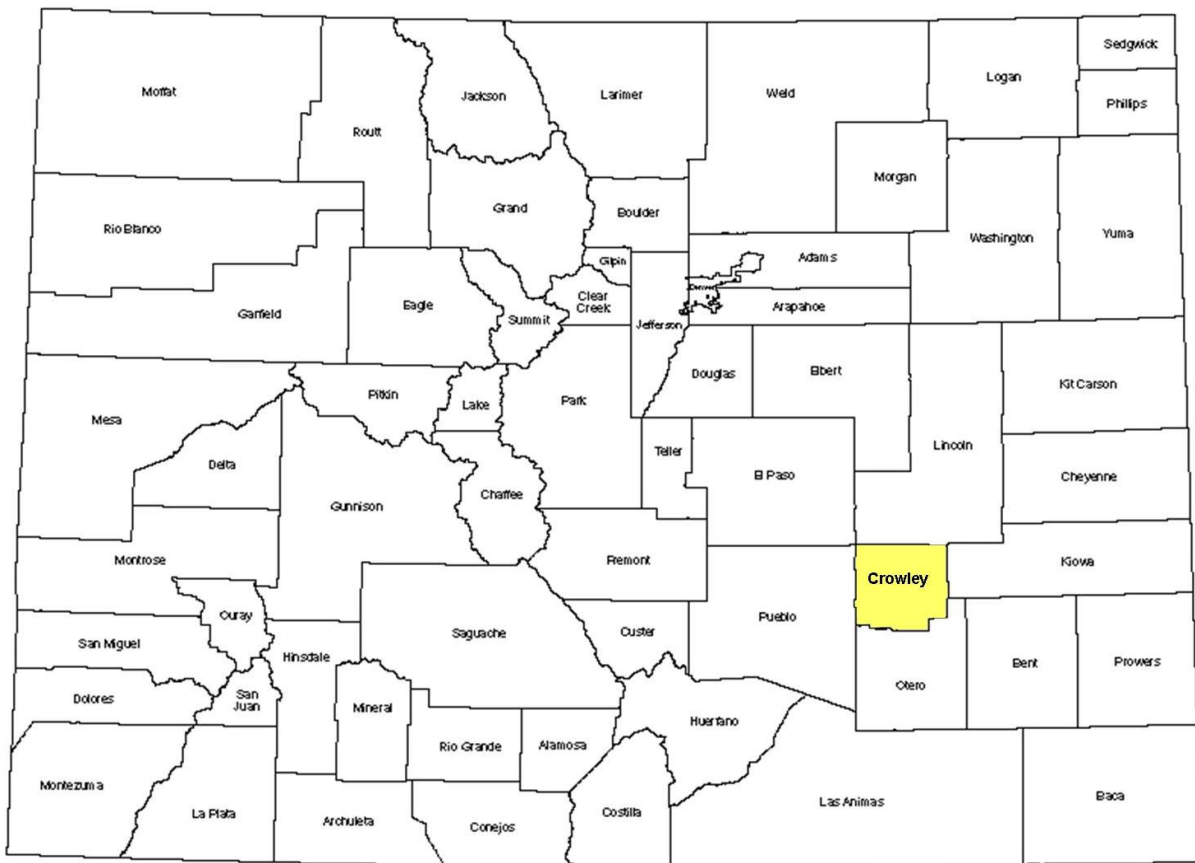
ENVIRONMENTAL, GEOGRAPHIC & CLIMATIC INFORMATION

Environmental

A great place to live and work, Crowley County's air quality index is 48.2, ranked 18th among the 64 counties in Colorado. Crowley County has the common, known environmental interests, such as feed yard facilities, sewerage facilities, and solid waste landfills (that have potential to generate releases that affect the environment).

Geographic

Crowley County is located in the high plains of Southeast Colorado. Ordway, the County seat, lies about 50 miles east of Pueblo at the intersection of U.S. Highway 96 and Colorado 71. Crowley County has 787.42 square miles of land area and 12.91 square miles of water area and a population density of 8.2 per square mile. The average elevation is 4,300 feet.



Climatic

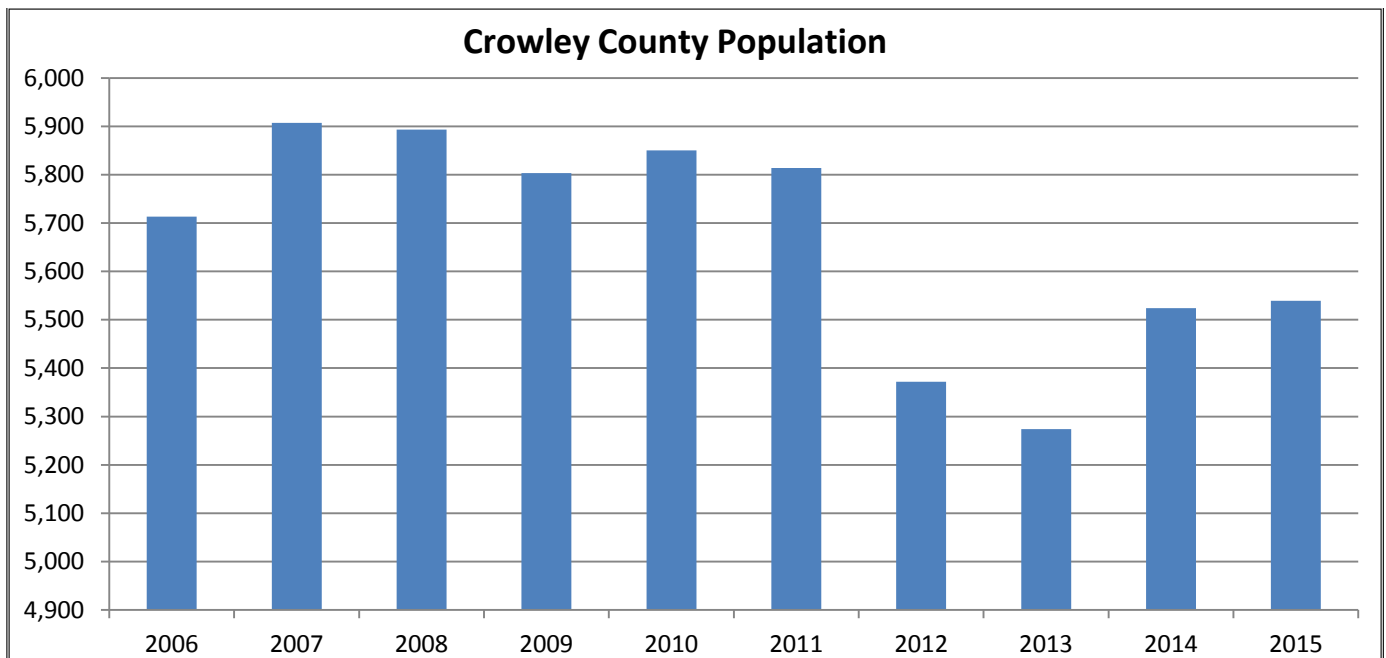
The average temperature of Crowley County is 50.77°F, which is much higher than the Colorado average temperature of 46.26°F and is lower than the national average temperature of 54.45°F.

The average high temperature during summer months is 90.8°F compared to average low temperature during winter of 14.2°F. The risk of tornado damage in Crowley County is lower than the Colorado average and much lower than the national average. The chance of earthquake damage in Crowley County is lower than Colorado average and is much lower than the national average.

DEMOGRAPHIC & SOCIOECONOMIC DATA

Population

The Department of Local Affairs estimates the 2015 population of Crowley County at 5,539, which is approximately .11% of the State's population. Crowley County's population has been volatile, experiencing many changes from 1920-2015. Census population data shows growth occurred from 2006-2011 and then a steep decline in 2012 and 2013. Population in 2014 and 2015 has rebounded somewhat. The county's population peaked in 1920 with over 6,383 residents. There has been an overall 13% decrease in population since 1920.



Data retrieved from State Demography Office-DOLA
<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>
12/21/2016

Population trends show some growth since the mid-1990s. In the early 1980's, Crowley County suffered out migration with the sale of water rights in the area. Since that time, Census and population data reports show a recovery. This in part is due to opening of the prison and the inmate count being included in the data.

Population Trend

1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
6383	5934	5398	5222	3978	3086	2988	3946	5518	5823	5539

In the last five years, Crowley County's population has decreased approximately 5.3%, while the State saw a 5% increase. The recent decline in population has been due to job losses combined with an aging population that encompasses fewer families as well a steady outmigration of college-aged population.

Crowley County Prison Population

As we review population statistics, it is important to remember that prison populations are included in the data. The prison census can distort the assessment because prisoners rarely require the same community services as residents. In 2015, almost 45.9% of the population was incarcerated.

Private Prisons	Dec-05	Dec-06	Dec-07	Dec-08	Dec-09	Dec-10	Dec-11	Dec-12	Dec-13	Dec-14	Dec-15
Arkansas Valley Correctional	1004	1003	1008	995	1002	1001	1008	994	997	984	1027

Public Prisons	Dec-05	Dec-06	Dec-07	Dec-08	Dec-09	Dec-10	Dec-11	Dec-12	Dec-13	Dec-14	Dec-15
Crowley County Correctional	935	1276	1556	1629	1635	1641	1590	1257	1205	1492	1513
Total Prison Population	1939	2279	2564	2624	2637	2642	2598	2251	2202	2476	2540

Data retrieved from State Demography Office-DOLA

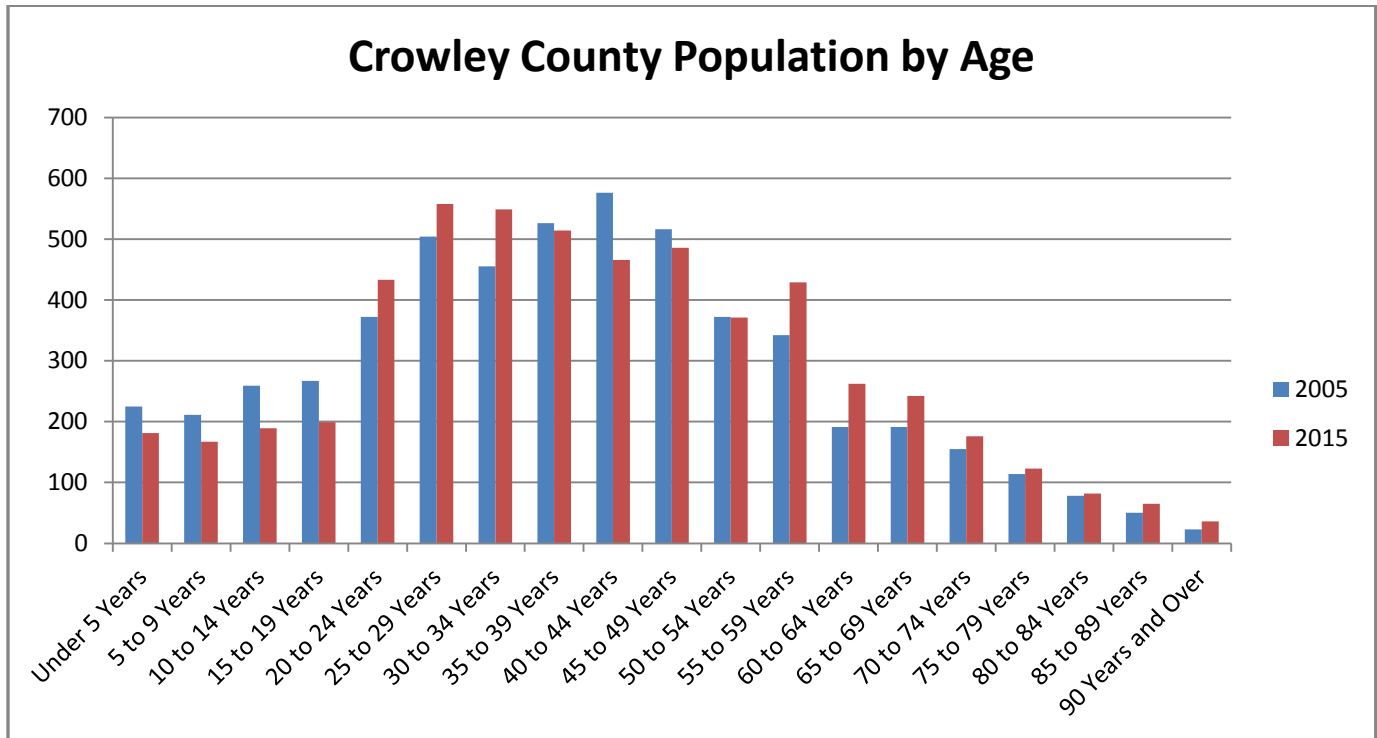
<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>

1/5/2016

Population by Age

Crowley County's population by age is shown in the chart below for both 2005 (blue bar) and 2015 (red bar). DOLA estimates the median age for the county at 39.7 compared to 37.1 for the state. The average life expectancy for the county is estimated at age 76.8. This is fairly close to the nation's average of 78.2 but almost five years shorter than the state's average of 81.1.

The largest increase in overall population for the county was in the 30 to 34 year-old age group followed by the 55 to 59 age group and 60 to 64 age group. It is advisable to evaluate aging services – healthcare, assisted living accommodation, nursing home facilities -- in the County as the population ages. Decreases in most other age groups are consistent with overall population decline. The loss in the 40 to 44 year-old group correlates with a decrease in the population under 18. This correlation supports the idea that families with young children are migrating to other areas potentially for employment at a higher wage level.



Data retrieved from State Demography Office-DOLA
<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>
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Population by Race

Crowley County data for population by race demonstrates that 56% of Crowley County’s population is White Non-Hispanic, 31% is Hispanic, and 9.7% is African American, 1.3% is Asian and 1.8% are American Indian.

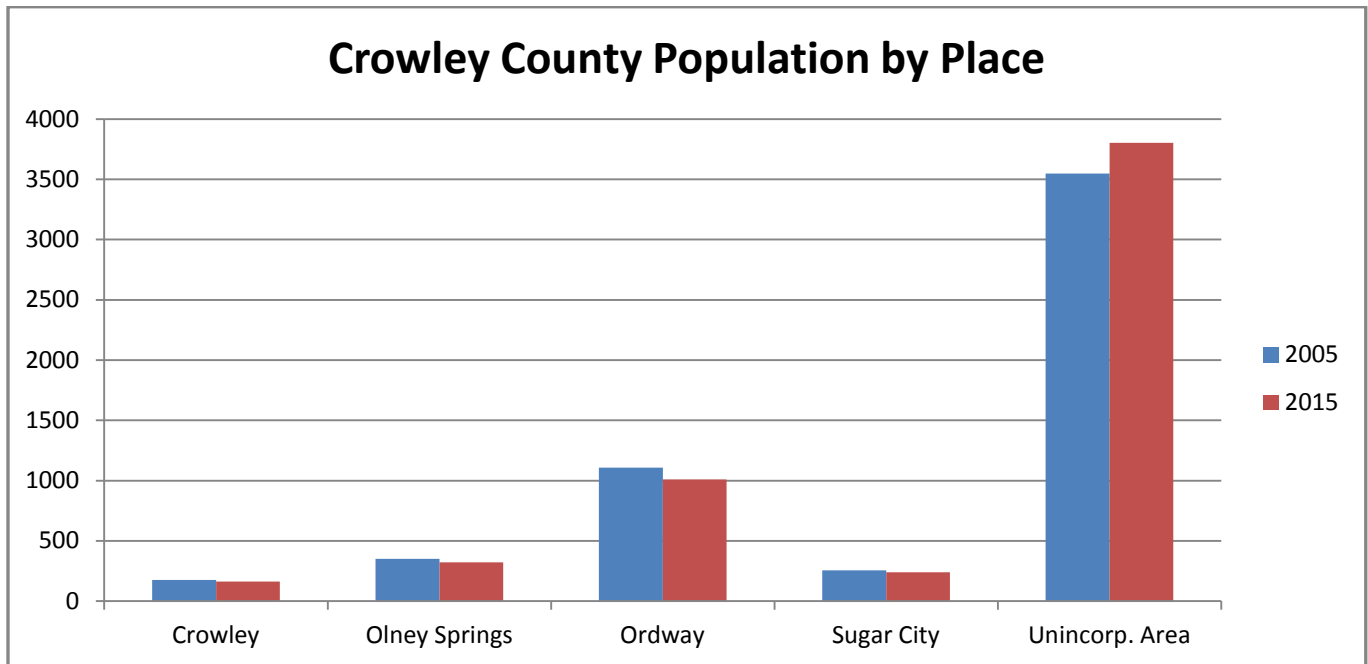
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
American Indian non Hispanic	104	104	97	96	101	101
Asian non Hispanic	70	71	68	68	73	75
Black non Hispanic	558	560	523	514	540	541
Hispanic	1688	1702	1586	1580	1690	1724
White non Hispanic	3430	3382	3103	3022	3148	3131

Data retrieved from State Demography Office-DOLA
<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>
 12/29/2016

Other than English, the most common language is Spanish, followed by Indo-European and Asian/Pacific Islander languages.

Population by Community

The population data for each community demonstrates that the largest concentration of the population (68%) lives in the unincorporated areas of Crowley County followed by Ordway at 18%. Again, keep in mind, 45.9% is attributed to prison population.



Data retrieved from State Demography Office-DOLA

<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>

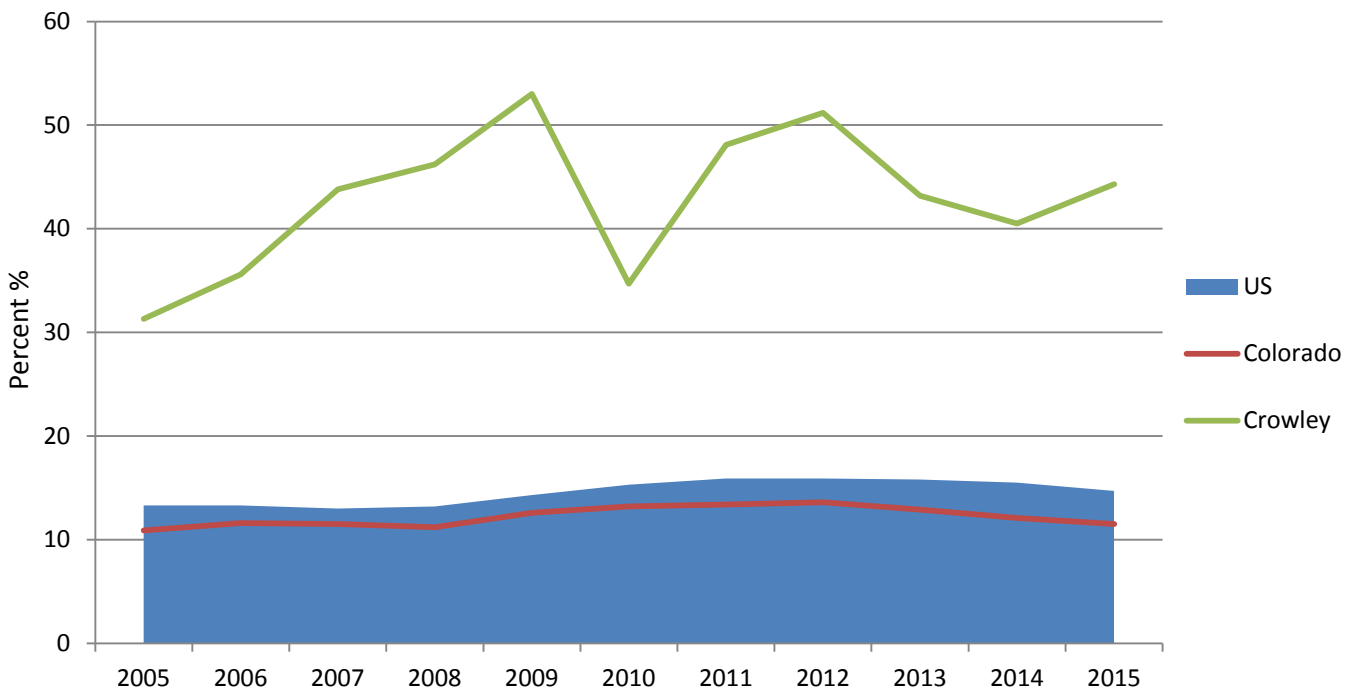
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Poverty Data

Poverty in Crowley County is high compared to the State and the Nation. In 2015, Kids Count reported 71.7% of school age children qualified for free/reduced lunch compared to 41.8% in the State and 38.5% of children under 18 years of age were living in poverty compared to 14.8% in the State.

The US Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates report 44.3% of Crowley County's total population lives in poverty compared to 11.5% in the State and 14.5% in the Nation.

Persons Living in Poverty in Crowley County



Data provided by State Demography Office-DOLA

<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>

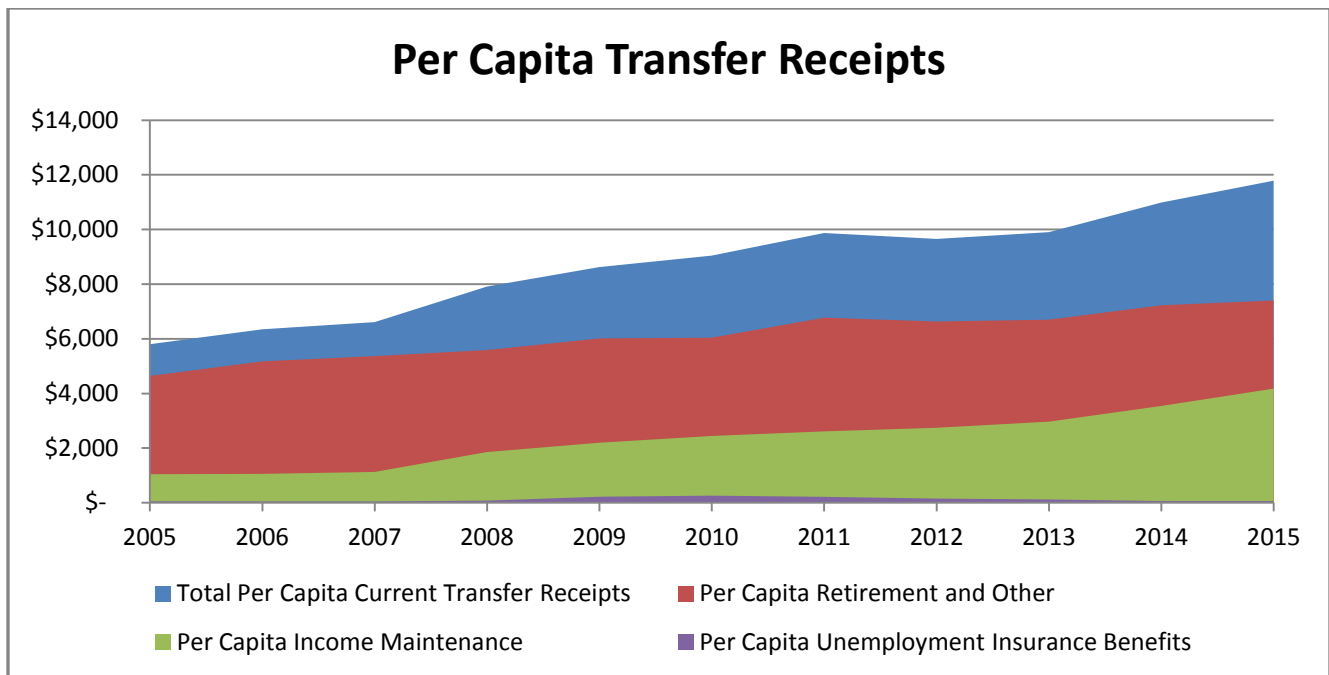
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Personal Transfer Receipts

Federal programs attempt to alleviate poverty and are tracked as transfer payments. In 2015, federal transfer payments were slightly over \$6,891 for every man, woman and child in Crowley County. Approximately 58% of the total transfer payments are from retirement programs including Social Security and Medicare. Income maintenance (public assistance such as SNAP and Medicaid) accounts for approximately 40% of total payments.

Additional reports measuring poverty reveal:

- ❖ Food assistance program participation in 2015 is slightly under 19.5%
- ❖ In 2014, 12.7% of the population was uninsured, compared to the State at 11.7%
- ❖ Teen births are high with 60/1,000 reported in 2015, which is higher than the State average of 19/1,000.



Data provided by State Demography Office-DOLA
<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>
 12/21/2016

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS

Broadband

Broadband is considered both a strength and a significant need in Crowley County. A broadband grant enabled the Region to access funding to address connectivity issues in the early 2000s. It was a much needed improvement that upgraded the area from DSL to fiber optic speeds and gave governments, schools, and hospitals fast, reliable internet. Unfortunately, it did not encompass outlying communities' and unincorporated residents. Local internet providers have made improvements in wireless services to many areas in the County. Continuing efforts are ongoing to ensure service to all residents.

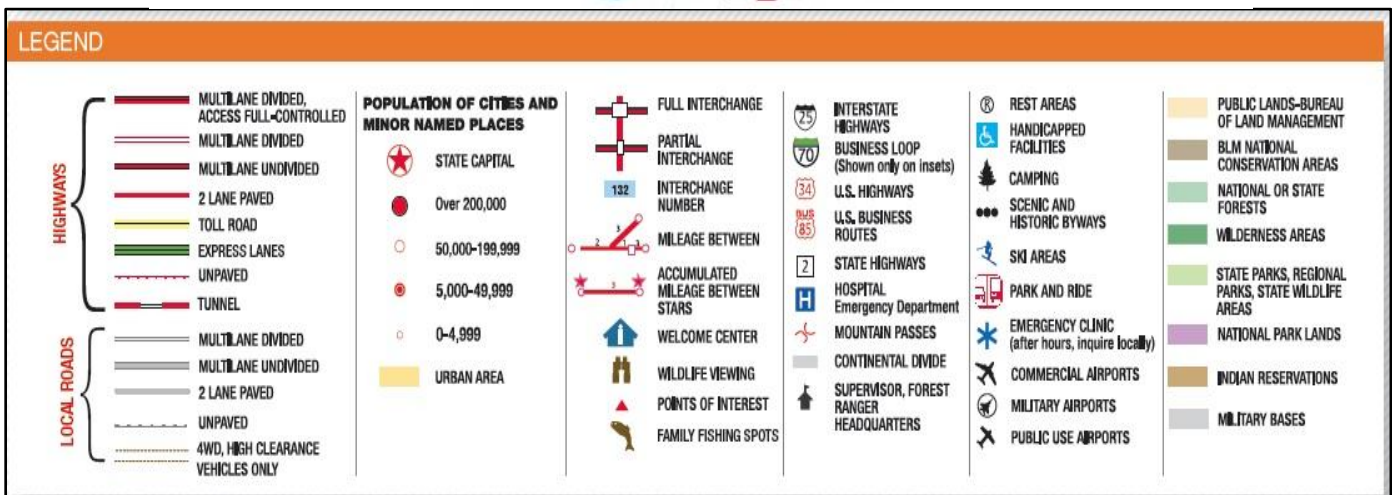
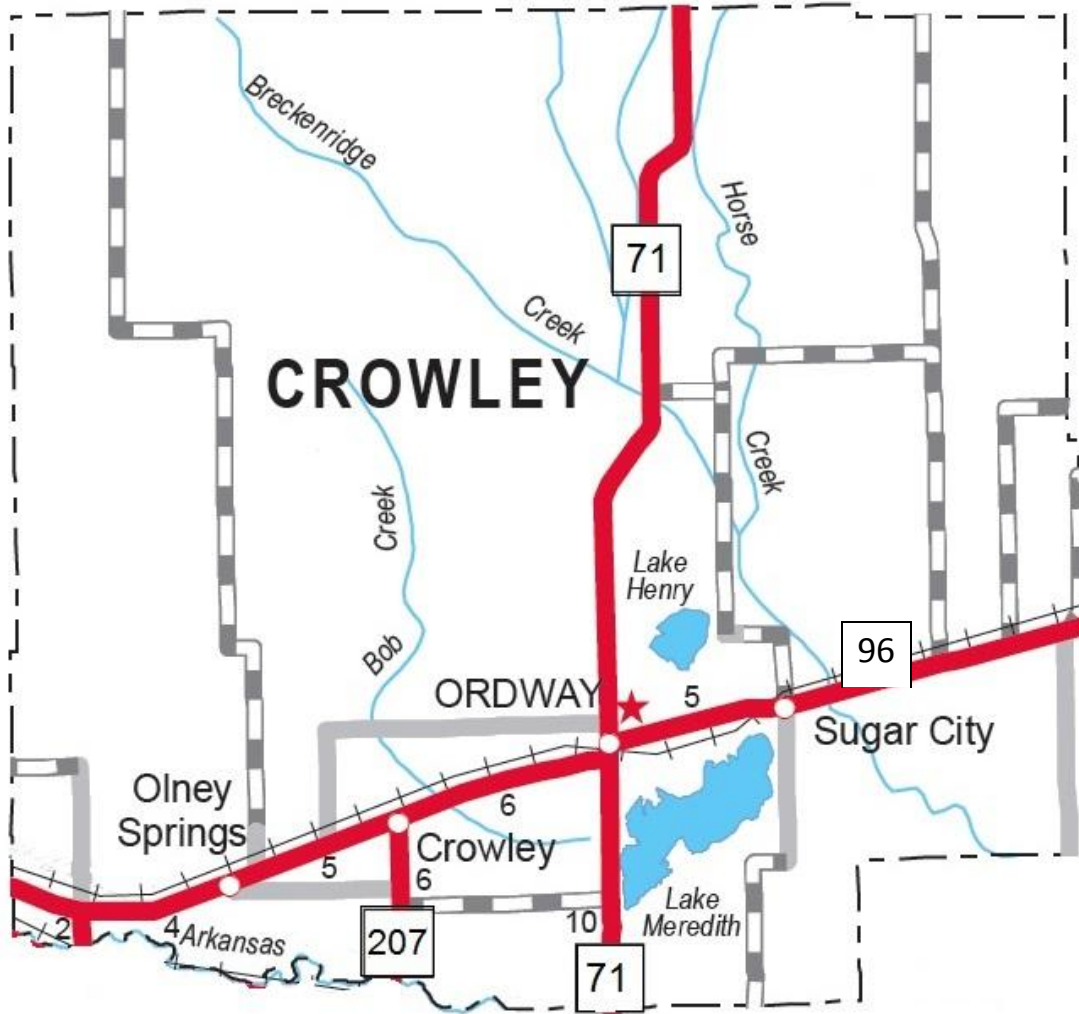
Post Secondary Education/Workforce Training

Educational opportunities are available to Crowley County residents, both traditional and non-traditional, as well as for job training. Residents have access to Otero Junior College, a well-known community college, which offers a diverse catalog of classes. Residents can travel approximately 20 miles and have the opportunity of a high-quality education at an affordable cost. Otero Junior College also works with area business to provide courses to help improve the skills of local workforce, making the college an invaluable asset to the Crowley County.

Colorado State University-Pueblo and Pueblo Community College are also within driving distance as Crowley County is approximately 50 miles away.

Transportation System

Crowley County has two State highways, Hwy 71, which runs through it traveling north which connects with I-70, and Hwy 96 running east to west, which offer opportunities to businesses to market their goods outside the immediate area and ship goods.



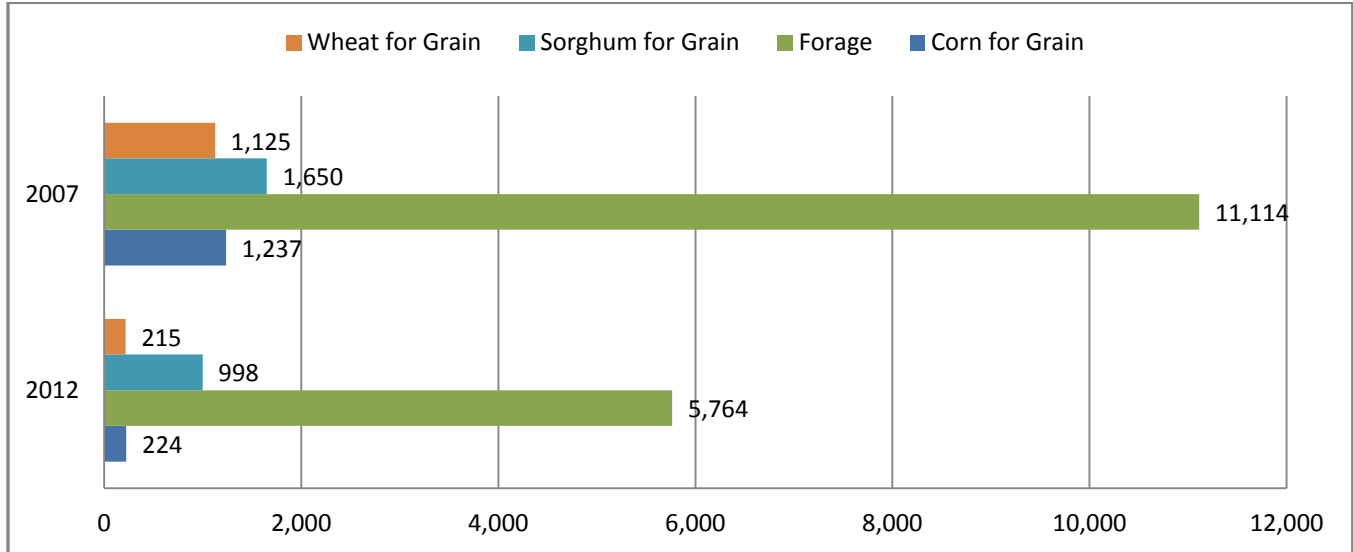
CDOT State Travel Map

INDUSTRY SECTORS

Agriculture / Value-Added Ag

Agriculture continues to be the main source of the economy in Crowley County. In 2012, as reported by the 2012 Census of Agriculture, Crowley County had 500,066 acres of agricultural land. There are 228 farms, with an average of 2,193 acres. Crowley County's largest crop harvested is forage and the top livestock is cattle and calves.

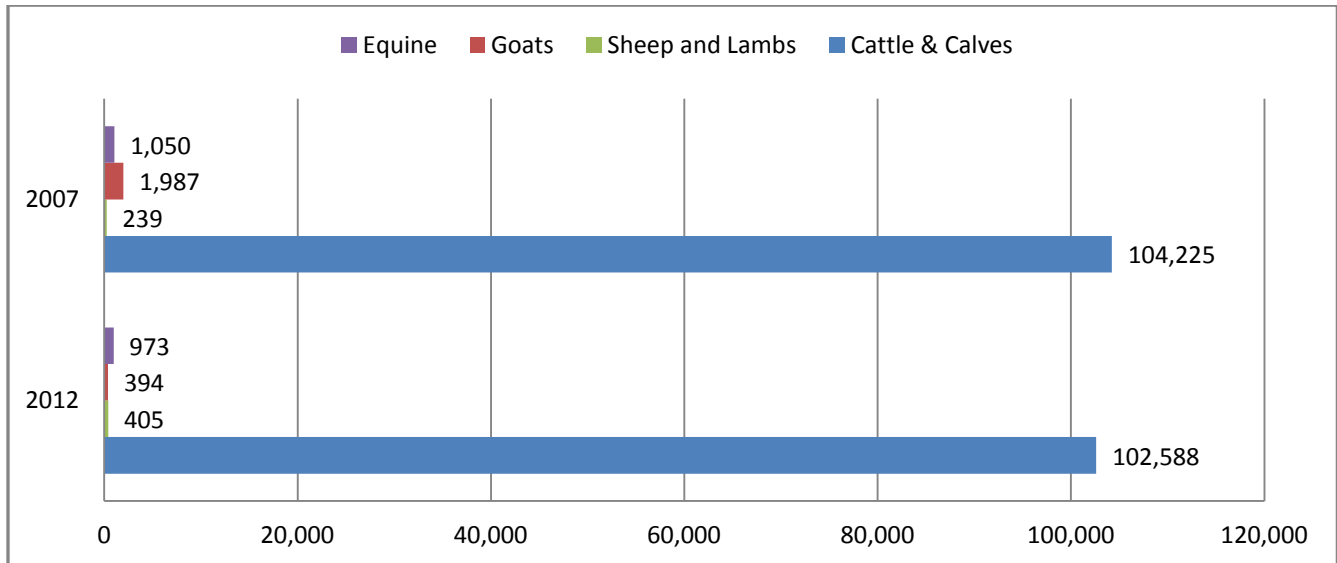
TOP CROPS HARVESTED IN ACRES



www.agcensus.usda.gov
1-4-2017

Out of sixty-four counties in Colorado, Crowley County was ranked eighth in production for sorghum for grain, twenty-ninth in corn for grain and forty-seventh in forage.

TOP LIVESTOCK INVENTORY-QUANTITY



www.agcensus.usda.gov
1-4-2017

Out of sixty-four counties in Colorado, Crowley County was ranked seventh in cattle and calves, and thirteenth in broilers & other meat-type chickens.

HOUSING, HEALTH SERVICES & EDUCATION

Housing Statistics

The 2015 average household size in Crowley County is 2.48 compared to an average family size of 3.21 (per US Census Bureau 2010). Quality, affordable housing is of great concern to Crowley County as stock has begun to deteriorate and the market has not lent itself to supporting new housing starts. A large percentage of the population continues to rent versus purchasing or building new.

CROWLEY COUNTY HOUSING UNITS AND VACANCY RATES

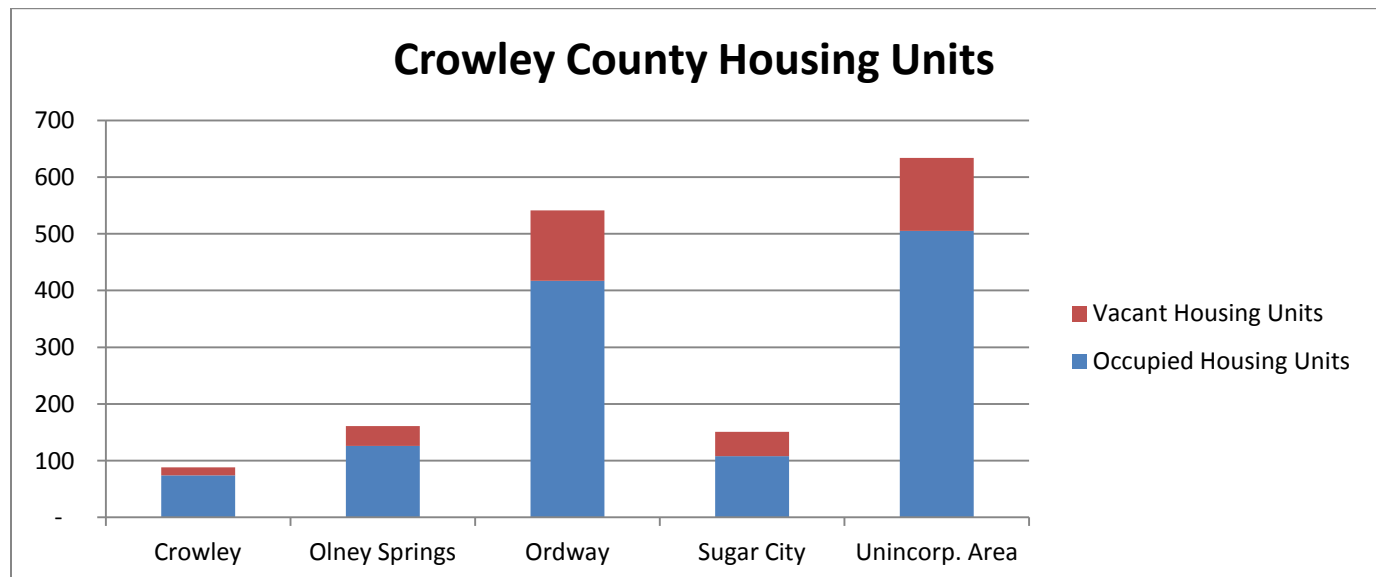
Household Type	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Household Population	5850	5814	5372	5274	5524	5539
Housing Vacancy Rate	15.9%	15.5%	18.1%	19.4%	20.3%	21.9%
Total Households	1311	1321	1281	1262	1250	1230
Total Housing Units	1559	1563	1565	1565	1568	1575
Vacant Housing Units	248	242	284	303	318	345

Data provided by State Demography Office-DOLA

Vintage 2015

<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>

12/21/2016



Data provided by State Demography Office-DOLA

Vintage 2015

12/21/2016

It is estimated that in 2015, in order to purchase the average house, a person in Crowley County needed to earn a little over \$38,920. The median household income was approximately \$31,151. Approximately 50% of housing is valued between \$50,000 and

\$150,000 with a median value of \$76,100. Almost 94% of rental housing costs between \$300 and \$1000.

Housing Profile

Year Structure Built	Total	Percent
2014 or later	0	0
2010 to 2013	1	.1
2000 to 2009	120	7.8
1990-1999	166	10.7
1980 to 1989	122	7.90
1970 to 1979	173	11.2
1960 to 1969	112	7.2
1950 to 1959	171	11.1
1940 to 1949	128	8.3
1939 or earlier	553	35.8

According to data, affordable rent represents the generally accepted standard of not spending more than 30% of gross income on gross housing costs. The fair market rent in 2015 for Crowley County was \$595 for a two-bedroom home. In order to afford rent at this amount, a household in Crowley County must earn \$11.06 per hour or \$23,800 annually; at minimum wage it would take 1.3 wage earners in the household to contribute to cover the cost of rent.

Foreclosures

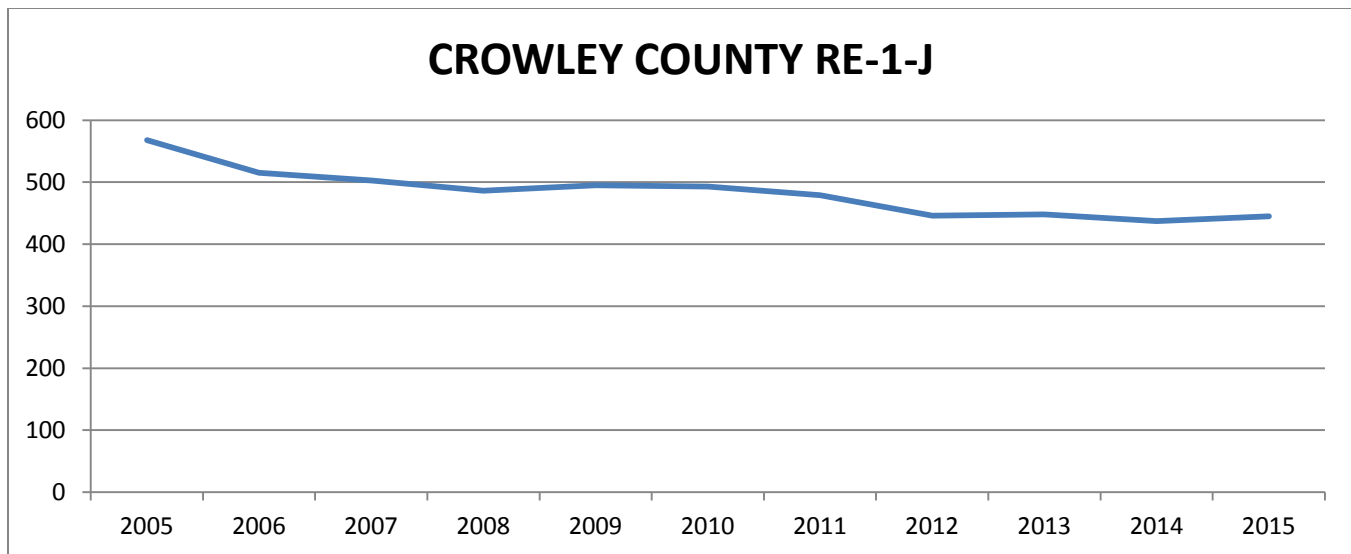
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Filings	20	20	16	12	13	17	18	9	10
Sales	10	10	5	12	14	1	12	5	8

Health Services

Centennial Family Health is a vital facility and provider of medical health services in the County. A general practice facility offering family medicine, Centennial Family Health offers affordable services to residents.

Education

One district provides vital K-12 education in Crowley County. Data exhibits a decrease in enrollment of at a rate of about 22%. Despite the decrease, Crowley County offers award-winning schools which have been recognized nationally. Most high school seniors graduate with some college credit, and many are able to graduate with associate degrees. Crowley County School District also offers a full online school available to students throughout the State.



Colorado Department of Education
1-2-2017

A noticeable trend seen throughout many counties in the SCEDD region is the decline in school enrollments, compared to the number of school age children living in the County. The 2015 Census estimates report there are 555 school age children (5-19 years of age) living in the County and the Department of Education reports there are 445 students enrolled in Crowley County schools.

EDUCATION	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crowley County RE-1-J	568	515	503	486	495	493	479	446	448	437	445
Totals	568	515	503	486	495	493	479	446	448	437	445

Colorado Department of Education
1-2-2017

The 2011-2015 Census American Community Survey estimates 83.4% of the total population 25 years of age and older has attained a high school diploma or higher; 11.1% have attained a Bachelor's Degree or higher

Graduation Rates

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crowley County RE-1-J	79.5	75.0	78.9	85.7	86.5	70.7	74.4	87.8	88.2	71.4	84.8

Colorado Department of Education
1-2-2017

Drop Out Rates

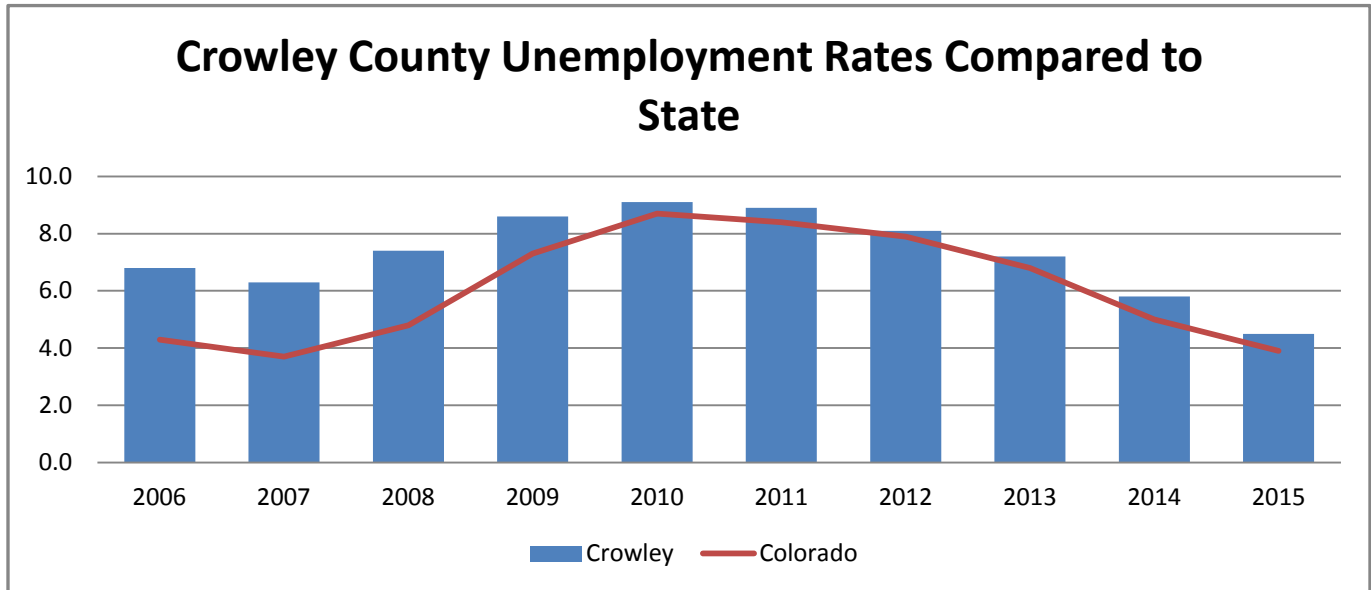
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crowley County RE-1-J	4.6	0.9	1.0	0.4	2.1	1.8	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4

Colorado Department of Education
1-2-2017

LOCAL ECONOMY

Workforce Data

Crowley County unemployment has been steadily declining since 2010 when it was at its highest at 9.1%. The lowest unemployment rate was recorded in 2015 at 4.5%.



Data provided by State Demography Office-DOLA

<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>

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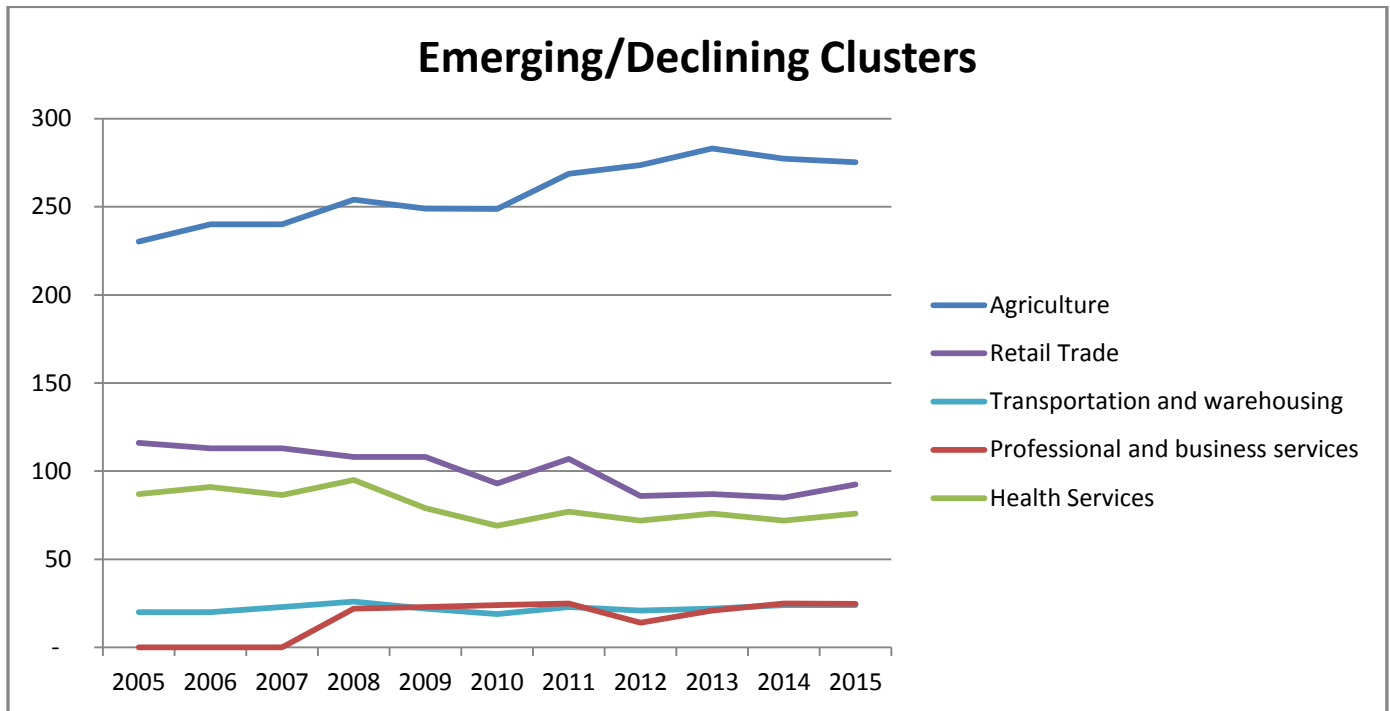
Employment by Sector

SectorName	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Agriculture	230	240	240	254	249	249	269	274	283	277	275
Mining	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Utilities	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Construction	46	41	53	46	57	52	53	54	45	44	38
Manufacturing	S	12	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Wholesale trade	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Retail Trade	116	113	113	108	108	93	107	86	87	85	93
Transportation and warehousing	20	20	23	26	22	19	23	21	22	24	24
Information	S	1	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Finance activities	23	26	27	31	28	22	24	21	23	20	22
Real estate	19	15	12	16	16	17	17	17	14	13	11
Professional and business services	S	S	S	22	23	24	25	14	21	25	25
Management of companies and enterprise	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Admin and waste	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Education	S	S	1	S	S	-	S	S	S	S	S
Health Services	87	91	87	95	79	69	77	72	76	72	76
Arts	4	6	6	10	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Accommodation and food	24	24	27	S	29	33	35	25	23	24	22
Other services, except public administration	92	101	103	93	90	72	75	S	S	S	S
Government	527	517	523	531	529	523	526	525	528	530	522
Total	1,513	1,566	1,590	1,620	1,595	1,518	1,584	1,483	1,449	1,464	1,457

Data provided by State Demography Office-DOLA

<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>

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Data provided by State Demography Office-DOLA
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Agriculture continues to be the strongest cluster in the County, peaking in 2013 at 283 and remaining steady at 275 in 2015. Since 2005, it appears that professional and business services emerged as a rising cluster and has remained consistent since 2007. All other clusters have declined slightly or remained the same since 2005, demonstrating lack of growth.

Wages

Wages in Crowley County are lower than the State average. In 2015, average weekly wages, as reported by the Colorado Workforce, for Crowley County were 38% below the State, with Crowley County wage being \$633 and the State at \$1,042. The Bureau of Economic Analysis reports average annual wages for Crowley County in 2015 were 39% below the State with Crowley County at \$32,934 and the State at \$54,179.

Average Weekly Wages by Sector

Sector	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total, All Industries	\$670	\$668	\$680	\$687	\$706	\$744
Accommodation and Food Services	\$446	\$348	\$499	\$617	Confidential	Confidential
Administrative and Waste Services	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	\$655
Construction	\$1,295	\$1,626	\$1,521	\$1,341	\$981	\$1,497
Educational Services	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential
Finance and Insurance	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$525	\$542	\$446	\$466	\$490	\$547
Mining	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	0	0	0
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential
Professional and Technical Services	\$635	\$662	\$572	\$646	\$690	\$719
Public Administration	\$832	\$831	\$834	\$851	\$886	\$897
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential
Retail Trade	\$473	\$475	\$508	\$530	\$590	\$586
Transportation and Warehousing	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential
Utilities	\$511	\$515	\$534	\$552	\$565	Confidential
Wholesale Trade	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential	Confidential

Data provided by State Demography Office-DOLA

<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>

12/21/2016

Average Annual Wages by Sector

Crowley County	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total, All Industries	\$34,840	\$34,736	\$35,360	\$35,724	\$36,712	\$38,688
Accommodation and Food Services	\$23,192	\$18,096	\$25,948	\$32,084	ND	ND
Administrative and Waste Services	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	\$34,060
Construction	\$67,340	\$84,552	\$79,092	\$69,732	\$51,012	\$77,844
Educational Services	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
Finance and Insurance	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$27,300	\$28,184	\$23,192	\$24,232	\$25,480	\$28,444
Mining	ND	ND	ND	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
Professional and Technical Services	\$33,020	\$34,424	\$29,744	\$33,592	\$35,880	\$37,388
Public Administration	\$43,264	\$43,212	\$43,368	\$44,252	\$46,072	\$46,644
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
Retail Trade	\$24,596	\$24,700	\$26,416	\$27,560	\$30,680	\$30,472
Transportation and Warehousing	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
Utilities	\$26,572	\$26,780	\$27,768	\$28,704	\$29,380	ND
Wholesale Trade	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND

Data provided by State Demography Office-DOLA

<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>

12/21/2016

Median Household Income

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Colorado*	\$52,265	\$55,517	\$57,184	\$55,735	\$56,456	\$57,685	\$58,244	\$58,433	\$59,448	\$60,629
Crowley County	\$28,375	\$30,896	\$31,603	\$29,104	\$38,189	\$40,636	\$38,507	\$31,477	\$31,534	\$31,151

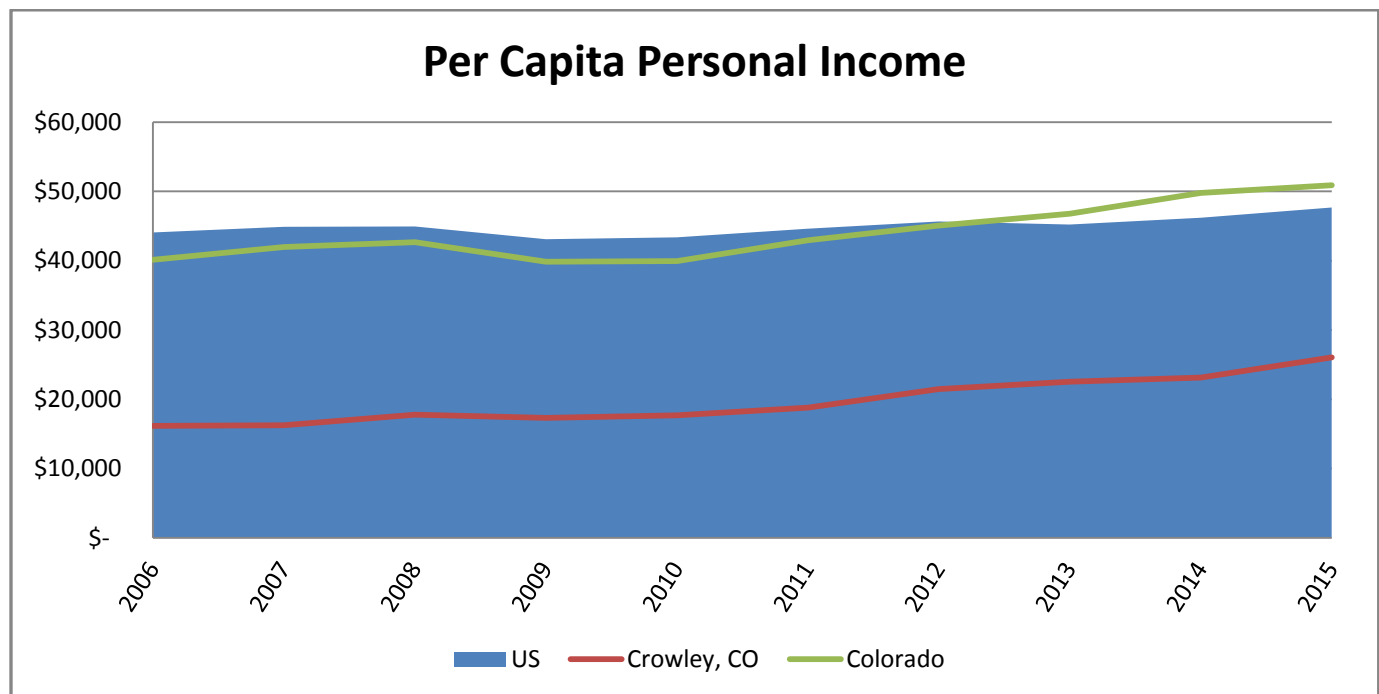
Data provided by State Demography Office-DOLA

<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>

12/21/2016

Per Capita Personal Income

The per capita income for Crowley County is 51% below the State average. Per capita income for Crowley County in 2015 was \$26,039 compared to the State average of \$50,899.



Data provided by State Demography Office-DOLA

<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov>

12/21/2016

Just as in all other Counties in Region 6, per capita income is very low as compared to the State as well as the nation. As a result, it is very difficult to keep current population from migrating to other areas that offer more competitive wages. It is a dilemma that is Region 6 is very aware of and options are being explored in how to address and improve this problem.

2013 Cost of Living Index, where state benchmark = 100

County	Cost of Living	Composite COLI	Description	Rank in State
Colorado	\$49,100	100		
Baca	\$40,779	83.1	Very Low	63
Bent	\$41,477	84.5	Very Low	60
Crowley	\$41,440	84.4	Very Low	61
Kiowa	\$40,438	82.4	Very Low	64
Otero	\$42,013	85.6	Very Low	57
Prowers	\$41,197	83.9	Very Low	62

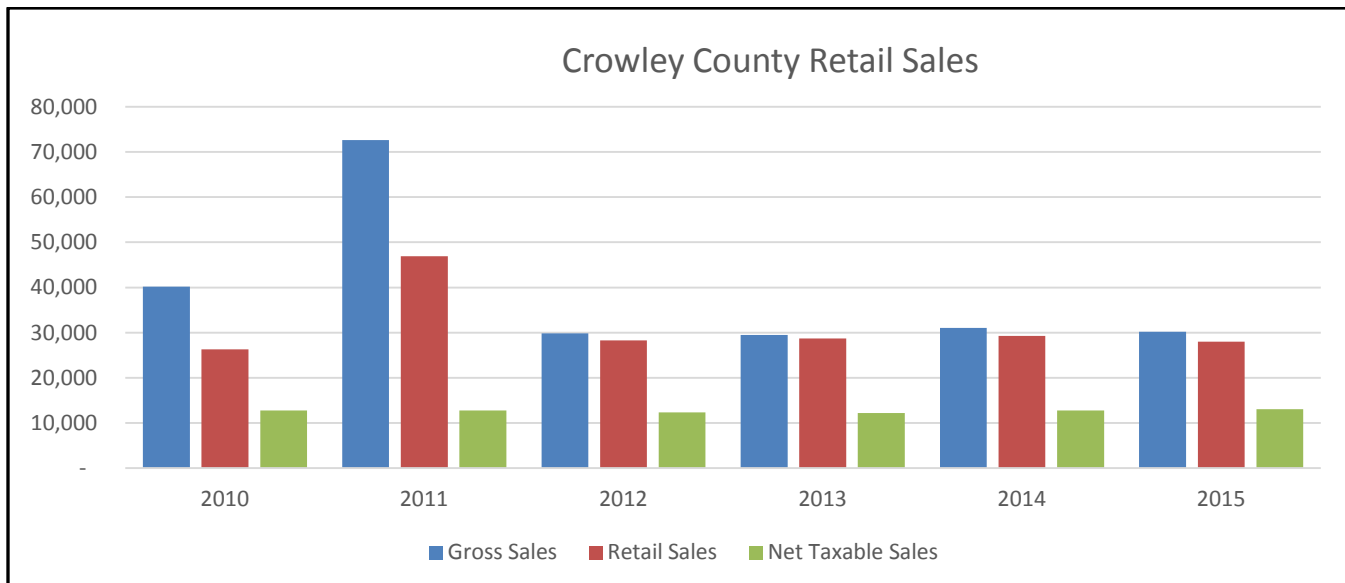
Crowley County, as well as the rest of Region 6, have been identified as affordable areas to live. The cost of living index for Crowley County, as compared to the State, is 84.4 which ranks the County as 61st out of 64 counties.

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE & FACTORS

Crowley County has a 2% sales and use tax. Colorado's sales and use tax is 2.9%.

Retail Sales

Retail sales have increased 12% since 2010. Reported gross sales have increased as well at about the same rate as retail sales. Taxable sales have remained fairly consistent since 2010.



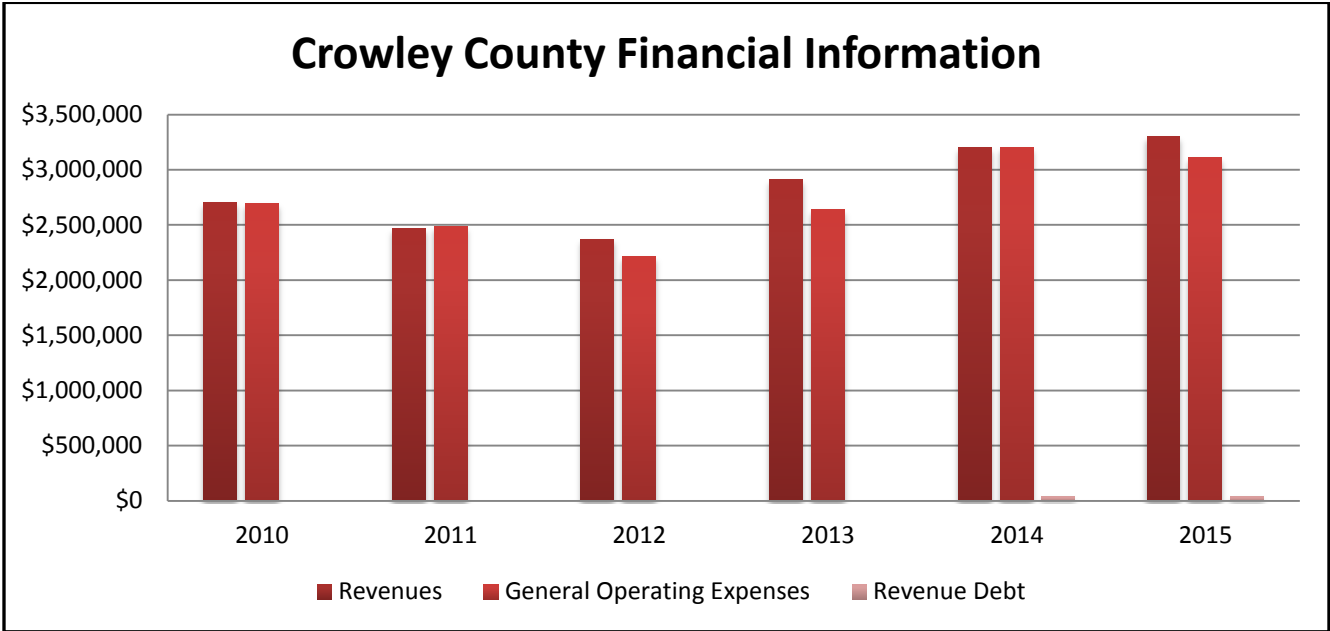
Colorado Department of Revenue
<http://www.colorado.gov>
 1/4/2017

Crowley County has experienced a drop in gross sales since 2010, while retail sales have remained fairly consistent. In 2011, however, the County experienced a spike in gross sales and retail sales, attributable to the activities related to the installation of a major pipeline in the County and increased recreational activities resulting from the Lakes having water all summer. Since

then data shows that gross sales is 33% below the 2010 level and retail sales is 6% above the 2010 level.

County General Revenue & Expenses

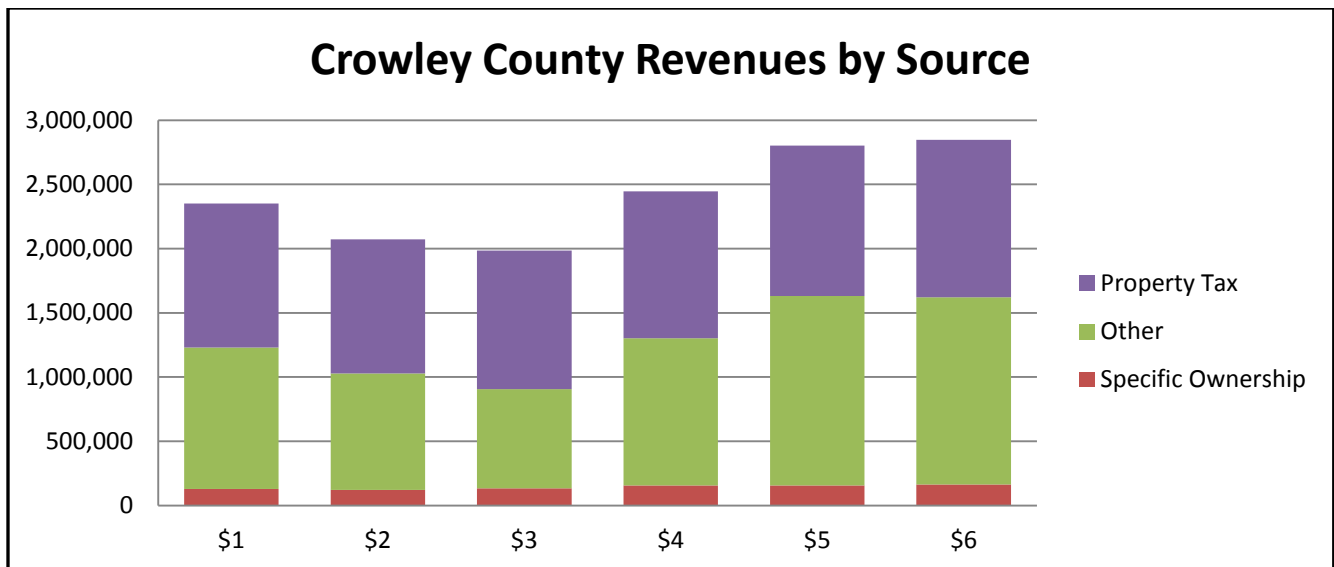
Revenues have exceeded expenses each year since 2010. Despite the recession, revenues have continued to show a steady increase. However, expenses are also showing an increase.



*Crowley County
Audited Financial Statements*

Revenues by Source

Crowley County is dependent on revenues from property taxes. Approximately 37% of revenue are derived from property taxes, 14% from sales taxes and 44% from other sources. Those other sources include fees and fines, licenses and permits, intergovernmental, charges for services, investment earnings, miscellaneous, and rent.



Crowley County
Audited Financial Statements

Factors Affecting Economic Performance

Some of the items identified that are affecting economic performance include but are not limited to the list below which is in no specific order of importance.

- ❖ Inadequate inventory and sub-standard housing
- ❖ Inadequate electrical power capacity
- ❖ Lack of capital for business expansion/establishment
- ❖ Instability of the agricultural commodity markets
- ❖ Unstable and under-trained workforce
- ❖ Lack of a stable water supply for recreational purposes in the reservoirs

CURRENT ASSESSMENT

STRENGTHS

- ❖ Location to HWYs 96 & 71 – 35 to 50 Miles to I-25 and I-70.
- ❖ Mild Climate.
- ❖ Reasonable cost of Real Estate.
- ❖ Good Schools.
- ❖ Recreational opportunities at two beautiful lakes.
- ❖ Availability of higher education opportunities (Otero Junior College, Pueblo Community College, CSU-Pueblo)
- ❖ Prairie Horizon’s Bicycle Trail / Trans America Bicycle Trail Part of the TransAmerica Bicycle Trail that dissects the United States and comes through Crowley County on Highway 96. The portion of that trail that runs from Pueblo east to the Kansas border is referred to as the Prairie Horizons Trail. Cyclists from all over the world are not only welcome in all of our small communities but are a huge economic boost all along the way.

The Prairie Horizons committee provides leaflets to the cyclists showing what amenities are available in each community and welcome signs in business windows.

WEAKNESSES

- ❖ Shortage of water for agricultural purposes.
- ❖ Lack of adequate electrical capacity.
- ❖ Minimal retail opportunities.
- ❖ Shortage of affordable, suitable housing.

OPPORTUNITIES

- ❖ Ag Industry looking at other high value opportunities/crops, to include hemp and hemp processing.
- ❖ Oil and gas drilling/production.
- ❖ Commercial/Retail Marijuana production.
- ❖ Other greenhouse opportunities re: fruits & vegetables.

THREATS

- ❖ Possibility of future private prison closure.
- ❖ Severe drought.
- ❖ Government Regulation.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION / ACTION PLAN

VISION STATEMENT

To increase the economic standard of living and quality of life in Crowley County and to harness local assets, skills and knowledge to create prosperity in all Crowley County communities.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Economic Development Strategy

Crowley County is the most depressed county in the SCEDD District; reporting an aging population, the highest poverty rate, low wages, aging housing and a high unemployment rate . Census data reports some growth in population. However, it is important to remember the prison population distorts the population figures.

As noted in previous CEDS, the transfer of water resources has drastically affected the economy of Crowley County. The need to diversify the economy in Crowley County is a priority, but the lack of water hinders development on many levels. The agricultural community consists of mainly forage and cattle. Competition from Pueblo and Otero County make it difficult to recruit primary employers and the lack of an industrial park and infrastructure further encumbers economic growth. While plans to rejuvenate the community and create new jobs are a top priority, funding for the projects will be a roadblock to the County's progress.

Although there are some challenges to economic growth, the county possesses some unique qualities. Crowley County enjoys a mild climate and low cost of living. Resources the county can take advantage of are: available transportation, local businesses, prisons and recreation opportunities.

Colorado Highways 96 and 71 intersect at Ordway, providing good highway transportation and connections to Interstate 25 and Interstate 70. General air service is available twelve miles away in Rocky Ford and commercial services are an hour away in Pueblo.

Small businesses are a strong economic driver in a community. Revitalization of the downtown and retention of small businesses will be a priority for the county. Efforts to recruit primary employers will continue as well. However, if improvements in the community are not made first those efforts will be much more difficult.

Two prisons provide several hundred jobs in Crowley County and is the main support for the economy. Due to the lack of adequate housing, many employees live outside of the County.

Two lakes are located in Crowley County; Lake Henry and Lake Meredith. The two lakes provide fishing, skiing and boating opportunities for the locals and visitors. The addition of restrooms, campsites and trails would increase the recreational opportunities for locals and tourists. In addition to the lakes, the grasslands are a prime territory for hunting and bird watching enthusiasts. Increased marketing of these resources would greatly increase tourist traffic and provide a much needed boost to the economy.

County leaders have made some progress since the 2010 CEDS. Improvements have been made to the downtown streetscape and film crews have visited the area for future productions. One major development was the creation of a Microenterprise Center. The facility was funded by a HUD grant in collaboration with Otero Junior College. The facility provides services and meeting areas for the community and businesses in Crowley County.

Additional plans for the County include: increasing the population, providing adequate and affordable housing, exploring renewable energy options, increasing broadband availability and recruiting healthcare professionals. Specific projects and goals have been listed in this CEDS to provide a guide for community leaders as they move forward with their economic plans.

Goal: Economic Development - Crowley County is working on expanding on current resources and creating new jobs, which will diversify the community and relieve the dependency on the prisons for revenues.

Project 1: Revitalize Main Street

Most buildings in downtown are over a hundred years old and in need of repair. Owners of the storefronts do not live in the community, which leaves storefronts empty and in disrepair. In order to retain business and encourage new developments, improvements must be made in the downtown. Buildings will need to be repaired, storefront facades

improved, sidewalks repaired and streetscaping completed. A façade improvement program could encourage owners to make improvements to the buildings. This project is expected to cost approximately \$100,000. Since 2010, Crowley County has been able to upgrade one building, but more remain.

Project 2: Business access to Main Street from Highway 96

Travelers from Highway 96 are not aware of the facilities and services available in Ordway and tend to drive through town and stop in other communities to fill up with fuel and shop. Direct access to Main Street from the highway will draw in additional business to the community.

Project 3: Marketing of Amenities

Signage and increased marketing of the amenities and recreation available in the County is needed to draw in travelers to the County and to downtown businesses, especially in peak times.

Project 4: Increase broadband availability

Broadband is available, but inadequate in parts of the county. As technology becomes a vital service to business, the importance of providing high speed internet increases. A DOLA grant was awarded to continue the effort of addressing the needs of the unserved and under-served. This is a continual effort.

Goal: Improve Community Facilities and Appearance - Improving community facilities and the appearance of the community will entice travelers to visit the community and improve the quality of life for residents.

Project 1: Replace and construct bridges

This \$3 million project consists of construction and replacement of support bridges; three identified projects are at Bob Creek/Lane 14, Bob Creek/Road G and Road G/17. While this project does not create jobs, it will improve the safety of the community.

Project 2: Dust control program

The dust particles from the feed lot have been identified as the cause of health issues in the community. This project is being addressed in stages and \$2,000,000 has already been invested in the effort to address the goal of reducing the amount of dust from animal waste, furthering the quality of life for residents.

Project 3: Town Hall renovations

The Town Hall building is one hundred years-old and is in need of maintenance and renovations. The City has made some improvements to the ground floor; however, the building is not up to code and additional renovations are needed to the second level floor.

Project 4: Road improvements

Road improvements are always of utmost importance. This project is continuous and consists of several road improvements in the County. The heavy truck traffic has worn out the roads to and in the County. Over \$700,000 is needed to repair roads into town, the prisons and emergency vehicle access.

Project 5: Water/sewer system improvements

Another project of importance is the continued effort to provide and improve on an adequate supply of clean water to the County. This is vital to development and quality of life. An expansion of the water system would greatly improve the water delivery system in Crowley County; new lines to transport water and the creation of a backup system have been identified as priority projects. In addition, lagoons are over capacity and in need of being expanded and improvements are needed with storm sewers to relieve flooding during storms.

Project 6: Solid waste facility

The county does not currently have an open landfill. There is an increasing need for a solid waste facility within the county. The cost for such a facility is estimated at \$1.5 million. Funding for this project must be pursued; whether it is a landfill, transfer station or other solid waste program.

Project 7: Energy Needs & Infrastructure Current energy infrastructure/capacity is prohibitive for the attraction and expansion of businesses. It is vitally important to explore alternative options for providing the necessary infrastructure at an affordable rate to encourage economic growth. Crowley County has the spatial efficiencies for development, but if the infrastructure is not available and affordable, economic efforts are stifled. Studies to assess and ultimately deal with these issues are needed.

Goal: Energy Development - Researching and analyzing the available resources for energy development will be a new avenue for Crowley County. Pilot projects have been discussed, but lack the funding to begin the projects.

Project 1: Pilot project

Efforts to reduce electricity costs are always being discussed. The County would like to implement a program to explore and encourage additional renewable energy resources. Currently Crowley County has three operational oil wells. Wind and solar energy and possibly a Bio-digester are being explored at the county level. This project would put renewable energy in place at county facilities. The end result would be to save money on the high cost of electricity and encourage the community to use renewable energy at their personal residences.

Goal: Improve Housing - Housing is aging in Crowley County. The need for rehabilitation and development of new housing is vital to the survival of a community.

Project 1: Development of housing

The lack of quality housing has been an obstacle to growth in the county. Improvements to current housing stock and increasing affordable housing are vital to economic development plans. Participation in the HUD Self Help Program may address this issue, but an increased effort to market and utilize the housing rehabilitation program needs to be made. With anticipated economic growth in the next five years, it is imperative that affordable housing multi-family units as well as single-family dwellings be addressed in the effort to be proactive.

Goal: Expand Recreational Opportunities – Crowley County is well-known for their lakes and recreational activities. Water is a vital for attracting the multitude of recreational events that occur each summer, which in turn gives the economy a much needed boost each year.

Project 1: Development of Lake Meredith and Lake Henry

As stated earlier, two lakes provide recreation opportunities in Crowley County. With the increased use that has been experienced in the past five years, the lakes are in additional need of sanitary facilities and camp sites. The County continues to stress that water is vital for water recreation. As long as the water is available in the County, the lakes will continue to enhance the economic activity in the County. As the influx of visitors to the lakes come to the area, businesses reap the benefits.

Project 2: Develop bird trail

Bald Eagles and Geese are unique to the area and a great opportunity to bring in bird enthusiasts. However, bird trails, parking and marketing of this phenomenon are needed. Increased tourism would bring in needed tourism dollars to the county. Marketing/promotion of this effort is necessary to help continue this growing opportunity.

Project 3: Renovation of the sports facility

The current building, which houses locker rooms and training equipment for the football and wrestling teams is in disrepair. The building needs additional renovation, including lighting and ventilation. Mold issues also need to be addressed. If renovation of the building is not cost effective, options of building new or purchasing another building will be explored.

ACTION PLAN

Strategic planning in Crowley County will be an ongoing process. Projects identified in the CEDS are long term and contingent on available funds. As projects are under taken and available funds are identified, adjustments may be necessary.

Local leaders will work with their local economic development organizations as well as SCEDD, State and Federal sources to implement the plan and make adjustments as needed. Funding sources will be identified and pursued for individual projects. While some projects may not be eligible for EDA funds, USDA, DOLA, SBA, HUD, Private Foundations and Grants through the Governor's office will be researched.

In some cases, a regional approach may be more feasible. Most counties in Southeastern Colorado lack the funds for matching grants; therefore, a collaborative effort could be beneficial. In those instances, Crowley County will work with other counties and regional planners to ensure continuity between all organizations.

Crowley County will report its progress to SCEDD to be included in the annual CEDS updates. As new opportunities arise, projects or adjustments will also be included in the updated CEDS.

The State Bottom Up Economic Development Strategy is included as a supplement to the CEDS. Crowley County will continue to work on the Bottom Up Strategy at the State level, while working on CEDS projects at a Federal level. In any case, both strategies are vital to the economic growth of Crowley County and should be considered complimentary to each other.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Below are a list of steady state and responsive initiatives that have been implemented in an effort to address the issues faced by the County and the Region.

“STEADY STATE” INITIATIVES & EFFORTS

Colorado Blueprint 2.0

Regional Broadband Strategic Grant

Regional Manufacturing Labor Shed Study

Regional Housing Study

Regional "flight for life" Service with Care Connect

Regional Healthcare Sector Partnership

Regional Plug-In Stations

Kreativo Marketing and Regional Website

Colorado Comes to Life

“RESPONSIVE” INITIATIVES

SEBREA (Southeast Business Retention Expansion and Attraction)

SBDC (Small Business Development Center)

SECED, Inc. (Southeast Colorado Enterprise Development, Inc.)

OEDIT (Office of Economic Development & International Trade)

DOLA (Department of Local Affairs)

USDA RD (US Dept of Agriculture Rural Development)