

# ***Chapter 1: An Invitation***

## **Section 1.A: The Comprehensive Plan**

The Comprehensive Plan represents the community vision of a municipality by establishing goals, objectives and policies for: natural features and resources; land use; housing and community development; historic and cultural resources; community facilities and services; parks, recreation and open space; fiscal impact and economic development; stormwater management; sewer, water and utility services; and transportation. The recommendations and action plan for these functional components should provide overall guidance for a ten (10) to twenty (20) year planning period.

Comprehensive planning is a continuous process that requires evaluation periodically to insure that the plans and policies of the community reflect the current events, philosophies and theories of the municipal officials, residents, landowners and businesses within the community. This reflection is vital to Exeter Borough since there is significant development activity on a local and regional level, which could change the landscape of Exeter Borough and the Luzerne County over the next twenty (20) years. All maps relating to this planning effort are contained within Appendix A of this Comprehensive Plan.

## **Section 1.B: Local and Regional Perspective**

Exeter Borough is located within the northeastern portion of Luzerne County along the Susquehanna River. The adjacent municipalities include: Exeter Township to the north; Duryea Borough and West Pittston Borough to the east; Pittston City and Jenkins Township to the south; and Wyoming Borough and West Wyoming Borough. The total planning area consists of 3,200 acres of land (5.0 square miles) with a total population of 5,558 residents (2016 estimate). A Community Profile containing demographic and socio-economic data of Exeter Borough is included under Appendix B of this Comprehensive Plan.

While Exeter Borough is located within Luzerne County, it shares many demographic, socioeconomic, land use, and environmental characteristics with other municipalities within eastern Pennsylvania. Exeter Borough is influenced by many urban centers including: Wilkes-Barre located 4 miles to the southwest; Scranton located 5 miles to the northeast; Allentown located 54 miles to the south; Philadelphia located 95 miles to the southeast; Harrisburg located 90 miles to the southwest; Williamsport located 60 miles to the west; Binghamton (NY) located 57 miles to the north; and New York City located 102 miles to the east of Exeter Borough. The Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport (AVP) is also located 3 miles to the east of Exeter Borough. Map 1 of this Comprehensive Plan depicts the geographic proximity of Exeter Borough.

Exeter Borough has experienced a moderate growth and development activity that has resulted over the past 100 years. According to the United States Census Bureau, the population of Exeter Borough has increased at an average rate of 0.33 percent per year over the past 100 years. According to population projections supplied by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, most suburban and urban municipalities within Luzerne County are expected to have minimal change over the next 20 years. Therefore, a stabilized population considering limited growth and development activity shall be considered to evaluate impacts on municipal services, police and fire protection, educational centers, parks and recreation, the local economy, utility services, the transportation network, and the overall land use composition on a local and regional level.

## Section 1.C: Current and Past Planning Efforts

Exeter Borough does have a history of preparing and implementing plans that are intended to provide guidance over a designated period of time. The Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan was initially adopted in 1968 (1968 Plan). This plan was based upon the foundation that guidance should be provided on a municipal and regional level in an effort to implement the goals and objectives, which have been developed by the Exeter Borough to reflect the overall needs of the community. In addition to the 1968 Plan, Exeter Borough participated in or was considered as part of the following planning efforts.

- Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Comprehensive Plan (2011)
- Lackawanna-Luzerne Long-Range Transportation Plan (2011)
- Luzerne County Stormwater Management Plan (2010)
- Luzerne County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2014)
- Luzerne County Flood Operations Plan (2017)
- Lackawanna-Luzerne Open Space, Greenways and Recreation Master Plan (2004)
- Exeter Borough Plans, Ordinances and Codes

These past and present planning effort shall be considered as part of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan.

## Section 1.D: Project Organization

Exeter Borough has determined that the Comprehensive Plan of 1968 should be reviewed and updated in order to consider current and future conditions. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued by Exeter Borough in March of 2018. As a result, Exeter Borough received Proposals from qualified consultants to: conduct a community assessment; establish a community vision; prepare a complete comprehensive plan; and to coordinate efforts with Exeter Borough as stipulated by the RFP.

Hawk Valley Associates (HVA) was selected by Exeter Borough to provide guidance to establish a Community Vision and to prepare the Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan of 2019 in accordance with its Proposal and Professional Services Agreement endorsed on June 4, 2018.

The HVA Project Team shall coordinate all efforts with the Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (ESC), which shall include representatives of the Exeter Borough Council and Exeter Proud. Additional support may be provided by the Exeter Borough (Staff and Consultants) as well as the Luzerne County Planning Commission (LCPC) and other agencies designated by the ESC.



## **Section 1.E: Components of this Comprehensive Plan**

The Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan of 2019 was prepared considering the following subjects, which are discussed in the subsequent chapters of this document:

**The Community Vision:** The ESC has formulated a Mission Statement that will be utilized to establish a community vision for the 2019 Comprehensive Plan. The community vision shall consider the results of a Community Survey and Business Survey that were conducted in July of 2018.

**The Foundation of this Plan:** This component provides direction on how the Comprehensive Plan will be developed considering the current issues and future needs of Exeter Borough. The planning goals serve as guidelines for directing future growth, development and other planning activities within the community. These guidelines are broad enough to encompass all major planning considerations, but are also specific enough to guide and evaluate the progress of the functional elements contained within the Comprehensive Plan. The goals, objectives and policies were confirmed through interviews with the ESC and the results of the Comprehensive Plan Survey and Business Survey.

**Natural Features and Resources:** This component contains an inventory and analysis of the physical and natural environment including topography, hydrology, ecology and botany. It is essential to determine the presence of important natural features, wetlands, floodplains, woodlands, soil capabilities, as well as other natural resources and environmentally sensitive land areas within Exeter Borough.

**Historical, Scenic and Cultural Resources:** Exeter Borough has a rich and diverse heritage that is reflected in the historic, scenic and cultural resources that are integrated within the existing land use patterns. This component will focus upon the identification and preservation of these historic, scenic and cultural resources in an effort to establish a community bond from past generations to future generations.

**Existing Land Use:** The existing land use composition and development patterns within Exeter Borough are essential planning elements to formulate a plan for future growth and conservation management. This component will focus on the existing land use conditions, construction activity, and the subdivision and land development activity within Exeter Borough. This documentation shall be utilized to formulate a plan for future land use over the next 15 years.

**Future Land Use:** One of the most important elements in the comprehensive planning process is the charting of the future land uses and growth boundaries. This component attempts to reflect the goals, objectives and policies for future land use and development within Exeter Borough. The documentation and recommendations contained within plan shall be utilized to support the rationale utilized to chart the future land uses and growth boundaries. The Future Land Use Map will be utilized as a guide by Exeter Borough in considering future amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.

**Adjacent Planning and Zoning:** There are seven (7) municipalities surrounding the perimeter of Exeter Borough. This component provides a regional evaluation of the existing land use patterns, zoning ordinances and comprehensive plans of each municipality to avoid potential land use conflicts and discrepancies. In addition, the Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Comprehensive Plan was also evaluated to avoid regional planning and land use discrepancies.

**Community Facilities and Services:** This component provides special attention to the community facilities and services within Exeter Borough including those relating to municipal government, police protection, fire protection, ambulance service, solid waste management, education and libraries. These community facilities and services are essential to the existing and future residents of Exeter Borough and should be carefully planned in an effort to maintain an effective level of service.

**Parks, Recreation and Open Space:** This component provides focus on the existing and future demands for recreation facilities and programs on a municipal and regional level. The planning for both passive and active recreation opportunities is a vital component to any comprehensive planning effort. As part of this effort, a detailed inventory has been developed and a spatial park analysis was performed to address recreational deficiencies and needs. Through the implementation of the recommendations contained within this chapter, recreation opportunities should be available to meet the demands of the residents within Exeter Borough.

**Fiscal Impact and Economic Development:** This component provides an overview of the economic and employment characteristics within Exeter Borough. A healthy economy provides not only needed goods and services, but also employment opportunities and tax revenues, which pay for public facilities and services. This chapter will also focus on the abilities to retain and expand economic development opportunities within Exeter Borough.

**Utilities and Stormwater Management:** Utilities provisions are essential components to support growth and development. A coordinated and cooperative approach is essential in order to properly plan utilities and stormwater management improvements within planned growth areas. This component will focus upon the existing and planned utility services within Exeter Borough and evaluate their ability to adequately support future growth and development.

**Transportation and Circulation:** Transportation routes often determine the general direction of growth within any community and are often deciding factors of residential, commercial, institutional and industrial developments. The effectiveness of a transportation system is measured by its ability to provide safe and efficient modes of travel on a local and regional level. Therefore, it is imperative to develop an effective plan for transportation in order to accommodate existing and future land uses within Exeter Borough. The objective of this component is to develop a detailed transportation profile and plan considering local and regional needs.

**Strategic Implementation:** The 2019 Comprehensive Plan must be strategically implemented in an integrated, coordinated and opportunistic manner. The purpose of this component is to provide direction concerning the following issues:

- How will the Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan be implemented;
- Who will undertake the responsibilities for implementing specific recommendations and assignments;
- What are the tasks that will be required to successfully implement the recommendations and assignments;
- When should the recommended tasks and assignments be completed; and
- What priorities should be assigned to each recommended task.

**Maps, References and Appendices:** The 2019 Comprehensive Plan shall include a set of maps that will be utilized to portray existing conditions and future planning concepts. In addition, several background studies and demographic information will be included as a reference guide for this planning effort. The corresponding maps that have been prepared for the 2019 Comprehensive Plan are contained within Appendix A. Supporting documentation pertaining to demographic, social and economic data have been included as part of Appendix B of this Comprehensive Plan.

The Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan of 2019 should be considered as a continuous process that provides sound guidance and direction over the next 10 to 20 years. The content of the chapters and maps have a direct and indirect correlation with each other, but ultimately reflect the vision of Exeter Borough. The municipal officials should continuously monitor the effectiveness of each chapter in an effort to effectively implement the recommendations established in this Plan. Further, the entire Comprehensive Plan should be completely reviewed and updated by the year 2030 to ensure that the vision of today is consistent with current goals, objectives and policies, thus satisfying the overall vision of this Comprehensive Plan.

## **Section 1.F: MPC Compliance**

The overall focus of this comprehensive plan is to provide guidance on a municipal level in an effort to implement the goals, objectives and policies, while complying with the guidelines established by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Codes (MPC). More specifically, Article III of the MPC requires that all comprehensive plans include the following basic elements:

- (1) A statement of objectives of the municipality concerning its future development, including, but not limited to, the location, character and timing of future development, that may also serve as a statement of community development objectives.
- (2) A plan for land use, which may include provisions for the amount, intensity, character and timing of land use proposed for residence, industry, business, agriculture, major traffic and transit facilities, utilities, community facilities, public grounds, parks and recreation, preservation of prime agricultural lands, floodplains and other areas of special hazards and other similar uses.
- (3) A plan to meet the housing needs of present residents and of those individuals and families anticipated to reside in the municipality, which may include conservation of presently sound housing, rehabilitation of housing in declining neighborhoods and the accommodation of expected new housing in different dwelling types and at appropriate densities for households of all income levels.
- (4) A plan for movement of people and goods, which may include expressways, highways, local street systems, parking facilities, pedestrian and bikeway systems, public transit routes, terminals, airfields, port facilities, railroad facilities and other similar facilities or uses.
- (5) A plan for community facilities and utilities, which may include public and private education, recreation, municipal buildings, fire and police stations, libraries, hospitals, water supply and distribution, sewerage and waste treatment, solid waste management, storm drainage, and flood plain management, utility corridors and associated facilities, and other similar facilities or uses.

- (6) A statement of the interrelationships among the various plan components, which may include an estimate of the environmental, energy conservation, fiscal, economic development and social consequences on the municipality.
- (7) A discussion of short-range and long-range plan implementation strategies, which may include implications for capital improvements programming, new or updated development regulations, and identification of public funds potentially available.
- (8) A statement indicating that the existing and proposed development of the municipality is compatible with the existing and proposed development and plans in contiguous portions of neighboring municipalities, or a statement indicating measures which have been taken to provide buffers or other transitional devices between disparate uses, and a statement indicating that the existing and proposed development of the municipality is generally consistent with the objectives and plans of the county comprehensive plan.
- (9) A plan for the protection of natural and historic resources to the extent not preempted by federal or state law. This clause includes, but is not limited to, wetlands and aquifer recharge zones, woodlands, steep slopes, prime agricultural land, flood plains, unique natural areas and historic sites. The plan shall be consistent with and may not exceed those requirements imposed under federal and state laws.

The Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan of 2019 has been prepared to address the basic planning elements and requirements, which are specified by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

