

# Chapter 4: Land Use, Zoning and Housing

Chapter 4 of this Comprehensive Plan provides an overall evaluation of land use, zoning, housing and development conditions and trends while placing emphasis on the goals, objectives and policies that have been established within Chapter 2 of this Comprehensive Plan. By considering this information, a future land use, zoning and housing plan shall be formulated to provide guidance for growth, development, preservation, revitalization and zoning efforts over the next 10 to 20 years.

## Section 4.A: 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, development, preservation, revitalization and conservation management. Section 4.A of the Comprehensive Plan will focus on the existing land use composition within Exeter Borough.

The Luzerne County Planning Commission and Mapping Department periodically conducts an existing land use survey of all municipalities within Luzerne County. As part of this effort, Exeter Borough conducted an existing land use survey of all properties. Map 2 portrays the existing land use patterns of Exeter Borough, as initially classified by Luzerne County and updated by Exeter Borough. The following text provides a land use summation.

**Single-Family Residential:** There are 284.8 acres of land or 8.9 percent of the land area within Exeter Borough that can be classified as parcels of land with single-family dwelling units. These parcels of land include single-family detached units or single-family attached units (duplex) on areas of various residential densities (low, medium and high) on individual lots that are less than 10 acres. Most of the existing single-family residential uses are located within the central portion of Exeter Borough within areas that have public utility services.



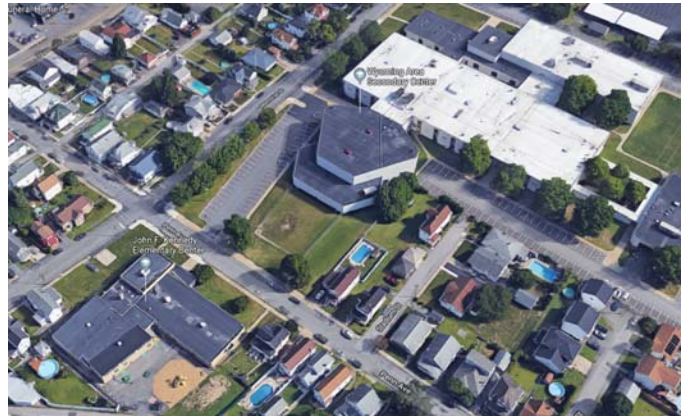
**Multi-Family Residential:** There are 70.4 acres of land or 2.2 percent of the land area within Exeter Borough that can be classified as parcels of land with multi-family dwelling units. These parcels of land include residential uses (townhouses, apartments and mobile home parks) on areas with high residential densities on common lots. Most of the existing multi-family residential developments are located within the central or western portion of Exeter Borough within areas that have sufficient infrastructure and public utility services.



**Commercial:** There are 844.5 acres of land or 26.4 percent of the land area within Exeter Borough that can be classified as retail, office, business, recreational and other commercial uses. There are approximately 90 commercial establishments plus several home occupation uses within Exeter Borough. Most of the prominent commercial uses are located along Wyoming Avenue, Slocum Avenue, Tunkhannock Avenue and Schooley Avenue.



**Industrial:** There are 25.6 acres of land or 0.8 percent of the land area in Exeter Borough that can be classified as manufacturing, warehousing, wholesaling or general industrial.

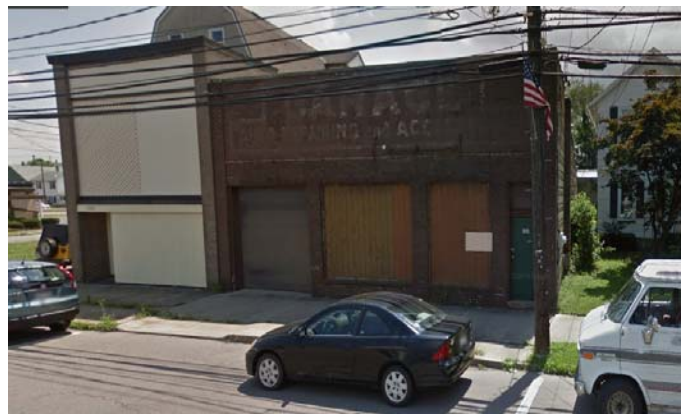


**Institutional:** There are 390.4 acres of land or 12.2 percent of the land area in Exeter Borough classified as municipal, public, quasi-public, emergency management, schools, churches and recreation areas. Some of the more prominent institutional uses include: Exeter Borough; the Exeter Borough Fire Department; Wyoming Area School District; Wyoming Area Catholic School; Slocum Apostolic Church; and St. Barbara's Roman Catholic Church.

**Conservation or Undeveloped:** There are 1,584.3 acres of land or 49.5 percent of the land area within Exeter Borough that can be classified as agricultural, vacant or undeveloped land. These parcels of land are typically over 10 acres and do not contain other principal land uses. Most of the agricultural and/or undeveloped areas are located along the Susquehanna River or the northern portion of Exeter Borough.



**Transportation and Utilities:** Exeter Borough has additional land that can be classified as areas designated for transportation, communication and utility uses, which area encompassed by rights-of-way and easements.



**Blighted, Abandoned or Vacated Properties:** Exeter Borough has several properties that can be classified as "blighted, abandoned or vacated". Most of these properties are located along prominent roads or visible areas, which may be considered as an eyesore within the community. Additional information regarding "blighted, abandoned or vacated properties" is included under Sections 4.E, 4.G and 4.H.



As part of the 1968 Comprehensive Plan adopted by Exeter Borough, an existing and projected land use comparison was completed to analyze changes over time. Based upon a review of this information, infill development patterns were anticipated through the years 1980. The projected land use patterns were realized by Exeter Borough with occasional setbacks resulting from national economic development trends, improved infrastructure (roads, sewer and water) and regional flood events.

Based upon a review of past land use trends within Exeter Borough, it can be assumed that infill development patterns shall continue based upon the availability of undeveloped land within the suburban landscape and revitalization efforts as part of adaptive reuse and redevelopment opportunities. These existing growth areas should be developed or redeveloped considering conventional methods or through adaptive reuse and revitalization tools. Exeter Borough may also consider expanding the suburban landscape to areas that were not previously designated for growth and development.

#### **Section 4.B: Existing Zoning Map and Zoning Districts**

The Exeter Borough Zoning Ordinance was initially prepared and adopted in 1968. A comprehensive amendment or re-write was adopted in 2011 considering several community development objectives relating to land use, housing, development, transportation, open space, environmental and local government policies. The following zoning districts have been established:

- C-1: Conservation Zoning District**
- R-1: Single-Family Residential Zoning District**
- R-2: Two-Family Residential Zoning District**
- R-3: Multi-Family Residential Zoning District**
- B-2: General Business District**
- B-3: Highway Business District**
- I-1: Industrial Zoning District**

The Zoning Ordinance also contains: definition of terms; general regulations; conservation design overlay requirements; provisions for special exceptions and conditional uses; supplemental regulations; off-street parking requirements; sign regulations; non-conformity guidelines; and administrative guidelines. A Zoning Map has been adopted as part of the Zoning Ordinance. The principal zoning districts within Exeter Borough are depicted on Map 3 of this Comprehensive Plan.

The Exeter Borough Zoning Ordinance of 2011 was prepared to consider the background studies and functional planning components for land use, community facilities and services, utilities and transportation of the Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Comprehensive Plan, which was also adopted in 2011. Since the 1968 Comprehensive Plan was considered obsolete when the current Zoning Ordinance was prepared and adopted, it is imperative that the 2018 Comprehensive Plan evaluate the current and projected trends in an effort to address the community vision and issues that are facing Exeter Borough. If necessary, certain provisions contained within the 2011 Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map may need to be amended in order to reflect the recommendations specified by this Comprehensive Plan. This requirement is further outlined under Articles 3 and 6 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

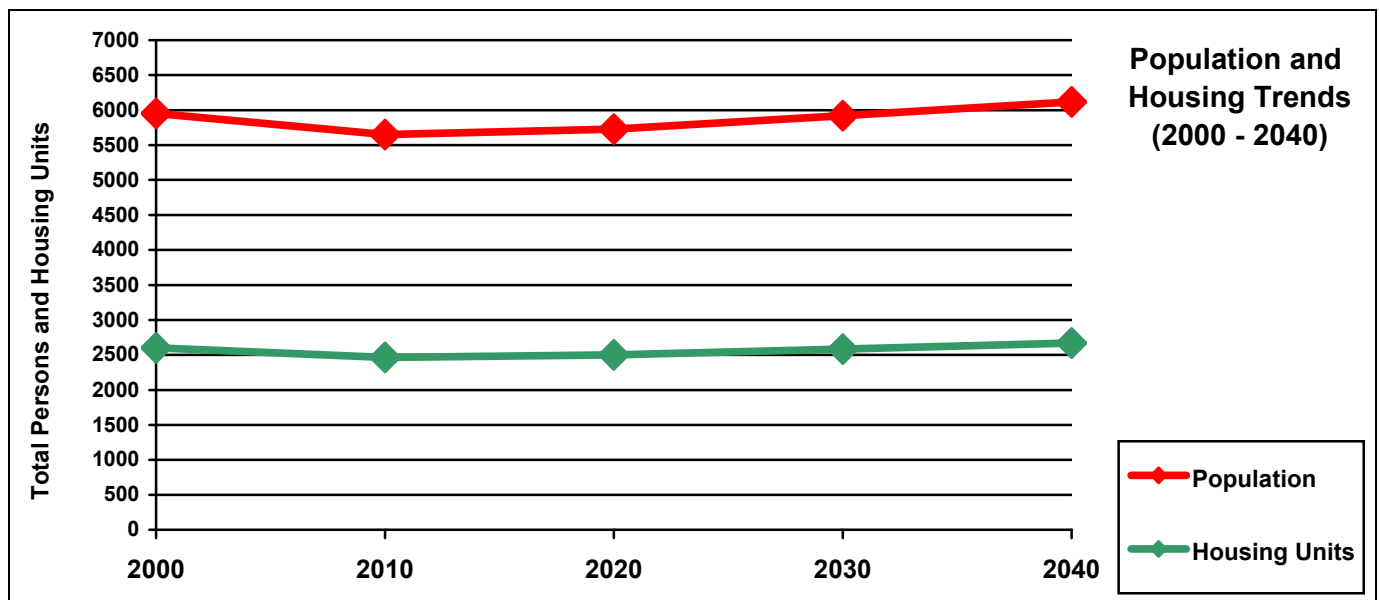
## Section 4.C: Projected Growth and Development Trends

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. If this trend should continue, the population and housing projections for Exeter Borough should increase at a zero-growth rate to moderate rate (0.33 percent per year) through the year 2040. The following table provides the population and housing projections for Exeter Borough for 2020, 2030 and 2040.

Exeter Borough Population and Housing Projections (2010 through 2040)					
Exeter Boro.	2010 Census	2016 Estimate	2020 Projection	2030 Projection	2040 Projection
Population	5,652 <sup>(1)</sup>	5,558 <sup>(2)</sup>	5,727 <sup>(3)</sup>	5,919 <sup>(3)</sup>	6,117 <sup>(3)</sup>
Housing Units	2,463 <sup>(1)</sup>	2,427 <sup>(2)(4)</sup>	2,501 <sup>(4)</sup>	2,585 <sup>(4)</sup>	2,671 <sup>(4)</sup>

(1) The total population and occupied housing units were obtained through the US Census Bureau (2010 Census)  
 (2) The total population and housing units were derived on estimates provided by the US Census Bureau.  
 (3) The population projection was established by the Exeter Borough utilizing a 0.33% annual growth rate  
 (4) The projected housing units were calculated by dividing the projected population by 2.29 persons per unit.

Population and housing projections are vital elements in the preparation of a comprehensive plan since they are utilized in planning future land uses, community facilities and transportation improvements. Exeter Borough has derived the population and housing projections based upon growth trends utilizing a geometric extrapolation technique or ratio-share technique, whereas historic growth trends are applied to project future population counts. The adjustment factors considered potential limitations such as environmental factors, pipeline development, infrastructure, protected land areas, municipal zoning, undeveloped land area, and other policies endorsed by this Comprehensive Plan.



There are no significant pipeline development projects that are currently being considered as an active development plan at this time. Therefore, the flat-line growth rate pattern is expected to continue.

## **Section 4.D: Regional Planning and Zoning Evaluation**

Exeter Borough is surrounded or bordered by seven (7) municipalities of which 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. A regional evaluation of the existing land use patterns, zoning ordinances and comprehensive plans of each municipality has been completed during the 2018 calendar year to avoid potential land use conflicts and discrepancies.

**Exeter Township, Luzerne County:** Exeter Township is located along the western boundary of Exeter Borough sharing a common municipal border of 18,200 linear feet. The existing land use composition of the areas adjacent to Exeter Borough is currently classified as agricultural, woodland, conservation and low density residential uses. Most of this land is contained within the Single-Family Residence (R-1) Zoning District. There are no planning, land uses or zoning conflicts for between Exeter Borough and Exeter Township.

**Duryea Borough, Luzerne County:** Duryea Borough is located along the northern boundary of Exeter Borough sharing a common municipal border of 7,570 linear feet along the Susquehanna River. The existing land use composition of the areas adjacent to Exeter Borough can be classified as conservation, agricultural and woodland uses with undeveloped as a result of the floodplain along the Susquehanna River. These areas are contained within the Agricultural (A-1) Zoning District. There are no planning, land uses or zoning conflicts between Exeter Borough and Duryea Borough.

**West Pittston Borough, Luzerne County:** West Pittston Borough is located along the northeastern boundary of Exeter Borough sharing a common municipal border of 11,080 linear feet. The existing land use composition of the areas adjacent to Exeter Borough can be classified as a mix of medium to high density residential and institutional uses. These areas are contained within the Single-Family Residence (R-1), Two-Family Residence (R-2) and Mining (M-1) Zoning Districts. There are no planning, land uses or zoning conflicts between Exeter Borough and West Pittston Borough.

**Pittston City, Luzerne County:** Pittston City is located along the eastern boundary of Exeter Borough sharing a common municipal border of 1,400 linear feet along the Susquehanna River. The existing land use composition of the areas adjacent to Exeter Borough can be classified as a mix of conservation, municipal, recreational, industrial uses with undeveloped areas as a result of the floodplain along the Susquehanna River. These areas are contained within the Heavy Industrial (I-2) Zoning District. There are no planning, land uses or zoning conflicts between Exeter Borough and Pittston City.

**Jenkins Township, Luzerne County:** Jenkins Township is located along the southwestern boundary of Exeter Borough sharing a common municipal border of 5,140 linear feet along the Susquehanna River. The existing land use composition of the areas adjacent to Exeter Borough can be classified as a mix of conservation, woodland and medium density residential uses with undeveloped areas as a result of the floodplain along the Susquehanna River. These areas are contained within the Two-Family Residential (R-2) and Highway Commercial (B-2) Zoning Districts. There are no planning, land uses or zoning conflicts between Exeter Borough and Jenkins Township.

**Wyoming Borough, Luzerne County:** Wyoming Borough is located along the southern boundary of Exeter Borough sharing a common municipal border of 3,940 linear feet. The existing land use

composition of the areas adjacent to Exeter Borough can be classified as a mix of medium density residential, commercial and institutional uses with undeveloped as a result of the floodplain along the Susquehanna River. These areas are contained within the Agricultural (A-1) and Neighborhood Business (B-1) Zoning Districts. There are no planning, land uses or zoning conflicts between Exeter Borough and Wyoming Borough.

**West Wyoming Borough, Luzerne County:** West Wyoming Borough is located along the southern boundary of Exeter Borough sharing a common municipal border of 8,500 linear feet. The existing land use composition of the areas adjacent to Exeter Borough can be classified as conservation, woodland, medium density residential, commercial and institutional land uses. These areas are contained within the Agricultural (A-1), Single-Family Residence (R-1) and Heavy Industrial (M-3) Zoning Districts. There are no planning, land uses or zoning conflicts between Exeter Borough and West Wyoming Borough.

The existing zoning classifications for Exeter Borough and the areas adjacent to Exeter Borough are depicted on Map 3 of this Comprehensive Plan. The existing land uses and zoning districts are generally compatible between the Exeter Borough and the adjacent municipalities.

### **Luzerne County Planning Projects**

In addition to evaluating the adjacent municipal land use and zoning documents, Exeter Borough has reviewed and applied the fundamental guidelines that have been recommended for the Wyoming Valley of Luzerne County. Exeter Borough also considered the following regional planning documents prepared by the Luzerne County Planning Commission:

- 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)

These planning efforts shall be considered as part of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan for Exeter Borough.

The Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Comprehensive Plan has the most impact upon land use, zoning and housing implications within Exeter Borough. The vital components of the Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Comprehensive Plan include Chapter 2 (The Vision) and Chapter 3 (Implementation Strategy). The guidelines for land use, zoning and housing shall be considered within Chapter 4 of the Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan. The Exeter Borough Future Land Use Plan, which is portrayed on Map 4 of this Comprehensive Plan, is also generally consistent with the Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Comprehensive Plan.

All other county-wide or regional plans relating to community facilities and services, utilities, flood control, stormwater management, parks and recreation, and transportation shall be considered and evaluated under the corresponding chapters of this Comprehensive Plan.

## **Section 4.E: Blighted, Abandoned and Vacated Properties**

Exeter Borough has several properties that can be classified as “blighted, abandoned or vacated”. Most of these properties are located along prominent roads or visible areas, which may be considered as an eyesore within the community. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has past legislation in order for municipalities to establish regulations to mitigate blighted properties, which are defined as follows:

- (1) Any premises which because of physical condition or use is regarded as a public nuisance at common law or has been declared a public nuisance in accordance with the local housing, building, plumbing, fire and related codes.
- (2) Any premises which because of physical condition, use or occupancy is considered an attractive nuisance to children, including but not limited to abandoned wells, shafts, basements, excavations, and unsafe fences or structures.
- (3) Any dwelling which because it is dilapidated, unsanitary, unsafe, vermin-infested or lacking in the facilities and equipment required by the housing code of the municipality, has been designated by the department responsible for enforcement of the code as unfit for human habitation.
- (4) Any structure which is a fire hazard, or is otherwise dangerous to the safety of persons or property.
- (5) Any structure from which the utilities, plumbing, heating, sewerage or other facilities have been disconnected, destroyed, removed, or rendered ineffective so that the property is unfit for its intended use.
- (6) Any vacant or unimproved lot or parcel of ground in a predominantly built-up neighborhood, which by reason of neglect or lack of maintenance has become a place for accumulation of trash and debris, or a haven for rodents or other vermin.
- (7) Any unoccupied property which has been tax delinquent for a period of two years prior to the effective date of this act, and those in the future having a two-year tax delinquency.
- (8) Any property which is vacant but not tax delinquent, which has not been rehabilitated within one year of the receipt of notice to rehabilitate from the appropriate code enforcement agency.
- (9) Any abandoned property. A property shall be considered abandoned if: (i) it is a vacant or unimproved lot or parcel of ground on which a municipal lien for the cost of demolition of any structure located on the property remains unpaid for a period of six months; (ii) it is a vacant property or vacant or unimproved lot or parcel of ground on which the total of municipal liens on the property for tax or any other type of claim of the municipality are in excess of 150% of the fair market value of the property as established by the Board of Revisions of Taxes or other body with legal authority to determine the taxable value of the property; or (iii) the property has been declared abandoned by the owner, including an estate that is in possession of the property

This is a complex definition that must be carefully evaluated in order to determine if a community does have properties that can be classified as “blighted, abandoned or vacated”. Exeter Borough has determined that several properties appear to fall under these guidelines. Exeter Borough has adopted the International Property Maintenance Code in order to resolve some of these problems. However, the problems appear to be compounding and the community has determined that “blighted, abandoned and vacated properties” are a principal issue that needs to be addressed in this Comprehensive Plan.

The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania has recently published (2016) “***We Can Do This, A Five-Step, Fast-Track Blight Plan***”, which provides a systematic way for municipalities to develop a comprehensive strategy to address blight. The process begins with a quick assessment of the local blight problem. A blight task force is established, meets to discuss the nature and extent of local blight, and identifies possible strategies to address it. Participants engage in a consensus-building exercise designed to help them select the strategies most appropriate for their community. A comprehensive blight strategy report documents what they have decided and is released at a joint meeting of the task force with local, county, and/ or municipal officials. The implementation process consists of the following steps:

**Step 1: Gain Consensus for Developing a Blight Plan**

**Step 2: Assess the Nature and Extent of the Blight**

**Step 3: Convene a Blight Task Force**

**Step 4: Engage Municipal Officials**

**Step 5: Identify Priority Action Steps and Implement Them**

The Five-Step, Fast-Track Blight Plan has paid significant dividends for local municipalities and counties that have embraced the methodology endorsed by the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania. They have attracted new money to address blight, because funders increasingly want to see a comprehensive plan with clearly identified steps to carry it out, strong local buy-in, and consensus on how to move forward. A comprehensive blight strategy builds confidence among the participants of the program. The initial efforts should be considered as a short-term objective that can be achieved within the next 10 years, while the program should be implemented over the next 20 years. If successful, this issue can be resolved by Exeter Borough. A complete copy of “***We Can Do This, A Five-Step, Fast-Track Blight Plan***” has been included as part of Appendix E of this Comprehensive Plan.

The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (PA DCED) has published several documents to assist municipalities with blight, abandoned and vacated properties, including:

***Understanding Blight and Its Impact on Communities***

***Planning to Prevent and Remediate Blight***

***Blight to Bright Manual***

***Blight and Land Bank Funding Options***

***Prevailing Law, Code Enforcement Tools and Model Ordinances***

***PA Abandoned and Blighted Property Conservatorship Act***

These documents can be also found on the PA DCED webpage at: <https://dced.pa.gov/> or at the following link: <http://www.pablighlibrary.com/readdownloadprintshare/>.

Luzerne County has also established the Municipal Stop Slum and Blight Clearance Program, which applies funds from the Community Development Block Grant Program funds and can be found at: <https://www.luzernecounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/13687/MUNICIPAL-SPOT-SLUM-AND-BLIGHT-CLEARANCE-PROGRAM?bidId=>



## **Section 4.F: Housing Diversity and Fair Share Analysis**

The Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan recognizes appropriate land areas to accommodate existing, planned and projected residential development. These designated areas include the Single-Family Residential (yellow) and Multi-Family Residential (orange) as viable land use classifications. Pursuant to Section 301 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), the Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan must address the following element:

- ❖ ***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.***

In order to accomplish this requirement, Exeter Borough should provide a “fair share” of housing, as determined appropriate by the MPC as well as through recent court challenges. In addition, Exeter Borough should develop a housing plan to consider fundamental issues such as affordability, diversity, architectural integrity, zoning, revitalization and rehabilitation.

The “fair share” principles are based upon the planning premise that each municipality is required to plan and implement land use regulations, which meet the housing needs for the range of all people who may desire to reside within that municipality. Although the MPC does not provide specific criteria on how a municipality must achieve its “fair share” of all types of housing, the courts have offered guidance on this topic. Pursuant to case law pertaining to “fair share”, a municipality must evaluate to determine if it is providing its fair share of housing types. The three (3) basic tests are as follows:

### **Test 1: Is Exeter Borough a logical area for growth and development?**

Exeter Borough is located in the vicinity of other rural, suburban and urban municipalities. A considerable amount of the land within the northern and southern portions of Exeter Borough are classified as rural, conservation or undeveloped land that is not suitable for residential activity due to the proximity of floodplains and/or steep slopes. Further, most of the land within the central section of Exeter Borough is classified as suburban or partially developed with a mixture of residential, commercial, industrial, institutional and conservation uses that have basic infrastructure (sewer, water and roads) to support suburban development. Therefore, the central part of Exeter Borough does have the capacities to accommodate growth, development, revitalization and adaptive reuse projects over the next 10 to 20 years.

### **Test 2: Is Exeter Borough considered as a developed or developing community?**

Over the past 100 years, the population and housing of Exeter Borough has increased at an average growth rate of 0.33 percent per year. This growth rate is compatible to similar suburban and urban municipalities located within Luzern County. Further, the amount of recent subdivision and land development activity within Exeter Borough would lead to the conclusion that Exeter Borough will not experience significant growth and development over the next 10 to 20 years. Therefore, Exeter Borough is considered as a stabilized community with minimal growth and development expectations.

**Test 3: Is the amount of land zoned for multi-family development disproportionately small in relation to the population growth pressure and present level of development?**

This is a complex question, which has been considered throughout this Comprehensive Plan. The following points attempt to clarify the answer to this test:

- Exeter Borough is a municipality with suburban characteristics. Currently, there are a total of 1,584.3 acres of land classified as conservation, agricultural, woodland, floodplain or undeveloped, which represents 49.5 percent of the total land area within Exeter Borough. This Comprehensive Plan established goals, objectives and policies for the preservation of conservation areas in order to protect the areas encompassed by flooding and steep slopes through conservation management, zoning and development strategies.
- The amount of land area currently zoned and available for multi-family development has been proportionate to the population growth pressure within the Exeter Borough and Luzerne County. The residential densities prescribed for each of the zoning districts should also provide opportunities for future growth, while providing a clear distinction between residential densities and protecting the conservation areas and rural landscape.
- In order to comply with the objectives of Test 3, Exeter Borough should continue to provide residential zoning districts (R-1 and R-2) in order to accommodate all residential land uses at a density compatible to the suburban landscape of Exeter Borough. The current R-1 and R-2 Zoning Districts are capable of accommodating current development and future growth opportunities with medium to high residential densities.
- The R-2 Zoning Districts provides for a variety of multi-family development opportunities at the highest residential densities within Exeter Borough. These areas also provide affordable housing opportunities to the residents of Exeter Borough.
- Exeter Borough has developed population and housing projections through the year 2040. These projections indicate that the population of Exeter Borough will increase at an average growth rate of 0.33 percent per year through the year 2040, which could be obtainable given the amount of undeveloped land within Exeter Borough.
- Exeter Borough shall promote adaptive reuse and revitalization efforts within all zoning districts in order to: provide opportunities for affordable housing; reduce the number of existing and potential vacant housing units; to reduce the number of blighted properties; and to improve the existing housing stock.
- Exeter Borough does not have any significant amount of “pipeline development projects” that will be constructed and occupied by the year 2040. Therefore, the undeveloped land areas designated within the R-1 and R-2 Zoning Districts should be capable of supporting new residential development opportunities in areas that have sufficient infrastructure. In addition, Exeter Borough anticipates that it will also experience some “infill development”.

Based upon a review of the existing land use composition, recent residential construction activity, proximity to improved infrastructure and the current zoning regulations, it is apparent that the housing supply within Exeter Borough is diversified and capable of accommodating all residential densities and income levels.

## Section 4.G: Planning Implications and Issues

Based upon an evaluation of the land use, zoning and development conditions of Exeter Borough, the following planning implications and issues are hereby identified:

- (1) A conservation management plan should be considered with emphasis on: agricultural resources; environmentally sensitive lands; hydrological conditions; woodlands; and scenic areas and view sheds. Chapter 4 of this Comprehensive Plan has established an inventory of the natural features and resources within Exeter Borough. Further evaluation and enhancement through land use decisions should be a priority.
- (2) The historical and cultural resources within Exeter Borough are vital components to the rural and natural landscape. The integrity of these resources become vulnerable as new subdivision and land development activity is introduced into the rural and natural landscape.
- (3) Successful historic and cultural resource planning efforts are predicated upon community support and a basic understanding of the issues. Exeter Borough should consider innovative methods to educate the residents about their local heritage as well as the importance of historic preservation efforts. A coordinated effort between the public and private sectors will be necessary to implement the recommendations for historical and cultural resources. Partnerships should be encouraged to promote a versatile approach to preservation efforts in the community.
- (4) The cultural heritage of Exeter Borough has evolved from its origins as an agricultural community to a mineral extraction center to a vibrant suburb within the Wyoming Valley. The remaining farmland is now limited to the floodplain along the Susquehanna River. This conservation use should be maintained as since it provides: a natural barrier for significant flood events; connects biodiversity corridors for ecological habitats; and is a scenic resource within the community.
- (5) Planned growth areas should be established within areas that have sufficient infrastructure (sewer, water and transportation) in order to accommodate residential, commercial, industrial and institutional uses within Exeter Borough over the next 10 to 20 years.
- (6) The population and housing projections that have been developed as part of this Comprehensive Plan reflect minimum growth opportunities if the average growth rate of 0.33 percent per year is applied through the year 2040. Exeter Borough should consider expanding its growth areas to include new residential development opportunities while considering revitalization and adaptive reuse opportunities within the suburban landscape. As a result, Exeter Borough should monitor the population and housing projections as part of this Comprehensive Plan.
- (7) Exeter Borough does not have any significant developments that are pending and/or approved for future growth and development. Exeter Borough anticipates that it will have some moderate growth through “infill development” within the defined growth areas and some new growth outside of the current growth areas. As a result, the total cumulative projection or average growth rate within Exeter Borough should be 0.33 percent per year through the year 2040.
- (8) The median age of the residents within Exeter Borough is 44.4 years of age, which is higher as compared to Luzerne County (42.5 years of age) and Pennsylvania (40.1 years of age). This is also reflected in the cohorts of the residents over 60 years of age. Exeter Borough must consider this demographic statistic and age-cohorts as part of the land use and housing plan.

- (9) The population projections reflect a zero to moderate growth rate (0.33 percent per year) through the year 2040 and the median age of the current residents (44.4 years of age) is considered relatively high compared to most municipalities. These factors may create other impacts with community facilities and services that will be required through the year 2040.
- (10) A plan for residential uses should be established in order to promote the preservation of existing housing units and provide sufficient land for future growth and development. A variety of housing opportunities should be considered based upon the demographic, housing and socio-economic conditions that are anticipated within Exeter Borough. Most of the residential growth should be contained within growth boundaries, which are supported by the zoning and land use provisions established by Exeter Borough.
- (11) A plan for commercial uses should be established considering the proximity of residential development clusters, transient customers, available land, compatible land uses, utility services and the transportation network within Exeter Borough. Based upon current conditions, Exeter Borough has limited opportunities to accommodate high volume or intense commercial uses. Therefore, commercial uses should be encouraged in small clusters or along designated transportation corridors within Exeter Borough.
- (12) A plan for industrial uses should be established considering employment sectors, available land, compatible land uses, environmental impacts, utility services and the transportation network within Exeter Borough. Based upon current conditions, Exeter Borough has limited opportunities to accommodate high volume or intense industrial uses. Therefore, light or limited industrial uses should be encouraged along designated transportation corridors within Exeter Borough.
- (13) A plan for institutional uses should be established so that uses classified as municipal, educational, emergency management, health care, religious, social and/or community services can continue to function as a vital asset within Exeter Borough. The institutional uses should be contained within the growth boundaries established by Exeter Borough.
- (14) Exeter Borough has special uses or areas that must be defined and accounted for as part of its future land use and zoning plan. Where appropriate, special overlay districts should be considered to integrate land use planning and zoning provisions.
- (15) Exeter Borough should make every reasonable effort to provide for conforming uses and to minimize revisions that will add non-conforming uses and/or buildings.
- (16) Exeter Borough has determined that blighted, abandoned and vacated properties are a principal issue that needs to be addressed in this Comprehensive Plan. Initial efforts should be considered as a short-term objective that can be achieved within the next 10 years, while the program should be implemented over the next 20 years.
- (17) A Future Land Use and Zoning Plan should be maintained to endorse the concepts that should be applied to classify and designate areas for: Conservation (C-1); Residential (R-1 and R-2); Commercial (B-2 and B-3); and Industrial (I-1). Modifications may be considered provided that it meets the overall goals, objectives and policies of this Comprehensive Plan.



- (18) Map 4 (Future Land Use) of this Comprehensive Plan should be utilized as a guide for the Future Zoning Map. Modifications may be considered provided that the proposed change meets the overall goals, objectives and policies of this Comprehensive Plan.
- (19) This Comprehensive Plan should consider and implement the fair share and affordable housing evaluation. Additional demographic, housing and socio-economic data for Exeter Borough is contained within Appendix B of this Comprehensive Plan.
- (20) This Comprehensive Plan must consider community sustainability issues, including: the condition of the existing housing units; vacant and blighted properties; an aging population; commercial revitalization and adaptive reuse; and improved streetscape opportunities.

#### **Section 4.H: Future Land Use, Zoning and Housing Plan**

The community goals, objectives and policies that are relative to land use, zoning and housing are contained within Chapter 2 of this Comprehensive Plan. Exeter Borough has determined that a strategic action plan should be considered for implementation over the next 10 to 20 years. The following plan for land use, zoning and housing has been established for this Comprehensive Plan:

- (1) **Growth Boundaries:** Exeter Borough should establish a balance between designated conservation areas and planned growth areas.

**Conservation Areas:** These areas include ecological habitats and environmentally sensitive areas, which includes: prime agricultural lands and farmland; woodlands and meadows; floodplains and stream valleys; historic and cultural resources; scenic vistas and view sheds; ecological and biodiversity corridors; and other natural features.

**Planned Growth Areas:** These areas include: medium to high density residential uses; commercial uses; industrial uses; institutional uses; transportation corridors; and public utilities. These planned growth areas are comprised of a proportionate balance to accommodate existing land uses, proposed and projected developments, community facilities, parks and recreational facilities, utility provisions and transportation improvements.

Although Exeter Borough is located within a suburbanized setting, this Comprehensive Plan shall consider and establish a balance of conservation areas and planned growth areas.

- (2) **Conservation:** An area designated as Conservation (C-1) should be established to preserve, protect and manage the rural landscape or conservation areas of Exeter Borough. The following concepts should be considered for future land use planning and zoning compliance:
  - The areas designated as C-1 should encourage the continuation of preservation of conservation uses within Exeter Borough, which would include: floodplains, wetlands and stream valleys; woodlands and meadows; steep slopes; historic and cultural resources; scenic vistas and viewsheds; ecological and biodiversity corridors; and other natural features. The landowners should be encouraged to consider land preservation, protection and development options that promote conservation management techniques.

- The areas designated as C-1 should encourage the continuation, evolution and preservation of agricultural uses within Exeter Borough, which would include agricultural operations and farms that are defined by Exeter Borough. A minimum of 10 acres should be required for agricultural operations and uses. The landowners should be encouraged to consider farmland preservation or protection programs.
  - Conventional development techniques should be considered as the method to permit rural residential uses (single family detached dwellings) on conforming lots containing a minimum of one (1) net acre of land, which should be served by on-lot sewage disposal facilities and on-lot water supply systems.
- (3) **Single-Family Residential:** An area designated as Single-Family Residential (R-1 and R-2) should be established as a transition between conservation areas and the suburban landscape. These areas should contain single-family residential (detached or attached) residential uses as well as compatible non-residential uses considering the transportation system, utility provisions and conservation areas. The minimum lot size should be 11,250 square feet for residential developments, which should be serviced by sanitary sewage disposal facilities and water supply facilities. Exeter Borough may consider other permitted uses, lot sizes, dimensional criteria and development standards that should be contained within the Zoning Ordinance.
- (4) **Multi-Family Residential:** An area designated as Multi-Family Residential (R-3) should be established as part of the suburban landscape of Exeter Borough. These areas should contain single-family (detached or attached) residential dwellings, townhouses and multi-family apartments as well as compatible non-residential uses considering the transportation system, utility provisions and conservation areas. The minimum residential density or lot size should be predicated upon the permitted uses and the capability of being served by sanitary sewage disposal facilities and water supply facilities. Exeter Borough may consider other residential development options (planned residential development, age-qualified retirement communities, manufactured home parks), lot sizes and dimensional criteria that should be contained within the Zoning Ordinance.
- (5) **Commercial:** An areas designated as Commercial (B-1, B-2 and B-3) should be established as part of the suburban landscape of Exeter Borough. These areas should contain low to high volume commercial, institutional, municipal and residential uses, which are located along designated transportation corridors. Subdivision and land development activity should be encouraged provided that the projects are designed to mitigate transportation and environmental impacts. The existing and/or proposed land uses should be served by a collector or arterial road system and public utilities with sufficient capacities. Adaptive reuse, revitalization and creative land development designs should be considered to accommodate new business opportunities and enhance economic development opportunities within Exeter Borough.
- (6) **Industrial:** An area designated as General Industrial (I-1) should be established as part of the suburban landscape of Exeter Borough. These areas may contain industrial, institutional and municipal uses, which are located along designated transportation corridors. Subdivision and land development activity should be encouraged provided that the projects are designed to mitigate transportation and environmental impacts. Opportunities for industrial development or redevelopment should be considered to accommodate new businesses and enhance economic development within Exeter Borough.

- (7) **Special Overlay Districts:** In addition to the conservation areas and planned growth areas portrayed on Map 4 (Future Land Use) of this Comprehensive Plan, Exeter Borough should consider special overlay zones to supplement the provisions of the underlying land use or zoning classifications. The following special overlay districts should be contained in the Exeter Borough Zoning Ordinance: the Wyoming Avenue (WA) Overlay District; Airport (AP) Overlay District; Historic Preservation (HP) Overlay District; Floodplain (FP) Overlay District; Riparian Buffer (RB) Overlay District; and Steep Slope (SS) Overlay District.
- (8) **Wyoming Avenue (WA) Overlay District:** A designated enterprise zone should be established as an overlay concept that generally incorporates all properties within 500 feet (average distance) of the centerline of Wyoming Avenue (PA Route 11). The purpose and intent of the WA Overlay District is to promote high quality streetscape development, revitalization and adaptive reuse techniques on areas that were once prominent features and attractions within Exeter Borough. The WA Overlay District shall provide emphasis on the following issues:
- **Streetscape Enhancements:** A streetscape enhancement plan should be established to provide specific focus on the community vision for a vibrant business corridor between Wyoming Borough and West Pittston Borough.
  - **Adaptive Reuse and Revitalization:** The Zoning Ordinance should be amended to include provisions for creative adaptive reuse and revitalization projects. If Exeter Borough can provide conceptual ideas and realistic options, the private development community could implement the community vision.
  - **Store Fronts Enhancements:** Exeter Borough will need to establish a partnership with the local business owners to implement the community vision. Many store fronts have been neglected over the years. This effort could be coordinated with a streetscape enhancement plan and/or “form-based zoning code” to implement the community vision. Funding opportunities should be considered on a local and regional scale.
  - **Dimensional Requirements:** Exeter Borough should consider modifications to its lot area, building setback and height requirements to provide more flexibility for development.
  - **Parking and Signs:** Exeter Borough should amend the Zoning Ordinance to consider obsolete or overwhelming requirements for off-street parking, loading and signs. Most municipalities tend to duplicate and apply requirements that do not make sense, whereas a common sense method could work to serve the best interest of the community.
  - **Design Standards:** Exeter Borough may consider a form-based code to reflect the vision of the WA Overlay District. A portrayal or example of the desired streetscape and store front enhancements may be the best method to implement the community vision.
  - **Procedural Requirements:** Exeter Borough should consider a legally compliant “expedited review process” for applications that promote the community vision for streetscape improvements, store front enhancements, adaptive reuse and revitalization. If there is a clearly defined path with less resistance, you will achieve your community goals.

The WA Overlay District should be created to supplement and not replace the permitted uses specified by the underlying R-1, R-2, R-3, B-1 and/or B-3 Zoning Districts.

- (9) **Blighted, Abandoned and Vacated Properties:** Exeter Borough has determined that it has several properties classified as “blighted, abandoned or vacated”. The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania has published “*We Can Do This, A Five-Step, Fast-Track Blight Plan*”, which provides the following a systematic approach to resolve community blight problems:

**Step 1: Gain Consensus for Developing a Blight Plan**

**Step 2: Assess the Nature and Extent of the Blight**

**Step 3: Convene a Blight Task Force**

**Step 4: Engage Municipal Officials**

**Step 5: Identify Priority Action Steps and Implement Them**

The Five-Step, Fast-Track Blight Plan has paid significant dividends for local municipalities and counties that have embraced this methodology. A comprehensive blight strategy should be welcomed and implemented by Exeter Borough. The initial efforts should be considered as a short-term objective that can be achieved within the next 10 years, while the programs and other initiatives should be implemented over the next 20 years. A complete copy of “*We Can Do This, A Five-Step, Fast-Track Blight Plan*” has been included as part of Appendix E of this Comprehensive Plan. The PA DCED should also be considered as a viable resource with these implementation efforts.

Exeter Borough should continue to utilize the identification and enforcement tools that are contained within the International Property Maintenance Code. This is a first line of defense that can be utilized to mitigate adverse impacts by the designated official of Exeter Borough.

Luzerne County has also established the Municipal Stop Slum and Blight Clearance Program, which applies funds from the CDBG funds to resolve problems on a municipal scale. Additional information has also been included as part of Appendix E of this Comprehensive Plan.

- (10) **Transitional or Undefined Properties:** There are several properties within Exeter Borough that may be considered as a “transitional or undefined property”. These parcels may be considered “useless” to the community, but each property does have the potential to make a difference. The following examples should be considered:

- **Pocket Parks:** Small parcels of land could be utilized as a passive recreation area that complements the community vision for streetscape improvements and enhancements.
- **River Front:** There is a significant amount of land and water along the North Branch of the Susquehanna River that can be utilized as a community recreation area and/or scenic open space area that provides hydrological, environmental and ecological benefits.
- **Flooding and Stormwater Management:** The opportunity and need to establish effective flood controls or stormwater management improvements are often considered after a problem has presented itself by damage and destruction.
- **Off-Street Parking:** Certain areas along Wyoming Avenue do not have sufficient area to accommodate off-street parking during peak business hours. Small parcels of land could be used as a municipal or common parking area.



- **Traffic Improvements:** Land acquisition is a significant problem for the conceptual design and site implementation of transportation plans.

This Comprehensive Plan does not advocate that Exeter Borough should buy every available parcel of land. However, there are opportunities that should be considered when and if that opportunity should become available.

- (11) **Housing:** Exeter Borough should continue to provide opportunities for residential growth and development within the designated growth areas of Exeter Borough. As part of this effort, Exeter Borough should maintain its residential zoning districts (R-1, R-2 and R-3) to specifically accommodate existing, proposed and projected residential land uses and densities. Map 4 of this Comprehensive Plan depicts the Future Land Use Plan for Exeter Borough. The areas designated for single-family residential uses are depicted as yellow on Map 4 and the areas designated for multi-family residential uses are depicted as orange on Map 4.
- (12) **Residential Density:** Exeter Borough should continue to provide opportunities for housing to meet all income levels for its existing and future residents. Exeter Borough has zoned several acres of land to permit medium to high density residential uses (townhouses, apartments and manufactured homes) that are within the designated growth areas (R-2 and R-3) of Exeter Borough.
- (13) **Projected Growth:** The population projections developed by this Comprehensive Plan reflect a zero to moderate growth rate (0.33 percent per year) through the year 2040. Exeter Borough does not have any “pipeline developments projects”. Therefore, the undeveloped land area within the R-1, R-2 and R-3 Zoning Districts should be capable of providing sufficient growth areas for residential uses.
- (14) **Infill Developments:** There are infill development opportunities on vacant residential lots within the designated growth areas or established neighborhoods of Exeter Borough. These areas could provide: affordable housing opportunities on existing or nonconforming lots; maximize public utility services; utilize existing public roads; and increase the values of older homes. In order to promote this opportunity, zoning regulations and land development procedures should be more flexible to accommodate infill development.
- (15) **Senior Housing Options:** The median age of the residents within Exeter Borough is 44.4 years of age, which is high considering the corresponding age cohorts for Luzerne County and Pennsylvania. Exeter Borough should continue to support the planning and development of retirement communities or other forms of elderly housing in the community. Therefore, it would be advantageous for Exeter Borough to plan for an aging population over the next 10 to 20 years. The zoning districts should provide opportunities and incentives for the development of retirement communities, assisted living care facilities and nursing homes.
- (16) **Development Associations:** Continue to support the establishment of successful neighborhood organizations and home owners associations. As residential developments are planned, improved and occupied, it is vital to enact special guidelines, covenants, restrictions, agreements and bylaws for overall best interest of the community. These controls assist with maintaining the health, safety and general welfare of the community while enhancing property values.