

Chapter 2: Our Community Vision

Section 2.A: Our Mission Statement

The Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (ESC) was assigned the responsibility of preparing the Mission Statement for this Comprehensive Plan. This is our message:

The Comprehensive Plan is an opportunity to evaluate past traditions while considering contemporary planning methods that will have a positive impact on growth, preservation, development, conservation and quality of life issues within our community. New challenges are on the horizon. We have accepted this invitation and pledge to prepare this plan in order to consider the health, safety and general welfare of our community.

The Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan (2019) was adopted on January 8, 2019 via Resolution Number 2019 - _____. This is not the end of this planning effort but just the beginning.

Section 2.B: Community and Business Surveys

In order to gather information to prioritize community issues and needs within Exeter Borough, the ESC determined that a Community Survey and Business Survey should be distributed to the residents and businesses within Exeter Borough. Both surveys were conducted in July and August of 2018.

Community Survey: The Community Survey was distributed to all residences within Exeter Borough via local mail delivery. In addition, an on-line survey was posted on the Exeter Borough Website. There were 490 total responses to the Community Survey, which accounted for 20.2 percent of the total housing units within Exeter Borough. The ESC evaluated the results of the Community Survey to prioritize the current community issues (refer to Section 2.C of this Comprehensive Plan). A copy of the Community Survey with the corresponding results has been included as Appendix C of this Comprehensive Plan.

Business Survey: The Business Survey was distributed to all businesses within Exeter Borough via local mail or hand delivery. There were 28 total responses to the Business Survey, which accounted for 35.0 percent of the total estimated businesses that were identified and distributed within Exeter Borough. The ESC evaluated the results of the Community Survey to prioritize the current community issues (refer to Section 2.C of this Comprehensive Plan). A copy of the Business Survey with the corresponding results has been included as Appendix D of this Comprehensive Plan.



Section 2.C: Prioritization of Community Issues

The foundation of this Comprehensive Plan shall provide emphasis on specific issues that have been designated as “high priority issues”. The ESC determined that an “Implementable Comprehensive Plan” utilizing “Issues-Based Planning” would be the best approach for this planning effort.

What is an Implementable Comprehensive Plan and “Issues-Based” Planning?

An Implementable Comprehensive Plan (ICP) is a new philosophical approach to comprehensive planning developed by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). This approach was developed in 2010 in response to a realization that few recommendations in Comprehensive Plans actually get implemented. Often, recommendations are not realistic, too vague, not responsive to everyday concerns of the community or there are simply too many for a municipality with limited resources to consider and resolve. ICPs are intended to get broad support for a small number of specific issues of concern to a community and focus a plan on implementing solutions.

The heart of an ICP is the utilization of an “issues-based” approach. This approach identifies a small number of issues (3 to 5) and then provide focus or emphasis on these issues within the plan. Rather than listing dozens, or even hundreds, of recommendations with vague, boiler-plate solutions, an “issues-based” approach develops detailed solutions tailored to address a small number of issues.



Since it has been 50 years since Exeter Borough’s last Comprehensive Plan, the Project Team determined that a hybrid ICP approach would be beneficial for this Comprehensive Plan. In order to prioritize the issues confronting Exeter Borough, a Community Survey (refer to Appendix C) and a Business Survey (refer to Appendix D) were completed by the ESC and Project Team. As a result, the ESC determined that the following principal issues should be the priority for this Comprehensive Plan:

- (1) ***Sustainability as a Community.***
- (2) ***Economic Development and Revitalization Opportunities.***
- (3) ***Blighted, Abandoned and Vacated Properties.***
- (4) ***Public Safety and Emergency Management Services.***
- (5) ***Community Education.***

The ESC determined that it would “aim high” to develop a strategic plan based upon the community vision. These fundamental issues shall be incorporated into the goals, objective and policies as well as the functional components of this Comprehensive Plan. Although this Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide guidance for the next 10 to 20 years, the ESC determined that it should also consider complex issues that Exeter Borough may face over the next 50 years.

Section 2.D: Goals, Objectives and Policies

The goals, objectives and policies of the Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan of 2018 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. In general, goals, objectives and policies are defined as follows:

Goals: *The goals are general statements of intention, purpose and commitment aimed at long-term desired conditions on the part of the community.*

Objectives and Policies: *The objectives and policies are more specific and provide direct approaches, standards and guidelines in an effort to implement the goals within the community.*

Together, the goals, objectives and policies form the foundation upon which future planning decisions can be based by the appropriate authorities within Exeter Borough through the year 2030. The following set of goals, objectives and policies have been formulated by the representatives of the Exeter Steering Committee in an effort to reflect the attitudes and concerns within the local community and the region.

Goal 1: *To have an integrated planned community that considers diversification, sustainability and opportunities that meets the existing and projected housing markets.*

Objectives and Policies:

- 1.1 Maintain a thorough land use survey considering land use types and lot sizes for all existing residential units within Exeter Borough.
- 1.2 Maintain a balance of residential land uses considering the housing needs and demands of the existing and prospective residents within the community.
- 1.3 Consider local and regional residential growth trends projections in order to assess the demand for housing within Exeter Borough.
- 1.4 Conduct an inventory to identify all vacated, sub-standard and/or blighted residential properties within Exeter Borough.
- 1.5 Continue to evaluate affordable housing opportunities while considering the residential diversity within the community.
- 1.6 Continue to improve the code enforcement program in an effort to meet the minimum certification requirements of the statewide building code.
- 1.7 Evaluate residential zoning districts with an emphasis on identity, purpose, use, revitalization and density.
- 1.8 Coordinate efforts with local, county and state agencies in order to revitalize and improve residential neighborhoods.

- 1.9 Encourage residential growth and development to areas that have existing or planned infrastructure, which should include public utility services and public roads.
- 1.10 Consider residential density as an important factor in determining infill development potential and the existing infrastructure of urban growth boundaries.

Goal 2: *To provide for growth, revitalization and redevelopment opportunities by considering existing non-residential land uses, vacated properties, infrastructure and the suburban characteristics of Exeter Borough.*

Objectives and Policies:

- 2.1 Develop and maintain an inventory of commercial, industrial and institutional sites within Exeter Borough.
- 2.2 Define and classify all non-residential uses contained within the Zoning Ordinance.
- 2.3 Define the limits of the commercial and industrial zoning districts considering existing uses, infrastructure, corridor network and other development variables. I
- 2.4 Direct commercial, industrial and institutional uses to areas that have sufficient infrastructure, which should include public utility services and public roads
- 2.5 Consider the limited capacities of existing collector and arterial roads that may invite corridor development implications in the future.
- 2.6 Establish regulatory requirements, which will help preserve the character of the community while offering flexibility to individual business owners.
- 2.7 Promote adaptive reuse, revitalization and redevelopment efforts for abandoned commercial, industrial and institutional properties.
- 2.8 Evaluate the current zoning, land use and building code requirement to determine if they are effective and necessary.
- 2.9 Conduct an inventory to identify all vacated, sub-standard and/or blighted properties within Exeter Borough.
- 2.10 Monitor existing non-residential operations and expansion activities to determine that all uses and activities are environmentally compliant.
- 2.11 Consider “form-based zoning codes” along selected corridors or districts in order to portray and implement the community vision.

Goal 3: *To provide economic development opportunities by considering the current business environment and how a defined business district can become a destination point within the region.*

Objectives and Policies:

- 3.1 Establish local business district(s) that reflect common traits such as identity, proximity, compatibility and intensity.
- 3.2 Retain and expand existing businesses to maintain the tax base and provide employment opportunities within the region.
- 3.3 Consider flexible zoning techniques to accommodate non-residential uses.
- 3.4 Establish regulatory requirements, which will help preserve the character of the community while offering flexibility for individual business owners.
- 3.5 Enhance communications among the businesses, government, and the public to address issues that have an impact on the retention and expansion of business and commerce within the community.
- 3.6 Host periodic meetings with representatives of the local business community in an effort to build relationships and to monitor needs
- 3.7 Establish a local business group or organization that provides emphasis on economic development, revitalization and sustainability efforts within Exeter Borough.
- 3.8 Prepare a Streetscape Plan for Wyoming Avenue that provides emphasis on: gateway development; storefront or façade enhancements; vacated and blighted properties; parking; loading; signs; lighting; and pedestrian accessibility.
- 3.9 Evaluate county, state and federal programs that can provide incentives and opportunities for implementing a Streetscape Plan for Wyoming Avenue.
- 3.10 Establish an “expedited review and appeals process” for projects that will implement the community vision while complying with relevant legal requirements.
- 3.11 Apply common sense principals to promote, enhance and revitalize Exeter Borough.

Goal 4: *To preserve, protect and enhance the natural, environmental, historical, cultural and scenic resources of Exeter Borough.*

Objectives and Policies:

- 4.1 Protect and enhance natural features and resources for the benefit of future generations while providing areas for growth and development.

- 4.2 Formulate an official policy statement for the preservation and protection of natural, historic, cultural and scenic resources within Exeter Borough.
- 4.3 Coordinate historic and cultural preservation efforts with the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission, the Luzerne County Historical Society and other agencies who share similar a community vision.
- 4.4 Coordinate efforts to establish a comprehensive survey of the prominent natural, environmental, historic, cultural and scenic resources within Exeter Borough.
- 4.5 Encourage the design of development and revitalization efforts to complement the natural, scenic and historic character of Exeter Borough.
- 4.6 Establish natural buffers that compliment scenic vistas, waterways, hillsides, hedgerows, stonewalls, and other aesthetic features
- 4.7 Promote the significance of the Susquehanna River as a community resource in addition to their educational, recreational, historical and cultural values
- 4.8 Support the identification and designation of historic sites and properties eligible for national, state, and local recognition.
- 4.9 Seek funding opportunities to implement the recommendations relative to natural, environmental, historic, cultural and scenic resources.
- 4.10 Consider the adoption of effective zoning, subdivision and land development amendments, which consider provisions for buffer yards, scenic vistas, adaptive reuse, landscaping, signs and other visual enhancements of properties that are historic, within close proximity to historic properties and/or within overlay districts.
- 4.11 Encourage compatible development adjacent to properties that are considered historically significant.
- 4.12 Develop and support a hydrological and open space plan to provide a comprehensive approach to protecting riparian buffers and stream corridors, while encouraging passive recreation and open space opportunities within the community.
- 4.13 Protect and preserve land areas classified as floodplains, woodlands and steep slopes from significant impacts relating to subdivision and land development projects.
- 4.14 Preserve and protect all wildlife habitats and biodiversity corridors considering the survival of existing rare, threatened, and endangered species.

Goal 5: *To provide community facilities and services, which meet the needs of the community while staying within fiscal budget limitations.*

Objectives and Policies:

- 5.1 Monitor population, age and household trends to plan for future community facilities and services.
- 5.2 Continue to improve communications between municipal officials and residents within the community.
- 5.3 Continue to maintain and improve the Exeter Borough Website to provide residents and property owners with information concerning meetings, announcements, codes, ordinances, maps, programs, services and other vital news.
- 5.4 Implement a capital improvements program to plan for future financial needs.
- 5.5 Continue to evaluate, monitor and implement the civic service plans to establish a viable and dependable police force to serve Exeter Borough.
- 5.6 Continue to support the Exeter Borough Volunteer Fire Department
- 5.7 Evaluate regionalization options for all emergency management services (police, fire and ambulance) considering budgets, coverage, services and community impacts.
- 5.8 Coordinate efforts with emergency management service providers and maintain an up to date emergency management and operations plan.
- 5.9 Explore the use of cooperative agreements with other local municipalities or state government resources for the purchase of materials and the provision of services in an effort to be more efficient and cost effective.
- 5.10 Maintain a cooperative relationship with the Wyoming Area School District and other regional educational facilities.
- 5.11 Encourage the development of advanced communication technology to enhance educational opportunities among businesses, government, schools, and residents within the community.
- 5.12 Support local civic groups and non-profit organizations so they can achieve their goals while creating a positive impact within the community.
- 5.13 Continue to provide a local and cost-effective recycling program through the Exeter Borough Road Department.
- 5.14 Continue to evaluate administrative staff levels and needs in an effort to provide a high level of service to the residents within the community.

Goal 6: *To provide sufficient park, recreation and open space areas, which meet the current and future needs of the residents.*

Objectives and Policies:

- 6.1 Develop a park, recreation and open space plan, which should be innovative and realistic in an effort to provide guidance for acquiring, maintaining, developing and enhancing the parks, recreation facilities and open space areas.
- 6.2 Improve the existing parks, recreation and open space facilities within Exeter Borough in an effort to attract, satisfy and maintain the residents and property owners.
- 6.3 Use community input to establish future direction for park acquisition, development and recreation programming.
- 6.4 Prepare a greenway and trail plan including the mapping and implementation strategies to link parks and recreation facilities, expand existing walking and bicycle trails and connect the systems planned by neighboring municipalities.
- 6.5 Consider park, recreation and open space opportunities along the banks of the Susquehanna River.
- 6.6 Consider environmental, ecological, conservation and passive recreation opportunities for Scovell Island and Wintermoot Island.
- 6.7 Evaluate the amount of land available for active park and recreation opportunities.
- 6.8 Identify financial resources that are needed to implement future planning efforts.
- 6.9 Consider opportunities and partnerships with the Exeter Little League, Junior Football League and other local community groups that add value to the community.
- 6.10 Consider opportunities and partnerships with private or quasi-public recreation facilities including the Wyoming Area School District, Four Seasons Golf Course and Fox Hill Country Club.
- 6.11 Consider establishing “pocket parks” on abandoned or blighted properties that can no longer be utilized for economic development opportunities.
- 6.12 Utilize current planning resources and documents to provide guidance for future planning endeavors and recreation site development.
- 6.13 Coordinate future recreation planning endeavors with advocacy organizations, adjacent municipalities, and other public or private agencies.

Goal 7: To provide public utility services, floodplain controls, stormwater management facilities and other vital infrastructure in order to meet the needs of the community, protect the environment and compliment land use plans.

Objectives and Policies:

- 7.1 Coordinate future planning and facility improvements for sanitary sewage disposal services with the Wyoming Valley Sewer Authority.
- 7.2 Coordinate future planning and facility improvements for water supply services with Pennsylvania American Water Authority.
- 7.3 Continue to develop effective floodplain management regulations in order to protect public safety and water quality, and reduce public costs from flood damage
- 7.4 Continue to develop effective stormwater management regulations, which promote groundwater recharge, establishing riparian buffers, and best management practices.
- 7.5 Continue to require and implement Best Management Practices (BMP's) for controlling flood elevations and enforcing stormwater management regulations.
- 7.6 Continue to coordinate efforts for NPDES and MS4 compliance on a regional scale with the Wyoming Valley Sewer Authority and the participating municipalities.
- 7.7 Identify flood-prone areas and define drainage area to assess methods to reduce flooding by reducing upstream runoff.
- 7.8 Evaluate provisions to encourage "green stormwater infrastructure" (GSI) techniques for developers to use as part of development and redevelopment projects.
- 7.9 Protect a safe, long-term supply of water, which is adequate for all land uses by encouraging a sustainable water cycle balance within watersheds as subdivision and land development activity occurs.
- 7.10 Endorse conservation and ecological management practices by protecting floodplains and wetlands and recognizing the significance of their hydrological functions.
- 7.11 Preserve and enhance buffer areas around water bodies to mitigate environmental and visual impacts from adjacent uses and activities.
- 7.12 Support upgrades of stream quality designations by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.
- 7.13 Encourage energy efficiency in the design and operation of buildings
- 7.14 Encourage telecommunication providers to co-locate their equipment on other towers or to utilize existing facilities and buildings in order to limit the number of support towers within the regional service areas.

Goal 8: *To provide and maintain a safe and efficient transportations system, which optimizes mobility, improves accessibility and protects the environment.*

Objectives and Policies:

- 8.1 Maintain the functional integrity of existing and future transportation routes through appropriate land use controls and design standards to alleviate congestion and promote safety.
- 8.2 Inventory traffic volumes and projected growth areas within the region to prioritize needed transportation improvements to effectively address accessibility, congestion, safety, mobility and maintenance issues.
- 8.3 Assess the appropriateness of existing functional classifications of roadways and ensure that all roads within Exeter Borough are designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with their appropriate functional classification.
- 8.4 Coordinate efforts with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), Luzerne-Lackawanna Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Luzerne County Planning Commission (LCPC) to develop a plan that benefits Exeter Borough on a local and regional scale.
- 8.5 Schedule or attend regular meetings with PennDOT, the MPO and LCPC to become familiar with future projects, studies and funding programs.
- 8.6 Provide input to regional planning and engineering studies that will improve the capacity, mobility, accessibility, safety and functional integrity along expressways, arterial roads, major collector roads and minor collector roads.
- 8.7 Require that new and existing roads within Exeter Borough are designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with their appropriate functional classification.
- 8.8 Evaluate access management strategies along Wyoming Avenue to increase mobility and limit accessibility.
- 8.9 Develop a parking, loading and streetscape plan for Wyoming Avenue considering the goals and objectives for economic development in Exeter Borough.
- 8.10 Coordinate efforts with the Luzerne County Transportation Authority in order to enhance public transportation opportunities.
- 8.11 Develop short-term goals (5 to 10 years) and long-term goals (10 to 20 years) for all necessary transportation improvements within Exeter Borough.
- 8.12 Encourage alternative means of transportation, which may increase mobility, relieve congestion and reduce the need for additional roads to accommodate the demand.

Goal 9: To plan for non-motorized transportations opportunities, which can be designed and integrated as part of a regional planning effort.

Objectives and Policies

- 9.1 Evaluate improvement requirements for landscaping, pedestrian circulation, public transportation, lighting, visual effects at the gateways and other beautification efforts.
- 9.2 Identify nodes where enhanced pedestrian connections and pedestrian-friendly enhancements would make walking a viable form of transportation.
- 9.3 Promote linkages between community facilities, common open space and regional trail systems, such as the West Side Trail.
- 9.4 Evaluate bicycle and pedestrian connections to parks, schools, and other community facilities on a local and regional scale.
- 9.5 Identify existing and future pedestrian crossings and evaluate ways to enhance pedestrian safety at these locations.
- 9.6 Identify areas where traffic calming measures may serve to slow vehicular traffic to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment and create a database of design and maintenance standards for these measures.
- 9.7 Create, enhance and protect the aesthetic and scenic qualities of the roads located within Exeter Borough.
- 9.8 Consider bicycle and pedestrian facilities to reduce the number of vehicular trips, avoid user conflicts and establish linkages to other public facilities and uses.
- 9.9 Encourage non-motorized and intermodal transportation improvements along roads and within designated parking areas.

Goal 10: To achieve a high level of municipal and intergovernmental planning by coordinating efforts with local and regional groups within the public and private sectors.

Objectives and Policies:

- 10.1 Maintain an open line of communication with the surrounding municipalities.
- 10.2 Encourage legislation to improve municipal planning and growth management capabilities within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- 10.3 Continue to discuss the feasibility of regionalizing municipal facilities and services with adjacent municipalities.
- 10.4 Conduct a comprehensive review of the Exeter Borough Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map in an effort to implement this Comprehensive Plan.

- 10.5 Conduct a comprehensive review of the Exeter Borough Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and other relevant Codes in an effort to implement this Comprehensive Plan.
- 10.6 Increase public participation in the planning and budgeting process.
- 10.7 Continue to support Exeter Proud on its effort to revitalize and sustain a flourishing downtown business corridor and neighborhoods that preserve the history of our borough, attracts visitors, and enhances the quality of life for the benefit of all residents, now and in the future.
- 10.8 Support and celebrate activities and events, which express the community pride, civic accomplishments and visual character of Exeter Borough.
- 10.9 Coordinate efforts with the Luzerne Planning Commission in an effort to implement the Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan.
- 10.10 Endorse regional planning efforts with adjacent municipalities in an effort to improve issues relative to natural resource and environmental protection, historical and cultural resources, community facilities and services, parks and recreation, economic development, utilities, transportation, zoning and land use.
- 10.11 Expand and enhance the methods of communication so that the community is on the same page to implement this Comprehensive Plan.

Section 2.E: Relationship with the Functional Components

The principal issues specified within Section 2.C along with the goals, objectives and policies contained within Section 2.D are intended to establish the foundation of the Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan. Chapters 3 through 8 are intended to be the functional components that shall provide specific emphasis on: natural features and resources; land use; community facilities and services; fiscal impact and economic development; utilities and stormwater management; and transportation. Chapter 9 shall serve as the strategic action plan for implementation.

The Exeter Borough Comprehensive Plan of 2019 is intended to be an interactive plan that is capable of being implemented within 10 to 20 years from municipal adoption. The ESC determined that it would “aim high” to develop a strategic plan based upon the community needs and vision. It is understood that certain recommendations within this Comprehensive Plan may not be achieved by the year 2040. The ESC ultimately decided to look beyond this horizon so that all complex issues can be evaluated on a continuous basis over the next 50 years.

