Planning Area
This plan includes three municipalities east of Reading—Exeter and Amity townships and St. Lawrence Borough. With a combined population of more than 32,000, these communities have experienced rapid growth in recent years, though rural areas remain. Development is concentrated on the west side of the planning area, near the city of Reading, and along Rt. 422, a major east-west highway that traverses the southern sections of Exeter and Amity townships.

Status
Initiated in 2001, the plan was completed in fall of 2005. It was adopted by all three participating municipalities near the end of 2006. There is currently no implementation agreement.

Plan Development
As part of its commitment to inter-governmental cooperation, Berks County has been a leader in encourag-
protecting historic resources. Transportation issues, especially congestion along the Rt. 422 corridor, were of particular concern. In addition, the participating municipalities wanted to “slow the high residential growth rates of the past and encourage light industrial and limited, managed, attractive commercial development to provide a balanced tax base.”

Features of the Plan

Like all of the plans produced in Berks County, the Exeter-Amity-St. Lawrence plan is consistent with the county comprehensive plan. It identifies designated growth areas and public infrastructure areas, but stops short of identifying future growth areas, stating that the potential future growth areas are within parts of Amity Township that have already been planned for low-density residential development.

For each area and each category of land use, the plan identifies uses, standards, and density ranges. The plan calculates housing and other land use needs and demonstrates that adequate land for each category is provided in the future land use plan. The plan also includes strong policies for the protection of agricultural and environmentally sensitive land. However, it declines to designate rural resource areas “because no areas appropriately fit all the criteria which have been established.”

Because the three municipalities already contain a wide range of housing options, no need was seen to allocate housing on a regional basis. Considerations of land use sharing were limited to “undesirable” uses. Because Exeter Township already has a landfill, for example, Amity Township assumed it did not need to provide for one.

Implementation

Exeter and Amity Townships are both revising their ordinances to bring them into compliance with the plan. Exeter is creating an overlay zone for village areas, and both townships are expanding their commercial zones along Rt. 422. In addition, the two townships have made some minor adjustments to their zoning ordinances to render them more uniform.

The steering committee that oversaw plan implementation is no longer meeting, and no regional planning committee has been created. However, the Berks County Planning Commission is continuing to work with the municipalities to help them coordinate their land use plans and policies.