

# **Borough of Leetsdale**

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**



August 2023

## Acknowledgements

The 2023 Leetsdale Comprehensive Plan is a living and working document. Special thanks to the Project Committee, Borough Government, and community members of Leetsdale for creating a living-document and vision to help improve the community. The innumerable hours of research, interviews, and meetings informed the goals of this Comprehensive Plan.

## Funding Acknowledgment

This Comprehensive Plan has been created solely by the volunteer work of the Project Committee, comprised of Leetsdale residents. Funding for the demographic data that supported a random survey was provided by the Borough of Leetsdale.

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## Additional Acknowledgments

The Project Committee would like to also thank the following experts and community stakeholders who gave valuable input over the course of the project:

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## **Executive Summary**

### **How to Use This Document**

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide decision-making for the optimal use of land in the borough. It represents the culmination of research conducted by the Planning Commission, including,

- An analysis of demographic trends
- A study of physical and economic features
- A survey of the needs and wants of community residents.

From this research, the Comprehensive Plan lays out the borough's strengths and weaknesses, along with guiding principles. The plan presents a series of goals (the big principles that guide the development of Leetsdale) and objectives (specific actions that could help achieve the goals).

These goals and objectives serve as a map for action. Using it, borough council may choose to implement strategic plans, allowing the council to modify objectives on an ongoing basis. IN this way, as the borough strives towards the goals in the plan, its actions can continually reflect evolving conditions.

If during implementation of the plan, the borough council believes that the goals themselves need to be updated, a new planning exercise may be kicked off by the council. Many comprehensive plans are designed as one-time exercises - a state of the borough - repeated every decade or so. This document, in contrast, is meant to be a living. It is designed so that it can easily be updated on a rapid and regular basis as new information becomes available. The elements of the plan are clearly laid out and sources and methods are retained by the borough so that any piece can be easily repeated.

### **Previous Planning Documents**

Past comprehensive plans were created for the Borough of Leetsdale prior to this project and were used to construct this document. The two plans used are:

- "SHALE Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan", July 2004. Pashek Associates.
- "Leetsdale Borough Riverfront, Greenway and Parks Master Plan", September 2007. J.T. Sauer & Associates, LLC

Additionally, an archive of drawings from prior planning exercises made for the Leetsdale Industrial Park was used during research and is referred to in this document:

- "Leetsdale Riverfront Greenway Site and Landscape Improvements Plan", May 2006. Chapman Properties / LaQuatra Bonci Associates. Provided by Nichols & Slagle Engineers.

## Background to Study

Leetsdale lies on the northwestern edge of Allegheny County in Pennsylvania. Near the City of Pittsburgh, it began as an Indian-trade post. Later, it became the site of a brick manufacturing plant and eventually transformed into a steel-mill town. Today, the borough is turning its attention from its prior industrial focus toward a new residential one.

*“Improving what we have is the most important thing we can do to improve Leetsdale.”*

*- Resident Comment*

The borough’s history is deeply tied to its neighbors. At one time, called Sewickley Flats, the area of the borough was joined with that of Edgeworth and remained so until 1904. Today, the borough has an image of a heavily industrialized area. Within its 653-acre corporate limits lies 565 acres of non-residential use, of which 320 acres are used as an industrial park. Fortunately, unlike other industrial towns throughout western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and eastern Ohio, Leetsdale has adapted and evolved to save its industries. Today, Leetsdale provides more than 2,000 jobs.

Its more than 1,000 residents live on eighty-eight acres of the 635-acre borough, with the town divided lengthwise by both Route 65 (Ohio River Blvd.) and by three lanes of the Norfolk Southern Railroad. The town is dwarfed by the Buncher Company Industrial Park, the Leetsdale Industrial Park, and Hussey Copper. Residential use is primarily grouped to the east along Beaver and Broad Streets, Victory Lane, Breck Hill Drive, and Oak Drive and to the west, across Route 65, on Washington Street. Leetsdale housing is a combination of medium to low-density residential with one main commercial area.

### *Comparison Area*

Throughout this document, the borough is compared to the neighboring municipalities from its historical and geographical continuum, as well as outlying areas, grouped as follows.

<b>Comparison Area</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Sewickley Valley	Continuous and historically linked area with most of the population settled around Beaver St. and Ohio River Blvd that includes Sewickley, Edgeworth, Leetsdale, and Leet. These municipalities offer the best demographic comparison to Leetsdale.
Quaker Valley	Contains additional municipalities of Bell Acres, Aleppo, Sewickley Hills, Sewickley Heights, Glen Osborne, Haysville, and Glenfield, which comprise the Quaker Valley School District. Their residents share many recreational and community amenities as well as travel patterns throughout the area.
Ambridge	A geographically adjacent municipality that belongs to Beaver County and a different school district; residential areas of the two towns are separated by a bridge and steeply sloped area. Ambridge has a similar industrial history and housing stock to Leetsdale, but distinct demographic trends and travel patterns of its residents.
Moon Township	An outlying large suburban municipality across the Ohio River with newer residential developments and big-box commercial retail complexes.

Compared to its neighbors, Leetsdale has notable constraints, including,

- Leetsdale is currently almost fully developed within its boundaries, in both residential and industrial zones.
- Most of the riverfront has been deemed off-limits for any public use by the property owner, except for a small parcel of Borough land, today crowded by truck parking.
- Any connection to the Allegheny County Trail System via a woodland trail would require 80% of the trail to lie outside of the borough; a trail would run along the borough's edge with Leet and Edgeworth, meaning it would mostly bypass the borough.
- Although an archaeological site is within the borders of Leetsdale, the property is not owned by the borough. A generous gift of the property by the landowner was at one time considered; the exit of the DEP and the State, however, became an opportunity to develop the property. Therefore, the archeological site is not available to the borough.

## **Summary of Study**

In this executive summary, we detail the conclusions reached by each element of analysis and provide an overall conclusion, including a summary of goals.

### Part I: Assessment of Existing Conditions

The study begins with a careful assessment of existing conditions, ranging from the demographic trends in the borough to an analysis of its infrastructure.

#### A. Demographics and Housing

The population of Leetsdale has declined by 16% since 1990, outpacing drops observed in neighboring areas. Current rates would winnow the borough to three-quarters of its 1990 level by 2050.

The fact that senior citizens living alone account for one-quarter of households undergirds this trend. The senior population - like the borough as a whole - is skewed female and many residents are widowed/divorced women and never-married men.

The percentage of households with children has remained stable over the last decade, suggesting the possibility of renewed growth. During this period, residents also became better educated while the incomes of wage earners increased. Nevertheless, the median income in Leetsdale remains below the region's average, partially due to the large number of residents relying on fixed incomes, and economic inequality between Leetsdale and its neighbors increased.

Overall, the borough is becoming home to an increasingly smaller and dichotomous population: older and younger; richer and poorer; more racially diverse; and smaller households.

Like the population, Leetsdale's housing stock is decreasing at an annual rate of 10%. Vacancy rates and rental percentages continue to climb: more than 40% of people living in Leetsdale now rent their homes. Vacant land accounts for 64% of back taxes in the borough, most claimed by the Quaker Valley School district, creating a barrier to re-development until a new owner remedies the tax delinquency.

This study modeled the impact of the ongoing population changes and degradation of housing stock, finding

- Owners will increasingly give up occupancy, going into 2030.
- A larger rental population will absorb the excess housing.
- By 2030, renters and owners will approach parity.

A larger rental population could change the character of the borough, including,

- Increasing levels of disrepair and neglect
- Decreasing the residential tax base

Leetsdale must prepare to accept the demographic shift or manage it.

## B. Commerce & Industry

The borough's historic ties to the steel industry remain evident in its vibrant industrial zone. These areas, including the Buncher Industrial District, Leetsdale Industrial Park, and Hussey Copper Complex, have been the backbone of the local economy, contributing significantly to tax revenue. A deep dive into business activity reveals a diverse economic base in the borough. Major industries, including Metals, Oil and gas/Mining Products, and Medical Products and services, collectively make up approximately 40% of the borough's economic activity.

Through zoning legislation, Leetsdale has dedicated land for both commercial and industrial use. Such uses are designed to benefit the community by providing jobs, revenue, and a place for residents to obtain goods and services. Leetsdale's commercial activity is anchored by the Quaker Village Center, the largest shopping center for groceries in the Sewickley Valley.

The borough's industrial park dominates land use within the community by its sheer size. The park, however, has provided few jobs for residents. Analysis suggests local businesses account for only 10-14% of jobs held by people who live in Leetsdale.

Moreover, although gross revenues from the park are significant, the net contribution, considering expenses incurred by the borough, is comparable to residential sources.

These discrepancies underscore the importance of the fair-share principle in zoning, meaning that each land use should be balanced, fostering symbiotic relationships between residents and businesses.

## C. Environment Resources

### Flora and Fauna

Leetsdale boasts invaluable environmental resources, offering both natural beauty and potential benefits for its residents, making their preservation for future generations a priority. Hydrologically, the borough lies within the Upper Ohio Watershed, encompassing southeastern Beaver County, northwestern Allegheny County, and the Ohio River Basin.

This area features the Sugar Maple-Beech Climax association, crucial for the region's aesthetic appeal, wildlife habitat, recreational value, and water retention. Leetsdale is home to a diverse array of trees, as evidenced by the 2023 Shade Tree Inventory; it identified two hundred sixty trees on borough property and public right-of-way, representing seventy-seven different species. The data revealed challenges too, including tree loss, poor tree health, overgrown trees, and issues related to species selection.

Leetsdale's location also fosters a diverse range of wildlife, showcasing the resilience of the local ecosystem within an urban setting. Small mammals like raccoons demonstrate remarkable adaptability to human habitats, albeit occasionally causing minor inconveniences. The borough is also home to deer, which traverse wooded areas and move between the borough and Edgeworth, as well as iconic bird species, such as bald eagles, great horned owls, and ospreys. The increasing prevalence of tick-borne diseases, however, presents significant challenges, particularly in wooded, hilly areas.

### Recreational Assets

Leetsdale takes pride in its commitment to recreation and parks, with services standing as essential pillars, providing diverse programs that cater to all ages. This study highlights areas experiencing degradation: funding for parks and recreation represents a small percentage of the borough's overall finances; the equipment used is at least two decades old; existing facilities and green spaces show signs of wear in terms of functionality, safety, and attractiveness.

#### D. Historic Structures and Cultural Institutions in Leetsdale

Leetsdale boasts historic and potentially historic buildings, constructed between the 1880s and 1920s. Two recognized landmarks (Elmridge House and Lark Inn) reside within the borough. Prominent architectural styles include Tudor Revival and Craftsman while examples of Dutch Colonial and Palladian-derived Classical architecture are present. The borough, however, has not created a plan to protect its historic assets. As a result, some historic buildings and structures have been lost over time.

Similar towns have used Historical Architectural Review Boards to fight blight and attract new residents. Leetsdale should pursue this path, ensuring new land development respects our history.

The borough should also enhance its cultural institutions by building additional partnerships with arts, cultural, and heritage organizations, as well as by preserving resources within the borough's Parks.

#### E. Public Safety, Utilities, and Infrastructure

Leetsdale maintains public utilities for water and sewer services and emphasizes public safety, supporting a police force, a volunteer fire department, and emergency medical services to protect the well-being of residents.

As with any municipality, maintaining and enhancing infrastructure is a constant challenge. Roads and bridges require continuous attention but this analysis does not identify any significant infrastructure risk at this time. Aging roads will continue to need periodic maintenance and drainage pipes, particularly in the hill areas of Leetsdale, do require minor repairs.

Notable gaps highlighted by this analysis include,

- Expenditure on physical infrastructure and community institutions is the principal reason for government, yet Leetsdale is spending less as a percentage of revenue today than it did in the past.
- For infrastructure, the borough has neither prioritized a list of problems nor maintains such a list.
  - Road repair has proven a highly variable expense; after the borough identifies problems, a large expenditure is approved, potentially in the following year, to correct it. This approach is more expensive and certainly riskier than a proactive approach.

- Sewer maintenance and the function of Public Works would benefit from a proactive approach that sets priorities, develops a systemic maintenance plan, and keeps thorough records of work done and planned.
- Leetsdale's Zoning Ordinance was originally adopted in 1972 and updated in 1991. The ordinance does not identify Community Development Objectives and has not been updated to reflect comprehensive plans published between 2000 and 2010.
- Any future land use that relies on Beaver Street must contend with unknowns: the construction of a new high school on the hill above Beaver creates will impact traffic at Village Drive and Camp Meeting, but the extent of that impact has never considered a new use at the existing 625 Beaver Street site and was based on traffic volumes during the winter of the pandemic period when many residents and students worked from home.

This assessment underscores the importance of proactive planning, budgeting, and collaboration to address these infrastructure needs comprehensively.

## Part II: Resident Outlook

This study made extensive efforts to talk with residents and understand their needs and wants, including holding four in-depth community forums, conducting individual interviews, and managing a random survey process. Results are grouped into two categories: future land use and borough policy.

### A. Future Land Use

Leetsdale's future land use should encourage single-family homeownership to support property standards and the borough's character while enhancing the tax base. High-density development, like multi-family rental properties, is not ideal for redeveloping the existing High School site or for the borough as a whole. Instead, well-planned mixed development is viewed as desirable to both increase tax revenue and revitalize the area, potentially creating a new "main street" district.

Preserving green spaces, especially in Henle Park, is deemed essential. In Kohlmeyer Park, recommendations include fencing the picnic area and planting more trees for landscape buffering. Proper tree planting in all green spaces should involve professional arborists. Better and more timely maintenance of sidewalks, lawns, and amenities is desired. There's also interest in revitalizing the boat dock through a private-public partnership, following the model of New Brighton's Big Rock Park.

B. Enhancements to Borough Policy

Residents expressed concerns about habitual code violations and the effectiveness of complaint-based enforcement. The community prefers proactive code enforcement, possibly involving a dedicated code enforcement officer and collaborative efforts with neighboring boroughs. Historic preservation initiatives are seen as good policy, with suggestions for guidelines to maintain neighborhood character and address parking concerns in historic areas.

Residents also want policies to facilitate the purchase of blighted properties and address concerns related to flooding, landslides, and hazmat incidents. An alternate exit from the Washington St. area via Hussey Copper and the Big Sewickley Creek bridge is considered a priority. Traffic issues, including problems at the Route 65/Ferry St. intersection and vehicular speeding on Broad St., need attention. The community recognizes the borough's heavy reliance on industrial parks for tax revenue and sees the need for an infrastructure fund to prepare for major repairs.

Part III: Goals

The study concludes with goals that stem directly from the needs and wants expressed by residents (Part II) as supported by the quantitative and qualitative research performed in Part I.

Goal	Description	Rationale for Goal
<b>Encourage Home Ownership and Low to Medium Density Development</b>	Leetsdale should prioritize homeownership of low to medium density, single-family dwellings to support the character, property standards, and tax base of the borough.	Corporate landlords are increasingly common, and Leetsdale is facing a trend of reduced owner-occupancy. The borough could approach parity of renters and owner-occupants by 2030.
<b>Protect Henle Park and Kohlmeier Park</b>	Protect green space and improve facilities in our parks.	Residents expressed staunch support for the borough's parks and noted deterioration, highlighting poor maintenance, the loss of trees, and the degradation of playground equipment.
<b>Bring Back the Boat Dock</b>	Create a private-public partnership to bring the borough-owned boat dock back into use as a recreational area.	Leetsdale is a river town without access to the river. There is strong resident interest in cleaning up, expanding, and rebuilding the boat dock as a private-public partnership, following New Brighton's Big Rock Park as a model.

<b>Fight Blight</b>	Re-develop vacant land and protect properties slipping toward blight.	Leetsdale's housing stock is slowly decaying with about 10% of homes vulnerable to blight.
<b>Preserve Leetsdale's History</b>	Stop the degradation of Leetsdale's housing and historic features.	Leetsdale's housing stock is slowly decaying with about 10% of homes vulnerable to blight. Residents demonstrated an important attachment and respect for the history of the borough, believing that historic preservation initiatives are good policy.
<b>Enhance Cultural Amenities and Community Programs</b>	Find ways to bring cultural amenities to Leetsdale and make new ones.	Over the decades, Leetsdale has lost most of its cultural institutions, the places that create a community, including its library and elementary school. Leetsdale's recreational programs are an asset to the borough and help make it a regional attraction.
<b>Reclaim Leetsdale's Tree City Designation</b>	Reclaim the title we once had: Tree City and bring back the canopy over Broad Street. Leverage the borough's Tree Inventory to create a strategy to green Leetsdale.	There is evidence Leetsdale has lost half of its trees over time in some areas.
<b>Communicate and Enhance Preparation for Natural and Man-Made Accidents</b>	Prepare residents for emergencies and ensure the best options are in place.	Residents see flooding, landslides, and hazmat incidents (in the railroad or the industrial parks) as key concerns for Leetsdale. The community expressed trust in the emergency services and stated a wish for more information about what to expect and what to do in case of an emergency.
<b>Improve Defenses Against Traffic Accidents</b>	Determine whether it is possible to put a left-turning lane at Route 65/Ferry or find ways to better communicate and enforce the left-turn prohibition and improve other traffic and parking issues.	Traffic patterns at the Route 65/ Ferry St. intersection continue to create concerns among residents who see the prohibition against left turns as confusing and dangerous. Vehicular speeding, especially through Broad St. and Washington St., is a concern.
<b>Infrastructure Improvements</b>	Determine whether Leetsdale is putting adequate resources into its Public Works department and help Public Works better prioritize resident concerns.	Expenditure on physical infrastructure and community institutions is the principal reason for government, yet Leetsdale is spending less as a percentage of revenue today than it did in the past.

		At the same time, road repair has proven to be a highly variable expense, suggesting a reactive approach to maintenance.
<b>Update Zoning Ordinances</b>	Review zoning ordinances to see whether they should be updated based on comprehensive plans.	Leetsdale's Zoning Ordinance was originally adopted in 1972 and updated in 1991. The ordinance does not identify Community Development Objectives and has not been updated to reflect comprehensive plans published between 2000 and 2010.

The comprehensive assessment that follows this summary details the analysis performed and the conclusions reached.

# **Comprehensive Plan for the Borough of Leetsdale**

## Section I: Assessment of Existing Conditions

### A. People & Housing

#### A.1 Demographic Trends

This section establishes the demographic trends present in Leetsdale, including population size and age, household composition, income, educational attainment, and social characteristics. Data supporting all conclusions is provided below. The study uses this data to project the resources available from and the needs of the borough's population.

##### A.1.1 Population

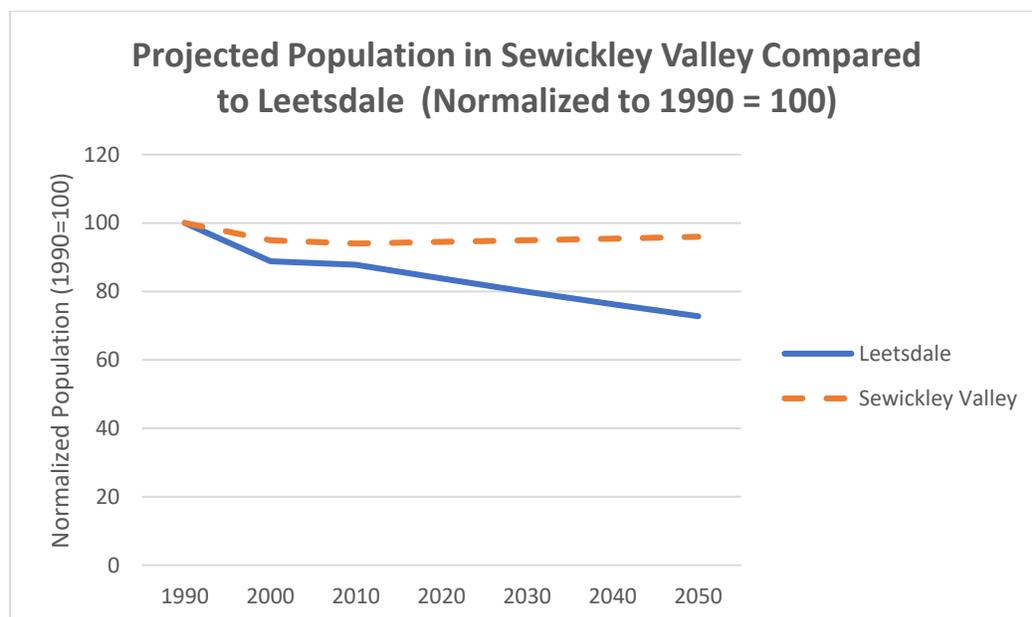
Population levels declined between 1990 – 2020, a total of 16% over the period. The table below compares population counts in Allegheny County and those across the Sewickley Valley.

**Population in the Sewickley Valley**

	1990	2000	2010	2020	% Change
Allegheny County	1,336,000	1,280,000	1,224,000	1,211,000	(9.4%)
Sewickley Valley	9,476	8,998	8,906	8,952	(5.5) %
Leetsdale	1,387	1,232	1,218	1,162	(16.2%)
Leet	1,740	1,568	1,634	1,624	(6.7%)
Edgeworth	1,679	1,730	1,680	1,669	0.7%
Sewickley	4,134	3,902	3,827	3,907	(5.5%)
Glen Osborne	536	566	547	590	4.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Leetsdale's population decreased more than its neighbors and at a rate that surpasses the county average. While the rate has slowed over the last decade – moving from -8.9% between 1990-2000 to -7.4% between 2010-2020 – it remains in decline. Assuming the last decade's trend continues, populations in Leetsdale and the Valley are projected below (1990 base).



At current rates, Leetsdale would suffer further population losses, reaching approximately three-quarters of its 1990 level, a trend that had been reversed in the larger Sewickley Valley between 2010 and 2020.

### ***A.1.2 Age***

Like the surrounding area, Leetsdale is home to an aging populace, yet it has also become home to more younger residents in the last decade.

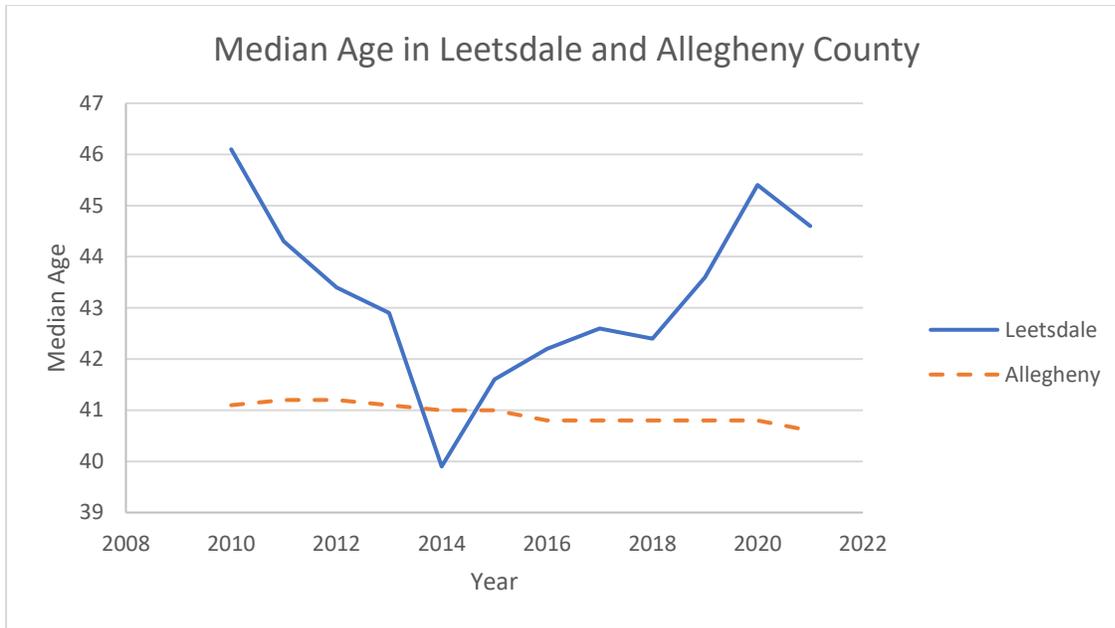
#### **Age Distribution of Leetsdale and Surrounding Areas**

	<b>Population Over Age 65</b>		<b>Population Under Age 18</b>	
	<b>2010</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2021</b>
Allegheny County	16.9%	19.7%	15%	18.8%
Sewickley Valley	17.8%	19.5%	19.2%	23.4%
Leetsdale	20.5%	23.4%	13.2%	19.2%
Leet	15.0%	13.5%	20.9%	28.7%
Edgeworth	17.4%	21.6%	23.0%	24.5%
Sewickley	18.8%	19.5%	18.2%	23.3%
Glen Osborne	14.1%	22.3%	23.0%	20.5%

*Source: American Community Survey; Estimate for Sewickley Valley Based on Population and Percentages*

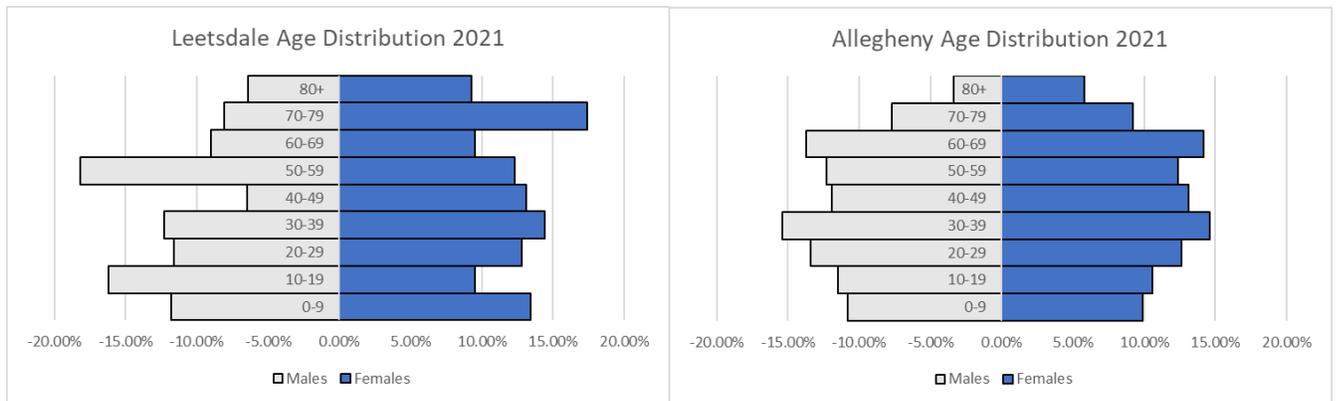
The borough saw significant growth in its younger cohort since 2010, experiencing a larger jump than its neighbors and one greater than the increase in older residents. The percentage of the younger population, though, is still below the area’s average.

By looking at the median age of Leetsdale’s residents, we can see whether the demographic shift translated into an older or younger population.



Source: American Community Survey

While the county has seen an increasingly younger population, Leetsdale’s median age exhibits more volatility, unsurprising for a small municipality and suggestive of a sizeable number of short-term residents. To understand this, we consider the age distribution of residents, benchmarking again to Allegheny County.



Source: American Community Survey

An ideal age distribution exhibits a wide base and a small top, resembling a tree, an indication of a large population of young people to support older residents. This is not what we see in Allegheny County. Like the United States as a whole, it exhibits an atypical distribution, possessing a narrow base, a large top, and a bulging middle.

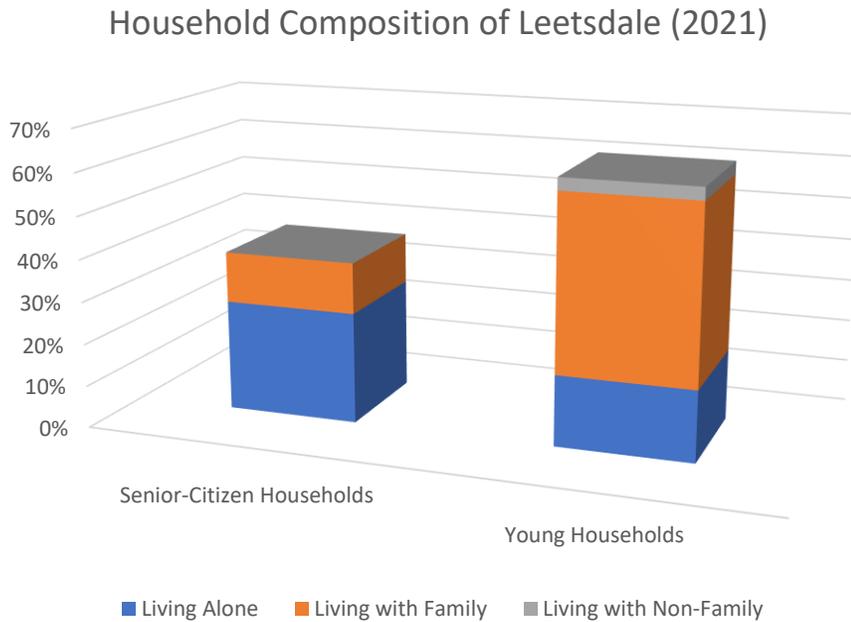
Leetsdale’s tree is marked by,

- A population skewed toward female, particularly among senior-citizen residents
- A fairly constant distribution of ages.

The municipality, therefore, while older than the county, looks healthier in terms of age distribution.

### A.1.3 Household Composition

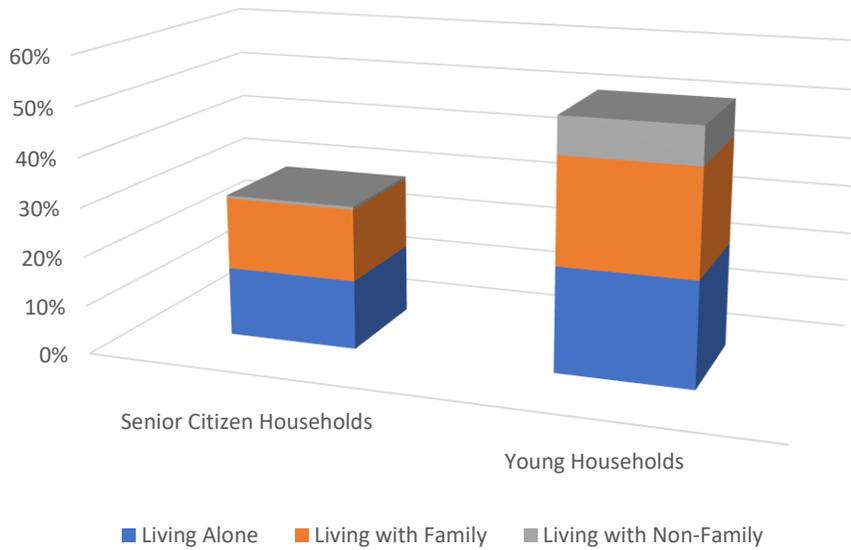
Household composition impacts a community’s character as well as its needs. The chart below shows the percentage of households led by older persons (65+) and younger persons (<65), as well as whether the householder lives alone or with others.



*Source: American Community Survey; Definitions Senior-Citizen Households are those headed by a person at least 65 years old; Young Households are headed by a person less than 65 years old.*

The borough has a large number of older households – more than one-third – and many of whom live alone. We can benchmark with Allegheny County to better understand whether and how Leetsdale might be different.

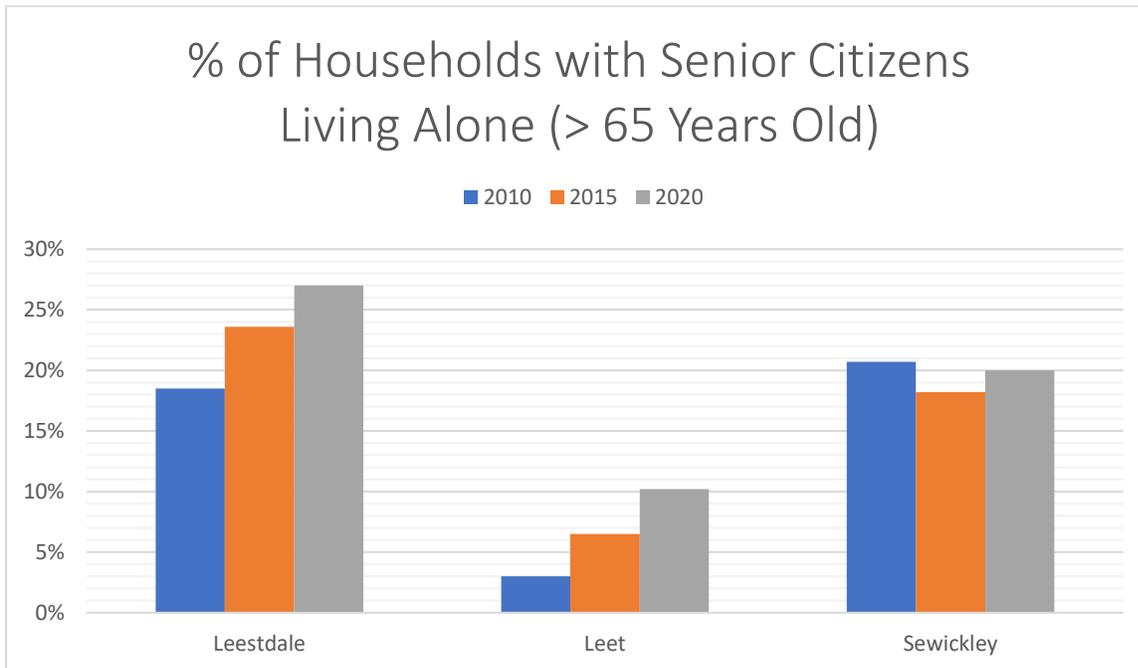
## Household Composition of Allegheny County (2021)



Source: American Community Survey; Definitions Senior-Citizen Households are those headed by a person at least 65 years old; Young Households are headed by a person less than 65 years old.

The principal difference is the number of senior citizens living alone. Leetsdale has much greater rate than the county.

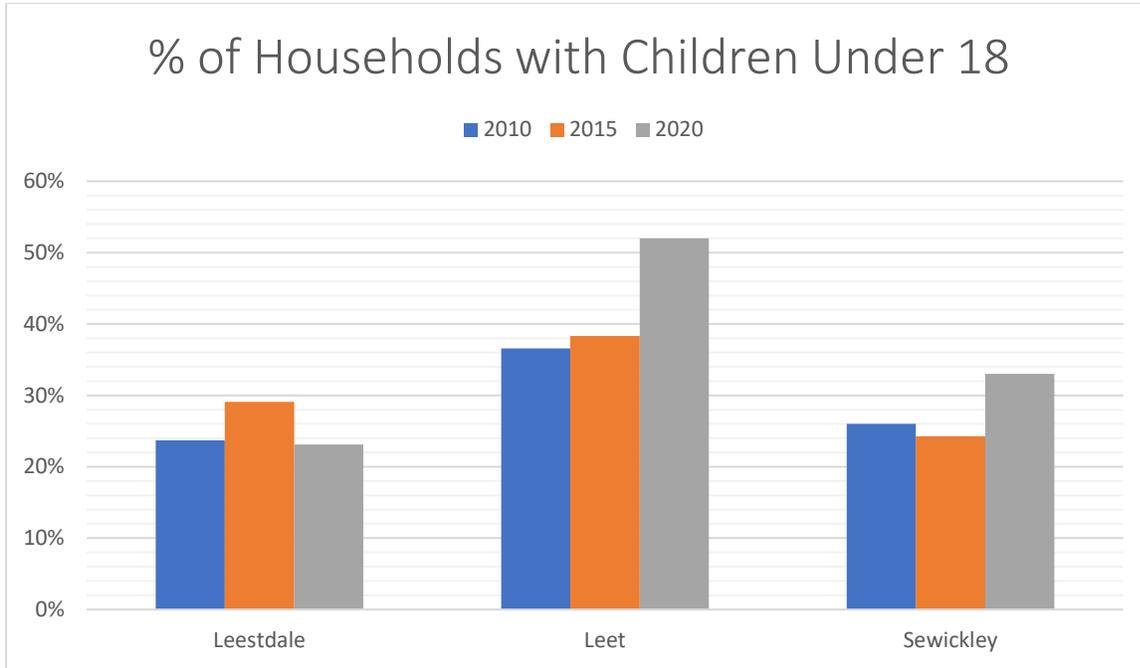
We can also benchmark across time and the Sewickley Valley.



Source: American Community Survey

The data points toward more homes being led by older Leetsdale residents living alone.

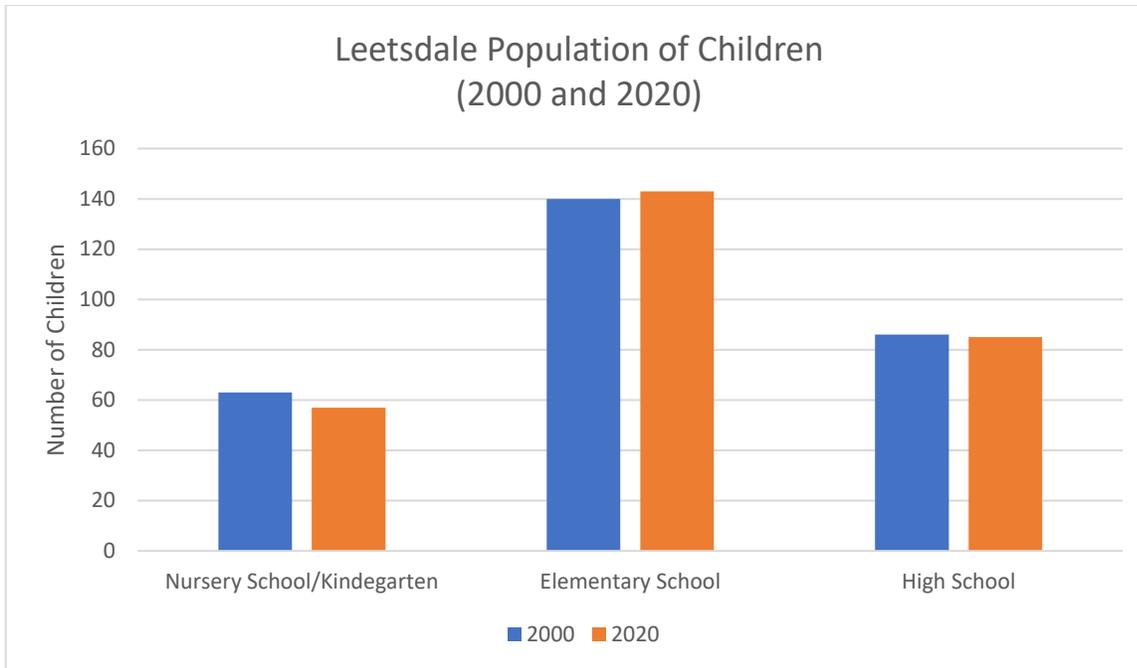
Similarly, we can look at the presence of children in households.



Source: American Community Survey

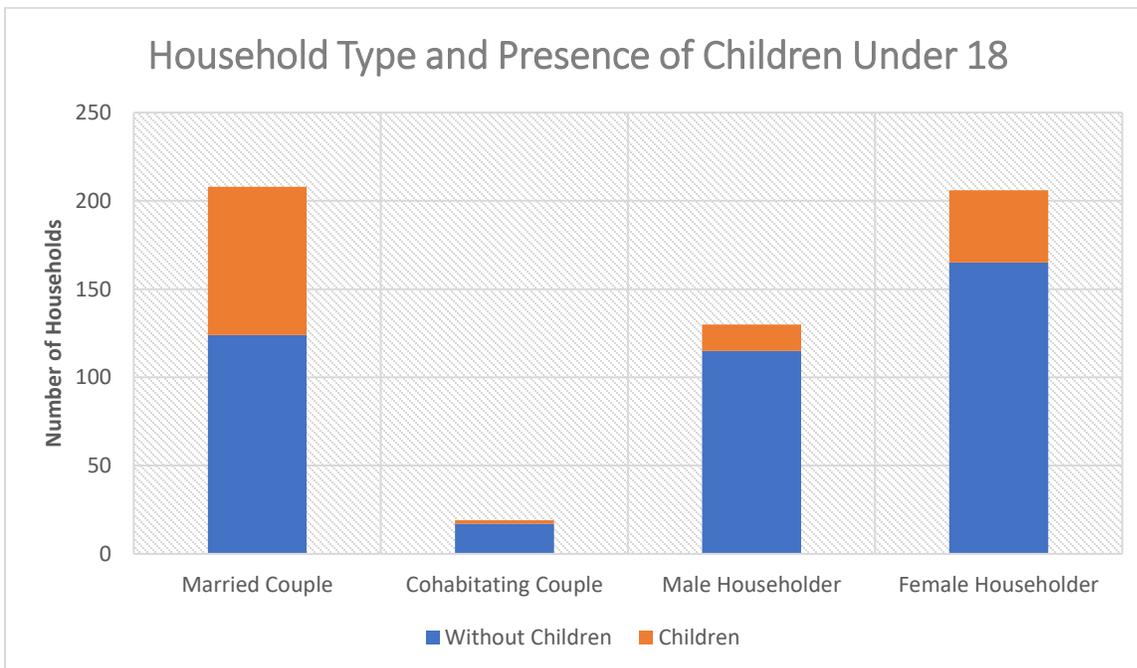
The percentage of homes with children has remained stagnant in Leetsdale over the last decade yet has grown in the surrounding communities, particularly Leet, a borough with much newer homes.

Similarly, the number of school-age children in Leetsdale appears stable over the last ten years.



Source: Diennial Census, Nursery Shool/Kindergarten = Under 5; Elementary School = Ages 6 – 14; High School = Ages 15 - 19

To see why this might be occurring, we investigate the composition of all households in Leetsdale (2021).

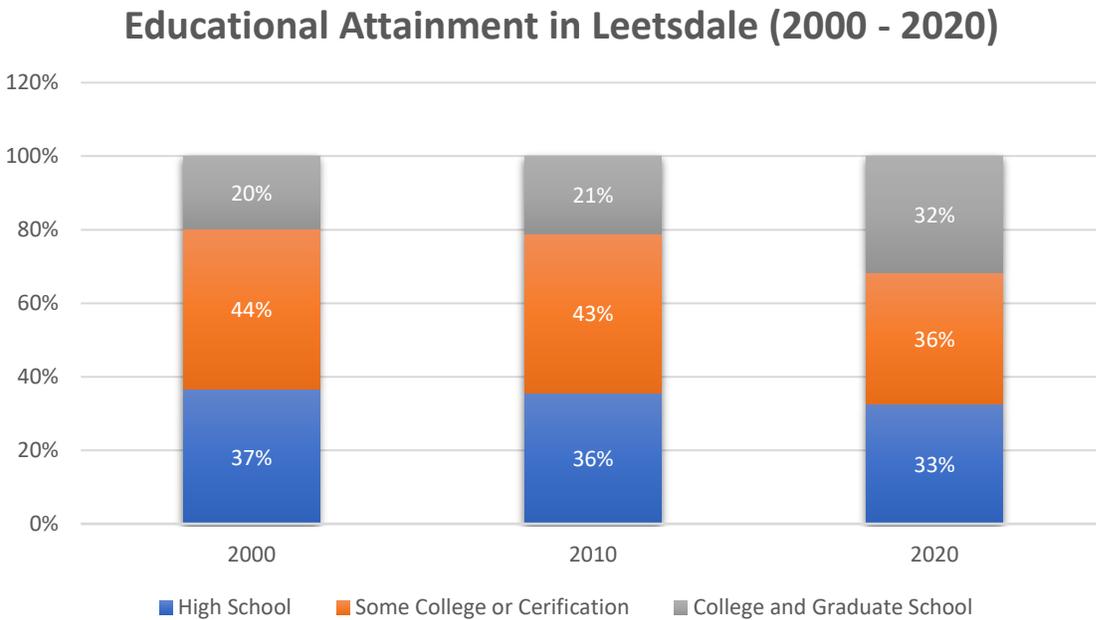


Source: American Community Survey, 2021

As expected, most children live in the household of a married couple. Therefore, the data suggests Leetsdale is losing young, married couples to other local communities such as Leet.

### A.1.4 Educational Attainment

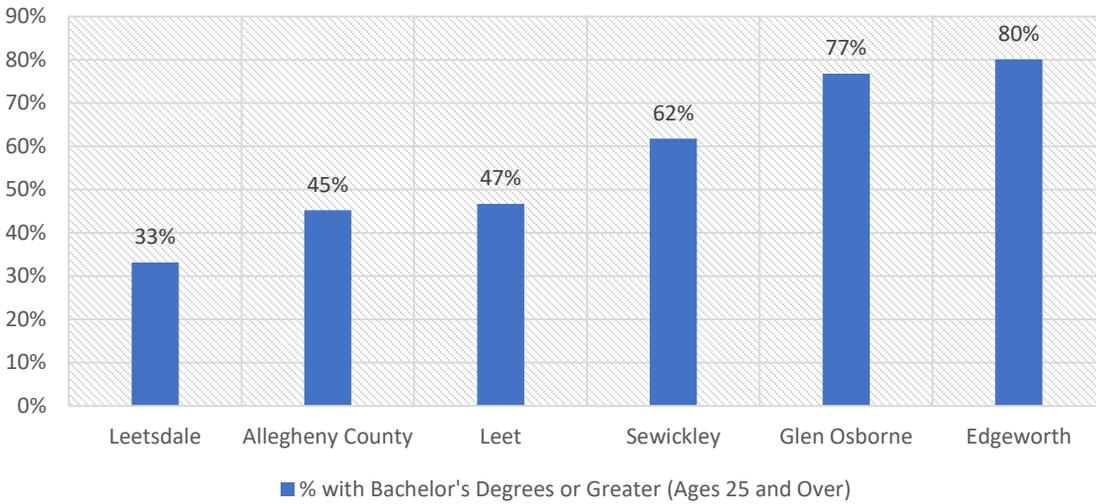
The level of education in a community is a measure of the skills and resources available to it. The chart below shows the education of residents since 2000.



Source: American Community Survey

The portion of Leetsdale’s population with a college degree increased by 12% points over the period from 2000 to 2020, exhibiting a steady rise in the college-educated population. That percentage, however, remains less than the county average and that of other communities in the Sewickley Valley.

## Education of Leetsdale Residents and Surrounding Communities (2021)

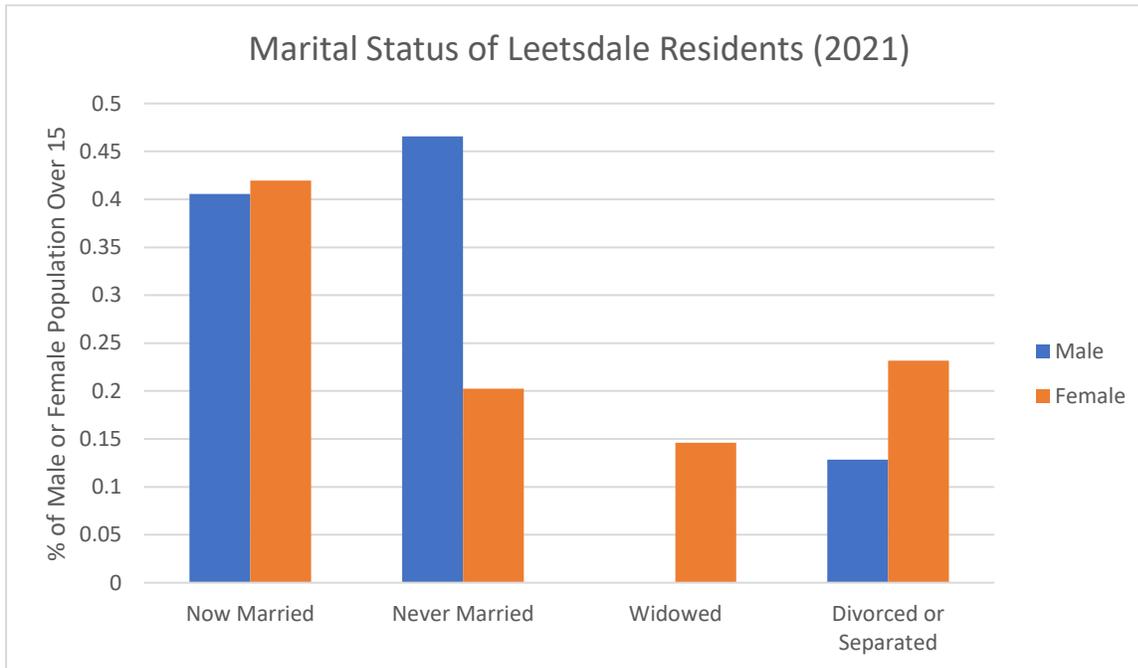


Source: American Community Survey

Therefore, Leetsdale is home to an increasingly educated population, but fewer of those who are college-educated prefer to live in Leetsdale than in surrounding communities.

### A.1.5 Social Characteristics

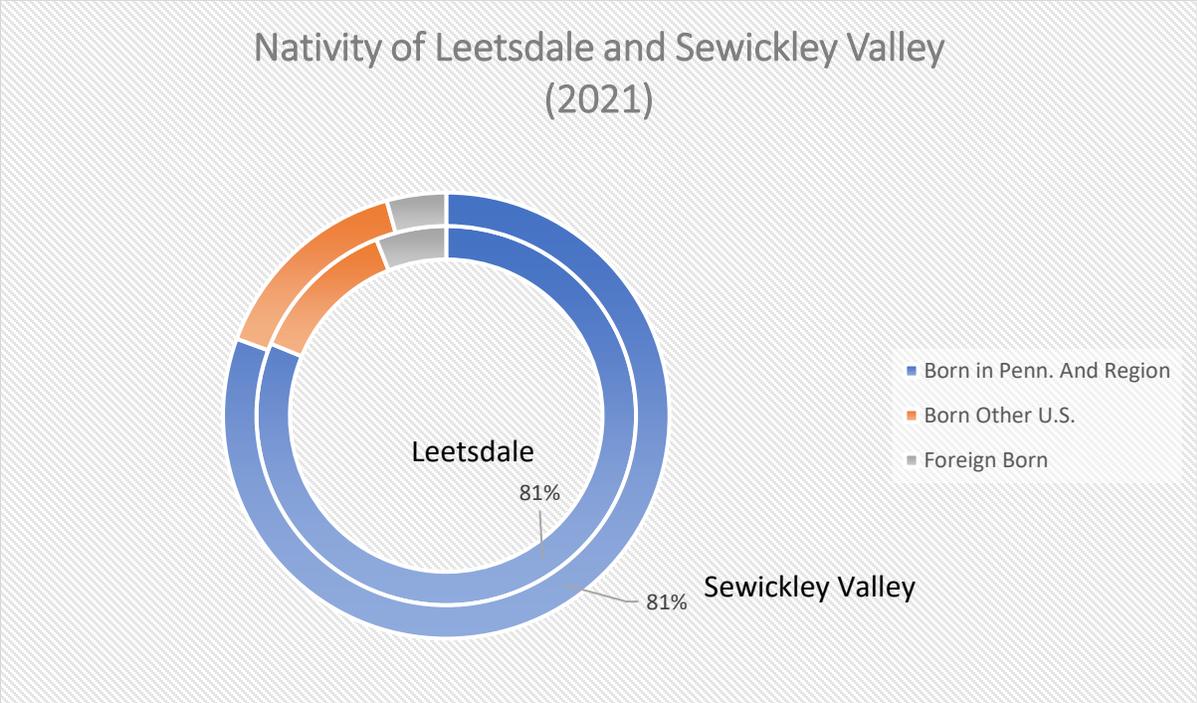
A community must be aware of ongoing shifts in its social characteristics to better support the population. We begin by looking at the strength of relationships within the community. One measure is the marital status of residents:



Source: American Community Survey, 2021

Among Leetsdale’s population, a sizable portion are never-married men and widowed/divorced women.

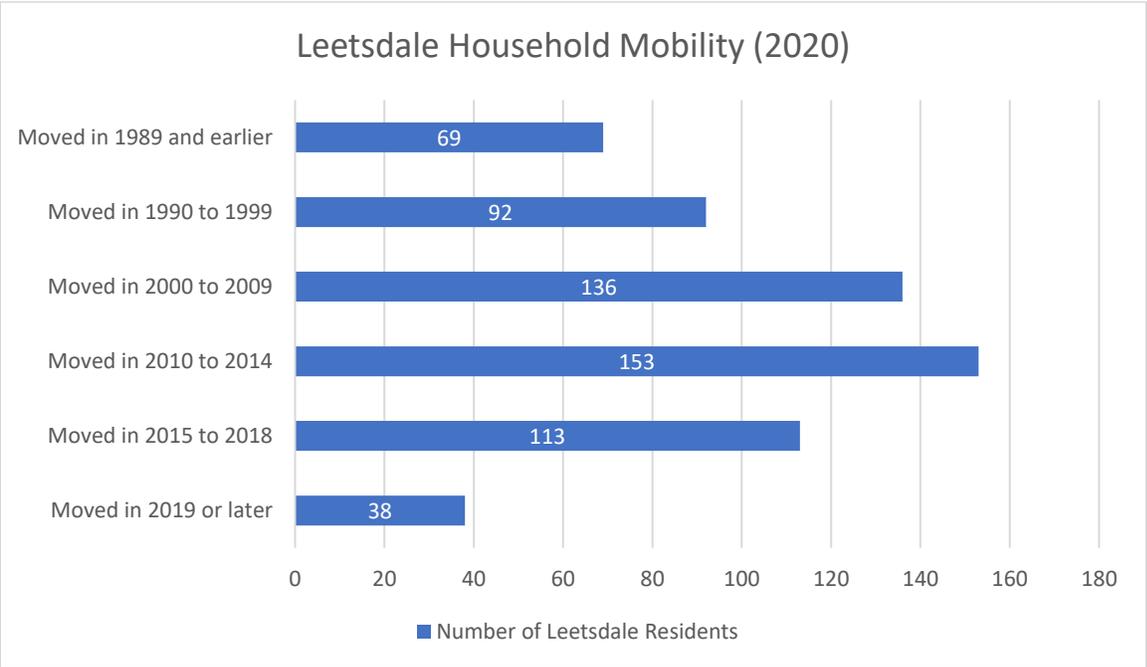
Another measure of communal connection is nativity, the percentage of residents born in the region (defined as Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia).



Source: American Community Survey, 2021

The vast majority of Leetsdale’s residents have roots in the region.

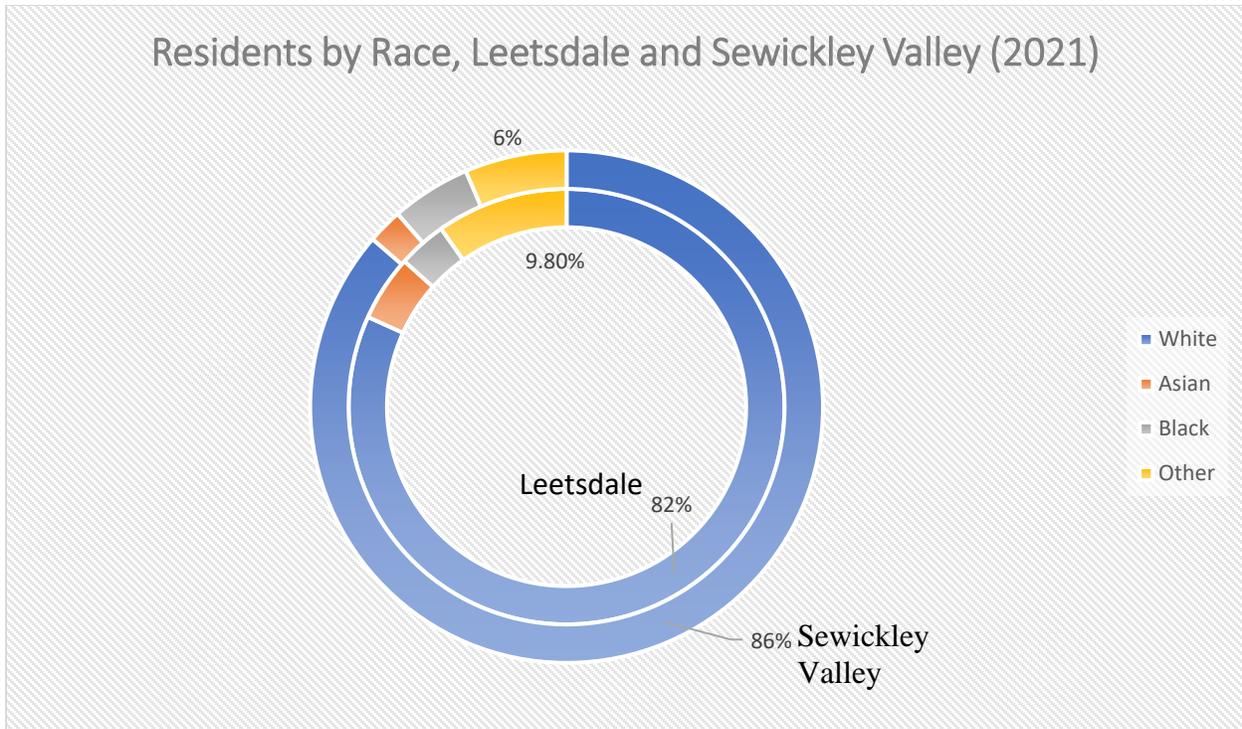
To better understand when residents of Leetsdale placed down roots in the area, we turn to the mobility of the population.



Source: American Community Survey 2020

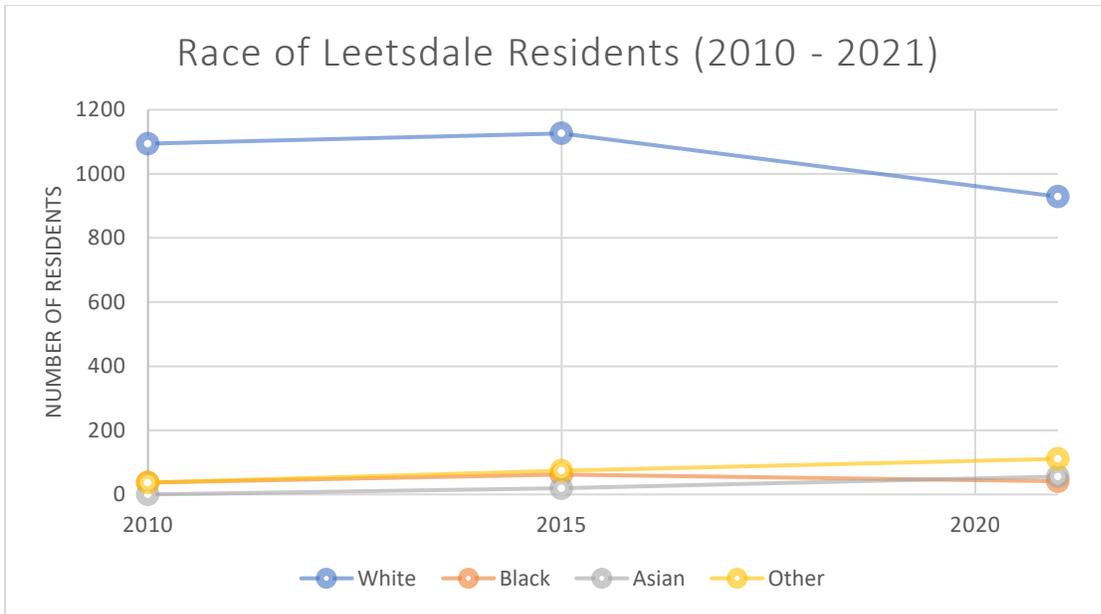
Nearly 50% of Leetsdale's households settled in the borough only after 2010.

We can further investigate the racial make-up of the population.



Source: American Community Survey

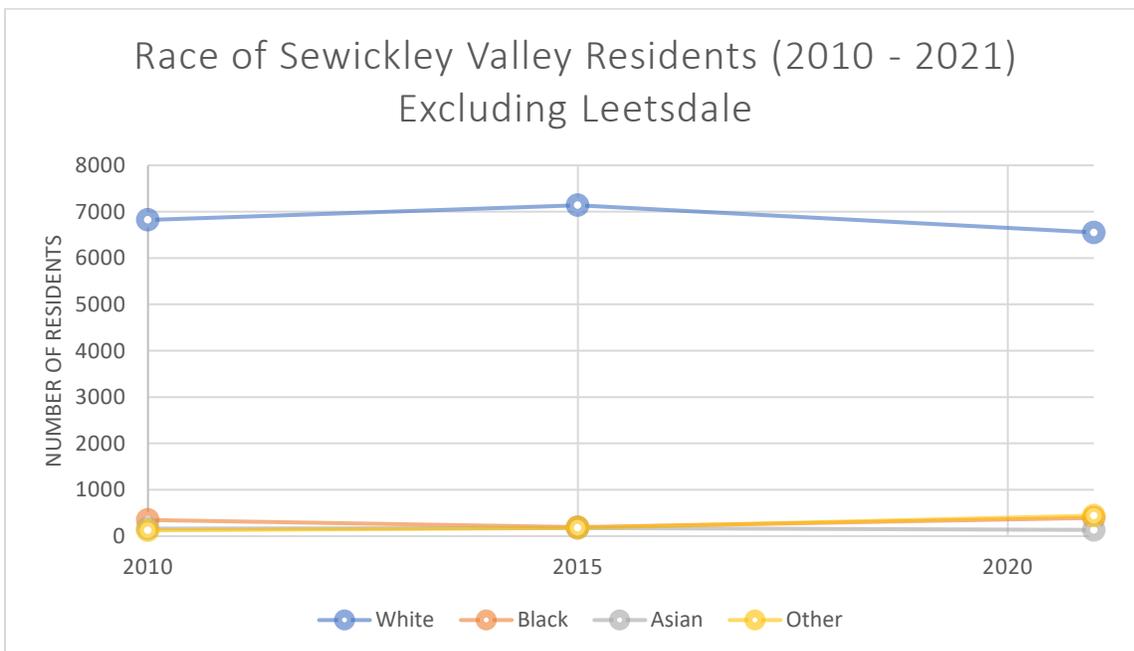
Leetsdale, with most of its residents identifying as White/European ancestry, is like the surrounding area. The racial makeup has been slowly shifting.



Source: American Community Survey

The White population declined by 15% in the period 2010 - 2020, whereas the Black population has increased by 10%, and other segments, including Asian and multi-racial, have increased by 350%. Hispanics, as an ethnic group, continue to be a small percentage of the population, rising from thirteen people in 2010 to 20 people in 2021 (American Community Survey 2010;2021).

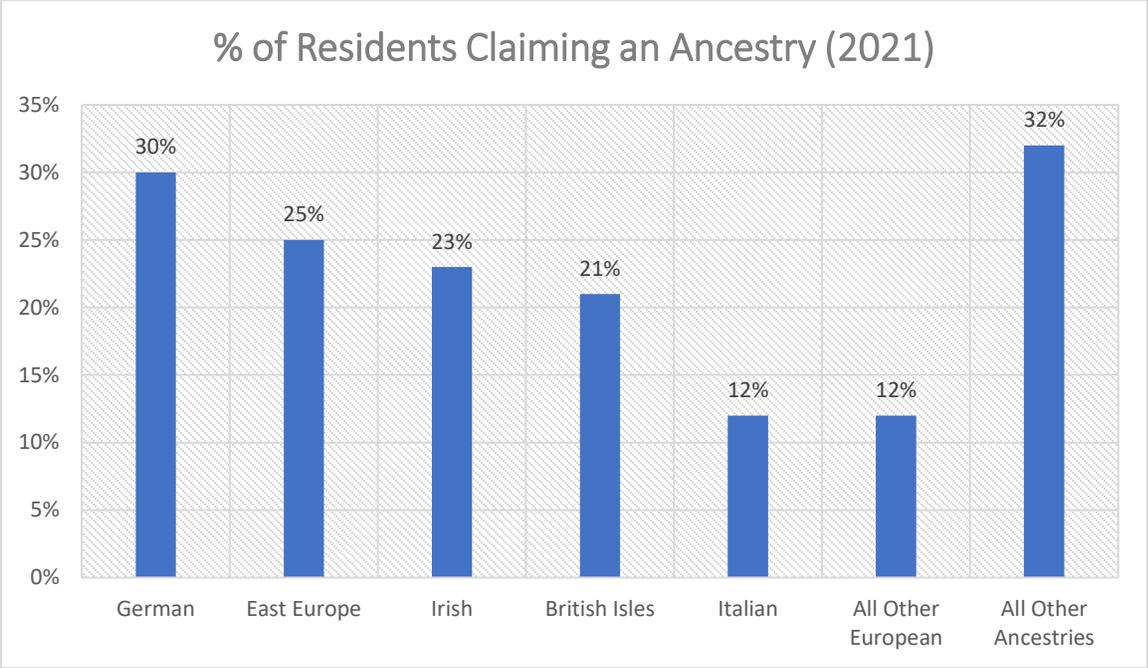
Benchmarking to the Sewickley Valley, we find the following,



Source: American Community Survey, 2021

Surrounding communities exhibit similar trends to Leetsdale, with the White population declining by 4% and Black and residents of other segments increasing by 12% and 100%, respectively.

We can drill down further on the ancestral makeup of the population.

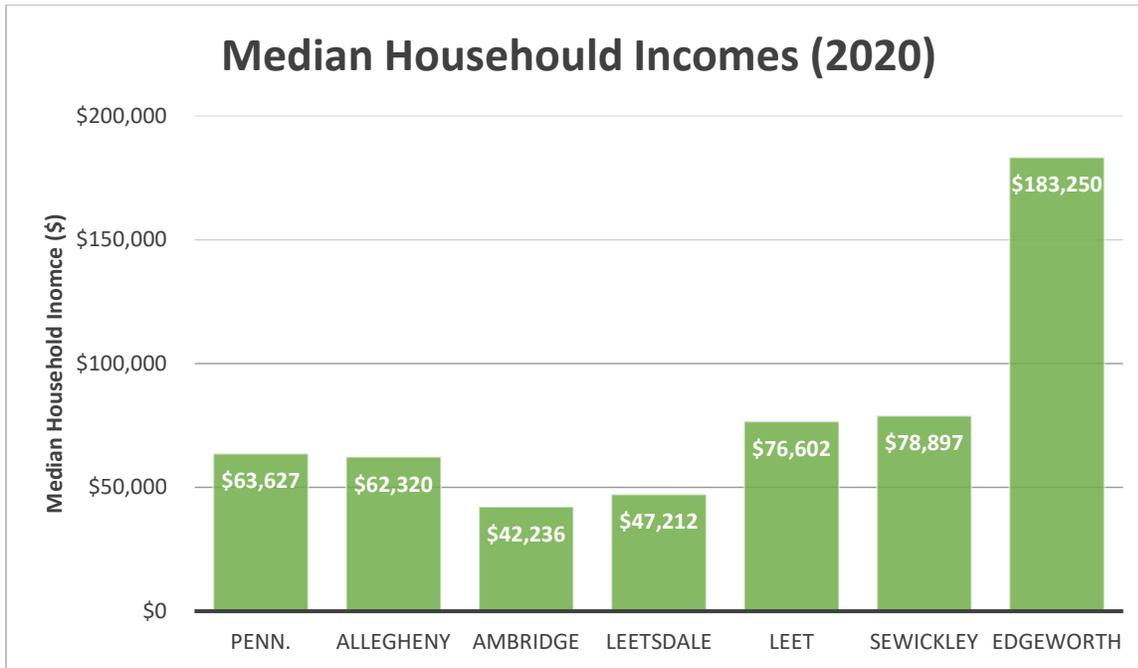


Source: American Community Survey, 2021

Leetsdale has historically been and continues to be heavily dominated by White ethnics with heavy concentrations of German, East European, Irish, and Italians.

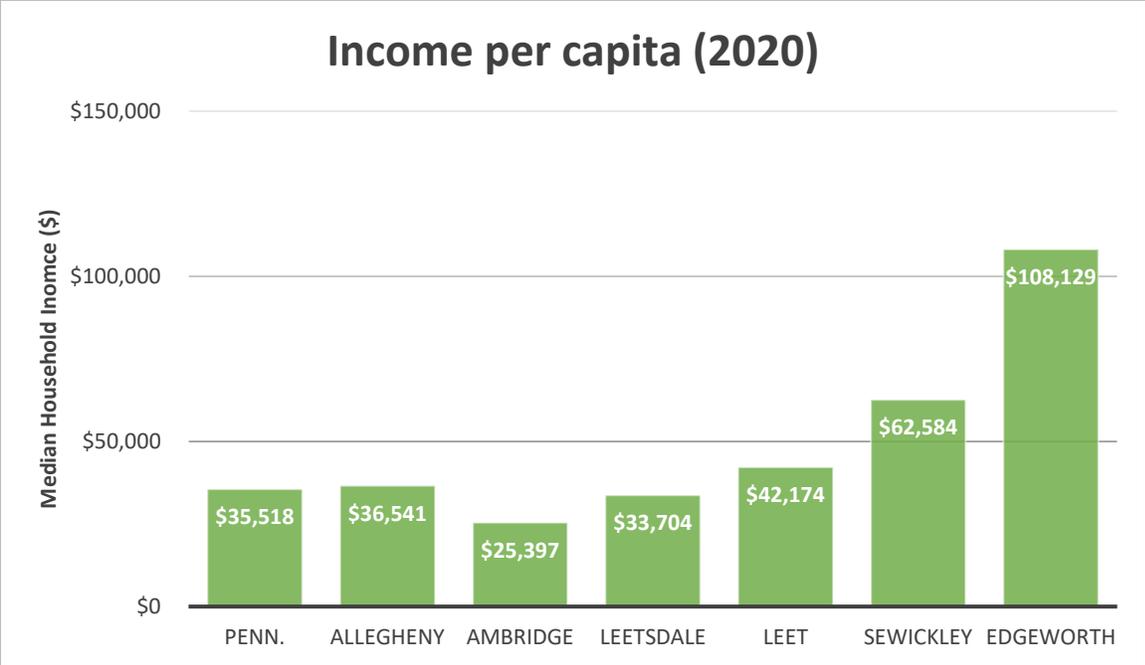
### A.1.6 Income

Economic measures help us understand the resources available to enhance and grow the community. Median household incomes are the most widely used measure, telling us the point at which half the households are above and half below.



Source: American Community Survey (2020)

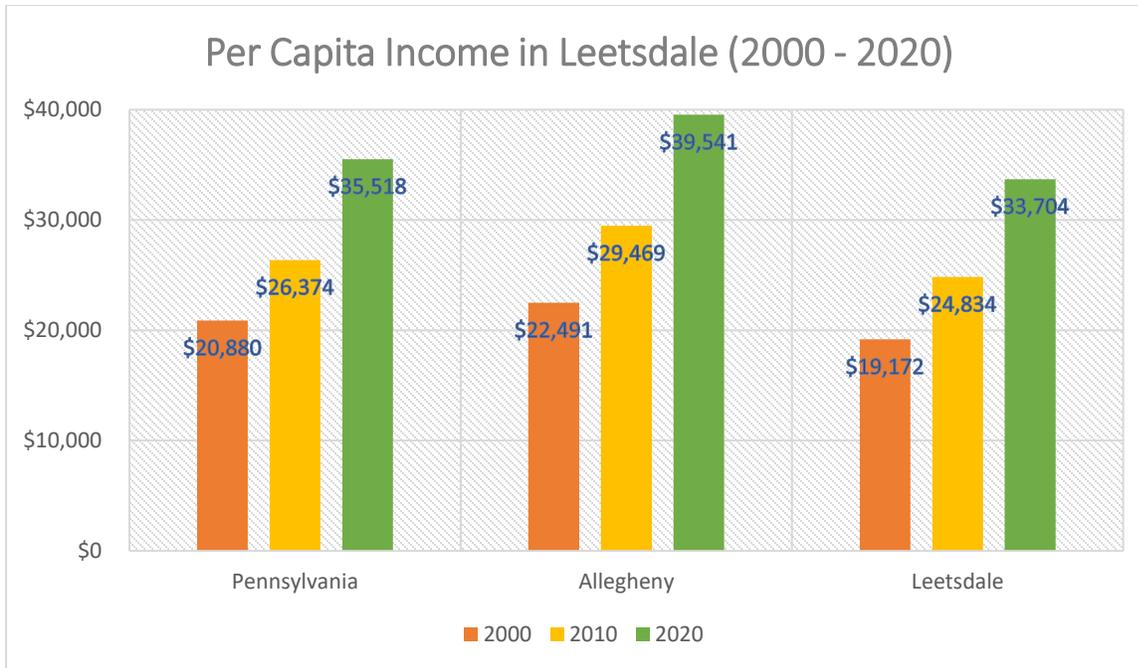
In 2020, the median household income in Leetsdale is \$ 47,212, or 24% below the average for Allegheny County. Leetsdale, though, might suffer on this measure due to the smaller size of its households. We can take this into account by looking at per capita income.



Source: American Community Survey (2020)

Indeed, on a per capita basis, Leetsdale looks more like the county and surrounding communities, exhibiting incomes only 15% less than the county average. Thus, Leetsdale’s lesser median incomes are due in part to household size. The observation suggests that the borough’s smaller homes might be attracting people who are retired and living on a fixed income. We will investigate this theory further in the section.

The change in income over time is of equal importance for the community’s development.

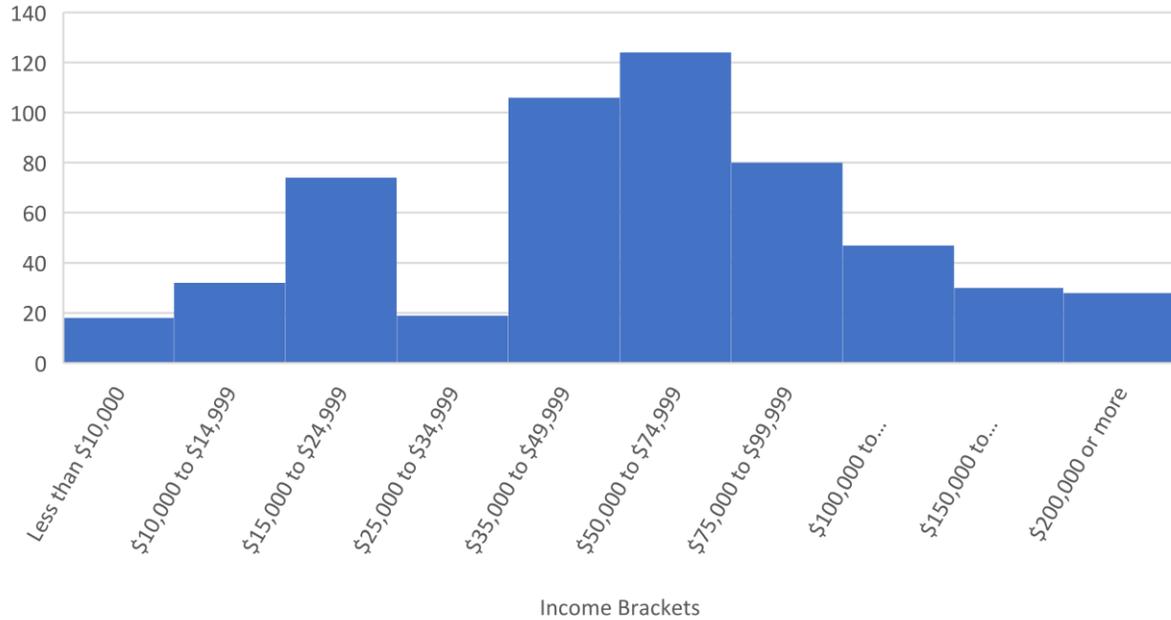


Source: American Community Survey (2000, 2010, 2020)

Leetsdale’s per capita income grew slower than that of the state and county. Since 2000, the median income (not per capita) in Leetsdale has increased by over 65%, outstripping neighboring boroughs like Leet (41%) and Ambridge (61%), along with the state average (59%). Sewickley and Edgeworth have seen greater increases of 99% and 85%, respectively. Growth then is accompanied by more inequality in the region.

To investigate the underlying causes, we consider income distribution and unemployment rates over the period.

Histogram of Households by Income Bracket (2020)



Source: American Community Survey (2012 - 2021)

Leetsdale exhibits a normal distribution although skewed leftward.

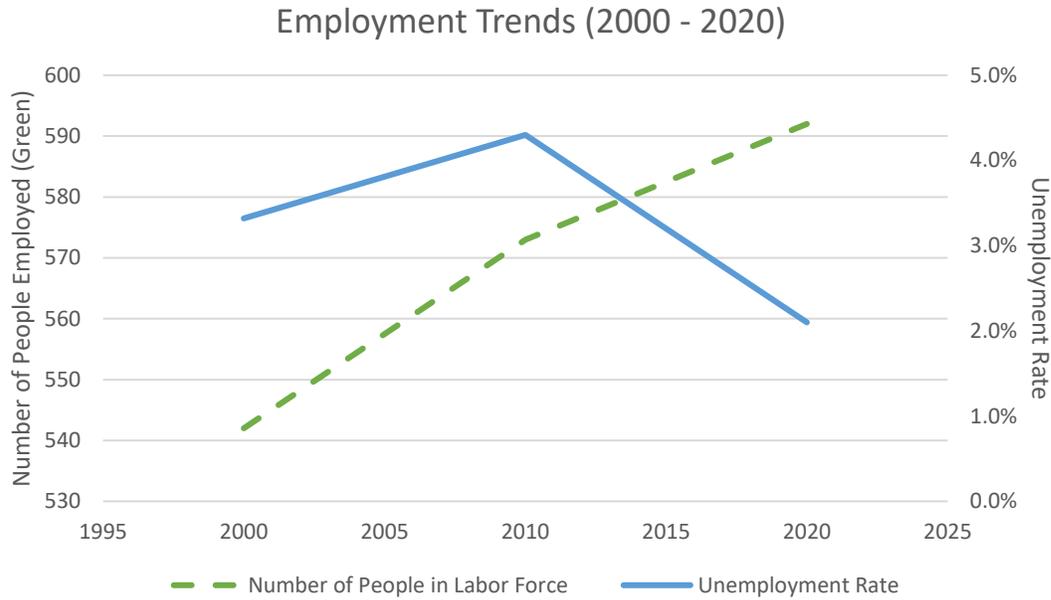
- Wage-earning residents appear to be centered around the \$ 50,000 to \$ 75,000 range<sup>1</sup>;
- Fixed-income residents appear to be centered around the \$15,000 to \$25,000 range.<sup>2</sup>

This suggests that the effect stems from many residents on fixed incomes.

We can further investigate employment trends among wage earners.

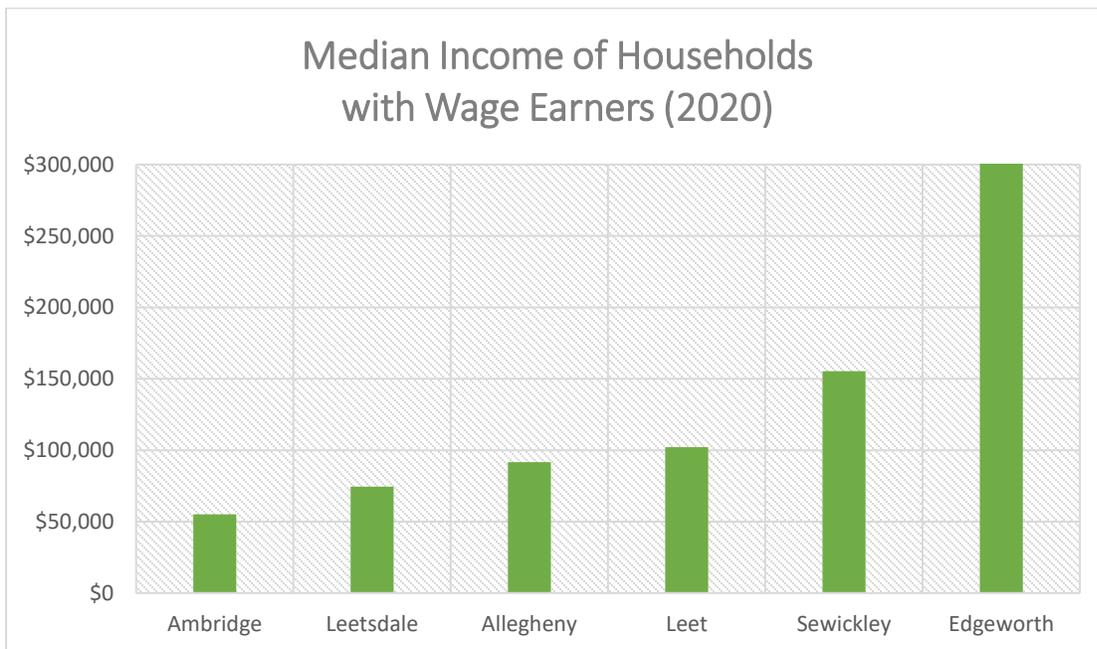
<sup>1</sup> Mean earnings were \$ 74,432 across 404 households in 202, per American Community Survey, representing 67% of Leetsdale's households.

<sup>2</sup> Mean Social Security earnings were \$ 17,395 across 238 households in 2020, per American Community Survey; approximately 40% of Leetsdale's households, corresponding to the left side of the median.



Source: American Community Survey (2000, 2010, 2020)

Leetsdale has seen the number of adults (16 and over) in the labor force climb over the last two decades while unemployment rates fell. This is a positive sign, suggesting Leetsdale has a growing population of economically active adults. Thus, median income appears suppressed due to the large number of residents on fixed incomes. We can confirm this by looking at median earnings by households across the region.



Source: American Community Survey (2000, 2010, 2020)

The data bears out the hypothesis. Leetsdale is more like Leet and Allegheny County, when looking only at wage earners.

### *A.1.7 Conclusions*

The demographic data paints a mixed picture of Leetsdale.

- The population of Leetsdale has declined by 16% since 1990, outpacing drops observed in neighboring areas. Current rates would winnow the borough to three-quarters of its 1990 level by 2050. This is a trend that had been reversed in the larger Sewickley Valley between 2010 and 2020.
- Leetsdale's population is distributed evenly across age groups. The municipality, therefore, while older than the larger county, looks healthier in terms of age distribution.
- The vast majority of the residents have roots in the region, greater than 81%. Nevertheless, many households only recently settled here; nearly 50% moved into the borough after 2010.
- Leetsdale is home to an increasingly educated population, but more college educated prefer to live in the surrounding communities than in Leetsdale.
- The population is skewed female, particularly among residents age 65 and over. A sizable portion of residents are widowed/divorced women and never-married men.
- Economic health has improved since 2000, driven by a greater number of wage earners, yet at the same time we see more inequality between Leetsdale and its neighboring communities.

The borough is becoming home to an increasingly smaller and dichotomous population: older and younger; richer and poorer; more racial diverse and with smaller households.

## A.2 Housing Stock Trends

The one-square-mile borough of Leetsdale is split down the middle by Ohio River Boulevard (Route 65). Residential areas are found primarily to the northeast of Ohio River Boulevard and large industrial complexes are located to the southwest of the Boulevard along the Ohio River. Some housing is found between the industrial complexes in this portion of the Borough. The adjoining industrial and residential areas are not compatible land uses due to the intensity of the industrial activity. In addition to Route 65, the railroad tracks physically divide the residential and industrial areas. There is a commercial shopping center, Quaker Village, located on the border of Edgeworth Borough. Public buildings and parks include the Leetsdale Borough Municipal Building, Quaker Valley High School, and Edward C. Henle Park.

Housing in Leetsdale includes single-family housing units, as well as townhouses and duplexes. Development densities range from low-density (1-2 dwelling units/acre) residential to medium-density (4-6 dwelling units/acre) residential areas. There are also areas with multi-family housing including duplexes and small apartment buildings. Overall, the neighborhoods are well-maintained. However, the quality of housing does range, and some units are vacant. Likewise, housing in Leetsdale ranges in affordability and quality. Housing is primarily older in character with little new construction taking place.

Located between the Leetsdale Industrial Park and the Hussey Copper plant is a small residential area with homes situated along Washington Street and Monroe Way. Historically, most of the borough's homes were situated along the river in a neighborhood called Oliver Town. This changed after the 1936 Flood caused extensive damage. Now largely an industrial park, only Washington and Monroe, along with a handful of homes still standing between warehouses remain. The neighborhood is Leetsdale's remnant link to its roots as a river town. A playground located on the edge of Monroe is bordered by the Leetsdale Industrial Park and is surrounded by wire fencing, to prevent children from straying into the adjoining industrial area.

Broad Street from Rapp Street to Ferry Street at Edward C. Henle Park has well-maintained homes along tree-lined streets. Sidewalks, street trees, grass strips, and setbacks are uniform and continuous along the street. Homes include porches and small landscaped yards. Road widths are appropriate for the development style and accommodate on-street parking.

Lark Inn Fields, from Valley Lane to Winding Road, are hilly, narrow roads with larger homes than are found on Broad Street. This area is characterized by wide setbacks and large wooded lots. Sidewalks are not present.

Victory Lane is a circular street lined with brick townhouses. The area's architecture is consistent and maintains the same village-like theme. Street trees and sidewalks are sparse in this neighborhood. The development has a considerable number of rental units.

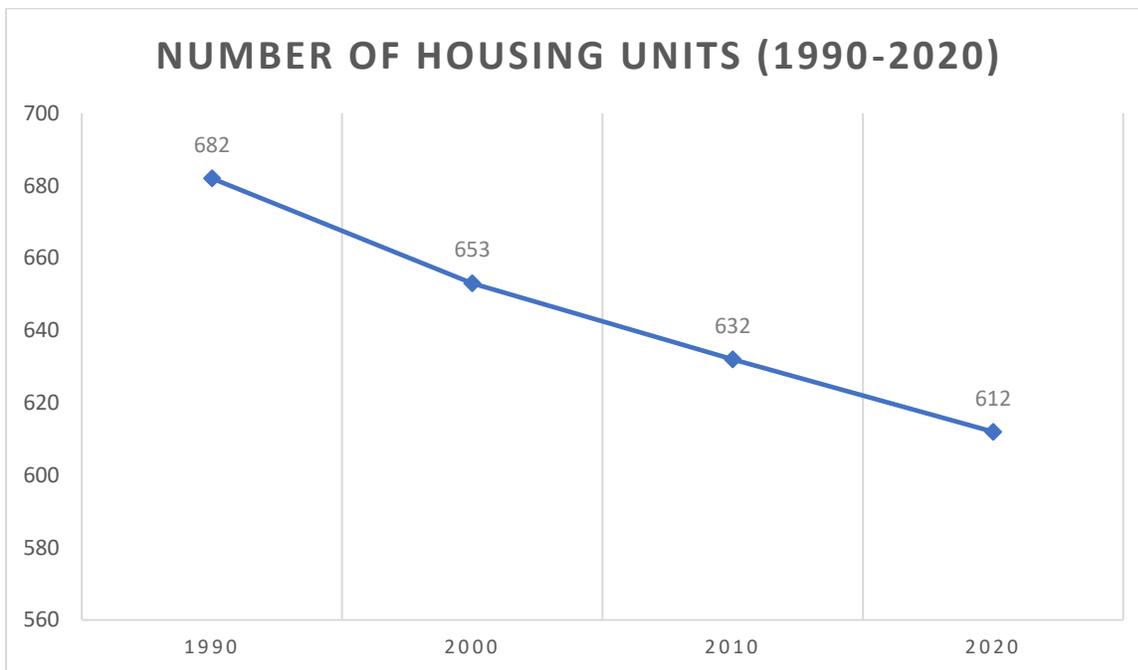
Beaver Road backs up against the Leet Township municipal boundary and is steeply sloped. Houses located on the northeastern side of the street are built into the hillside and setbacks are short due to steep slopes. Maintenance of homes is an issue as you travel along Beaver Road toward Leet Street. Vacant housing units are identifiable.

Some single-family housing is found along Ohio River Boulevard (Route 65). Houses front the street and look out toward the railroad tracks, industrial areas, and river. Maintenance of some of the homes in this area is an issue.

Some single-family housing is found along Ohio River Boulevard (Route 65). Houses front the street and look out toward the railroad tracks, industrial areas, and river. Maintenance of some of the homes in this area is an issue.

### ***A.2.1 Housing Statistics***

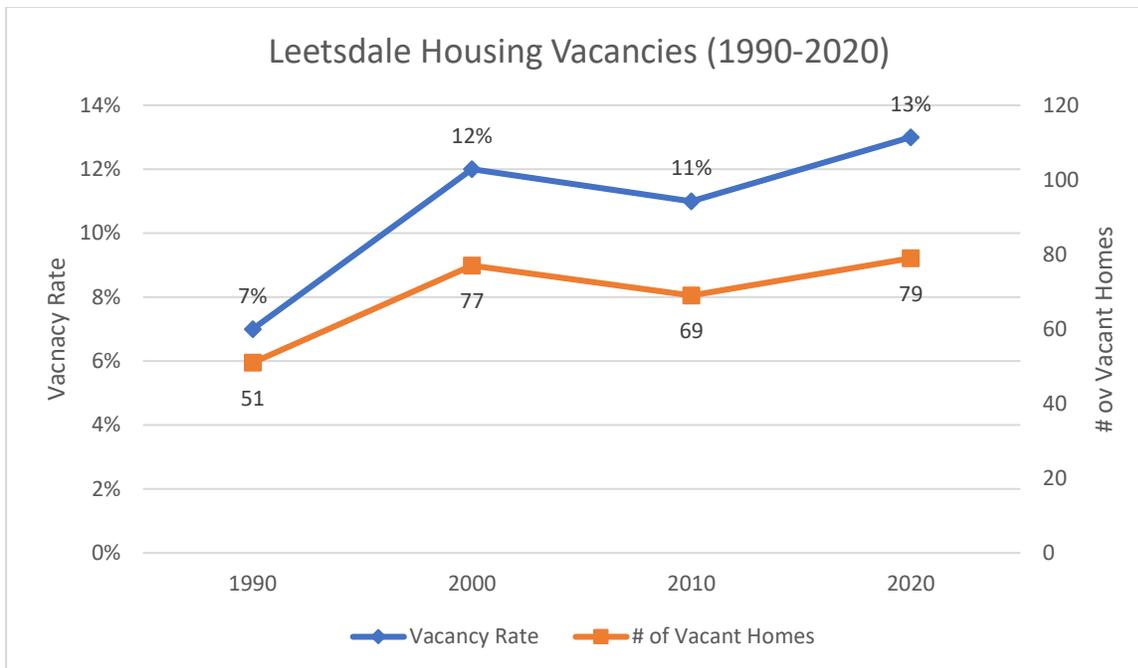
Turning to the statistics, we begin by looking at the number of housing units in the borough over time.



*Source: Census Data 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020*

Housing stock has steadily declined over the last 30 years, falling at a consistent rate of 10%.

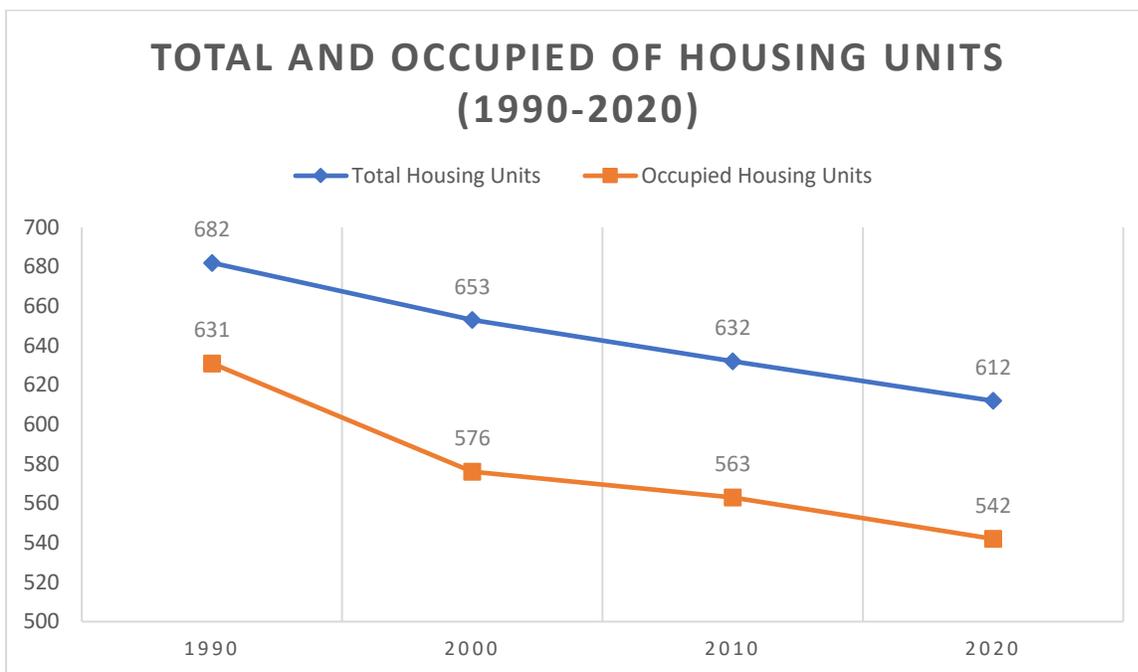
Vacancy rates within the housing stock are also a principal factor of livability.



Source: Census data 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020

After a surge in vacant homes during the 1990s, the number has since plateaued. The vacancy rate, in contrast, has continued to increase.

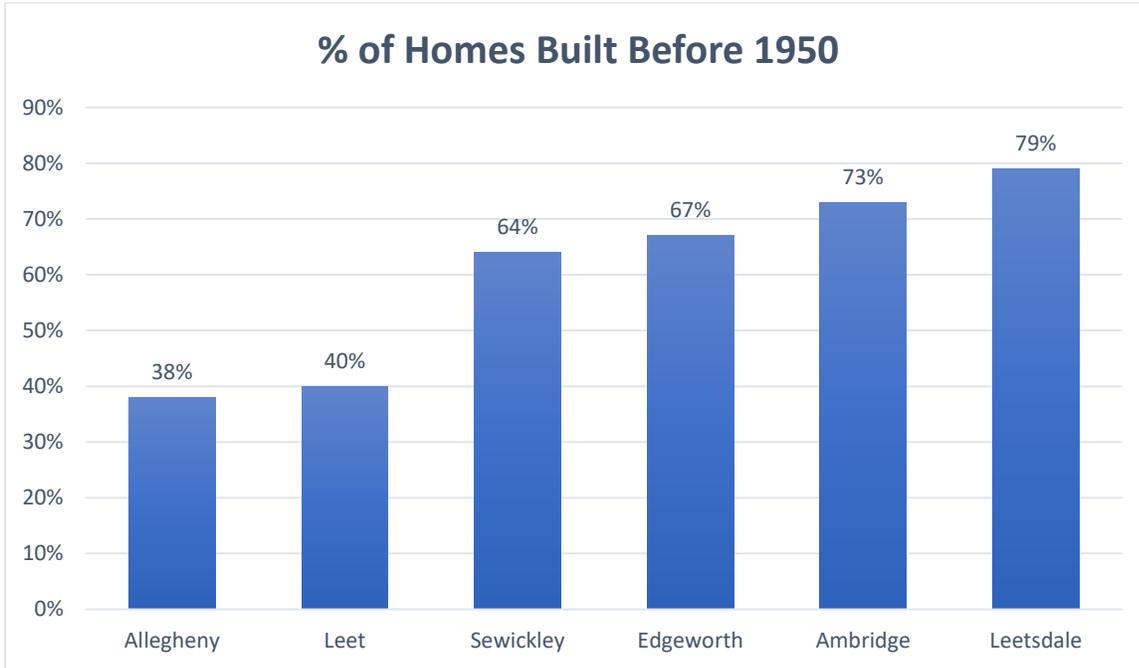
Combining these two, we can extrapolate the total occupied housing in Leetsdale.



Source: Census data 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020

Occupied housing has decreased at a rate of 14%, outstripping the decline in total housing units as vacancy rates climb.

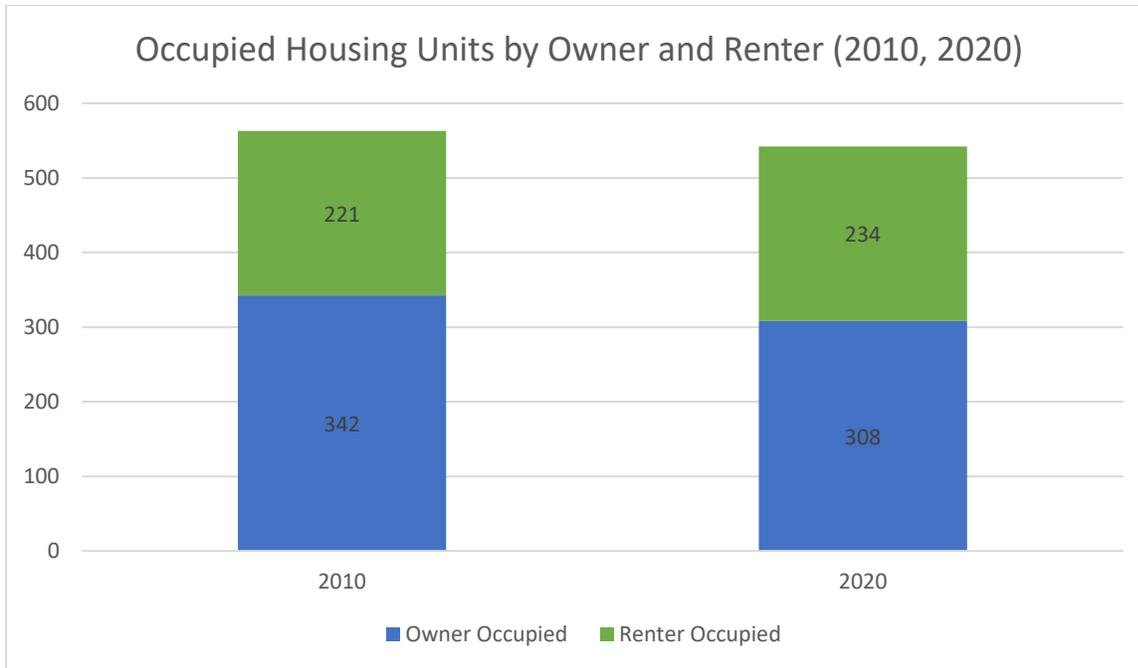
In part, this might be due to the age of Leetsdale’s homes.



Source: American Community Survey (2020)

Leetsdale’s housing stock is among the oldest in the region and considering that its median incomes are less than the surrounding communities, those homes are more likely to need repair.

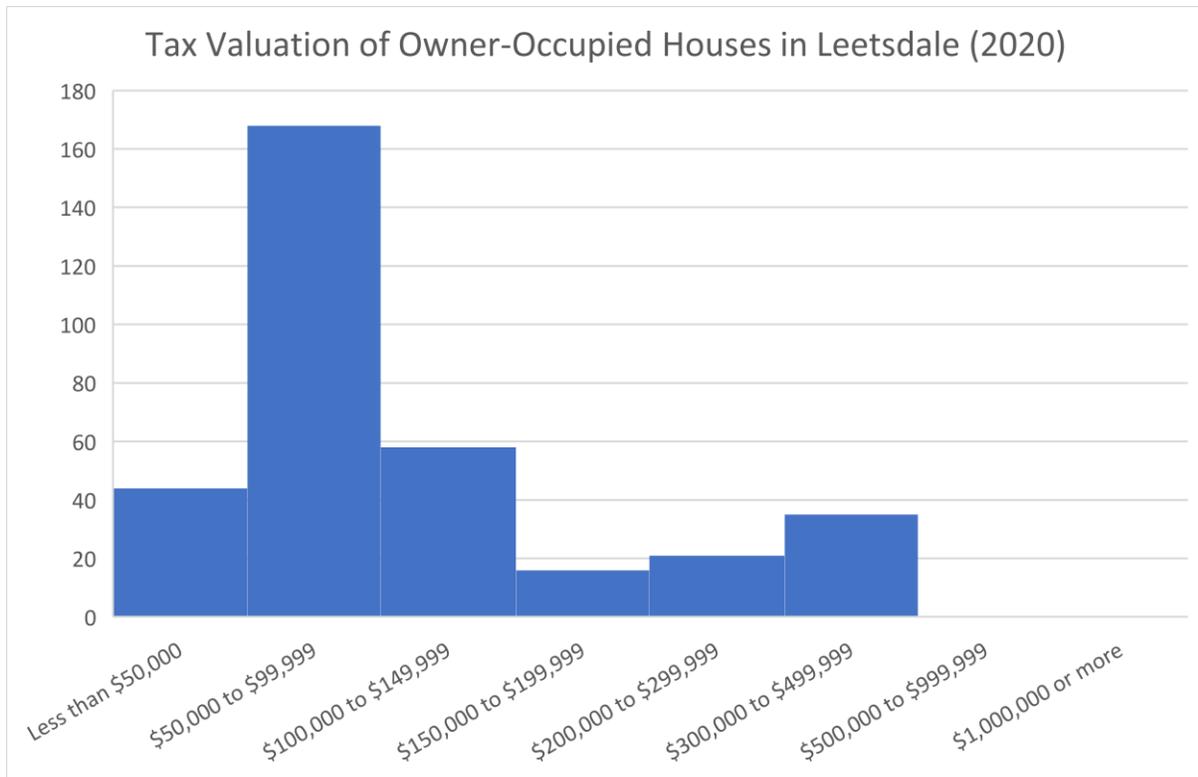
In such a situation, rentals often increase. We can look at the rental trends in Leetsdale.



Source: American Community Survey Occupancy Rate applied to Census Data Total Housing Units (2010, 2020)

The number of rentals as a proportion of occupied housing increased by 4%, moving from 39% in 2010 to 43% in 2020. As expected, the number and percentage of rentals is increasing.

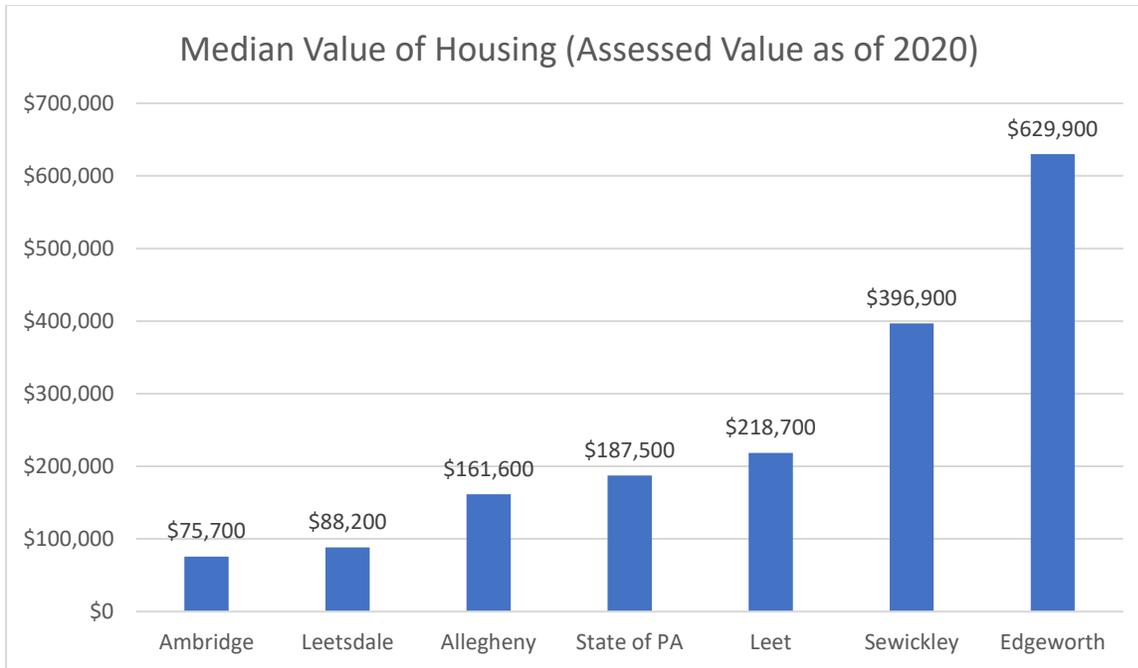
The distribution of house values points to the variety of housing in the borough.



Source: American Community Survey, 2020

The distribution exhibits a Pareto pattern, with most homes around a median value, but a long tail of homes at greater valuations.

The median value is \$88,200, representing the most affordable option in the Sewickley Valley, as reflected in the chart below.



Source: American Community Survey, 2020

When compared to neighboring boroughs, Leetsdale presents one of the more affordable options within the Quaker Valley School District.

### ***A.2.2 Conclusions***

Leetsdale’s housing stock is decreasing at an annual rate of 10%. Vacancy rates and rental percentages continue to climb with more than 40% of residents renting their homes.

### A.2.3 Blight Assessment

Blighted properties are defined in Pennsylvania Act 385, *Urban Redevelopment Law*, which describes blight as a building or property that has become a nuisance or hazard to the community because of disrepair, dangerous conditions, infestation, or abandonment and provides criteria.<sup>3</sup>

A risk-assessment for blight was conducted in Leetsdale in 2023. It was built on four steps:

- Listing Leetsdale properties by condition grade,<sup>4</sup> using publicly available information in the Allegheny County Real Estate Assessment Portal.
- A Right-To-Know request was used to identify properties with unpaid borough, school district, and county taxes and to obtain information on taxes owed. These properties constituted the basis for the At-Risk list.
- Additional properties were identified that were rated as poor by the County Assessor’s office but were not tax delinquent. These were added to the At-Risk list.
- A walk-through survey verified property conditions of the At-Risk properties, making a comparison with the status provided by the County Assessor’s Office.

Tax delinquency is one of the blight criteria per law and was found to be a major factor in overall blight risk. Public data indicates that 210 properties in Leetsdale are delinquent on property taxes, some extending back to 1961 (the earliest year known). The total liens can be substantial. One residential building, for instance, has \$85,927.77 owed.

#### *Total Taxes Owed by Delinquent Properties in Leetsdale*

<b>Taxing Authority</b>	<b>Amount Owed</b>
Allegheny County	\$ 177,229.51
Borough of Leetsdale	\$ 754,098.81
Quaker Valley School District	\$ 1,961,507.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,883,828.23</b>

*Source: Tax Authorities, with Borough of Leetsdale analysis*

Properties with back taxes are difficult to sell or re-develop because a buyer at auction must assume those taxes. Most back taxes are owed to the Quaker Valley School District, due to its significant millage rate. Thus, removing this obstacle to re-development is an issue that Leetsdale can only achieve by working with the school district.

The table below shows the distribution of properties with back taxes by type and condition.

<sup>3</sup> Note: Allegheny County’s redevelopment authorities consider a property blighted if it meets three or more of the criteria outlined in the law.

<sup>4</sup> Allegheny County inventories properties and ranks them with letter grades (A, B,C,D,E, X) and condition descriptors (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Average, Fair, Poor, Very Poor, and Unsound). This data can be used to assess the condition of the housing stock and blight risk for the area. Further information on blight criteria and property conditions in Allegheny County can be found in Appendix B.

	# of Properties	# of Tax Delinquent	% Tax Delinquent	Average Taxes Owed
<b>Total Properties</b>				
Residential	513	107	21%	\$ 8,029.67
Non-Residential	112	13	12%	\$ 7,008.61
Vacant Land	128	88	69%	\$20,856.85
<b>Building Condition</b>				
Very Good/Good	30	2	8%	\$ 5,840.16
Average	306	50	16%	\$ 4,612.25
Fair	140	38	27%	\$ 8,605.60
Poor	15	8	53%	\$ 19,690.24
Unsound	1	1	100%	\$ 4,372.92
Unrated	133	26	20%	\$ 12,200.96

Source: Tax Authorities, with Borough of Leetsdale analysis

From this data, we see that,

- Vacant lots account for most back taxes (\$ 1.8 million; 64%)
- Occupied-residential buildings account for most of the remained (\$0.86 million; 30%)

Vacant lots are the result of deindustrialization: families moved and lost track of properties. Moreover, the Quaker Valley School District is the primary lien holder for properties in Leetsdale. The combination of these two factors has made it difficult for new development to come in, allowing unoccupied land to become a problem in Leetsdale.

Tax delinquency is also a key indicator of future blight. Properties that are both tax-delinquent and already rated below average condition and delinquent, are more likely to fall into disrepair and become blighted. This is especially important, given Leetsdale’s aging population.

From the table above, forty-seven tax-delinquent buildings are graded below average by the Assessor’s Office. They are likely to meet 3 or more blight criteria if formally assessed using the country’s blight definition (confirmed by observations on the walk-through). Three additional structures were deemed of poor condition, also likely to meet the three or more criteria for blight. Each structure is owned by real estate companies that have paid the required taxes. Therefore, at least fifty property structures in Leetsdale are vulnerable to becoming blighted.

#### *A.2.4 Conclusions*

Over two hundred properties in Leetsdale owe back taxes, often significant. Based on the combined data on back taxes owed and property condition, at least fifty buildings in Leetsdale are vulnerable to blight.

Vacant land accounts for 64% of back taxes in the borough. Most taxes owed on the eighty-eight lots are obligated to the Quaker Valley School district, creating a barrier to re-development. Leetsdale may wish to coordinate a tax forgiveness program with the district as part of an effort to redevelop these lots and put them back on tax rolls.

We also see that absentee corporate owners of residential properties may be perpetuating the blight cycle by leaving their properties in poor condition even if their taxes are paid. Working with an established land bank, such as Tri-Cog Land Bank, would give Leetsdale more ability to control who would purchase a blighted property, and make sure it is redeveloped promptly as a condition of sale.

### A.3 Assessment of Residential Land Use

Leetsdale is an aging community with a decreasing number of residents. While most homes are owner-occupied, the trend favors rentals and smaller household sizes. Moreover, incomes are increasing but remain half the average for Pennsylvania.

Assuming current trends continue, we can forecast residential land uses and income from those uses.

We begin by dividing the population into owners and renters.

$$\Delta Population = \Delta Owner Population + \Delta Renter Population \quad (1)$$

Where,

$\Delta Population = \text{Change in total population}$

$\Delta Owner Population = \text{Change in Owner Population}$

$\Delta Renter Population = \text{Change in Renter Population}$

Owner and renter populations can be projected by assuming the trends over the last decade will continue into the next decade, a reasonable assumption given the stability of the trend thus far observed. Relevant data from the Decennial Census and American Community Survey is repeated in the table below.

Factors	2010	2020	Rate of Change
Total Population	1,218	1,162	-4.6%
Total Housing	632	612	-3.2%
Total Vacant Housing	69	70	1.4%
Owner Data			
Household size	2.42	2.03	-16.1%
% Occupied Housing	61%	57%	- 4 % points
Renter Data			
Household Size	1.75	1.68	- 4.0%
% Occupied Housing	39%	43%	+4 % points

Source: Decennial Census (2010, 2020) for totals; ACS (2010,2020) for household size and % of housing units, calculated based on occupied housing units found in ACS survey. Rate of change is calculated.

Using household size and household units, we compute the population of renters and owners as,

$$Population = (Total Household Units - Total Vacant Housing) \times \% Occupied \times Household Size \quad (2)$$

We can supplement the table as,

<b>Factors</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Rate of Change</b>
Total Population	1,218	1,162	-4.6%
Total Housing	632	612	-3.2%
Total Vacant Housing	69	70	1.4%
<b>Owner Data</b>			
Household size	2.42	2.03	-16.1%
% Occupied Housing	61%	57%	- 4 % points
Calculated Population	865	720	-16.8%
<b>Renter Data</b>			
Household Size	1.75	1.68	- 4.0%
% Occupied Housing	39%	43%	+ 4 % points
Resident Population	353	442	25.2%

Source: Decennial Census (2010, 2020) for totals; ACS (2010,2020) for household size and % of housing units, calculated based on occupied housing units found in ACS survey. Calculated populations are found using formula (2) and then normalized to total population. Rate of Change is calculated.

Since 2010, there has been a steady decline in the size of owner households, a trend compounded in effect by the decreasing number of housing units. Renters, on the other hand, have been increasing occupancy while also exhibiting decreasing household sizes.

Using formula (1), we can project into 2030.

<b>Factors</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2030 Projection</b>
Total Population	1,218	1,162	1,109
Total Housing	632	612	592
Total Vacant Housing	69	70	71
<b>Owner Data</b>			
Household size	2.42	2.03	1.70
% Occupied Housing	61%	57%	53%
Calculated Population	865	720	<b>599</b>
<b>Renter Data</b>			
Household Size	1.75	1.68	1.61
% Occupied Housing	39%	43%	47%
Resident Population	353	442	<b>510</b>

Source: Decennial Census (2010, 2020) for totals; ACS (2010,2020) for household size and % of housing units, calculated based on occupied housing units found in ACS survey. Calculated populations are found using formula (2) and then normalized to total population. Projected populations are found using formula (1) and normalized; other projections are directly calculated based on rate of change in prior table.

## Conclusions:

The analysis suggests that,

- Owners will increasingly give up occupancy going into 2030.
- Renters will absorb the excess housing.
- By 2030, renters and owners will approach parity.

A large rental population could change the character of the borough, including,

- Increasing levels of disrepair and neglect
- Decreasing the residential tax base

Leetsdale, therefore, must either accept the demographic shift or manage it via,

- Responsible landlord regulation, fostering maintenance of sound and hospitable units.
- Proactive code enforcement to improve the appearance of properties.
- Zoning regulation that encourages low-density development.

## **B. Commerce & Industry**

Historically, Leetsdale was dependent on the primary-metals industry. Unprepared for the downturn in the late 1970s, the region saw population levels and employment decline.

Today, an industrial area continues, accounting for a significant portion of the borough's tax revenue. Therefore, a study of the health and diversity of Leetsdale's business activities is important.

### **B.1 Business Activity**

#### Overview

The borough's industrial areas are located southwest of Ohio River Boulevard (Route 65) along the Ohio River. There are several industrial complexes in this area including the Buncher Industrial District, the Leetsdale Industrial Park, and the Hussey Copper Complex, together herein referred to as the Industrial Park. Industrial activities range from light manufacturing to warehousing and distribution. The Industrial Park sits atop the former community of Oliver Town, a one-time river community that was part of Leetsdale at its founding. In the aftermath of the 1936 Flood, few of those homes survived. Residential land use continues among a few homes along Ferry Street – in between warehouses – and homes along Washington Street.

Commercial activity is centered in the Quaker Village, a shopping area separated from Edgeworth Borough by Village Drive, with access to Route 65. Its anchor store is Giant Eagle, a grocery store that serves the Quaker Valley area. The architecture of the complex is consistent from store to store with well-designed signage including a multi-tenant monument sign located at the entrance to the complex, which reduces sign clutter in the area. The interior of the parking lot lacks buffers, pedestrian walkways, and landscaped islands.

Within the larger borough, business activity includes,<sup>5</sup>

- Local businesses located along Route 65, including two strip malls.
- Rental properties
- Home businesses

#### Assessing the Diversity of Business Activity

Business activity in the borough is a source of employment and revenue. As part of the planning exercise, a census of businesses with a physical address in Leetsdale was conducted. The largest firms and their industries are listed in the table below.

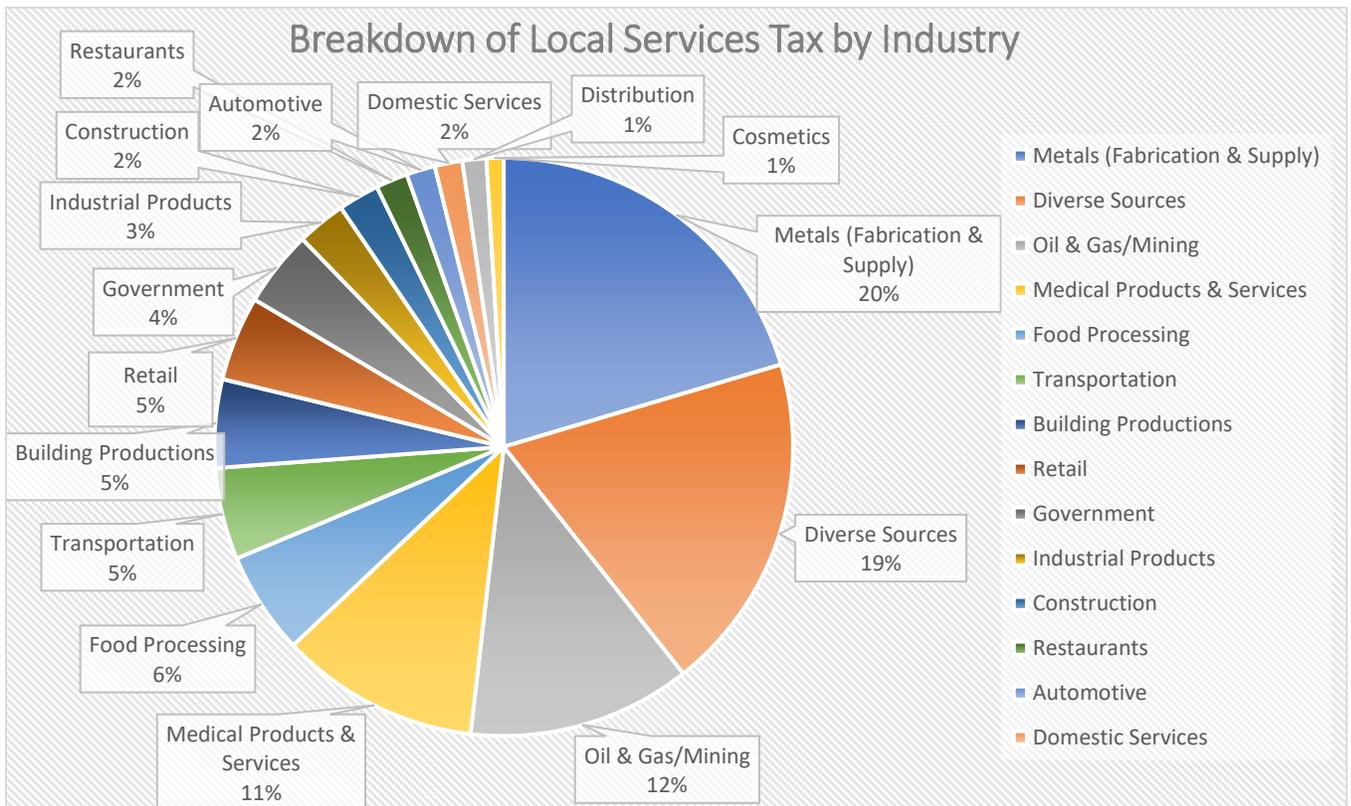
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<sup>5</sup> The Quaker Valley School District has both a high school and district offices within Leetsdale. It is a source of local services taxes – which are employment based - but not property taxes. Thus, its contribution is small and not mentioned as a business activity.

<b>Business Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Industry Type</b>	<b>Key Industry Served</b>
Libertas Copper LLC	100 Washington St	Metal Fabrication	
Schroeder Industries	580 West Park Road	Industrial Products	Mining
Haemonetics Corp	Ave C Building 18	Medical Products	
Quaker Valley School District	100 Leetsdale Industrial Dr., Suite B	Government	
Giant Eagle INC	5 Quaker Village Drive	Retail	
Almatis, Inc.	Building 4 Avenue B	Metal Fabrication	
Impact Guard LLC	31 Leetsdale Industrial Dr,	Building Products	
JT Thorpe & Son	17 Ferry Street	Engineering	Metal Fabrication
Bimbo Bakeries	142 Ferry St	Food Processing	
K&K Gourmet Meats	300 Washington Street	Food Processing	
Allegheny Performance Plastics LLC	Building 3 Avenue A	Industrial Products	
Arch Logistics LLC	601 Riverside Place	Transportation	
Rudd Equipment Co	Building 1 Avenue A	Equipment Dealer	Construction
Primary AIM LLC (Wendy's)	9 Quaker Village	Restaurant	
Serenity Unlimited Inc	412 Washington Street	Medical Services	
BL Cream Company	866 Avenue A	Food Processing	
Millwood Inc	200 Leetsdale Industrial Dr	Industrial Products	Transportation
Stone Rooster Inc	16 Avenue A	Distribution	
CMR - USA LLC	940 Riverside Place	Electronics	Oil & Gas
Heritage Valley Multi Group	Quaker Village	Medical Services	
Bob Sumerel Tire Company	687 Ave A	Industrial Products	Transportation
Carroll Manufacturing Co., LLC	Suite 301 80 Leetsdale Industrial Drive	Metal Fabrication	
Veteran Plumbing Services	109 3rd Street	Domestic Services	
Framkat LP (a.k.a Framesi)	Building 17 Avenue A	Beauty Supply	
Shaw Industries Group	700 Brickworks Drive	Building Products	
VSMPO-Tirus	401 Riverport Drive	Metal Fabrication	
Utz Quality Foods	5 Quaker Village	Food Processing	
Prime Source AP Department	19 Ave C	Building Products	
Competitors Edge LLC	541 Avenue B Building 11	Contracting	Construction
Port of BeeMac	375 Riverport Dr	Transportation	

These thirty firms account for 70% of the approximately 2,700 people employed in the borough, with the top firm accounting for 10% of employment, suggesting that no one firm dominates the local economy.

We can further analyze business activity by industry.



Source: Estimated by Leetsdale Borough Office for Noted Categories

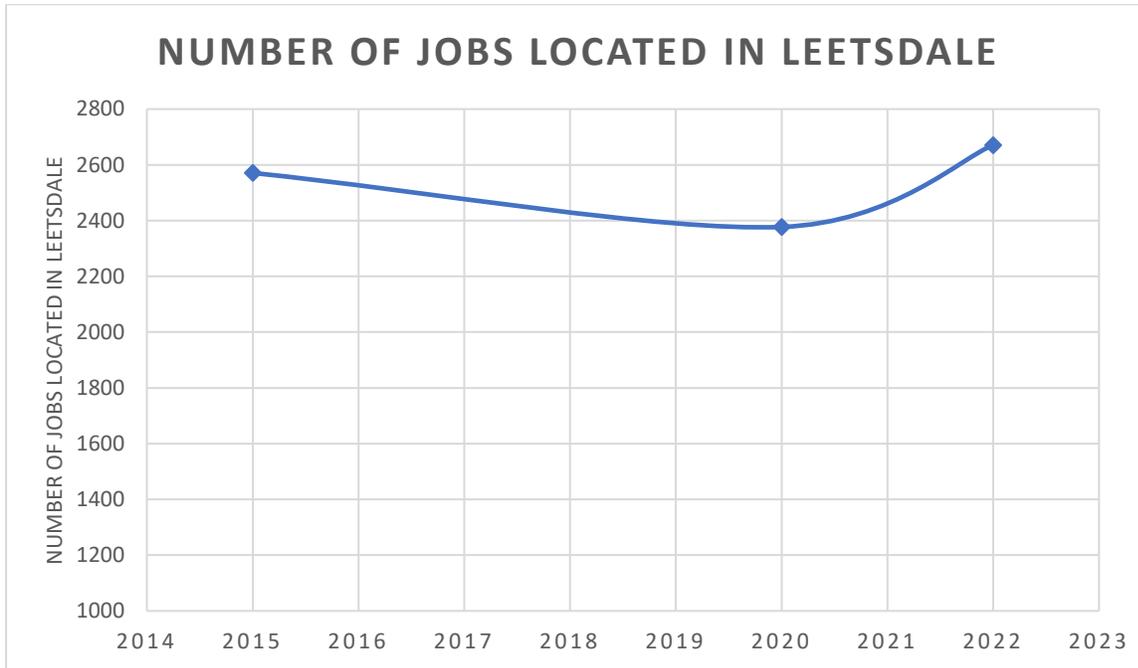
The data suggest that while Leetsdale’s industry is still dominated by metals, that industry now represents a minority of business activity. Three industries lead: 1) Metals, 2) Oil & Gas/Mining Products, and 3) Medical Products & Services, together accounting for approximately 40% of activity. Leetsdale, therefore, now has a diverse economic base.

### ***B.1.2 Conclusions***

The borough has diversified its economic base since the 1980s when the metals industry dominated jobs. Metal (Fabrication & Supply) now accounts for 20% of jobs. Medical products and services and Oil and gas/Mining round out the top 40%. Leetsdale’s industrial base appears much more resilient than in the prior decades.

## B.2 Employment Trends

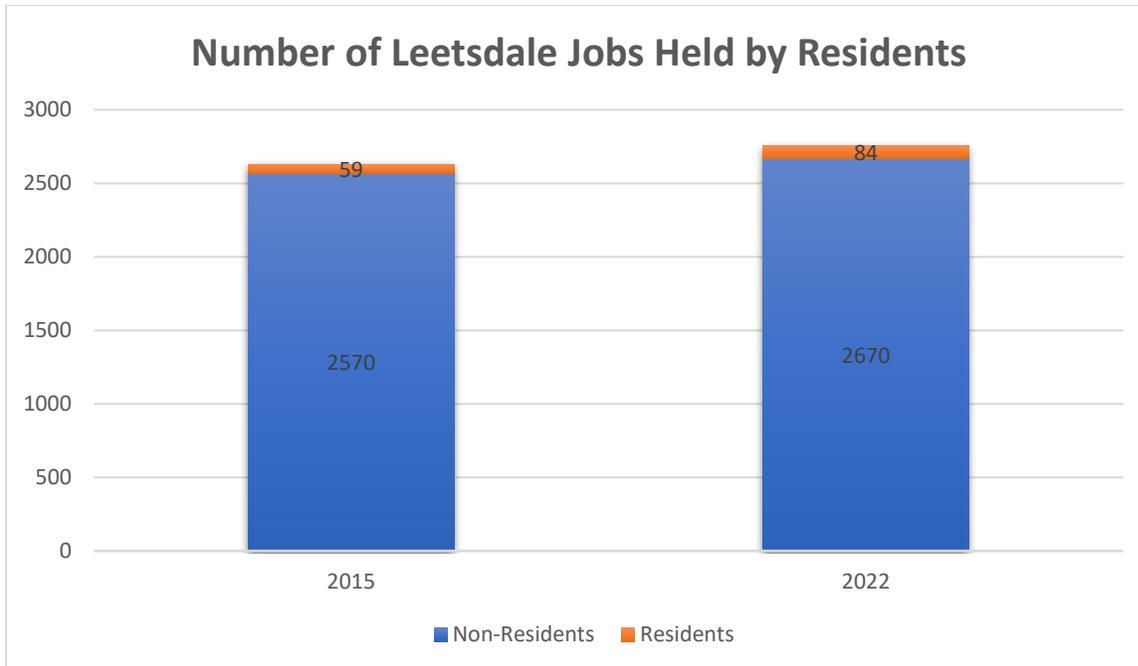
An estimate of the number of jobs available in Leetsdale is charted below, going back to 2015.



*Source: Leetsdale budget for actual LST collected Divided by \$ 52 (the amount each employee pays)*

The chart shows that Leetsdale is home to a substantial number of jobs for the region. Despite the drop in 2020, a period of economic shutdowns, levels have risen at the rate of 0.5% per year.

Using census data, we can also estimate the number of Leetsdale residents who work in the borough.



*Source: American Community Survey, % of Leetsdale Residents Who Commute Less than 10 Minutes; this assumes all people who commute less than 10 minutes work in Leetsdale. It also fails to account for the % of remote workers who do not commute. For these two reasons, the values are likely an overestimate.*

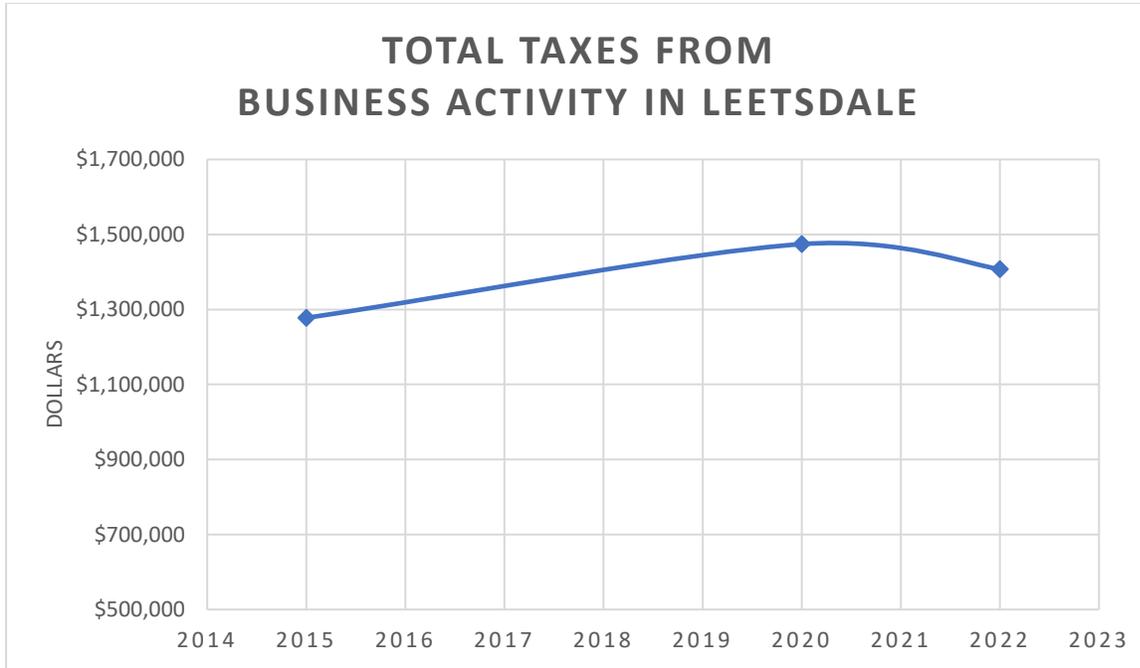
The chart demonstrates that very few jobs in Leetsdale are held by Leetsdale residents. This is true also if we consider Leetsdale’s workers as a percentage of the residential population, suggesting that at most 10% to 14% of working-residents work in Leetsdale, a small minority.

### ***B.2.2 Conclusions***

Business activity in Leetsdale provides more than two thousand jobs and has been increasing at the rate of 0.5% per year. Nevertheless, few of those jobs are held by residents. Data suggest that at most 10% to 14% of working-residents are employed by Leetsdale businesses.

### B.3 Business Activity as a Source of Revenue

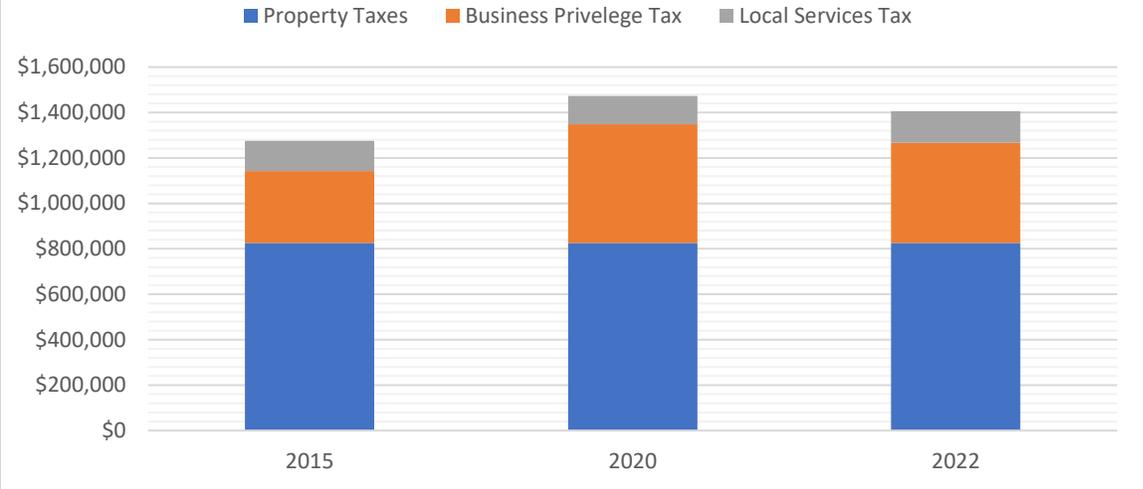
Although Leetsdale’s businesses provide few jobs for its residents, they do provide tax revenue. We can estimate the total revenue in the chart below.



*Source: Leetsdale budget for BPT and LST; Allegheny Property Assessor Land Values in 2023 x 9 mils. The chart assumes that the property assessment in 2023 has been constant since 2015, a fair but approximate assumption. The chart also neglects earned income taxes since they are likely to be immaterial.*

The source of these taxes can further be distinguished by property taxes, business privileges taxes, and local services taxes.

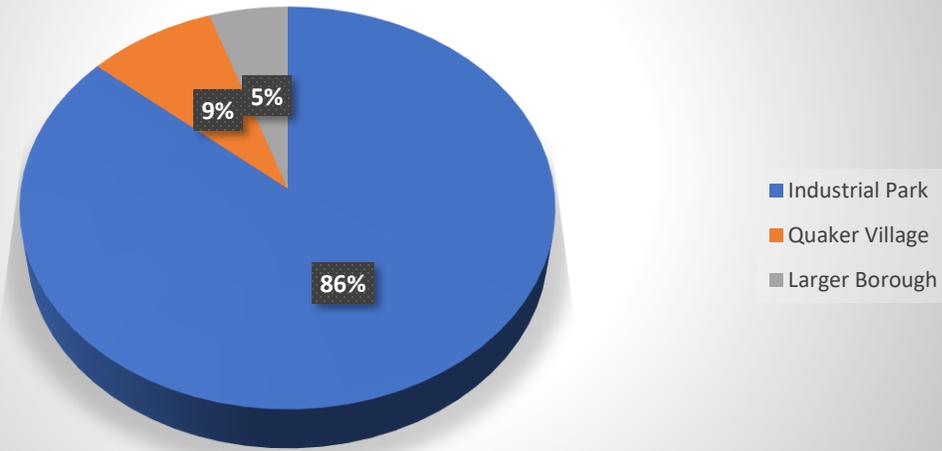
# Breakdown of Revenue from Business Activity



Source: Leetsdale budget for BPT and LST; Allegheny Property Assessor Land Values in 2023 x 9 mils. The chart assumes that the property assessment in 2023 has been constant since 2015, a fair but approximate assumption. The chart also neglects earned income taxes since they are likely to be immaterial.

Property taxes dominate the composition of revenue. We can further break down revenue sources by the location of business activity in the borough, either the Industrial Park, Quaker Village, or the larger borough.

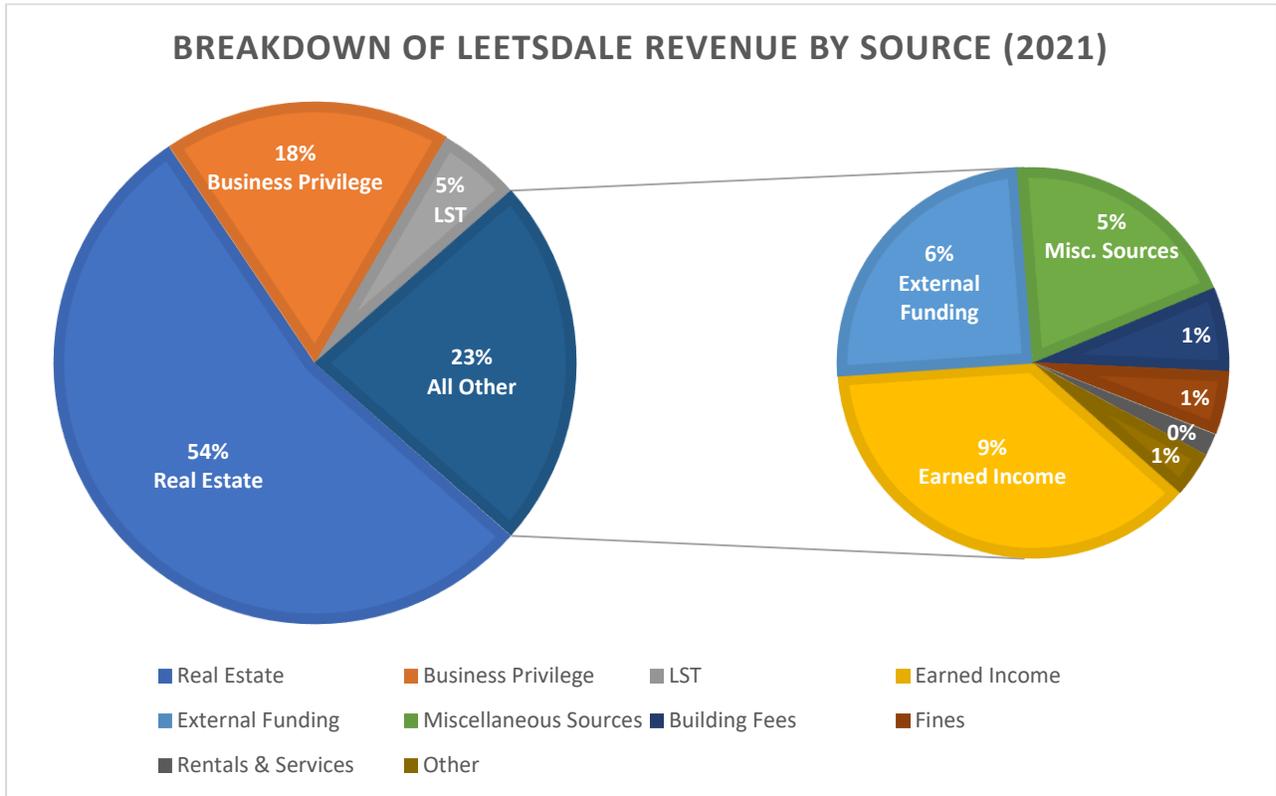
## Revenue from Business Activity by Geography (2022)



Source: Estimated by Leetsdale Borough Office for Noted Categories on LST and extrapolated the same distribution to BPT. Property Tax taken from Allegheny County.

The Industrial Park accounts for most of the revenue, unsurprising since it accounts for most of the land used in Leetsdale, a purpose afforded by the borough in order to generate revenue and jobs for the community. Given that so much land-use has been dedicated to industry, we should further investigate its net contribution to the community.

We begin by considering the largest sources of revenue for the borough.



Source: Leetsdale Budget (2021).

The three commonly discussed sources of revenue – Real Estate, Business Privilege Tax (BPT), and Local Service Tax (LST) – are regressive taxes imposed by the borough and represent about 77% of the total revenue.

We begin by applying the percentages determined in the prior analysis to Leetsdale’s financials as of year-end 2021. From this, we can determine the gross revenue from each land-use source.

**Table: Land Use Revenue from Regressive Taxes (Real Estate, BPT, and LST) (2021)**

Land Use	Revenue	Percentage
Industrial	\$1,167,346	65%
Residential	\$ 428,817	24%
Commercial	\$189,959	11%
Total	\$1,786,122	100%

Source: Leetsdale year-end financials for 2021, allocated according to the percentages described herein.

As a portion of regressive taxes, business activity represents the lion share of revenue, 76%. This, however, is an incomplete picture.

We should also consider all sources of revenue.

**Table: Estimated Gross Revenue by Land Use (2021)<sup>6</sup>**

Land Use	Revenue
Industrial	\$1,205,946
Residential	\$ 925,707
Commercial	\$189,959
Total	\$2,322,612

*Source: Leetsdale year-end financials for 2021, allocated according to the percentages described herein.*

This, however, overstates the contribution of industrial uses. Leetsdale dedicates a material portion of its budget to support the Industrial Park, expenses that span infrastructure improvement to public safety. Since industrial use is not an end in itself but rather a means to serve residents, we must account for how much residents are giving back to the Industrial Park in order to receive a benefit.

**Table: Net Contribution by Land Use (2021)<sup>7</sup>**

Land Use	Revenue	Percentage
Industrial	\$678,904	38%
Residential	\$ 925,707	52%
Commercial	\$189,959	10%
Total	\$1,794,640	

*Source: Leetsdale year-end financials for 2021, allocated according to the percentages described herein.*

The overall analysis represents an estimate, pointing to the fact that while the Industrial Park is a large contributor to the community, its net contribution is comparable to that from residential sources.

<sup>6</sup> Assumes external funding such as state grants should be considered a residential source since such external funding is available to the community regardless of industrial land use.

<sup>7</sup> Assumes external funding such as state grants should be considered a residential source since such external funding is available to the community regardless of industrial land use. Expenses identified to support the Industrial Park include, tax collection (2% of expense), solicitor (10%), engineering (50%), police (33%), protective inspections (100%), roads (50%). The expenses allocated to the Industrial Park are assumption based. A small portion of these expenses should be allocated to commercial uses, so there could be a degree of overestimation when allocating expenses. The analysis should, therefore, be considered for directional.

### ***B.3.2 Conclusions***

The borough dedicates a significant portion of land to industrial uses in order to generate jobs and revenue. While there is evidence that industrial activity is a net contributor to the borough's finances, that contribution appears comparable to the revenue from residential uses, after considering expenses the borough incurs to support continued operations at the site.

### **B.4 Assessment of Commercial and Industrial Land Uses**

Through zoning legislation, Leetsdale has dedicated land for both commercial and industrial use.

Commercial use benefits the community by providing jobs, revenue, and a place for residents to obtain goods and services. The Quaker Village Center Shopping Center, as the largest shopping center for groceries in the Sewickley Valley, anchors commercial activity. Commercial activity appears to provide 10% of the borough's revenue.

Leetsdale's industrial park dominates land use in the community. Although the park was constructed to provide jobs for residents and income to the municipal government, it has provided few jobs for residents and its net contribution to income is comparable to residential sources.

### C. Environmental Resources

We share the borough with a myriad of living things and natural wonders. From the river to the trees, they benefit us, and we endeavor to care for them. Our natural resources contribute to the economic vitality, environmental health, and quality of life of a community. Environmentally sensitive areas, such as woodlands, wetlands, steep slopes, stream valleys, and floodplains also contribute to the overall scenic beauty of a place and support important ecological functions. For these reasons, environmentally sensitive areas and open space should be preserved and protected. Information on environmental resources should be used to guide growth to areas that are more suitable for development and protect important environmental resources.

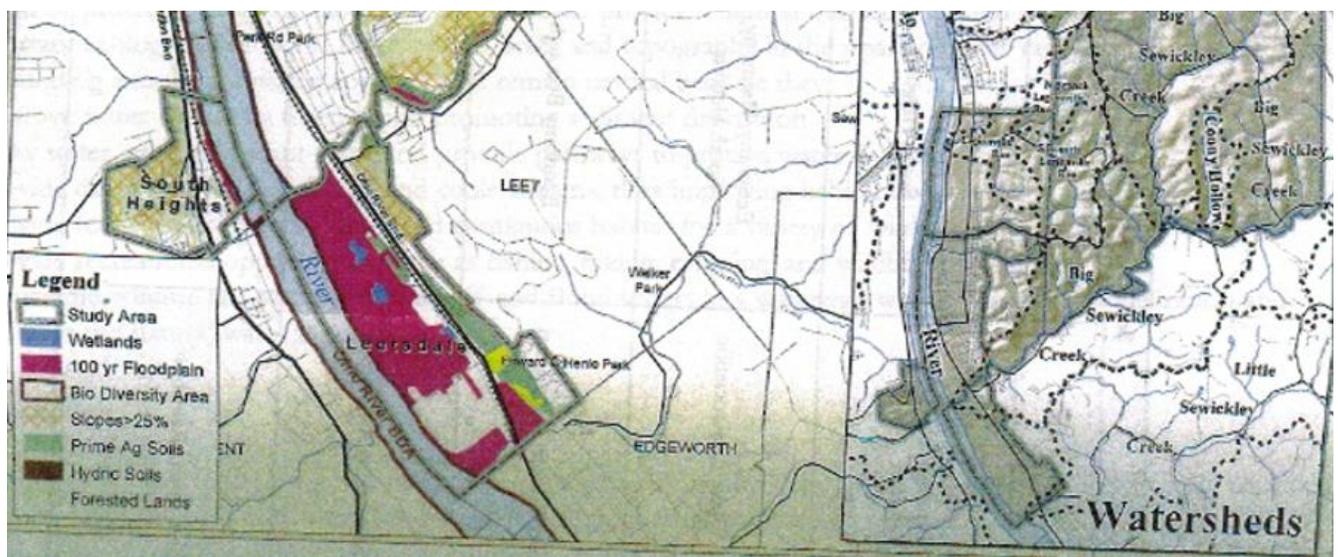
This section provides an overview of the environmentally sensitive features and areas in the region. Environmental features identified in the region include,

- Soils
- Steep Slopes
- Rivers and Streams
- Wetlands
- Woodlands

The Natural Resources Map below indicates the occurrence of these features and should be referenced throughout this section.

The investigation then continues with a more detailed discussion of flora & fauna and how Leetsdale currently uses its environment in terms of parks and green spaces.

*Natural Resources Map for Leetsdale Area*



Source: 2004 SHALE Plan

## C.1 Soil and Slopes

### Soils

Understanding soil types is important for protecting water quality, wetlands, and wildlife habitat. Information on general soil types is provided by soil surveys, which evaluate the behavior of a type of soil under alternative uses, its potential erosion hazard, potential for ground water contamination, and suitability and productivity for cultivated crops, trees, and grasses. The general soil types found in the region are described below based on the Allegheny County Soil Survey (1981), Table 1.25, which provides more information on the potential uses and limitations of the soil types found in the region.

*Gilpin-Upshur-Atkins Association:* This association is found in Leetsdale in Allegheny County. It is characterized by moderately deep and deep, well drained soils underlain by red and gray shale on uplands and deep, poorly drained soils on floodplains.

*Urban Land-Philo-Rainsboro Association:* This association is found in Leetsdale in Allegheny County along the Ohio River. It is found in areas altered by urban development and is characterized by deep, moderately well drained soils and urban land on floodplains and terraces.

Concerning use of soils for agriculture, Leetsdale is dominated by urban land and contains no active farms although prime farmland exists along and north of Beaver Road. Prime farmland is defined as land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses (ISDA, 1998).

### Slopes

Allegheny County is underlain by the Glenshaw Formation, the top of which includes Pittsburgh Red Beds. These are a primary source of landslides in southwest Pennsylvania. The Pittsburgh Red Beds are a 40 to 60-foot series of mostly reddish, greenish, and grayish claystone and shale, with minor amounts of sandstone and siltstone that tend to weather deeply on hillsides throughout southwestern Pennsylvania. Claystone is a low permeability, low strength rock with weakly connected pore space. Repeated weathering cycles and excessive pore pressure tend to reduce the internal shear strength of this rock, which can lead to failure.

Slope information is important for all aspects of land use planning as it affects transportation, building design, drainage control and erosion, sewage disposal, and the type of land use practical for a given area. In most cases, steep slopes pose development constraints. The topography of the study area can be described as relatively flat floodplains extending outward from the Ohio River to increasing steeply sloped ridges and stream valleys. Steeply sloped areas in excess of 25% are present. These sloped areas tend to congregate around streams and headwaters and follow drainage ways.

Steeply sloped areas can be part of greenways, woodlands, or connected wildlife corridors because they are cost prohibitive and not suitable for development.

## **C.2 Hydrology: Watersheds, Rivers, and Streams**

A watershed is the area of land where all the water that is under it (ground water) or drains off it travels to the same point, whether it be stream, lake, river, or the ocean. The watershed is the unit for assessing the water quality in a water body because the activities that take place in a watershed impact the quality and condition of the water body. Watersheds conform to natural boundaries, rather than municipal and political boundaries and national, state, and local agencies are emphasizing the importance of environmental planning on a watershed level.

Leetsdale falls within the Upper Ohio Watershed, which encompasses the southeastern corner of Beaver County and the northwestern corner of Allegheny County and flows to the Ohio River Basin. Smaller watersheds units associated with the streams and creeks in the area are illustrated on the Natural Resources map, including Big Sewickley Creek (Ambridge, Economy, Harmony, Leetsdale).

The Ohio River originates in Pittsburgh at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers and flows north and west through Beaver County. The development of cities and towns in the area took place along the Ohio River where industries leveraged the river for transportation. As a result, the Ohio River is lined with industrial and residential development to a degree that little natural features remain. The industrialization that occurred along the river during the 20<sup>th</sup> century resulted in decreased water quality and a loss of native species. This was due to poorly regulated industrial discharges, construction of locks and dams that altered the depths and currents of the river, and dredging of the river to extract sand, gravel, and cobblestone for ease of transportation.

Federal mandates to clean the river coupled with a decline in industrial activity has resulted in improved water quality. The present-day Ohio River is classified as a low- to medium-quality warm water fishery. Water quality has improved over the past decade with some fish populations increasing while pollution-sensitive species are returning, including the walleye, sauger, and bass. The Ohio River has been designated a Biodiversity Area by the Beaver County Natural Heritage Inventory due to the presence of fish species of concern. Additional measures of protection are needed to improve the water quality and protect habitat to ensure the survival of native plants and animals.

The Pennsylvania Code, Title 25. Environmental Protection, Chapter 93. Water Quality Standards (issued under Clean Streams Law) set water quality standards for surface water in Pennsylvania. According to the Act, surface waters can be designated for specific water uses, which are protected based on water quality criteria set forth for that particular use. Water uses are designated according to aquatic life, water supply, recreation, and special protection for high quality and exceptional value waters.

Some boroughs and counties have designated as protected warm Water Fishes (WWF) along the river, including Beaver County (The Ohio River), Harmony Township (Legionville Run), and Economy Borough (Tevebaugh Run). The WWF designation sets forth water quality criteria for the maintenance and propagation of fish species and additional flora and fauna which are indigenous to a warm water habitat. The Ohio river is also protected for navigational uses, such

as the commercial transfer and transport of persons, animals, and goods. Big Sewickley Creek, which forms the southern border of Economy Borough with Allegheny County, is designated as protected for Trout Stocking (TSF). This designation includes maintenance of stocked trout from February 15 to July 31, and maintenance and propagation of fish species and additional flora and fauna which are indigenous to a warm water habitat.

Additionally, riparian zones are narrow strips of land bordering creeks, rivers, lakes, and other bodies of water. These areas should be protected from development because they provide a natural buffering around waterways that serve important ecological functions. Plant species, soils, and topography in the riparian zones vary in comparison to the surrounding areas and riparian zones should remain natural because they:

- Improve water quality by filtering and promoting sediment deposition.
- Allow water storage in plant roots and provide pathways to ground water layers.
- Provide canopy cover that shades and cools streams, thus improving habitat conditions.
- Provide food, shelter, nesting sites, and contiguous habitat for a variety of wildlife.
- Provide recreational opportunities such as fishing, hiking, camping, and wildlife observation.
- Reduce the volume and velocity of run-off and flood waters in waterway, which
- *Floodplains:* a flood, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency National Flood Insurance Program, is a general and temporary condition of partial or complete inundation of two or more acres of normally dry land or of two or more properties due to overflow of inland or tidal waters, unusual and rapid accumulation, or runoff of surface waters from any source, or a mudflow. A second definition is the collapse or subsidence of land along the shore of a lake or similar body of water because of erosion or undermining caused by waves or currents of water exceeding anticipated cyclical levels that result in a flood. Development in the floodplain can result in loss of life, property damage, and increased downstream flooding. Therefore, it is important to identify these areas in the 100-year floodplain and establish floodplain management guidelines to prevent damage and destruction due to flooding. The 100-year flood plain includes those areas with a history and statistical probability of flooding at least one percent per year.

*Wetlands:* The Natural Resources Map also indicates the presence of wetlands identified by the National Wetlands Inventory of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Wetlands are located within floodplains along the Ohio River in Leetsdale.

## **C.3 Flora & Fauna**

### ***C.3.1 Woodlands***

The Ohio River valley includes a Sugar Maple-Beech Climax association, which is dominated by sugar maple, American beech, hickory, red oak, white oak, white ash, and American basswood. These areas are important resources as they add to the scenic beauty of the area, provide wildlife

habitat, and offer recreational opportunities. Wooded areas also provide water holding capacity to prevent erosion and siltation which can result in the sedimentation of streams.

### ***C.3.2 Urban Shade Trees***

Trees in dense urban and suburban developments yield countless benefits to people and the environment as shown in the table below.

*Table: Benefits of Shade and Ornamental Trees in Urban and Suburban Developments*

Economic Benefits to Homeowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Property Values</u>: increase by up to 9% for lots with mature trees.</li> <li>● <u>Energy Savings</u>: tree shade helps save \$200+ in energy bills yearly.</li> <li>● <u>Neighborhood Effect</u>: landscaping a blighted lot increases surrounding property values by up to 40%</li> <li>● <u>Friends to Sidewalks</u>: shade coverage from urban trees protects sidewalks from overheating and elements, delaying repair needs by 10-25 years.</li> </ul>
Economic Benefits to Municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Livability</u>: tree-lined streets make a desirable community</li> <li>● <u>Revenue</u>: increased tax base from higher property values</li> <li>● <u>Stormwater Management</u>: each mature street tree prevents over 1000 gallons of water per year from going into the stormwater runoff, decreasing the load on sewer systems.</li> <li>● <u>Good for Business</u>: Main Street retail spaces with adjacent trees are popular with shoppers, bringing 11% more business and justifying premium prices.</li> </ul>
Environmental Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Oxygen</u>: a mature tree fully provides for the breathing needs of four people</li> <li>● <u>Climate Action</u>: a mature tree sequesters over 600 lb. of carbon dioxide per year, helping resist climate change.</li> <li>● <u>Air Quality</u>: street trees clear urban air from chemical pollutants</li> <li>● <u>Microclimates</u>: shade trees can lower local temperatures by up to 10 degrees in the summer and decrease wind throughout the year</li> <li>● <u>Biodiversity</u>: trees provide habitats for wildlife and food for pollinators</li> <li>● <u>Risk Management</u>: by intercepting stormwater, trees help prevent erosion and floods</li> </ul>
Health and Social Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Work Better</u>: office employees with access to green spaces are more productive and take less sick leave.</li> <li>● <u>Be Together</u>: people love to gather among trees for community activities.</li> <li>● <u>Healing Powers</u>: better healing reported in hospital rooms overlooking trees.</li> <li>● <u>Green Play</u>: green spaces foster physical activity, as well as friendly and inclusive play, among school children.</li> <li>● <u>Calm Focus</u>: children with ADD experience a decrease in symptoms when surrounded by nature.</li> <li>● <u>Peaceful Heart</u>: green areas and trees invite reflection, connecting us to symbols, shared values, and continuity of life</li> </ul>

*Sources: TreePittsburgh, Arbor Day Foundation, Western PA Conservancy*

## Rationale for Shade Tree Inventory

A shade tree inventory is a complete list of municipal trees that includes information on their identification, size, location, and health. This inventory is meant to be updated regularly and serve as a basis for a comprehensive tree care plan.

Past work on keeping records of shade trees in Leetsdale has been intermittent. A shade tree inventory has been performed in 1972 by John Cigan for an Eagle Scout project. It contains tree information, measurements, and hand-drawn maps of their locations. The inventory had identified 256 trees on borough streets and the two parks. There has been no data on the state of borough trees in the intervening years. According to the records of the Shade Tree Commission, active planting was done in the 1990s with borough funds, private donations, and grant support. At that time, Leetsdale qualified for the distinction of Tree City USA. In the Spring of 2023, working with Western PA Conservancy, Leetsdale has been selected for a TreeVitalize grant and received sixteen landscape and three restoration trees to be planted in borough parks and on borough streets.

An updated inventory of trees helps identify valuable specimens and provide for their protection and care. It can pinpoint locations where coverage has been lost, or where trees in poor health need to be removed. The inventory will help select species for future plantings that are best suited to certain locations. It will also help prevent the spread of disease among trees of similar species by informing where to begin preventive measures. Finally, it can be used in grant applications for future plantings.

## 2023 Shade Tree Inventory

Borough trees were surveyed by Conor Kelley, Local Government Academy summer intern, and Maria Napolitano, Council President, during late May and early June of 2023. Andrew Tomaskovic, an independent arborist, visited the site on June 23, 2023, verified tree identifications in borough parks and along Broad and Spencer streets, evaluated tree health and gave care recommendations. Brian Crooks of Western PA Conservancy provided additional assistance with tree identification via e-mail.

Data collected included: circumference, diameter, estimated height, presence of overhead lines, width of grass strip, and curb distance if applicable. Tree locations, coordinates, and street addresses were also recorded.

Tree condition was evaluated using four definitions:

- Good: tree health and condition are acceptable.
- Fair: parts of the canopy display undesirable leaf color, inappropriate leaf size, and inadequate new growth. Parts of the tree are likely to fail.
- Poor: most of the canopy displays dieback and undesirable leaf color, inappropriate leaf size, or inadequate new growth. Trees or parts of trees are in the process of failure.
- Dead

Tree locations were mapped using ESRI ArcGIS Online software. The map is publicly available. A report on the study has been published on the Leetsdale Borough website.

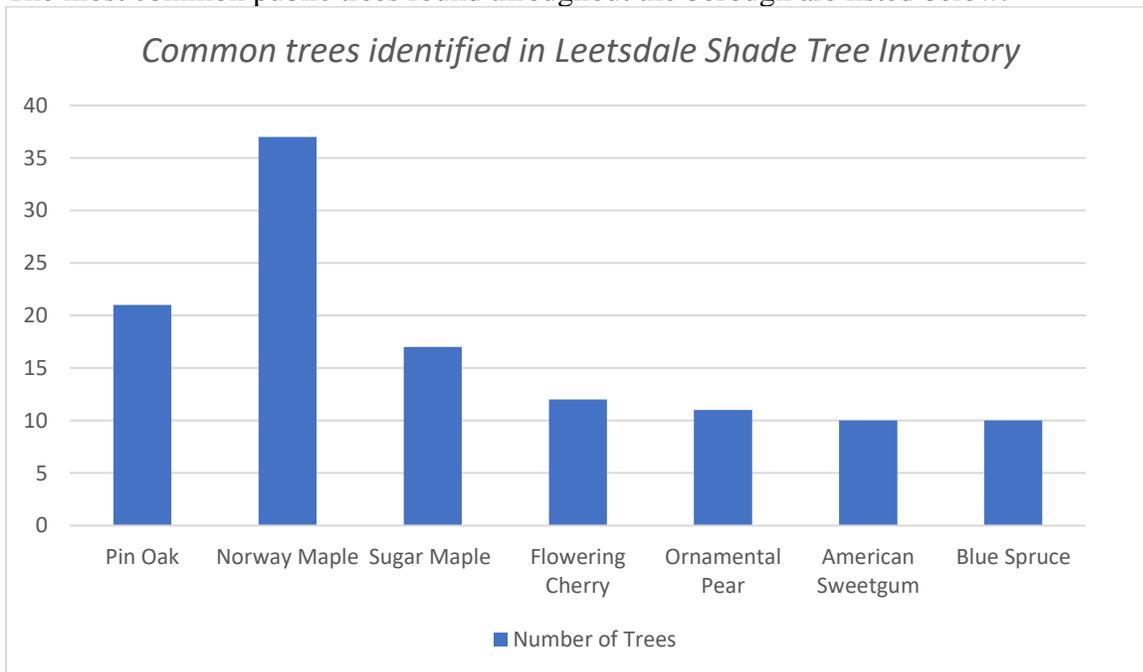
## Results

This shade tree inventory has identified a total of 260 trees on borough property and public right-of-way in Leetsdale. In addition, the inventory identified and recorded information on 30 Publicly Visible trees. Two types of trees are included in this category:

- Trees located on properties that are owned by public entities other than borough or commercial entities, are located within 20 ft from borough sidewalks or accessible parking lots and overlook pathways of high visibility and traffic for Leetsdale residents.
- An exceptional tree on a private property donated by a former Mayor and planted by the borough.

This brings the total of the surveyed trees to 290 specimens. There were seventy-seven tree species identified.

The most common public trees found throughout the borough are listed below.



Of those, the numbers for Norway Maple (both green and crimson varieties) and Ornamental Pear reflect the popularity of these species as street trees in the 1970s-1990s. Since then, they have been recognized as not optimal in the role of urban trees due to their invasive nature, shallow roots, and propensity towards structural instability. Most Pin Oaks in Leetsdale are in borough parks and other public and commercial lots rather than on the streets. Many of the Blue Spruce trees were found to be in poor condition.

Data is further summarized by region below. For convenience, the trees have been grouped into five general areas:

- Henle Park: a public park bordered by Beaver St., Ferry St., and Ohio River Blvd.
- Broad and Spencer Streets: trees in the public right-of-way on Broad St and cross streets
- Beaver Street: trees on public right-of-way and borough lots along Beaver St.
- Washington Street, Kohlmeyer Park, and Brickworks Drive: trees on public rights-of-way, a public park, and on borough lots in the industrial area of Leetsdale
- Train Tracks and Ohio River Boulevard: trees on the borough lot between the railroad and Ohio River Blvd, adjacent to the Red Cap Cleaners building.

### Henle Park

Henle Park contains mature Arboretum-quality specimens of native, foreign, and exotic trees in a small area, a rarity for public parks. The original trees on this site, formerly the Atwood estate, were planted by Mrs. Rebecca Atwood in the post-Civil War period, and by Mr. Walter Morrow for the Atwood family pre-World War II. The present layout of Henle Park balances green space with recreational amenities, including a gazebo, basketball court, playground, and Splash Pad.

A total of seventy-nine trees have been identified in Henle Park. In addition, there is a row of arborvitae along the fence between Ohio River Boulevard and the park that serves as a green barrier between the road and the park grounds. Those were not included in the inventory. Of the trees identified in the 1972 inventory, twenty-seven specimens still stand. They include majestic mature specimens of purple beach, fern leaf beach, shaker oak, chestnut oak, golden raintree, and ginkgo.



*Golden raintree*



*Purple Beech*



*Fernleaf Beech*

Overall, the 1972 inventory identified eighty-two trees. Although the 2023 tree count is close, it portrays a very different picture:

- More trees are recent plantings: only three of the eighty-two trees, or 3.65%, in 1972 were recent plantings under 3” in diameter. In 2023, those represent fifteen out of seventy-nine, or 18.98%.

- Fewer shade trees, more flowering trees: in 1972, all but four of the eighty-two trees (95%) were shade trees that promised to grow to a generous size and provide wide canopy coverage. At present, shade trees represent sixty-seven out of seventy-nine, or 85%. The rest are smaller flowering trees of limited height, planted together in groups and limiting options for layering tree canopies in future plantings.
- Rare trees lost: large specimens of catalpa, purple beech, and oak were removed due to disease, recreational development, or weather-related accidents.

### Broad and Spencer Streets



Broad Street is the historic core of the community and a quintessential tree-lined “main street” area with a few neighborhood-commercial enterprises among residential dwellings. Homes on Broad and Spencer streets stand back away from sidewalks. Public right-of-way grass strips of 5-ft width or wider separate sidewalks from the road and represent optimal spaces for street trees.

There are fifty-five trees on Broad Street, including both shade trees (pin oak, maple varieties, sweetgum) and flowering trees (hawthorn, redbud, flowering cherry, ornamental pear). On Spencer Street, there are thirteen trees, including large sweetgums, Norway maples, and linden.

#### *American Sweetgum*

The trends in tree coverage, compared to the 1972 inventory, are not favorable:

- Many trees lost: Broad St. lost almost half of its trees and is now at 59% of tree numbers compared to ninety-two trees found in the 1972 inventory. This is mostly observed at the northwestern end of the street, past the borough building. Spencer St. has the same coverage as in 1972 (13 vs 14 trees), but Rapp Street, another cross street to Broad, no longer has any trees at all.
- Grass strip disappeared: grass strip along the northwestern side of Broad St has been paved over for parking needs in front of some homes, removing spaces for shade trees.
- Overgrown trees: large trees on the southern side of Broad Street are growing over power lines.
- Species selection not optimal: Norway maple were popular street trees in past decades, but are now known to be invasive, have shorter lifespans, and shallow root systems that can damage sidewalks. Ornamental pears have also fallen out of favor due to the same issues and higher risks of structural instability.
- Poor tree health: two of the Norway maple trees are structurally unstable. One of the pin oaks was topped, which will shorten its lifespan.

### Beaver Road

Beaver Road is a major thoroughfare through the residential part of Leetsdale, from Sewickley to Ambridge. A total of eighteen trees have been identified in this area.

Between the bus stop at Beaver and Broad Streets and the borough office building, there are no places for street trees. A large sycamore at Oak and Beaver, noted in the 1972 inventory, is still standing, as are a few smaller ornamental trees planted at the corner of Beaver and Winding streets by the Shade Tree Commission in the 1990s.

The block between the high school building and Quaker Village Dr. is a wooded area and not a priority for future plantings. Should it be necessary, however, there is a grass strip that contains three maple trees, with room for more.

### Washington Street, Kohlmeyer Park, and Brickworks Drive

Washington St. is a small residential area surrounded by industrial developments. Both sides of the street have public right-of-way areas for street trees between the sidewalks and the road. The sugar maple trees at Petrun Rd. are also located in the public right-of-way.

Kohlmeyer Park is a neighborhood minipark at the far end of Washington St, below the overpass. It contains older trees both inside the playground fence and outside, closer to the curve of the overpass. A few additional younger trees have been planted on a grass triangle that forms the park entrance from Brickworks Dr. This green barrier is important because it shields the residential area from the overpass, the railroad, and the expanse of industrial development.



The northern side of Brickworks Dr. as it comes down from the overpass, is borough-owned land. It was shaped with fill during the construction of the overpass in 2007 and landscaped with trees paid for by grant funds. This green space is a gateway to the industrial area and Washington St.

The shade tree inventory has identified seventy-five trees in this area. The biggest tree in the borough, a silver maple over eighty inches in diameter, is located outside Kohlmeyer Park.

### *Silver Maple*

Overall, the trees in this area face many challenges:

- Many trees lost: Washington St. lost almost 60% of its trees. Their numbers are down to twenty-four with no new plantings, from fifty-seven, over half of those newly planted, found in 1972 inventory.
- Grass strips paved over: in front of many residences, grass strips have been paved over for parking needs, removing spots for street trees.
- Roots damaged in sidewalk repairs: sidewalk replacement at the far northern side of Washington St. damaged the roots of a stretch of Norway maples. As a result, two maples have failed and were recently removed, and others display dry limbs.
- Poor tree health: a few trees are damaged and in poor condition.

- Stunted tree growth along Brickworks: trees along Brickworks Dr., in Kohlmeyer Park and on the borough lot alongside the road, despite being regularly fertilized, were estimated to be growing up to three times slower than their counterparts elsewhere in Leetsdale. This could be due to poor soil quality in the industrial fill, or overuse of herbicide around trees.

Train Tracks and Ohio River Boulevard

The lot between the railroad and Ohio River Blvd, at Ferry St. crossing, is owned by the borough. Its line of trees serves as a green barrier, shielding the railroad and industrial area on one side from the main residential area of Leetsdale.

This area has twenty-one trees, all of them mature. Three of the spruces are failing and should be removed. Two of the large trees on this parcel have been identified as ailanthus or tree of heaven. It is a fast-growing and highly invasive species that makes soil toxic for surrounding plants and is a favored host to an equally invasive insect, the spotted lanternfly.

Publicly Visible Trees



*Tricolor Beech*

These trees include four trees at the edges of the VFW lot, three trees in front of the entrance to Leetsdale Manor High Rise, the trees in front of the high school building, and a few trees on the Red Cap Cleaners lot that are continuous with the line of trees on the adjacent borough lot. Among these, there are beautiful mature oaks and maples.

Also included in this list is a beautiful tricolor beech donated in 1997 by Mayor Michael Maruca to the Budacki family at 10 Sycamore Spur and planted by the borough in front of the property. 25 years later, this tree is over twenty-four inches in diameter and thriving.

Conclusion

For a small municipality with few shade trees in the public right-of-way and in borough parks, Leetsdale has a diversity of tree species. It also boasts large trees of species that are rare for the area.

Community observations, over recent years, have suggested that Leetsdale trees are disappearing. This is consistent with data on decreasing canopy coverage from urban forests across Allegheny County. The 2023 shade tree has provided data that confirms it.

### C.3.3 Animal Life

Notable animal species observed in and around Leetsdale, along with both their positive and negative impacts on the ecosystem and human lives, are described in the table below.

Table: Data on the notable animal species in the Sewickley Valley area

Animal Species	Data and Observations	Impact
<b>Small mammals</b>		
<b>Raccoons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raccoons are omnivores that adapt well to living near human dwellings.</li> <li>Raccoons are primarily crepuscular and nocturnal animals but will adjust their feeding schedule to daytime hours when raising their young.</li> <li>Raccoon rabies is an ongoing concern but its incidence in a substantial decline throughout Western PA due to monitoring and vaccination efforts.</li> <li>Rabies vaccine bates are distributed in the Leetsdale area, in nearby Morrow Park, between July and September every year. Announcements are typically posted. Pet owners are directed to leash their pets or keep them indoors during bait distribution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raccoons are a nuisance for homeowners outdoors as they are attracted to refuse.</li> <li>Raccoons that find shelter in attics or garages can cost thousands of dollars in damage from chewed pipes, torn wiring, ruined insulation, and contamination.</li> <li>Though people fear raccoon bites, one is much more likely to be bitten by a pet animal such as a dog or a cat. All animal bites are reported in Allegheny County by law. In 2021, only four raccoon bites were reported, or 0.2% of the total.</li> <li>There have been no recent records of a rabid raccoon in the vicinity of Leetsdale. In 2022, there were only three raccoons recovered in Allegheny County that tested positive for rabies. The closest location was in Bellevue.</li> </ul>
<b>Opossums</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opossums are shy nocturnal animals observed in Leetsdale backyards.</li> <li>Opportunistic scavengers, they consume everything from rotting fruit and dead matter to mice, cockroaches, and slugs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opossums are extremely clean and help in pest control.</li> <li>Opossums may help control Lyme disease in the area. They kill and eat 95% of ticks that latch on them, eliminating over five thousand ticks during the season.</li> </ul>
<b>Feral Cats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presence of feral cats has been reported in Leetsdale at various times, in Broad St. and the hill area.</li> <li>Trap-neuter-release (TNR) is a method of feral cat management in which cats are spayed or neutered, vaccinated for rabies, and returned to the area rather than being euthanized upon capture. Animal Friends shelter has worked with Leetsdale in 2015 to use TNR on local feral cats.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feral cats, even if spayed and neutered, have a negative impact on the ecosystem because they kill many small wild birds and native mammals and can spread diseases between each other and the wildlife.</li> <li>In general, it is best to avoid feeding stray cats, but killing strays is against the law. If needed, call local animal shelter for help.</li> </ul>
<b>Rabbits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rabbits are small mammals that are adapted to living in a suburban landscape.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rabbits can be destructive to gardens and landscaped yards.</li> <li>PA game commission is taking RHD threat seriously. Should it spread to the</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rabbit population throughout the state, however, is in decline due to habitat fragmentation and protective cover loss.</li> <li>Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHD) has been identified among domestic rabbit population in PA in 2022.</li> </ul>	wild population of rabbits and decimate it, it may drive large predators closer to human dwellings in search of food.
<b>Bats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A population of bats resides on the roof of the High School Building.</li> <li>Bats are observed at dusk over the high school field, Henle Park, and the river area.</li> <li>Bat boxes, which serve as artificial habitats, have been installed in nearby Fern Hollow Nature Center in Glen Osborn.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Important in the ecosystem as predators of nighttime flying and biting insects.</li> <li>Pennsylvania bats have been in decline due to an introduced disease caused by white nose fungus.</li> <li>Pennsylvania conservationists are working on surveying bat numbers and protecting bat habitats.</li> </ul>
<b>Large Herbivores</b>		
<b>Deer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roving groups of deer including males, females, and young, are present throughout Leetsdale, from the hill area and Henle Park to Washington St.</li> <li>It is possible for the deer to walk through the stretch of human development in Leetsdale, from the river and through the industrial area to Washington St., and under the railroad in the adjacent Morrow Park to the hills above Beaver St, using green trails only.</li> <li>Numbers are hard to estimate, because PA Game Commission monitors deer populations using mathematical models based on hunting data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deer routinely damage garden plants, landscaped yards, and recently planted trees.</li> <li>Deer carry ticks that transmit Lyme disease. Western Pennsylvania leads the nation in Lyme disease incidence since 2013. Forty percent of ticks tested locally come up positive for Lyme disease bacteria. Half of the reported Lyme cases impact children and teenagers.</li> <li>Reducing deer population, however, is unlikely to reduce Lyme disease impact as the main animal reservoir for the Lyme bacteria is in white mice.</li> </ul>
<b>Large Predators</b>		
<b>Bears</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sightings of transient black bears have been reported every summer in recent years in nearby Bell Acres, Sewickley Hills, and Ohio Twp, both in public parks and near private residences. Residents reported an isolated sighting in Leetsdale a few years ago.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sightings are typically limited to sparsely populated, densely forested areas located higher on the hills and linked to wide undeveloped spaces.</li> </ul>
<b>Notable Bird Species</b>		
<b>Bald Eagle</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bald eagles in flight have been sighted repeatedly over Ohio River in Leetsdale.</li> <li>Currently, two active nests in the immediate area are listed on the website of the PA Fish and Game Commission. One of them was the very first bald eagle nesting site reported in Allegheny County in 2010. They are located across the river in Crescent Township.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revival of bald eagles across Pennsylvania indicates success of conservation efforts and a healthy ecosystem.</li> <li>There are now over three hundred active nesting sites across the state, up from only three nests in 1980s.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The next closest nests are in Beaver and New Brighton. They can be observed through installed binoculars.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bald eagles are no longer considered endangered in PA but are still a protected species.</li> <li>Bald eagle soaring over Ohio River is a beautiful and hopeful sight</li> </ul>
<b>Great Horned Owl</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great horned owl is found across Pennsylvania.</li> <li>It can live in urban environments such as parks and cemeteries. Prefers forest edges and open mature woods.</li> <li>Its distinct hooting call has been heard in the hill area of Leetsdale.</li> <li>Adult great horned owl has been sighted in the residential area on Washington St.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An apex predator, the Great Horned owl helps control rodent populations, potentially also decreasing pest activity and Lyme disease.</li> <li>Recent statewide bird counts have shown a drop in the species' numbers, likely due to habitat destruction or disease such as West Nile virus.</li> <li>Presence of a large owl in local ecosystem is a good sign for habitat quality and species diversity in the area</li> </ul>
<b>Osprey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ospreys are large fish-eating birds of prey.</li> <li>They prefer to nest on tall artificial structures near water reservoirs.</li> <li>Osprey has been sighted over Ohio river in Leetsdale.</li> <li>According to Osprey Watch, there is an osprey nest at the Leetsdale boat launch. The other nearest nest is in Aliquippa. Both currently appear unoccupied.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Habitat destruction, waterways pollution, and DDT use have brought osprey to the brink of destruction in 1980s.</li> <li>Numbers rebounded due to reintroduction and environmental clean-up. The species remains protected.</li> <li>Osprey presence is a sign of clean water and robust fish stock.</li> </ul>
<b>Aquatic Life</b>		
<b>Fish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The three rivers of Pittsburgh area are home to over seventy species of fish.</li> <li>In a 2003 study, Little Sewickley Creek and Sewickley Creek were graded as streams with the greatest diversity of fishes (17 and 13 species respectively), including environmentally sensitive species such as sculpin and darters.</li> <li>The creeks are stocked with trout every year, and there is evidence of successful trout reproduction.</li> <li>Favorite fishing spots in Leetsdale are from the shore behind Buncher Industrial Park or from the boat ramp in Leetsdale Industrial Park area.</li> <li>Fish caught locally include carp, catfish, bass, walleye, trout, bluegill, crappie.</li> <li>Fish can reach large sizes. 45-lb catfish has been captured by the boat dock.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Closing of the mills lead to pollution reduction in the small tributaries of the Ohio River. Robust fish numbers indicate ecosystem recovery from industrial pollution and a healthy food chain.</li> <li>Large sizes of caught specimens suggests successful migration of fish from down the river as per research data.</li> <li>Catch-and-Release is the widespread practice for fishing in Leetsdale, but locally caught fish is safe to eat if limited to one meal a week as per PA Fish and Boat Commission recommendations.</li> <li>Supports osprey, bald eagle, and otter populations in the tri-rivers area</li> </ul>

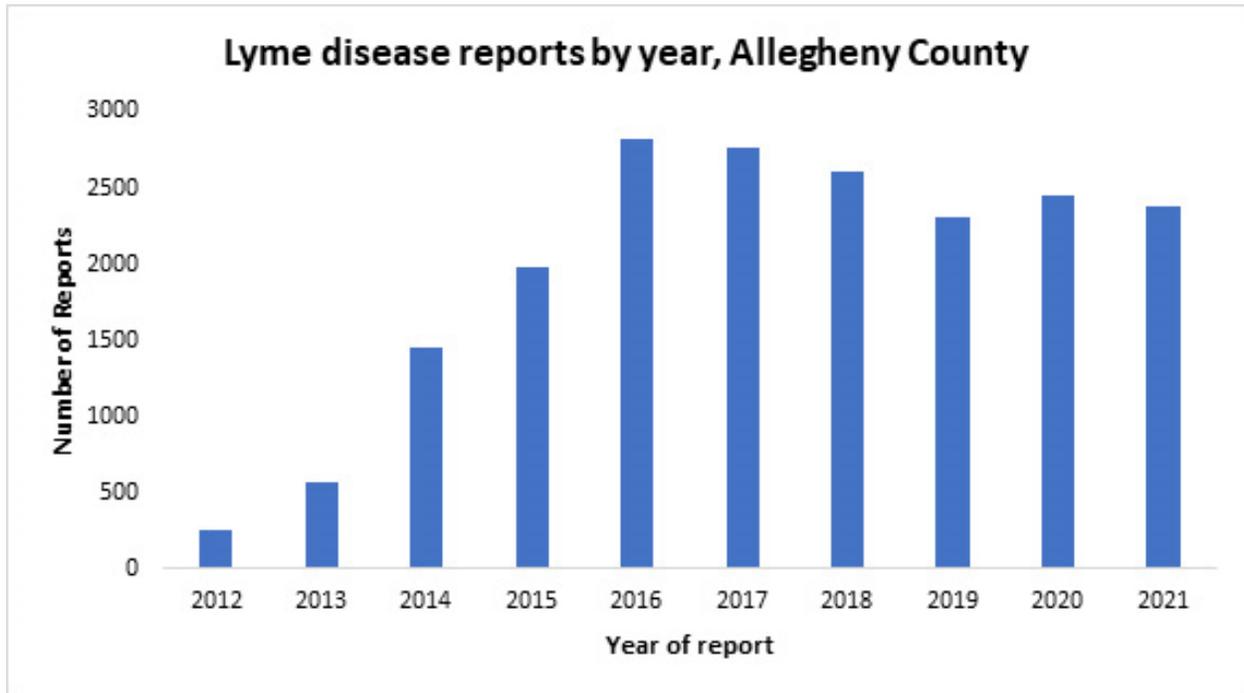
Sources: PA Game Commission, PA Fish and Boat Commission, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Harvard University School of Public Health, Western PA Conservancy, The Daily Item, TribLive, Allegheny County Department of Health, WPXI.com, personal communications with residents

## Tick-Borne Disease as Environmental Risk in Leetsdale

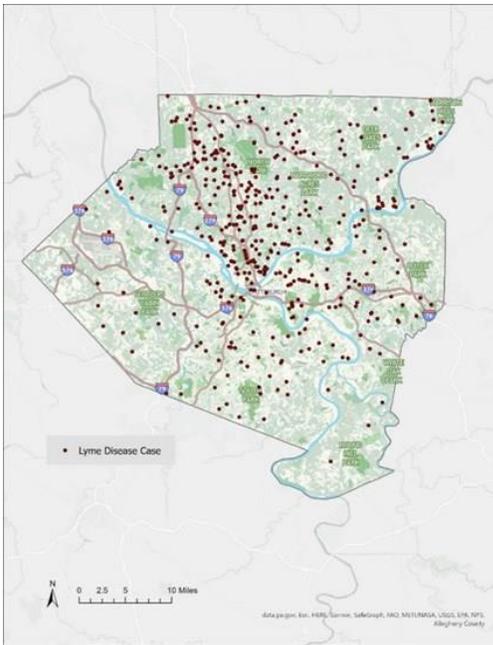
The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection’s Tick Surveillance and Testing Program conducts statewide tick surveillance to determine the distribution, prevalence, and expansion of tick populations throughout the state.

Lyme disease is the most common tickborne disease in Pennsylvania. It is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted by the blacklegged tick *Ixodes scapularis* in the Eastern and Midwestern parts of the United States. Transmission occurs when an infected tick has been attached for more than 36 hours. Symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and a skin rash called erythema migrans.

Lyme disease has increased tenfold in Allegheny County in the past 10 years. Other tickborne diseases reported in Allegheny County in 2021 include twenty-one cases of anaplasmosis and one case of each of babesiosis and ehrlichiosis.



Source: Allegheny County



Lyme disease reporting by place of residence shows more cases reported along the I-279 corridor. This is consistent with more hilly and more wooded landscape in that area, as well with a denser population.

According to the chart, Lyme disease is of average concern in the Leetsdale area compared to the county.

*Source: Allegheny County*

### Conclusion:

Leetsdale is home to a surprising diversity of animal life. Though the animals listed above are only a small portion of those that would be found in the area upon full animal census, they give indication of a robust ecosystem in the area.

Leetsdale is a densely developed municipality, yet it also has access to rivers, streams, and well-forested areas adjacent to homes. Though not necessarily walkable by humans, there is an indication of a wildlife corridor from the hill area down to the banks of the Ohio river. Because of this, enough wildlife can find homes close to human dwellings or be observed in their vicinity.

Every homeowner should be aware of risks to property that come from wildlife and take basic protective measures. There appears to be, however, little to no risks to human health from direct wild animal interactions, including those with large animals, unlike in less developed parts of Western PA.

Data and observations show that each animal species can impact another, or human lives, in multiple ways. E.g., for public health issues like Lyme disease, some of our animal neighbors (deer, mice) increase risks, but others (possums) are protective, and none is fully responsible for the whole situation.

It is also encouraging to see sightings of rare animals, or an increase in counts of environmentally sensitive species, even against statewide trends. Those suggest cleaner air, water, and soil for human lives, and better recreation opportunities for fishing and birdwatching.

## **C.4 Parks & Green Spaces**

### ***C.4.1 Purpose and Objectives of Recreation Planning***

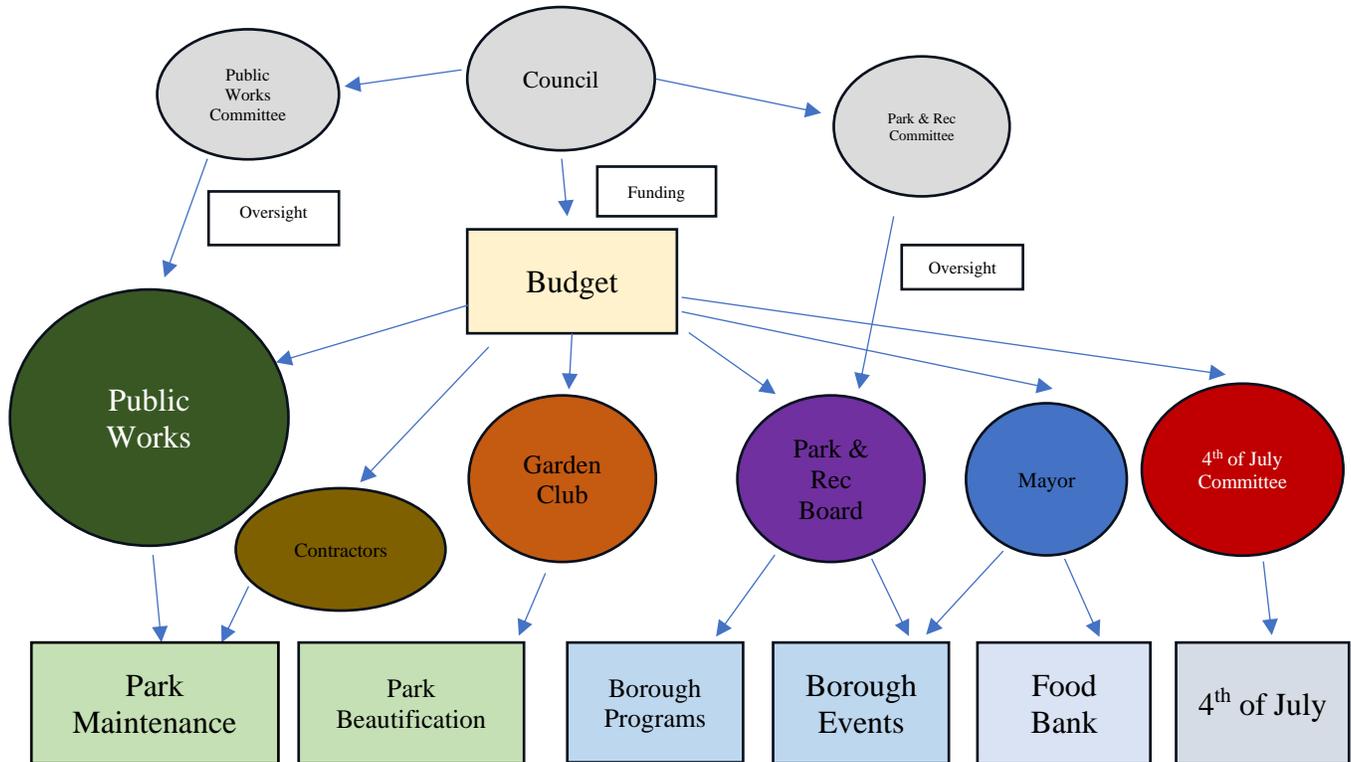
Parks and recreation systems are increasingly regarded as top-rank anchor institutions in the community. They are essential, vital spaces that enable people of all ages and walks of life to connect to each other daily. According to National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) reports, these spaces are no longer seen as just amenities provided by a municipality, but as primary social drivers of healthy living, fair and just opportunity for people to thrive, and a vehicle that supports economic development.

The purpose of planning for Park and Recreation in Leetsdale is to assess the state of borough parks, recreational facilities, and programs in their role as community anchors. This will serve six objectives:

- To assist the borough administration and council in budgeting for, planning, and managing the park and recreation programs and services
- To put the park and recreation offerings in Leetsdale in context of nationwide trends and neighboring community offerings
- To understand how Leetsdale Park and Recreation meets community needs, and to assess gaps.
- To pay special attention to issues of ADA accessibility, inclusivity, and serving residents of all age groups, especially the youth and senior citizens.
- To map out a path for their improvement to attract new residents and visitors to Leetsdale and improve the quality of life in the borough.
- To identify additional resources and opportunities for inter-agency cooperation

### C.4.2 Overview of Park and Recreation Management in Leetsdale

An organizational chart for parks and recreation management in Leetsdale is presented. The role of each agency is further clarified below:



#### Role of Borough Staff

**Public Works:** The Leetsdale Department of Public Works performs most of the work of caring for borough parks and open spaces. Public Works is the maintenance department for Leetsdale as well as the manager of city utilities.

- The department has 1 supervisor and 3 full-time employees.
- Current staffing is adequate. New staff have been appointed as needed. In the past, part-time seasonal positions were advertised, and employees were hired following an interview process. In recent years, the borough has found it more cost-effective to rely on outside contractors help to assist with seasonal work.

More information about Public Works operations, procedures, equipment, and budget can be found in E.2 section of the plan.

**Outside Contractors:** Leetsdale employs outside contractors for street sweeping, occasional seasonal grass mowing. Bartlett Tree Experts provide regular tree care and services. An independent arborist has inspected trees in 2023.

Part-Time Summer Employee: In 2022 and 2023, the Borough hired a part-time employee to work in the Snack Shack at the Henle Park Splash Pad for 20 hours/week. This work serves primarily families with young children, both from Leetsdale and outside the area, during weekdays in summer months. The employee reports directly to Borough Council’s Park and Rec Committee. In 2023, a private donation covered this employee’s salary and purchase of snack shack food.

### Role of Elected Officials

Borough Council and Committees: The borough budget, as well as the approval for future projects, are determined by the Borough Council. The Council’s Public Works committee oversees the Public Works Department, and the Park and Recreation committee oversees the Park and Recreation Board.

Role of Mayor: by tradition, Leetsdale’s Mayor runs two community services and activities related to Park and Recreation operations:

- Leetsdale Food Pantry: Mayor organizes and operates a Food Pantry that is affiliated with and accredited by the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank. The Borough donates the regular hours of two Public Works employees for 3 hours each once a month, to assist with Food Pantry delivery. The Borough also partially funds the Food Pantry at the amount of \$2,500/year, earmarked for the collection and distribution of food.
- Community Events: Mayor organizes Labor Day Picnic for the community and senior picnics at the Leetsdale High Rise, senior housing complex. Informational presentations and enrichment activities such as concerts for seniors accompany these events. Mayor funds them through Mayor’s budget that is set by the council at \$1,500/year, as well as private donations.



*Holiday Concert in Leetsdale High Rise, 2022*



*Mayor Ford and Councilman Awad at a senior picnic, 2022*

## Role of Volunteer Organizations

Parks and Recreation Board: this Board has been established in Leetsdale by ordinance (2007, amended in 2013), and works indicated below.

- The Board members are appointed by the borough council.
- There are 5 seats on the board, 2 of them are currently vacant.
- The Board's annual budget is \$1,500, which typically exceeds actual expenditures.
- The Board's primary function is to plan and supervise recreation programs approved by the Borough Council, as well as undertake other recreation and park tasks.
- The Board has worked actively in planning summer programs for children and seasonal celebrations in the borough.
- Covid-related shutdowns have negatively affected the work of the board and lead to event cancellation. The programs are currently being rebuilt to pre-pandemic levels.
- The Board also has the power to identify the open space, recreation, park, and trail needs of the Borough, recommend improvements, and advise the Borough Council in the acquisition and development of parklands. The Board had not exercised this power during its existence, due to its primary focus on other activities.
- Intra-agency Cooperation: In 2023, the Board has been working closely with the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Committee and Garden Club to organize events and raise funds for Leetsdale's 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade and celebration.



*Park & Rec Event Flyer, 2023*



*Butterfly Garden in Henle Park, maintained by Leetsdale Garden Club, 2023*

Leetsdale Garden Club: this volunteer organization is dedicated to seasonal beautification of Leetsdale and works as indicated below.

- It is a non-profit, independent, and unaffiliated volunteer organization that accepts its own members and elects its own leadership.
- Beautification Work: In Henle Park, Leetsdale Garden Club maintains flower beds, a flower garden, flowers around monuments, and flower baskets at the gazebo. It also maintains two flower gardens on Beaver St. by the overpass. It also puts out seasonal fall decorations and organizes fall and winter events.
- Leetsdale Garden Club gives out a Garden of the Month award to residents with beautiful flower gardens in their front yards.
- Leetsdale Garden Club is funded by Council in the amount of \$1,000/year, which it spends on purchasing plants for the borough.
- The Garden Club has 15+ members with varied degrees of commitment and ability to engage in gardening work. The Club is looking for more members.

4<sup>th</sup> of July Committee: this community organization funds and organizes the Leetsdale 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade and related activities, a flagship regional event in the area.



*Children riding bikes in the 2023 Leetsdale 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade. Image Credit: Scott Cindrich*

- 4<sup>th</sup> of July Committee is an independent registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July Committee plans, organizes, and conducts the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade that draws hundreds of visitors to the area. It also organizes carnival activities, band concerts, and fireworks on that day.
- Throughout the year, the Committee conducts fundraising activities, including spaghetti dinners, bake and plant sales, and lottery ticket sales. In the past, the Snowflake Classic 5K race in November has also raised money for the event.
- The borough council approves \$10,000 of funding for the fireworks and other necessary expenses for this community celebration.

## Conclusions

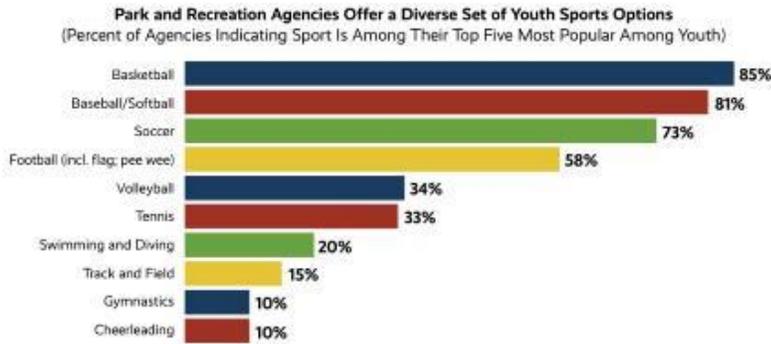
Leetsdale Borough has adequate staff and paid contractors for the routine care of parks and open spaces.

For creative, longer term, and community-related tasks and projects, however, the borough relies on volunteer work. The rates of attrition among volunteer teams are high, and positions remain unfilled for a long time. There is always a need for more help.

The borough provides a variety of services and events geared especially towards the younger and older populations. Many of these services are utilizing parks and open recreational spaces in Leetsdale that are very well suited to community gatherings.

The next chapter provides context for the analysis on how parks and recreational spaces in Leetsdale can be better used and improved.

### C.4.3 Nationwide Trends in Community Recreation



Source: NRPA

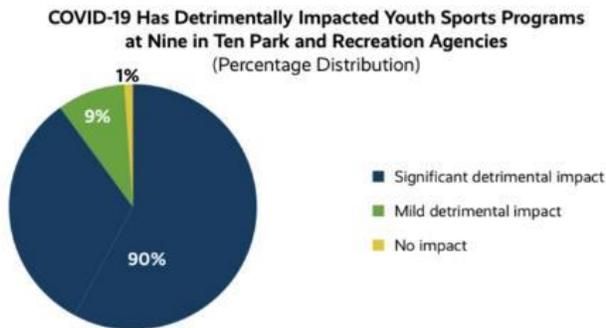


Source: Aspen Institute

Community parks and recreation complexes are the main service providers of athletic activities for the surrounding community.

For youth athletic activities, basketball remains the most popular sport nationwide.

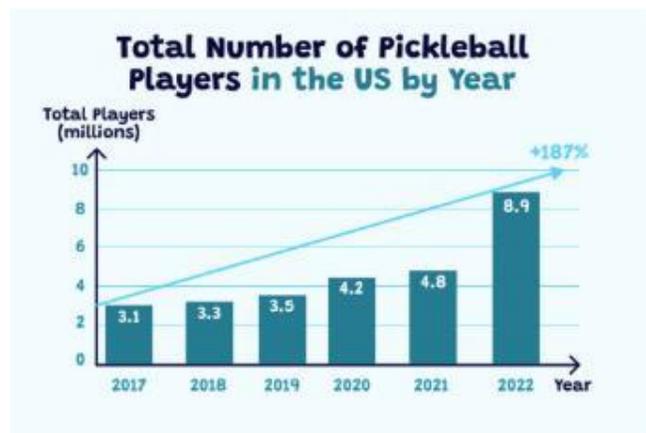
Overall, however, youth sport participation has decreased, according to NRPA and Aspen Institute. This is attributed to increasing costs of athletic activities and Covid-related shutdowns.



Most parks and recreation departments have reported disruption of their services during the pandemic. Concerted efforts and policy initiatives are underway to reverse this trend to engage the young generation and improve their health.

Source: NRPA

For older adults, pickleball is a popular athletic activity that has enjoyed a 158% increase over the last few years and is now the fastest growing sport in the nation.



Source: Statista/PickleHeads

### C.4.4 Park and Recreation Benchmarks

The following chart contains data from NRPA and University of Arizona on the use, needed size, and needs per demographic size for the selected athletic amenities. It can be used to help evaluate community needs, without discouraging desired elements requested by a community.

Activity / Facility	Recommended Space Requirements	Recommended Dimensions	Recommended Orientation	Unit	Service Area	Notes
Badminton	1620 sq ft	Singles 17'x 44 ' Doubles 20'x 44'	Long axis North-South	1 per 5000	¼-1/2 mile	Usually in school, rec center or church facility. Safe.
Pickleball	1800 sq ft	20'x44' inclusive of lines 10' surrounding margin is recommended Total size: 30'x 64'	Long axis North-South	1 per 5,500 at current trends	¼-1/2 mile	Can be combined with other sports on a multiuse court.  Net is 36" high at sideline and 34" high in the middle
Basketball	2400-3036 sq ft	46-50'x84' 50'x84'	Long axis North-South	1 per 5000	¼-1/2 mile	Same as badminton. Outdoor courts in neighborhood and community parks, plus active recreation areas in other park settings
Youth	5040-7280 sq ft	50'x94'				
High School	5600-7980 sq ft	With 5' unobstructed spaces on all sides				
Collegiate						
Tennis	Minimum of 7,200 sq ft single court (2 acres for complex)	36'x78'. 12' clearance on both sides; 21' clearance on both ends.	Long axis North-South if outdoor	1 court per 2000	¼-1/2 mile	Best if in batteries of 2-4. Located in neighborhood and community parks or adjacent to schools
Volleyball	Minimum of 4,000 sq ft	30'x60'. Minimum 6' clearance on all sides	Long axis North-South	1 per 5000	¼-1/2 mile	Same as other court activities (e.g., badminton)
Multiple Recreation Courts	9,840 sq ft	120'x80'	Long axis of court with primary use North-South	1 per 10,000	1-2 miles	
Trails	n/a	Well defined head maximum 10' width, maximum average grade is 5% not to exceed 15%.	N/A	1 system per region	N/A	Capacity rural trails – 40 hikers/day/mile. Urban trails – 90 hikers/day/mile.
Soccer	1.7-2.1 Acres	195' to 225'x330' to 360' with a minimum 10' clearance all sides.	Fall: long axis northwest to southwest. For longer periods north-south	1 per 10,000	1-2 miles	Number of units depends on popularity. Youth soccer on smaller fields adjacent to schools or neighborhood parks.

Source: NRPA/University of Arizona, 2004 SHALE Plan; Note: Football fields, softball, field and ice hockey, swimming pool, and golf facilities are omitted from the original chart, and pickleball is added.

*NRPA Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* recommend a park classification system which breaks down open spaces by location, size, amenities, and population they serve, as illustrated in the following chart.

<b>Mini-Parks</b>	
General Description	Specialized facilities that serve a concentrated, limited, or isolated population area, or unique recreation needs
Location Criteria	Less than ¼ mile distance in residential setting
Size Criteria	Between 2500 sq ft and 1 acre
Acre/1000 population	0.25 to 0.5
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>	
General Description	Remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal active and passive recreation that serves neighborhood recreation needs.
Location Criteria	¼ to ½ mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and physical barriers
Size Criteria	5 acres minimum size, 5-10 acres is optimal
Acre/1000 population	1.0 to 2.0
<b>Community Parks</b>	
General Description	Serves broader purposes than the neighborhood parks. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation, athletics, and open space needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes.
Location Criteria	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods and ½ to 3-mile distance.
Size Criteria	As needed to accommodate desired uses, between 30 and 50 acres
Acre/1000 population	5.0 to 8.0
<b>Special Use Park/Facility</b>	
General Description	The focus is on a single major use, such as golf courses, historical sites, water parks, and other special uses. May include neighborhood or community park elements, but with amenities that have a regional appeal to visitors from outside the local area boundaries.
Location Criteria	As needed
Size Criteria	Varies
Acre/1000 population	Varies
<b>Open Lands</b>	
General Description	Areas designated as parks that have few or no built amenities but provide natural areas or open space that can be utilized for passive recreation. Dominated by open areas for the enjoyment of nature, fishing, or other similar activities.
Location Criteria	Undefined, as they do not serve a population, but rather a resource
Size Criteria	Any size
Acre/1000 population	Defined by neighborhood

*Source: 2007 RGPMP Plan, Addison Park District Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan*

The next chapters contain a detailed analysis of borough-owned parks, recreational facilities, and open spaces.

***C.4.5 Leetsdale Parks and Recreation Spaces and Their Classification***

Leetsdale has three borough-owned community recreation areas. All three of them are outdoors and designated as park spaces:

- Edward C. Henle Park
- Kohlmeyer Park
- Riverfront/Boat Dock Area

The Shale Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan (SMMCP) adopted in 2004 by South Heights, Harmony, Ambridge, Economy and Leetsdale, classified only Henle Park using NRPA guidelines. The 2007 Riverfront, Greenway, and Parks Master Plan (RGPMMP) classified Washington St. Park, renamed since as Kohlmeyer Park, as a minipark. It discusses the Boat Dock area but does not classify it.

2023 classification reflects intervening changes in Leetsdale Parks and continued research on the recreation use criteria. The 2008 addition of Splash Pad helped make Henle Park a regional attraction to the Sewickley Valley area, as well as Ambridge and beyond. Henle Park can now receive an additional distinction of being a Special Use Park. Boat Dock can be formally classified as Open Land. The changes are reflected in the chart below:

Park Name	2004 SMMCP Classification	2007 RGPMP Classification	2023 Re-Evaluation
Edward C. Henle Park	Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood Park	Amended with the addition of Splash Pad:  Neighborhood/Special Use Park
Kohlmeyer Park	Not Given Listed as small park on Washington Street	Mini-Park	Mini-Park
Riverfront/Boat Dock Area	Not Given	Not Given	Open Land

### C.4.6 Facilities and Open Space Inventory and Analysis

A map of the locations for facilities and open spaces in Leetsdale, both public and private, is shown below. In addition to the three borough-owned spaces, there is an additional outdoor stadium complex owned publicly by Quaker Valley School District.

There are three privately owned indoor recreation facilities in Leetsdale: Curves, a locally owned gym franchise; Three Rivers Karting, an entertainment complex; and Rize Sports, a private basketball facility and event space, set to open in September 2023.



Facilities are further described in the table below:

Facility Name	Ownership	Classification	Size	Inventory	Condition and Use
Edward C. Henle Park	Leetsdale Borough	Neighborhood Park/Special Use Park	+/-2.5 acres	2 Pavilions Restroom 4 Playground pieces 2 Basketball Court	Maintenance by Leetsdale Borough. Used by Leetsdale residents and wider community
Kohlmeyer Park	Leetsdale Borough	Mini-Park	+/- 0.25 acres	Pavilion, Playground, Basketball Court	Maintenance by Leetsdale Borough. Neighborhood use.
Riverfront/ Boat Dock	Leetsdale Borough	Open Space		Open areas with boat dock. Portable toilets installed seasonally; service paid for by the Borough.	Maintenance by Leetsdale Borough. Used by the rowing club and by fishing enthusiasts
Quaker Valley High School	QVSD	School Facility	+/- 8 acres	Football/ Soccer Field- 1 Schedule use only 5 Tennis Courts 400-meter track and field complex	Regular maintenance by the school district. Can be used by community subject to availability. The school intends to move outside the area. Future use of these facilities, and whether they will remain, is unknown.
Rize Sports	Sports Facilities Companies	Indoor Sports Facility	55,000 sq ft	3 regulation basketball court, 1 championship basketball court; pickleball use possible; team rooms, lounge, concessions area	Opening September 2023. Will be available for use to community groups. Space is leased by the company for 10 years.
Curves	Locally Owned	Health Club	1,710 sq ft	Fitness equipment	Women-only membership gym, serving local and surrounding community.
Three Rivers Karting	Locally Owned	Indoor Entertainment Complex	42,336 sq ft	Go-kart track, axe throwing, arcade	Serving local and surrounding community. Racing leagues are available for adults and teenagers.

The inventory of borough-owned parks and open land is provided below. This inventory is further evaluated in respect to accessibility, inclusivity, condition of amenities, and recurring maintenance.

## **Henle Park**

### Role in the Community

Henle Park was founded in 1943 and is the community focal point. A part of the original Atwood Estate's arboretum, its present layout balances green space with recreational amenities, including a gazebo, basketball court, playground, and Splash Pad.

Henle Park is not only a Leetsdale tradition but a regional attraction. The park draws visitors from Leetsdale and beyond for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade and carnival activities.

The Splash Pad water feature is unique in the area and draws visitors throughout summer months:

- According to staff reports, over 50 people visit Splash Pad independently on an average day with good weather.
- Additionally, multiple groups such as daycares, YMCA camps, QVSD summer programs, and disability groups schedule field trips to the Splash Pad with the borough office.
- Free admission and accessibility of Splash Pad makes it attractive for visitors.

### Park Layout

Henle Park is bordered by Beaver St, Ferry St., Ohio River Blvd, and the backyards of the Victory Ln development.

The original Atwood estate was subdivided decades ago. The larger portion of the estate has become Henle Park. The upper portion of the park contains a gazebo set among trees. The lower part of the park contains the pavilion, the Splash Pad, courts, playground structures, and the building with Snack Shack and bathrooms. Sidewalks are laid out across the park.

The smaller part of the original lot is privately owned by VFW Post 3372. It contains the agency's building, parking lot, and grounds that include a memorial. There is no fencing to separate VFW lot from Henle Park.

### Revenue Sources for Henle Park

- Pavilion rentals (prices are \$50.00 plus a \$25 deposit for residents, \$300.00 plus a \$25 deposit for non-residents).
- Snack Shack sales
- Donations for park programs

## Park Inventory

Equipment	Description	Age	Condition and Maintenance
1 Splash Pad	Circular water play structure consisting of showering, raining, and misting features, without standing water.	Open in 2008	Good  Recent visual inspection by the installer. Circular non-slip pad painted by the borough in 2021.
1 Play Structure 2-5	Stairs, landing pad with activity features, tube slide. Safety surface: wood chips	Installed in 1999	Fair  Structurally sound but plastic elements are deteriorating. Wood chips worn out and weed-covered.
1 Play Structure 5-12	4 slides, monkey bars, jungle gym/obstacle course, and a small riding structure. Safety surface: wood chips	Installed in 1999	Fair to Poor  Structurally sound. Some rust on screws. Visible deterioration of plastic elements, cracks on slides. Wood chips worn out and weed-covered. Inspected visually by the borough crew. Bolts tightened in 2017.
2 Tic-Tac-Toe	Standalone activity elements	Installed prior to 2000	Poor  Cracked and broken attachment to pole, removal recommended.
3 Swing Sets	1 10-ft tall swing set with 3 swings (one adapted seat), 1 10-ft tall swing set with 4 swings, 1 8-ft tall swing set with 2 baby swings, located in a row	Installed prior to 2000	Fair to Poor  No safety surface underneath. Mulch under the swings replaced in 2018, now worn out. Some rust on bolts. Inspected visually by borough crew. Bolts tightened in 2017, protruding bolts remedied. Seats replaced in 2017. Adapted seat broken.
2 Basketball Courts	1 basketball court, 30'x60', and 1 adjacent unmarked court, 40'x60'; asphalt surface, all surrounded by 10ft net fence	Existed for decades, last renovation prior to 2000	Poor  Surface cracked, uneven; sidelines overgrown; Broken basketball fixtures removed. Purchase of new basketball equipment poles and nets approved.
1 Gazebo	Hexagonal open-wall structure with 4 benches	Installed in 2017	Excellent
1 Shelter	Rectangular open-wall structure with 5 picnic tables; electric outlets available	Installed prior to 2000, electricity added after 2008	Good  Visually inspected by borough public works and cleaned after rentals.

1 Snack Shack and Bathrooms Building	Building contains Men's and Women's Restrooms with 3 stalls each; Snack Shack with two open windows for serving, and a storage area. Running water and electricity available.	Unknown	Good to Fair  All major elements are in working order but worn out cosmetically. Floors are unfinished. Some latches are broken on stalls. Roof repaired after damage by fallen tree in 2018. Water fountain attached to outside of the building. Maintained by borough crew, open seasonally.
Grill	By the pavilion	Unknown	Good to fair
Volleyball Net Poles	By the pavilion	Unknown	Poor, not in use
Shed	By the pavilion	Unknown	Good
Picnic Table	By the pavilion	Unknown	Good
11 Benches	10 benches are standard size, and one is small, without a back	Unknown	Good to Fair (9 benches) Poor (2 benches) Community feedback indicates that benches tend to be too low to the ground
Bike Rack	By the Ferry St. entrance	Unknown	Good
6 Trash Cans	Located by park entrance and pavilion	Unknown	Good  All trash cans have attached coverings. Regularly inspected and cleaned by borough crew
1 Dog Waste Disposal	Located by park entrance on Ferry	Unknown	Good
1 Little library	Part of the Little Free Library project, small box with double doors, located across the Gazebo	Installed in 2017	Good  Installed by QVHS students Genevieve Moffett and Zahra Udaipurwala and stocked by community members.
1 Little Food Pantry	A small box adjacent to VFW parking lot	Installed within the last 5 years	Good  Stocked with non-perishable goods by community members
1 Boys Scout Shack (poor condition)	Covered walled structure by the VFW	Unknown	Poor – not in use  Ownership unclear but lot maps indicate that it is located on the borough land

### Compliance with Safety Standards

2-5 and 5-12 play structures are compliant with most Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) safety standards, including those on bolts, guardrail openings, guardrails, and spacing of tall structures. They do not appear to be fully compliant with safety surface requirements. Mulch

is worn out, with plastic liners showing. This also creates an uneven surface that represents a tripping hazard. This can be remedied with maintenance. 5-12 and 2-5 play structures are separated per CPSC requirements. They are also not, however, optimally located for the line-of-site recommendations, as they are not within a direct line from nearby park benches.

Swings are not compliant with CPSC safety standards. They are obstructed by trees and are out of the line of site from other playground structures and benches. Per safety requirements, swings should be on an even surface, and safety surfacing should extend, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar. To be compliant, Henle Park swings should be in the middle of a 40ft-wide safe even surface. Instead, they are located on an uneven sloping surface without safety surface, with grass extending in front and back. Therefore, the area where the swings are located cannot be remedied to support this structure.

### ADA Accessibility

Playground structures, swings, and Splash Pad in Henle Park are NOT ADA accessible:

- There are currently no ADA parking spots in Henle Park. The borough has applied for and received a QVCOG grant to construct an ADA parking pad in the park.
- Sidewalks leading down from the VFW parking lot, from a strip owned by the borough, are too steep and do not meet the minimum requirements (1' drop in 20') for ADA regulations.
- Some areas of sidewalk within the park have cracks, representing a tripping hazard.
- Sidewalks do not extend all the way to the playground and swing structures. To access the structures, it is necessary to cross uneven surfaces covered by grass. The distance is significant (over 20 ft) for 5-12 play structure and swing sets.

Playground equipment is inclusive for all ages of children, and the Splash Pad is inclusive for all ages and ability levels.

### Connectivity and Walkability

Henle Park is in a walkable area. It is centrally located in Leetsdale, on the walking continuum with other local municipalities. It is accessible by sidewalk from anywhere on Beaver St., from Broad St., and internally from Victory Ln. Residents of Washington St. could also walk to Henle Park using sidewalks through Kohlmeyer Park and up over the overpass towards Broad St.

Henle Park is also located directly on the Pittsburgh Regional Transit Route #14 and can be accessed by bus.

## Parking

Parking in Henle Park is not adequate compared to its size and intensity of use.

Henle Park shares a parking lot with VFW. A larger part of the lot belongs to VFW and is only open for use to its members. The borough owns a small strip of land with a few parallel parking spaces at the western edge of the lot. In recent years, VFW has restricted visitors from accessing those parking spots as well due to their insurer's requirement.

Visitors also have an option to use street parking on Ferry St., Broad St., and Spencer St., and walk to park entrance, crossing Ferry St. That is a residential parking area and fills up quickly when many visitors come to the park.

## Conclusions

Henle Park is a focal point for Leetsdale and regional attraction due to its amenities and community celebrations. It attracts a lot of visitors. Henle Park represents a beautiful green space balanced with recreational amenities. Its boundaries are historically defined. It is located on a walking continuum for Leetsdale and beyond and is accessible by public transit.

Some of Henle Park's amenities, however, need a comprehensive update, with an eye for better usability for all age groups, ADA accessibility, and better parking options.



5-12 Playground Structure



2-5 Playground Structure



Swing Sets



Pavilion



Splash Pad



Broken Tic-Tac-Toe



Cracked Slide



Cracked Basketball Court Surface



Basketball court in poor condition

No safety surface under swings



## Kohlmeyer Park

### Role in the Community

Washington Street is the oldest residential street in Leetsdale. Its two blocks are separated from most of the residential areas by the railroad and Route 65. Kohlmeyer Park is a small park at the end of Washington Street and provides neighborhood recreation. Its playground is used extensively by children of the residents and their visitors. Children can walk to the park unattended.

### Park Layout

The entrance to the park is on Brickworks Dr. and is marked by a sign. A sidewalk goes to the fenced-in playground area. Playground area can also be accessed directly from Washinton St. A spot further north from the playground towards the overpass has mature trees. There is an additional triangular area of the park that borders Brickworks Dr. It has a picnic area that is used by Industrial Park workers on their lunch break.

### Revenue Sources for Kohlmeyer Park: Possible pavilion rentals

### Park Inventory

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Condition and Maintenance</b>
1 5-12 Play Structure	A structure with multiple stairs, slides, hanging bridge, and activity center. Safe surface: rubber mulch	Installed after 2007	Good  Playground equipment in good condition. Safe surface adequate but not optimal in use: off-gassing in hot weather, stains skin and clothes, and intrudes on nearby basketball court surface
2 riding structures	Standalone play structures for small children	Installed after 2007	Good
2 swing sets	Swing set with 6 swings, two of them for infants. Safety surface: rubber mulch	Installed after 2007	Good  Safety surface adequate
1 Basketball Court	1 basketball court, 30'x60'; asphalt surface, no separate fence	Unknown	Fair to Poor  Surface cracked; basketball poles are straight, but baseboards, baskets and nets need replaced.
1 grill	Next to pavilion	Unknown	Poor
1 small pavilion	Inside the fenced-in area	Unknown	Good
1 picnic table	Inside the pavilion	Unknown	Good
4 benches	In the fenced area	2022	Good  Newly installed together with the ADA parking
1 picnic area	Outside the fence, in the open triangle, four benches.	Unknown	fair
2 Trash receptacles	At the entrance to the playground area and by the picnic area	Unknown	Good
1 water fountain	At the entrance to the playground area	Unknown	Poor – does not work

### Compliance with Safety Standards

Playground equipment in Kohlmeyer Park complies with CPSC safety standards. There is an extensive overgrowth of poison ivy over the fencing in the playground area, presenting hazard to children using the playground.

### ADA Accessibility

Kohlmeyer Park is ADA accessible. A new ADA parking pad for two landing places and a safe sidewalk was installed in 2022, paid for by a QVCOG grant.

Playground space is accessible to all ages of children, as there is equipment available for young children, older children, and teens. Having a 2-5 play structure will improve inclusivity, as would a different safe surface, because rubber mulch is hard to navigate with wheels.

### Connectivity and Walkability

Though isolated, Kohlmeyer Park is still on Leetsdale's walking continuum. It can be easily accessed on sidewalks from Washington St. It can also be reached by walking from the other side of Leetsdale via an overpass.

### Parking

Besides a dedicated ADA parking, there is a cul-de-sac next to the playground where visitors can park. Parking is also available along residential streets.

### Conclusions

Kohlmeyer Park is properly located to accommodate the residents on Washington St. Park provides opportunities for 5-12 and 12 to adult, utilizing the basketball court and families utilizing the pavilion. The park is used actively by neighborhood residents. Recommendations for future park development would include the provision of 2-5 small play structures, repair of a water fountain, and better maintenance of the park grounds.



*Kohlmeyer Park playground*



*Kohlmeyer Park Basketball Court*



*ADA parking spot*



*New sidewalk and benches*



*Broken water fountain*



*Triangle picnic area*

## **Riverfront/Boat Dock Area**

### Role in the Community

This area is the only borough-owned river access point, and is important for multiple reasons, including,

- Despite being located on the Ohio River, Leetsdale has no riverside residences. All lots by the river are zoned industrial, privately owned by industrial parks, and used for commercial and manufacturing operations. This is the only point of public access to the river in the Leetsdale area.
- Leetsdale Boat Dock is the only place in the Quaker Valley area to launch the boat down Ohio River. The dam located upriver from that location prevents boats launched from Sewickley and other points from traveling down the river.
- Boat Dock is used by individuals for boat launch and fishing, and by Leetsdale Curragh Rowing Club for rowing practice. In the past, the area held fishing tournaments and community events. Those are no longer happening due to an expanded industrial presence but would add a lot of value to the community if restarted.

### Area Layout

The riverfronts in Leetsdale are 98% privately owned and occupied by the local industrial parks. Additionally, the Buncher Company Industrial Park actively uses the riverfront for transportation of goods by barge. According to 2007 GRPMP, The Buncher Company receives daily shipments of coal by train which is loaded onto barges using the docks along the river. The Buncher Company prohibits any riverfront access from its property to the public.



*The Riverfront of Leetsdale Borough*

*Source: 2007 RGPMP*



Lot 814-M-275 is the only lot in the area owned by the borough. It contains Petrun Rd and stretches from Washington St. to Ohio River, expanding right at the dock area. The area north of the dock belongs to Hussey Copper, and the area to the South belongs to Leetsdale Industrial Park.

Source: Leetsdale Riverfront Greenway Site and Landscape Improvement Plan, 2006

### Revenue Sources for Boat Dock

Boat dock rentals

### Inventory

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Condition and Maintenance</b>
1 Boat Dock	The dock is in four sections; it is installed in the launch area in May and removed in October.	Unknown	Fair Installed, removed, stored, and maintained by the borough
1 Picnic Table	Sitting area	Unknown	Fair
2 Benches	By the picnic table	Unknown	Fair
2 trash receptacles	In the area	Unknown	Fair
1 flagpole	By the river	Unknown	Fair
Signage	Provides visitor notice	Unknown	Fair
1 portable toilet	Installed seasonally by outside contractor	Unknown	Good. Regularly maintained by the contractor

### ADA Accessibility

The area has an ADA parking spot delineated. The markings have worn out.

### Connectivity and Walkability

Boat dock is within a short walking distance from Washington St. residential area. Petrun Rd does not have a sidewalk but has some residential and commercial traffic, therefore, appropriate care must be exercised. The area is also accessible by car from Ohio River Blvd via overpass. Overall, the area is poorly maintained. Signage is inadequate for clear directions, and trash on the ground is regularly observed and reported.

## Parking



Parking in the area is limited. Importantly, a large stretch of the pavement adjacent to the road right by the dock area, belongs to Leetsdale Industrial Park. It is used extensively for truck parking overnight. According to community feedback, this area used to be open to use for the borough by informal agreement which no longer holds. Due to parked trucks, there is no place for visitor vehicles to either park in the area or turn around while hauling boat trailers. This decreases the use of the Boat Dock by the community.

*Source: Leetsdale Industrial Park Riverfront Greenway Site and Landscape Improvement Plan, 2006*

## Conclusions and Possible Future Development

The Boat Dock area has been neglected. Past efforts at improving the area included a project to construct a new concrete ramp into the river, rain garden, and ADA signage. The project had received a \$50,000 50:50 match DCNR grant in 2019 but was declined due to larger than expected local share cost from actual bids received. Nevertheless, the area represents a unique amenity for Leetsdale and the surrounding area.

Three improvements would be valuable:

- Signage and Maintenance: improving access signs and cleaning up the area will make it easier to find and more pleasant to be in
- Parking: developing a public/private partnership with adjacent industrial property owners to extend the use of truck parking area for borough and visitor access
- Marina:



According to 2007 GRPMP, Boat Marinas fronting industries and otherwise inaccessible riverfronts currently occupy much frontage along the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongahela Rivers. A boat marina can fit along the frontage of an industrial park without impact on the functions of the facility. Though the marina would be limited to areas not in the barge traffic pattern, a marina could be used to expand the existing boat launch.

*Source: 2007 GRPMP*

## Riverside Park:



Source: Leetsdale Industrial Park Riverfront Greenway Site and Landscape Improvement Plan, 2006

A 2006 Leetsdale Industrial Park Site and Landscape Improvement Plan had envisioned a public/private partnership with Leetsdale in developing a riverside park that would unite Leetsdale boat dock area with a walking trail and landscaping by the river on the edge of the industrial lot.

A version of the proposed landscape currently exists on the industrial lot, separately from the borough lot. Revisiting the original plans outlined above to connect that river walk with the boat dock area in a public/private partnership is another conversation worth having.



*Industrial Park walking trails are above the fence.*



*ADA parking spot*



*Boat dock area*



*Sanitary facilities*



*Sitting area*

**C.4.7 Assessment to Outdoor Recreation Access in Leetsdale**

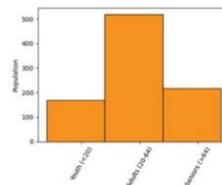
High Walkability: Leetsdale is a walkable community. Beaver Street creates a walking continuum by going across the borough and connecting it with neighboring municipalities. Most of the streets between Beaver St. and Ohio River Blvd, as well as the overpass and Washington St., have sidewalks.

According to the Trust for Public Lands ParkServe report generated on August 20, 2023, 78% of Leetsdale residents, or 906 out of 1159, live within 10-min walk (1/2 mile) from a space available for outdoor recreation. This score compares favorably with those of other local municipalities:

Municipality	Walkability/Accessibility	Population Served	Number of Parks
Leetsdale	78%	906 out of 1,159	3 (2 borough parks and Boat Dock area)
Leet Twp	45%	719 out of 1,607	4
Bell Acres	24%	356 out of 1,494	2
Sewickley	83%	3,216 out of 3,875	5
Edgeworth	80%	1,340 out of 1,676	2
Ambridge	73%	5,064 out of 6,956	3
Moon Twp	29%	7,936 out of 27,049	16

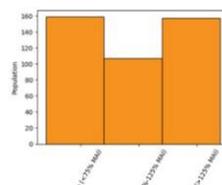
Population	Within a 10-minute walk
Total Population	906

Age	Within a 10-minute walk
Children (less than age 20)	169
Adults (age 20 to age 64)	519
Seniors (age 65 and up)	217

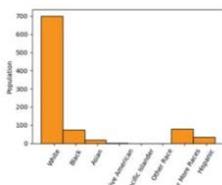


Households by Income	Within a 10-minute walk
Low income	159
Middle income	107
High income	157

(Generated from urban area median income)



Race/Ethnicity	Within a 10-minute walk
White*	700
Black*	73
Asian*	18
Native American*	2
Pacific Islander*	0
Other Race*	0
Two or More Races*	79
Hispanic	34



\* Excludes those that report Hispanic origin (which is captured separately from race by the U.S. Census)

Demographic information is derived from ESRI 2022 Demographic Forecast Block Groups data.

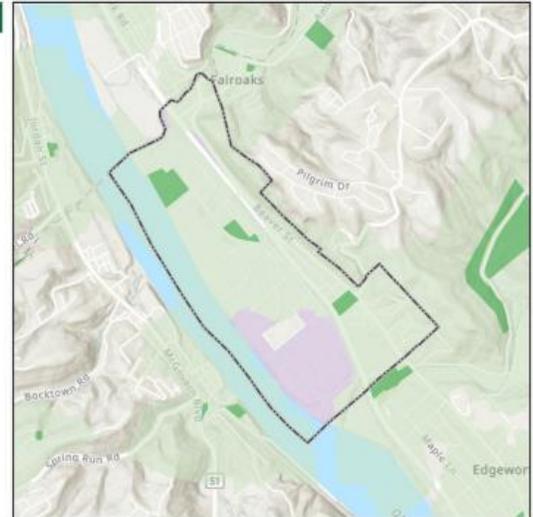
The data shows equitable access to outdoor recreation opportunities for youth and senior populations. When recalculated as a percentage of population in respective age categories, 78% of all seniors and 76% of all children in Leetsdale have walking access to the park facilities, comparable to the average for the total population. Accessibility by income and race/ethnicity is similarly equitable throughout the whole community.

Source: ParkServe

The report indicates that an area of moderate priority for having additional recreational space exists at the northwestern end of Beaver St., towards Ambridge. This need is partially fulfilled by the Whimsical Garden, maintained by the Garden Club, and located near the intersection of Beaver and Broad St/Overpass.

City Statistics	Current
City: Leetsdale, PA	
Park Acres	25
Total Population	1,159
Served Population	906
Percent Served	78.2%

Legend
City Boundary
Parks
Service Areas
Priority areas for new parks
Very high priority
High priority
Moderate priority



Another area marked for this purpose in the report is Buncher Industrial Park, an industrial area with no residential population, and can therefore be disregarded.

*Source: ParkServe*

Access To Public Transportation: Leetsdale residents can access recreational opportunities within the borough, as well as along Beaver St. in both Beaver County and Allegheny County as far as North Shore, by using Pittsburgh Regional Transit Route #14 which stops in the area every 30-60 min. BTCA Route#1 bus also has a drop-off point on Ohio River Blvd by the Quaker Village Shopping Center.

Neighboring Parks Also Available: the following neighboring area parks, located in the communities adjacent to Leetsdale, are also available for the use of Leetsdale residents with easy access by walking, public transit, or driving.

Ambridge

Park Name	NRPS Classification	Size	Inventory
Walter Panek Park	Community Park	26 acres	2 Baseball fields, 3 Tennis Courts, 2 Playgrounds, Pavilion, Exercise and Hiking Trails
C.J. Caul Park	Neighborhood Park	+/- 1 acre	Gazebo, Formal Park
Park Road Park	Neighborhood Park	+/- 3 acres	Playground
Penn Way Park	Community Park	+/-6 acres	Baseball Field, Playground
Ambridge School and Duss Avenue	School Sports Facility and Community Park	+/- 10 acres	Artificial Turf Football/Soccer Field, 400 Meter Track, Softball Field, Baseball Field, 4 Tennis Courts, Basketball Courts, 2 Half Basketball Courts, 1 Deck Hockey Court

## Edgeworth

<b>Park Name</b>	<b>NRPS Classification</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Inventory</b>
Morrow-Pontefract Park	Community Park	10 acres	5 Tennis Courts, Baseball Field, Soccer Field
Way Park	Neighborhood Park	1.5 acre	Formal Passive Recreation Park and Open Space Pavilion
Walker Park	Community/Regional Park	81 acres	2 Pavilions, Hiking Trails, Lodge, Passive Recreation Park and Conservation Open Space

## Leet Township

Sewickley Heights Country Club - Golf Course  
Private Parks - Not Open to Public

Conclusion: Leetsdale is a walkable community that has good access to outdoor recreation. It has sufficient park areas and elements for a borough of its size. Henle Park is centrally located for Leetsdale and the surrounding community. Kohlmeyer Park serves the needs of Washington Street and the rest of the community located on the other side of Route 65. Leetsdale is built and has no room for new green spaces. The Riverside/Boat Dock area has the potential to provide residents and visitors to the area with recreational opportunities by the river.

From the review of the recreation trends, park classification and location, as well as community needs, the current need of Leetsdale is to refurbish and upgrade its existing parks and open spaces through borough investment and public/private partnerships.

### ***C.4.8 Green Buffers, Greenways, and Woodland Trails***

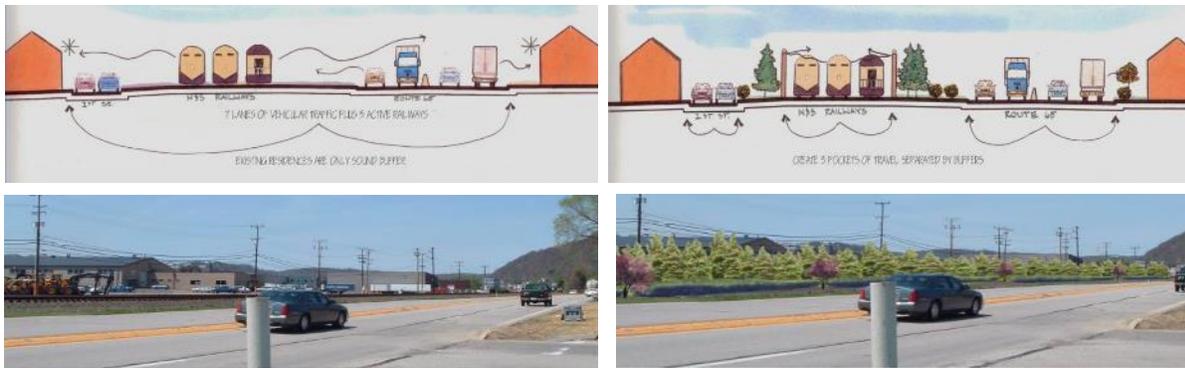
Leetsdale is currently divided into 2 sections: North-bound side of Route 65/Norfolk Southern and South-bound side of Route 65/Norfolk Southern. This transportation artery consists of a 4-lane divided highway, 3 active rail lines, 1 local rail line, and a 2-lane local road. Per 2007 GRPMP, the Norfolk Southern Railway trains pass through Leetsdale at the average of 1 train per 5 minutes, with each pass requiring crossing whistles. Vehicular traffic is also heavy.

This presents a challenge both for living in the area and using it recreationally. Visually, the entry to Leetsdale from the Route-65 is not clearly marked. There are no signs informing visitors they have reached Leetsdale and its amenities, parks, or commercial venues. The view is dominated by industrial landscape and signage. Additionally, heavy noise pollution is prevalent.

Green buffers and better signage on Route-65 have been promoted as a positive future development opportunity in both 2004 SHALE and 2007 GRPMP plans:

- Reduce Noise Pollution: Green buffers, especially when combined with sound reflecting surfaces such as a wall can reduce the impact of Route 65 and the Norfolk Southern Railway.

- **Visual Buffer:** Neither Leetsdale Industrial Complex nor Buncher Company Industrial Complex encourages off-the-street commercial commerce that requires advertisement visibility. Therefore, buffering of both the Industrial Complex and the railroad would provide a visual separation of Leetsdale from industry. This buffering would focus attention on the community.
- **Safety:** Norfolk Southern has documented a major derailment in Leetsdale due to an intoxicated resident entering onto trail tracks. The creation of a buffer would remove the ease of access to the existing railway and discourage people from the tracks except at crossing locations.
- **Economics:** Removing the visual and auditory impact of the railway and the industrial park promotes Leetsdale as a more desirable community to live in, thus encouraging new residents.



Current State

Proposed Solution



Source: 2007 GRPMP

According to both 2004 SHALE and 2007 GRPMP plans, a connected greenway / woodland trail system is not possible for Leetsdale due to its layout, prevalence of industrial land use, and steep slopes:

- No Riverfront Trail: In Leetsdale, 87% of the riverfront is dangerous and must remain off-limits to pedestrians. Trails and pedestrian access along Leetsdale's riverfront are not safe due to Norfolk Southern Railway's active rail lines, and the active barge loading center for the Buncher Company Industrial Complex and the Leetsdale Industrial Complex. Riverfront Greenway Trails, for the purpose of connecting with neighboring communities, cannot happen in Leetsdale.
- Allegheny County Trail System: The original 1995 Allegheny County study posited a development of an interconnecting trail system that stretched throughout the county, going mostly through natural and woodland environments and some urban connections. That plan did not include Leetsdale. Since then, from the county GIS data, there appeared to be no local development of county trails, and there are no new plans in existence.
- Steep Slopes: Within the wooded areas of Leetsdale off Beaver St., slopes exceed a steep 4:1 ratio (4 ft horizontal, 1 ft vertical). Therefore, creation of a woodland greenway would require 80% of the trail system to be in Leet Township. Such a trail would bypass Leetsdale Borough, as would all trail users.

#### Conclusion:

Though a connected greenway/woodland and an extended river trail system is not possible in Leetsdale, green buffers and better signage will improve both livability and use of recreation amenities. Part comprehensive plans have provided working strategies that can be revisited and implemented. A grove of trees located on a borough lot between Route 65 and the railroad at the Ferry St. intersection, surveyed in the 2023 Shade Tree Inventory, can provide a model for such a barrier.

#### ***C.4.9 Overview of Park and Recreation Programs***

Leetsdale Borough hosts several recreational programs through different agencies.

#### Borough Programs: Parks and Recreation Board

Summer Fun Mini-Camps: This program is a series of 2-hour long summer classes for children with a caregiver, conducted in Henle Park grounds and pavilion.

- 4-6 classes are planned through the summer on Fridays, to start and finish before Splash Pad openings.
- Target participants: children ages 3-12 and their caregivers
- Typical attendance: 10-20 children
- Class topics included: yoga, gardening, doll-making, visit with service dogs in training, hydroponics, visit with police and fire department.
- Program fee: none; incidental costs covered by borough via Parks & Recreation budget.

- Program features: non-competitive; active; inclusive
- Participation trends for the past 5 years: strong attendance in 2017 and 2018; programs discontinued during Covid pandemic, resumed in 2021 and 2022; no classes in 2023 due to transition in Park & Rec Board membership.

Movies in the Park: This program is a series of outdoor movie screenings on select summer and early fall evenings in Henle Park.

- Movies are shown on a portable screen.
- Target participants: all ages
- Typical attendance: 30-40 visitors
- Snacks are available for purchase or free distribution at the snack shack.
- Activities to match the movie theme (e.g., craft, moon observation through the telescope) were offered to visitors before and during the show.
- Program fee: none
- Program features: non-competitive; passive and active; inclusive
- Participation trends for the past 5 years: program started in 2022 with 5+ movies to excellent attendance and feedback; 1 movie shown so far in 2023.

Seasonal Celebrations: This program offers community-wide events to celebrate major seasonal holidays in Henle Park or the Borough Community Room.

- Recurring events: Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween Parade and Bonfire in Henle Park
- Additional events: Mother's Day Tea, End of Summer Celebration
- Target participants: all ages
- Typical attendance: 50-90 visitors for recurring events, 20-30 visitors for smaller events
- Program fee: none; incidental costs covered by borough or through sponsorships.
- Program features: non-competitive; active; inclusive of age, gender, ability level, or income.
- Participation trends for the past 5 years: Easter Egg Hunt and Halloween Bonfire and Parade are community traditions going back many years, with robust participation from residents and visitors alike. Events were suspended during Covid pandemic but came back strong in 2022. Children's parade, as well as Mother's Day tea and summer celebrations, are a recent addition.

Borough Programs: Park and Rec Council Committee

Free Lunches in the Park: This Program provides free lunches to children visiting Henle Park Splash Pad on select days in the summer.

- Lunches are served at the Snack Shack by volunteers.
- Target participants: school age children.
- Typical attendance: 20-30 children per event
- Program fee: none; incidental costs covered by borough or through donations.

- Program features: non-competitive; passive; inclusive of gender and ability level; need assumed on the honor basis.
- Participation trends for the past 5 years: popular program that has attracted both residents and visitors to Leetsdale; run for 3 days/week in 2022 and 1 day/week due to volunteer and staff availability.

### Borough Programs: Mayor's Programs

Senior Picnics: This program provides community events for all seniors in Leetsdale in Leetsdale Manor High Rise community room.

- The program provides 4-6 senior lunch or dinner events per year, with an accompanying enrichment activity (musical concert, presentation from a local organization).
- Target participants: Leetsdale residents 65+ years of age
- Typical attendance: 30-40 people
- Program fee: none; incidental costs covered by borough from Mayor's budget, or through private donations and sponsorships (e.g., Salvation Army, Union Aid).
- Program features: non-competitive; passive; inclusive of gender, ability, and income level.
- Participation trends for the past 5 years: traditional event for a few years; number of events and participation increased in 2022; sponsorship efforts encouraged.

Labor Day Picnic: Program provides a yearly community celebration.

- Target participants: Leetsdale residents
- Typical attendance: 50-70 people
- Program fee: none; incidental costs covered by borough from Mayor's budget.
- Program features: non-competitive; passive; inclusive of age, gender, ability, and income level.
- Participation trends for the past 5 years: traditional event for many years; not held in 2023 due to budget considerations.

Food Pantry: a service program affiliated with Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank that provides food assistance to eligible residents.

- The Food Pantry packs and delivers food packages, including both non-perishable and perishable food items, once a month.
- Target participants: low-income residents, many of whom are elderly and disabled.
- Typical coverage: 50 people.
- Program fee: none; costs covered by the borough and through grants.
- Program features: non-competitive; passive; inclusive of age, gender, and ability.
- Participation trends for the past 5 years: program coverage expanded more than double in the last two years while staying within the same budget; additional grants and support actively solicited.

### Borough Programs: Police Department Christmas Party/Toy Drive

- Program provides a children's Christmas Party or toy drive.
- Target participants: Leetsdale children ages 2 to 12
- Typical attendance: 12-20 children and their caregivers
- Program fee: none; incidental costs covered by private donations.
- Program features: non-competitive; passive; inclusive of gender, ability, and income level.
- Participation trends for the past 5 years: traditional event for a few years; during Covid, the program transformed into a remote option, toy drive and delivery.

### Programs Sponsored by Local Non-Profit Organizations

Leetsdale Snowflake Classic: This program is a 5K race through Leetsdale's streets that is held in November and serves as a fundraiser for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration.

- AthLinks-registered event and officially timed event with an option for a 5K run, 2K walk, and Children's Race
- Target: all ages
- Typical attendance: 70-100 runners
- Program fee: \$20-35
- Program features: competitive and non-competitive options; active; inclusive of age, gender, ability, and income level.
- Participation trends for the past 5 years: traditional event for over a decade, held through the Covid pandemic; unfortunately, had not happened in 2022-2023 due to change in leadership.

4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration: a hallmark regional event for the area.

- Parade, carnival activities in the park, band line-up, and fireworks at dusk.
- Target: all ages, Leetsdale residents and visitors to the area
- Typical attendance: hundreds of residents and visitors
- Program fee: free; funded by the borough, sponsorships, and donations.
- Program features: non-competitive; active; inclusive of age, gender, ability, and income level.
- Participation trends for the past 5 years: a Leetsdale tradition since 1943, and an anchor event and location for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday in Quaker Valley area.

### Sewickley Library Programs

Sewickley Library funds and organizes three programs in Henle Park, targeting preschool and school-age children for participation. Henle Park location is chosen for its beautiful location and for funding eligibility reasons.

- Family Story Time: a 1-hour interactive story time for preschool children and their caregivers on select Fridays, timed to coincide with Splash Pad openings.

- Story Walk: a display of sequential signs illustrating a select children’s book in Henle Park, for passive enjoyment of visitors.
- Book Stop: an active program in which the school bus travels through the library coverage area on select days over the summer. Children ride the bus and enjoy stories read during stops. Henle Park is one of the stops.

All programs are free for the community and inclusive for gender, ability, and income level. Program attendance in 2023 is indicated in the table below.

Family Story Time				Story Walk				
Date	Children	Adults	Total	Date	Program	Children	Adults	Total
7/9	40	30	70	April	The Hidden Rainbow	75	50	125
7/16	26	22	48	June	We Are Water Protectors	75	50	125
7/23	32	26	58	August	This is a School	75	50	125
7/30	12	15	27	September	Goodbye Summer, Hello Autumn	TBD	TBD	TBD
7/14	28	22	50	December	Snowmen at Night	TBD	TBD	TBD
7/21	27	17	44	Total		<b>225</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>375</b>
7/28	21	17	38	<i>*Note: Story Walk attendance estimated due to the nature of the program</i> <b>Total Programs: 14</b> <b>Total Attendance: 813</b>				
8/4	32	24	56					
8/ 11	28	19	47					
Total	<b>246</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>438</b>					

Source: Sewickley Public Library

### Comparison with Surrounding Communities

Of the 10+ municipalities within a comparison area, only Sewickley and Ambridge have a year-round calendar of street festivals, events, running races, recreational and service programs. There are key differences between those communities and Leetsdale:

- Both Sewickley and Ambridge are substantially bigger (3,894 and 6,896, respectively)
- Both communities have a prominent retail/commercial “Main Street” district. For these municipalities, recreational events and programs are driven by their Chamber of Commerce and reflect an effort to attract visitors to shop at local businesses.
- Those larger communities have amenities that support youth sports participation from around the area, thus also serving smaller communities like Leetsdale.

Therefore, for a community of its small size and without a strong local retail district, Leetsdale is unique in hosting a solid line-up of community recreational programs and events throughout the year.

### Conclusion

Leetsdale’s recreational programs and services are an asset to the community. They provide inclusive activities and service outreach to residents of all ages, making a special effort to reach the young population, seniors, and low-income residents. Their offerings also extend to regional events that attract area visitors and promote Leetsdale as a great place to live. Leetsdale’s

challenge is that recreational programs largely rely on the work of a few dedicated volunteers. If people who run the program step down, the program disappears. Community engagement and financial support from diverse sources are crucial in continuing program development in Leetsdale.



*Easter Egg Hunt, 2023*



*Library Story Time, 2023*



*Pumpkin Festival, 2022*



*Halloween Parade, 2022*



*Summer Fun Mini-Camp, 2017*



*Leetsdale Snowflake Classic 5K, 2019*



*Mother's Day Tea, 2023*

### C.4.10 Financing Park and Recreation Programs

Leetsdale Borough park and recreation budget analysis is presented in the tables below. To assess recent spending, budget figures for the last five years from 2018 to 2022 were used. For comparison, figures from 2002-2006 were used from the 2007 RGPMP. These numbers do not include funding for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July activities, Food Pantry, and senior activities organized by the mayor.

Table: Park and Recreation Budget Relative to the Total Borough Budget

	2002	Average 2002-2006	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average 2018-2022
Overall budget	\$1,582,675.49	\$1,881,365.91	\$2,250,285.01	\$3,005,152.05	\$2,352,114.20	\$2,562,400.36	\$2,479,639.00	\$2,529,918.12
Parks and Recreation budget	\$19,674.04	\$17,331.29	\$24,514.83	\$54,441.94	\$23,934.17	\$24,917.39	\$42,507	\$34,063.07
Park and Rec % of Overall Budget	1.24%		1.09%	1.81%	1.02%	0.97%	1.71%	
Park and Rec per capita expenditure	\$15.96		\$20.95	\$46.77	\$20.59	\$21.64	\$37.25	

\* The Leetsdale Borough Parks and Recreation budget includes money for the boat dock, as it is part of the recreation facilities in the Borough.

Table: Parks and Recreation Budget Breakdown (Actual Spending)

	2002	2006	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average 2018-2022
Boat Dock	\$9,726.09	\$3,520.38	\$2,607.10	\$2,569.75	\$1,590.32	\$2,378.75	\$3,000	\$2,429.18
Park operations	\$4,487.05	\$5,614.01	\$19,237.13	\$49,833.09	\$21,056.51	\$18,922.32	\$3,0389	\$27,887.61
Park supplies	\$328.84	\$418.80	\$209.52	\$417.50	0	\$3,196.13	\$3,954	\$1,555.43
Park programs	\$1,947.36	\$2,551.60	\$1,257.70	\$595.99	\$130.97	\$420.19	\$3,551	\$1,191.17
Shade tree commission	\$873.00	\$225.00	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other services and charges	xx	xx	\$218.68	0	0	0	\$113	\$66.34
Garden club	xx	xx	\$984.70	\$1,025.61	\$1,156.37	0	\$1,500	\$933.34
Total	\$19,674.02	\$13,956.71	\$24,514.83	\$54,441.94	\$23,934.17	\$24,917.39	\$4,2507	\$34,063.07

Table: Parks and Recreation Budget Differences

	2002	2006	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average 2018-2022
Budgeted	\$20,100.00	\$24,100.00	\$31,900	\$32,900	\$47,400	\$49,100	\$10,1822	\$52,624.4
Actual	\$19,674.02	\$13,956.71	\$24,514.83	\$54,441.94	\$23,934.17	\$24,917.39	\$42,507	\$34,063.07
Difference	\$425.98	\$10,143.29	\$7,385.17	\$-21,541.94	\$23,465.83	\$24,182.61	\$59,315	\$18,561.33

Table: Revenue from Parks

	2002	2006	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average 2018-2022
Boat docks	xx	\$2,983.99	\$2,850	\$2,025	\$1,125	\$10,027.27	\$26,000	\$8,405.45

Rentals	\$175.00	\$380.00	\$1,250	\$1,425	\$75	\$600	\$1,950	\$1,060
Misc. grants	\$3,000.00	\$994.20	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donations			\$6,017	\$3,753	\$880	\$500.85	\$399	\$2,309.97
Total	\$3,175.00	\$4,358.19	\$10,117	\$7,203	\$2,080	\$11,128.12	\$28349	\$11,775.42

## Conclusions

- Parks Don't Pay for Themselves: Leetsdale is running its Parks and Recreation programs at an average deficit of \$22,287.65 over the 2018-2022 period. This deficit existed back in 2002-2006 as well. According to 2007 RGPMP, from 2002-2006 Leetsdale Borough spent an annual average of \$17,331.29 on their parks and recreation facilities throughout the borough. During the same time Leetsdale averaged \$4,358.19/year in revenue from boat launch permits, pavilion rentals, and miscellaneous grants.
- Funding Philosophy: This deficit reflects the borough's philosophy that park and recreational amenities are a service that the borough provides to the taxpayers, redirecting public funds for community benefit. This means, however, that the borough may be missing opportunities to create revenue from its park system.
- Money Running Like Water: Between the 2002-2006 and 2018-2022 periods, there has been a significant increase in both budgeting and actual amounts spent on parks and recreation. The average spent went from \$17,330.88 spent in 2002-2006 to 34,063.07, increasing by \$16,732.18. There has been no significant increase in services provided, especially since due to Covid shutdowns many recreational activities were suspended. Therefore, beyond standard inflation, this increase could be attributed largely to the cost of a water bill for running the Splash Pad that was constructed in 2007-2008.
- Funding Sources: the borough funds its park and recreation maintenance and programs mainly with tax dollars. In the past, the Free Lunch program in Henle Park was compensated by Allegheny County. This compensation is no longer available. Park and Rec Board has raised over \$600 in 2022 from fall activities. A private donation of \$3000 supported Snack Shack in 2023.

## C.5 Assessment of the State of Environmental Resources

The topography of Leetsdale is a flat floodplain extending outward from the Ohio River to increasing steeply sloped ridges and stream valleys. Steeply sloped areas in excess of 25% are present, creating concerns for drainage and geologic hazards due to the presence of Pittsburgh red beds in the Glenshaw formation. In part, these concerns are regulated by slope ordinances, but each land development application must contend with these environmental challenges.

Leetsdale has a diversity of tree species, boasting large specimens that are rare for the region. Community observations, over recent years, have suggested that Leetsdale trees are disappearing. This is consistent with data on decreasing canopy coverage from urban forests across Allegheny County. The 2023 shade tree has provided data that confirms it.

Although Leetsdale is a densely developed municipality, it is in proximity to rivers, streams, and well-forested areas adjacent to homes. Because of this, a variety of wildlife can find homes close to human dwellings. Lyme disease is a concern; no one species is fully responsible for the risk.

An interconnected trail system by the river or through woodland is not feasible in Leetsdale due to a lack of public access to most of the riverbank, safety concerns in the industrial area, and steep hill slopes. Green buffers between the transportation routes and the residential areas, as well as better signage, will improve both livability and the use of recreation amenities.

From the review of park conditions, recreation trends, park classification, and location, the current need of Leetsdale is to refurbish and upgrade its existing parks and open spaces:

- Henle Park is a focal point for Leetsdale and a regional attraction due to its amenities and community celebrations. It attracts a lot of visitors. Henle Park represents a beautiful green space balanced with recreational amenities. Its boundaries are historically defined. Its amenities need a comprehensive update, with an eye for better usability for all age groups, ADA accessibility, and better parking options.
- Kohlmeyer Park is properly located to accommodate the residents on Washington St. Recommendations for future park development would include the provision of 2-5 small play structures, repair of the water fountain, and better maintenance of the park grounds.
- Though the Boat Dock area has been neglected, it is the only area with public access to the river and offers unique recreation opportunities. Four possible improvements would be valuable: better signage, better parking, a marina, or a riverwalk trail constructed with a public-private partnership with Leetsdale Industrial Park.

Leetsdale's recreational programs and services are an asset to the community. They provide inclusive activities and service outreach to residents of all ages, making a special effort to reach the young population, seniors, and low-income residents. Their offerings also extend to regional events that attract area visitors and promote Leetsdale as a great place to live.

Leetsdale's challenge is that recreational programs largely rely on the work of a few dedicated volunteers. Community engagement and financial support from diverse sources are crucial in continuing program development in Leetsdale.

## **D. Cultural and Historic Resources**

### **D.1 History of the Borough**

The area known today as Leetsdale Borough has been active since the late 18th century when it was a fur-trading post and frontier settlement. Daniel Leet was a Major in the Virginia Division of the Army during the Revolutionary War. Leet spent the unforgivable winter at Valley Forge with George Washington and later returned to reside in present-day Washington County, Pennsylvania. When Washington County was created by the State of Pennsylvania on March 28, 1781, Daniel Leet became one of the five original county commissioners. After purchasing the land at a public auction in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Major Leet returned to Washington County to raise his family and had no interest in settling his newly acquired land. However, William Leet, Daniel's brother, became the overseer and landlord. By 1809 considerable stagecoach traffic was traveling through the area and required a place that could accommodate travelers. A two-story inn was built and with modifications, it still stands today.

Leetsdale has been deeply rooted in the industrial history of the Pittsburgh area. One of the first major industrial operations to open in Leetsdale Borough was the Harmony Brickworks, founded by a religious separatist group, the Harmonist Society. The Harmonists began the brickworks in 1888 and were forerunners in the brick-making business for many years and produced 20,000 common red bricks per day. They later sold the Brickworks and surrounding land to James Oliver in 1902. This was the second brick-making factory in Leetsdale at the time, the other factory being Penn Brick Company. Five years later the Harmony Brick Works was devastated by a flood and the Brick Works never operated again. Recent discoveries in the vicinity of the old brickworks site led to an extensive archaeological excavation.

#### *Industrial Heritage*

There are no formally designated historic districts in Leetsdale on either a state or national registry. However, Leetsdale like Ambridge and Harmony was heavily influenced by the industrial growth that took place along the Ohio River in the early 20th century, affording it a rich history.

#### *Archaeological Site*

In 1999 work began on the 12-acre Leetsdale Archaeological Site, under the direction of the Pittsburgh District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and was completed in 2003. The site, once a sandbar on the Ohio River, is optimal for examining prehistoric human activities due to undisturbed layers of soil that have resulted from frequent flooding. No other site of this type has been excavated under controlled conditions along the upper Ohio River in Pennsylvania.

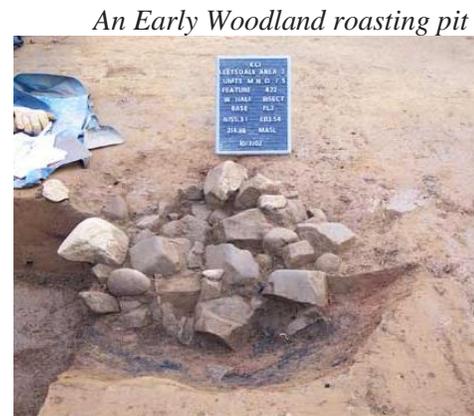
During the span of the archaeological excavation, many finds were made at the Leetsdale Archaeological site. Evidence of human occupation, dating back 8,000 years was discovered, along with remains of a 19th Century brick factory associated with the Harmonist Society. The findings indicated that people have been sporadically camping within the same 12-acre area over the last 7,000-8,000 years.

Special interest was found in the intact strata that date back between 6,000 BC to 4,000 BC, known as the Middle Archaic Period. In Eastern North American prehistory, this is the time of which we know the least.

The remains found from the Early Woodland period (1,100 BC- 200 AD) are significant because most of the previous findings from other sites were focused on ceremonial sites (mounds) rather than the daily activities of people as found at the Leetsdale Site.

Once the site area was completely reviewed, the site was refilled and returned to the Leetsdale Industrial Park, which owns the property where the site was located.

This archaeological site is an important part of Leetsdale Borough's and Pennsylvania's history, giving insight into the life of early peoples in western Pennsylvania.



*Harmony Society Brickworks*

Source: Caprico, Maria. "Dug Out: Archeologists complete excavation of former Leetsdale island." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 4, 2003.

Photo Source: *Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Pennsylvania Archaeology.*  
<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/archaeology/native-american/leetsdale.html>

## D.2 Historic Areas and Buildings

### *Historic Landmarks*

The Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation (PHLF) Historic Landmark<sup>8</sup> plaque program began in 1968 to identify architecturally significant structures and significant pieces of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States's local heritage throughout Allegheny County. Nominations are reviewed by the private non-profit foundation's Historic Plaque Designation Committee composed of trustees, architectural historians, and citizens.

Beginning in 2010, the committee expanded its program to consider applications for historic status from counties surrounding Allegheny, extending its reach to a 250-mile radius from the city (if the site has a connection to the greater Pittsburgh region). Historic designation by the foundation does not protect the building from alteration or demolition. Structures awarded the designation typically have aluminum or bronze plaques affixed to their exterior that signify their status. Over five hundred Historic Landmark Plaques have been awarded since the program's inception, although not all structures have been preserved.

Buildings, structures, districts, and landscapes may be approved for a Historic Landmark plaque if four conditions are met:

- They represent remarkable pieces of architecture, engineering, construction, landscape design, or planning, or impart a rich sense of history.
- Alterations, additions, or deterioration have not lessened their value in the above respects.
- They are at least 50 years old and are located within 250 miles of Pittsburgh.
- They are not located in historic districts bearing a plaque (unless of exceptional individual significance).

Two Leetsdale sites have been awarded Historic Landmark plaques by the PHLF.



Lark Inn  
634 Beaver Road  
1798  
Plaque Awarded 1979



Elm Ridge  
1 Breck Drive  
James Gardiner Coffin/ John Walker house. 1869. Isaac Hobbs, architect; David Kerr, builder. Plan published in Hobbs Architecture, 1873  
Plaque Awarded 2007

*Source: Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation Historic Plaques - Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation (phlf.org)*

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<sup>8</sup> These designations are not to be confused with City of Pittsburgh historic designations.

*National Register of Historic Places*

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.

Leetsdale has one property on this list.

Historic Structure	Location
Elm Ridge	1 Breck Drive

Source: *National Register of Historic Places (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov)*

*Historic Bridges*

Allegheny-Beaver Co. Bridge No. 1 Sewickley Creek

Location: Leetsdale, Allegheny Co. - Ambridge, Beaver Co.

Although altered, this may be the oldest bridge in Allegheny County. A plate embedded in the sandstone parapet reports the bridge was erected in 1827, then widened and lined in 1919.



Most of the stonework is carefully cut and fitted, with the black sooty veneer typical of this region's structures that stood through the dirtiest days of the then-Smoky City. But there are remnants of the earlier construction.

At the exposed base of the southeast abutment, the color, shape, and wear of the stone is obviously different.

The bridge name given on the plate is like the format used by Allegheny County. Bridges are named for the stream they cross and ordered numerically from their outflow. When this bridge was built, it was sequentially the first County Road crossing above the outflow of this creek into the Ohio River.

Downstream along the creek, the Ohio & Pennsylvania Railroad (later incorporated into Pittsburg, Fort Wayne & Chicago Railroad, then Pennsylvania RR) built a bridge to cross the creek when that line was being competed in 1851. In 1929, the PRR moved their mainline further toward the Ohio River allowing the former right-of-way to become Ohio River Blvd. The boulevard now carries the main traffic bypassing the old Beaver Rd.

Big Sewickley Creek forms the boundary between Allegheny and Beaver counties. General "Mad" Anthony Wayne had led troops in the Northwest Territories, permanently displacing the Native Americans leading to the 1795 Treaty of Greenville. With the resulting peace leading to rising population, residents pressed for the establishment of new counties. The Pennsylvania legislature passed an act, March 12, 1800, which allowed the formation of eight new counties,

including Beaver -- with part of the land being taken from Allegheny County. Just 27 years later, the first parts of this stone bridge were built.

*Source: Beaver Rd over Big Sewickley Creek - Bridges and Tunnels of Allegheny County and Pittsburgh, PA (pghbridges.com)*

### Leet Street or Oliver Bridge



*Metal 7 Panel Pin-Connected Pratt Through Truss, Fixed  
Length: 109 ft. Main Span: 105 ft. Roadway: 19 ft. Main Spans: one  
Built 1886 By: Morse Bridge Company of Youngstown, Ohio*

One of the oldest truss bridges in the county, this bridge had unusual design details.

This bridge was built in 1886 by Morse Bridge Company for the railroad at Lawrence Junction, PA and widened and relocated to this location in 1904. Because this truss widening occurred so long ago and during a period where rivets and pin-connected truss bridges were still being built, the alteration is not readily apparent on the bridge, nor does it diminish the historic significance. The alterations themselves are old enough to be historic.

This bridge features unusual design details, most noteworthy the corrugated built-up beams on the hip verticals and the bottom chords, a detail which adds to the historic significance of the bridge. The Historic Bridge Inventory refers to these as "Z" sections. This detail on the bridge is an uncommon type of built-up beam, that most often shows up on railroad bridges. In addition, the Leet Street Bridge does not display any of the design details commonly associated with the Morse Bridge Company. Some of the oldest Morse Bridge Company truss bridges had an uncommon detail in that they had no sway bracing but had heavy lateral bracing. They also tended to have a wide variety of decorative details. Another 1886 Morse Bridge Company bridge in Ohio does not display any unusual design details including the corrugated "Z" sections and is nicely decorated. These facts, especially the railroad style corrugated "Z" sections may suggest that the Morse Bridge Company did not design the Leet Street Bridge but instead constructed the Leet Street Bridge according to railroad design plans.

The bridge was demolished in 2017.

*Source: Historic Bridges .org*

## *Buildings that Could be Historic Landmarks*

### Leetsdale Station

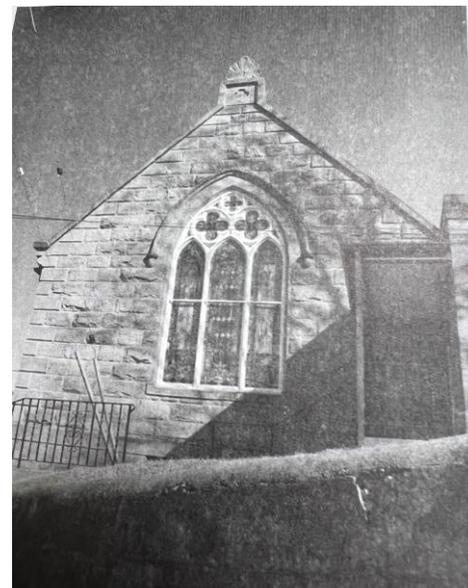
The Leetsdale Railroad Station was in Leetsdale, Pennsylvania, on the north shore of the Ohio River. It was a stop on the Pennsylvania Railroad, running from East to West. The first train to travel through Leetsdale was headed for the town of Economy, Pennsylvania, on July 4, 1851. The president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, General William Robinson, along with several stockholders, rode on board in gravel cars during this trip. As of November 1851, there were a total of four trains that stopped at what was then known as Shousetown Lane. As a result of the growing patronage of the railroad, a train yard specifically for passenger trains was constructed to take patrons to and from the City of Pittsburgh. There were approximately twenty trips a day to Pittsburgh from this station.  
*Source: Leetsdale Station | Historic Pittsburgh*



### First Missionary Baptist Church

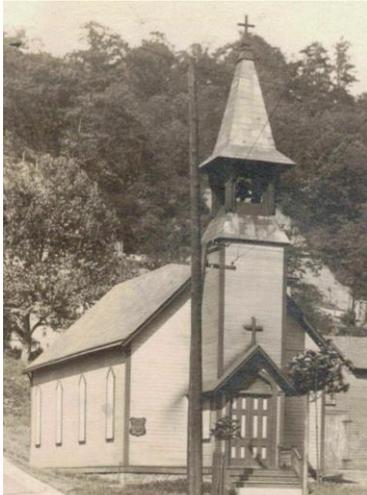
First Missionary Baptist Church's traces its history to the arrival in Leetsdale of the William Robinson family from Ohio. According to church documents, the Robinson family worshiped at a nearby Baptist church in Fair Oaks. As years passed, William Robinson wanted to start a church. In 1889, the First Missionary Baptist Church began in a small frame structure on Third Street in Leetsdale. Extended members of the Robinson family gathered. The Rev. J.C. Taylor from Howard Street Baptist Tabernacle in Pittsburgh became the first pastor of the new and growing congregation.

In 1936, First Baptist Missionary Church was swept away in the historical St. Patrick's Day flood. Members were welcomed to worship at the Stone Church, which was built in 1876 by the Stoner family on a donated lot on Beaver Street. In 1961, First Missionary Baptist Church purchased the property from the Stoner family.



*Source: First Missionary Baptist Church in Leetsdale celebrates 125th anniversary (timesonline.com)*

### St. Matthews Lutheran Church



Lutheran services in Leetsdale were begun by Pastor Ivan Dietrich in 1882 in a schoolhouse on Camp Meeting Road, about two miles from Leetsdale. Seven years later, services were held in the public library of Leetsdale.

A lot on the corner of Broad and Rapp Streets was purchased for \$500, and the church was erected at a cost of \$1500. The church was dedicated by Pastor Dietrich on April 9, 1893.

No longer a church.

*Source: 1904/2004 Leetsdale Centennial Booklet*

### Leetsdale United Presbyterian Church



charter to the congregation.

The history of the First United Presbyterian Church of Leetsdale begins before the borough was formed in November 1904. The Presbytery of Allegheny inaugurated a new mission work in what was to become the borough of Leetsdale with a view toward establishing a church there. This work was placed under the care of a seminary student, John A. Gregg, who became its first pastor (1901-1905). The first few years the Sabbath School and Church Worship Services were held in a hall over a feed store. The church continued to grow and on October 28, 1903, the courts of the State of Pennsylvania granted a

No longer a church.

*Source: 1904/2004 Leetsdale Centennial Booklet*

Leetsdale High School (Quaker Valley High School)



Built in 1926 by the Borough of Leetsdale, the building became the high school for all surrounding communities in 1956. The building is marked by elements of classical architecture, including Ionic columns, symmetrical arrangement, architrave elements, and its grand scale. It traces its influence from the Palladian style present in North America.

*Source: Quaker Valley School District website and Planning Commission study*

## Residential Homes

Leetsdale's historic homes were built in three periods: 1) Before 1890, 2) 1890 – 1990, and 3) 1920s. The homes exhibit several architectural styles. Especially prominent are the styles of Tudor Revival and Craftsman. There are also examples of Dutch Colonial architecture.

64 Beaver Street (McCrum/Dschuhan House)  
Built 1845



1-2 Breck Drive (Dohar House)  
Built 1870 (no picture available)

266 Beaver Street (Stilts & Stone LLC House)  
Built 1880



25 Ferry Street (Old Post Office)  
Built 1890



66 Broad Street (James House)  
Built 1890



195 Broad Street (Carroll House)  
Built 1890



81-83 Broad Street (Rogerson - Martin House)  
Built 1890



6 Sycamore Spur (Nobers House)  
Built 1890



318-320 Beaver Street (Green Acreage LLC)  
Built 1890



391 Beaver Street (Martin Mgmt House)  
Built 1892



321 Beaver Street (Killen House)  
Built 1895



395 Beaver Street (Kusnirak House)  
Built 1895



145 Broad Street (Hasan House)  
Built 1900



474 Beaver Street (Ewing House)  
Built 1902



189 Broad Street (Schneider House)  
Built 1905



72 Ohio River Blvd (Seaman House)  
Built 1919



24 Winding Road (Jasper House)  
Built 1918



11 Sycamore Spur (Elliott House)  
Built 1920



11 Winding Road (Falcone House)  
Built 1920



198 Broad Street (Freeble House)  
Built 1920



19 Valley Lane (Whitaker House)  
Built 1926



15 Valley Drive (Napolitano House)  
Built 1926



5 Winding Road  
Built 1928



7 Sycamore Spur (Rodu House)  
Built 1928



16 Winding Road (Jenkins House)  
Built 1929



2 Oak Drive (Canney House)  
Built 1946



Possible historic districts:

- Washington Street
- Victory Terrace
- Lark Inn Fields

### **D.3 Cultural Facilities**

Leetsdale lacks many of cultural facilities, having lost many of its churches, its library, and elementary school, as well as the main street shopping district it once had. It has come to rely on Sewickley, which holds the area's library, art galleries and shops, a movie theater, and primary athletic fields.

Today, Leetsdale boasts,

- Quaker Valley High School
- First Missionary Baptist Church

It lacks much access to the high school facilities, though, which are often used by school athletic teams.

Among the amenities that Leetsdale lacks include,

- Theater
- Art Gallery/Shop
- Library
- Museum
- Community Cultural Center
- Dance/Music Facility
- Historical Society
- Botanical Society

#### Quaker Valley School District

Leetsdale belongs to the Quaker Valley School District. Ten other municipalities are in the district, including Bell Acres Borough, Leet Township, Sewickley Hills Borough, Sewickley Heights Borough, Aleppo Township, Glenfield Borough, Haysville Borough, Osborne Borough, Sewickley Borough, and Edgeworth Borough.

Schools in the District include:

- Quaker Valley High School (Leetsdale)
- Quaker Valley Middle School (Sewickley)
- Edgeworth Elementary (Edgeworth)
- Osborne Elementary (Osborne)

Total enrollment in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade is approximately 1,814 students (2022-2023). Most growth in enrollment is expected to come from residential development in the less built-up municipalities, such as Aleppo, Leet, and Bell Acres. The School District completed facility improvements, including the expansion of elementary in Osborne and Edgeworth, but intends to abandon the location in Leetsdale, favoring new construction in Leet. Depending on the course of action, vacating the high school property could have significant impact on

Leetsdale's future. The school sits at the entrance to the borough and occupies a significant portion of its land.

#### **D.4 Assessment of the State of Historic and Cultural Resources**

Leetsdale boasts many historic and potentially historic buildings but has not created any plan to protect or manage them. As a result, it has lost historic buildings and structures as well as cultural institutions over time.

There is a need to establish an Historical Architectural Review Board, which,

- Appoints citizens based on interest, knowledge, and expertise.
- Ensures all board members receive the required training.
- Creates an Historic District Ordinance
- Ensures that zoning ordinances provide protection of natural and historic features and resources.
- Creates and oversees historical districts.
- Partners with neighborhood groups such as the Sewickley Historical Society to obtain official recognition for historic structures.

Moreover, Leetsdale must develop cultural institutions for the community.

- Build partnerships among arts/culture/heritage and business/ government/community organizations, throughout the County.
- Support free temporary public art projects.
  - Chalk art festival, knit-in, sculpture competition, outdoor film series, community stories led by artists, etc.
  - Increase opportunities for youth to showcase their talent in events and festivals, stimulating pride in the community and youth while providing opportunities for leadership, responsibility, and skills building.
- Make a special effort to preserve the resources within the Borough Parks.
  - Movies in the park - Bring energy and vitality to town and contribute to a safe, friendly, charming feel.

## E. Infrastructure & Institutions

Leetsdale relies on physical infrastructure and institutions for day-to-day operations. This section covers the state of both.

### E.1 Public Safety

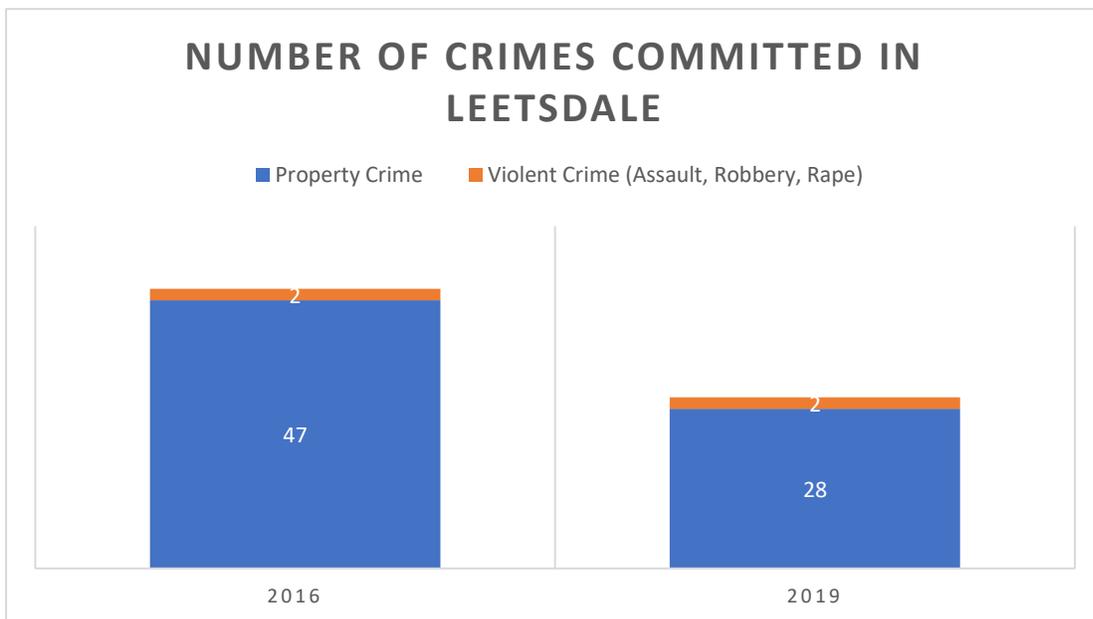
#### E.1.1 Leetsdale Borough Police Department

The Leetsdale Borough Police Department, whose building is located within the municipal complex on Beaver Street, consists of five full-time and one part-time officer. This is comparable to staffing described in the early 2000's comprehensive plan when the borough maintained four full-time and six part-time police officers. Staffing levels are guided by the desire to provide 24-hour coverage throughout the residential areas and the industrial park.

The Borough owns four police vehicles. Every 2 years, the oldest vehicle is traded in at approximately 8 years of service to maximize resale value. Vehicles are serviced on a regular schedule.

Vehicle	Function	Year Acquired	Life	Acquisition Cost	Condition
2016 Charger	Dodge	2016	8	\$35,337	Good
2018 Charger	Dodge	2018	8	\$33,698	Good
2020 Charger	Dodge	2020	8	\$32,073	Good
2022 Durango	Dodge	2022	8	\$36,013	Good

Crime statistics between 2016 and 2019 are provided in the chart below, demonstrating a decrease.



Source: FBI, *Crimes in the United States, State Cut*

The crime rate per 1,000 residents is approximately 26, about double found in surrounding communities, but this is not unexpected, given the presence of a shopping center. In 2019, 70% of crimes were larceny-theft, unlawful taking of goods, such as shoplifting and removing items from cars.

Spending on police has increased over the last decade in absolute terms but decreased as a percentage of total revenue.<sup>9</sup>

	2011	2021	CAGR
<b>Amount</b>	\$ 445,800	\$ 545,760	2%
<b>% of Budget</b>	24.3%	20.6%	-

Source: PA Department of Community & Economic Development, Municipal Statistics

### ***E.1.2 Leetsdale Borough Fire Department***

The Leetsdale Fire Department Allegheny County station number is 309. The fire station is in the Leetsdale municipal building on Broad Street.

Volunteers from both inside and outside of the borough make up the members of the Fire Department. The department is structured with the Chief leadership position elected by its members, and fire officers, including an Assistant Chief, a Lieutenant 1, and a Lieutenant 2, both appointed by the Chief.

The department owns three vehicles:

- 309 Engine 1 is a 2006 Spartan/Keystone. It has a 1500 gpm pump and carries 750 gallons of water. It is also certified for QRS (EMS) response.
- 309 Engine 2 is a 1994 Seagrave-50' Squirt. It has a 1500 gpm pump and carries 750 gallons of water. It also has a 50' elevated waterway capable of flowing 1000 gpm.
- 309 Squad is a 2018 Ram 5500/Keystone. It carries portable pumps and generators for the lower acuity calls. It is the primary QRS response vehicle.

The Leetsdale Fire Department answers emergency calls in and outside of the borough of Leetsdale. The department utilizes automatically dispatched assistance on calls from neighboring departments depending on the type of call. Mutual aid is received from Cochran Hose Company (Sewickley), Fair Oaks VFD (Leet Township), Harmony Township-Beaver County, Aleppo VFC, Big Sewickley Creek (Bell Acres Boro), and Ambridge-Beaver County. The Leetsdale Fire Department also responds to help these same departments as incoming mutual aid. Leetsdale Fire answers Medical or Quick Response Service (QRS) calls at the E0 and E1 priority levels in Leetsdale and Leet Township.

Training is attended by members at the federal, state, and local levels. Instruction can be at the Allegheny or Butler County Fire Schools and at local departments as well as virtual instruction. The firefighters are also trained as First responders for emergency rescue and technical rescue, including Hazmat, in the Leetsdale Industrial Park. In river rescue simulations, Leetsdale relies

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<sup>9</sup> Excluding Other Financing Sources, which is largely recognized distributions from a long-term bond.

on Crescent Township for the rescue boat, but the Leetsdale Volunteer Fire Department will provide land-based support. Local-level training also includes weekly Monday night drills. These drill nights are more concentrated on the operation and use of the equipment of the LFD.

Leetsdale Fire Department is compliant with the policies set forth by the office of the PA State Fire Commissioner. In 2023, Leetsdale Borough updated the Fire Department Ordinance, delineating existing policies, authorized activities, and membership of the Fire Department; it also provides financial support.

Funding to support the Fire Department is raised by the Borough of Leetsdale through local tax. This is most of the Department’s funding for equipment and repairs, but they do some fundraising as well. Leetsdale Fire Department is a non-profit corporation under Section 501(c)(3).

Spending on fire safety has decreased over the last decade in both absolute terms and as a percentage of total revenue.

	2011	2021	CAGR
<b>Amount</b>	\$ 94,920	\$ 80,749	-1.6%
<b>% of Budget</b>	5.2%	3.1%	-

*Source: PA Department of Community & Economic Development, Municipal Statistics*

### ***E.1.3 Emergency Management***

The borough of Leetsdale has an Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) appointed by the state and a Deputy Emergency Manager. The EMC’s role is to coordinate a response during emergency and disaster situations by working together with the Police Chief, the Mayor, the Fire Department Chief, and if necessary, with outside agencies on the county, state, and federal levels. The Borough of Leetsdale last updated its Emergency Operations Plan in 2022.

In case of an incident, the Leetsdale Borough Community Room would be used as a designated emergency operations center, equipped with an emergency generator (running on diesel) and other necessary supplies. The room also serves as a warming center, in case of severe weather incidents. Leetsdale subscribes to the Rave Alert system that disseminates emergency notifications from the borough to residents.

### ***E.1.4 Medical Services***

In 1974, the Quaker Valley Ambulance Authority was organized as the second municipal ambulance authority in the United States, providing EMS and medical transportation services to Aleppo Township, Bell Acres Borough, Edgeworth Borough, Glenfield Borough, Leet Township, Leetsdale Borough, Haysville Borough, Glen Osborne Borough, Sewickley Borough, Sewickley Heights, and Sewickley Hills. At that time, it entered into a joint operating agreement

with Valley Ambulance Authority to share facilities, personnel, administrative costs, and operational expenses.

The Authority is co-headquartered with Valley Ambulance Authority in a facility located at 3550 University Boulevard in Moon Township, between the Sewickley Bridge and Coraopolis. Quaker Valley Ambulance Authority is a non-profit municipal authority supported by insurance payments and donations. QVAA also receives proceeds from an annual municipal per-capita tax assessment which is currently established at a rate of \$9.00 per resident.

The closest hospital facility is Sewickley Valley Hospital in Sewickley Borough (3 miles from Leetsdale). In addition, there are several hospital facilities in the City of Pittsburgh that are within approximately twenty miles of Leetsdale.

Spending on ambulance services has increased over the last decade in absolute terms but decreased as a percentage of total revenue.<sup>10</sup>

	<b>2011</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>CAGR</b>
<b>Amount</b>	\$ 9,744	\$ 10,962	1.2%
<b>% of Budget</b>	0.53%	0.42%	-

*Source: PA Department of Community & Economic Development, Municipal Statistics*

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<sup>10</sup> Excluding Other Financing Sources, which is largely recognized distributions from a long-term bond.

## E.2 Public Utilities

### E.2.1 Electric, Gas, Phone, Television

Utilities are provided on a regional basis.

Service	Provider
<b>Electric</b>	Duquesne Light Company
<b>Gas</b>	Columbia Gas
<b>Phone</b>	Verizon (increasingly provided on a national basis by mobile networks)
<b>Cable TV</b>	Verizon and Comcast (Xfinity)

### E.2.2 Water Supply

The Edgeworth Water Authority - a special-purpose governmental unit in Pennsylvania to accomplish a public purpose without the direct action of a municipality - provides water service to Leetsdale Borough. Although an independent corporate agent of the Commonwealth, exercising governmental, as well as private corporate power, the Authority is owned jointly by the Edgeworth Borough and Leetsdale Borough, meaning that through the authority the boroughs own the water distribution systems in the two municipalities.

Edgeworth Water Authority purchases water from the Ambridge Water Authority, which withdraws its raw water from the Service Creek/Ambridge Reservoir, a man-made basin located in Independence and Racoon Townships on land owned by the Ambridge Water Authority. Since the Edgeworth Municipal Authority is a distributor, rather than a supplier, it is limited in expansion according to the capacity constraints of the Ambridge Water Authority, which does not have a long-range plan for expansion of the public water system.

Water is piped through seven (7) miles of 24-inch pipe to the Ambridge Treatment Facility where its water is treated and then distributed to its customers. This treatment facility provided an average of 3.44 MGD of drinking water during 2021. Ambridge Water Authority is permitted by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) to draw on 4.8 million gallons per day (mgd) of water from the reservoir, with a one-day peak per year of 6.6 mgd.

A Source Water Assessment was last completed in 2002. A summary report is available at [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us) (keyword: "DEP source water"). It is known the gas drilling companies have leased more than 1,400 acres within the watershed of the Service Creek/Ambridge Reservoir.

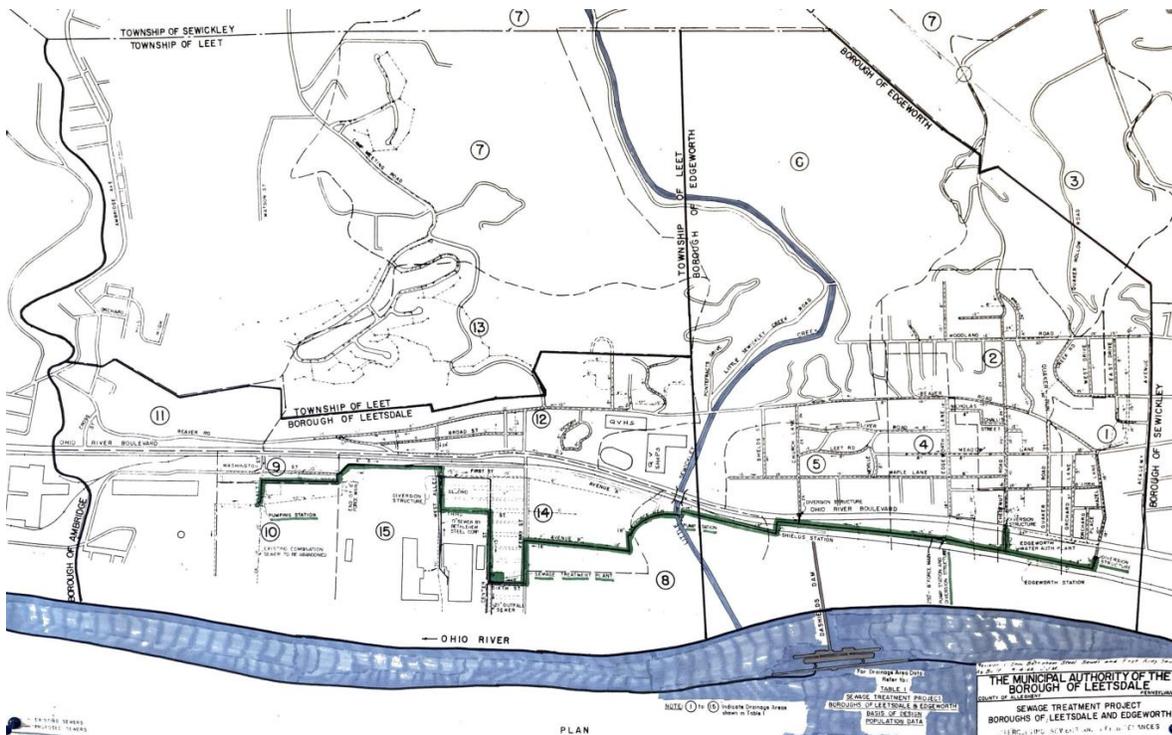
The Municipal Authority of the Borough of Edgeworth and its water supplier routinely monitor constituents in the drinking water according to Federal and State laws. Its full report shows the result of the monitoring for the period of January 1st through December 31st, 2022. A data table included in the full report shows the system had no violations of water quality. The drinking water meets or exceeds all Federal and State requirements, but some contaminants have been detected.

All sources of drinking water are subject to potential contaminants that are naturally occurring or man-made. Those contaminants can be microbes, organic or inorganic chemicals, or radioactive materials. Drinking water, including bottled water, may be expected to contain at least a small amount of contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk. To ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) prescribes regulations that limit the number of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems.

### E.2.3 Public Sewer Service

All of Leetsdale’s properties are connected to the public-sewer system. Service is provided by the Leetsdale Municipal Authority. Like the Edgeworth Water Authority, it is jointly owned by Edgeworth Borough and Leetsdale Borough, meaning that through the authority the boroughs own the sewage treatment facilities in Leetsdale. It was created in 1960, the same time as the Water Authority, in an agreement by the two boroughs to jointly distribute and clean the water.

The actual sewage pipes in Leetsdale are owned by Leetsdale Borough, except for the force-mains (they run parallel to the Ohio River Boulevard and collect outfall from commercial buildings and residences; the mains are owned and maintained by the Leetsdale Municipal Authority along with three related pumping stations). Therefore, maintenance of the upstream sewage collection pipes is the responsibility of Leetsdale.



Caption: approximate location of the force-main owned by the Leetsdale Municipal Authority is shown in green.

The Municipal Authority is governed by appointees from both Leetsdale (3 persons) and Edgeworth (2 persons). They engage engineering services from Nichols & Slagle Engineering

Company. The lead engineer - Dan Slagle - has provided multiple decades of oversight of the sewage facility. His eventual retirement represents a key-man risk for the Authority.

Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act (ACT 537) - Malfunctioning sewage disposal systems pose a threat to public health and the environment. They can pollute public and private drinking water sources, often by discharging directly to the groundwater, and expose humans and animals to various bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Repairs to these systems often can lead to financial hardships for affected municipalities or homeowners. On January 24, 1966, the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act (Act 537) was enacted to address existing sewage disposal problems and prevent future problems. To meet these objectives, Act 537 requires proper planning of all types of sewage facilities. Oversight comes from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Allegheny Health Department, which provides regional oversight and coordinates its efforts with the DEP. Leetsdale Municipal Authority is in full compliance with DEP and Allegheny Health Department regulations.

#### Treatment Plant History

- The state-of-the-art facility was built in 2010.
- In 2017, new operation buildings were constructed. In 2023, an approximate \$500,000 upgrade was made to the force-mains or “last mile” collection pipes, which are designed to be able to handle a 100-year storm.

#### Treatment Plant Technology

- The treatment system is a Sequential Batch Reactor (SBR).
- Sequencing batch reactors (SBR) or sequential batch reactors are a type of activated sludge process for the treatment of wastewater. SBR reactors treat wastewater such as sewage or output from anaerobic digesters or mechanical biological treatment facilities in batches. Oxygen is bubbled through the mixture of wastewater and activated sludge to reduce the organic matter (measured as biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and chemical oxygen demand (COD)). The treated effluent may be suitable for discharge to surface waters or for use on land.

#### Sewage Pipe Network

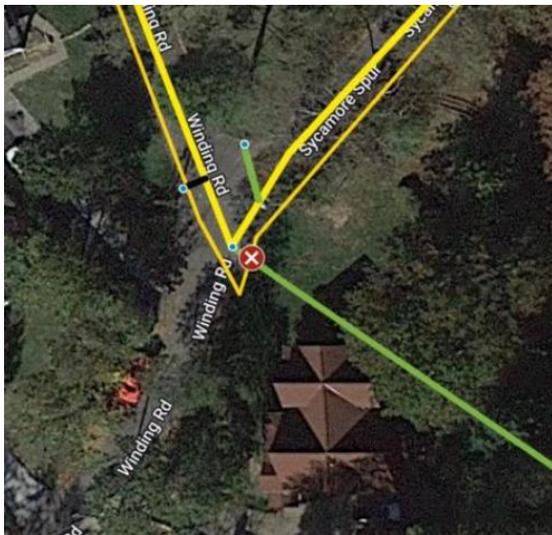
- The Borough of Leetsdale owns the actual pipes. Made of terra cotta, they are upwards of a century old.
- Leetsdale has a combined sewer system. Homes constructed after 1991, per Leetsdale ordinance, shall provide the premises with separate sanitary sewers and storm sewers, extending to the point or points of connection to the public sanitary sewers. Combined sewers have a known risk of overflows and back-ups during extensive rainfalls. With the age of Leetsdale pipes, however, periodic rain rinse may help extend the pipe life.
- There is not a formal map of the pipes. However, the Borough is in possession of a video survey of the actual pipes performed by Columbia Gas in 2022. The surveillance footage identified cracks / breakages in four areas:
  - Crack in sanitary sewer pipe: River View and Oak Dr.
  - Damage to storm sewers close to catch basins near 11 Winding Ln, 11 Valley Ln, and 132 Victory Ln.

Otherwise, the survey indicated that the pipe system is in good condition. The pipes were designed to be part of a combined-sewer system, flushed clean by stormwater. This is evidence that the system is working.



*To the Left:  
Location: Oak Dr.  
and Riverview*

*Below:  
Sign marks the  
problem area.*



*Note: map of sewer-pipe conflict with damaged pipe indicated by red X.*

#### Oversight of System by Leetsdale Borough:

- A monthly plant performance report - reviewing the hydraulic and organic loads - is generated by the Municipal Authority's independent engineering firm. It is published monthly on the Authority's website.
- Additionally, the Authority issues a full engineering report monthly for the Borough Council.
- The plant is in full compliance with DEP and Allegheny Health requirements. It is positioned to handle significant growth equal to about 25% of its current capacity.

### ***E.2.4 Public Works and Sanitation***

Leetsdale is unique among regional municipalities in that its staff performs waste and recycling collection. The same staff are also responsible for road, property, and park maintenance.

The department operates as indicated below.

- There are four full-time employees: one supervisor and three crew members. Tasks are assigned based on need and priority.
- The personnel policy manual is available in the borough office. No regular appraisal system currently exists. Personnel issues are approached on a case-by-case basis following the policy manual directions.
- Continued education is available to personnel in the form of webinars and conferences organized by the Allegheny League of Municipalities (ALOM) and the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB).
- User manuals are available for the major equipment. The user manual for the Splash Pad is stored in the Henle Park building.
- There is no formal maintenance management plan on record. Preventive maintenance is done on a regular schedule (e.g., garbage is picked up weekly; playground structures are inspected yearly; curbs and sidewalks in front of the high school building are repainted every 2 years before the beginning of the school year, etc.). Problems are addressed as they arise and as judgment dictates.
- There is little formal record keeping of work performed and planned.

Public Works has an inventory of major equipment at their disposal. All equipment is serviced on a regular schedule.

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Manufacturer</b>	<b>Year Acquired</b>	<b>Life</b>	<b>Acquisition Cost</b>	<b>Condition</b>
Super Duty 2007 Dump Truck	Ford	2007	8	\$65,000	Good
Garbage Truck 7000 Series 2012	International	2012	8	\$156,000	Good to Fair
Super Duty 2012 Vehicle	Ford	2012		\$66,000	Good
F350 Vehicle with Plough and Lights	Ford	2020		\$65,000	Good
Truck	Ford	2019	8	\$44,700	Good
Lawn Tractor w/62' mower deck, 3-pt hitch, snow blade and snow blower 45	John Deere	2009	12	\$15,004	Good
Chipper/Shredder	Brush Band	2003	12	\$24,029	Good
Blower Leaf Ford Diesel Engine	ODB	2000	12	\$20,720	Good
2 Forklifts		2016 2017	10 15	\$6,000 \$35,000	Good

Expenditures for the department are shown below.

	2011	2021	CAGR
<b>General Administration</b>	\$ 299,376	\$ 321,143	0.7%
<b>Road Repair</b>	\$ 5,818	\$ 459,791	54.8%
<b>Street Lighting</b>	\$ 32,418	\$ 34,649	0.7%
<b>Waste Collection</b>	\$ 33,760	\$ 28,477	-1.7%
<b>Storm Drain Repair</b>	\$ 1,784	\$ 10,267	19.1%
<b>Miscellaneous (snow removal, etc.)</b>	\$ 17,989	\$ 11,103	-3.8%
<b>Total</b>	\$ 391,145	\$ 865,430	8.3%
<b>Total Without Road Repair and Storm Drain Repair</b>	\$ 385,327	\$ 405,639	0.5%
<b>% of Budget</b>	21.1%	15.6%	-

Source: PA Department of Community & Economic Development, Municipal Statistics

While expenses for staff have grown little over the decade (General Administration), repairs demonstrate significant variability. In fact, road repair accounts for little of the 2020 budget but again proved to be significant in the 2019 budget.

The borough's budgeting process and the absence of a maintenance plan suggest that the borough is fixing problems after they manifest, rather than proactively planning to prevent them. This is a cause for concern, especially since expenditures for public works – like other infrastructure expenditures – represent a decreasing percentage of the budget (as a percentage of revenue). Together, these factors create a source of uncertainty for not only budgeting but also the health and well-being of the community.

More information about the involvement of Public Works in caring for borough parks and green spaces can be found in Section I, Part C.3.

## **E.3 Government Structure**

### ***E.3.1 Borough Government***

Leetsdale Borough is governed by a seven-member Council. Council members are elected to four-year terms. Other elected positions in the Borough include the Borough Mayor and Tax Collector. The Borough Council appoints five committees: Finance, Public Safety, Public Works, Administration, and Planning and Zoning.

The Council employs a Secretary, public-works staff, and police force. It uses third parties to act as Solicitor, Engineer, and Code Enforcement Officer. The Borough also engages third parties to review applicants for building permits and collect earned income and business privilege taxes. It relies on the Secretary for Local Services Tax and an elected Tax Collector for real-estate tax.

### *E.3.2 Land Use Ordinances*

The Planning Commission and Zoning Hearing Board oversee planning and implementation of ordinances.

Leetsdale's Zoning Ordinance was originally adopted in 1972 and updated in 1991. It does not identify Community Development Objectives and has not been updated to reflect comprehensive plans published between 2000 and 2010.

The Zoning Ordinance creates two distinct single family residential districts: the R-1 district, and the R-2 district. The main difference between the two districts is the permitted use of schools and churches in the R-2 districts. The ordinance also designates a Multi-Family Residential District which allows for single family and two-family dwellings and a Multiple Family Residential/Neighborhood Commercial District which allows a mix of residential and small-scale commercial uses.

Leetsdale is the only local municipality to include an overlay district in its zoning ordinance to regulate development in the floodplain. According to the ordinance, the purpose of the Floodplain District is to prevent the loss of property and life, the disruption of commerce and governmental services, the extraordinary and unnecessary expenditure of public funds for flood protection, and impairment of the tax base. The Floodplain District overlay includes those areas in 100-year floodplain as designated by the Federal Insurance Administration. The overlay is further delineated into the Floodway District, the Flood-Fringe District, and the General Floodplain District. The Floodway district prohibits any uses that will increase the elevation of flood waters, and the Flood Fringe and General Floodplain Districts specify floodproofing requirements. The remaining zoning district includes a commercial district, industrial district, and special district for the use of public parks and playgrounds.

Leetsdale Zoning:

R-1 Single Family Residential  
R-2 Single Family Residential  
R-3 Multiple-Family Residential  
R-M Multiple-Family Residential and  
Neighborhood Commercial  
C-Commercial  
I-Industrial  
S-Special (public parks, essential services,  
other)  
Floodplain District Overlay



## **E.4 Transportation**

The goal of the transportation analysis is to evaluate the existing roadway network in terms of condition and general operation. This evaluation is then used to prioritize roadways and intersections in need of general improvements.

### Existing Transportation Network and Circulation Patterns

The following narrative summarizes the classification of the existing roadways within the study area based on information supplied by PENNDOT and front observations made during the field view. Any existing deficiencies observed or noted in the municipal surveys are also included. A graphical representation of the existing transportation system is included on the Transportation Issues Map.

#### *Arterials*

Arterials provide for high ability and limited direct access. Arterials convey an average daily traffic (ADT) volume between 10,000 and 25,000 vehicles. These roads connect urban centers and convey traffic for distances over one mile. Arterials often connect urban centers with outlying communities and employment. The roadway design is usually four to five 12-foot lanes at 8–10-foot shoulders, median, and design speeds of 40 to 60 mph. PENNDOT further classifies Arterials as Principal and Minor, where principal is synonymous with Major.

Route 65 is an Urban Principal Arterial also known as Ohio River Boulevard. Regionally, Route 65 provides access from downtown Pittsburgh to Beaver. Locally, Route 65 parallels the Ohio River's eastern shore collecting vehicular traffic from adjacent communities and routing them either north towards Beaver or south toward Interstate 79 and Pittsburgh.

Route 65 consists of four travel lanes (two lanes in each direction) with some auxiliary turning lanes at major intersections and paved shoulders. Access to Route 65 is limited by the use of raised medians and median walls. Typical average daily traffic (ADT) volumes on Route 65 are approximately 19,000 vehicles per day (vpd) [Source: PennDOT Traffic Volume Map, Allegheny County, as updated September 2022]. Posted speeds vary from 45 to 55 mph. Pavement quality is good with minimal cracking in and rutting. Overall, Route 65 is designed for and operates as a primary arterial. Route 65 does, however, have some issues that affect the study area.

Route 65 has issues at three signalized intersections [Source: PennDOT Allegheny County Traffic Signal Locations, as last updated 2/10/2009]. One intersection at Ferry has no auxiliary left turning lanes. This creates the potential for operational and safety issues. Postings are made to prohibit turns; left-turning vehicles could still reduce Route 65 to one through lane and create the potential for high-speed rear-end collisions. This situation is likely since the turn at Ferry is the most direct route to Camp Meeting Road for vehicles traveling northeast into the hill area. As development uphill increases, this intersection could experience issues.

Similarly, traffic attempting to exit Route 65 to enter the parking lot of the former train station poses greater challenges since doing so would require a vehicle on Route 65 to slow down to a speed far below normal traffic, creating safety issues. There is a safe way to enter this location via a traffic light at Ferry St and Route 65, but this would require traffic from 65 to first travel through residential areas. The former train station is zoned for commercial use; uses such as a fast-food restaurant have been proposed, which could create safety concerns.

There are also issues with Route 65 that deal with destination and wayfinding. For example, access to the Ambridge-Aliquippa bridge requires vehicular traffic to leave Route 65 to access the bridge from the local roadway network. However, there is no signage to direct traffic to the bridge. This is an issue that affects Ambridge's traffic volume more than Leetsdale's.

### *Local Roads*

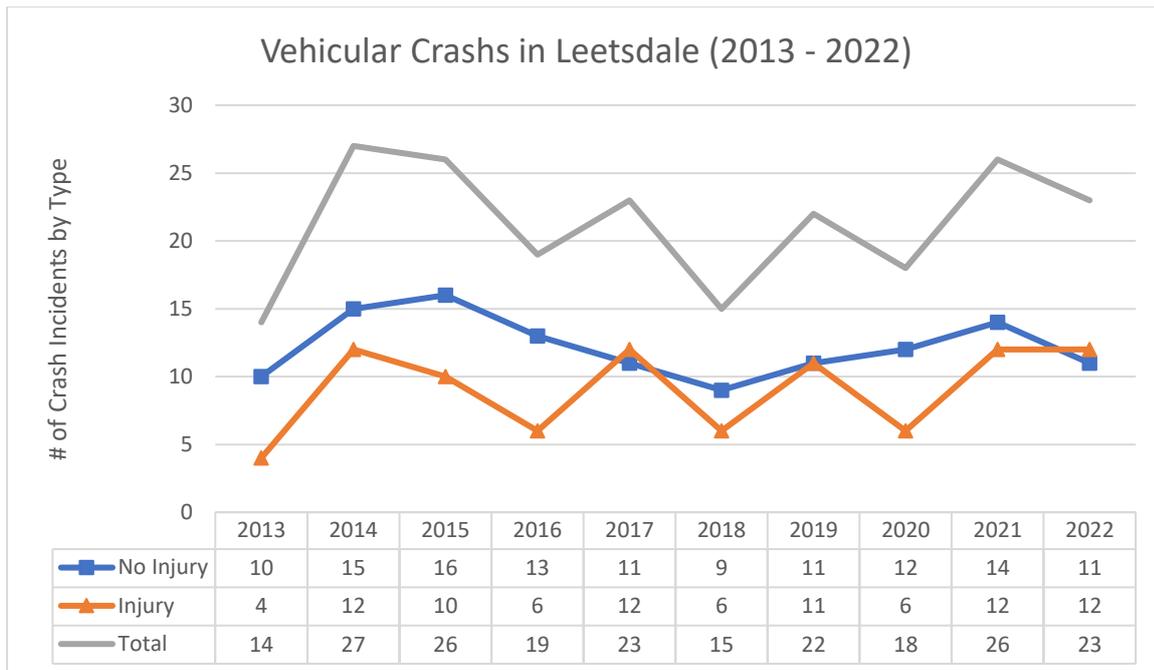
Local roads are intended to provide access to adjoining land use. Local roads are intended to only provide for transportation within a particular neighborhood, or to one of the other road types described. Local roads are generally 20-22 feet wide with 2–8-foot shoulders and design speed of twenty-five mph.

The most heavily travelled road through the residential section of Leetsdale is Beaver Street, which connects the boroughs through the Sewickley Valley from Glenn Osborne to Leetsdale and continues onto to Ambridge via a bridge crossing. The intersection of Village Drive and Beaver Street, at the border of Leetsdale and Edgeworth is the key congestion point, as traffic comes from Leetsdale and the Sewickley Valley to enter the Quaker Valley Village Shopping Center. This point is managed via a stop sign. Note: PennDOT indicates a traffic light at this point (ID 380), which does not exist [Source: PennDOT Allegheny County Traffic Signal Locations, as last updated 2/10/2009].

Ferry Street in Leetsdale intersects Route 65. At one point this provided access to the industrial area west of Route 65. Access to the industrial area, beyond the former train station, has been closed off due to safety concerns. Large numbers of trucks used Ferry Street to access the industrial area. Ferry Street is a two-lane concrete roadway that crosses railroad tracks immediately west of Route 65. Pavement width was deemed insufficient to allow semi-trucks to make turns at unsignalized intersections and a choke point for cars and trucks having to cross both a highway and railroad created unsafe conditions.

### Vehicular Crash Experience

Vehicular crash experience in the study area was examined using crash data provided by PENNDOT [Source: PennDOT Crash Data, August 2023]. Crash data for the past ten years was examined for all roadways on the state highway system. A brief description of the overall crash rates and apparent crash trends are also discussed.



Source: PennDOT Crash Data, August 2023

Of these crashes,

- Sixty-two percent occurred on local roads / 38% occurred on Route 65
- Twelve percent occurred at traffic lights.
- Between eight and nine percent involved use of alcohol.
- Two percent involved school buses.
- One percent involved hazardous trucks.

The data does not suggest a trend or a specific cause. The number and severity of crashes has been consistent over the last decade.

### Inventory Analysis

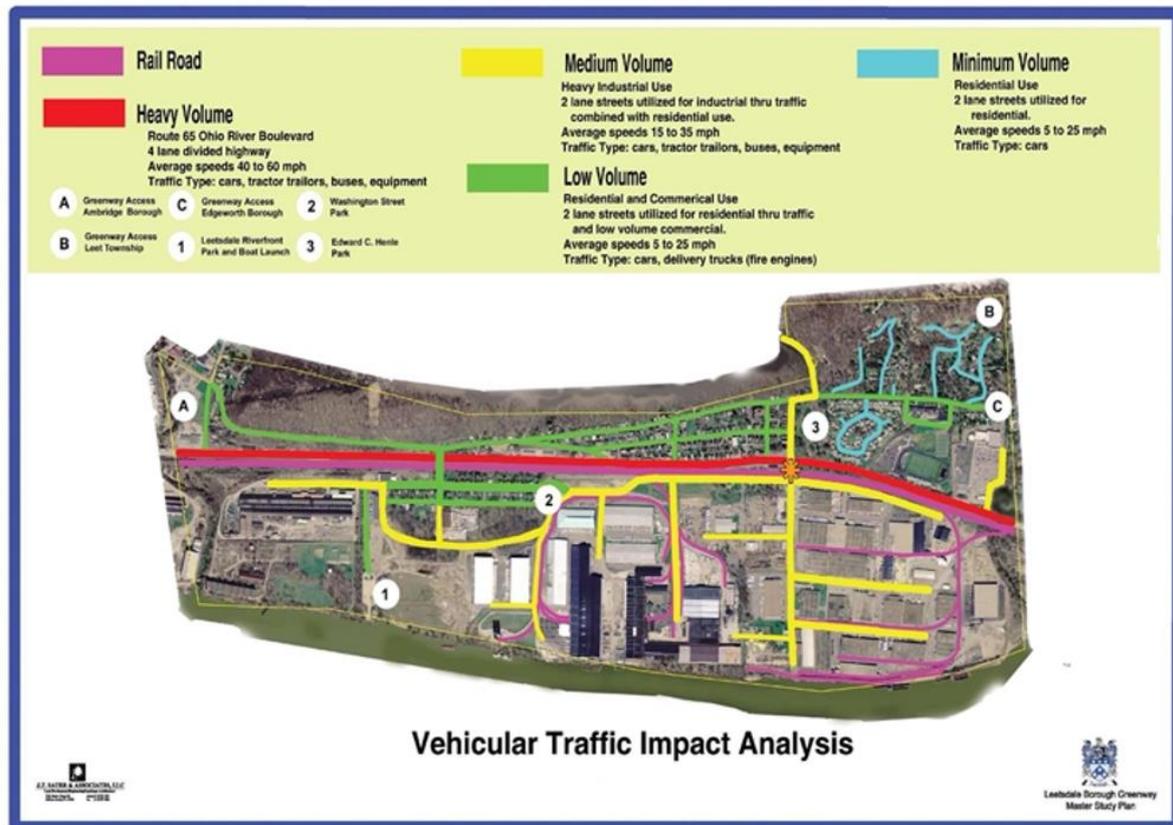
Leetsdale can be seen as two communities divided by the Ohio River Boulevard (Route 65). To the south lies the Industrial Parks which consist of 85% of Leetsdale Borough's land mass. To the north are the Quaker Valley High School, the Quaker Valley Shopping Center, and most of the residential community of Leetsdale.

The Washington Street neighborhood, located on the southern portion of Ohio River Boulevard is separated from the other residential blocks by a four-lane divided highway and three active railroad tracks. Washington Boulevard is utilized by residential traffic. Industrial traffic is prohibited although violations have been anecdotal reported.

In September 2007, J.T. Sauer & Associates reviewed traffic patterns, speeds, and types of traffic in Leetsdale [Source: Riverfront, Greenway, and Parks Master Plan for Leetsdale, 2007]. In March 2021, David E. Wooster & Associates studied traffic patterns at five intersections in Leetsdale [Source: Transportation Impact Study for the Proposed Quaker Valley High School, 2021]:

- Ohio River Blvd. and Ferry Street
- Ohio River Blvd. and Village Drive
- Beaver Street and Board Street
- Beaver Street and Camp Meeting Road
- Beaver Street and Village Drive

This study confirmed that the original distribution of traffic remains valid, which is reproduced below.



The later traffic study also made forecasts about future scenarios, assuming construction of a proposed high school above Leetsdale and the elimination of use at the current high school site. It found a measurable increase in traffic at two points in Leetsdale:

- **Beaver Street and Camp Meeting** – delays of up to 10 seconds should be expected during arrival and dismissal times of the school. No road improvements or traffic controls devices were recommended by the study, which suggested instead that a local authority provided an officer to direct traffic during these times.
- **Beaver Street and Village Drive** – delays of up to 6 seconds should be expected during arrival and dismissal times for the school. No road improvements or traffic control measures were recommended.

The study is helpful but has limitations. Notably, it did not assume any new use at the existing school site and recorded traffic patterns during the first winter following the pandemic period when most residents worked from home and many schools were still out of session.

## **E.5 Assessment of Infrastructure & Institutions**

Leetsdale's infrastructure and institutions exhibit stability over the decade and no significant risk has been identified. Aging roads will continue to need periodic maintenance and the drainage system, particularly in the hill areas of Leetsdale, will require a minor degree of replacement. Notable gaps highlighted by this analysis include:

- Expenditure on physical infrastructure and community institutions is the principal reason for government, yet Leetsdale is spending less as a percentage of revenue today than it did in the past.
- For infrastructure, the borough has neither prioritized a list of problems that need to be addressed nor maintains a list of problems.
  - Road repair has proven to be a highly variable expense, suggesting that once problems are identified, a large expenditure is approved by the council in the following year to remedy. This approach is more expensive and certainly riskier than a proactive approach.
  - Sewer maintenance and the overall function of the Public Works department will benefit from a proactive approach that sets priorities, develops a systemic maintenance plan, and keeps thorough records of work done and planned.
- Leetsdale's Zoning Ordinance was originally adopted in 1972 and updated in 1991. The ordinance does not identify Community Development Objectives and has not been updated to reflect comprehensive plans published between 2000 and 2010.
- Commercial zoning of the former train station area creates concerns for traffic safety on Route 65.
- Any future land use that relies on Beaver Street must contend with unknowns: the construction of a new high school on the hill above Beaver creates will impact traffic at Village Drive and Camp Meeting, but the extent of that impact has never considered a new use at the existing 625 Beaver Street site and was based on traffic volumes during the winter of the pandemic period when many residents and students worked from home.

## **F. Overall Conclusions Based on Assessment of Existing Conditions**

Use of land within Leetsdale is dominated by industrial use, far outweighing other uses, and restricting both further residential development and the community's access to the river. While industrial zoning of land was established to provide jobs for residents and income to the municipal government, it has provided few jobs for residents and its net contribution to income is comparable to residential sources.

Analysis of existing residential uses demonstrates that Leetsdale's population is not only aging but also declining, in contrast to other communities in the Sewickley Valley. Moreover, there is a decreasing trend of owner-occupancy while rentals are increasing. Renters and owners are expected to approach parity by 2030. The existing residential tax base is decreasing; more rentals suggest higher levels of disrepair and neglect, which is already seen in the gradual erosion of the number of buildings and greater tax delinquencies. Leetsdale, therefore, must be prepared to either accept the demographic shift or manage it through,

- Responsible landlord regulation, fostering maintenance of sound and hospitable units.
- Proactive code enforcement to improve the appearance of properties.
- Zoning regulation that encourages low-density development

A key barrier to new residential development is not only the land use for the industrial park but also the considerable number of vacant lands on which back taxes are owed. Unless these liens are forgiven by the tax authorities, notably the school district, the properties are unlikely to be sold and re-developed.

Development within Leetsdale needs to contend with its topography, a flat floodplain extending outward from the Ohio River to increasing steeply sloped ridges and stream valleys. The area is also marked by the presence of Pittsburgh red beds. Land development applications must address both drainage and – in select areas - landslide risks.

Leetsdale, though, boasts many historic and potentially historic buildings, including well-preserved examples of classical architecture and Tudor Revival. It has not, however, created any plan to protect or manage them. As a result, it has over time lost many of its historic buildings and structures as well as its cultural facilities.

Leetsdale is home to a diversity of plant and animal life. Its parks include large specimens of trees that are rare for the region. Community observations, over recent years, have suggested that Leetsdale trees are disappearing. This is consistent with data on decreasing canopy coverage from urban forests across Allegheny County. The 2023 shade tree has provided data that confirms it.

Its extensive natural areas, though, also bring risk. Leetsdale's access to rivers, streams, and well-forested areas adjacent to homes, means wildlife can find protection close to human dwellings. Lyme disease is a concern.

Leetsdale's infrastructure and institutions have exhibited stability over the decade, and no significant risk has been identified. Aging roads will continue to need periodic maintenance and the drainage system, particularly in the hill areas of Leetsdale, will require a minor degree of replacement. Notable gaps highlighted by this analysis include,

- Expenditure on physical infrastructure and community institutions is the principal reason for government, yet Leetsdale is spending less as a percentage of revenue today than it did in the past.

For infrastructure, the borough has neither prioritized a list of problems that need to be addressed nor maintains a list of problems.

- Road repair has proven to be a highly variable expense, suggesting that once problems are identified, a large expenditure is approved by the council in the following year to remedy them. This approach is more expensive and certainly riskier than a proactive approach.
- Sewer maintenance and the overall function of the Public Works department will benefit from a proactive approach that sets priorities, develops a systemic maintenance plan, and keeps thorough records of work done and planned.
- Leetsdale's Zoning Ordinance was originally adopted in 1972 and updated in 1991. The ordinance does not identify Community Development Objectives and has not been updated to reflect comprehensive plans published between 2000 and 2010.
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## Section II: Resident Outlook

### A.1 Introduction

Public involvement is essential to a municipal planning process. We gathered people's views using multiple steps, including,

- Step 1: Preliminary Survey June 2022

A convenience sample of more than thirty visitors to an open-house filled out an eight-question survey. The results were intended to help identify those topics that would be further investigated.

Results showed the three priorities appeared to be of most concern for the community:

- The fate of the old high school site
- Parks and green spaces
- Blight issues

The process also demonstrated the limitation of convenience sampling; the preponderance of older residents among the respondents and suggested a random sample might provide superior and more conclusive information.

- Step 2: General Public Meetings November 2022 – May 2023

Four community-wide events, each dedicated to a specific discussion topic, were held over the course of a year to gather an in-depth understanding of the outlook from residents. Summaries of the discussions were provided to the borough council following each discussion. Summaries are also included in this section.

All meetings took place in the Borough Building Community Room. Events were advertised through a combination of the borough website, social media, and a paper of record. Attendance averaged between 12-25 people, with various residents attending each group discussion.

Maps, images, and story boards were offered, and focus-group style questions employed to maximize community discussion on each of the four topics:

- November 2022: New Uses for Existing High School Property
- March 2023: Parks and Recreation
- April 2023: Blight Issues in Leetsdale
- May 2023: Risks to the Community

- Step 3: Key-Stakeholder Interviews July 2023

Six interviews of community residents, leaders, and outside experts were conducted to further define issues of ADA accessibility and Henle Park usability.

- Four of the interviewees were Leetsdale residents who relied on personal experience with ADA accommodation needs.
- Two were area professionals who relied on their experience of working with groups of visitors in Henle Park.

▪ Step 4: Random-Sample Survey

August 2023

A random-sample survey was carried out, collecting the views of approximately 10% of the borough's households. The random survey was designed to be representative of age and neighborhood.

The survey extended the questions asked at the general-public meetings to a wider population and aimed to be representative of the community, based on age and neighborhood.

Using demographic data from Claritas, a random sample of eighty households was created and normalized for age and neighborhood (Broad St., Washington St., Beaver St., Ohio River Blvd, and Shields/Hill area).

A three-page, six-question survey with multiple sub-questions (Refer to Appendix C for survey copy and notes), was hand-delivered to each household with return instructions. The surveys were individually coded with a number to retain anonymity but maintain demographics.

The initial response rate was high at 31.25%, with a median responder age of 58, matching the demographic median for householders. Nevertheless, the neighborhood sample was skewed. The initial samples were supplemented with convenience sampling following the rule: if a resident did not respond, approach the closest neighbor who was outside. This rule created a representative sample, with a median age of 57 and good distribution across neighborhoods. In total, there were 61 responses received, representing about 10% of households.

Findings from the meetings and surveys are detailed below. Survey design details can be found in Appendix C.



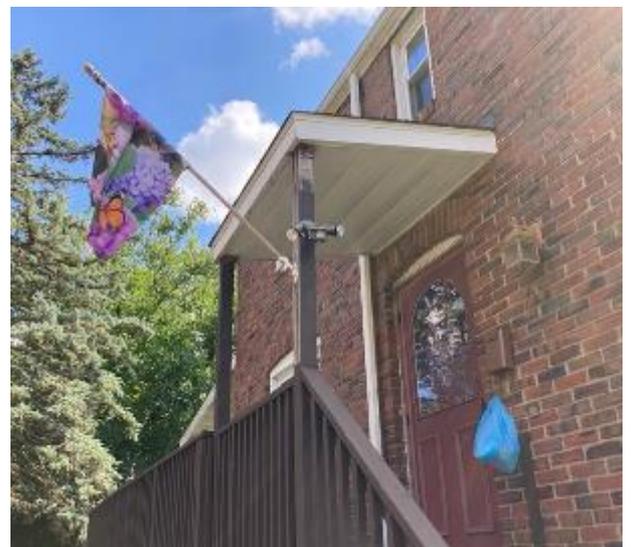
Poster from the Borough Open House inviting visitors to take a Preliminary Survey



General Public Meeting Flyer  
General Public Meeting in Progress



Public Meeting participants express their preferences for park updates using visual aids



Key Stakeholder interview  
in Sewickley Public Library



Resident left a completed survey for pick-up (photo taken with permission)

## A.2 Findings from General-Public Meetings



### Leetsdale Planning Commission Research Old High School Site: What's Next? Results of a Community Focus Group November 6, 2022

**Background:** On November 6<sup>th</sup>, the Leetsdale Planning Commission held a focus group to research what the community wants to happen if the existing high-school site is sold and developed. The meeting was attended by eleven residents, as well as the mayor. Three questions were discussed:

- What is the worst that could happen to the old high school site?
- What do the residents want to happen to the old high school site?
- What are the concerns about increased traffic on Beaver Street?

### Summary of Results

#### Current State:

The existing high school site is the entryway to the community.

The roads and infrastructure at the site do not support significant traffic.

There is already a high percentage of rental properties in Leetsdale and an existing high rise.

#### Group Consensus:

High-density development, including multi-level, multi-family rental properties, is not optimal for this location and not desirable for Leetsdale as a whole.

Residents cited poor maintenance of such properties as a top concern.

The roads and other infrastructure will not be able to support resulting traffic.

#### Desired Outcome:

Leetsdale should prioritize homeownership of single-family dwellings to support property standards, existing infrastructure, character of the borough, and the taxable base. Residents were unanimous on this point and quickly achieved consensus amongst themselves.

#### Desired developments include:

- Single-family houses
- Townhomes
- Planned residential development: a mix of affordable and higher-end single family homes.
- Planned mixed-use development: interpreted as the residential options above + retail and light commercial.
- A well-planned development will bring more taxes to the borough and can become another “main street” area, revitalizing the borough.

#### \*Affordable housing criteria:

The group decided that for the purposes of this discussion and future planning, an “affordable house” is a “missing middle” or “starter home.” It is described as a dwelling with at least two bedrooms and a kitchen-dining area, at least 1,200 sq ft in size, with more than one parking spot.



**Leetsdale Planning Commission Research  
Parks and Recreation  
Results of a Community Focus Group  
March 12, 2023**

**Background:** On March 12, the Leetsdale Planning Commission held a focus group to research which improvements the community would like to see in Parks and Recreation options in Leetsdale. The meeting was attended by twenty-two residents, as well as the Councilwoman B. Carrol. The group discussed Henle Park, followed by a short break; then Kohlmeyer park, then Boat Dock. For each topic, the questions were as follows:

- 1) What do you NOT like about the park/recreation area?
- 2) What do you LIKE about it? Any other challenges or comments?

### Summary of Results

#### **Henle Park:**

- The park is well-utilized; it is a flagship recreational space in Leetsdale and a regional attraction.
- Protecting green spaces in Henle Park is essential.
- Tree plantings must be planned with consultations from professional arborists.
- The community would like to see better immediate maintenance of sidewalks, lawns, and amenities.
- There is no appetite in the community to increase the footprint of play and athletic amenities.
- During the break, the focus group was straw-pollled for preferred capital improvements in park amenities and playground design features. Results were as follows:
  - Strong preference for nature-inspired playground design
  - Average preference for all other playground features, and low preference for shared adult-child play space
  - Strong preference for basketball court as a sole athletic amenity, a marked preference for a corn hole game, and low preference for other amenities
- Cooperation with VFW was recommended to help improve parking in Henle Park

#### **Kohlmeyer Park:**

- This neighborhood park is used extensively by neighborhood families and area visitors.
- The park's equipment is overall in decent shape, but maintenance is needed.
- Landscaping, weeding, mulching, and removal of poison ivy is an immediate priority.
- Fencing in the picnic area, and planting more trees as a landscape buffer suggested

#### **Boat Dock:**

- Boat Dock is the only place locally to launch boats to go down the river.
- It used to be well utilized by local boaters and boating associations.
- Poor condition of the area and truck parking on the adjacent industrial property preclude use.
- There is a strong interest in cleaning up, expanding, and rebuilding boat the dock as a private-public partnership, following New Brighton's Big Rock Park as a model for such development.



**Leetsdale Planning Commission Research  
From Blight to Bright: Cleaning Up Leetsdale  
Results of a Community Focus Group  
April 23, 2023**

**Background:** The focus group on Blight took place on April 23. The meeting was attended by eleven residents, as well as the Councilwoman B. Carrol and the Tax Collector T. Belcastro. The group discussed the street and property maintenance issues in the borough that they have observed. Those fell into one of the three categories: blight, code enforcement, or inappropriate development.

**Blight Issues:**

- Blight is defined in state law; these properties are abandoned, unfit for habitation, or dangerous.
- Abandoned buildings and lots have been an issue in Leetsdale for five decades.
- Blight issues are a high priority for the residents.
- Work done over the years was limited to demolition grants that helped remove blighted homes.
- Many abandoned properties in poor condition, or vacant lots, have tens of thousands in tax liens.
- Appeal for tax forgiveness; condemning properties; conservatorship are further useful strategies to remove abandoned buildings and move lots to real estate sales and redevelopment.
- Straw poll indicated most problems observed at the far end of Beaver St. and Washington St.
- There is interest in the community in side-by-side purchases of the affected properties.

**Code Enforcement Issues**

- Code enforcement issues were the highest priority for participants.
- Concerns with trash in yards, weeds and grass, improper parking, unkept hedges and home inspections for rentals were noted.
- There was a strong preference for proactive code enforcement. Participants felt that the complaint-based code enforcement process does not generate enough participation, can be subjective, and the complaints are not properly followed through.
- Participants expressed concerns about habitual violations and effective end results of complaints.
- Participants expressed interest in having a code enforcement officer on staff and participating in shared code enforcement initiatives with neighboring boroughs.

**Inappropriate development**

- There is interest in historic preservation initiatives such as having a historic district designation.
- This can provide additional guidelines to maintain a character of a neighborhood such as Victory Ln and Broad St, and guide both maintenance of old structures and new construction.
- The group noted that having paved parking spaces in the front yards and street-facing garages, though seen by homeowners as solutions to parking problems, in practice tends to remove parking spaces from the street and make the parking situation worse.



**Leetsdale Planning Commission Research**  
**Risks to the Community**  
**Results of a Community Focus Group**  
**May 7, 2023**

**Background:** The focus group on Risks to the Community took place on May 7. The meeting was attended by twelve residents, as well as the Councilmen J. Weatherby and W. James, and the Emergency Management Coordinator A. Cameron, who were able to answer and address many questions from the residents.

The group discussed the possible risks that may impact Leetsdale. Those fell into three categories: hazards to the population, personal safety, and financial risks.

**Hazards to the Population:**

- Participants discussed flooding, landslides, hazmat incidents in the railroad or the industrial parks, and weather conditions.
- **Flooding:** Though the dam now better controls the Ohio River water levels, floods are still a concern. Even with a moderate rise of the Ohio River, sewer and storm water backups affect properties. On Broad St., after it was deemed illegal to discharge storm water from the gutters into sewers, the downspouts flood the street during severe rains.
- **Landslides:** the hillside is the area of concern. In addition, hillside is continuously and slowly moving towards Beaver St.; terraced backyards of hillside homes disappear over time.
- **Hazmat incidents** were a major priority, given recent railroad accidents. There is no substantial storage of the hazardous chemicals in the Industrial Park, though side-by-side storage of reactive chemicals from different businesses remains unknown risks. Hussey Copper and the chemicals transported on trains are the biggest concern. Railroad procedures, safeguarding, and the history of bridge building and old bridge demolition of the old bridge were discussed.
- **Public Awareness:** The community expressed trust in the emergency services but also expressed a wish for more information about what to expect and what to do in case of emergency in the area.
- **Washington St. Evacuation:** participants unanimously listed an alternate exit from the Washington St. area via Hussey Copper and the Big Sewickley Creek bridge as TOP PRIORITY.

**Personal Safety**

- This part of the discussion centered on traffic safety, crime, and vagrancy/squatting.  
**Traffic:** Residents expressed concerns with the traffic patterns at the Route 65/ Ferry St. intersection. No Left Turn, a remainder from the time when this was also an active railroad crossing, is now creating confusion for the motorists and making the intersection unsafe. That intersection will get less safe with the traffic from a new high school. This intersection is under the jurisdiction of PennDOT. Residents asked that the council continues to petition for improvements. Speeding, especially through Broad St, was also cited as a concern.
- **Crime:** Residents viewed crime as a background concern rather than an urgent issue. Most crimes locally appear to be crimes of opportunity committed by transients.

Retail theft in Quaker Village is a major component. The county line between Allegheny and Beaver Counties appears to be a crime deterrent due to the poor reputation of Allegheny County jail. Participants would like to see a better visualization of crime trends over time in police reports.

- **Squatting:** Participants noted occasional loitering but made no reports on squatting. It was noted that rental occupancy is the responsibility of the landlords, limiting the information the borough may have.

### **Financial Risks**

- Rising interest rates do not represent a risk to the borough because of successful recent refinancing.
- The borough is in good financial shape; Leetsdale has the AA+ rating. The borough, however, relies too heavily on the Industrial Parks as our tax base. The variety of industries represented in the industrial park enterprises limits financial risks.
- A scenario, however, can be envisioned in which Industrial Park tax income goes away due to major problems in operating their business, such as, a bridge collapse. The need for major sewer repairs can be another financial risk.
- Infrastructure fund is the answer to many of the Borough's financial risks.

## Summary of Key Stakeholder Interviews

- Six interviews of community residents, leaders, and outside experts were conducted to further define issues of ADA accessibility and Henle Park usability.
- Four of the interviewees were Leetsdale residents who relied on personal experience with ADA accommodation needs.
- Two were area professionals who relied on their experience of working with groups of visitors in Henle Park:
  - J. Farmerie is the head of the Sewickley Public Library Children’s Department. Ms. Farmerie’s programs - Family Story Time and Story walk - brought over 800 visitors to Henle Park in 2023.
  - J.H. is an educator who supervises a group of disabled middle school students on their visits to Henle Park.
- Results were consistent with feedback from general-public meetings and community survey and gave further information on improving Henle Park and surrounding area:
  - Parking availability is important in making Henle Park accessible.
  - ADA compliance from the point of landing to the playground area and better sidewalk quality is crucial to improve visitor navigation through the park.
  - Visitors enjoy the park and want to spend a whole day there. They appreciate the balance of shady green space, play space, and community activities.
  - Measures that improve ADA compliance will also benefit all other visitors to the park, including families with strollers, community groups, and older residents.

### A.3 Findings from the Community Survey

We report results from the community survey into four sections, mirroring the in-depth community discussions.

Concerning land use of the existing high-school site, results were consistent with findings from the in-depth community meetings.

<b>Use of Existing High School Site</b>	<b>% Residents in Favor</b>
<b>Townhomes Only</b>	10%
<b>Low-Density Single-Family Homes Only</b>	20%
<b>Mixed Use (retail, homes, townhomes)</b>	58%
<b>Other</b>	12%

Residents indicated they wanted mixed-use development (58%), including a variety of retail uses and lower density housing. Some residents (30%) indicated only low-density residential use is appropriate. The remaining residents (12%) suggested that they would like to see other uses, including,

- High-density apartments, especially for seniors
- Educational uses with comments indicating the current high school should remain.

Comments provided by residents help us to better understand the results. The table below provides comments received on the questions.

<b># Comments Made</b>	<b>Comments Grouped by Similar Sentiment</b>
<b>5</b>	No apartments; traffic concerns.  Low-density is best because I have a rental attached to my home that is my primary source of retirement income.  Homes should be on the school site.  Chick-Fillet, multi-purpose stores, sit down restaurants. Green space is very important. Tear down apartments and replace them with aesthetic townhouses.  I would like new construction of homes to increase property values.
<b>3</b>	High school should not move.
<b>2</b>	Best to have an athletic facility or community event space  Make the old school site into a school-sports or community space. Raise home values, avoid low-value housing.
<b>2</b>	A senior-high rise would be best.

The survey also covered the amenities and layout that residents would like to see in their parks, notably the redevelopment of Henle.

<b>% in Favor</b>		
	<b>All Residents</b>	<b>Residents with Children</b>
<b>Court Type</b>		
<b>Basketball Only</b>	23%	
<b>Multiple-Use</b>	77%	
<b>Location of Little Kids vs. Big Kids Playgrounds</b>		
<b>Separated</b>	74%	
<b>Combined</b>	26%	
<b>Surface</b>		
<b>Poured Resin</b>	78%	
<b>Wood Chips</b>	22%	
<b>Size of Swing Set</b>		
<b>Small</b>	13%	5%
<b>Medium</b>	46%	38%
<b>Large</b>	41%	57%
<b>Most Desired Amenities</b>		
<b>Obstacle Course</b>	43%	59%
<b>Spiderweb</b>	36%	55%
<b>Climbing Wall</b>	51%	50%
<b>Additional Pavilion</b>	44%	36%
<b>Monkey Bars</b>	43%	36%
<b>Adult Exercise</b>	41%	27%

The survey brought out some differences from the in-depth discussions. Notably, most residents want a multiple-use rather than a basketball-only court. Parents of young children viewed the area as dedicated to children’s recreation, showing strong preference for active set-ups, such as climbing walls and obstacles courses. Older adults showed some preference for a pavilion (49%) and adult exercise equipment (49%).

The survey also demonstrates the strength of feeling people have about the loss of a recreational area - the borough’s boat-dock. 93% are in favor of enhancing this area (see table below).

Comments provided by residents help us to better understand the results. The table below provides comments received on the questions.

<b>Comment #</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>1</b>	Stick to what appeals to kids. Focus of playground should be children/teens. Additional pavilion space would be good. No pickleball: will be monopolized by adults.
<b>2</b>	Keep as much green area as possible. ADA compliant. Don't clutter the park.

3	Greenspaces are so special and irreplaceable.
4	Where will people park after we increase park activities?
5	Expand splash pad and seat around splash pad and create a dog park.
6	Dog park
7	Why can't dogs walk through the park? There is so much green spaces that goes unused. Just do not allow them on playgrounds and splashpads.

Causes of blight were also confirmed with many residents indicating failure to comply with ordinances on trash and vegetative growth in yards is a concern. Abandoned homes and vacant lots were also called out as key issues.

<b>Property Problems in Leetsdale</b>	<b>% Residents Indicating</b>
<b>Overgrown Yards/Trash in Yards</b>	80%
<b>Abandoned Homes/Vacant Lots</b>	75%
<b>Improper Parking</b>	33%
<b>Rental Not Inspected</b>	25%
<b>Vacant Lots Only</b>	31%

Solutions, according to residents, are varied. All the possible solutions discussed in the in-depth community meetings received agreement from most respondents.

<b>Possible Policy and Legislation</b>	<b>% Residents in Favor</b>
<b>Protect Historic Buildings</b>	97%
<b>Offer Mini grants to Help Residents Beautify Leetsdale</b>	97%
<b>Pursue Recreation Area in Industrial Zone</b>	93%
<b>Protect Character of Historic Neighborhoods</b>	92%
<b>Zone Buffer Area for Washington Street</b>	85%
<b>Implement Proactive Code Enforcement</b>	76%
<b>Encourage Development of a Main Street with Shops on Board</b>	74%
<b>Encourage Development of Townhomes on Beaver Hillside</b>	61%
<b>Allow Residential Land Use Along River</b>	53%

Comments provided by residents help us to better understand the results. The table below provides comments received on the questions.

<b># Comments Made</b>	<b>Comments Grouped by Similar Sentiment</b>
2	Restore Victory Lane to a unified, clean neighborhood. Mark Victory Lane with better signs for one way.
2	Code enforcement should be humane and paired with grants.

	Code enforcement with due process and enforcement guidelines; mini grants based on need, with income verification.
2	No main street [on Broad] because of parking issues. Parking for Broad is an issue.
2	Safety, stability, and parking for Beaver are issues. Hillside on Beaver in the past has had erosion problems and flooding.
2	Auction abandoned homes. Code enforcement for vacant homes on Beaver.
2	Drivers do not stop at stop signs. Possible speed bumps over Washington Street. Truckers need to know not to bring tracker trailers over Washington Street. Protect alley and front street on Washington Street. We have many children on Washington Street.
2	Wonderful idea for river trails to restore boat dock. River trail is a great idea.
1	Improving what we have is the most important thing we can do to improve Leetsdale.
1	Backyard clean-up
1	Don't believe in tearing down trees

Finally, the residents' perception of risks was also confirmed.

<b>Perceived Risks to the Community</b>	<b>Relative Ranking*</b>
<b>Failing Infrastructure</b>	100
<b>Industrial Accidents</b>	97
<b>Lack of Washington Street Emergency Exit</b>	86
<b>Declining Tax Revenue for Borough</b>	85
<b>Crime</b>	83
<b>Natural Disasters</b>	76

\* Each risk was scored based on number of people who indicated the issue and the rank (1-6) that people gave to it. The result is reported as normalized to the top choice, with the maximum of 100.

## **A.4 Summary of Community Goals**

Leetsdale residents identified the following priorities for land use and municipal policy.

### Future Land Use

- Leetsdale should encourage homeownership of lower-density, single-family dwellings to support property standards, existing infrastructure, the character of the borough, and the taxable base.
- High-density development, including multi-level, multi-family rental properties, is not optimal for re-development of the existing High School site and not desirable for Leetsdale as a whole. Concerning re-development of the existing school site, there is consensus that a well-planned mixed-use development could bring more taxes to the borough and become another “main street” area, revitalizing the community.
- Protecting green spaces in Henle Park is essential. Tree plantings in all green spaces must be planned with consultations from professional arborists.
- In Kohlmeyer Park, fencing in the picnic area and planting more trees as a landscape buffer are suggested.
- Better and more timely maintenance of sidewalks, lawns, and amenities is desired.
- There is a strong interest in cleaning up, expanding, and rebuilding the boat dock as a private-public partnership, following New Brighton’s Big Rock Park as a model for such development.

### Working Towards Better Policy

- Participants expressed concerns about habitual code violations and an ineffective result for complaints. There is a preference in the community for proactive code enforcement. Residents feel that the complaint-based code enforcement process does not generate enough participation, can be subjective, and the complaints are not properly followed through. Residents also expressed interest in having a code enforcement officer on staff and participating in shared code enforcement initiatives with neighboring boroughs.
- Residents demonstrated an important attachment and respect for the history of the borough, believing that historic preservation initiatives are good policy. They suggest that this could take the form of additional guidelines to maintain the character of a neighborhood such as Victory Ln. and Broad St. and guide both the maintenance of old structures and new construction.
- Desired updates in Henle Park would improve park amenities within the same general footprint, accommodate the needs of both families with children and older residents, and ensure safety and ADA accessibility. Older residents expressed a preference for a multi-use athletic facility, another pavilion, and some adult recreation equipment. Residents with children wanted more amenities oriented towards children and teens: a

basketball court and varied kinds of playground equipment. Better parking around the Henle Park area was also desired by residents.

- In areas such as Victory Lane, residents noted that having paved parking spaces in the front yards and street-facing garages, though seen by homeowners as solutions to parking problems, in practice tends to remove parking spaces from the street and make the parking situation worse.
- There is interest within the community to enact policies that facilitate the side-by-side purchases of blighted properties and those vulnerable to blight.
- Residents see flooding, landslides, and hazmat incidents (in the railroad or the industrial parks) as key concerns for Leetsdale. While the community expressed trust in the emergency services, they also expressed a wish for more information about what to expect and what to do in case of emergency in the area.
- For hazmat incidents, residents strongly believe an alternate exit from the Washington St. area via Hussey Copper and the Big Sewickley Creek bridge must be a top priority for the borough.
- Traffic patterns at the Route 65/ Ferry St. intersection continue to create concerns. The prohibition against left turns is viewed as creating confusion and therefore endangering motorists. Residents believe the borough's council should continue to petition for improvements.
- Vehicular speeding, especially through Broad St, was also cited as a concern.
- Residents view the borough as relying too heavily on the Industrial Parks for its tax base and envisioned scenarios where that income could go away.
- An infrastructure fund was seen as needed to prepare for the maintenance of aging infrastructure that threatens homes and businesses.

### **Section III: Goals & Objectives**

The prior assessment of Leetsdale's existing conditions highlighted the trends and constraints facing the borough.

In this section, we gathered input from residents, enabling us to make choices in the face of those trends and constraints.

#### Community Vision Statement

Over the next decade, Leetsdale will focus on the goals summarized below.

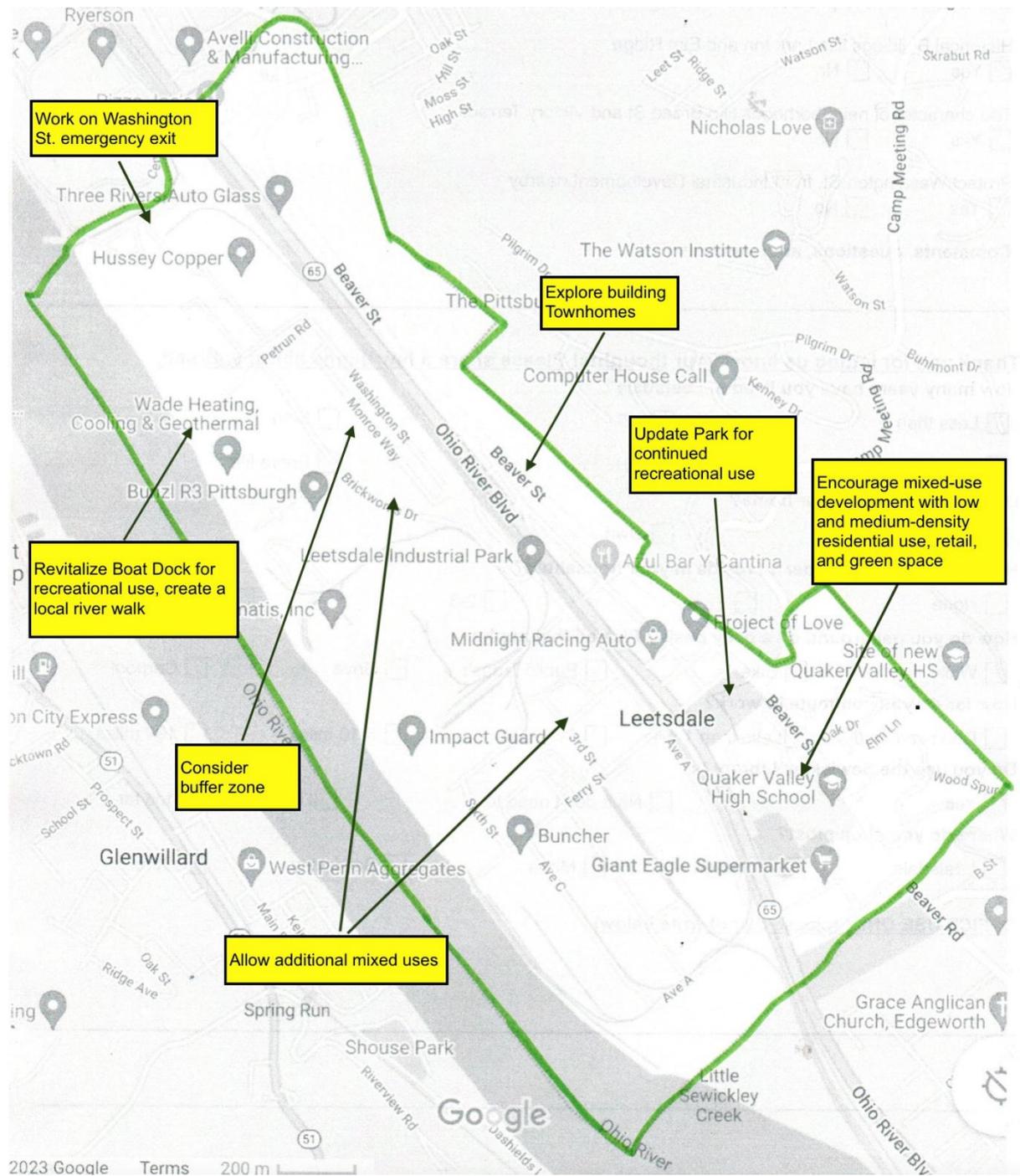
- **Residential Development:** We aim to redevelop vacant land for new homes and public spaces. We will encourage residential home ownership and development and ensure the conditions for our rental population are maintained through updated regulations and proactive code enforcement.

We will review and update our zoning ordinance, encouraging low to medium density residential development (single-family detached homes or townhomes), promoting additional mixed-use development on the existing high-school site (retail and green space), and correcting any instances of spot zoning and fair-use imbalances.

- **River Front Access:** We will work to re-establish access to our river, ensuring that it becomes a recreational option for our town once more.
- **Protecting Our Heritage:** We will explore ways to safeguard the character of our neighborhoods, with a particular emphasis on preserving historic buildings and areas. This includes the possibility of establishing a Historical Architectural Review Board to protect our historic homes, buildings, and architectural heritage.
- **Parks, Recreation, and Culture:** We will devote resources to rejuvenating our parks and green spaces, creating welcoming environments for leisure and recreation. Over the next five years, we will utilize our Inventory of Trees to replant lost greenery, fostering a more sustainable environment. We will grow partnerships that support recreational programs throughout the borough, recognizing that these are the things that make a community.
- **Safety and Infrastructure Enhancement:** We will address safety issues on Washington Street, including emergency exits. We will seek to improve issues around the Route 65/Ferry Street intersection and tackle speeding violations within our residential neighborhoods. At the same time, we will seek to make our infrastructure maintenance more proactive.

We are resolute in our commitment to building a thriving, safe, and culturally rich community for the future.

The conceptual map shown below highlights key efforts stemming from the vision.



## Goals

In this section, we list specific goals as informed by community input and existing conditions. Each goal represents a priority for community development. To accomplish these goals, we list objectives, both long-term and near-term, explaining how the goal can be achieved. Finally, we provide for an owner of the goal, ensuring accountability to drive implementation.

<b>Goal</b>	
Number	100
Title	Encourage homeownership and low to medium density development.
Description	Leetsdale should prioritize homeownership of low to medium density, single-family dwellings to support the character, property standards, and tax base of the borough.
Rationale for Goal	Corporate landlords are increasingly common, and Leetsdale is facing a trend of reduced owner-occupancy. The borough could approach parity of renters and owner-occupants by 2030.
<b>Objectives</b>	
Near-Term	<p>Explore zoning regulations that encourage low to medium density development.</p> <p>Consider proactive code enforcement to improve the appearance of properties.</p> <p>Benchmark how other communities create landlord regulation, to help maintain sound and hospitable rental units.</p>
Long-Term	<p>Begin discussions with Quaker Valley Schools and Gumberg (owners of the Quaker Valley Village Center) about encouraging home ownership in Leetsdale through a mixed-use / low to medium density residential development on the existing high school site.</p> <p>Investigate the pros and cons of zoning that expands mixed-use provisions in the industrial park, particularly behind Washington and along Ferry where residential homes remain. As part of this, consider policies that encourage additional residential use in this area via tax breaks.</p> <p>Revisit rates for earned income, evaluating the impact of lowering rates to attract families who can invest in Leetsdale.</p> <p>Initiate a relationship with intermediary organizations like Tri-Cog Land Bank to encourage rehabilitation of properties by residents who commit to owner-occupied homesteading.</p>
<b>Owner</b>	Working Group, Council Committees
<b>Targeted Completion Date</b>	<p>Short-term: 1-2 years</p> <p>Long-term: 3-5 years</p>

<b>Goal</b>	
Number	101
Title	Protect Henle Park and Kohlmeyer Park
Description	Protect green space and improve facilities in our parks.
Rationale for Goal	Residents expressed staunch support for the borough's parks and noted deterioration, highlighting poor maintenance, the loss of trees, and the degradation of playground equipment.
<b>Objectives</b>	
Near-Term	<p>Design a layout for new playground and athletic facilities in Henle Park, aiming to protect green space, stay within the existing footprint of amenities, and provide for safety, ADA compliance, and inclusivity of all age groups, based on community feedback.</p> <p>For Kohlmeyer Park, improve ground maintenance, investigate the pros and cons of adding fencing in the picnic area and planting more trees as a landscape buffer.</p>
Long-Term	<p>Apply for a variety of grant funding and obtain funding through budget and donations to construct the Henle Park improvements.</p> <p>Continue Leetsdale's partnership with TreeVitalize and other professional organizations, ensuring a professional arborist guides the development of our green spaces, informed by the borough's tree inventory.</p> <p>Communicate with VFW about cooperative parking arrangements, keeping in mind that the lots are historically linked as the former Atwood Estate.</p>
<b>Owner</b>	Council Committees, Working Groups, Nichols&Slagle Engineering
<b>Targeted Completion Date</b>	Short-Term: 6 months – 1 year Long-Term: 1-5 years

<b>Goal</b>	
Number	102
Title	Bring Back the Boat Dock
Description	Create a private-public partnership to bring the borough owned boat-dock back into use as a recreational area.
Rationale for Goal	Leetsdale is a river town without access to the river. There is strong resident interest in cleaning up, expanding, and rebuilding the boat dock as a private-public partnership, following New Brighton's Big Rock Park as a model.
<b>Objectives</b>	
Near-Term	<p>Research the development of New Brighton's Big Rock Park as well as other models for revitalizing the boat dock.</p> <p>Begin discussions with Leetsdale Industrial Park, owner of the surrounding parking lots, about how best the area could be used.</p> <p>Design options for a recreation area around the boat dock, gather community feedback, and create an implementation plan.</p>
Long-Term	Obtain funding, through budget, grants, and donations to execute the plan.
<b>Owner</b>	Working Group, Council Committees
<b>Targeted Completion Date</b>	<p>Short-Term: 1-2 years</p> <p>Long-Term: 1-5 years</p>

<b>Goal</b>	
Number	103
Title	Fight Blight
Description	Re-develop vacant land and protect properties slipping toward blight.
Rationale for Goal	Leetsdale's housing stock is slowly decaying with about 10% of homes vulnerable to blight.
<b>Objectives</b>	
Near-Term	<p>Discuss options with Quaker Valley Schools to forgive back-taxes of vacant land, encouraging residential re-development.</p> <p>Conduct Property Clean-Up days with local and visiting volunteers. Invite Habit-for-Humanity and other local groups to improve homes in Leetsdale.</p> <p>Explore options for providing mini grants to homeowners for property repair.</p> <p>Explore policies that facilitate the side-by-side purchases of blighted properties and those vulnerable to blight.</p> <p>Establish a task force that uses Leetsdale's database of properties vulnerable to blight, to execute options to protect them, following the Blight Decision Tree (see Appendix D). Work with intermediaries like Tri-Cog bank to assist with legal aspects and property rehabilitation.</p>
Long-Term	<p>Turn around the declining trend: increase Leetsdale's housing stock each year.</p> <p>Continue to condemn and demolish homes unfit for habitation and restoration.</p> <p>Network with developers to encourage infill development or building attached residences on neighboring lots, where zoning and location permits.</p> <p>Identify properties that cannot be re-developed and build parks, community gardens, and parking lots, to support the community and shopping in mixed-use districts.</p>
<b>Owner</b>	Working Group, Council Committees, Mayor, Partner Organizations
<b>Targeted Completion Date</b>	Short-Term: 1-3 years Long-Term: 5-10 years

<b>Goal</b>	
Number	104
Title	Preserve Leetsdale's History
Description	Stop the degradation of Leetsdale's housing and historic features.
Rationale for Goal	Leetsdale's housing stock is slowly decaying with about 10% of homes vulnerable to blight. Residents demonstrated an important attachment and respect for the history of the borough, believing that historic preservation initiatives are good policy.
<b>Objectives</b>	
Near-Term	<p>Establish a list of historic buildings and districts in Leetsdale.</p> <p>Begin partnership with neighborhood groups like the Sewickley Historical Society to obtain official recognition for historic homes.</p> <p>Review zoning ordinances to ensure they provide protection of natural and historic features and resources.</p>
Long-Term	Create an Historical Architectural Review Board
<b>Owner</b>	Working Group, Council Committees, Partner Organizations
<b>Targeted Completion Date</b>	<p>Short-Term: 1-3 years</p> <p>Long-Term: 5-10 years</p>

<b>Goal</b>	
Number	105
Title	Enhance Cultural Amenities and Community Programs
Description	Find ways to bring cultural amenities to Leetsdale and make new ones.
Rationale for Goal	Over the decades, Leetsdale has lost many of its cultural institutions, the places that create a community, including its library and elementary school. Leetsdale's recreational programs are an asset to the borough and help make it a regional attraction.
<b>Objectives</b>	
Near-Term	<p>Consider a series of free temporary public art projects around town: Chalk art festival, knit-in, sculpture competition, outdoor film series, community stories led by artist, etc.</p> <p>Increase opportunities for youth to showcase talents in events and festivals. Showcasing youth talent stimulates pride in community and youth and provides opportunities to exercise leadership, responsibility, skills building.</p>
Long-Term	<p>Build partnerships among arts, culture, and heritage organizations, business, government, and community organizations, throughout the County.</p> <p>Make a special effort to preserve the resources within the Borough Parks. Movies in the park - Brings energy and vitality to town and contributes to safe, friendly, charming feel.</p> <p>Support a robust line-up of recreational programs and events in a variety of settings, serving both young and older residents and visitors in an inclusive fashion.</p>
<b>Owner</b>	Park & Recreation Board, Council Committees, Mayor, Partner Organizations
<b>Targeted Completion Date</b>	Short-Term: 1-3 years Long-Term: 3-5 years

<b>Goal</b>	
Number	106
Title	Reclaim Leetsdale's Tree City designation.
Description	Reclaim the title we once had: Tree City and bring back the canopy over Broad Street. Leverage the borough's Tree Inventory to create a strategy to green Leetsdale.
Rationale for Goal	There is evidence Leetsdale has lost half of its trees over time in some areas.
<b>Objectives</b>	
Near-Term	<p>Henle Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prioritize a variety of fast-growing and locally rare shade trees expected to reach significant heights.</li> <li>▪ Maintain the Arboretum-like environment in the park and shade canopy coverage over recreational amenities.</li> <li>▪ Provide regular tree care and removal of trees in poor condition to open room for timely re-planting.</li> </ul> <p>Broad Street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Choose a variety of smaller varieties for planting under power lines.</li> <li>▪ Choose tree species without shallow lateral root systems that do not interfere with sidewalks.</li> <li>▪ When considering sidewalk repair needs, use methods that will preserve root systems of large trees.</li> </ul> <p>Washington Street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explore planting street trees to visually buffer industrial development.</li> <li>▪ Evaluate soil quality in Brickworks or Kohlmeyer Park's triangle area before planting on borough property.</li> </ul>
Long-Term	<p>Plant more trees to expand the green barrier between the railroad and Ohio River Blvd to beautify Leetsdale.</p> <p>Work together with homeowners to plant rare shade trees on private properties; support tree donation programs.</p> <p>Continue to build the Shade Tree Inventory database to identify potential planting sites and develop a comprehensive tree management plan.</p> <p>Review ordinances to protect trees.</p>
<b>Owner</b>	Shade Tree Commission, Council Committees, Public Works, Service Partners, Partner Organizations
<b>Targeted Completion Date</b>	Short-Term: 1-3 years Long-Term: 5-10 years

<b>Goal</b>	
Number	107
Title	Communicate and Enhance Preparation for Natural and Man-Made Accidents
Description	Prepare residents for emergencies and ensure the best options are in place.
Rationale for Goal	Residents see flooding, landslides, and hazmat incidents (in the railroad or the industrial parks) as key concerns for Leetsdale. The community expressed trust in the emergency services and stated a wish for more information about what to expect and what to do in case of an emergency.
<b>Objectives</b>	
Near-Term	Prepare a communication package for residents to explain Leetsdale's extensive preparations. This should include both written and in-person formats.  List solutions for an alternate exit from the Washington St., based on time to implement. Communicate that list to residents.
Long-Term	Implement an alternative exit via Hussey Copper and the Big Sewickley Creek bridge. Work with state government representatives, corporate entities, and local agencies to coordinate solutions and raise funds.
<b>Owner</b>	Working Group, Council Committees, Partner Agencies
<b>Targeted Completion Date</b>	Short-Term: 1-3 years Long-Term: 3-5 years

<b>Goal</b>	
Number	108
Title	Improve Defenses Against Traffic Accidents
Description	Determine whether it is possible to put a left-turning lane at Route 65/Ferry or find ways to better communicate and enforce the left-turn prohibition and improve other traffic and parking issues.
Rationale for Goal	Traffic patterns at the Route 65/ Ferry St. intersection continue to create concerns among residents who see the prohibition against left turns as confusing and dangerous. Vehicular speeding, especially through Broad St. and Washington St., is a concern.
<b>Objectives</b>	
Near-Term	Analyze the pros and cons of speed restrictions, speed bumps, and speed monitoring to control traffic near pedestrians. Recommend a solution to Council.  Examine ways to improve parking availability for residents.  Look and pros and cons of commercial zoning of the former train station area and whether traffic safety on Route 65 could be improved by rezoning.
Long-Term	Begin discussions with PennDOT about options to improve the Route 65/Ferry left turn. Communicate options to residents and Council.  Put together a plan to execute the solutions and reset timelines.
<b>Owner</b>	Working Group, Council Committees
<b>Targeted Completion Date</b>	Short-Term: 1-3 years Long-Term: 3-5 years

<b>Goal</b>	
Number	109
Title	Infrastructure Improvements
Description	Determine whether Leetsdale is putting adequate resources into its Public Works department and help Public Works better prioritize resident concerns.
Rationale for Goal	Expenditure on physical infrastructure and community institutions is the principal reason for government, yet Leetsdale is spending less as a percentage of revenue today than it did in the past. At the same time, road repair has proven to be a highly variable expense, suggesting a reactive approach to maintenance.
<b>Objectives</b>	
Near-Term	Analyze Leetsdale's budget to understand why infrastructure is receiving a smaller percentage of than it had in the past. Determine whether this is warranted and make a recommendation to Council.  Discuss with Public Works the concerns that residents have with the timeliness of maintenance of sidewalks, public lawns, and amenities. Find out how priorities are being set and create a procedure to set priorities that considers community input.
Long-Term	Create a list of priorities for improvement.  Maintain an infrastructure fund to prepare for major repairs.  Create a proactive approach to budgeting for and scheduling improvement of physical infrastructure.  Recommend an activity-based costing approach to monitor expenses by land use and neighborhood.
<b>Owner</b>	Public Works, Council Committees
<b>Targeted Completion Date</b>	Short-Term: 1-3 years Long-Term: 3-5 years

<b>Goal</b>	
Number	110
Title	Update Zoning Ordinances
Description	Review zoning ordinances to see whether they should be updated based on comprehensive plans.
Rationale for Goal	Leetsdale's Zoning Ordinance was originally adopted in 1972 and updated in 1991. The ordinance does not identify Community Development Objectives and has not been updated to reflect comprehensive plans published between 2000 and 2010.
<b>Objectives</b>	
Near-Term	Review Leetsdale's zoning ordinance to see whether it continues to align with the goals and findings of the comprehensive plan. As part of zoning, consider the possibility of overlays, buffer zoning for Washington Street, allowing more mixed use in select industrial areas, and encourage mixed-use / low to medium density residential development on the existing high school site.
Long-Term	Make a recommendation to the borough's council for proposed updates.
<b>Owner</b>	Planning Commission
<b>Targeted Completion Date</b>	6 months – 1 year

## APPENDIX A: Map to MPC Requirements

In this section, we describe the requirements of a comprehensive plan per the Municipal Planning Code and provide a statement or reference to how each has been fulfilled.

### Requirements

**A. Statement of objectives of the municipality concerning its future development, including, but not limited to, the location, character, and timing of future development.**

Over the next decade, Leetsdale aims to,

- Re-develop vacant land in its residential districts as either new homes or public areas that benefit the community.
- Re-establish access to the river.
- Protect the character of its neighbors, particularly its historic areas.
- Bring back cultural institutions it has lost.

*Refer to Section III: Goals & Objectives*

**B. 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, flood plains and other areas of special hazards and other similar uses.**

Through zoning, Leetsdale will encourage low to medium density residential development, emphasizing home ownership throughout the borough, notably on currently vacant lots and by allowing additional mixed uses, including residential, near areas of the industrial park that have the potential to be used for recreation.

The borough will also promote mixed-use development – a combination of low to medium density single family homes, townhomes, retail, and green space – on the existing high-school site, with the goal of bringing back the vibrant main street area it once had.

*Refer to Section III: Goals & Objectives, Goals 100, 102, and 110*

**C. 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.**

Leetsdale anticipates a declining population and an increased proportion of renters. Prior responses to requirements A and B describe goals to encourage residential home ownership. As part of this, we will also protect our rental population by updating landlord regulation and pursuing proactive code enforcement.

*Refer to Section III: Goals & Objectives, Goals 100, 102, and 110*

**D. 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.**

Leetsdale's system of roads and transport is adequate for its needs. The borough, however, will consider the safety hazards around Route 65/Ferry and explore ways to minimize speeding violations along its residential neighborhoods.

*Refer to,*

*Section I: Part E.4 Transportation*

*Section II: Part A.2 Findings from General Public Meetings*

*Section II: Part A.3 Findings from Community Survey*

*Goals & Objectives, Goal 108*

**E. 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.**

Leetsdale has excellent infrastructure, including water, sewage systems, fire, and police. It also has its own sanitation program, unlike neighboring towns. Nevertheless, Leetsdale has been spending less on its infrastructure as a percentage of revenue - and in some cases absolute terms - than it once did and has encountered variable budget for road repair. Therefore, Leetsdale will investigate the root cause of the expenditure declines and explore whether budgeting for proactive repairs will decrease risk and long-term cost.

At the same time, Leetsdale will correct the degradation of its parks and green space and build contingent evacuation routes for its Washington Street neighborhood.

*Refer to,*

*Section I: Part C.4 Parks & Green Spaces*

*Section I: Part D Cultural and Historic Resources*

*Section I: Part E.1 Public Safety*

*Section I: Part E.2 Public Utilities*

*Section II: Part A.2 Findings from General Public Meetings*

*Section II: Part A.3 Findings from Community Survey*

*Goals & Objectives, Goals 101, 107, 108, and 109*

**F. 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.**

Leetsdale's focus on residential re-development is compatible with the land use in surrounding communities, which are also largely residential.

**G. A plan for the protection of natural and historic resources to the extent not preempted by Federal or State law [including]... wetlands and aquifer recharge zones, woodlands, steep slopes, prime agricultural land, flood plains, unique natural areas and historic sites.**

Over the next five years, Leetsdale will leverage its Inventory of Trees to replant the trees it has lost since 1972.

Over the next year, the borough will seek to create an Historical Architectural Review Board to protect its historic homes and buildings.

*Refer to,*

*Section I: Part C.4 Parks & Green Spaces*

*Section I: Part D Cultural and Historic Resources*

*Section II: Part A.2 Findings from General Public Meetings*

*Section II: Part A.3 Findings from Community Survey*

*Goals & Objectives, Goals 101, 103, 104, 105, and 106*

Reference Guide to Goals

<b>Goal #</b>	<b>Goal</b>
<b>100</b>	Encourage Home Ownership and Low to Medium Density Development
<b>101</b>	Protect Henle Park and Kohlmeyer Park
<b>102</b>	Bring Back the Boat Dock
<b>103</b>	Fight Blight
<b>104</b>	Preserve Leetsdale's History
<b>105</b>	Enhanced Cultural Amenities and Community Programs
<b>106</b>	Reclaim Leetsdale's Tree City Designation
<b>107</b>	Communicate and Enhance Preparation for Natural and Man-Made Accidents
<b>108</b>	Improve Defenses Against Traffic Accidents
<b>109</b>	Infrastructure Improvements
<b>110</b>	Update Zoning Ordinances

## **APPENDIX B: Blight Resources**

### **Blighted Properties:**

In property terms, blight refers to the deterioration or decay of a property or an entire area. It is typically associated with the decline of a neighborhood or community due to various factors such as neglect, physical deterioration, crime, economic decline, or environmental contamination.

Blighted properties exhibit visible signs of deterioration, such as vacant or dilapidated buildings, overgrown vegetation, broken windows, graffiti, or accumulation of trash. These properties can have a negative impact on the surrounding area, affecting property values, safety, and overall quality of life for residents.

These properties also often harbor hazards, including toxic chemicals, broken appliances, or structural damage that can potentially harm people living in or near the property.

Blight can be caused by a variety of factors, including economic downturns, population decline, lack of investment, inadequate maintenance, natural disasters, or urban decay. Governments and local authorities implement blight remediation programs or initiatives to revitalize blighted areas and improve the overall condition of the properties and the community.

There are multiple legal frameworks to challenge blighted property then. Those include code enforcement, blight remediation programs, land bank authorities, and legal actions to acquire land. Blighted property has caused millions of dollars in upkeep for municipalities that are struggling to balance budgets. Therefore, focusing on these areas can lead to efficient use of old land to create further revenue for the community.

The legal criteria of blighted property are found under Section 12.1.C of the Urban Redevelopment Law passed into effect on May 24th, 1945 (Center, Legislative Data Processing).

Blighted property shall include:

- (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 more than 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.

In Allegheny County, a minimum of three of the criteria below must be met to be considered blighted to qualify for the programs supported by ACED.

**Allegheny County Building Assessment:**

Allegheny County grades all properties as part of its assessment process, using letter grades and additional descriptors, on a scale based on the year of construction, square footage, and quality of building materials used, as well as the property’s condition.

The condition scale factors in maintenance, age, quality of materials, and deterioration of the building and the property while the grade scale focuses on square footage, quality of craft and workmanship, number of bathrooms, and specific features of the building.

The property grade is based on a grade scale from E, D, C, B, A, and then another category of X. There are also (+), or (-) signs added to the grades that are determined through the age of the building as well as general traits that might make it attractive or unattractive to a buyer.

Property grade and condition descriptors are shown in the tables below:

Table 1. Allegheny County Property Grades

A Grade	Buildings that are of superior materials and workmanship. They have special architectural highlights that are typically custom designed. They are built with at least 3 full bathrooms and are 4,000 square feet in size. Not all historic homes may meet this criteria or designation but should be considered when grading a handsome, “antique” dwelling that has been maintained and is desirable to the market.
---------	--

B Grade	Buildings that exhibit materials and fixtures of good quality and workmanship. They are generally framed with rafters and joists exceeding current code and standards. The plumbing and heating are better quality and have two full three-fixture bathrooms. This class is often common today in “better” developments, built by higher-end developers. These units will typically show some emphasis on both interior and exterior refinements. Generally, this class of residence will exceed 1,5000 square feet of living area but will not exceed 4,000 square feet.
C Grade	Considered standard quality construction. Buildings in this classification are typical of today’s construction and materials and methods. This class will meet current building code standards. A developer typically builds this class of building on a mass-production basis. This residence class will range from 900 to 1,600 square feet of living area.
D Grade	considered below average in quality. Buildings in this classification will generally be found to have adequate electricity, heat, and plumbing, but the fixtures are commonly of below-average quality. This class is considered to have essential conveniences. Dwellings in this class are typically between 600 and 1,000 square feet in total size.
E Grade	Lowest class of construction providing minimal shelter. Most homes in this classification are not habitable year-round and are considered camps or cabins. They lack basic insulation and may lack minimal plumbing and central heat. They are generally considered only for seasonal occupancy and will not have been constructed, in most instances by a modern builder, nor will they meet current building codes for year-round occupancy.
X Grade	Residence is a unique structure, often one of a kind, which has been designed by an architect. Premium quality materials and the highest level of workmanship available at the time of construction are found throughout. Typically, there will be special features such as unusual shapes or designs, an impressive entrance, elaborate windows, and/or staircases, cathedral ceilings, and archways.

Table 2. Allegheny County Property Condition Descriptors

Excellent	Building that exhibits an outstanding standard of maintenance and upkeep in relation to its age.
Very Good	Building that exhibits a high degree of maintenance and upkeep when considered to its age.
Good	Building that exhibits and is above ordinary standards of maintenance and upkeep in relation to age.
Average	Building that shows only minor signs of visible deterioration caused by normal wear and tear.
Fair	Building that is structurally sound but has greater deterioration relative to its age and has visible signs of a lack of maintenance.

Poor	Building with significant signs of visible structural deterioration.
Very Poor	Building defined as barely livable and close to condemnation.
Unsound	Building defined as the dwelling being structurally unsafe and should not be inhabited. In some cases, it may still be inhabited by individuals, but still, the grade can be considered as unsound.

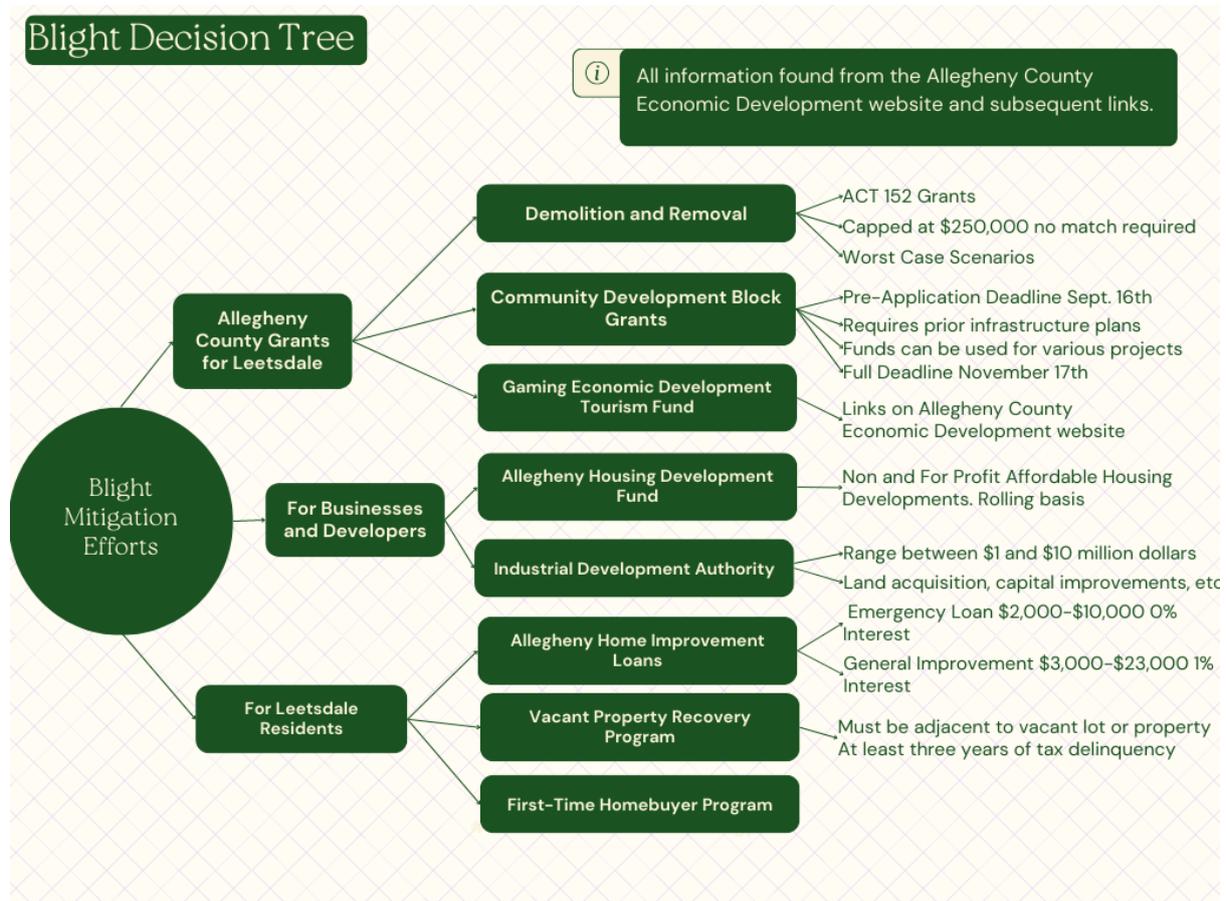
#### Citations

Bucks, County. “Blight Abatement Program.” *The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Bucks*, 15 Mar. 2023, [www.bcrda.com/blight-abatement-program/](http://www.bcrda.com/blight-abatement-program/).

Center, Legislative Data Processing. “1945 Act 385.” *The Official Website for the Pennsylvania General Assembly*, 2022, [www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/LI/uconsCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&yr=1945&sessInd=0&smthLwInd=0&act=0385](http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/LI/uconsCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&yr=1945&sessInd=0&smthLwInd=0&act=0385).

N, A. “Comprehensive Guides to Combatting Blight.” *Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania*, 30 Sept. 2020, [housingalliancepa.org/comprehensive-guides-to-combatting-blight/#:~:text=From%20Blight%20to%20Bright%20is,term%20vacant%20and%20abandoned%20properties](http://housingalliancepa.org/comprehensive-guides-to-combatting-blight/#:~:text=From%20Blight%20to%20Bright%20is,term%20vacant%20and%20abandoned%20properties).

## Blight Remediation Strategies and Resources Available to Leetsdale



Research and Image Credit: Conor Kelley, LGA

## **APPENDIX C: Additional Documentation of Public Input**

1. Park usage and ADA key stakeholder interview notes
2. Preliminary Survey Copy and Analysis
3. Random Survey Copy and Design Description



**Leetsdale Planning Commission Research  
Key Stakeholder Interviews  
Henle Park Usage and ADA Accessibility  
July 2023**

**Background:** We wanted to evaluate how to make Henle Park amenities ADA accessible and inclusive, to inform future updates. To this end, over July 2023, Leetsdale Planning Commission has identified and interviewed individuals and groups who may use the park differently based on special needs.

The respondents were asked the following questions: 1) How do you use the park? 2) Is the park accessible and easy to navigate, or are there difficulties? 3) What do you like and dislike about amenities, playground, Splash Pad? A follow-up free-form discussion unfolded based on each answer to elucidate more details. Interview summaries are provided below.

**Interview 1.**

**Interviewee Name: Jennifer Farmerie, resident of Leet Twp.**

**Why was this person interviewed?**

Ms. Farmerie is Head of the Children’s Department at the Sewickley Public Library. She has organized several events in Henle Park. Those include: 1) a bi-weekly outdoor Summer Story Time that brings in 40-80 guests for each gathering; 2) a year-round Story Walk with rotating displays that brings in 100-200 visitors for each installation; and 3) a Book Stop that attracts up to 100 visitors.

**Interviewee Feedback:**

- Ms. Farmerie’s events attract young families with many children in strollers. Some groups have handicapped family members. Her guests come from all over the area. They visit for a story time but look for an opportunity to stay longer, making it a morning out. They use all amenities in the park including the grounds, playgrounds, Splash Pad, bathrooms, and concession stand.
- Ms. Farmerie uses the park for her events because it is accessible by walking. It is a nice spot for outdoor story time, and Splash Pad is an attraction. She likes that there is open space for parachute games, yet also shade from large trees. She would appreciate a couple more trees for shade in the area.
- On a rainy day, Ms. Farmerie’s group uses the pavilion which is adequate for a small group but not for a larger one that her events can attract.
- Ms. Farmerie noted that there is currently no ADA accessible parking, which precludes visits and participation from handicapped guests. She described one family with two kids who also had a handicapped grandfather. They parked on the side of the VFW parking lot. They had a very hard time getting the grandfather’s wheelchair down the steps and a steep sidewalk. Once they reached the spot where the story time was held, the wheelchair couldn’t get more than a yard away from the sidewalk into the grass. This family never brought the grandfather again, and only came a couple more times without him.
- Ms. Farmerie noted that playground space, especially the slides and the swings, is not ADA accessible. She noted that pored rubber surface would be better than chips for preventing falls and accidents. Importantly, it would also make the area accessible throughout the whole playground. Wood chips are hard to navigate. She pointed out a

mother who strained to push the stroller near the slide, to show that wood chips aren't accessible at all on wheels.

- Even though the swing set has an ADA accessible seat, it cannot be reached on a wheelchair.
- She also pointed out that the current playground is located out of line of sight for a police vehicle patrolling the area, or for parents who are watching the kids from elsewhere in the park. She recommended moving the playground towards the basketball court or even swapping the locations of court and playground.
- She also pointed out the need for more benches around Splash Pad and playground area.

*Quote: "A child in a wheelchair isn't coming [to Henle Park] now because it's not accessible".*

## **Interview 2.**

**Interviewee Name: Kong Lee, resident of Leetsdale Borough**

### **Why was this person interviewed?**

Ms. Lee is a mother of four children ages 4 to 14. She lives within a block of Henle Park. She is blind and uses her cane and her children's assistance to navigate the area outside.

### **Interviewee feedback:**

- Ms. Lee uses the park regularly with her three younger children.
- Ms. Lee can walk with assistance from her home to Henle Park. Sidewalk quality is important to her. A broken sidewalk in front of her home represents a tripping hazard. A muddy sidewalk in Henle Park is also a problem.
- Ms. Lee uses the sidewalk across Henle Park for directional assistance. She can understand where she is while she is on the sidewalk. When she steps on the grass, she loses her sense of orientation. Though she can walk the park unassisted, she could never find the playground by herself, because the sidewalk doesn't lead to the playground.
- Ms. Lee also uses her hearing to navigate through the park. She can always reach the Splash Pad because of its noise and because it's closer to the sidewalk.
- Ms. Lee has a poor understanding of how current playground structures all located relative to each other, and of their size. In particular, she feels that the swing set is located very far and is not accessible to her.
- Ms. Lee does not like walking around the playground area due to uneven terrain and the rough feel of wood chips under her feet.
- When at the playground, she prefers to sit down on the bench and supervise her children using her sense of hearing. She likes the bench under the shade tree. She feels there are not enough benches in the playground area, and that the benches can be more comfortable, with backs to lean onto.
- When her children go in different directions, Ms. Lee can still hear them and know where they are, if one of them is a basketball court, and the other on the playground. But she loses sense of where her children are, if even one of them goes to the swing set. She feels she cannot supervise them at the same time if they are playing that far away from each other.
- Ms. Lee feels it would be nice to have another pavilion closer to the playground equipment. When the current pavilion is rented for a party, she feels that there is too

much noise in the area, and a lot of traffic between the pavilion and the playground. She feels that parents cannot properly supervise their children from the pavilion while the children are on the playground.

*Quote: “[A broken sidewalk] in a way, it’s a hazard. I trip a lot and stub my toes. I walk very slow and just know to be careful.”*

### **Interview 3.**

**Interviewee Name: J. H. (full name withheld by request), Life Skills Support Teacher, QVSD**

#### **Why was this person interviewed?**

J.H. supervises a group of 6 middle school students with disabilities. J.H. visits Henle Park with the students during the summer months for a day at the Splash Pad. There is also an end-of-year picnic for all special needs students at QVSD that brings in 25 children and 20+ adults to the Henle Park pavilion and a visit to the park grounds. One of the high school students who visits Henle Park for this event and other high school visits, has an electric wheelchair.

#### **Interviewee feedback:**

- J.H. likes visiting Henle Park with his group because they are looking for enduring community relationships in a space to which the students can have a lifetime connection. The group cannot visit public pools, so the Splash Pad represents a nice alternative.
- The group comes on a bus that parks at VFW. They have no issues accessing the area from the parking lot, including using the sidewalk with the steps. The group has 0 members who use wheelchairs. A high schooler in an electric wheelchair has no problem riding through the grass. An electric wheelchair must be covered to protect it from water when near the Splash Pad.
- When in the park, the students use Splash Pad, park grounds, basketball courts, and the playground.
- The group finds the playground to be a bit far from the pavilion. They rely on the presence of adult helpers and one-on-one aids to supervise all the children.
- J.H. noted that the sitting area at the playground is limited. Benches around splash pad are heavily used but there are no other places to sit.
- On the playground, the group uses the swings and the 5-12 area. Students use the regular swings. A handicap swing is available but J.H. cannot recollect using the handicap swing for the student in the wheelchair. The group likes that there are multiple swings for all the children to use.
- J.H. appreciates that the pavilion is well-shaded and would prefer that there be more shade in the park. J.H. considers shade to be an issue of accessibility and inclusivity. J.H.’s group likes the existing pavilion and considers it to be adequate for the group’s needs. They also appreciate the courts which they use for basketball games.

*Quote: “Shade leads itself well to accessibility because some people simply can’t stay in the sun. Some medication makes our students sun-sensitive”.*

### **Interview 4.**

**Interviewee Name: Mary Hays, Pauline Jenkins, David Rosinsky, residents of Leetsdale Borough.**

**Why was this person interviewed?** Ms. Hays, Ms. Jenkins, and Mr. Rosinsky reside in Leetsdale Manor High Rise, senior housing complex in Leetsdale, located a block away from Henle Park. They use walkers and wheelchairs for getting around the building and outside.

**Interviewee feedback:**

- Residents expressed that they love Henle Park and think it is a focal point of the community.
- Residents view the park as first and foremost a gathering space that provides community activities. Ms. Hays is a lifelong resident of Leetsdale. She fondly remembers park activities and community events, such as movies in the park, bingo games, and the 4th of July carnival.
- Ms. Jenkins suggested many additional activities like corn hole tournaments. She also suggested that those activities could be brought back and used as fundraisers for park improvements.
- High Rise residents do not use the playground equipment but have commented that the basketball court and a tennis court are both in disrepair and represent a lot of wasted space. They think that having another pavilion in the court area could be a good addition to the park.
- Residents also appreciate the park as a passive space to enjoy nature. Mr. Rosinsky visits the park simply to sit in the shade, enjoying the green space and people-watching.
- Residents appreciate shade and older trees in the park. They think that benches tend to be too low for people to comfortably sit down and need to be updated.
- Unfortunately, even though their High-Rise apartment complex is within a block from Henle Park, residents find that they cannot easily access it. Ms. Hays uses a specialized tall walker to walk outside. She finds that the sidewalk going up to Beaver St. is too steep, and there is an area of gravel that makes it impassable. Sidewalks on Broad are broken and represent a trip hazard. Ms. Jenkins reports a similar experience.
- Once in a park, residents reported that they can go with their walkers over grass.
- Mr. Rosinsky and Ms. Hays report driving to the park for access and having difficulty finding a parking spot that is close enough for ADA needs. Ms. Jenkins confirmed this experience.
- Ms. Jenkins said that if there is better sidewalk access, ADA parking, and transportation, people from the High Rise would visit the park more often.

*Quote: "People want things to do [in Henle Park]!" Ms. Jenkins*

# Leetsdale Planning Commission

Preliminary  
Survey

## Eight Question Survey

**Help the Planning Commission plan for a better town. Tell us about yourself and how you hope Leetsdale will flourish. We want to hear from you!**

**1. What neighborhood do you live in?**

Victory Lane Area  Beaver St. (Passed Henle Park Toward Ambridge)

Broad Street Area  High School Area (Beaver and Uphill from Beaver)

Ohio River Blvd.  Washington St Area

**2. Please tell us your age?**

< 18  35 - 45  65 - 75

18 - 25  45 - 55  75 - 85

25 - 35  55 - 65  85+

**3. How many people are in your household?**

One  Three  Five

Two  Four  Six

**4. How many children under 18 live in your home?**

None  Two  Four

One  Three  Five +

5. What do you like about Leetsdale? Pick one or two.

Affordable living  Public transportation  Walkability

Sense of community  Commute Time  Public Safety

Parks and green space  Access to shopping

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. What don't you like you about Leetsdale? Pick one or two.

Taxes  Lack of Code Enforcement  High Percentage of Rentals

Roads  Industrial Park  Public Safety

Blighted Properties  Noise and Traffic

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. What should the Borough work on? Rank your top three priorities. Put 1, 2, and 3 next to your choices.

Parks Quality  Noise from industrial park  Code Enforcement

Road Quality  Green space and river trails  Current High School Site

Deal with blight  Access to Washington St.

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

8. If we work on our parks, what would you like to see the Borough improve? Pick one or two.

New playground equipment  Handicap Access  Flowers, trees, and gardens

Trails  Tennis courts  Skate Park

Pickleball courts  Basketball courts  Park Programs

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU!

## Leetsdale Preliminary Survey Results

<b>Neighborhood Distribution</b>		<b>Age Distribution</b>		<b># in Household</b>		<b># Children in Household</b>	
High School	26%	85+ - 65	42%	1 - 2	47%	0	62%
Board	26%	65 - 45	36%	3 - 4	47%	1 - 2	29%
Victory	20%	45 - 25	18%	5+	6%	2+	9%
Beaver	15%	< 25	3%				
Washington	12%						
Ohio Blvd	0%						

<b>What Do Like About Leetsdale?</b>		<b>What Do You Dislike?</b>		<b>Top Priorities</b>		<b>Best Park Improvements</b>	
				% of Possible Points			
Affordable	26%	Blight	40%	#1 Blight	25%	Playground Equip	14%
Sense of Community	26%	Taxes	12%	#2 High School	19%	Trails	14%
Walkability	16%	Rentals	12%	#3 Park Improve	18%	Pickleball	14%
Access to Transportation	12%	Traffic & Noise	10%	#4 Washington St. Access	12%	Basketball	11%
Green Spaces	6%	Code Enforce	10%	#5 Code Enforcement	11%	Flowers & Trees	11%
Access to Shopping	6%	Expensive Housing	6%	Green Space and Trees	8%	Handicap Access	8%
Public Safety	3%	Other	10%	#6 Noise Control	3%	Skate Park	8%
Other	5%			Other	3%	Park Programs	6%
						Other	11%

## What We Learned

- We need additional survey methods to get feedback from young residents.
- We should distinguish the needs of seniors vs. the needs of the young. Both have value in the short and long term.
- People seem to settle in Leetsdale because it is affordable and offers a sense of community. Its other resources have not been put front and center as much as they could.
- Blight, the high school, and parks/green spaces dominate concerns.
- It's difficult to draw any conclusions on park improvements since the survey is dominated by seniors and thus those without children.

## Leetsdale Community Survey

## Random Survey

This survey aims to identify the needs of Leetsdale residents with questions based on previous focus groups. Your insights could help with the research for Leetsdale's Comprehensive Plan update, helping prepare the borough for the future. Your responses will be confidential and anonymous. For inquiries, contact Leetsdale Borough at 724-266-4820.

### Henle Park Update

#### 1. If the Borough updates Henle Park playground, which amenities would you like to see?

##### Pick ONE kind of athletic court:

- Basketball
- Multi-use Court for Basketball and Pickleball  
(or other racquetball sports)

##### Pick ONE playground layout:

- Age 2-5 & 5-12 structures separated  
(Current)
- Age 2-5 & 5-12 structures combined

##### Pick up to FOUR additional amenities for the Playground:

- An additional pavilion
- Horseshoes

##### Pick ONE type of swingset:

- Large Swing Set with 8+ Swings  
(Current)
- Medium Size Swing Set (6 Swings & Seesaw)
- Small Swing Set with 4 Swings

##### Pick ONE preference for playground surface

- Wood Chips
- Poured Resin Surface

- Climbing wall
- Spiderweb Climbing Net

Obstacle Course     Chessboard     Monkey bars     Corn hole

Adult outdoor exercise area    Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments, questions, and concerns:**

---

**Future Development in Leetsdale**

**2. If the high school moves up the hill, what kind of development would you like to see on the existing site?**

**Pick your top choice:**

Affordable low-density single-family homes     Townhouses

Mixed-use development with stores, a variety of homes, and green space

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments, questions, and concerns:**

---

**3. What kind of development should Leetsdale promote in the future?**

**Build more residential homes by the river:**

Yes     No

**Attract more business to Broad St. to restore the “Main Street” feel of the area:**

Yes  No

**Build townhomes on the hillside on Beaver St.:**

Yes  No

**Expand recreational use in the current industrial zone (restore boat dock area & develop river trail system):**

Yes  No

**Comments, questions, and concerns:**

---

**Safety and Risks for Leetsdale**

**4. Rank your concerns for Leetsdale in order of importance. (Rank 1-6 where 1 is of most concern and 6 is least concern)**

\_\_\_ Washington St Emergency Exit    \_\_\_ Crime    \_\_\_ Natural Disasters (Floods, landslides)  
\_\_\_ Industrial Accidents    \_\_\_ Declining Tax Revenue    \_\_\_ Failing Infrastructure (Sewers, Bridges, Roads)

**Comments, questions, and concerns:**

---

**Protecting What We Have**

**5. How can we improve property maintenance in Leetsdale?**

**Pick THREE property maintenance issues of most concern to you:**

**Do you support the following measures?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Vacant lots	<input type="checkbox"/> Improper parking	<input type="checkbox"/> Overgrown yards
<input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned homes	<input type="checkbox"/> Rentals not inspected properly	<input type="checkbox"/> Trash in yards
<input type="checkbox"/> Homes unfit for habitation: broken windows, doors, lack of electricity, plumbing		
Other: _____		

Proactive Code Enforcement with regular patrols  
 Yes  No

Mini-grants for homeowners to repair properties  
 Yes  No

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Is it important to protect the following historical features (structures, look, character) in Leetsdale?**

Historical Buildings like Lark Inn and Elm Ridge

Yes  No

The character of neighborhoods like Broad St and Victory Terrace

Yes  No

Protect Washington St. from Industrial Development nearby

Yes  No

**Comments, questions, and concerns:**

---

**Thank you for letting us know your thoughts! Please share a few things about yourself.**

**How many years have you lived in Leetsdale?**

- Less than 1                       1-5                                       5-10  
 10-15                               20+                                       Entire life

**Do you rent or own your home?**

- Rent                                       Own

**How many children under 18 reside in your household?**

- None                               1                                       2-3                                       3+

**How do you get around on a daily basis? Pick all that apply:**

- Walk                               Bike                                       Public Transit                               Drive                                       Carpool

**How far do you commute to work?**

- Don't commute                       Less than 1 mile                       1-5 miles                       5-10 miles                       10+ miles

**Do you use the Sewickley Library?**

- Yes                                       No, I don't need to                       I'd like to but it's too far

**Where do you shop most?**

- Leetsdale                       Ambridge                       Moon                                       Sewickley                       Other

**OFFICE USE ONLY (please do not write below)**

1.

---

2.

---

3.

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## Design of Random Survey

Using the demographic data from Claritas, a random sample of 80 householders was chosen to reflect the distribution of the community by neighborhood and age.

Despite a response rate of over 30%, the neighborhood distribution of respondents was skewed. Therefore, it was supplemented via a convenience rule: if a resident was unavailable then the nearest neighbor who was outside was approached.

Neighborhood	# Homes	% of Homes	# Sampled	# Responded	# Supplemented	% of Homes Surveyed
Beaver	82	16%	13	2	8	16%
Ohio River Blvd.	28	5%	4	0	0	0%
Old Main (Board)	139	27%	22	5	12	28%
Oliver Town (Washington)	64	12%	10	5	1	10%
Shields	80	15%	12	3	7	16%
Victory	124	24%	19	10	9	30%
<b>Total</b>	517	100%	80	25	36	

The random sample as supplemented created a good distribution by neighborhood with underrepresentation on Ohio River Blvd (no one answered their doors) and slight overrepresentation of the Victory Lane homes.

The process created a representative distribution by age as well. Random sampling alone yielded a median age of 58, matching the demographic data for householders. When supplemented, the median was 57.

Conclusion: the survey process generated a representative sample by age and neighborhood. The process appears to have little risk of bias. There is little reason to believe people outside are different than people inside since the chance of being outside is largely random and the age distribution is nearly identical.

## APPENDIX D: Sources Used for Environmental Assessment

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