

2023 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

What is your name as it will appear on the ballot?

Kendra Brooks

What office are you seeking?

City Council At-Large

Campaign Committee Name & Address:

Kendra for Philly

Campaign Website Address:

www.kendraforphilly.com

Candidate Introduction:

<https://www.kendraforphilly.com/about>

ROADWAY SAFETY

For 5th Square's positions on these issues see: https://www.5thsq.org/2023_issues

Short Response:

1. a) Will you commit to reducing Philadelphia's annual traffic deaths in half by 2026?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____

b) Do you support redesigning Philadelphia's most dangerous roadways if this means eliminating travel lanes for automobiles and parking spaces?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____

c) Daylighting is a pedestrian safety measure achieved by replacing curb parking spaces near an intersection with flexible posts, planters, or bollards – increasing visibility for pedestrians and drivers. Do you support daylighting more intersections in Philadelphia if this means removing parking spaces?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____

2. Will you support a ballot measure to establish a PHL Department of Transportation, combining the transportation division of the Streets Department with the Office of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Sustainability (oTIS)?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____

3. After two terms in office, the Kenney Administration will have built 30 miles of protected bicycle lanes. Will you support an expansion of Philadelphia's network of protected bicycle lanes by an additional 30 miles by 2028?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____

4. a) The pilot speed camera program on Roosevelt Blvd has changed driver behavior, improved safety, and saved lives. Do you support making the speed cameras on Roosevelt Blvd permanent?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____

b) Do you support expanding speed camera enforcement to more high-crash corridors across Philadelphia?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____

Use this space if you'd like to elaborate on any of the above short response questions:

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Long Response:

5. Despite the city taking a Vision Zero pledge to reduce traffic deaths to zero by 2030, more than 120 people died on city streets in 2022. What will you do to significantly lower the rates of traffic deaths in Philadelphia?

It's clear that we have more work to do to achieve the city's Vision Zero pledge. Throughout the country we have seen promising implementations that have significantly reduced and achieved various versions of vision zero policies that involved deep stakeholder engagement, outreach programs, and a unified city government willing to prioritize ending traffic deaths. With a new mayor, we have an opportunity to seriously look at our current policies and make reforms where necessary including streamlining how the city makes these decisions. It's clear that the way it's been handled is no longer working.

Specifically, I passed legislation to expand bike share services citywide and I will keep fighting for fully-funded public transit and safe streets. In my second term, I am committed to putting pressure on the next mayoral administration and working with my Council colleagues to ensure that the city is doing more than just putting forth plans— we're actually making progress by saving lives and implementing safety we can feel in our streets.

6. Many curb cuts, crosswalks, bus stops, and sidewalks across Philadelphia are routinely blocked by illegally-parked vehicles. How will you address this specific problem?

Every day on my commute to work and in my social media feeds I see egregious examples of parking that make walking our city blocks inaccessible to impossible – sometimes from the very parking authority charged with enforcing those laws. Curb cuts and sidewalks are an important part of reducing traffic deaths and ensuring that our city is accessible to everyone. We know that a city that is not friendly to pedestrians does not foster community. And we know that when our streets, crosswalks, and sidewalks are well maintained we are protecting residents young and old, empowering neighborhoods, and attracting new residents. These are basic infrastructure updates that improve people's lives and must be prioritized.

I will continue to support accountability for illegal parking and measures to improve walkability and safety in every neighborhood. This means fighting for increased capital funds for sidewalk improvements and it means holding the PPA accountable for adequate enforcement. If a car is parked in a crosswalk, it poses a danger to pedestrians and it should be towed — it's that simple.

7. What is your plan to ensure the city's sidewalks are safe and usable for all pedestrians, including people with disabilities and families with strollers?

As the head of the Committee on People with Disabilities, and as someone who worked for over a decade with young people with disabilities, ensuring that our streets and sidewalks are accessible to all is a top priority for me. And as a mom of four and a grandma, I know just how challenging navigating unsafe streets, poorly maintained sidewalks, and haphazard crosswalks can be. The state of our sidewalks often run along lines of race and socioeconomic class, with whiter wealthier zip codes having better maintained public spaces than working class zip codes with higher populations of Black and brown people having to make do with low-quality streets and sidewalks. We need to aggressively tackle the condition of our sidewalks with an equity lens, focusing on the neighborhoods that have faced decades of disinvestment and neglect and fighting for a city where every neighborhood has high-quality, accessible, safe sidewalks.

In order to improve sidewalk quality and safety across every neighborhood, we must increase funding for sidewalk maintenance, truly enforce building construction safety, and begin putting pedestrian safety and accessibility first.

PUBLIC SPACE

For 5th Square's positions on these issues see: https://www.5thsq.org/2023_issues

Short Response:

1. Will you support an expansion of the current municipal street sweeping program, even if it means non-compliant motorists may receive parking violations or have their vehicles towed?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
2. Do you support easing regulations on outdoor dining streeteries and facilitating more parklets and pedestrian plazas even if this means eliminating space for parking?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____

Use this space if you'd like to elaborate on any of the above short response questions:

Co-sponsored the bill introduced by CM Domb to make outdoor streeteries and sidewalk cafés permanent and worked closely with his team to ensure that the bill addressed accessibility concerns raised by disability justice advocates.

Long Response:

3. Place-based interventions like greening vacant lots, repairing abandoned homes, and planting street trees in Philadelphia is linked to a reduction in violent crime, a decrease in illegal dumping, and lower rates of depression among residents. How will your office work to accomplish these place-based interventions in historically-disinvested neighborhoods?

I see my role as a City Councilmember as someone who can amplify the voices of working families and uplift social movements. And that's why I've been working with community gardeners, land stewards, and working-class neighbors to ensure they have a fair chance to acquire ownership of the pieces of land that they've been taking care of for years or in many cases decades.

I've revived efforts to protect dozens of community gardens in working class neighborhoods from being sold off at sheriff sale to the highest bidder. We are on the cusp of an unprecedented victory to return nearly 90 community gardens on the cusp of being lost back to community control, so they can continue to operate as urban farms, rain gardens, and safety hubs in working class neighborhoods.

I was also a vocal proponent of my colleague Councilmember Jamie Gauthier's #JustServices budget proposal in 2022 to increase funding for sealing vacant homes, removing abandoned cars, maintaining and expanding street lights, greening vacant lots, addressing dumping, and improving neighborhood-based services. This budget cycle, I plan to advocate for further increases to these areas as essential violence prevention strategies across Philadelphia.

4. Philadelphia's public spaces suffer from two main types of improper waste disposal: littering and illegal dumping. For decades, the City's reduction and removal efforts have been woefully inadequate. What would you do to solve this issue?

During the great recession, Philadelphia gutted public services and our city has never fully recovered. While our local economy has since stabilized, our city's leaders have continued to use an austerity approach to our annual budget that underfunds public services while giving tax cuts to the ultra-rich. And when we underfund City services, the fallout is felt most acutely in working class communities of color, where trash pick up is inconsistent, dumping is widespread, and environmental pollution is pervasive.

We need to adequately fund our Streets Department to ensure that communities like the one I live in are not treated as if we are disposable. I know from firsthand experience that when we provide quality services to communities, issues like littering become less widespread because community members take pride in their neighborhoods.

It's time that we empowered people to take ownership over their communities by making deep investments into neighborhood-based City services like trash pickup, street cleaning, and dumping prevention and enforcement. And to do that, we need to stop cutting taxes for the ultra-rich and instead require that everyone pay their fair share for the city we deserve.

5. The city has struggled to staff and adequately fund city services, which has resulted in reduced hours at libraries, pools, and recreation centers. How would you ensure consistent and convenient hours for these facilities?

I believe that making deep investments in our public libraries and Parks and Recreation centers is paramount to strengthening our communities, preventing violence, empowering youth, and transforming Philadelphia into a city where working families thrive. On City Council, I've been the lead advocate for increasing funding in these areas, which has resulted in restoring funding for libraries and Parks and Recreation to pre-pandemic levels — a \$8 million increase from the previous year.

But if we want to see real change, we need more than just incremental improvements, we need to make significant increases in funding levels. We need all libraries and recreation centers to be open seven-days a week, with evening and weekend service. This budget cycle, I will be campaigning for an increase to 7-day service and expanded hours for pools, libraries, and recreation centers. This is crucial to the quality of life for families across the city, but especially important in the handful of zip codes most impacted by gun violence.

That's why a central part of my Philly Wealth Tax proposal, which would raise nearly \$260M in annual City funding, is investing in our public libraries and recreation centers so that we could have facilities available and accessible to our communities and provide robust services to our neighborhoods. Making the ultra-rich pay their fair share for the fully-funded City services that our communities deserve will continue to be a top priority of mine.

TRANSPORTATION & TRANSIT

For 5th Square's positions on these issues see: https://www.5thsq.org/2023_issues

Short Response:

1. Do you support the City of Philadelphia enrolling all municipal employees into the SEPTA Key Advantage program?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
2. Do you support the City establishing a fare discount program for low-income riders?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
3. Do you support congestion pricing - a toll for vehicles entering Center City and University City during peak travel times - with funding used for improving public transportation?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
4. Do you support increasing the cost of monthly residential parking permits and using the funds for improving public transportation?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
5. a) Do you support expanding bus-only lanes throughout Philadelphia, even if this means removing a lane of travel for personal vehicles or parking?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
b) Do you support using camera technology to enforce bus-only lanes and bus stops by ticketing violators?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
6. Will you advocate for increasing local transit funding to SEPTA?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
7. Do you support a subway/metro line for Roosevelt Blvd?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
8. The City of Denver launched a popular e-bike rebate program in an effort to reduce vehicle miles traveled. The rebate program offered \$1,200 for income-qualified residents and \$400 for everyone else for e-bike purchases. Do you support a similar program here in Philadelphia?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
9. Do you support micro-mobility initiatives such as scooter share programs for Philadelphia?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____

Use this space if you'd like to elaborate on any of the above short response questions:

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Long Response:

10. What are your ideas for combating Philadelphia's problem with traffic congestion?

As a mother of four, I know how expensive travel can be for a family using SEPTA. We need to find ways to reduce the cost for communities in our cities and improve the quality of service so that SEPTA is more attractive for working families. Expanding bus service, increasing staffing in SEPTA stations, improving sanitation practices, and providing more affordable options for working people to take SEPTA are all possibilities that I support. We should examine fare reductions for multi-child households like mine, work with the School District of Philadelphia and City partners to encourage public transit for employees, and continue fighting for expanded alternatives to car use in the city.

11. What are your solutions to ensure SEPTA rebuilds its ridership post-pandemic?

With your support, I took on SEPTA during my first campaign and talked about how it could be better. The challenges may be slightly different, but the fundamental problem remains the same. For us to be the poorest big city in America — and a large portion of our citizens are using public transportation as a means to work, as well as engage their families — we need to find a way to make it more affordable and safer. Since the pandemic, we have seen an increase in anti-social behavior on our public transit. We need city leaders to step up and communicate how important it is that our public transit remains safe and clean for everyone — and most importantly families. I would look to work with advocacy organizations for input on these efforts and find sustainable solutions dedicated towards growing SEPTA ridership.

Personal Travel Habits:

1. How often do you ride a bicycle for transportation in the city?
☐ Never ☐ Yearly ☒ Monthly ☐ Weekly ☐ Daily
2. How often do you ride public transportation in the city?
☐ Never ☐ Yearly ☐ Monthly ☒ Weekly ☐ Daily
3. How often do you travel by car in the city?
☐ Never ☐ Yearly ☐ Monthly ☐ Weekly ☒ Daily
4. Will you commit to taking public transportation at least one week of each year while in office?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
5. How do you typically commute to work? Describe your experience traveling in Philadelphia and what you would do to improve it.

As a city councilmember at-large, I often commute to City Hall in a car because of the demands of representing people across the city. Before becoming a Councilperson, I took public transit almost daily.

HOUSING & LAND USE

For 5th Square's positions on these issues see: https://www.5thsq.org/2023_issues

Short Response:

1. Do you support eliminating minimum parking requirements for all of Philadelphia's zoning categories?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
2. Will you veto or vote against downzoning overlays?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
3. Do you support legalizing Single-Room Occupancy dwellings (SROs) in all multifamily and commercial zoning districts across Philadelphia?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
4. Will you support designating Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) overlays city-wide, allowing increased commercial and residential zoning density near all rail transit stations in Philadelphia?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
5. Should our city government encourage the growth of Philadelphia's population back to 2 million residents?
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
6. Should our zoning allow for denser housing in high-income, high-amenity neighborhoods to accommodate more residents?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Other: _____

Use this space if you'd like to elaborate on any of the above short response questions:

I believe that the guiding force for our housing policy in the city is the belief that housing is a human right, that every person, no matter their income, deserves a decent place to live. There are many tools to help us get there, including inclusionary zoning and mixed-income multifamily housing. We need to expand the amount of land and neighborhoods that are eligible for the mixed-income housing program. Let us not forget that while many houses might be zoned as single-family, there are many homes where 2-3 families are crowded together due to housing instability in our city. These neighborhoods should certainly have access to affordable, integrated and accessible housing.

Long Response:

7. The affordability crisis hits renters harder than owners. Philadelphia Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) estimates the city needs about 70,000 affordable rental units to meet demand. How will you address this affordable housing shortage?

In order to strengthen Philadelphia's neighborhoods and tackle poverty, we must aggressively fight evictions, protect renters, and expand access to quality, affordable housing. That's why on City Council, I have led efforts to reduce evictions in Philadelphia by nearly 70% through the Emergency Housing Protection Act, which instituted the Eviction Diversion Program and has been held up as a national model by the White House. I also passed the Renters' Access Act, which regulated the rental application and screening process for tenants to ensure that low-income renters were not being discriminated against in the private rental housing market. I am also a strong supporter of expanding Good Cause eviction protections because I believe that evictions traumatize children, destabilize families, and disproportionately harm low-income communities of color.

But I know that we can't stop there. Low-income renters across the city, especially our seniors who live on fixed incomes, simply cannot keep pace with skyrocketing housing costs. My first action as a City Councilmember was to introduce a resolution to hold hearings on rent control in Philadelphia. While this work got delayed due to the pandemic and my focus shifted to eviction prevention, I am currently planning a public committee hearing for March 2023 in tandem with the Rent Control Coalition. As I look toward re-election and my second term in office, winning rent stabilization for Philadelphia will remain a top priority.

To be clear: I support building more affordable housing, and have co-sponsored numerous measures to this end on City Council. As the city builds more housing to meet the demand for affordable housing, rent control ensures that people can stay in the communities they have called home. We urgently need both — more affordable housing and rent control — in order to adequately address the housing crisis.

8. Record low housing supply has pushed up home prices, closing off the possibility of home ownership to many first-time homebuyers. The median home value in the Philadelphia metropolitan area has reached \$320,000, increasing \$100,000 from 5 years ago. How can we keep neighborhoods affordable and sustainable as Philadelphia sees more growth and development?

In my work as an elected official, I have consistently shown up for the expansion of affordable and workplace housing and I don't plan on stopping any time soon. I support repealing our current tax abatement and replacing it with a tax abatement that incentivizes the development of affordable housing. I have supported efforts like the Turn the Key program that City Council has championed, which will help facilitate the sale of 1,000 new, energy-efficient, 3 bedroom, 1½ bath homes on publicly-owned city land. I have led efforts for the City to buy back lots encumbered by U.S. Bank liens that are at risk of being sold off at Sheriff Sale to protect community-ownership of land and also supported legislation that creates pathways for community-controlled, permanently affordable housing and urban gardens on City-owned land. In my second term, I plan to support and introduce more legislation of this kind that expands affordable and low-income housing while also holding developers accountable to the community and ensuring that long-term residents can afford to stay in their homes.

9. Philadelphia faces some serious headwinds from more residents and businesses considering leaving the city for the suburbs, more than at any point in the last two decades. What do you think must happen to ensure the region's economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic comes out in urban-Philadelphia's favor?

It's no secret what makes people want to take a job and encourages them to stay: competitive pay, regular pay increases, access to a union, safe working conditions, and good benefits. We knew all this before the pandemic but every inequality compounded during that time. I've delivered real, material victories for working Philadelphians, including passing robust COVID-19 paid sick leave for workers, expanding renters' rights, resisting austerity and advocating for deep investments in City services, and protecting our reproductive freedoms. These are the type of policies that attract small businesses, keep families in Philly, and make us an attraction for the world to see. If I'm successful in my re-election efforts, I plan to build on these efforts to make Philadelphia the city of our dreams.

CLOSING STATEMENT

Tell us more about what you bring to the table as an ally for urbanist politics in City Hall. Why should 5th Square endorse you over other candidates running for your position? What makes you the right person to advance the urbanist movement's goals politically at the local level?

I see my role as a City Councilmember as someone who can amplify the voices of working families and uplift social movements. Efforts like Vision Zero and organizations like 5th Square are a great entry point for people to get involved in these causes. The type of solutions I have and always will champion come from grassroots organizations like yours. During my first run, your endorsement was critical to introducing me to new communities and growing my education on these policies. Throughout my time in council, I've enjoyed all the opportunities we've been able to work together and help grow the urbanist base in Philadelphia to communities not often represented in the media as traditional urbanists. I know urbanism to be a racial justice issue, a disability rights issue, and an economic justice issue and I hope my support of your efforts turns new people on to your organizing. That's what movement politicians do.