



2023 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

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

Job Itzkowitz

What office are you seeking?

Council at-Large

Campaign Committee Name & Address:

Job for Philly

Campaign Website Address:

jobforphilly.com



Candidate Introduction:

I am a civic leader, a public servant, and a lifelong Philadelphian. I have spent over a decade working to make our neighborhoods safer, our streets cleaner, and our city more inviting to businesses and visitors.

For the last eight years, I have served as the top executive of the Old City District, the business improvement district for the Old City neighborhood. In that role, I have overseen cleaning, safety, marketing, and economic development initiatives. I worked to create a long-term vision plan for Old City and have advocated for public transit, bike lane infrastructure, and the elimination of parking minimums in the neighborhood. In 2022 alone, under my supervision, the OCD team collected nearly 17,000 pounds of trash, removed over 600 instances of graffiti, and safely cleared almost 700 used needles from the streets of Old City.

In addition to my executive experience improving Philadelphia for small businesses, workers, and families, I served as Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Legislation in Philadelphia City Council. It was there that I helped advance legislation to protect Philadelphia’s park spaces from gun crimes and to encourage economic diversity in community investment, allowing community members to shape the future of their own neighborhoods.

An attorney by training, I am a graduate of University of Pennsylvania School of Law. While in law school, I interned for City Council’s Technical Services Unit, assisting in the legislative process and analyzing the role of the unit. After law school, I chose to stay in Philadelphia, working as a commercial litigator with a focus on antitrust law.

I was recognized with the Alan J. Davis Pro Bono award for my work supporting the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the National Voting Rights Commission. Acting as staff counsel to the Commission, I participated in nationwide hearings and researched and drafted part of a

report on the continuing impact of racism on voting in America which was presented to Congress in support of the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act.

For over two decades, I have worked in Philadelphia's civic-minded non-profit realm. I co-founded Young Involved Philadelphia, which helped lift the voices of young Philadelphians in the halls of government and in the media. Subsequently, I co-founded the Friends of Love Park, which secured a \$1mm sponsorship for Fairmount Park. As Co-Chair of the Board of Philly Fellows, I fought Philadelphia's "brain drain" by helping recruit and train talent for the nonprofit sector. I also served on the Board of East Point Breeze Neighbors and chaired its zoning committee.

A longtime supporter of Philadelphia Democratic politics, I have served as a Democratic City Committeeperson in three different wards over the last twenty years. I am an avid Eagles fan and reigning champion of my fantasy football league. I am enthralled by the sanitation and transit systems of cities all over the world, but you will likely find me closer to home exploring one of several coffee shops within walking distance from my house. At 6 foot 7 inches, I will be the tallest person to seek or hold office in Philadelphia.

I live in Point Breeze with my wife and pre-school aged daughter.

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:

As Executive Director of Old City District, I have a track record of developing and advocating for road diets and installing bike lanes. I have worked to redesign Market St, from 2nd to 6th, adding two curb-protected bike lanes and eliminating a lane of vehicular traffic. The project was adopted by the City and is currently past the 60% engineering mark and is fully funded.

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?

There are three rubrics that contain solutions to the problems of traffic deaths: enforcement, infrastructure, and cultural/behavioral shifts.

I support various types of enforcement for traffic violations. I support speed cameras, bus-mounted cameras, PPA bike lane officers, and civilian traffic enforcement. To the extent Council needs to fund or enable such programs, I will work to do so.

Philadelphia can, and should, build additional infrastructure to reduce traffic violence. These include daylighting intersections (Jersey City has done this extremely well) and building curb and/or parking protected bike lanes. To the extent Council needs to fund or enable such programs, I will work to do so.

Ultimately, however, the longest-term impact requires a cultural shift that focuses on a reduction of car dependency. Improving public transit, increasing mixed-use development, incentivizing e-bikes (e.g., Denver's rebate program), and building protected bike lanes are part of the solution. There are times where I have romanticized car-free cities or neighborhoods; but many of the same problems can be solved with a less politically charged solution: reducing the abilities of cars to travel *through* certain areas but still allowing them to enter the area. A recent trip to the Baltics informed my thinking on the subject. Rather than banning cars in their downtowns, Baltic cities eliminated parking and put bollards at one end (or in the middle) of the block. That allows for deliveries, taxis, and moving, but did not encourage cars to travel through these areas. The result was more pedestrianism and fewer opportunities for crashes.

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?

As a policy matter, Philadelphia should be looking to replicate Jersey City's successes in daylighting intersections and greatly reducing deaths caused by automobiles. Such interventions are low cost. While they may not be popular politically at first, there would be more limited objection to installing such protections at school intersections (e.g., Arthur Elementary) and the program could expand from there. Councilmember Phillips recently introduced a bill addressing the same and I look forward to its passage and subsequent implementation.

Houston has a volunteer parking enforcement program, whereby citizens can obtain training to issue citations directly and New York City is exploring a program whereby citizens can receive compensation from any parking tickets they refer, not in place of parking enforcement officers, but in addition to them. Philadelphians can text 911 to report tickets for vehicles blocking crosswalks, but these types of formal programs raise awareness that citizens can play a role in keeping our streets safe while adding incentives for them to do so.

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 a parent of a toddler, and as the son of two senior citizens who live in the city, this issue is personal to my family and me. As a Councilmember, I would work to ensure the safety and security of our sidewalks for all pedestrians:

It is important to remember that City Council is not an enforcement agency. However, Council's power rests in its ability to investigate such agencies via subpoena power and to fund (or defund) those agencies. Enforcement ought to include illegally parked vehicles (on sidewalks, those obstructing curb cuts, and those obstructing line of sight at intersections), unpermitted and/or unmarked construction blockages, and trash, to name a few areas of need.

In Philadelphia, property owners are responsible for maintenance of their sidewalks. Accordingly, the City does not repair sidewalks. However, there are two ways that Philadelphia can encourage better sidewalk upkeep. The first is Chicago's "Shared Cost Sidewalk Program." By leveraging its purchasing power, Chicago offers sidewalk repairs to property owners at deep discounts. Council can work to develop and fund this program, which is a "carrot" approach.

The "stick" approach is where the municipality notifies the property owner of the faulty sidewalk, issues a fine, repairs the sidewalk on behalf of the property owner, charges the property owner for the repair, and liens the property if the bill is unpaid. Philadelphia already has this method on the books, though it is rarely used. Also, the legislation needs to be amended to allow the City to collect its full expense for the repair.

Another way to safeguard sidewalk space is for the City to apply the street trees program to bollards. If a resident is concerned about vehicles parked on the sidewalk in front of their home, they could request the City install bollards in front of their home. Like the street tree program, this is inexpensive and creates meaningful results.

Finally, we need to reduce reliance on vehicles. See answer to question 5.

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:

Mechanical street-sweeping is treated as a panacea for Philadelphia's dirty streets. It isn't. For the past eight years, I have managed a pan-and-broom street-sweeping team in Old City. Last year, we collected 17,000 pounds of trash, collected 700 used needles, and removed 600 instances of graffiti and stickers from our streets. This program is not expensive and is easily replicable. It employs returning citizens. For \$50 million, Philadelphia could sweep every block in the city thrice daily. For \$17 million, Philadelphia could sweep every block in the city once daily. When sweeping sidewalks, crews also sweep the curblin, removing debris from the street, even when cars are parked. I support requiring moving cars for mechanical street-sweeping, but I encourage those concerned with clean streets to think about a variety of means to achieve the same ends.

I co-founded the Philadelphia BID Alliance in April 2020. The first order of business for the new organization was advocating for outdoor dining upon the eventual reopening of restaurants. Our advocacy focused around five issues: 1) allow cafe seating by right; 2) allow cafe seating at a neighboring property by-right with permission; 3) allow seating in parking lanes in front of the business by-right; 4) allow seating in parking lanes in front of neighboring businesses by-right with permission; and 5) allow street closures for outdoor dining (and I am proud that Old City was the first neighborhood to host closed street outdoor dining every weekend.) I was in the meetings with city agencies in recent months in which the agencies, acting without guidance from administrative leadership, gutted the program. Old City's restaurants were devastated and the neighborhood is worse off. For the two years of closures and streeteries, nobody missed the handful of parking spaces in the neighborhood. But most miss the outdoor dining experiences.

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 have reviewed studies making the same argument and completely subscribe to their conclusions. The street cleaning program I describe above addresses many of these issues equitably by providing the same level of service citywide. Further, my proposal hires 800-1000 new crew members, and can prioritize hiring returning citizens at a living wage with benefits.

I also support the Philly Tree Plan to help green our neighborhoods and prevent further heat island effects, predominantly in lower income communities. The current tree planting schedule is several years behind. While some of that delay is attributable to workforce issues, much of it is because the program is underfunded. Council can and must invest in this type of program.

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?

There are many litter removal systems globally that are exciting and innovative. But many of those systems are not realistic solutions for Philadelphia. We should not pursue the pneumatic tubes of Copenhagen or even the underground dumpsters of Lisbon.

Rather, a pragmatic, affordable model is found in Barcelona, where it is difficult to walk one block without finding large, clean containers for general waste, recycling, and composting. I have spoken with representatives of one such manufacturer—Formato Verde—who is interested in exploring business in the US. Importantly, as NYC hired McKinsey to analyze containerization, it may be prudent to await the results of that study before moving forward, as many findings may be analogous.

Insufficient enforcement is also an issue. There are too few SWEEP officers. In Center City, there are no more than two SWEEP officers assigned at any time. SWEEP needs to be fully staffed to enforce against dumping violations.

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?

The simple answer is the City needs to hire more people. One in seven city jobs is vacant, leaving departments barely able to deliver vital services. To attract the best and brightest to its workforce, the city government can and should be a leader on salary and benefits. Council must first repeal its parochial "pre-residency" requirement for hiring city jobs. Even if the administration can waive this requirement, its mere existence is confusing and sends the message to those who may relocate to Philadelphia that they are not welcome. Council must also use its investigatory powers to ensure that city job salaries and benefits are competitive with comparable private sector jobs to retain talent.

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:

3. I support congestion pricing as necessary. I am not sure if the data supports the need, but I support it if the congestion warrants it.

4. The cost should be increased for one permit as a baseline, then increased again for a second, and the total number of permits per household should be capped. Pricing can also be dynamic for applications / available spots.

8. This is low-hanging fruit for Philadelphia, though there are some lessons to be learned from Denver, where demand outpaced supply. Before introduction, a study of estimated demand should be conducted..

9. I support these initiatives but with regard to scooters, I prefer that they are "docked." By that, I don't mean a physical dock infrastructure, but designated geofenced areas where users must park.

Long Response:

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

Philadelphia traffic congestion is a changing problem in a post-COVID world. As office commuting has changed, so has the extent and timing of vehicular traffic changed. However, increases to home delivery and decreases in public transit ridership have added to Philadelphia’s congested streets.

The city needs a comprehensive loading zone plan that creates an effective network of spaces where delivery vehicles and ride sharing vehicles can stop without blocking traffic.

Also, as discussed in detail in my response to “Road Safety question 5”, the city needs to fundamentally shift behavior with regard to car dependency.

To enable that shift away from car dependency, Philadelphia needs clean, safe, and reliable transit. Please see more on this in response to question 11 below.

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

The concern I hear most frequently about SEPTA, from both occasional and regular riders, is that the system is neither clean nor safe, especially underground.. This is an eminently fixable problem, both through actual cleaning and safety interventions, but also through better marketing of the service and its improvements. The barrier here is money, and I would commit more local dollars in support of these programs.

The system also needs to function better. It should be more intuitive to use, with better signage and digital communication, including global “next to arrive” information and updates about delays. Headways should be more frequent and operator shortages must be addressed.

In addition to funding, Council can play an active role in legislating bus-only lanes, upzoning near transit stops, and laying the legislative groundwork for construction of the Roosevelt Boulevard Subway. I will work to support each of these ideas.

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.

In normal weather, I walk to the subway with my daughter and take her to school at Broad and Oregon. Then I pick up an Indego bike and take it to work at 2nd and Market. In inclement weather, I take the subway for all legs of the trip.

The highlights of the bike trip are either in the 11th St. bike lane or the new Washington Ave. bike lane. We need more of these types of lanes to support additional ridership and reduction in vehicular traffic.

The contrast of riding the Broad St. Line and the E1 is currently stark. The BSL has greatly improved in recent months. Several times in the last few weeks i have seen multi-person crews cleaning stations and riding to the next station to start cleaning it. I have not seen the same attention paid during my MFL legs and the smaller cars and increased nuisance behavior makes the experience much less pleasant.

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:

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I successfully advocated for the elimination of parking minimums in the Old City commercial core area. |
|---|

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?

Philadelphia has a housing crisis. Too frequently, a debate rages about whether Philadelphia needs affordable housing or market rate housing. This is a false choice; the city needs lots of housing of both types.

With regard to workforce and affordable housing, the city should dispose of its 10,000 vacant lots as soon as possible to provide scattered site, economically integrated, affordable housing. The return on limiting the use of these lots is greater than the collective market rate sales price.

To maximize the impact of the disposition of those city-owned lots, Council must upzone the parcels to allow multi-family development. This need not require dimensional changes; for example, Innova has developed multi-family affordable housing in my RSA-5 neighborhood and was able to do so by putting in more than one unit per parcel.

Our city needs a holistic and all-inclusive approach to the housing crisis. We cannot rely on false dichotomies or rigid orthodoxy when it comes to providing adequate housing for our citizens. We can and must forge an all-of-the-above strategy that incorporates workforce/affordable housing and capitalizes on the city's far too numerous vacant lots, turning blight into blooming communities.

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 order to attract large-scale market rate housing development, Philadelphia should upzone where possible, but particularly along commercial corridors, in neighborhoods on the traditional grid, and where transit is adequate. Parking minimums should also be eliminated citywide to lessen the cost of building and allow for better commercial ground floors that are more attractive to tenants.

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?

This City was built for at least two million residents, and the benefits from an increased population are numerous: more efficient service provision, a larger tax base, increased use in public transit, and larger support for the school district are just some of the advantages of growing the population. There is also the political advantage of having a proportionally large city in terms of representation in both Harrisburg and Washington, D.C.

People want to live in Philadelphia. With the exception of pandemic-related departures, Philadelphia's population has grown for more than 20 years. There are, however, barriers to both attracting new

residents and retaining existing ones.

Housing

I address this in the housing section above, but I firmly believe that people want to live in Philadelphia and access to housing is a barrier at both affordable and market-rate levels..

Crime

Council's role regarding the day-to-day operation of the local criminal justice system is limited. Council does not legislate the criminal code nor play a role in operations of the Police Department, District Attorney's Office, the courts, and other related entities. Council can play a role in oversight and funding of the various departments, but the body should understand the limits of its role in this capacity.

Rather, Council should focus its energy on policies that can help reduce crime in the long run. There are several policies within Council's domain that are proven effective in crime reduction.

Studies show that clean streets and clean vacant lots can reduce crime up to 30%. Council can, and should, fund citywide, pan-and-broom, street sweeping. Based on my experience overseeing a street cleaning crew for the past eight years, I conclude that the city can implement citywide, 3x/day pan-and-broom street sweeping for every single block in the city for ~\$50 million / year. The program would hire up to 1,000 new workers, including returning citizens, paying a living wage with benefits. If the price tag is too high, Council can fund once daily sweeping for one-third of the cost.

Similarly, in addition to the readily apparent environmental benefits, per Brookings, tree planting can also reduce crime. The current street tree planting list is 2-3 years behind schedule. While some of that relates to lack of contractors to do the work, much of it relates to chronic underfunding.

The lack of basic home systems repair can also contribute to crime. Fortunately, Pennsylvania recently passed legislation funding a repair program statewide. Council's role thus becomes one of advocate-blasting messaging about the program to those in need and, as necessary, funding the systems to support the applications to the program.

Schools

Throughout my childhood and into the aughts, the conventional wisdom among many young Philadelphians with means was that they would move out of the city upon their children reaching school age. Fortunately for the city, and for the schools, many parents now choose stay so that their children can attend a select, though increasing, number of elementary schools.

This is a silver lining, however, on what is still a dark cloud. Schools remain underfunded by the state government, the capital improvement requirements are daunting, many elementary schools are not meeting minimum education requirements (for many reasons, both intrinsic and extrinsic, and non-special admission high schools appeal to too few. Regardless of the outcome of the fair funding litigation, Council must ensure that the District is adequately funded.

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 am passionate about the causes for which 5th Square advocates. Public space, transit, and mobility are core to equitable city-building and placemaking. For that reason, I have been a 5th Square supporter for several years.

I have collaborated with 5th Square to advance my work at Old City District, particularly with regard to eliminating parking minimums, and I will take my belief in these fundamental issues, and my ability to implement change, to City Council.

Thank you for considering my candidacy.