

## **COUNCILMANIC DISTRICT 8: Compiled Candidate Q&A's**

Question	Councilwoman Bass	Seth Anderson-Oberman
<p><b>What is one life experience you have that voters should know about?</b></p>	<p>My service as president of East Mt. Airy Neighbors was one of my most rewarding experiences ever. It was then and is now truly an honor to serve the people.</p>	<p>In my role as a union organizer, over the last 24 years, I've helped thousands of workers build power in their workplaces; for good wages, healthcare, paid time off and a voice at work. Now, I am excited to help the working people of our communities build power and win a strong voice for the things we need - like deeply affordable housing, community led development, fully funded and resourced public schools, urgent action around climate change and a holistic approach to the epidemic of violence that's robbing our neighbors of their loved ones and family members.</p>
<p><b>What would be your top three policy priorities in office?</b></p>	<p>1. Repairing the city's property reassessment process to prevent unexpected property tax increases. 2. Gun violence 3. Trash dumping and blight.</p>	<p>1. We're in a housing crisis. Use every tool available to expand deeply affordable housing and low cost loan assistance to help existing homeowners stay in their homes. We must preserve the racial and economic diversity of our neighborhoods. 2. Fight for the public schools our children deserve. Fully fund education so we can renovate and green our school buildings, recruit and retain teachers and staff (especially teachers of color), reduce class sizes, expand CTE and support more neighborhood schools with wrap around services so they can become resource hubs for the community. 3. A comprehensive and targeted approach to violent crime that addresses generations of disinvestment from poor and working class communities (especially African-American communities) and the narrowing of liveable options that have shaped the current crisis. We need to treat violence through poverty reduction and expanding mental health services and supports from a community led approach.</p>

Question	Councilwoman Bass	Seth Anderson-Oberman
<p><b>What sets you apart from other candidates?</b></p>	<p>I'm best known for my fierce tenacity. When I believe in something that I know will benefit my constituents and all Philadelphians, I don't back down. That's how I secured additional funds for my district after it didn't receive its fair share of REBUILD program dollars compared to other districts that had similar need for projects to overhaul and spruce up City parks, libraries and rec centers. I fought for my district and didn't give up until my constituents got what they deserved.</p>	<p>I wholeheartedly reject the cynical pay to play politics that have dominated our city for far too long. I have a deep and abiding love for the working people of our district and will fight with them and for them for everything we deserve. I believe politics is something we do together and I know when we stand together we can win and change lives.</p>
<p><b>How do you plan to work across ideological lines to achieve shared goals?</b></p>	<p>From the time I was elected in 2012 until my current term, I've repeatedly found common ground with colleagues with whom I have differences. For example, I co-chaired a special committee on child separation with my colleague from a different party. Despite that, we were able to lead the committee together, agree on goals, and collaborate on a report that exposed the unacceptable performance of Community Umbrella Agencies and proposed recommendations for improvement in an effort to protect Philadelphia's children. I've also supported the legislation of colleagues whose ideologies were not 100 percent aligned with mine because I was able to overlook our differences and recognize their legislation's merit. Should I be fortunate enough to be able to represent the 8th District, I plan to continue my collaborative approach.</p>	<p>There are no simple solutions to the problems we face. There are many sets of interests that have a stake in what happens in our neighborhoods and communities - first and foremost the people who LIVE in our communities. We must bring everyone to the table, especially those who've been historically shut out of our political process to look for answers that help us grow together and build an economy that works for everyone, not just the wealthy and powerful few.</p>

Question	Councilwoman Bass	Seth Anderson-Oberman
<p><b>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?</b></p>	<p>Support installing more speed cameras throughout the city and collaborate with State officials to work on speed calming measures.</p>	<p>My neighbors and I have been fighting to get speed bumps on our block in Germantown for over 5 years. On the corner of the street where we live, there is a rec center, where kids and families regularly travel to and from on foot. I have listened to neighbors across the district report similar hard-fought attempts to improve their road safety conditions over the past decade with little to no action from their City Councilmember. In some areas of the district, notably wealthier ones, we see roads with no potholes, ample speed bumps and street lighting. In other areas, there are roads in abysmal form -- plagued with speeding, dumping and deadly street conditions. No one should have to fight tooth and nail to earn basic safety measures that could save lives. No part of our district should experience disproportionate rates of traffic deaths or accidents. These are policy decisions.</p> <p>As 8th district City Councilmember, I will be committed to lowering rates of traffic deaths in Philadelphia by being a fierce advocate for constituent calls for increased safety measures on their own blocks and by supporting/advancing safety policy which expands access and use of these measures. I want to be clear in my commitment to providing equitable constituent services throughout North and Northwest Philadelphia. This has been missing from the 8th district for far too long and contributes to the incredibly dangerous road conditions in our neighborhoods. Equitable constituent services looks like; directing increased resources towards areas most affected by traffic deaths, the same areas which have been denied access to these resources for far too long. It also looks like responding to calls for increased road safety in all areas of the district, with accountability measures to ensure resources and attention are equitably distributed.</p>
<p><b>Question</b></p>	<p><b>Councilwoman Bass</b></p>	<p><b>Seth Anderson-Oberman</b></p>

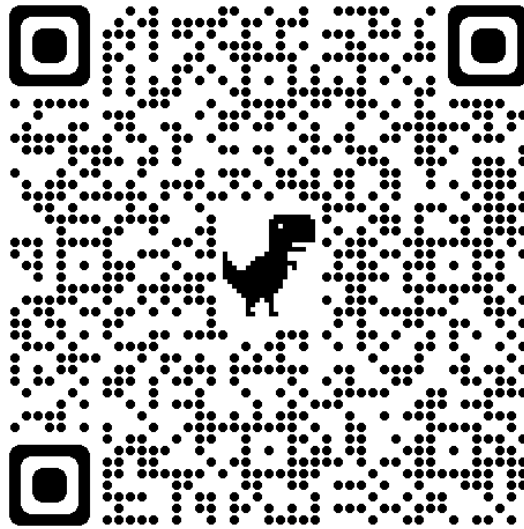
<p><b>Place-based interventions like greening vacant lots, repairing abandoned homes, and planting street trees in Philadelphia is linked to a reduction in violent crime, a decrease in illegal dumping, and lower rates of depression among residents. How will your office work to accomplish these place-based interventions in historically-disinvested neighborhoods?</b></p>	<p>Work with neighborhoods and community organizations to identify vacant lots and abandoned houses and provide resources to support their projects. I will collaborate with BIPOC developers on real estate projects that transform underutilized land and abandoned property into assets that invest in residents instead of displacing them. I will continue to support the Philly Tree Program.</p>	<p>I support requiring the land bank to prioritize the disposition of properties to favor low-income and cooperatively owned developments, including land trusts. We have an ample amount of vacant lots in our district which have immense potential to become sites of place-based interventions. I have spoken with residents who have used vacant lots on their blocks as sites of community gardens for decades but are thrown out at a second's notice when the lot is sold from under them to wealthy developers. The community must have decision-making power in the development that occurs in our neighborhoods. Our community members have been calling for place-based interventions for decades; community greenspace, fixing abandoned homes, renovating vacant properties. But these measures must be done responsibly, allowing long-term residents to remain in their homes after neighborhoods are greened and re-invested in. Therefore, these conversations must be held alongside conversations of housing justice.</p>
<p><b>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?</b></p>	<p>I will continue to support efforts to enforce illegal dumping, which includes creating a taskforce to help with enforcement and monitoring of cameras. Support the expansion of the street sweeping program. Support and enhancing all initiatives that currently address littering and illegal dumping.</p>	<p>Illegal dumping and littering has been a massive problem in district 8 for over a decade, and in some areas these issues have worsened significantly over this time. Our City Council office can be doing more to respond to constituent calls for trash clean-up and illegal dumping enforcement. I will actively search for innovative solutions to illegal dumping that looks at effective measures instituted across the country. Again, I do not believe that cameras is a long-term solution to issues facing our neighborhoods. We need to tackle this crisis by tracking it to the systemic root causes of littering and simultaneously support crafting and advancing policy which moves us towards a trash-free Philadelphia while supporting our neighborhoods in reducing the harm that is currently being done by illegal dumping and trash overflow.</p>
<p><b>Question</b></p>	<p><b>Councilwoman Bass</b></p>	<p><b>Seth Anderson-Oberman</b></p>

<p><b>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?</b></p>	<p>As Chair of Parks and Recreation, I will continue to support increasing funding for libraries, pools and recreation centers. I will reach out to State and Federal officials for additional support that hasn't been taken advantage of.</p>	<p>I support allocating funding to fully-staff our centers of growth, rec-centers, pools and libraries 7-days a week. We also need funding to make much needed repairs in these buildings so they can be supportive and safe environments for staff and the public. I will be a fierce advocate for these critical, essential measures. There is literally no excuse for not having these centers of growth be adequately funded and supported.</p>
<p><b>What are your solutions to ensure SEPTA rebuilds its ridership post-pandemic?</b></p>	<p>Support increasing safety measures. Increase the cleaning at stations and the vehicles. Support the exploration of expanding the Septa Key Advantage program. Support improving frequency and reliability of services and fare discounts for riders through low-income reduced fare programming.</p>	<p>I fundamentally believe public transportation should be free and I will support measures that move fare policy in this direction. This includes fare capping, eliminating transfer fees, and integrating the regional rail system with bus and subway lines. The safety of our transit system is also a major concern. The answers to creating a safer SEPTA system must come from increased investment in approaches to public safety which are community-rooted, non-carceral and centered in meeting residents' basic needs. This can look like providing social services to folks using stations as shelter, appointing non- police officers trained in crisis intervention to de-escalate situations where folks are having mental health crises, and more. We must look to other cities where public health interventions are already proving effective in increasing transit system safety while also not contributing to the mass criminalization and stigmatization of riders experiencing housing insecurity and/or mental health crisis.</p>

Question	Councilwoman Bass	Seth Anderson-Oberman
<p><b>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?</b></p>	<p>By supporting and enhancing efforts that are already in place to address affordable housing. Increase the promotion of property tax relief programs and housing Choice Voucher programs. Expanding funding and income requirements for the Housing Trust Fund. Support the expansion of the Shallow Rent program.</p> <p>Remove council approval requirements for any public parcel that will build affordable housing.</p>	<p>We need to fundamentally re-define 'affordable' in this city. I support the re-definition of 'affordable' to be no more than 40% of the current poverty level for a family of four in a given neighborhood. I will: 1. Work alongside allies in the state and federal legislatures to update and modernize the Philly Housing Authority's properties and practices to better respond to the immense need for affordable housing, now. 2. Fighting for comprehensive rent and mortgage relief that addresses the historic inequity exacerbated by the pandemic. 3. Increasing funding for deeply affordable housing, – and preserving and renovating existing affordable housing to keep families in homes. 4. Fully funding legal aid and defense counsel to meet the right to counsel requirement for all eviction cases. 5. Expand funding for housing first opportunities for persons experiencing homelessness. 6. Invest in home repair, weatherization, and housing efficiency to help keep folks in their homes and work towards an 8th district with green infrastructure.</p>

Question	Councilwoman Bass	Seth Anderson-Oberman
<p><b>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?</b></p>	<p>Support making the eviction diversion mediation program permanent. Support funding for legal services, expanding Right to Counsel to at-risk zip codes. Support access to free/low-cost estate planning to reduce tangled titles. These are just a few concepts that will keep our neighborhoods affordable and sustainable.</p>	<p>As Philadelphia sees more growth, we need to ensure that while we are welcoming new residents into our neighborhoods, our long-term and existing residents are not being unjustly pushed out (see responses to question 7 for specific policy points). We also need to ensure that our community members have a voice in these decision-making processes which affect every aspect of our lives. For far too long, the 8th district has been shut out of the planning and development process. Projects of all sizes have been dictated to us, only performatively bringing community members at the last moment of the process. Our neighborhood high school, Germantown High was shut down and sold for pennies on the dollar to a developer who has done nothing with the near city block sized building for over a decade. In 2017, a toxic gas plant was placed in the middle of Nicetown over the organization of the residents who did not want it there – now spewing 158x the amount of toxic emissions than the previously used boilers into the lungs of nearby residents. Our beloved YWCA has sat vacant for many years, despite community plans put forth to include affordable housing units. Where has our City Councilperson been throughout all of this? We demand community-led development where residents are involved in shaping the future of our neighborhoods. This involves strengthening the role of the city's communities, including its RCOs, Block Associations and CDCs, so that our people have greater control over zoning and construction in their neighborhoods. It means working with good-faith developers who have a stake in our community to build the projects we want to see here. It also involves changing our district City Council leadership – a position which wields immense power in shaping development in our districts.</p>

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