

A Vision for One Philadelphia

A Vibrant, Healthy City Can Be Achieved with Smart, Fair Taxes and Strategic Spending to Improve Quality of Life

From Southwest Philadelphia to the Great Northeast, Philadelphia is a city of neighborhoods, reflecting hundreds of nationalities and races and from all income levels. As diverse as we are, we are still *One Philadelphia* — each of us seeking to improve our quality of life in a vibrant, safe and healthy city. *One Philadelphia* envisions a city that strengthens families and neighborhoods by providing opportunities for good jobs, access to health care, affordable housing, safe and clean streets, and rich cultural experiences for all residents.

An important part of achieving that vision is to ensure that our communities have the resources they need to be vibrant, strong and livable. Government has a vital role in creating strong communities by collecting tax revenue equitably, using taxes special or targeted tax rates only to encourage or discourage certain industries or behavior in the public interest, and spending tax revenue responsibly and adequately on public services. Individuals and businesses have an obligation to pay their fair share of taxes to allow government to fill that role.

City Council and Mayor John Street have considered policies that eliminate or reduce certain taxes. Other policies have been adopted that award subsidies to already profitable corporations, leading to a drain on city resources with questionable economic benefit. These policies could have serious negative effects on Philadelphians, as well as other residents in the region beyond city borders. To grow the City as *One Philadelphia* means having clean streets, safety for our children before and after school, curing the triple scourges of homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, having thriving cultural institutions, adequate fire and police protection, and reliable enforcement of our housing, zoning and human relations codes. These things cannot be paid for with ever shrinking revenues.

One Philadelphia believes there's a better way than drastic tax cuts to meet the needs of Philadelphians, and demonstrate to others that our city is already an attractive place to live and do business, and only growing stronger.

Adequate Revenue Raised Fairly is Necessary to Support Philadelphians

Government must raise enough revenue necessary to insure that basic necessary services can be provided to citizens, including those who are most vulnerable. To raise adequate revenue in a fair, equitable manner, we believe that:

- Individuals of greater means should pay a larger percentage of their income in taxes than the low income should pay.
- Individuals and businesses have an obligation to pay their fair share based on profits, presence or property to support the city services and resources they use. Given the regional nature of our economy, assessing some level of taxes on profit earned outside of the city limits by companies based here is fair and appropriate.

- Creating a tax system in which the responsibilities are shared regionally will help end the bidding war between counties and municipalities to attract businesses away from each other.
- Property taxes should be fair, and higher value residential and commercial properties should contribute more in taxes than modest or lower cost homes.
- Any tax cuts or elimination of certain taxes must be offset with revenue from other sources or taxes to ensure adequate revenue is raised and services are maintained.
- Taxes can and should be used to discourage or encourage certain industries or behavior, such as higher taxes on services or products that have a negative impact on our environment, and lower tax rates on services and products that offer public benefit.

Tax Dollars Should be Spent Strategically to Invest in Philadelphians

Taxpayer dollars should be used to ensure the basic needs of citizens are met, and should be used to make strategic investments that will build our communities. Our dollars should be spent modestly on administration, and should only be invested in “economic development” projects that clearly benefit the public as a whole. Transparency in how tax dollars are spent is vital to ensuring proper use. To leverage tax dollars most effectively, we believe that:

- Strategic investments in services such as education, health care, transportation and housing are the most effective ways for our city to build strong, vibrant communities attractive to both individuals and businesses.
- Earmarking adequate revenue for these services must be the first priority in order to attract new residents and businesses to our city.
- Tax cuts should never come at the expense of the city’s ability to make strategic investments in the city’s future or cause cuts in vital public services.
- Tax breaks, grants or other subsidies for private business or corporations are appropriate only when it is clear that taxpayers will receive a return on our investment.
- Priority for tax incentives or subsidies should go to businesses that contribute to the economic and social strength of our communities.
- Government spending on administration – such as travel, food or office expenses for elected officials and their staff – ought to be modest.
- Taxpayers have the right to know how their dollars are being spent, the right to offer public comment, and the right to demand their money back if resources have been wasted or spent inappropriately.
- Contracts must be let, with due regard to gender and racial equity, in a transparent manner, free from coercion and political influence.

One Philadelphia, a coalition of diverse individuals and organizations, is working to build support for these principles among community leaders, businesses and groups. Working together, the vision of One Philadelphia – that of a safe, vibrant and healthy city that prioritizes quality of life and the public’s interest – can be achieved without compromising basic public needs and services.