

# CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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## INTRODUCTION

Name: [Nelson Diaz](#)

Seeking The Office Of: [Mayor](#)

Political Party Affiliation: [Democrat](#)

Campaign Website and/or Facebook page: [www.nelsondiazformayor.com](http://www.nelsondiazformayor.com)

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## YES OR NO

For each question below please indicate whether you agree or disagree. You may comment to elaborate on your response. (optional)

### VISION ZERO

Do you support funding a Vision Zero approach for pedestrian & cycling safety citywide?

YES

NO

Car crashes are not inevitable, and we shouldn't accept any pedestrian deaths as being unavoidable. While things will never go exactly as planned, we are too willing to accept the current status quo as the only possibility. I reject that approach and will make sure the streets department, police department, and other applicable agencies are taking every possible step to make this city as safe and welcoming for pedestrians, cyclists, and mass transit users as possible.

Would you support enhancing penalties for aggressive, distracted and reckless driving, including speeding and DUI, in order to reduce road safety deaths and injuries?

YES

NO

In some cases, the penalties for reckless behavior should certainly be toughened. At the same time, my primary focus would be enforcing the laws on the books already. I don't think the problem in most cases is that we lack the legal tools to tackle these issues. I think the problem is that we don't consistently make vehicular safety a priority.

**Candidate, please initial each page and sign last page.**

## The 5th Square PAC

Should the Philadelphia Police Department do more to enforce existing traffic laws?

- YES  
 NO

As I note about existing bus and bike lanes in my environmental policy platform, “It is also vital that we aggressively enforce existing bus and bike lanes citywide, including with increased traffic cameras, and look for opportunities to physically separate express bus lanes; painting lines on a street is meaningless if drivers and delivery trucks simply ignore the

Do you support the use of traffic calming devices, such as curb bump-outs, chicanes, speed bumps or garden medians?

- YES  
 NO

I’d also add that one problem with our current approach is the expansion of councilmanic prerogative to streetscape changes made in recent years, with the support of the entire city council. If the Mayor and streets department, looking at what’s best for the city as a whole, want to make changes to the streetscape of a neighborhood they should be held hostage to the whims of the local council member.

Would you find room in the budget for additional Streets Department traffic calming devices?

- YES  
 NO

One lesson we should have done a better job learning is that upfront investments in solutions are better and ultimately cheaper than constantly treating the symptoms of our problems. Smart transit planning is superior in every way to our current system, and I’d look to continue the process of changing our priorities.

## TRAFFIC PLANNING

Do you support giving buses priority over private cars on city streets?

- YES  
 NO

Our bus network doesn’t get its fair share of attention from policy makers. More than half of all SEPTA trips are on our bus network, and routes are overcrowded, slow, and unreliable. I think streetscape changes – including physically separated bus lanes and signal prioritization – can play a key role in improving service on this key component of our transit network. Based on the experience of other cities that have tried similar changes, and based on pilot studies done by SEPTA and MOTU, I think we can achieve a goal of a minimum 10% reduction in travel times and 10% boost in ridership across the bus system within my term in office, with our goals increasing to 25-30% in each of those categories on key routes.

Do you support the installation of 30-minute loading zones on all blocks with high residential density and/or commercial activity?

- YES  
 NO

MAYBE. This idea is worthy of study, but I’d have to know the details before agreeing to a blanket rule; in general, I think streetscape rules, including parking, need to take into account both the unique characteristics of the block and citywide policy imperatives, not just one of the other. I believe any change should also be tied to broader changes in parking policies, including by implementing dynamic pricing for street parking in core business districts as San Francisco is successfully experimenting with.

Mayor Nutter created MOTU (Mayor’s Office of Transportation and Utilities) in his first administration. Do you support continuing the overall mission of MOTU in the next 4 years?

- YES  
 NO

Mayor Nutter deserves a lot of credit for putting transportation issues front and center in the Mayor’s office. While I believe we’ve begun to make progress on creating a progressive, multimodal transit network, that work is still very much ongoing. I’d work hard to make sure we made even greater progress going forward.

## The 5th Square PAC

Do you support restricting commercial deliveries to late night and early morning hours, and banning the largest trucks from residential neighborhoods absent compliance with special permit and insurance requirements?

- YES  
 NO

YES, IN THEORY. Such a solution may not be possible as a blanket rule for practical purposes, but I certainly support encouraging and incentivizing deliveries outside of peak business and travel hours by every means possible and practicable. It's more efficient for the city as a whole. As to the second part of your question, as someone who grew up with asthma because of poor air quality where I lived, I certainly would like to try any solutions we can to improve local air quality.

Philadelphia used to repave streets every 9 years. It now repaves every 15 years. Overall, the city has a 900 mile backlog of streets needing to be repaved. Do you support doubling the funding levels for Streets Department's paving budget by fiscal year 2017?

- YES  
 NO

The state of our streets is, frankly, an embarrassment. I believe we should be repaving streets at least once a decade – and using the opportunity presented by repaving to prioritize transit alternatives – and would look to put the streets department onto that schedule by the end of my first term in office.

Do you believe that universities, colleges and large non-profits should be encouraged to subsidize the cost of public transit for students, staff, administration, etc.?

- YES  
 NO

We're better off as a city if more people are using mass transit rather than driving. As someone over the age of 65, I frequently take advantage of the system to let me ride free on buses and subways, and for a reduced price on Regional Rail. I'd like our students and university employees to have the same freedom.

## OPEN DATA

Should the City Revenue Department release as much of its records as legally possible for independent analysis and overall transparency?

- YES  
 NO

As Justice Brandeis wrote, "sunlight is said to be the best disinfectant," and I believe wholeheartedly in transparency. The people have a right to know how their money is being spent, and to analyze the data and hold public officials accountable.

Should the city make all data concerning street use, street conditions and traffic crash investigations available in a timely, digital format to the public?

- YES  
 NO

To put a spin on an iconic line: Information wants to be free, and those with information want it to be expensive. Information like you are describing should be publicly available, as it is in no way sensitive – unless you count "embarrassing to public officials" as sensitive, which I do not. This data should be available and accessible.

## BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Protected bike lanes on JFK and Market were piloted and found to be minimally disruptive to drivers in 2011. Will you support funding the installation of these protected bike lanes if elected?

- YES
- NO

I support protected bike lanes on key routes, such as JFK Boulevard and Market Street. It is my impression that, because of the legal status of those streets, any permanent addition of protected bike lanes on them would require a partnership with PennDOT to achieve. I will work to achieve that partnership, because there is more than enough space on those boulevards to accommodate cars, bikes, and mass transit.

Do you believe that bike-friendly infrastructure is economically beneficial to a community's commercial corridors & cities at large?

- YES
- NO

Bike infrastructure is frequently presented as a niche issue for rich, white Millennials in Center City. I reject that characterization. When properly done, bike lanes in particular and transit alternatives in general are particularly beneficial to low-income residents, young families, and senior citizens. While people – including some of my opponents in this race – have sometimes succumb to the urge to bash bikers, I think the launch of IndeGo and progress made under Mayor Nutter have given us a strong starting point to continue making this a better city over the long term.

## ZONING & LAND USE

Do you support raising millage rates on the land portion of the property tax, and lowering millage rates on improvements to the structure?

- YES
- NO

YES. I was intrigued to read the opinion Rep. Sims solicited from the Office of the Chief Counsel that suggested that a split-tax was Constitutional. I support property tax reform along the Levy-Sweeney model, and think that a straight land tax could be an interesting addition to the Levy-Sweeney plan.

Do you support revising the zoning code to remove minimum accessory parking requirements?

- YES
- NO

In transit rich neighborhoods, it doesn't make sense to require developers to include amenities that encourage automobile use. We should be encouraging transit-oriented development – particularly in North Philadelphia near the Broad Street Line, where there are far too many vacant and abandoned properties – and removing mandates that raise costs without serving our city's needs. Mandatory parking minimums generally don't make sense, and I support greatly scaling them back, and completely eliminating them where appropriate.

## PUBLIC SPACE PLANNING

Would you support pedestrianization of street space that may currently be used for parking or vehicle transit?

- YES
- NO

As I point out in my community development plan on my website, community parklets and pedestrian plazas are good for business and good for communities. They encourage pedestrian activities, increase business, and improve property values in surrounding neighborhoods and business districts. Whole-scale changes, like New York City has experimented with in places like Times Square and Herald Square without negative impacts on traffic, are also worthy of study here in Philadelphia.

## The 5th Square PAC

Is regularly scheduled street sweeping of Philadelphia's streets more important than preserving the convenience of residents who prefer not moving their vehicles?

- YES  
 NO

“Filthadelphia” needs to be a thing of the past. I support a modest fee on single-use plastic bags, and using a portion of the cost to institute bi-weekly street sweeping. I also appreciate your organization’s consistent advocacy for this position over time, and the helpful breakdowns of cost and benefit you’ve provided on the issue.

The current cost for an annual parking permit for car owners to store their private vehicle on public streets is \$35. Do you think this price point should be revisited?

- YES  
 NO

This cost does not accurately reflect the value of residential parking permits. While I am cognizant of the need not to overburden the working class and middle class, I do not believe \$35 is an appropriate price point when garages – sometimes on the same block – cost orders of magnitude more on an annual basis.

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## OPEN RESPONSE

For each question below please answer using the provided space. Detail is appreciated.

### VISION ZERO

What is an appropriate legal speed limit on a neighborhood street in Philadelphia? On an arterial street? What are some policies and/or physical alterations that can be implemented to help ensure drivers obey speed limits and other traffic laws?

As mentioned in an earlier response, I think that the police department should be more aggressively enforcing the traffic laws that are on the books – including by expanding the use of traffic enforcement cameras, at the very least on major arterial streets and where there are dedicated bus and/or bike lanes. Experience from cities like New York and London, and from Philadelphia’s own experiments with red light cameras, suggest strongly that cameras can play a key role in enforcing existing transit laws.”

Speed limits on neighborhood streets, and actual travel speeds, are likely too high in much of Philadelphia, particularly on roads like the Roosevelt Boulevard. One key change that would make lower limits more palatable to car users would be signal upgrades to synchronize traffic lights. If limits were lowered, but people knew they could have a guaranteed speed of advance without stop-and-go traffic, that would be a bargain many motorists would gladly take. Experience in parts of Center City where this has been tried has been extremely positive, and it should be extended to as many other neighborhoods as possible as quickly as possible.

## The 5th Square PAC

# ZONING & LAND USE

What kinds of zoning and land use policies can best help our neighborhood commercial corridors and small businesses?

I think the biggest change we can make for neighborhood commercial corridors and small business would be to revamp our tax code. That's why I support tax reform modeled on the Levy-Sweeney proposal to make our tax code more like that of every other major city in America. It's not that we tax too much, but that we tax the wrong people at the wrong time and wrong place. Commercial property taxes create less distortion than our current wage and business tax based system."

At the same time the 40,000 vacant and abandoned properties in Philadelphia are problematic in outlying commercial districts; while there is vacant and underused land in Center City and some other booming neighborhoods, it is rapidly being redeveloped in thriving parts of our city. No one wants to locate a business or live next to a burned out building or abandoned, trash-strewn lot. Tackling our vacant lot problem and beautifying public space in outlying commercial corridors would pay significant dividends."

Finally, it's important to note that many small businesses and business districts need help with three particular areas - 1) Comprehensive planning, 2) Access to capital, and 3) Help with the bureaucracy. I'd work with our government agencies and locally based organizations to bring them all together to develop unique neighborhood development plans, similar to what PIDC did at the Navy Yard, connect entrepreneurs to available resources, and help them navigate the alphabet soup of City and Commonwealth agencies that impede development in Philadelphia.

# PARKS & GREENSPACES

Do you support increasing funding for Parks & Recreation throughout the city as a means to improving public health and the economy? If so, how would you better fund our parks? If not, why not?

Parks and structured greenspaces are essential to our children's development and to the health and well-being of our neighborhoods. The same is true of arts and cultural institutions. That's why I support increased funding for both."

One way I'd like to achieve that goal is to address our vacant and abandoned property epidemic. As mentioned above, we have 40,000 vacant properties in Philadelphia, and I'd like to halve that number during my time in office and replace them affordable housing and parks. That will quickly pay dividends for the City. By coordinating all of our existing programs and efforts and beefing up the land bank, we can take better advantage of the resources we're already putting into this problem and get better results for the people of Philadelphia. Combined with moderately increased funding, I believe we can significantly improve our parks system.

# STREET TREES

At 16% of total land area, Philadelphia has one of the lowest tree canopy percentages among large U.S. cities. Comparable cities exceed 30%. Do you believe Philly needs to increase this percentage? If so, how? Please be specific about how you would fund this.

We absolutely need to increase urban greenery in Philadelphia, and there are a number of small ways to do so that will add up to significant change. I believe Philadelphia should repave streets as part of a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy that includes increased greenery and tree cover in public spaces. If we're going to spend money repairing decaying infrastructure anyway, we might as well improve on, rather than simply replicate, the status quo."

I also support initiatives like the storefront improvement program that spruce up the streetspace in business corridors, improving property values and increasing sales. If we can develop mechanisms to better capture value increases from actions like that, increasing greenery can be effectively free in direct terms, in addition to being indirectly beneficial. If, for instance, transit improvements and

## PUBLIC SPACE

What is your position about vehicles parked on the City Hall apron/sidewalk?

This is actually a simple answer: I oppose this, and would seek to end it.

## BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

What is your position in regards to creating an integrated protected bike lane network throughout the city of Philadelphia? Are there areas in the city that you believe should be addressed first?

My top priority for additional bicycle infrastructure is going to be to create connections between our existing infrastructure and outlying neighborhoods that haven't gotten the full benefit of the flagship additions to our bike network. As we roll out later phases of the bike share program, we can use that as an opportunity to make bicycle commuting a real and protected option for our poorest citizens. Our default setting should be to prioritize shared space and transit alternatives. They're not a nice add-on, but are rather an integral part of a complete streets network. Unless there is an extremely compelling reason why any one major street doesn't need a bike lane, I would generally favor repurposing traffic lanes for mass transit and bikes on arterial roadways."

While much of the focus for this type of infrastructure is usually on Center City, I believe it is equally if not more important in our neighborhoods. Low-income and middle class Philadelphians deserve the same transit alternatives as everyone else, especially because they can't always afford to drive.

## TRASH & LITTER

Philadelphia provides municipal trash service to residences, but businesses are left to contract with private vendors, resulting in multiple large dumpsters in the public realm (e.g., alleyways). Do you think the City should change this current trash collection strategy? If so, how?

I believe this proposal is worthy of study, but am unaware of any studies on what the impact of it would be. Would overall costs go down, as I suspect they would? Would increased efficiency actually allow us to use less streetspace for dumpsters? If detailed study suggested the City could actually do a better job than the private sector is doing now, I would support this change and a change in fees to make it cost-neutral to the City.

# TRAFFIC PLANNING

Should City Council be the approving body for traffic alterations to Philadelphia's citywide street network, e.g. removal of a traffic lane, turning lane, parking lane, etc.? Or should this be determined by the Streets Department, MOTU, PennDOT and other street-related agencies?

This is another simple answer: The Mayor and his appointees should make these decisions, not council. The Mayor can look at what's best for the City as a whole. He or she is more insulated from NIMBY pressures. It was extremely unfortunate that the Council, with the support of one of the candidates in this race, made this power grab. The problem in Philadelphia isn't too little red tape, too simple an approval process, and too few boxes to check for change to happen; in fact it's the opposite.

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# BLOG INVITATION

We invite you as a candidate for political office to reach out to the voters of Philadelphia by speaking to them directly. We will host your thoughts on one of the following 9 topics below if you so choose. Please choose one topic and detail 3-5 policy changes you would make to achieve this goal.

1. Reducing the number of motor-vehicle crashes and conflicts among street users with appropriate infrastructure or roadway design changes, automated traffic law enforcement, or street- or neighborhood-specific changes in traffic rules
2. Ensuring thorough investigation of, and appropriate consequences for, drivers who commit traffic offenses that result in injury or death
3. Encouraging Philadelphians to use public transit, walk or bicycle within the city, instead of driving
4. Repurposing street space to better meet transportation needs (please specify particular streets)
5. Making land assessments accurate, and keeping them accurate
6. Increasing the amount of public space for non-transportation use, such as plazas and street closure programs (e.g., open streets and play streets.)
7. Expanding the on-street bike network in the most heavily-biked areas
8. Investing in walking and biking infrastructure outside of Center City
9. Getting our most popular bus and trolley lines out of congested mixed traffic

# The 5th Square PAC

Topic 3:

I'd like to talk a bit about improving our mass transit network, borrowing from my environmental policy agenda on my website. Today, the Schuylkill Expressway and 95 are frequently jammed for miles in either direction at rush hour – not to mention the Blue Route or Turnpike in our suburbs, which are just as bad. The solution is not more road capacity that will inevitably be filled via “induced demand”; it’s to get cars off our roads and get more people to use mass transit.”

Part of the problem is simply that too many jobs in our area are outside of Philadelphia itself. Our dysfunctional tax policies have driven employment into the suburbs, the single biggest reason that 40% of Philadelphians with jobs have to commute out of the City to work every day. If we want to get cars off the road, we have to bring more jobs into our City where people will use mass transit or transit alternatives, rather than personal automobiles, to access them. That’s why my tax reform and economic development plans are extremely relevant to the environment.”

In order to make it possible for residents and workers to use mass transit effectively, it is also vital that we make some investments in our transit infrastructure. One of these is likely to be expensive: Extending the Broad Street Line to the Navy Yard. This would likely cost \$500 million or more, according to the most recent estimates by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and PIDC. The expense is necessary, however, if the Navy Yard is going to reach it’s full potential as the next economic engine of Philadelphia without putting more cars on the road.”

There are also a number of less expensive but no less consequential investments we can make to promote mass transit and transit alternatives. The most important of these to the future of our city will be to inaugurate direct, express commuter rail access to Central New Jersey and New York City. By changing services patterns and through-running existing NJ Transit service from Trenton, we can make it significantly easier and/or cheaper for commuters to travel between places like the Route 1 Pharmaceutical Corridor, New Brunswick, or New York to Center City.”

We can also do a huge amount to make our buses run more efficiently. More than half of all SEPTA riders take buses, and too many routes are subject to overcrowding and unacceptably slow travel times. Our goal has to be to work with SEPTA to dramatically increase speed of travel system-wide for buses, create more consistent and reliable headways, and reduce dwell time, with top priority for key routes.”

Philadelphia has experimented with consolidating bus stops to bring distances in line with industry standards, traffic signal prioritization, and common sense solutions like putting stops on the far side of intersections. Philadelphia and SEPTA should also work together to adopt off-board fare payment with police spot checks. It is also vital that we aggressively enforce existing bus and bike lanes citywide, including with increased traffic cameras, and look for opportunities to physically separate express bus lanes; painting lines on a street is meaningless if drivers and delivery trucks simply ignore the restrictions and park or drive in space that’s supposed to be reserved for transit alternatives. Combined, based on the experience of cities that have adopted these kinds of changes on key routes, we could improve both performance and ridership by a minimum of 10% on every route and 25-30% on key routes.

**Candidate Signature:** I, Nelson Diaz, have personally read and responded to this questionnaire.

# THE 5<sup>th</sup> SQUARE