
***THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM
FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA***

POLICY BRIEFS

APRIL 2019



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

The People's Platform for a Just Philadelphia is a vision for our city that centers the needs of all Philadelphians and prioritizes communities over corporations. This vision includes investing in the services and public institutions we all need, while divesting from the broken systems that hurt us all. Our eight core platform points are:

- *Stop Targeting Black and Brown People*
- *Keep Philadelphia Accessible and Affordable*
- *Invest in Healthy Schools, Jobs and Re-Entry, and Affordable Accessible Housing*
- *Make Corporations, Developers and Universities Pay their Fair Share*
- *Community Control of Land, Housing, Schools and Energy*
- *Make Philadelphia Safe and Healthy*
- *Dignity and Respect for all Work*
- *Ensure a Democracy Where We Can All Participate*

This report includes the twelve policy briefs detailing our first-year policy priorities and the solutions and City Council actions to take on these key problems.

These key issues are:

- Elected School Board
- End Contracts with ICE
- Harm Reduction and Safe House
- Housing Trust Fund
- Land Bank Reform
- Rent Control
- End the Tax Abatement
- End Mass Incarceration
- Healthy Schools
- Labor Policy Enforcement
- Public Bank
- Stop Fossil Fuels



The Alliance for a Just Philadelphia is a coalition of nearly 30 community-based grassroots organizations fighting for major changes in our city. The Alliance came together to craft a multi-issue, cross-class, issue platform that speaks to the needs and aspirations of all Philadelphians. Rooted in groups that are leading and winning campaigns to benefit all residents of the city and led by those most impacted by key issues, the Alliance is redefining the political landscape to challenge over-policing, displacement, and broken systems that do not meet our needs.

Learn more at www.ajustphiladelphia.org.

THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD

THE PROBLEM

- **Philadelphia's board of education does not reflect the essential stakeholder groups that are most impacted by the board's decisions** - namely, students, current teachers, and parents of students attending standard Philadelphia public schools.
- The board of education's makeup reflects values that put class and educational privilege before the real, lived experiences of the students, teachers, and parents that must daily confront the consequences of structural underfunding and budget cuts.
- Philadelphia's board of education was not elected by the residents of Philadelphia, but rather appointed by the city's Mayor. As such, the board members can be influenced by the political interests of the mayor they serve or risk losing their positions. As appointees, they are less objective and may not center the interests of Philadelphia's children, parents, educators, and school staff.
- Further, as appointees, board members are not accountable to the public but rather only to the mayor. We need a school board that answers directly to those who work and learn in schools.
- Schoolchildren, educators, and school staff face widespread environmental hazards in Philadelphia district schools and have no direct control over how to fix the schools they must spend time in. Children and adults are exposed to conditions that cause serious health issues and disrupt learning and teaching. Those closest to the problems who need to live with the consequences of them have no control over their own well-being while in school.

OUR SOLUTION & CITY COUNCIL ACTION

- **Create a democratically elected school board with taxation power** and publicly funded elections that are open to all Philadelphians, regardless of documentation status.
 - This board must reflect the values of those who work and attend our Philadelphia schools and honor the needs and desires of Philadelphia's many diverse communities by engaging in ongoing conversation with school-based leaders.
- Dismantle the mayoral appointed Board of Education in the City of Philadelphia.
- Create a process that allows for students, educators, staff, and parents currently involved in Philadelphia's public schools to be nominated for the Board of Education and eligible to serve on it.



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

END 10-YEAR TAX ABATEMENT

THE PROBLEM

- **The tax abatement costs Philadelphia millions in essential funds for our city and communities.**
- The 10-year tax abatement was created to spur new development after decades of disinvestment. But Philadelphia is no longer a city with few economic prospects — Center City is a robust economic engine and “the fastest growing place to live” in Philadelphia.
- The tax abatement has taken millions of dollars away from our schools and the city, subsidizing large developments while long-term Philadelphians struggle to pay their rising property taxes. Last year alone, the abatement cost the School District \$61 million and the City General Fund \$50 million.
- Meanwhile, our schools are filled with lead, asbestos, mold and pests, and housing costs in the city are skyrocketing. Ending the abatement could fund 912 teachers or 848 counselors, or remediate lead for 120 schools. It could also fund 700 new affordable rental apartments, nearly 700 accessible home repairs and 795 mortgage or utility assistance grants. At a time when our city and School District budgets are tight, **huge handouts to megadevelopers are completely unaffordable.**
- The tax abatement has also contributed to the acceleration of gentrification in low-income areas, leading to loss of control of land to wealthy developers.
- While proponents of the abatement say that it has helped fuel development in the city, therefore bringing in tax revenue that wouldn't exist otherwise, the Controller's Report in 2018 highlighted that other factors such as “increasing urbanization and millennial population growth” were large parts of the development boom.
- The abatement has also **not led to uniform development** at all – instead development has been concentrated in ten neighborhoods that make up nearly 59% of the abated properties, particularly Center City, Northern Liberties and Point Breeze. This has led to tensions with long-term residents who are seeing increased property taxes from the abatement, while new residents pay nothing.

OUR SOLUTION

- **End the 10-year tax abatement.**
- To repair the impacts the tax abatement has had on housing costs, allocate money coming back to the City from abatement to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to prioritize low-income housing.
- Call on the School District of Philadelphia to prioritize money coming in to the schools from ending the abatement go towards cleaning up toxic schools.

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

- Pass the bill to end the 10-year tax abatement.
- Pass an appropriations bill to allocate future City money that would have been abated to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, particularly for families making less than 30% of Area Median Income.
- Pass a resolution calling on the School District of Philadelphia to allocate future School District money that would have been abated to cleaning up toxic schools by hiring, training, and reorganizing hundreds more permanent cleaning and maintenance staff in the District and creating a facilities taskforce of stakeholders for oversight.



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

END CONTRACTS WITH ICE

THE PROBLEM

- **The Philadelphia ICE field office is the most aggressive in the country.** According to a recent investigation, the Philadelphia ICE office surpassed all 23 other regional offices in the country with “at-large” arrests of immigrants without criminal convictions at 64%, while the national level is 38%.
- ICE uses rouge tactics such as “collateral” arrests, or arrests of immigrants unexpectedly met by ICE as the agency seeks its targets, and has informally expanded their definition of “criminal alien” to include immigrants who had traffic tickets or committed minor infractions like loitering. ICE occasionally bypasses legality, according to interviews, sworn affidavits, and court filings, by trespassing, conducting warrantless searches, engaging in racial profiling, and fabricating evidence.
- In addition, the detention and deportation of many community members who have prior criminal convictions - for example, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Lao community members - is a human rights abuse. These communities were displaced when the United States occupied Southeast Asian countries, creating a mass refugee crisis in the 1970s. Now, they are facing second-generation displacement by being forced back to the countries they originally fled. **We must fight to stop the re-traumatization of our communities.**
- Overly broad enforcement policies passed in the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996 created “one strike” laws, making deportation mandatory in many cases. Even when an immigration judge feels that deporting someone (a refugee, a mother, a community leader, etc.) would be unjust, her hands are often tied by these rigid laws.
- ICE has further ingrained a sense of distrust in the justice system and violated the right to due process in our immigrant communities. Many are now afraid of going to probation check-ins, showing up to court hearings, reporting crimes they see, or calling for help when they need it. This fear is a threat to the safety and sense of belonging for members of our community. This violence against our communities must end; no one should live in fear in a sanctuary city.

OUR SOLUTION

- **End City interaction with Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE)**

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

- Pass a resolution that instructs that city agencies should not accept, seek out, nor honor contracts with ICE.
- Work with the Mayor to ensure that our city will only accept federal funds if these funds do not come with obligations to work with or support ICE.
- Work with the Mayor to ensure that our city will require public funds not be used for collaboration with ICE (through DHS, the Police Department, Courts & Parole, the School District, etc.)
- Commit to working with community-based stakeholders to explore what further power our city has to limit ICE’s presence and impact on our communities.



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

END MASS INCARCERATION

THE PROBLEM

- **Philadelphia faces a mass incarceration epidemic that includes large racial disparities** in who gets arrested, prosecuted, and locked up, and who doesn't. The Police Department is left to its own devices for internal investigation of misconduct and has no real community accountability.
- Despite the reduction in Philadelphia's jail population, people across the city are still being incarcerated and held at an alarming rate, often for petty offenses, technical violations of probation or lodged automatic detainers, and/or due to an inability to pay unaffordable cash bails.
- Philadelphia has 44,000 people currently on probation and parole, and roughly a third of those people become reincarcerated within a year
- Technical violations for insignificant infractions, along with lodged automatic detainers means people spend extended periods in jail before a court hearing.
- Probation officers are overloaded with cases and are not held to accountable practices.
- The First Judicial District has no administrative policy for the practice of probation detainers.
- Despite a slight decrease in 2018, Philadelphia continues to prosecute youth under 18 as adults and hold youth pretrial in adult jails.
- The Police Advisory Commission, the body that is supposed to serve as the liaison between community and the PPD, is underfunded and has no real power of investigation or accountability.
- People entering our criminal justice system are not given real economic opportunities and support systems that allow them to thrive, leading to recidivism and hardship during pre-trial and re-entry.

OUR SOLUTION

- We must continue to reduce the number of people held we hold in jail by an additional 50% from current levels.
- Police must be held accountable in cases of brutality and misconduct.
- People impacted by our system must have access to community-centered opportunities.
- We must stop prosecuting and incarcerating children as adults, and divert youth out of the justice system and into community-based models of support whenever possible.

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

- Add staff and ample funding to the Police Advisory Commission, following through on the commitment to increase funding from \$500K to \$1.5 million
- With the savings from our decreasing jail population, invest in alternative sentencing programs like restorative and transformative justice initiatives, job programs, and pre-trial and re-entry services that are community-centered.
- Push criminal justice stakeholders, including the First Judicial District and its Adult Probation and Parole Department, the District Attorney, the Managing Directors' Office, the Public Defender Association, and all criminal justice partners to cut our adult parole and probation population from 40,000 to 20,000 within 2 years.



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

HARM REDUCTION AND SAFE HOUSE

THE PROBLEM

- The Alliance for a Just Philadelphia opposes the chaos-centered, racialized, community-destroying militaristic failed enforcement of abstinence from drug use.
- This policy led directly to the 50% increase in overdose deaths among Philadelphians who use drugs in 2017, as well as to an increase of 50% in HIV incidence among Philadelphia injectors in the last 18 months.

OUR SOLUTION AND CITY COUNCIL ACTION

In its place Philadelphia City Council should work with:

- **Harm Reduction:** A philosophy that seeks to ameliorate the harms inherent to any human activity, and the strategies to accomplish that goal. Within the context of drug use they focus on the biological/pharmacological effects of using a substance together with coping with the social and psychological harms inflicted by the systems around each substance.
- **People who use drugs** (instead of “addicts” or “junkies”): Emphasizes the humanity of drug users rather than focusing on demeaning epithets that elide the majority of users’ experiences. Talking about abuse without talking about non-problematic use denies an entire range of real experiences with substances. Abbreviated PWUD.
- **SafeHouse:** *Overdose Prevention Sites* or *Safer Consumption Sites* are harm reduction interventions that have a twenty-year history of implementation. Derived from users’ practice, OPSs address the societal stigma and health sequelae of drug use. In the context of the overdose epidemic, the salient outcome of the OPS intervention is that over more than two decades of data there have been zero deaths from overdose in any OPS. We strongly oppose the recent actions of the US Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, who seeks to enforce bad law with zero consideration for the health effects that the city alone will have to deal with.



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

HARM REDUCTION AND SAFE HOUSE

OUR SOLUTION AND CITY COUNCIL ACTION

In Philadelphia, city entities have advocated for SafeHouse to protect users from harms around race, gender and other harm-maximizing sections of stigma. Research on an SCS at an unknown site in the USA (Kral and Davidson 2017) concludes that the only demonstrable primary benefit of that SCS was the prevention of ODs, whereas interventions like referrals to treatment and other social services were characterized as secondarily attested at most, due to the legal status of the site.

- **Racial justice:** The genesis of the drug war is racist. As a group overpoliced as a result of this transgression, we reject using the tools of the racist drug war to right its racial wrongs. People of color are over-represented among the users who have died as a result of overdose. Current policies will obligate the city to spend over \$32,000,000 in healthcare costs. If policy changes were to save that amount, reinvestment of that amount in affected communities would be a meaningful first step toward healing.
- **Recovery:** Any positive change, as defined by the person pursuing it. The presumption of an abstinence-based, 12-step approach to recovery exclusively is not supported by evidence and is a contributing factor to the both the overdose epidemic and the overwhelming imprisonment and probationary burden of the drug war borne by users and the city budget.
- **Abstinence:** In the context of substance use, maintenance of a state of full sobriety, an avoidance of either a specific intoxicant or all mind-affecting substances. All law enforcement methods to address substance use proceed from the assumption of/demand for abstinence. There is no clinical study of the effects of abstinence.
- **Substance Use Treatment:** An attempt by a substance user to address the effects of their use and the biopsychosocial context it occurs in. It can happen either voluntarily, because the user is ambiguous about or outright dissatisfied with their use and its effects, or by order of a law enforcement or social service entity. It is demonstrably more effective when not mandated.



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

THE PROBLEM

- **Schoolchildren, educators, and school staff face widespread environmental hazards in Philadelphia district schools** like peeling lead paint, deteriorating asbestos, mold, rodent infestations, and leaking roofs and pipes. These conditions cause serious health issues and disrupt learning and teaching, as a 2018 investigation by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Daily News* exposed.
- Philadelphia has long struggled with the challenges posed by the age of its school buildings, but the severity and wide scope of today's building conditions is in large part the result of **massive and long term structural underfunding and budget cuts** to maintenance, operations, and capital infrastructure programs over the past two decades, accelerating during the Corbett administration. This has resulted in dangerously inadequate levels in needed environmental staff and building engineers as well as cleaning and maintenance crews.
- While some budget cuts have been restored, the District has relied on outside contractors who are expensive and often do substandard work, rather than hiring back necessary district personnel. Without proper staffing levels, there has been inadequate oversight from the District.
- Routine and preventive maintenance is deferred, leading to more damage and deterioration and to larger, more costly problems. It can take months or longer to address conditions reported by staff and when they are addressed, the work is often done during "schools hours", further exposing students and staff to toxic fumes, contaminated dust, and excessive noise that makes learning difficult.

OUR SOLUTION

- Allocate new City money to the School District and ensure that this money, such as money coming in from ending the 10-year tax abatement, is put towards cleaning up toxic lead, asbestos, rodents, and insects, and repairing faulty electrical, poor ventilation, and climate control in all Philadelphia schools.
- With additional funds, hire, train, and reorganize permanent School District environmental, cleaning and maintenance, and building engineer staff:
 - Restore environmental and maintenance staff to pre-Corbett cut levels. Hire and train additional staff and facilitate recruitment by increasing wages to \$15/hour.
 - Create new training programs for skilled workers so that the District stops relying on overpriced and unaccountable contract labor.
 - Work with expert stakeholders to develop new practices for faster facilities repairs, training cleaners and painters in specific techniques and changing staff practices like scheduling work to be done after school hours when children and teachers are no longer in the building.
- Create a district-wide Healthy Schools Task Force of parents, students, educators, staff and unions to plan, prioritize, and oversee major capital improvements, as well as short, medium, and long-term repairs and ongoing maintenance.



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

HOUSING TRUST FUND

THE PROBLEM

- **Gentrification is forcing long-time low-income residents out of their communities, and the current structure of the Housing Trust Fund does not do enough to protect their homes or low-income development.**
- Rising housing costs combined with stagnant or declining incomes have priced many long-term residents out of their homes, forcing displacement of many communities.
- In North, South, and West Philadelphia, 50% of renter households are housing-cost burdened, meaning they pay more for rent than they can afford.
- Many, especially people of color, are **pushed out of their neighborhoods**. The African American population in North, South, and West Philadelphia dropped 22-29% from 2000-2015.
- The Housing Trust Fund is meant to support the development of new affordable homes, repair existing homes, and prevent foreclosure and homelessness. However, recent changes to the Housing Trust Fund prioritize “affordable” housing, based on the median income of Philadelphia and surrounding counties, while **failing to focus on low-income housing** specifically.

OUR SOLUTION

- Grassroots community organizing that centers the leadership and lived experience of people directly impacted by the housing crisis
- Create permanent sources of funding for the Housing Trust Fund:
 - Where at least half of the money is set-aside for low-income households (making 30% of Area Median Income or \$26,200/year for a family of 4)
 - So that affordable monthly housing costs are not more than 30% of a person's income
 - For new development of affordable, accessible rental housing, home repair, adaptive modifications, and homelessness prevention
- Work with directly impacted communities to identify processes that ensure community control of land

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

- Pass legislation that creates a permanent, dedicated source of funding for the Housing Trust Fund
- Ensure that half of the money in the Housing Trust Fund and newly created sub-fund go to households making 30% or less of Area Median Income
- Hold the Land Bank accountable to putting land out for the development of community gardens, green space, and low-income, accessible housing.



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

LABOR POLICY ENFORCEMENT

THE PROBLEM

- In order to address Philadelphia's 26% poverty rate, **labor rights organizations have successfully organized for and passed ordinances to combat workplace exploitation**, which primarily impacts people of color and immigrants. Increased protections for low-wage workers are critical to lifting families out of poverty.
- Despite these hard-fought victories for low-wage workers, the **City has failed to invest the resources, strategy, and community education needed to ensure that the laws are enforced, resulting in ongoing and widespread violations.**
- Current pro-worker legislation includes the Wage Theft, Paid Sick Leave, Credit Card Tip Protection, and Ban the Box Ordinances. Without vigorous enforcement of employers who violate the ordinances, and without adequate community outreach so workers fully know their rights, we can also anticipate that the Fair Work Week Ordinance (slated to go into effect in January 2020) as well as future legislation (such as a Philadelphia Domestic Worker Bill of Rights) will not be appropriately enforced.

OUR SOLUTION

- **Increase dedicated staff in a fully funded City Enforcement Office** to ensure that all violations of worker ordinances are swiftly investigated and remedied, and to work with labor rights organizations to review and oversee policy enforcement.
- **Create a Labor Standards Advisory Commission that includes workers** to review the work of the Enforcement Office, advise the Council on design and funding of enforcement activities, ensure that workers have an ongoing voice in policy enforcement, make recommendations for improving existing policies, and play an active role in shaping future policy.
- **Dedicated funding for Community-Based Enforcement**, a proven strategy that enlists community organizations to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach to educate residents about their rights under city policies and support the agency in identifying noncompliance.

Model Legislation:

- [Seattle's Labor Standards Advisory Commission](#)
- [San Francisco, Seattle, and Los Angeles contract with community organizations for outreach and education on enforcement](#) (p. 13)

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

- Dedicate increased funding to the City Enforcement Office.
- Ensure that all future pro-worker ordinances have mechanisms and the needed funding to be appropriately enforced.
- Support the creation of a Labor Standards Advisory Commission that includes workers and has the ability to amend and improve existing ordinances.



LAND BANK REFORM

THE PROBLEM

- **Too many community urban gardens and green spaces are vulnerable to gentrification, and the current Land Bank policies both fail to protect these spaces and make it very difficult for folks from vulnerable communities to become landowners.**
- The Land Bank's mission is to return vacant and underutilized property to productive use through a unified, predictable, and transparent process that is intended to revitalize neighborhoods, create economically diverse communities, and strengthen the City's tax base. However, the Land Bank has proven unpredictable and non-transparent, and has destabilized neighborhoods while benefiting developers over communities.
- Black and Brown urban gardens provide not only food but also community space, cultural preservation, and economic opportunity. Gardening is a practice of resilience.
- Aggressive gentrification has brought attention to these previously overlooked and tax-delinquent lands and piqued the interest of developers, who have bought out the land from underneath community members in Sheriff Sales.
- Even if the Land Bank acquires the land through a Sheriff Sale, community members are still likely to be left out of the process, due to the resources required to buy the land and the short notice of the sale. Further, community members who have put in expressions of interest on land in the Land Bank have been left waiting for up to two years, only to be told that the land is not available.
- Many garden leases are only granted to non-profits, on terms too short for land work.
- About 500 lots in the city that people are currently growing on are land insecure.



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

LAND BANK REFORM

OUR SOLUTION

- Create opportunities for community accountability and transparency in decision-making around who gets land from the Land Bank and how land is sold.
- Protect, preserve, and expand affordable and accessible housing and green spaces in Black and Brown communities.
- Ensure community control of land.

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

- Amend the Acquisition and Disposition Policies of the Land Bank by:
 - Enforcing the existing Land Bank and establishing accountability by publishing Land Bank sales information accessibly on the website in real time, both before and after transactions.
 - Putting publicly held and tax-delinquent land into the Land Bank and ensuring this land is given, for a nominal fee, to groups for community benefit: low-income and affordable housing, food production, community green space, or economic development that creates living wage jobs.
 - Ensuring community control of land for gardeners and farmers that have worked the land: fix the broken Expression of Interest process to create a transparent and accessible pathway for land ownership, extend garden leases beyond 1-5 years, approve garden leases to individuals, not just non-profits, and increase transparency around land allocation decision-making.
- Hold the Land Bank accountable to:
 - Community elected representatives on the Land Bank Oversight Board that will include a community gardener and someone with experience developing or living in low-income housing.
 - Holding Land Bank and Council Quarterly Town Halls for community accountability, leadership, and authority in Council's decisions around land use and ownership per district.



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

PUBLIC BANK

THE PROBLEM

- **The City places all of its cash with private banking institutions that invest it for the benefit of shareholders, while denying credit to the people of Philadelphia, particularly people of color.**
- While holding or investing billions of City dollars, Philly's banks continue to redline black and brown neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia.
- Although the number of white and black households is essentially the same in the City, white applicants in 2015 and 2016 were granted 10 times as many conventional home purchase loans as African Americans.
- The City and School District have also been systematically defrauded by the big Wall Street banks into paying inflated interest amounts on their bonds, requiring the City to sue in federal court to recover millions of dollars in damages.
- These loan practices are directly responsible for tight City budgets that starve City services, with the City's debt service taking up 8.6% of all City expenditures in FY 2017.
- The City has failed to seek new and innovative ways of using its own money to serve its own people.

OUR SOLUTION

- City Council and the Mayor should create a City-owned bank, which will hold all City funds and invest them for the sole purpose of improving the lives of Philadelphians, particularly those whose credit needs have historically not been met by the big banks.
- The detailed mission of the bank should be determined through a process that broadly engages the community, and is ultimately decided by the City's elected government.
- The Board of the Bank, which implements the bank's mission, should include a majority of individuals with public advocacy or activist experience in one or more of the following fields: poverty reduction, low-income housing, renewable energy, workers' rights, small business development, promotion of co-operative enterprise, and/or civil rights.

Relevant Historical Precedent

- The Bank of North Dakota, child of the populist movement of the early 20th century, is one of only two public banks in the nation. It celebrates its 100th birthday this year.

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

- Council should enact an ordinance directing the Mayor, Council President and Controller to create the Philadelphia People's Bank with all the features described above.
- The ordinance should direct the City to apply for all permits required for the bank to begin operations.
- The ordinance should also require the City to report its progress in obtaining required permits, and complying with all relevant regulatory requirements, every six months at a public hearing until the bank is ready to accept deposits of City funds.



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

RENT CONTROL

THE PROBLEM

- **Rents in Philadelphia are rising, causing the city to become increasingly unaffordable for its lowest income residents, displacing communities of color, and creating a growing affordability and renter crisis, while corporate landlords profit.**
- Philadelphia had the fourth largest rent increase between 2014-2017. During this same time, Philadelphia had the highest poverty rate out of the ten largest US cities, holding steady at approximately 26%, significantly higher than the national average.
- In 2017, 53.6% of Philly renters were cost-burdened, meaning they pay more than 30 percent of their monthly income on rent, and 31.6% of Philly renters were *severely* cost-burdened, meaning they spent more than 50% of their income on rent. These numbers were significantly higher for the most economically vulnerable. Nearly all (87.9%) of households earning less than \$20,000 were rent burdened, and 73.8% were severely rent burdened, leaving them little money for other necessities.
- According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, **a minimum wage worker would have to work 111 hours a week** in order to afford a one bedroom apartment in Philadelphia and earn \$41,880 annually to not pay over 30% of their income in rent.
- With over 10,000 evictions, **Philadelphia had the fourth highest number of evictions** among major US cities in 2016. The Mayor's Taskforce on Eviction Prevention and Response estimates that 9.3% of renters experience forced moves--the second highest proportion among major metropolitan areas. Women of color with children, low-income renters, black households, people with disabilities, and households with children are disproportionately evicted. Low-income, predominantly Black neighborhoods experience the highest rates of eviction filings.
- Due to a politically powerful national and local real estate industry, there are **currently no meaningful protections against rent increases and eviction** in most places across the country, including Philadelphia.

OUR SOLUTION

Rent control protections for vulnerable renters: a system of tenant and rent protections that can curb the crisis of evictions, displacement, and affordability and protect tenants from profiteering landlords, providing immediate relief to renters and able to be implemented with little to no cost to the City. Rent control is thus the fastest and most cost effective policy solution to address Philadelphia's housing crisis. Rent Control policies should include:



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

RENT CONTROL

OUR SOLUTION

- **Restricted Rents:** In market rate apartments, landlords can charge whatever the market might hold, often putting undue burdens on renters and leading to economic displacement as neighborhoods gentrify and rents increase. Rent Control does not mean that rents are frozen in place, but that a regulatory apparatus determines what rent increases should be based on conditions in the housing market, including and not limited to landlord costs, tenants' incomes, utility costs, and vacancy rates. Rent Control provides a reasonable process to determine rent increases, rather than landlords having full control.
- **Tenants Bill of Rights:** For low-income Philadelphians making 30% median annual income or less, we need a Tenants Bill of Rights that includes such key protections as: requiring a lease; limiting security deposit payments to one month; increased standards for conditions and services, such as those regarding mold and lead; requiring disclosure of critical information to tenants upon rental; requiring receipts for rental payments; more equitable eviction procedures; ensuring the right to organize; requiring relocation assistance; additional anti-discrimination protections; and ensuring the right to first refusal.
- **Just Cause Eviction Protections:** Without just cause eviction protections, tenants' leases can be not renewed for no reason, leading to deep instability and insecurity for tenants. With Rent Control, tenants have guaranteed lease renewal unless they violate the terms of their lease, providing security and stability and helping tenants put down roots. Where there are just cause protections and no rent restrictions, landlords will often raise rent at the end of the lease renewal, leading to economic displacement. While Philadelphia's Good Cause legislation is a great first step, these protections need to be expanded to all tenants, not just those with a lease of less than one year, and to ensure that tenants have Right to Counsel through eviction procedures.
- **Process for Improved Conditions and Services from Landlords:** Many low and moderate income tenants live in housing that has not been cared for by the landlord and are afraid to ask for improved conditions because it could lead to eviction or retaliation. When tenants have the protections to ask for what they deserve, they can organize and ask for improvements to the housing stock. There are also Rent Control systems where tenants are able to withhold rent when landlords let buildings and apartment fall into disrepair.

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

- Pass a rent control ordinance with the four components outlined above.
- Include an oversight mechanism for the rent control ordinance in the budget.
- Introduce and pass legislation that legally supports counsel for tenants in court when facing eviction.
- Introduce and pass anti-retaliation legislation that protects tenants from retaliation from slumlords who do not adhere to License & Inspections and other city agency regulations and codes that protect the health of tenants.



THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM FOR A JUST PHILADELPHIA

STOP FOSSIL FUELS

THE PROBLEM

- The fossil fuel economy is **robbing our community's right** to breath and our children's future and is hastening climate change, which will exacerbate Philadelphia's housing, energy, health and economic insecurities.
- Because of SEPTA's development of a natural gas station in Nicetown, Philadelphia, Gas Works' (PGW) proposal to expand liquefied natural gas in Southwest Philly, or Philadelphia Energy Solutions (PES) refinery, Black and Brown residents disproportionately face increased rates of asthma and cancer.
- Further, the expansion of these fossil-fuel plants not only threatens our health and our lives, but also come at expense of Philadelphia residents' wallets; for instance, Philadelphia Energy Solutions owes \$3.8 Billion to the state in back-taxes!
- **At a time of worsening climate crisis and economic inequity in our city, we should not be investing in fossil fuels that will only make the problem worse.**
- Our fossil fuel infrastructure is old, antiquated, and making us sick, while the natural gas and petroleum industries reap profits at our expense and hold a heavy influence over our elected officials in the city and across the state. This is making policy solutions that incubate and fund community-driven solutions around renewable energy even more difficult at a time when we must be investing in them.
- While renewable energy is a critical step towards a better city, the access to renewable energy ownership continues to follow the path of redlining communities: those with access to capital and housing ownership are able to participate, leaving many renters and low-income residents out of the renewable energy economy - particularly Black and Brown residents.

OUR SOLUTION

- **Pass a moratorium on the development of fossil fuel infrastructure in Philadelphia and transition the Philadelphia Energy Solutions oil refinery to restored public land and community-owned renewable energy projects.**
- We need a **just transition** away from a fossil-fuel economy towards a renewable energy-- one that is rooted in racial equity and community ownership. This transition requires **centering labor and impacted communities** in the plans for our future. This means advocates, environmentalists, and our city officials must engage in deep listening, community-driven planning processes, and grassroots organizing that invest time and resources in a community and labor transition.
- The entities that constantly poison our air, water, and land and have profited off the burning of fossil fuels at the expense of our environment and home **must be held accountable.**
- PES's debt is maturing. We have an opportunity to lead a community-driven plan to reimagine the future of that land--a plan that advances equity, invests in the neighborhoods that have been most impacted by PES pollution, and builds Philadelphia's collective resilience.
- Make intentional investments in Black and Brown communities towards ownership and job creation in the renewable energy economy.

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

- Call for an immediate moratorium on all fossil fuel infrastructure development, starting with the denial of the proposed PGW liquefied natural gas plant.
- Amend Air Management Service's permitting process to adopt a Cumulative Impacts Analysis & a Health Impacts Analysis.
- Demand that the City invest in and prioritize community-owned renewable energy projects by Black, Brown, and poor communities in its energy procurement portfolio.

