

At-Large Council Candidate Al Taubenberger

Question 1

I see the role of parks and recreation the same today as it has always been - to help provide a high quality of life in an urban setting. With development spreading evermore outward, it can be difficult to immerse one's self in a truly natural environment. City parks provide a setting in which one can experience and enjoy nature without having to travel far from their front door. City parks also make one's daily routines more enjoyable. Parks provide a place to exercise, to recreate, and to meditate - all in beautiful settings that aren't enclosed in steel or concrete.

Development of new city parks also provide a unique opportunity to development in the 21st century. The issue of urban blight has been well-documented in Philadelphia and all cities across the nation. Abandoned house and small empty lots are certainly well-suited for redevelopment of houses. Larger empty lots and abandoned industrial sites, instead of being developed as housing sites, could (and should) be developed as new and interesting open park space. I look to New York's High Line as inspiration for what could be done to create new park space in the 21st century.

Question 2

I agree that funding for Philadelphia's parks and recreation system has been the first cut in budget talks, which has led to threadbare spending for a necessary component of city life. On Council next session, there is very little I can do rectify the situation immediately. Philadelphia is still in economic distress and all departments are looking at drastic cuts. I would fight any further cuts to the parks and recreation department. Philadelphia needs jobs to help it grow out of this economic turmoil. A healthy parks and recreation system can certainly play a key role in attracting businesses and people to the city. In the immediate future, I would fully support and lead a campaign to inform and educate the public of the true value of a vibrant parks and recreation system. I would also advocate that any future stimulus money be used to repair infrastructure, including parkland and recreation centers. I also believe public-private partnerships are essential to creating great cities and would reach out to the private sector and encourage businesses to also invest in our parks and recreation system.

I am a proud Penn State grad with a degree in Agronomy - soil science and field crop management. Growing up in Burholme, I also spent countless hours in Pennypack Park and Burholme park (and still do). Parks have always been a vital part of my life and I understand what is needed to maintain beautiful landscaping. I would be a tireless advocate for the parks and recreation system.