THE PHILADELPHIA

# \* CITIEN \*

# **2023 ANNUAL REPORT**



It kinda feels like the world is falling apart, no? The headlines scream out daily - terror attacks, the ravages of war, the rise of autocracy, climate run amok, the rejection of American values like free speech and tolerance. The effect, if we're not careful, is to numb us into apathy. We have no control, so why care?

The Philadelphia Citizen strives to be the antidote to that type of defeatism. "If you are distressed by anything external," wrote the Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius, "the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment."

When the world has gone bonkers, what power do we have? We have our city, and what we do in it: We can hold the door for our neighbor at Wawa; we can sweep a street; we can vote. Acting locally isn't just a feel-good measure; it's also an object lesson for how to be in a world gone mad. We know you know this because more than 85 percent of those who answered our reader survey in 2023 said they have been inspired to "Do Something" based on a call to action they saw in The Citizen.

In 2023, we acted locally to hire Philadelphia's 100th mayor, Cherelle Parker. Some 1,300 of you attended our Ultimate Job Interview series in person, to hear in-depth interviews with each of the Mayoral candidates, and more than 100,000 people turned to our voting guides to learn more about all the candidates, including for City Council.

You tuned into our groundbreaking podcast, How to Really Run a City, featuring our own former Mayor Michael Nutter and Atlanta's Kasim Reed, which in 2023 was named one of Bloomberg Cities Network's list of 10 city-related podcasts to add to your playlist.

More than 400 of you came to our 6th Annual Ideas We Should Steal Festival sponsored by Comcast NBCUniversal, to hear speakers ranging from Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro to MacArthur Genius Award-winning real estate developer Majora Carter.

You helped us name and fame our city's "Integrity Icons" — the public servants who go above and beyond in pursuit of the common good.

And you weighed in to suggest solutions we should cover, critique stories you read, share those you loved and support the do-good organizations we wrote about, including College Together, which saw an infusion of donations after we covered its innovative program to help students get their degrees.

As Sen. Robert F. Kennedy said in a previous generation's troubled times,

"Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

Today - and every day - our merry band of citizens chooses to be a hope rippler. The state of our democracy is fragile, but the city that birthed it in these once United States deserves no less.

Yours in citizenship, Larry Platt and Roxanne Patel Shepelavy Co-Executive Directors, The Philadelphia Citizen

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# **AUDIENCE & IMPACT**



**1,310,000**TOTAL AUDIENCE



**1,090,000**WEBSITE VIEWS



13,700 NEWSLETTER



48,400 PODCAST LISTENS



36,500 SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

### We're About Solutions

The Philadelphia Citizen remains the region's — and nation's — only nonprofit media outlet that combines solutions journalism with civic-minded events and calls to action to provide the tools for reinvigorating local democracy. The Citizen may have started out of frustration at the depths to which the city's public conversation had shrunk, but the intervening years have shown that Philadelphians are ready for a new narrative, and want to be a part of writing that story.





# **Journalism Leads To Impact**

The Philadelphia Citizen looks at problems through the lens of solutions. We seek fixes to what ails the city, shine a light on our city's change agents, and demand a new way of thinking from the business-as-usual crowd. Here are three examples of solutions in action from 2023:

### Friends of the Children

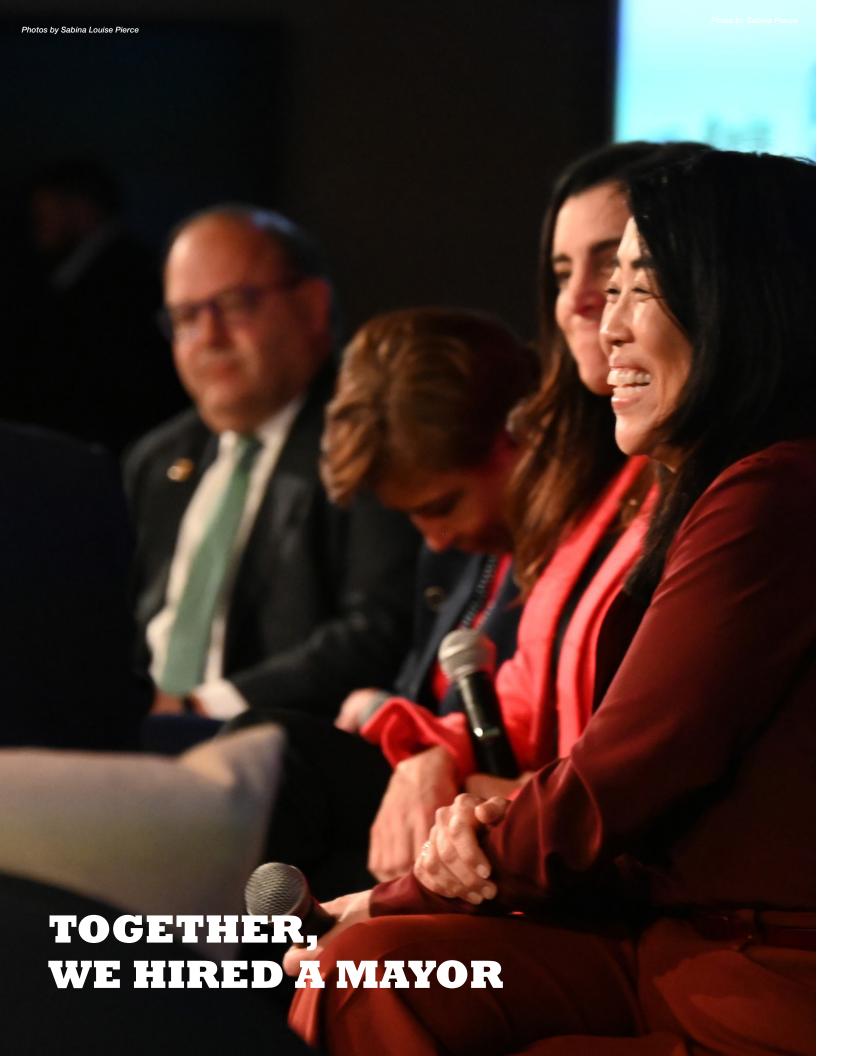
In 2021, Friends of the Children CEO Teri Sorenson spoke about the 12.5-year mentorship program that has helped guide children and their families out of poverty for the last two decades. That spurred local civic organizations to raise \$1.8 million to launch Friends of the Children in Philly in 2024.

### **Civic Coalition to Save Lives**

Inspired by hearing from gun violence prevention expert David Muhammad in 2019, the newly-formed Civic Coalition to Save Lives engaged Muhammad, executive director of the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, to help them develop a plan to reduce gun violence in Philadelphia. The program launched in 2023.

# College Together

A Philly based nonprofit, College Together, teamed up with Southern New Hampshire University to help oftenoverlooked students get to – and through – college. The Citizen's report on the innovative model was revered by the school as "the best-written and reported story" on the model over the past five years. The report directly influenced new funders to engage SNHU in support of the program, and lapsed funders to return.







2023 was a big year for Philadelphia. The city was charged with electing its 100th mayor – a pivotal decision that could serve as the catalyst for progress forward. Citizen readers were eager to have their voice heard. According to a recent Citizen audience survey, 76% of respondents voted in the mayoral election, compared to the less-than-impressive 31% turnout reported citywide.

# The Ultimate Job Interview

The Citizen's Ultimate Job Interview (UJI) series was a wildly successful initiative to engage citizens in the 2023 election. Over 1,300 people attended to hear from mayoral candidates in January and February. We convened experts in executive hiring to interview mayoral candidates based on a crowd-sourced job description to demonstrate how they can get things done. The free, public mayoral job interviews held at Fitler Club in Center City Philadelphia provided a deep dive into the character, history, policies, and leadership strategies of the possible next mayor of Philadelphia.

# **Introducing: Ranked-Choice Voting**

In April, The Citizen ran Philly's first independent poll – and only ranked-choice poll – of the Democratic candidates for mayor, in partnership with the Committee of Seventy, Chamber of Commerce, Urban Affairs Coalition, and FairVote.

# A Reliable Source for Election Information

Philadelphia also elected a new slate of City Councilmembers — including to fill the seats of the five members who resigned to run for Mayor. The Citizen's voter guides, candidate profiles, in-depth reporting and analysis were there to help citizens throughout the campaign. In the end...

- We published 30 election-related articles that reached 110,391 people.
- Our Primary Voter Guide alone informed 28,000 citizens about their candidates.
- We helped 21,500 people figure out which judges they were voting for.
- We helped 47,800 get to know the mayoral candidates from individual candidate profiles.
- People came to The Citizen 22,000 times to better understand the ballot questions.

The Ultimate Job Interview is a part of Every Voice, Every Vote, a collaborative project managed by The Lenfest Institute for Journalism. This project is also made possible by the support of Diversified Search Group, Fitler Club, WURD Radio, and 6abc.

# **MORE 2023 HIGHLIGHTS**

# How to Really Run a City Podcast

Former Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter and former Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, along with Citizen co-founder Larry Platt, dive deep into the mystery and mastery of urban leadership every month on this original Citizen podcast. In 2023, it was named to Bloomberg Cities Network's list of 10 city-related podcasts to add to your playlist. The podcast was generously sponsored by Comcast NBCUniversal and Diversified Search Group in 2023.

This is "must listen" content if you're a government geek or a normal person who wants to learn more about what it really takes to run a city.

— Jeff F.

### 6th Annual Ideas We Should Steal Festival

Presented by Comcast NBCUniveral

More than 400 guests joined us as we brought together changemakers from across the country to share solutions. Speakers included Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, MacArthur Genius Award-winner Bronx real estate developer Majora Carter, Gameheads creator Damon Packwood, MSNBC's Ali Velshi and Trymaine Lee, U.S. Representative Charlie Dent, founder and CEO of Coalition Media Group Troy Carter, and many more.







# **Real Estate Development ... For Good!**

In partnership with Drexel University's Lindy Institute for Urban Innovation and Fitler Club, we presented a year-long speaker series for the third year. Events smartly delved into the economic and cultural difference that enlightened and intentional real estate development can make in our city. This event series was supported by our generous sponsors Darco Capital, Campus Apartments, JLL, Brandywine Realty Trust, and Clarke & Cohen.



# **Integrity Icon Philadelphia**

In partnership with DC-based Accountability Lab, we named five non-elected, city workers who show the highest amount of integrity in their work for the fourth time. Integrity Icon is a global campaign that is powered by citizens in search of honest government officials. This program is generously supported by the Thomas Skelton Harrison Foundation.



# **Women's Health Disparity Editorial Series**

The Citizen began reporting on innovations in medicine, technology, and other spheres that are paving the way to meaningfully change women's health in Philadelphia. We have delved into underreported areas like barriers to mental health support for Black women, racial disparities in maternal and infant mortality, disparities in cardiac care for Black women, as well as cutting-edge Philadelphia-based interventions. This coverage continues into 2024. This series was supported by Independence Blue Cross.



# **New Citizen Voices**

Legendary photographer/chef/influencer Reuben Harley debuted *Big Rube's Philly* – a series where he spotlights hidden gems, mainstays and new things bubbling in the culture in our fair city and surrounding counties.

Also, Citizen and community writers submitted *Memos to Madame Mayor* – a series offering political and policy advice to the newly elected mayor, Cherelle Parker.

# **OUR DONORS**

We are grateful to the following donors for their generosity and support of The Philadelphia Citizen during Calendar Year 2023 (January 1, 2023-December 31, 2023). We greatly appreciate each gift given in support of The Philadelphia Citizen and have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the listing. Please notify us of any inaccuracies or omissions at ops@thephiladelphiacitizen.org.

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Founded in 2015.