

Tiffanie Fisher for Mayor

1- Public Safety & Transportation

What is your plan to improve auto safety and reduce vehicular incidents in Hoboken? How would you assess the effectiveness of the city's "Vision Zero" program, and what, if any, changes would you propose?

My plan to improve safety: Hoboken has long been one of the safest cities to get around, but growth and new transportation trends have created challenges — from reckless e-bike riding to double-parking that blocks sightlines. My plan focuses on enforcement, smarter design, and community partnerships: ending reckless e-bike riding, adding more daytime loading zones, fixing sidewalks and intersections before they fail, increasing DUI checkpoints and handheld ticketing, and partnering with delivery companies to ensure compliance with our traffic laws. The goal is simple: residents should feel safe every time they step out their door.

Assessment of Vision Zero: Because of Hoboken's narrow one-way street grid, traffic-related fatalities have been rare — just 11 in the last 25 years, two-thirds due to impaired or distracted driving, and none on our streets since 2017 (though a bus struck and killed a pedestrian at the terminal in 2021). Hoboken adopted its Vision Zero plan in 2019, and while I fully support the premise, the program has lacked the two most important elements: community engagement and enforcement. Vision Zero cannot just be a headline — it must build a culture of safety where pedestrians, drivers, cyclists, and businesses all do their part.

What I would change: On Day One, I will repurpose the Vision Zero Task Force to focus on real resident input, neighborhood-specific safety improvements, and stronger enforcement. That is how we will move from a paper plan to a true culture of safety that delivers results. You can read more in my policy papers here: bit.ly/T4H-SaferStreets and bit.ly/T4H-CurbEBikes.

What is your comprehensive vision for transportation that addresses the needs of both commuters and residents, including solutions for parking and the flow of bike messengers and pedestrians?

Hoboken residents need balance — safe streets, reliable transit, and parking that doesn't feel like a daily fight. My vision is to prioritize both parking and expanded transportation options so people are less car-dependent while still ensuring there's enough capacity for those who need to drive, especially with our population projected to grow another 20% by the next census.

Transportation: I've been a strong advocate for expanding and improving how people get around Hoboken. I worked directly with NJ Transit to add more 126 buses, create the 11th Street cutoff, and secure express service uptown. Since 2016, I've pushed for the long-overdue 15th Street Light Rail station — against resistance from two administrations — and discussions with NJ

Transit are finally advancing. As mayor, I will make finishing that project a top priority. I also believe we must electrify and expand our HOP bus system to move people more easily within Hoboken and expand our successful corner car program to reduce reliance on personal cars. For bikes, I will review our bike share program to ensure it is working for everyone — including addressing rebalancing issues — and I will add more bike racks across the city so cycling is safer and more convenient.

Parking: I am the most pro-parking member of the City Council. I've added 26 street spaces in the 2nd Ward, defended existing garages like 916 Garden when the city considered eliminating them, and pushed to ensure a new uptown municipal garage — now close to reality. As mayor, I will make parking a top priority, because it is one of the most important quality-of-life and affordability issues facing Hoboken residents.

Street safety and enforcement: Bike messengers and delivery workers need clear rules and accountability, not a free pass. I will ensure consistent enforcement of traffic laws and add more daytime loading zones to reduce dangerous double-parking. At the same time, I will improve cross-town traffic flow and pedestrian safety through better street design and neighborhood-specific solutions.

In short, my vision is a transportation system that works for everyone — commuters, drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians — so that Hoboken remains accessible, safe, and livable for the future.

2- Fiscal Policy and Budget

Please outline your philosophy on tax policy and budget management. What specific areas of the city budget do you believe are in need of improvement or could be optimized for efficiency?

Hoboken is in a financial crisis — and it needs someone who knows finance, math, and how to pick up the broken pieces. As a former CFO with 23+ years in finance, I will leverage my professional experience to bring discipline, transparency, and efficiency to Hoboken's budget. Most of these common-sense practices aren't happening today — and that's why change is needed. Accountability in how taxpayer money is spent will be my guiding principle.

It will be my top priority on Day One to deliver a budget on time — by April — that reflects a more efficiently run city and removes waste. Hoboken residents already face high taxes and a rising cost of living, and City Hall must stop adding to that burden through inefficiency, late budgets, and political decision-making.

My philosophy is simple: treat taxpayer dollars like your own, spend only what you can justify, and plan for the long term. On the Council, I've delivered over \$35 million in savings by cutting waste, negotiating better contracts, and demanding transparency. I also led the renegotiation of

Hoboken's water contract, freeing up \$33 million to reinvest directly into long-overdue upgrades to our water system — one of the most critical infrastructure needs facing our city. That's the kind of fiscal discipline and problem-solving I'll bring as mayor.

The areas most in need of improvement are:

- *Healthcare costs: Negotiate better plan design, reduce unnecessarily high administrative costs, and include wellness programs to manage costs while protecting employee coverage.*
- *Hudson County: Hoboken taxpayers send a lot of money to the County — we should demand more in return for our residents.*
- *Public works and public spaces: Establish a continual maintenance program to avoid more costly emergency fixes and keep our city clean, functional, and reliable.*
- *Services: Protect and maintain the core services our residents want and rely on every day.*
- *Technology: Finish long-delayed upgrades so the city runs more efficiently and residents get better service.*
- *Contracts and hiring: Bid out all contracts competitively — no more insider deals — and eliminate political patronage hires by appointing the most qualified professionals to deliver results.*

City Hall's culture must change. That's why I've published a formal policy on Trust, Transparency & Financial Responsibility — it's not just rhetoric, but a commitment you can read and hold me to.

The budget is not just numbers on a page — it is the roadmap for every service Hoboken residents rely on. With my CFO experience, I will ensure Hoboken's budget is delivered on time, runs more efficiently, rebuilds trust, and restores public confidence in how our money is managed.

3- Housing & Development

Given the challenges of urban density, what is your plan to manage financially responsible development and the use of PILOT agreements in a way that protects existing infrastructure and justifies their fiscal impact to Hoboken's taxpayers?

For most of my career, — 21 of my 23 years in finance — I worked with or for large real estate companies. Today, I sit firmly on the side of Hoboken residents. I do not take money from developers or special interests, unlike my council colleagues who do. Specifically, Councilman

Mike Russo has raised nearly \$200,000 from developers and property owners — and that tells you exactly which side of the table he is sitting on.

Hoboken needs a mayor who understands “developer math” and won’t be intimidated by it. I know their profit models, and that gives me the ability to negotiate from strength and prevent developers from winning financial windfalls or, even worse, acquiring public properties at firesale prices. Much of our city has already been approved for development, but my promise is to bring a more responsible, Hoboken-first approach to everything that remains. When a developer says, “I have to build to the sky to make this project work financially,” I know that isn’t true — and I can bring them back closer to the ground. This has been my philosophy since I first ran in 2015 on the phrase: “Hoboken should never be the underdog” in development negotiations.

On PILOT agreements, my position is clear: I do not support PILOTs for luxury residential projects. Development in Hoboken is already profitable enough to include even more affordable housing than we currently require, without this tool. A PILOT should only be considered when there is something extraordinary about the project that truly raises costs — for example, LCOR’s site adjacent to live rail lines and in a flood-prone area, where construction costs and resiliency needs are far higher than normal. And even then, a PILOT should only move forward if it is financially advantageous to Hoboken — where the revenues into our budget are greater than what we would otherwise collect under full taxation.

Infrastructure must also be part of every discussion. The biggest concerns are drainage and parking. Every new building is already required to include significant stormwater storage as part of Hoboken’s overall stormwater management plan, and the City is working with NHSA on major upgrades in west Hoboken to handle heavier rain events from climate change. For parking, I will require higher ratios in future projects than what has been negotiated in the past, so new development does not make our existing parking challenges worse.

What is your position on Hoboken’s existing rent control ordinance? What changes if any would you wish to see?

I fully support rent control in Hoboken, and as mayor I will make consistent, transparent enforcement a top priority. Rent control is one of the most important protections we have to keep longtime residents in their homes and preserve the stability of our neighborhoods. I have supported most proposed amendments that strengthen tenant protections and will continue to make enforcement a top priority.

The changes I would like to see include:

- *A Right to Counsel for any tenant facing eviction, so no one loses their home simply because they cannot afford legal representation.*

- *Restructuring the Rent Control Board with staggered terms, shared appointments by both the mayor and council, and at least half the board members as tenants to ensure balance and fairness.*

- *Revisiting how the law applies in rare cases where a long-term tenant (15+ years) leaves voluntarily and the landlord has either reduced rent, not applied allowable increases, or rented to a family member at an artificially lower rent. In those cases, we need to reconsider what landlords can charge a new tenant, but any adjustment must be structured carefully to ensure tenants are never pressured out or displaced.*

4- Sanctuary City

Please define your position on Hoboken's status as a sanctuary city. Given a scenario where an undocumented person commits a crime, is found guilty, and prosecuted, what would your administration's policy be regarding cooperation with federal agencies such as ICE?

Hoboken, like all municipalities, is required to follow the New Jersey Attorney General directive on how local police interact with federal immigration authorities. My view is consistent with that directive: Hoboken police should not be used to enforce immigration status violations alone, which are federal matters, but they should fully cooperate with federal prosecutors when crimes are committed. I don't want to see our police chasing grannies because of questionable immigration status.

In short: Hoboken police will not be diverted to act as immigration agents, but they will always cooperate in fighting crime.

My focus is on keeping Hoboken safe, fair, and law-abiding — and definitely not on chasing national headlines and bringing more attention and risking the safety of our Hoboken neighbors.

5- Homelessness

What is your approach to addressing homelessness in Hoboken, and what is your plan for providing services and shelter to the city's homeless population?

This is a very important issue to me, and I would argue I do more in this space than any other elected official in Hoboken. I work closely with some of our unhoused residents, and with agencies in Hoboken and Hudson County that provide supportive services. Together — with support from neighbors — we successfully housed someone who had been homeless in my neighborhood, and I'm currently working on a second case.

Through this work, I've seen four things clearly.

First, the people who work in this space — the social workers, case workers, homeless advocates, and shelter staff — are heroes. Full stop. They have some of the hardest jobs out there and work tirelessly to support people who have fewer choices than most of us and face much more uncertain futures.

Second, without an advocate, many who are unhoused struggle to access even basic support or services because the system is so hard to navigate. I've helped one neighbor get food stamps, General Assistance, and medical appointments. If I wasn't helping him — and I don't say this to pat myself on the back, just to be honest — he wouldn't be able to do it on his own due to mental health challenges. He would slip through the cracks and end up back on the street.

Third, while the system is full of heroes, it is also fragmented. There are duplications of services, gaps, and a lack of coordination. When it works, it's amazing. When it doesn't, it's frustrating. Many people working inside the system have told me they would like to see all the resources come together in a more coordinated way.

And fourth, this is not just a Hoboken or Hudson County issue — it is a national one. One of the greatest challenges facing our country is a growing population of adults without a stable future. Our policies — and both parties share the blame — have made it harder and harder for people to reach stability.

Here in Hoboken and Hudson County, we will not solve this entirely. But we can do more, and do it better. As mayor, I will bring together all of our local and county resources to work in a more coordinated, efficient way to serve those in need — while also ensuring the safety of our communities by addressing situations where individuals, whether facing mental health challenges or acting out of desperation for basic necessities, may pose a risk.

6- Public Education

What is your long-term vision for the future of public education? How would you make that vision a reality, and what role do you see charter schools playing in that plan? Do you support school choice? If you do, would you support a voucher system?

My vision is that every family in Hoboken has access to strong, high-quality public education — whether in district schools or charter schools. As mayor, my role will be to partner with our educators and Board of Education, not control them, and to make sure City Hall does its part to support safe facilities, enrollment growth, and the space and resources our children need to thrive.

I have consistently pushed for investment in our district schools — from raising concerns about enrollment growth since my first year on the Council, to pushing for more school space in redevelopment projects, to advocating for recreation and field capacity that meets the needs of a growing school-age population. I have also been a strong advocate with NJ Transit for the 15th Street Light Rail stop and more bus service, because getting students safely to and from school is part of the bigger picture.

I support both our district and charter schools, and have worked hard over the past several years to successfully reduce the historic acrimony between them. We have room for both, and combined they strengthen opportunities for all students. Transparency and accountability are essential so that both sectors continue to coexist in a way that benefits the entire Hoboken community.

I support school choice, but it must be carefully managed because the state funding provided does not always cover the full cost of educating each student, which can leave Hoboken taxpayers indirectly subsidizing the difference. School choice was an important tool for Hoboken when enrollment had declined significantly since the 1990s — the program helped bring in enough students and state aid to keep our schools operating efficiently. But with the enrollment explosion we have seen over the past 15 years, the district no longer needs this program simply to “keep the lights on.”

I do not support a voucher system, which would take resources away from our public schools.

7- Governance & Trust

What specific steps would you take to establish and maintain transparency and accountability in your administration? What would be your policy on OPRA responsiveness? Exclusions?

Restoring trust in local government will be one of my highest priorities as mayor. Hoboken residents deserve leadership that is open, accountable, and working for them — not for insiders or political interests.

As a former CFO, I know that accountability begins with transparency. That’s why I’ve released a detailed policy paper on this issue.

Here are the steps I will take:

- *Open City Hall & accessible leadership: Hold monthly office hours, attend all City Council meetings, and make myself available to neighbors and community groups — not just through email, but face-to-face.*

- *Proactive communication:* Every City Council agenda item will include a clear, plain-language summary so residents know exactly what's going to be voted on. I'll also hold a public caucus before each meeting with council members to review the agenda and take questions.

- *Empowering residents with information:* All city documents, reports, and records will be made easily accessible — not just through OPRA, but proactively online and at physical access points in City Hall.

- *Disclosure & conflict avoidance:* As mayor I will lead by example — disclosing donations or financial interests that could conflict with legislation, and asking the City Council to do the same.

- *Responsive OPRA policy:* We will treat OPRA as a tool for accountability, not delay. The baseline will be prompt and good-faith responses. Exceptions and exclusions will only align with state law (e.g. personal privacy, attorney-client privilege, active investigations). The presumption is disclosure.

My commitment: City Hall will be open, accountable, and resident-focused — trust will be earned through consistent, visible action.

What would be your hiring process for the city of Hoboken both for the mayor's office and the city at large?

Hoboken has many talented and dedicated people already working in City Hall, and I want to harness their experience as much as possible. My goal is not to discard what we have, but to strengthen it — making sure people are supported, in the right roles, and working within a structure that helps them succeed.

For the Mayor's Office, I would appoint a Chief of Staff (not two). I would also move Constituent Services back into the Mayor's Office as it is integral to the role of mayor and directly connected to residents' concerns.

For the city at large, I envision a clearer leadership framework built around three senior, experienced leaders who can bring focus and accountability to the city's most important functions:

- *Business Administrator* — overseeing budget/finance, legal, tax, permitting and planning, municipal services and recreation programming.

- *Director of Operations* — responsible for all large projects, infrastructure work, and the ongoing maintenance of our public spaces and recreation facilities. Hoboken will be a construction zone for the next decade, and we need top-level expertise responsible for this work, a position that doesn't currently exist.

- *Public Health & Safety Director — ensuring coordination and accountability across police, fire, OEM, EMS, and public health functions.*

I would have City Communications report to all three, so that communications reflect the priorities of the entire city government — not just the mayor's political agenda.

With this structure in place, our staff can be better supported, and the services residents rely on can be delivered more effectively. Above all, accountability to residents will be the standard for every role in my administration.

8- Non-Partisan Representation

Recognizing the November election is a non-partisan municipal race, how would you ensure that your administration represents the interests and concerns of all residents, regardless of political affiliation?

In Hoboken, we all share the same backyard. That's what makes our community so special — there is room for everyone. We live in a challenging, divisive political time, but I believe the greatest achievements come from bringing together more voices, different voices, and the best ideas. My whole reason for running is to end the divisiveness — not just between Democrats and Republicans, but also in our own Hoboken politics — and to focus on what brings us together and celebrate it.

I am a Democrat, and I've always been open about that. But in ten years and more than 400 newsletters, I have never pushed a partisan political agenda. Instead, I've worked to solve problems for my neighbors. That approach has allowed me to win three elections in the ward with the highest number of Republicans in Hoboken — because I respect people's views, I welcome debate, and I believe we share far more in common than what divides us. Many of my Republican and independent neighbors have told me they value that respect, even when we disagree.

As mayor, I will carry forward that same approach: respecting all perspectives, listening with an open mind, and making decisions based on what is best for Hoboken, not what is best for one political faction. We all share the same backyard — and my administration will always be about making it better, together.

9- City Focus

What would be the primary scope of your focus as mayor, and how would you balance addressing national issues like climate and immigration with the more immediate, localized needs of Hoboken residents?

As the saying goes, all politics are local. My primary focus as mayor will be on Hoboken's everyday needs — safety, affordability, parking, public spaces, and fiscal responsibility. These are the quality-of-life issues residents expect their local government to solve, and that is where my attention will go.

That said, when national or state-level issues directly impact our community, I will advocate the only way I know how: by putting Hoboken first. Hoboken residents want and deserve this. For example, the Hoboken Food Pantry relies on USDA produce boxes to support its biweekly distribution. Cuts to this program now mean they must look elsewhere to fill that need. I have been working with the pantry and with state and federal officials to find alternative ways to provide this food in a cost-effective way.

The same is true with climate resiliency. While climate change is a global issue, in Hoboken it means flooding in our streets, costly damage to homes, and ongoing stress for residents. That's why I've led on every resiliency project since joining the City Council — from Rebuild by Design to Cove Park — and will continue making resiliency a top local priority as mayor.

On immigration, my focus will be to follow state law while ensuring Hoboken remains a safe and fair community.

What you won't see me do is chase headlines on national issues for the purpose of making myself look better. My focus will remain on making Hoboken work better for Hoboken residents, while engaging with larger issues only in the ways they directly affect our community.

10- Recreation

Our community has a recognized need for more recreational opportunities, including the potential for a public swimming pool. What is your plan for evaluating and addressing this need?

Expanding recreational opportunities will be one of my top priorities as mayor. Hoboken's growing population — especially our kids, teens, and seniors — needs more spaces and programs to come together, stay active, and build community.

My plan has two major components:

- *New Recreation Centers: My plan is to deliver two new, modern recreation centers — one as part of the Multi-Service Center redevelopment and another through a partnership with the*

Hoboken Community Center at the former YMCA site. Taken together, these projects allow us to finally deliver the facilities Hoboken deserves, including gyms, flexible community rooms, and potentially pools. Plans will be finalized in my first year in office, and I will commit to having at least one flagship facility open during my first term. Importantly, by partnering with the Y and potential other users first, we can use this space to house the critical functions we have at the current Multi Service Center during construction of a new modern center on that site.

- *Recreation & Community Advisory Board: To ensure we get it right, I will create Hoboken's first Recreation & Community Advisory Board. This board will represent families, athletes, teens, seniors, and differently-abled residents, and will guide everything from programming and field allocation to design priorities for new facilities. It will give residents a real seat at the table and ensure decisions are transparent and community-driven.*

Together, these steps will allow us to move beyond short-term fixes and build the kind of recreation system Hoboken has long needed — one that is modern, inclusive, and responsive to residents.

11- Rodents

Addressing the persistent problem of rodents is a top concern for many residents. What is your long-term plan to tackle this issue, and what metrics will you use to measure the success of city services?

When this administration failed to respond, I stepped up. I launched a Rat Survey that received over 600 responses, created the Rat Free Hoboken Facebook group to collect input, and even brought Rat Dogs to Hoboken to fight infestations. Combined, this public response had the intended effect of forcing the administration to act — leading to the passage of the lid law, which has helped curtail food sources citywide. More recently, I led efforts to impose stronger cleaning requirements for outdoor dining. Simply put: no one has done more than me to put this issue on the front burner.

As mayor, I will take this leadership further by:

- *Coordinating with the Hoboken Housing Authority to ensure a citywide, unified extermination program.*
- *Fixing enforcement so our cleanliness laws can actually be applied — current administrative barriers to enforcement will be removed on day one.*
- *Evaluating expanded garbage removal schedules to further cut off rodent food sources, while balancing cost impacts.*

- *Integrating rodent mitigation into all city planning — from construction site requirements to infrastructure repair and trash containerization.*

Metrics for success will include:

- *Reduction in rodent sighting reports from residents.*
- *Faster response times to complaints and infestations.*
- *Compliance rates for trash storage, outdoor dining cleanliness, and construction site requirements.*
- *Resident surveys reflecting noticeable improvements in quality of life.*

Rodent mitigation is about accountability and follow-through. I've already proven I will lead on this issue when others won't — and as mayor, I'll make sure Hoboken finally has a long-term, citywide plan that delivers real results.

12- Cannabis

What are your thoughts on the city's current plan for six cannabis dispensaries? How would you characterize the rollout process to date, and what is your position on public marijuana use within city limits?

The rollout of cannabis dispensaries in Hoboken has been rushed, poorly planned, and too often shaped by politics instead of community input. That will end when I am mayor. I fully support cannabis — and have been a user myself — but I oppose dispensaries clustered near schools and parks. That's why I co-sponsored Hoboken's Commonsense Cannabis ordinance and continue to support our local laws. Public marijuana use is already prohibited in Hoboken's parks, and it should be enforced.

13- Environment

The previous administration spent a significant amount of time and money on legal action against companies regarding environmental issues. Do you plan to follow in the same footsteps, and what is your overall approach to environmental policy for Hoboken?

The reality is that Hoboken taxpayers did not foot the bill for the litigation the current mayor pursued — but what they did pay for were the endless press releases and headlines he chased from it. That's not how I will lead. I don't plan to pursue lawsuits for the sake of publicity. If legal

action is truly in Hoboken's best interest and can deliver real benefits to residents, I will support it, but my focus will be on tangible local results.

My environmental priorities will remain where residents feel them most: resiliency projects that protect us from flooding, cleaner and safer parks, stronger recycling and composting programs, reducing single-use plastics, and a citywide rodent mitigation strategy. Hoboken doesn't need more headlines — it needs results, and as mayor that's what I'll deliver.

14- Commercial Revival

What is your strategy for promoting commercial revitalization and supporting local business throughout the city?

Our small businesses are the backbone of Hoboken's character and economy. I founded the Hoboken Business Alliance for this very reason — after seeing firsthand how devastating the Washington Street construction was for our shops — and as mayor I will strengthen that partnership citywide.

My strategy is threefold:

- Predictable rules & fair enforcement – Streamline zoning, permitting, and inspections so opening and operating a business is clear, consistent, and not subject to politics.*
- Infrastructure that supports business – Better parking, delivery zones, and transit access so customers and employees can actually get to our businesses.*
- City Hall as a partner, not a hurdle – A stronger, resourced Business Services office that works hand-in-hand with the HBA and local owners to help them thrive.*

Hoboken doesn't need another round of flashy announcements — it needs steady leadership that treats small businesses as essential partners in our community's success.

15- Additional comments or anything that you would like to add.

This election is about the future of Hoboken — and who will put residents first.

I've spent nearly a decade doing the hard work on the City Council: solving problems, leading on major infrastructure and resiliency projects, protecting tenants and small businesses, improving public safety, and pushing for fiscal discipline and transparency. I'm proud of that record — but I also know we can do better.

Hoboken needs a different kind of mayor — one who knows how to run the city better and has the experience to deliver on day one. That’s what I bring: deep financial and operational experience, proven leadership, and a commitment to building a City Hall that works for you.

Liz Urtecho for Council

1. **Public Safety & Transportation** What is your plan to improve auto safety and reduce vehicular incidents in Hoboken? How would you assess the effectiveness of the city’s “Vision Zero” program, and what, if any, changes would you propose?

Improving auto safety and reducing vehicular incidents in Hoboken starts with listening to residents who experience our streets every day—whether as pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, or parents pushing strollers. Hoboken has made progress under the “Vision Zero” program, but there is more that can be done.

I support the goals of Vision Zero, but I believe we need to reassess the goals and how it has implemented. For example, we should carefully review data on where and why incidents are happening, and make sure the solutions actually address those conditions rather than creating new problems or frustrations. Residents have raised concerns about confusing street redesigns, loss of parking, and lack of coordination with other city initiatives—these need to be taken seriously. Moving forward, I support advancing the Willow Avenue redesign project, which has the potential to improve safety on one of Hoboken’s busiest and most dangerous corridors.

As a Council member, I would push for:

- **Data-driven decisions:** *Collecting and publishing clear information on crashes, near misses, and traffic flow so the public can see the rationale behind safety projects. Setting clear benchmarks to track whether Vision Zero initiatives are working.*
- **Better communication and outreach:** *Engaging residents and businesses before changes are made so that solutions balance safety with community needs.*
- **Targeted interventions:** *Focusing on known trouble spots, like high-traffic intersections, rather than blanket policies that disrupt the whole city without clear safety benefit.*

Vision Zero should not be about box-checking or headline-grabbing—it should be about real safety improvements that residents can see and feel. My approach will include community input at the center of how Hoboken addresses traffic safety.

2. What is your comprehensive vision for transportation that addresses the needs of both commuters and residents, including solutions for parking and the flow of bike messengers and pedestrians?

My vision for transportation in Hoboken is about balance and planning ahead so our one-square-mile city works for everyone—residents, commuters, pedestrians, cyclists, and businesses. Too often, decisions are made without a big-picture strategy, leaving residents blindsided and frustrated. We need a transparent, data-driven approach that puts safety and quality of life first.

Parking is a critical piece. It's been an issue since I first moved here, and in that time our population has doubled—now projected to increase another 20% with new development—while the number of parking spaces has stayed the same. We need to plan smarter:

- *Add more **neighborhood loading zones** to make drop-offs and pick-ups easier.*
- *Expand the **Hop shuttle** so residents and visitors can park in garages and still move easily around town.*
- *Be strategic in how we redevelop Garage B and the midtown garage so hundreds of spaces don't disappear from the system at the same time.*
- *At the same time, we must better manage the growing flow of bike messengers, scooters, and pedestrians through clearer rules, enforcement, and safer street design. Sidewalks also need to remain safe and accessible for seniors, families, and residents with disabilities.*

3. Please outline your philosophy on tax policy and budget management. What specific areas of the city budget do you believe are in need of improvement or could be optimized for efficiency?

I have a finance background, and what I have witnessed when it comes to municipal spending makes no sense. My philosophy on tax policy and budget management is that Hoboken needs to run more like a well-managed business—setting clear priorities, making disciplined choices, and being transparent with residents about where their money is going.

Running the city more efficiently should be our baseline. Too often, money is spent on politically driven projects while infrastructure, sanitation, and clean streets are neglected. We need to be more strategic about whether and when to issue new debt, and make sure we aren't saddling residents with long-term obligations for short-term wins.

There also needs to be more transparency behind the numbers. Right now, the budget is difficult for residents to understand, and decisions often feel like they're made behind closed doors. Residents deserve clarity: what we're spending, why, and how it benefits the community.

Areas for improvement include:

- **Capital projects and debt:** Smarter sequencing and prioritization so borrowing is sustainable.
- **Efficiency:** Cutting back on waste and finding ways to deliver services more effectively.
- **Redevelopment:** Negotiating better deals so the community sees real give-backs, not just added density.
- **Core services:** Ensuring day-to-day needs like water, sanitation, and maintenance are properly funded and managed.

At the end of the day, every tax dollar belongs to the people of Hoboken. My commitment is to bring transparency, discipline, and long-term planning back into how we manage the city's budget.

4. Given the challenges of urban density, what is your plan to manage financially responsible development and the use of PILOT agreements in a way that protects existing infrastructure and justifies their fiscal impact to Hoboken's taxpayers?

Given Hoboken's density, development has to be managed with a careful eye toward both financial responsibility and quality of life. I don't believe the city should be including PILOT agreements in redevelopment deals at this point unless there is a truly unique circumstance that justifies it

Any development agreement must include meaningful community give-backs to justify additional density—whether that's funding for schools, expanded recreation space, or infrastructure improvements to support our growing population. Without these, taxpayers are left paying more while services are stretched thin.

My approach would focus on:

- **Limiting PILOTs:** *Only considering them in exceptional cases where the financial impact clearly benefits the city long-term.*
- **Protecting infrastructure:** *Ensuring that new projects contribute directly to upgrades in water, sewer, and transportation systems that they will rely on.*
- **Negotiating smarter redevelopment deals:** *Making sure the city prioritizes schools, recreation, and other resident needs rather than giveaways to developers.*
- **Transparency in the numbers:** *Residents should be able to see, in plain terms, how a development project impacts our finances and infrastructure.*

Development in Hoboken is inevitable, but it must be done responsibly. My commitment is to make sure every project strengthens our community and doesn't leave an additional burden with the taxpayers.

5. What is your position on Hoboken's existing rent control ordinance? What changes if any would you wish to see?

Hoboken's rent control ordinance has been an important protection for many residents, helping to maintain some level of affordability in a city where rents continue to rise faster than wages and inflation. At the same time, I believe rent control policies need to strike the right balance so they protect tenants while also being fair to small, "mom and pop" landlords who are an important part of our community.

I do not support eliminating rent control, but I do believe we should continue to review the ordinance to make sure it is being implemented in a fair and transparent way. Any changes should come only after careful study, community input, and a clear understanding of the impact on both tenants and property owners.

For me, the focus should be on:

- ***Preserving affordability*** so long-time residents and working families are not priced out.
- ***Protecting small landlords*** so they are not disproportionately burdened compared to large corporate property owners.
- ***Improving transparency*** so both tenants and landlords understand their rights and obligations under the law.

Ultimately, housing policy in Hoboken should ensure stability and fairness, while keeping our community diverse and livable for all.

6. Please define your position on Hoboken's status as a sanctuary city. Given a scenario where an undocumented person commits a crime, is found guilty, and prosecuted, what would your administration's policy be regarding cooperation with federal agencies such as ICE?

I support Hoboken's status as a sanctuary city. Hoboken has always been a welcoming community, and our policies should reflect the values of inclusion and protecting vulnerable populations. Local government should focus on keeping our residents safe, maintaining trust between the community and law enforcement.

That said, if an undocumented individual commits a crime, our local law enforcement needs to step in and that case should move through the legal system the same as anyone else.

The priority for Hoboken should always be public safety, fairness under the law, and maintaining the trust that allows our diverse community to thrive.

7. What is your approach to addressing homelessness in Hoboken, and what is your plan for providing services and shelter to the city's homeless population?

Homelessness is a complex issue that requires both compassion and accountability. Hoboken cannot address it in isolation, but we do have a responsibility to make sure residents, businesses, and those experiencing homelessness are supported with real solutions.

Hoboken currently provides shelter beds and services that benefit the entire County, which means Hudson County must be engaged to help find solutions that benefit the entire community. We should also make better use of the social workers already employed by the city to provide outreach and connect the unhoused population with the right services.

The goal should be to provide pathways out of homelessness, while also ensuring public spaces remain safe and welcoming for all. This is not an issue we can solve overnight, but with a sustained effort, Hoboken can do better for everyone impacted.

8. What is your long-term vision for the future of public education? How would you make that vision a reality, and what role do you see charter schools playing in that plan?

As a parent, I support all of Hoboken's public schools—district and charter alike—and I believe they each bring value to our community. Every school faces its own unique challenges, and one of the biggest across the board is space in our land-constrained city.

My long-term vision is for Hoboken to have a strong, diverse, and collaborative public school system that meets the needs of our growing population. That means looking for creative ways to expand capacity, whether through redevelopment projects that incorporate school space, partnerships that open up new facilities, or smarter use of existing resources. It also means that any major initiative must be transparent, clearly communicated to residents, and structured in a way that doesn't overly burden taxpayers.

Charter schools are part of Hoboken's public education ecosystem, and I believe they play a vital role in educating Hoboken's children. The focus should be less on drawing lines between district and charter, and more on how all of our schools can succeed together so that families have access to high-quality education regardless of where they enroll their children.

9. Do you support school choice? If you do, would you support a voucher system?

Hoboken has plenty of choices in academic programs, and I don't believe a voucher system is necessary. Families here already have access to a wide range of options—including several private schools, charter schools, and our district schools—which gives parents meaningful choices for their children's education. The focus should be making sure all of our public schools, district and charter alike, remain strong and well-supported so families don't feel they need to leave Hoboken or rely on vouchers to get a quality education.

10. What specific steps would you take to establish and maintain transparency and accountability in your administration? What would be your policy on OPRA responsiveness? Exclusions?

Transparency and accountability are the foundation of how I would serve. Too often, residents feel blindsided by city decisions and are left with the impression that deals are being made behind closed doors. We need to build trust in our government and one way to do that is to be more transparent.

On OPRA, my policy would be simple: treat requests as a public right, not a nuisance. Residents should have timely access to records without unnecessary delays or stonewalling. Exclusions should be limited only to those required under state law, not expanded to shield city officials from scrutiny. If the city truly believes in transparency, it should welcome accountability and make information accessible upfront rather than forcing residents to fight for it.

11. As a city council member, what would your hiring process be for positions within the city?

The City Council does not make individual hiring decisions—we approve the budget that authorizes new positions, but the administration is responsible for the actual hiring process. That said, as a Council member I would take seriously my role in ensuring that any request for new hires is justified, fiscally responsible, and aligned with the city's priorities.

For me, that means asking the right questions before approving spending: What gap does this role fill? Is it the most efficient way to meet the need? How will success be measured? I would also push for transparency in the process so residents understand why new positions are necessary and how they will benefit the community.

12. Recognizing the November election is a non-partisan municipal race, how would you ensure that your administration represents the interests and concerns of all residents, regardless of political affiliation?

Hoboken's elections may be non-partisan, but more importantly, our daily lives here aren't defined by political labels—we are all neighbors. My approach would be to focus on the issues that affect everyone: safe streets, reliable infrastructure, quality schools, clean parks, and a government residents can trust. These aren't Democratic or Republican concerns; they're community concerns.

As a Council member, I would make collaboration the cornerstone of how I serve. That means listening to residents across the city, working with colleagues even when we don't agree on every issue, and finding common ground rooted in what's best for Hoboken as a whole. Residents should never feel left out because of political affiliation or personal connections—every voice matters.

13. What would be the primary scope of your focus as a council member, and how would you balance addressing national issues like climate and immigration with the more immediate, localized needs of Hoboken residents?

The role of a City Council member is to focus on Hoboken's local needs. My priority would be addressing the issues that impact residents every day—things like infrastructure, housing, transportation, recreation, public safety, and keeping our budget fiscally responsible. These are the areas where the Council has real authority and where our decisions most directly affect quality of life.

I believe national politics should not dominate local government conversations. Only in rare cases—when an issue intersects—should it enter our discussion. Even then, my focus would be on the local impact and what it means for our community.

14. Our community has a recognized need for more recreational opportunities, including the potential for a public swimming pool. What is your plan for evaluating and addressing this need?

A public swimming pool has been at the top of Hoboken's recreation wish list for decades. The challenge has always been our land-constrained city, which makes it difficult to identify space for new facilities. That said, I believe a pool should remain a priority, and we need to be realistic and strategic about how to make it happen.

The most viable path forward is through redevelopment of the Multi-Service Center, where plans already include a pool. In addition, we should pursue partnerships with the YMCA to renovate their facility, which also envisions a pool. By focusing on these opportunities, we can deliver on something residents have wanted for generations.

Recreation in Hoboken should serve all ages and interests, and adding a pool would be a major step forward in meeting that goal.

15. Addressing the persistent problem of rodents is a top concern for many residents. What is your long-term plan to tackle this issue, and what metrics will you use to measure the success of city services?

Rodents are a persistent quality-of-life issue in Hoboken, and addressing them requires more than just bait stations. The city needs a long-term plan that tackles the root causes through better sanitation services, stricter enforcement, and improved waste management. Success should be measured by fewer complaints, cleaner streets, and visible reductions in rodent activity.

For me, this issue comes down to accountability and transparency. Hoboken will only solve its rodent problem if city services are consistent, the rules are enforced, and residents can clearly see that progress is being made.

16. What are your thoughts on the city's current plan for six cannabis dispensaries? How would you characterize the rollout process to date, and what is your position on public marijuana use within city limits?

The rollout of cannabis dispensaries in Hoboken has been deeply flawed. From the start, the process lacked transparency and left residents feeling blindsided. Rules were changed after the fact to benefit certain applicants, and the public was too often shut out of meaningful input.

The cap of six dispensaries was arbitrarily decided and not based on any research. For a city our size, we should have 3 maybe 4 based on data. Our city and we may find that some go out of business as a result because there isn't enough demand.

Now that many dispensaries are open, the city needs to focus on proper oversight. As for public use, I do not support marijuana consumption in our parks, or other shared spaces. It's simply a quality of life issue.

17. The previous administration spent a significant amount of time and money on legal action against companies regarding environmental issues. Do you plan to follow in the same footsteps, and what is your overall approach to environmental policy for Hoboken?

I don't believe Hoboken should be leading large-scale litigations that are more about headlines than results. These cases often cost taxpayers significant money and, as we've seen in the past, frequently fail in court. Our focus should be on protecting Hoboken directly, not chasing lawsuits that stretch beyond our city's resources and authority.

If there were clear evidence of environmental negligence that specifically impacted Hoboken, I would carefully review the facts of the case before deciding whether legal action was warranted. But as a rule, I would prioritize collaboration with state and federal agencies, as well as regional partnerships, to ensure Hoboken's environment is protected without putting residents on the hook for costly legal battles.

18. What is your strategy for promoting commercial revitalization and supporting local business throughout the city?

Small businesses are the cornerstone of Hoboken's charm, and supporting them has to be a priority if we want a vibrant and balanced local economy. My strategy for commercial revitalization starts with making it easier—not harder—for businesses to open and thrive here. That means reviewing our zoning laws and permitting process to ensure they are transparent, consistent, and not cost-prohibitive, especially for small, independent businesses.

I would also work closely with the Hoboken Business Alliance to find solutions that support existing businesses and attract new ones. Washington Street, in particular, should reflect the diversity of our community, offering a mix of shops, services, and restaurants that appeal to residents of all ages. A healthy commercial corridor isn't just good for business owners—it's part of what makes Hoboken such a great place to live.

Diane Imus for Council 6 Ward

1- Public Safety & Transportation

What is your plan to improve auto safety and reduce vehicular incidents in Hoboken? How would you assess the effectiveness of the city's "Vision Zero" program, and what, if any, changes would you propose?

I would advocate for a holistic evaluation of all intersections to see where four-way stops are needed. I'd also include walk/don't walk at problematic intersections (i.e. Newark & Bloom) where traffic sometimes piles up because people are just walking through without allowing cars to move forward. I think the Vision Zero plan has been good in that there have been no traffic fatalities involving cars, but that has come at the expense of parking and bump outs that in some areas protrude too far and don't leave enough turn space for some corners. I would advocate that the depts of public safety and Transportation & Parking create a review and identify any problem areas or areas that may have been overdone.

What is your comprehensive vision for transportation that addresses the needs of both commuters and residents, including solutions for parking and the flow of bike messengers and pedestrians?

We have to acknowledge that roughly 66% of residents own cars, so we need policy that addresses parking, as well as a good inter-city transportation system. I'd like to see an

expanded HOP system that goes East/West as well as North/South, and could be used as a shuttle to perimeter parking. We cannot take municipal garages off line at the same time, and new solutions need to be put in place for the more than 12000 new residents that will be in Hoboken within 5-7 years. I'm not a fan of the camera pilot on Washington, it should have been rolled out at the same time that loading / pick up spots were created. I think we should move the charging stations, shorten the bus lanes by one spot on each block, and come up with a solution that allows people to use their cars when necessary. And finally, ebike riders must be registered, apps must limit the number of riders in each quadrant, and all regulations must be enforced. Reckless riders must be fined and their bikes confiscated.

2- Fiscal Policy and Budget

Please outline your philosophy on tax policy and budget management. What specific areas of the city budget do you believe are in need of improvement or could be optimized for efficiency?

I'm fiscally budget conscious, and I'm frankly appalled that the city doesn't see the need for a budget that's developed from a 0 based approach after filling in all of the line items that cannot be changed (such as union negotiated salaries, etc). I think the next mayor should evaluate all positions in city hall to find the ones that are simply not necessary that can be eliminated or consolidated where appropriate. Health insurance should be evaluated with a professional consulting firm with a mandate to find a new plan that is less expensive but does not cut benefits. This happens all the time in the corporate world, and there's no reason Hoboken can't undertake that same review. There should be a salary threshold for contributions towards those benefits – and that is something that could be evaluated.

3- Housing & Development

Given the challenges of urban density, what is your plan to manage financially responsible development and the use of PILOT agreements in a way that protects existing infrastructure and justifies their fiscal impact to Hoboken's taxpayers?

When structured properly, PILOTs can support Hoboken's larger goals — not just new buildings. They should be targeted to improving roads, utilities, parks, and other city services or amenities that are sorely lacking, such as a new community center and a pool. As a ward council person that would be voting on initiatives pan-Hoboken, I would prioritize shorter pilot agreements that are transparent, have clear oversight with regard to infrastructure and project management, and do not favor developers that do not demonstrate their expertise developing a specific property type. This all goes back to transparency, clear communication, and doing what's best for Hoboken with no other ulterior motives.

What is your position on Hoboken's existing rent control ordinance? What changes if any would you wish to see?

I support the current rent control ordinance in its intention, but believe it needs to be modernized. As an owner of the three-family building which is the home I've lived in for 25 years, I can attest that the registration process is cumbersome and outdated. I've also seen in person that many buildings, which clearly fall under rent control, are simply not maintained. And given the abysmal paper record keeping of the last thirty years, it's likely that the city can't even say with certainty how many rent-controlled properties and units exist. I would like to see transparent communication between the rent control advocates and landlords that could result in better outcomes for the people who are living in rent-controlled apartments yet incentivize landlords to better maintain their properties. I see rent control as a guardrail to ensure that tenants are treated fairly, that they are offered a renewal lease, and their rent increases are appropriate and in line with rising costs. Unfortunately we are now in a situation where non-rent-controlled buildings are increasing their rents by 15-20%, and landlords who follow the rules are raising their rents by a modest 2.5% – 3.5%, while their taxes are skyrocketing and the costs for utilities and maintenance are increasing as well. I believe that the carve out for owner occupied 2,3- and 4-unit buildings from some of the rules is appropriate, and I support the latest proposal to cap non-rent controlled building rent increases to 10%, as this will reduce market pressures.

4- Sanctuary City

Please define your position on Hoboken's status as a sanctuary city. Given a scenario where an undocumented person commits a crime, is found guilty, and prosecuted, what would your administration's policy be regarding cooperation with federal agencies such as ICE?

I don't see the need to label Hoboken as a sanctuary city and invite more scrutiny and issues with the federal government. We have enough problems within our city limits and shouldn't be chasing headlines or doing anything that increases costs to taxpayers. In terms of being a ward council person I would not support to cooperate, but in the scenario where a crime is committed, I would follow the state of NJ's directives.

5- Homelessness

What is your approach to addressing homelessness in Hoboken, and what is your plan for providing services and shelter to the city's homeless population?

I am hearing a lot from residents about the homeless, and everyone begins by saying, "I'm a compassionate person, but..." and then I hear the same things. The homeless are sleeping in doorways on Washington, and people are beginning to feel unsafe and uncomfortable because they recognize that these people are not just unhoused, they are frequently mentally ill. The shelter is in the sixth ward, and now, as a candidate, I am already engaging with them about changes to their program. Just this week they have received board approval to be open 24 hours, where before they were closed from 7AM – 9AM, resulting in lines during school drop off. They have also ensured that police are on hand on third street during the 7AM-9AM and 3PM - 5PM

windows. In addition to the ongoing dialogue, I would explore additional space away from schools and parks, as well as better coordination with regional support agencies (currently there is none). In Hoboken we do a great job taking care of our homeless population – not only with the shelter on third, but with the lunchtime ministry on 8th and Hudson. It would be great to ensure that we're taking care of the Hoboken-based population and not having more show up from other towns that don't provide the same services we do. Finally, the newly hired 23 police officers should be walking the streets and parks and enforcing rules around sleeping there.

6- Public Education

What is your long-term vision for the future of public education? How would you make that vision a reality, and what role do you see charter schools playing in that plan?

I am hopeful that the Board of Education releases a plan soon that is achievable and good for our students. With the population explosion of school-aged kids, and the rising costs of housing and private education, more kids will be using the system. We're so fortunate to have the choices we have locally, but the facilities must be modernized. Good public schools and facilities can only help cement Hoboken as the greatest place to raise a family. I think two of our three charter schools have homes, but HOLA needs a spot. Without these charter schools our current grammar schools would be completely overrun, so we are fortunate to have them. My three kids went through Elysian Charter, and I am a big supporter of smaller class sizes, more efficient and streamlined administration, and shared services between the public system and the charter system.

Do you support school choice? If you do, would you support a voucher system?

I do support School Choice as applies to Hoboken's system, which allows available High School seats to be filled by academically deserving students (about 25% of the 600 students). In terms of a voucher system, given all of the choices residents have for schools (charter, magnet, parochial and private) I don't believe it would be in Hoboken's best interest to implement this.

7- Governance & Trust

What specific steps would you take to establish and maintain transparency and accountability in your administration? What would be your policy on OPRA responsiveness? Exclusions?

I would support all efforts for transparency. In terms of OPRA requests, they should be responded to within 24 hours. I wouldn't be able to comment on what should be excluded – I assume anything related to personal privacy of an individual.

As a city council member, what would your hiring process be for positions within the city?

The best candidates for any job posted should be hired. All jobs should be publicly posted and promoted on the city's website, and on social media. (ie....we're hiring! Announcements).

8- Non-Partisan Representation

Recognizing the November election is a non-partisan municipal race, how would you ensure that your administration represents the interests and concerns of all residents, regardless of political affiliation?

Personally I come from an extended family that's split down the middle with regard to political parties, and I'm married to a fiscally conservative but socially responsible Republican. Political affiliations don't matter to me, what matters is that I know that I will be a responsive advocate for the Sixth Ward that's respectful of the opinions of others.

9- City Focus

What would be the primary scope of your focus as a council member, and how would you balance addressing national issues like climate and immigration with the more immediate, localized needs of Hoboken residents?

My focus will be on being the voice of the Sixth Ward and ensuring that I am available and open to all opinions. I wish the national climate would ratchet down. I believe that we need to be involved in the climate change conversation, and that the Rebuild by Design and flood mitigation projects underway around town are necessary. I'd love to see the rain gardens better maintained – maybe this is something we could have local businesses adopt! A lot of these projects are occurring around the Sixth ward (we are in the center, after all) but we are affected by all of the infrastructure projects and ongoing development as well as their implications for safety and parking. We need to walk sometimes before we run, and make sure we're not doing more than we should be at one given time so that our efforts are successful.

Our community has a recognized need for more recreational opportunities, including the potential for a public swimming pool. What is your plan for evaluating and addressing this need?

I've lived in town for 35 years and the pool conversation has happened every two years with the election cycles, and it goes nowhere. There is no reason that we can't have an outdoor pool like Weehawken does. And to think they are enclosing it in a bubble so people can lap swim all year round is truly amazing. The YMCA pool should be renovated and put back online ASAP, in a regulation size (not like the High School pool). Conversations about moving the men's dormitories to another location might also help position that site to be an amazing rec center for Hoboken. It's disgraceful that this has gone on so long. I would advocate for a semi-permanent floating pool along the lines of the one planned for the East River and the one that already exists in the Bronx as part of the Hoboken cove or maritime Park project. We have enough passive space, our kids need to learn how to swim, and we cannot rely on Stevens and their single pool for a population of 75,000 people.

Addressing the persistent problem of rodents is a top concern for many residents. What is your long-term plan to tackle this issue, and what metrics will you use to measure the success of city services?

Our streets and sidewalks are dirty. While the rat problem may not seem as bad as it did previously, they are still there. We live in a city, but property owners (commercial and residential) need to take better care of their trash and maintain their sidewalks. There should be more inspections, and the department of sanitation should be given directives to inspect, report and measure compliance. Once a baseline is set, this should be a quarterly assessment. Streeteries should be consistently cleaned.

10- Cannabis

What are your thoughts on the city's current plan for six cannabis dispensaries? How would you characterize the rollout process to date, and what is your position on public marijuana use within city limits?

I initially thought that six dispensaries in a one square mile were overkill, and I still do. I am not opposed to them, but don't believe they should be close to schools. I can't understand how two were placed less than a block apart on Washington. The roll out process was not transparent, and there are a good number of questions related to the process and how approvals were granted, given the arrest and conviction of one of the Cannabis Review Board members, who accused the administration of inappropriate actions. I don't believe that we should have people smoking pot in public.

11- Environment

The previous administration spent a significant amount of time and money on legal action against companies regarding environmental issues. Do you plan to follow in the same footsteps, and what is your overall approach to environmental policy for Hoboken?

No, absolutely not, the majority of that felt like headline grabbing. I believe that Hoboken is affected by climate change, and there are ways that we can all voluntarily become more sustainable. For example, I started composting and realized that I barely have any garbage any more – and I will say that I started unwillingly (my son got his master's in environmental sustainability). I was pleasantly surprised, and the program rolled out in Hoboken seems to work well. I would like to know, however, that the recycle cans in public areas in Hoboken are actually recycled.

What is your strategy for promoting commercial revitalization and supporting local business throughout the city?

It would be great to have reporting from the Hoboken Business Alliance on their annual goals and objectives each year, so that city initiatives don't overlap and duplicate, but enhance. I'm sometimes saddened to see long time businesses leave, and the stores sit vacant for months. This is a scenario where the HBA could have a quarterly meetings with the administration to ideate to make sure our business environment is welcoming and works for the owners and could report on why specific business are leaving. In addition, it seems too difficult for businesses to build out and get their approvals, so step one would be modernizing the process of application, providing guidance and shortening the timeline significantly. I have concerns that the loitering e-Bike riders are hurting businesses downtown, and a dedicated waiting area and limits applied to delivery quadrants by the apps themselves could also help.

Dave Mello for Council

1- Public Safety & Transportation

What is your plan to improve auto safety and reduce vehicular incidents in Hoboken? How would you assess the effectiveness of the city's "Vision Zero" program, and what, if any, changes would you propose?

My plan to improve auto safety in Hoboken starts with listening to our traffic professionals and relying on real data, not politics. During my prior terms on the City Council, I learned a great deal from transportation experts like former Director Ian Sacs, and I've seen how thoughtful, evidence-based design can save lives.

I would focus on practical, data-supported improvements such as expanding raised crosswalks near schools and senior areas, installing more flex posts and planters at high-risk corners, and increasing the number of loading zones with strict time-of-day enforcement to improve visibility and free up overnight parking.

To assess the effectiveness of Vision Zero, we need to look closely at measurable outcomes — not just policies or press releases. That means tracking crash and injury data, evaluating whether each initiative is actually reducing incidents, and adjusting our strategies accordingly. Safety decisions should be driven by results, not rhetoric.

What is your comprehensive vision for transportation that addresses the needs of both commuters and residents, including solutions for parking and the flow of bike messengers and pedestrians?

My vision for transportation in Hoboken is about balance — making it easier for residents, commuters, and visitors to move safely and efficiently through our city. We need better-managed and expanded garage parking, along with improved signage and real-time phone app updates to direct drivers to available spaces.

Every new building should include off-street loading zones to reduce congestion and double-parking. I also support creating clearly designated corridors across the city — some prioritized for deliveries, others for pedestrians or cyclists — so everyone has space that works for them without constant conflict.

I'd like to expand the HOP shuttle system and add a line serving our main commercial areas — Washington Street and the east ends of 1st and 14th Streets — during peak hours and weekends. And before making changes to the program, I'd want to see clear data showing whether keeping the HOP free continues to make sense.

The goal is a transportation system that works for everyone — safer, smarter, and better connected — without sacrificing the convenience residents rely on.

2. Fiscal Policy and Budget

Please outline your philosophy on tax policy and budget management. What specific areas of the city budget do you believe are in need of improvement or could be optimized for efficiency?

My philosophy on tax policy is simple: Our local government must be responsible with every dollar it collects, and fair to every taxpayer who pays it. I would explore every legal option to freeze or cap property taxes for our senior residents, who deserve stability after contributing to our community for decades. While Hoboken can't override state law on property tax policy, I would advocate for enabling state legislation to make senior tax relief possible — and make sure our seniors know about every program that already exists.

I also believe in honest budgeting. A modest annual tax increase that keeps pace with inflation is often necessary to maintain essential services without creating future deficits. What's not responsible is voting for generous employee contracts and then voting against a budget that funds those very agreements. You can't do both and still claim to be fiscally sound.

Looking forward, Hoboken's development strategy should prioritize commercial growth over new residential density. Commercial projects strengthen our tax base without adding strain to our schools, infrastructure, and city services the way housing often does.

Finally, I'd push to introduce the city budget by February 1st each year, so we can have real public input and fiscal transparency. If the state releases aid figures later, we can always revise — but Hoboken residents deserve a timely, disciplined budgeting process that reflects planning, not politics.

Housing & Development

Given the challenges of urban density, what is your plan to manage financially responsible development and the use of PILOT agreements in a way that protects existing infrastructure and justifies their fiscal impact to Hoboken's taxpayers?

My approach to development and PILOT agreements is rooted in fiscal responsibility and fairness to Hoboken taxpayers. In New Jersey, when a PILOT is granted, the city keeps 95% of the payment while 5% goes to the county — and virtually none of it can legally be shared with our public schools. When I chaired the Community Development Subcommittee, we tried to change that by passing a resolution around the 770 House development expressing our intent to share proceeds with the schools. Unfortunately, it became a divisive issue in our community, and I regret ever having supported that PILOT. It taught me an important lesson: PILOTs can divide our city while offering limited long-term benefit.

Going forward, I believe Hoboken should stop offering residential PILOTs altogether. Any development incentive must be justified by clear, measurable public benefit — not just private gain. Our focus should shift toward projects that strengthen our tax base without straining city services: commercial development, senior housing, and smaller-scale micro-units geared toward adults without children.

When new housing is built, it should include a reasonable 10% affordable set-aside as required by law and prioritize family-sized, three-bedroom condominiums over more transient rental units. Hoboken is a small city with limited capacity, and every new project must fit our infrastructure, our schools, and our long-term fiscal health.

What is your position on Hoboken's existing rent control ordinance? What changes if any would you wish to see?

I support Hoboken's rent control ordinance and believe it plays a vital role in keeping our city economically diverse, stable, and affordable for longtime residents. But our current laws are overly complicated and often misunderstood. We need a clearer, more transparent system that both tenants and landlords can easily navigate and trust.

I would focus on strengthening enforcement where it's most needed — particularly among corporate and investor landlords who don't live in their buildings — while continuing to respect small owner-occupants who manage their own properties responsibly. I would also support regular independent reviews of filings and tenant challenges, so both sides can have confidence that the system is being monitored fairly.

I believe it's time to reconsider exemptions for new construction. Developers continue to build in Hoboken regardless of those exemptions, and applying reasonable rent controls to new projects

could help guide more construction toward commercial, affordable, or senior housing — areas where our city has greater need.

Finally, I'd like to explore targeted reforms that prevent abuse — ensuring rent control protections go to those who truly need them, while keeping the process less adversarial through mediation before formal hearings. The goal is a rent control system that's fair, functional, and sustainable — one that protects tenants, respects responsible landlords, and preserves the character of our community..

4- Sanctuary City

Please define your position on Hoboken's status as a sanctuary city. Given a scenario where an undocumented person commits a crime, is found guilty, and prosecuted, what would your administration's policy be regarding cooperation with federal agencies such as ICE?

*I disagreed with the mayor's decision to issue an executive order declaring Hoboken a "Fair and Welcoming City" on his first day in office because it was legally unnecessary and purely symbolic. Immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility, and in New Jersey, it is already governed by the State Attorney General's **Immigrant Trust Directive**, first issued in 2018 and later revised in 2019. Municipalities like Hoboken are required to follow that directive, and our police department already does.*

In other words, the mayor's order didn't change policy — it just created headlines. It was redundant, unnecessary, and in my view, an example of state and national politics being brought into City Hall where they don't belong.

*If an undocumented person commits a crime, is found guilty, and prosecuted, my position is straightforward: Hoboken should cooperate with federal agencies such as ICE to the **extent that state law allows**. That approach respects the rule of law, maintains compliance with state directives, and keeps our community safe — without turning local government into a stage for political posturing*

5- Homelessness

What is your approach to addressing homelessness in Hoboken, and what is your plan for providing services and shelter to the city's homeless population?

Homelessness is a real challenge in Hoboken, and while Hoboken should always treat people with compassion, we also need to be smart and coordinated about how we address it.

Unfortunately, our current city administration has tried to tackle the problem in a bubble. We've hired two full-time social workers here in Hoboken, but haven't worked closely enough with Hudson County to make sure their existing social service network is deployed effectively within

Hoboken's borders. Rather than building our own system from scratch, we should be insisting that county resources—and county social workers and agencies—give more focused attention to Hoboken.

We also have to recognize that Hoboken is the wealthiest city in Hudson County, and that generosity from our residents makes us a magnet for homeless individuals seeking help. That compassion speaks well of our community, but it also creates unintended challenges that affect quality of life and safety. Our city's busiest park, Church Square Park, is located near our homeless shelter, and has unfortunately been the site of several high-profile incidents that must not be ignored or forgotten. Public safety must be priority number one.

My approach is simple: partner regionally, coordinate services effectively, and ensure that our parks and public spaces remain safe for everyone. We can care for those in need without trying to handle this alone, and without sacrificing public safety or fiscal responsibility.

6- Public Education

What is your long-term vision for the future of public education? How would you make that vision a reality, and what role do you see charter schools playing in that plan?

My long-term vision for public education is one where every child—no matter their family's income or background—has access to a strong, well-supported public school close to home. As someone who has spent 25 years teaching in urban, low-income neighborhoods, I've seen what works: smaller class sizes, experienced teachers who stay in the classroom, and schools with the resources to meet the needs of every student.

I believe in strengthening public education, not undermining it through vouchers or by diverting public funds. Charter schools, like the three we have in Hoboken, can play a positive role when they complement our district schools and remain fully accountable to the public. They give families options while still serving the broader community.

As a city councilperson, I understand that education policy is primarily a state responsibility, but there are important ways our city can help. I want to work cooperatively with the Board of Education to identify and build additional school space in a way that meets the needs of our public school students while respecting the tax burden on all Hoboken residents. My focus will always be on ensuring Hoboken's children have every opportunity to succeed through a strong, equitable, and truly public education system.

Do you support school choice? If you do, would you support a voucher system?

I support school choice within the public education system — not through private school vouchers. I believe in the model we already have here in Hoboken, where our three charter schools complement our district schools and provide families with options that remain part of the public system. Likewise, I respect the approach of neighboring districts like Jersey City (where I now work), which offer public high schools such as McNair Academic, Infinity, Innovation, and Liberty that students can apply to. These are examples of public school choice done responsibly — expanding opportunity without diverting funds from public education.

I do not support school vouchers. As a public school teacher for 25 years—nearly all of that in urban, low-income neighborhoods in the South Bronx and now Jersey City—I’ve seen firsthand how vouchers drain limited tax dollars from the public schools that serve students with the greatest needs.

When families with higher incomes or education levels pull out of the public system, schools become less effective for everyone left behind. While I understand parents who want relief from the cost of private or parochial schools, vouchers would be a death knell for public education in lower-income communities.

And frankly, this is a state-level issue—not something Hoboken’s city council should waste time debating. Our local government has spent too much energy on state and national issues in recent years. If re-elected, I’ll refocus the council on what matters here at home: keeping Hoboken strong, affordable, and well-served.

7- Governance & Trust

What specific steps would you take to establish and maintain transparency and accountability in your administration? What would be your policy on OPRA responsiveness? Exclusions?

Transparency and accountability are at the heart of good government, and I believe Hoboken has fallen far short on both over the past eight years. Too often, residents and even members of the press have struggled to get timely, complete, and honest answers from City Hall. That has to change.

My approach is simple: nearly all public information should be made available unless it is clearly illegal to release it—for example, matters involving active litigation, personnel files, or protected privacy data. Beyond those narrow exceptions, our municipal government should err on the side of openness.

*As a councilperson, I will push for an administration-wide commitment to **timely, accurate, and consistent OPRA Responses**. Residents should not have to wait weeks or months for information that legally belongs to them. I would also support the creation of a **public online OPRA tracker** so that both residents and the council can see what requests are pending, how long they've been open, and when they were fulfilled.*

Transparency builds trust, and trust builds good government. The current administration has done a terrible job living up to that basic standard. I intend to restore a culture of openness—where information is shared, not hidden, and where accountability is a daily practice, not a talking point.

As a city council member, what would your hiring process be for positions within the city?

The City Council doesn't make hiring decisions directly — that authority rests with the administration — but we do play an important role through our advice and consent powers, and through public oversight. I take that responsibility very seriously.

In recent years, there have been instances where people were hired not because they were qualified, but because it was politically convenient — even to remove them as potential challengers in future elections. That's outrageous, it's unethical, and it's an insult to the taxpayers who fund those salaries. I would oppose and expose that practice every time I see it.

My standard is simple: every city job should go to the most qualified person who will best serve the residents of Hoboken — period. I'll use every tool available to the council to make sure that happens, including demanding transparency in the hiring process and requiring clear qualifications for any position that comes before us for approval.

I'm also confident that if my running mate Tiffanie Fisher becomes our next mayor, she'll bring integrity and professionalism back to City Hall. I know she will hire based on merit and service to the community — not politics or personal loyalty. Together, we can restore trust and ensure Hoboken's government works for everyone, not just for those in power.

8- Non-Partisan Representation

Recognizing the November election is a non-partisan municipal race, how would you ensure that your administration represents the interests and concerns of all residents, regardless of political affiliation?

Although Hoboken's municipal elections are non-partisan, I think it's important for residents to

know where I stand. I'm a Democrat — just left of center — but I've always respected and appreciated the views of Republicans and independents alike. I believe good government starts with listening to everyone and making decisions based on what's best for our city, not on party loyalty or national talking points.

Over the past eight years, I've watched Hoboken's leadership get too distracted by state and national politics — chasing headlines and building résumés for higher office instead of focusing on the daily quality-of-life issues that matter here at home. That's not public service; that's self-promotion.

My commitment is simple: to represent all Hoboken residents — regardless of political affiliation — and to bring a service-first, service-only mindset back to City Hall. My job isn't to score political points. It's to make sure our city government delivers results for the people who live and work here, period.

9- City Focus

What would be the primary scope of your focus as a council member, and how would you balance addressing national issues like climate and immigration with the more immediate, localized needs of Hoboken residents?

As a council member, my primary focus would be on Hoboken's local quality-of-life issues — keeping our streets safe, our taxes manageable, our infrastructure strong, and our community well-served. That's the work city government is elected to do, and that's where I believe our time and resources should go.

On broader national topics like immigration and climate policy, I think it's important for Hoboken to act responsibly within our authority, but not to overstep it. Immigration, for example, is a federal issue — and in New Jersey, it's already governed at the state level through the Attorney General's 2018 Immigrant Trust Directive. When Mayor Bhalla issued his own "Fair and Welcoming City" order that same year, I believe it was unnecessary and redundant. It pulled Hoboken into a national debate we didn't need to be in, brought unwanted attention from federal officials, and ironically made life more difficult for many of the very immigrants it was intended to help.

My approach is to respect the proper role of each level of government. The federal government enforces immigration, the state sets the policy, and here in Hoboken, our responsibility is to focus on the daily issues that affect our residents — affordability, safety, cleanliness, transportation, and good governance. That's where I'll always keep my focus.

Our community has a recognized need for more recreational opportunities, including the potential for a public swimming pool. What is your plan for evaluating and addressing this need?

As someone who swam competitively throughout high school and who first advocated for an aquatic center when I served on the City Council eight years ago, I've long believed that Hoboken deserves a public swimming facility. A well-planned aquatic center — ideally featuring both an indoor athletic pool suitable for competitions and an outdoor recreational pool — would be an incredible asset for residents of all ages.

But it has to be done the right way. Some have proposed building a pool on a pier over the Hudson River, and while that might sound appealing on paper, it would be fiscally irresponsible and could become a long-term financial burden for taxpayers. I believe we can do better.

My plan is to evaluate all potential sites across the city and select a location where a pool could be built cost-effectively, sustainably, and equitably — one that doesn't exclude lower-income residents through high user fees. The goal should be a community aquatic center that enhances quality of life, is financially responsible, and serves every Hoboken resident fairly & equitably.

Done right, this project can be a lasting investment in our community's health, recreation, and togetherness — not another headline-driven promise that never materializes.

Addressing the persistent problem of rodents is a top concern for many residents. What is your long-term plan to tackle this issue, and what metrics will you use to measure the success of city services?

Rodents are more than a nuisance — they're a public health issue, and they've become far too common across Hoboken in recent years. I've been vocal about this problem for a long time, helping to raise awareness and calling for stronger action (especially regarding streeteries) well before it became a citywide talking point, as the lead content creator behind the Hoboken Matters web presence.. The truth is, we've only seen piecemeal responses from City Hall, but not a consistent, data-driven strategy.

My long-term plan starts with accountability and coordination. We need a comprehensive rodent control program that includes: regular data collection on sightings and complaints, targeted treatment of hotspots, stronger enforcement of trash storage regulations for both businesses and residents, and modernization of how and when garbage is collected.

Success should be measured by results — fewer rodent sightings reported through the city's

complaint system, cleaner streets and sidewalks, and a decline in sanitation violations. We can track and publish this data quarterly so residents can see real progress.

The city needs to stop treating this as an occasional PR problem and start treating it as a core quality-of-life issue. If we commit to real coordination between the health department, sanitation, and property owners, we can finally get this problem under control.

10- Cannabis

What are your thoughts on the city's current plan for six cannabis dispensaries? How would you characterize the rollout process to date, and what is your position on public marijuana use within city limits?

I fully support the legalization and responsible use of THC products. Frankly, I believe that for most adults, THC is far less harmful than alcohol and can be part of a healthy, balanced lifestyle. That said, legalization comes with responsibility — and I believe Hoboken's rollout of cannabis dispensaries has been deeply flawed.

The way Hoboken handled the approval and placement of several dispensaries, including the Blue Violet site that my running mate Liz Urtecho has strongly opposed, lacked transparency, community input, and sound planning. I respect Liz's leadership on this issue, and I share her concern that the process felt rushed and poorly managed. Rules exist for a reason, and every business — cannabis or otherwise — must follow them.

I support having dispensaries in Hoboken, but not six within such a small city, and not without thoughtful zoning that prevents clustering near schools, parks, or family-heavy areas. We need balance — access for responsible adult consumers, but also fairness and respect for neighborhood character.

As for public marijuana use, I don't support it. Just as we don't allow open alcohol consumption on our Hoboken sidewalks, we shouldn't normalize public THC use in our city either. Legalization was about personal freedom, not public nuisance. My goal is a balanced policy that reflects both common sense and community standards.

11- Environment

The previous administration spent a significant amount of time and money on legal action against companies regarding environmental issues. Do you plan to follow in the same footsteps, and what is your overall approach to environmental policy for Hoboken?

I believe strongly in protecting our environment and making Hoboken more resilient to flooding and climate change. But I also believe our local Hoboken government should focus on real, measurable results — not headline-chasing lawsuits that cost Hoboken taxpayers considerable money and accomplish little -

The current administration's 2020 lawsuit against major oil companies like ExxonMobil and Chevron is a perfect example. That lawsuit may have sounded bold, but it hasn't delivered any real benefit for Hoboken residents. Years later, we're still spending taxpayer money and staff time on a case that's gone nowhere — while our flooding, infrastructure, and resiliency needs remain right here at home. This lawsuit has been symbolic, expensive, and likely to go nowhere in court. A lawsuit of this scale belongs at the state level, not the municipal level. The State of New Jersey has the resources, legal standing, and jurisdiction to take on multinational corporations — Hoboken does not.

My approach to environmental policy is rooted in practical action, not publicity. That means investing in the things that truly protect Hoboken — flood pumps, modern stormwater management, green infrastructure, and parks that also serve as resiliency projects. During my two terms as Councilman At-Large, I helped lead exactly those kinds of efforts, including the creation of Southwest Park, the acquisition of land for the Northwest Resiliency Park, and the development of the Jackson Street Park. These are real, lasting investments that make our city more flood resistant and sustainable — not headline-grabbing gestures, but meaningful results.

If elected, I will ensure every environmental dollar we spend directly benefits Hoboken residents — not politicians' resumes. Real leadership is about doing the work, not chasing the spotlight.

12- Commercial Revival

What is your strategy for promoting commercial revitalization and supporting local business throughout the city?

My strategy for promoting commercial revitalization in Hoboken starts with a simple goal: make it easier for small businesses to survive and thrive here. Local businesses are the heart of our community and the foundation of our tax base, and they deserve a city government that treats them as partners, not afterthoughts.

I strongly support the work of the Hoboken Business Alliance, which has been instrumental in helping our commercial corridors recover and grow. I want to continue strengthening that partnership by improving how the city coordinates with property owners, entrepreneurs, and residents to keep storefronts active and vibrant.

A major part of that effort must include tackling the issue of long-term vacant storefronts.

Too many landlords sit on empty spaces waiting for the highest-paying national tenant, while our streets lose their energy and our small businesses struggle. We should explore policies and incentives that encourage active leasing — and, if necessary, modest penalties for prolonged vacancies — to help bring life back to Washington Street and our other commercial corridors & pockets.

We also need to focus on practical measures: streamlining permits and inspections, improving street cleanliness and lighting, expanding outdoor dining where appropriate, and ensuring that parking and loading zones support both customers and delivery needs.

My running mate, Tiffanie Fisher, has been a leader in championing local businesses and revitalizing our commercial districts, and I fully share her priorities. Together, we'll work to make Hoboken a place where small businesses can grow, residents can shop locally, and our neighborhoods remain lively and economically strong.

13- Additional comments or anything that you would like to add.

Experience matters. During my two terms as a Hoboken City Councilperson at-large, I worked across political factions to deliver real results — from being a leader of the team that created the Southwest Park, to helping redevelop the area around the Monroe Arts Center, to acquiring the land that became the Northwest Resiliency Park. I also served 10 years on the Hoboken Housing Authority Board, including as chair, where I helped hire our current director, Mark Recko, and brought in Torti Gallas + Partners to design the redevelopment plan now being implemented.

I've always stood up for what I believe is best for the people of Hoboken — even when it wasn't easy or politically convenient. Doing what's right for our community has always mattered more to me than advancing my own political career.

I've always rejected partisan politics at the local level and the self-promoting style of the current administration. My goal is simple: to bring a service-first, service-only approach back to City Hall — focused on results, collaboration, teamwork, and putting Hoboken residents first — and only