THE CHAMBER
of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia

2023 PRIMARY MAYORAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

About the Chamber

The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia brings area businesses and civic leaders together to promote growth and create opportunity in our region. We do this by building a stronger business climate through our local, county, state, and federal advocacy efforts; striving for increased economic inclusion by empowering small and minority-led businesses; and accelerating economic competitiveness in our region through business attraction and expansion, regional improvement, and Talent initiatives. Our members represent eleven counties, three states, and roughly 600,000 employees from thousands of member companies and organizations.

Candidate: Jeff Brown

Personal Background Information

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Email Address: ken@jeffbrownformayor.com

Public Offices Held: None

Civic/Community Activities/Experience (Past and Present) & Business/Other Activities (Past Present):

Jeff Brown is the founder and former Chairman, and CEO of Brown's Super Stores, Inc., a twelve-store supermarket chain trading under the ShopRite and The Fresh Grocer supermarket brands. He also serves as Chairman of the State of Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board, as a Board Member and Treasurer of Philadelphia

Lawyers for Social Equity, as a Member of the Pennsylvania Convention Center board, and as Chairman of the Convention Center's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.

Jeff is the former Chairman of the Philadelphia Youth Network and the founder and Chairman Emeritus of Uplift Solutions, a national nonprofit that operates a workforce system for returning citizens. Under Jeff's leadership, Uplift Solutions has supported and trained hundreds of returning citizens and has helped them find meaningful employment. Jeff also founded and is the Chairman of the PA30 Day Fund, assisting small minority businesses with financial support. In 2010, Jeff was a guest of First Lady Michelle Obama, at President Obama's State of the Union address, in recognition of his work advising the Obama Administration on solutions to the national "food desert" crisis.

Jeff and his wife and business partner Sandy, who serves as Executive Vice President of Brown's Super Stores, are the proud parents of four sons, Josh, Alex, Lenny, and Scott. Jeff is a fourth-generation grocer, and with the addition of his son Josh as the Chief Financial Officer for Brown's Super Stores, the Brown family has begun its fifth generation as grocers in the Philadelphia region. Over its 35-year history, Brown's Super Stores have employed more than 60,000 people, often providing individuals with their first work experience.

VISION

The path towards a prosperous future for every Philadelphian requires renewed energy and fresh approaches to how we collaborate and invest in the future growth of our remarkable city. It will take intentional, thoughtful, and engaged leadership to enact changes beneficial to all Philadelphians, and effective policies that will result in citywide economic growth.

If elected Mayor, what will be your vision for the City of Philadelphia?

As Mayor, my vision for Philadelphia is to help our city reach its full potential. My top three priorities are to restore public safety and end gun violence, create economic opportunity for all Philadelphians, and improve the delivery and efficiency of city services. I believe the root of Philadelphia's problems lie in our inability to address pervasive structural poverty and, through these priorities, I will work to uplift our city.

How would you describe your leadership style if elected? How would you work with the business and civic community in executing it?

Philadelphia's current struggles lead back to lack of strong leadership and effective management. Our City government is a large unionized workforce and, having run a unionized workforce of 2,300 unionized employees, I understand what it takes. In part, this means building a reliable team that can execute my vision and deliver what our city needs. As Mayor, I intend to be a present force and cheerleader for Philadelphia. This means having the Police Commissioner and other senior leaders in my office every morning and going out into the community to support our citizens. Throughout my career I have worked and built strong relationships with the business and civic community and I look forward to using these relationships to help Philadelphia achieve its potential. The business community is a critical part of improving our city - neighborhood by neighborhood - and my administration will work closely with Philadelphia's business to achieve our common goals.

POVERTY

Philadelphia's designation as the "poorest" of the largest U.S. cities is well documented. With 23.3% of residents living in poverty, over 350,000 of our fellow citizens are in need of resources and opportunities to make a better life for themselves and their families. The effects of poverty extend beyond the individual. They lead to lost tax revenue, increased fiscal burdens, and serve as a deterrent to the establishment and success of new businesses, jobs and income earners.

As Mayor, what would you do to reduce Philadelphia's poverty rate?

When I was growing up in Philadelphia, the poverty rate was 15%, now it's 23.3%. This is unacceptable and we need drastic change to ensure this number does not keep rising. One of the ways I will do this is by instituting career and technical education in our public school system. Our public school system currently functions with the end goal of students going to college. However, only a small percentage of our students do. By prioritizing workforce training in

schools, we would enable our youth to graduate high school and enter a $50,000 a year paying union job. As part of this vision, I will work to bring jobs into Philadelphia that meet these criteria. While we are a leading city in biotechnical engineering and gene therapy, most of this technology isn't being manufactured in Philadelphia. We need to bring these jobs to our city.

My administration will also create opportunities for entrepreneurs to create and achieve their dreams, with an emphasis on uplifting entrepreneurs of color. Through my Brown's Business Incubator I've been able to help 300+ entrepreneurs make their businesses a reality and I look forward to expanding these efforts as Mayor.

Further, what actions have you taken to help reduce Philadelphia's poverty rate?

As I previously stated, my business incubator has helped hundreds of Philadelphia entrepreneurs bring their businesses into fruition. Through my stores I have also employed thousands of Philadelphians, hiring straight from the neighborhoods. For many of them, it was their first job.

In 2009, my wife Sandy and I founded the non-profit Uplift Solutions, with the mission of reducing the barriers for justice-involved individuals and at-risk youth, helping them find pathways to success. The focus of Uplift is to help build long-term personal stability and financial success. Uplift employs a strategy built on the foundation of life skills training with a progression into technical skills training. The program provides both hard and soft skills through a combination of classroom instruction, hands on experience, and on-the-job support. Participants are required to complete an entrance survey that will inform the classroom instruction relative to life-skills training and social-services support. Uplift maintains engagement with program participants through its case management personnel for a period of three years. Through Uplift, we have created more than 550 careers, placed 100% of our participants, and achieved a recidivism rate of only 2%. This type of holistic approach is what the city should be utilizing and under my administration, we will dedicate the appropriate resources in this manner. Uplift currently does work with the city's prisons training people for work and with the DA's office to do diversion.

When the pandemic started, I co-founded the PA 30 Day Fund, an organization designed to provide support for small, struggling businesses. Upon hearing that PPP loans weren't going to small businesses, especially small businesses of color, we came together and raised 3+ million dollars which we gave out as forgivable loans. I called many of these business owners myself and witnessed firsthand how impactful and important this financial support was.

I also previously served as the Chairman of Philadelphia Youth Network which, under my leadership, aided 200,000 Philadelphia students in getting their first internships. I am also Chairman of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Workforce Development Board which has brought PA to its lowest unemployment rate in the Commonwealth's history. I am also a Board Member and Treasurer of Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity which helps ex-offenders receive pardons and expungements.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Philadelphia consistently ranks above the national average in terms of crime, especially violent offenses. In 2022 the city's gun violence statistics reached record levels for the third straight year with over 500 homicides and nearly 1,800 gunshot survivors.

If elected Mayor, what would you do to reduce crime, gun violence in Philadelphia?

We must immediately and urgently address our city's gun violence crisis. Part of that is filling the nearly 1,500 vacant officer positions we are missing from the Police Department. In rebuilding our police force, we must also re-envision the way we police our communities. We must build strong community ties, ensure we are diversifying our police force by recruiting from neighborhoods from across the city, and open rec centers and libraries to help occupy young people. We must also invest in improving our forensic resources and cameras so that we can successfully prosecute violent criminals. Additionally, as Mayor I will work with State and Federal law enforcement agencies to crack down on ghost guns and other hand gun loopholes.

What actions have you taken to date to help reduce crime and gun violence in the city?

Having worked in Philadelphia's neighborhoods throughout my career I have witnessed crime and gun violence in our city. Fifteen years ago, I started a gun buyback program which has taken thousands of guns off our streets. It has been so successful that last year the City joined us.

Is there a specific role that you envision businesses playing in helping to create a safe and clean environment?

Yes. We need to get Philadelphians into family-sustaining jobs. Individuals who are able to support their families with a reliable paycheck are less likely to get involved in criminal pursuits. As a key stakeholder, the business community has a clear, vested interest in the direction of our city. When properly engaged, businesses bring resources, manpower, jobs, and innovation to addressing the needs we face. The business community must feel engaged and involved in helping to turn our city around.

ECONOMY + JOB GROWTH

Philadelphia's unemployment rate of 10.6% is well above the U.S. average of 6.0%. Since 1970, Philadelphia jobs have decreased approximately 22% while regional competitors have realized double-digit gains. According to the Pew Charitable Trusts, Philadelphia has fewer business establishments per capita than comparable cities which diminishes opportunities for local employment, business to business contracting, lending and investment. Further, it severely limits the city's tax base for education, public safety, blight removal and other quality of life improvements.

If elected Mayor, what actions would you take to improve our economy, incentivize new and existing businesses to grow citywide and create more jobs? How will you make this a priority? Please be specific.

One of the first things we must do to incentivize new and existing businesses to grow citywide and create more jobs is make our city safe for all. By working with the police to get violent repeat-offenders off of our streets and ending the epidemic of violence we are facing, we will be more attractive to business.

My administration will also create an incentive for growing existing businesses or moving your business to Philadelphia. The incentive will be based on how many Philadelphia citizens are hired and the economic employment and business brought to the city. This 10 year incentive will give 50% of the city's economic benefit gained from the business back to the business. My administration will work to make this incentive stackable with state and federal incentives to maximize that capital for growing businesses in Philadelphia.

What do you see as the industry or industries best positioned to create inclusive economic growth for Philadelphia? If elected, how would you support their growth? Please be specific.

The industries I find most attractive to help raise Philadelphians out of poverty are ones rich in jobs that don't require a college degree but which we can train people for, such as logistics, manufacturing, and design in the creative arts. As I stated previously, we are a leading city in biotechnical engineering and gene therapy, yet most of this manufacturing isn't done in Philadelphia. We need to bring these jobs to Philadelphia so we can lower the barriers to well-paying jobs. Additionally, I am interested in exploring and expanding the e-commerce industry in Philadelphia. I will support these industries' growth through the previously mentioned incentive. And my administration will underwrite the cost of customized job training for employers. We will also work with state and federal programs to advocate for incentives and capital investments from all levels of government.

What specific actions have you taken in this regard?

I have led a unionized grocery business for over 35 years, employing over 60,000 people throughout my career. I am Chairman of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Workforce Development Board which has brought PA to its lowest unemployment rate in the Commonwealth's history. I served as the Chairman of Philadelphia Youth Network which, under my leadership, aided 200,000 Philadelphia students in getting their first internships. And I co-founded the PA 30 Day Fund, an organization designed to provide support for small, struggling businesses. I am also involved in financing, providing private equity to growing businesses.

TAXES + REGULATION

Philadelphia's tax rates are substantially higher than those of other major cities and nearby suburban municipalities. The City's Wage Tax and Business Privilege Tax rates are well above typical rates in other cities and local suburbs. Since the mid-1990s, the City's Five-Year Financial Plan has acknowledged that Philadelphia's unusually high tax rates make it difficult for the city to compete with other jurisdictions in attracting and retaining businesses and residents.

If elected Mayor, what regulations would you seek to reform in Philadelphia? What will you do to make it easier for businesses to register and operate within the city?

As Mayor I will put a 5% annual cap on Real Estate Taxes as a way to combat gentrification. Business moving into a community should be a positive, not a reason families are forced out of their homes. The rising value of a home is a way for Philadelphians to gain generational wealth, they should not be forced out due to exorbitant tax increases.

I will have a cabinet level position for process improvement and technology. This department will work to simplify all of our processes so we have a robust, user-friendly online system for everything one needs to do with the City, such as registering and operating businesses.

Specifically, do you support the continued or accelerated reductions of the city Wage Tax and Business Income and Receipts Tax?

Yes, I do.

EDUCATION + WORKFORCE

The mismatch between the educational qualifications of the population and the educational requirements of current and future jobs is dramatic in many of our nation's metropolitan areas, including Philadelphia. All too often employers struggle to fill skilled and professional jobs and employees are disadvantaged by the delta between educational skills and workforce needs.

What should Philadelphia's education and workforce development priorities be? Please be specific.

As I stated previously, our school system is designed to get Philadelphia students into college, despite the fact that a majority of our students don't go to college. My administration will implement career and technical education into our school district so students not going to college can feel secure knowing they have the skills and training to receive a $50,000 a year paying union job.

I also want Philadelphia Works to change its requirements so that it only funds nonprofit agencies that have direct partnerships with industry, in which they are training for specific jobs in ways the companies want. And it will require that every program has caseworkers to assist trainees with other challenges like housing, daycare, transportation, clothing, bank accounts, etc.

As Mayor how will you work with stakeholders to build a unified strategy to ensure Philadelphia's workforce needs are met?

As Mayor, I will build a partnership between the HR functions of businesses or small business owners and Philadelphia Works and the Commerce Department. That way we can better understand the individual hiring needs of businesses, understand what they need now and in the future, and work to connect the needs of businesses with underprivileged residents training to meet those needs.

Philadelphia is home to 55 colleges and universities and some of the nation's best medical service providers that play a critical role in addressing important policy issues like violence, education, and poverty. How do you envision working with them to help address these issues?

My administration will put together a team of our best experts on violence, education and poverty to help guide us through this critical time. They are an incredible resource for bringing our city out of this difficult time and I look forward to their input.