

Open Letter to Mayor Cherelle Parker

Toward a Healthier, Freer, and More Flourishing Philadelphia

Dear Mayor Parker,

Philadelphia stands at a crossroads.

With nearly **25% of our landmass devoted to green spaces**, we are one of the greenest cities in the country—yet Fairmount Park and other lush public areas remain drastically underutilized. These spaces should be *thriving* with life, conversation, creativity, and movement. Instead, they remain largely empty during the workday, while thousands of office workers remain trapped indoors under fluorescent lights, disconnected from the natural world that surrounds them.

I urge you to **lead a movement that sets our city free**—by **encouraging and facilitating outdoor, mobile work** across our parks and public spaces.

We live in a moment of incredible technological advancement. With the tools we now have—**iPhones, cloud computing, and AI**—most knowledge workers can accomplish their tasks anywhere. The office is no longer a place. It's a function. And it can happen in the shade of a tree just as effectively as behind a desk. It is time we **liberate our citizens from the cubicle** and allow them to bring their work out into the sun.

A Health Crisis That Demands Urgent Action

Today, nearly **7 out of 10 adults** and **4 out of 10 youth** in Philadelphia are overweight or obese. In some neighborhoods, those rates soar to **70% of young residents**. Roughly **1 in 7 adults** already lives with diabetes—many unaware until it's too late. Meanwhile, **metabolic syndrome impacts up to a third** of our population.

We are simultaneously *hungry, overweight, and chronically ill*.

These aren't just statistics—they are warnings. Communities suffering from food insecurity are often the same ones battling obesity and preventable disease. This isn't just a personal issue—it's a civic one. These conditions shorten lives, drain public resources, and rob families of vitality and joy.

A Vision for a Healthier, Happier City

Let's transform our city using what we already have: **land, light, and life**. Here are ideas we hope you'll champion:

1. Pilot an Outdoor Office District

Designate zones in places like Fairmount Park, Rittenhouse Square, and the Schuylkill River Trail with:

- Free public Wi-Fi
- Shaded seating and standing desks
- Solar charging stations
- Hammock zones and picnic areas

Encourage companies to promote “Work Outside Fridays” and lead the way in reimagining productivity.

2. Launch a Citywide 'PHL Moves' Program

A public campaign to get the city moving:

- Free yoga, calisthenics, and tai chi classes in public parks
- QR-coded guided fitness trails
- Movement ambassadors to lead morning exercise
- Spotlight citizen transformations through local storytelling

3. Build a Free Public Gymnasium in LOVE Park

Inspired by Ancient Greece, create a space where:

- People can weight train, stretch, and move freely
- No one is turned away based on income
- Movement becomes culture, not a commodity

Let this become a symbol of **human excellence** at the heart of Center City.

4. Partner with Amish Farmers at Scale

Build a formal partnership with Amish farms to bring **nutrient-rich, local food** into every Philadelphia neighborhood:

- Expand availability of clean meats, dairy, and produce in supermarkets
- Create weekly farmers markets in underserved areas
- Pilot a subscription-based “Amish Box” for direct delivery to residents
- Host mobile public kitchens with Amish chefs teaching clean cooking

This would reverse trends in chronic disease while building bridges between rural farmers and urban families.

5. Host a 'Work Outside Week' Every Spring

Invite all city employees and office workers to work outside for one week annually.

- Pop-up coworking stations across every major park
- Tech firms and startups lead by example
- Evening community events, talks, and wellness workshops

6. Create a Public Health Dashboard

Develop a simple, open-access online dashboard to track:

- Park usage and outdoor activity
- Obesity, diabetes, and metabolic health trends
- Participation in health and food programs

Make progress visible. Let data drive pride.

Reclaiming Health from the Inside Out

Let us also **reclaim our health from the inside out**:

- **Natural foods and clean diets** must be central to our city’s health vision. We need more than a few Amish stands at Reading Terminal—**we need Amish food from local farms in every grocery store across Philadelphia.**
- These nutrient-rich, chemical-free foods can help reverse chronic disease, improve mental health, and reinvigorate our communities—especially in underserved neighborhoods.
- Let Philadelphia be the first major city to scale up a *local food revolution* rooted in **clean farming, simplicity, and sustainability.**

Reclaiming Time, Health, and Meaning

Let’s use technology to **reclaim our time**. Let’s use our public parks to **reclaim our health**. Let’s use clean food to **reclaim our strength**. And let’s use freedom to **reclaim our meaning**.

In doing so, we can spark something greater—a **population boom** driven not by economic desperation, but by hope. By family values. By joy. Young people will want to stay, grow roots, and raise families in a city that feels alive.

Philadelphia Can Lead the Nation

Let’s not wait for another city to lead the way. Let Philadelphia become the first major American city where:

- **Public parks become our new office buildings**
- **Clean, local food fills our grocery stores**
- **Free movement becomes a civic right**
- **Beauty, nature, and vitality are felt by all**

The future is here—we just need the courage to build it.

Thank you for your leadership, and I hope you'll consider this vision.

With respect,
Dante Sisofo