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# The Philadelphia Inquirer

ALWAYS ASKING. ALWAYS PHILLY.

## Parker makes ardent appeal for rideshare tax

**City Council members argued back that it was difficult to close schools and levy additional costs on residents.**

By Kristen A. Graham  
Staff Writer

Mayor Chelle L. Parker on Wednesday made her best case for public schools, urging a skeptical City Council to rally behind

her proposed rideshare tax and to understand why some schools must close.

The extraordinary, 75-minute speech came after several City Council members threatened to hold up Philadelphia School District funding if the board continues with plans to close certain schools, including Lankenau High School.

In surrounding suburban counties, and elsewhere in Pennsylvania, Parker noted, if school systems need money to fix buildings, buy books or hire teachers, their boards raise the money themselves. In

Philadelphia, the school board lacks that option.

"It's this legislative body, not that school board, that has the power to generate the revenue that the School District of Philadelphia needs," Parker said. "We're not like the other school districts in our region. We have to work together in order to get it done, and I want us to figure out a way to get to yes."

The state contributes about half of the district's funding. But a landmark 2023 Commonwealth Court decision certified that Pennsylvania fails to meet its obligation to

fund low-wealth districts like Philadelphia, which is underfunded by more than \$1 billion annually, according to a state analysis.

Council members have made clear that though the district is insisting the rideshare tax and Superintendent Tony B. Watlington Sr.'s \$3 billion facilities plan — which would close 17 schools and modernize 169 — are unrelated, separating them is impossible.

Though closings are painful, Parker said, they are a must. And if Philadelphia wants to get more funding from the state, she said,

### Money talks

Pennsylvania has put \$1 billion toward underfunded schools, and a new report shows the new money has proven critical. **B1**

the city must show that it's made tough decisions and has put up extra funding, too.

"Mr. President, I know we're not trying to build the education system for the past — we're working on our children's future," the mayor said, speaking to City Council President

→ SEE SCHOOLS ON A10



Banshee designer Lance Saunders of Stokes Architecture & Design said rapid advances in LED systems have given designers more control over various areas of the dining room. At Banshee, the aim was "a very softly lit environment" that would still feel warm and inviting from the street, he said. Monica Herndon / Staff Photographer

## 'Is it dark in here?' Why so many restaurants are dimming the lights

**Designers are using warmer tones and lower light levels to make diners' experience more intimate and immersive.**

By Michael Klein  
Staff Writer

As night falls over South Street, the modern American bistro Banshee glows through its fling-out

windows, the restaurant's earth-toned dining room lit like a lantern. Warm light catches the tambour wood ceiling, candles pool softly on the tables, and opal globes cast a low radiance. The bar shimmers in layers of amber light. It is the kind of room designed to make dinner feel like an occasion, not a backdrop for cell phone food photography.

If upscale dining rooms seem dimmer than they used to, that is often intentional. Designers are using warmer tones, lower light levels, and tighter pools of

illumination to make restaurants feel more intimate and immersive. Lighting has become part of the mood, the brand — and the sales pitch.

Rapid advances in LED systems have given designers far more control over various areas of the dining room, said Lance Saunders of Stokes Architecture & Design, whose recent projects include Banshee, Provenance, and Borromini.

"Color temperature, color tuning, dimming systems — all of that has become much more advanced, and

it gives you much better quality of light and much more flexibility in how you light a space," Saunders said.

It's not darkness for darkness' sake.

While trying to make dinner feel like an experience rather than a meal, owners have made lighting part of the branding — a way to borrow some of the mood of cocktail bars, lounges, and boutique hotels. The goal is not just to illuminate the room, but to shape how the

→ SEE DARK ON A10

## Iranian forces step up attacks on shipping

**Three vessels were fired on in the Strait of Hormuz, and Tehran seized two of them. The White House said the ceasefire was intact.**

By Jon Gambrell  
and David Rising  
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran fired on three ships in the Strait of Hormuz and seized two of them on Wednesday, intensifying its assault on shipping in the key waterway. The attacks came a day after President Donald Trump extended a ceasefire while maintaining an American blockade of Iranian ports.

The standoff between the U.S. and Iran has effectively choked off nearly all exports through the strait, through which 20% of the world's traded oil passes in peacetime, with no end in sight. Iranian media said the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard was bringing the two ships to Iran, marking a further escalation, though the White House said the seizures did not violate ceasefire terms.

The conflict has already sent gas prices skyrocketing far beyond the region and raised the cost of food and a wide array of other products. The longer the strait remains closed, the more severe and widespread the effects will be — and the longer it will take the economy to bounce back.

The price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, nosed over \$100 per barrel, marking a 35% increase from prewar levels, but stock markets still appear to be shrugging it off.

The European Union energy commissioner, Dan Jørgensen, warned of lasting effects for

→ SEE IRAN ON A4

### Navy secretary leaving job

John Phelan's departure is the latest in a series of shake-ups of top leadership at the Pentagon. **A3**

## How Philly is working to clear abandoned cars

**The city has begun to reverse the trend of rising abandoned vehicle reports as the administration prioritizes the issue.**

By Nate File  
and Joe Yerardi  
Staff Writers

In Philly, abandoned cars are like giant aluminum pests — persistent and difficult to fully eradicate, and seemingly most abundant in the spring and summer.

The number of reports of

abandoned cars to 311 has risen significantly over the last decade in Philadelphia, with seasonal peaks in the warmer months and valleys in the colder ones.

In 2016, the greatest number of abandoned vehicle reports in a month was 1,638 in August. In May 2024, there were 3,585, an all-time high.

But while the number of abandoned car reports remains high, the city may have finally begun to reverse the trend. In 2025, there were 27,992 abandoned vehicle reports, the lowest total since 2020 and down roughly 5,000 reports from 2024.

Those working on the abandoned car problem say progress has

→ SEE CARS ON A6



An abandoned car without plates was parked for months in 2024 on the 700 block of East Ontario Street in Kensington, an area with a particularly high number of abandoned vehicle reports. Tom Gralish / Staff Photographer

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