

Questionnaire for Mayoral Candidates of Tbilisi

Please answer the following questions in no more than 250 words each. You can leave some questions unanswered if you believe they do not merit being addressed by a separate policy or if you do not have specific positions on those issues.

General Views / Political Platform Summary

1. What do you think are the main priorities for the city's development?

We would refine the city's development plan and make changes with the involvement of community experts. To do this, we would need to create a solid institutional framework that would prevent arbitrary or unprofessional decisions, even if those decisions weren't corrupt.

Development and Economy

2. Please provide a concise description of your vision or plan, if you have one, for Tbilisi's long-term economic development.

The main factor in Tbilisi's economic development is the changing political and legal environment across the country. We would introduce the following additional steps to promote the city's economic development:

1. Making Tbilisi City Hall free from corruption.
2. Relocating the railway, thus freeing up land for an investment and recreation zone in the city center. This project would require several hundred million dollars of investment and create a new automobile artery that would significantly improve traffic and movement within the city.
3. Developing new bridges and cable-car lines and improving the transport system in general.
4. Addressing the parking problem by complying with building regulations and encouraging multilevel parking-structure construction.
5. Refurbishing historical sites and increasing their tourism potential.
6. Setting up interconnected recreational spaces.
7. Developing the Tbilisi Sea and fully integrating it with the rest of the city. This would enable the development of its vast tourist, industrial, and construction potential.
8. Transforming Tbilisi into an education-exporting city.
9. Promoting relevant legislative, infrastructure, and other government projects to attract large-scale private investments.

3. In your view, what are the main problems impeding Tbilisi's economic development?

Corruption in the Tbilisi City Hall System: Making Tbilisi City Hall free from corruption would allow the people of Tbilisi to enjoy the real benefits of the billions in the city budget. At the same time, thousands of people who work honestly and professionally in Tbilisi City Hall would be properly rewarded.

- Today up to thirty thousand people work in City Hall. Their number has increased by at least seven to eight thousand in recent years. This nepotistic and corrupt system prevents us from solving the most acute social or infrastructure problems facing Tbilisi residents and rewarding the work of kindergarten teachers, cleaning and transport staff, art-school teachers, and other employees by paying them enough to bear hardships and poverty that have been exacerbated by inflation.
- Eradicating corruption from the Tbilisi government requires political will, and resolving this issue is a precondition for the city's development.

4. In your view, what advantages or capabilities does Tbilisi have that you could utilize to promote its economic and urban development?

Georgia and Tbilisi have the potential to create the best residential, tourist, and business environment within an eight hundred to one thousand-kilometer radius, become educational, cultural, scientific, and financial centers, and advance in terms of democracy, human rights, and fair business environments. Tbilisi and Georgia could become regional infrastructure hubs. Inclusive development in all these areas would contribute to rapid economic growth.

5. What are your budgetary priorities? Please provide a concise description of your budgetary policy.

Our budget priorities would be to increase employment, solve social problems more effectively, and spend more efficiently on infrastructure projects. The funds intended for the comfort of officials would be significantly reduced, and this money would be used to create jobs and solve social problems. Real steps would be taken to make the city greener, improve its ecological condition, and create a healthy environment for every citizen. The implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects is crucial. This would enable Tbilisi to realize its massive potential. Instead of bureaucratic expenses, most of the money should be redistributed to social programs.

6. What are your plans for improving Tbilisi's business and commercial infrastructure and attracting investments to the city?

To attract large-scale private investments, the municipal government needs to provide appropriate legislation, infrastructure, and other support to investors.

[Urban Development / City Planning / Home Construction](#)

7. What measures would you take to create better housing conditions for the city's residents?

Developing basic infrastructure and implementing large-scale infrastructure projects would be our first task in developing the city.

8. What are your plans for ensuring the cleanliness of the city's streets?

First, it is important to regulate wage policy and ensure that wages are enough to meet people's needs. We need to constantly update equipment and employees' personal gear and immediately address problems at

landfills. The removal of construction waste remains a significant problem that needs to be addressed immediately.

Infrastructure and Transportation

9. What measures would you take to improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians in the city?

Today, the movement of pedestrians, especially along the riverbanks, is impractical and dangerous thanks to the overcrowded network of main roads in the central area of the city. Strategic planning of pedestrian spaces has a significant impact on economic development as well. As studies show, pedestrian cities are more economically efficient. Pedestrians significantly increase revenue at local businesses in urban areas. Therefore, when implementing infrastructure projects in the city, special attention should be paid to pedestrian spaces which make it possible to create new small businesses such as cafes, children's attractions, shopping stands, and regulated outdoor shopping areas in rehabilitated spaces. This would bring thousands of additional jobs to the city.

We need to make it easier for pedestrians to move so that they don't have to walk on the road when there isn't any sidewalk space. This is currently a common practice and, in addition to causing traffic jams, threatens people's lives. Therefore, we need to completely stop people from parking on the sidewalk.

10. What measures would you take to improve the public transportation system?

The constant development and regulation of public transport is crucial for containing and preventing traffic jams in Tbilisi. One of the main problems in Tbilisi today is that public transport is insufficient and unpopular. The city needs at least nine hundred buses. In addition to adjusting the existing route network to real needs, this would also allow us to add new routes and increase the number of buses on existing ones, thus reducing waiting times for passengers and making public transport more attractive.

Developing Electric Transport:

- **Tram** - According to today's data, ninety percent of the air is polluted by emissions, with cars being one of the main culprits. A tram is a high-capacity, environmentally friendly, economical, and safe mode of transport that is convenient for people with disabilities. Most importantly, it consumes electricity, does not pollute the air, moves in the lane assigned to it, and, as a result, arrives at the destination faster than other vehicles. A single tram can carry several busloads of passengers at once. We need to quickly do a detailed study to determine where a tram line could be placed and how much money could be allocated for it in the budget.
- **Cable cars** – It is important to develop the cable car as an ecologically clean, modern, and comfortable mode of public transport. This would enable better, faster, and more comfortable movement of passengers, both tourist and resident. At the initial stage, we would want to build the following lines: University - Bagebi - Tskneti, Didube - Vashlijvari - Lisi, Tbilisi Sea – Lotkin - Station Square, Tbilisi Sea District - Akhmeteli Theater, Vazisubani - Samgori Metro station, Vake

Park, connecting Turtle Lake with a new station - Mtatsminda at the existing station – Narikala - Rike.

- **Tbilisi subway** – In addition to the major ongoing renovation of existing Metro and subway infrastructure, we need to start work on designing new Metro lines and increasing the number of trains.

11. What measures would you take to improve road safety conditions in the city?

Well-regulated road infrastructure - Sustainable development of the road network is an essential component for smooth movement on the roads. This development would include three main areas:

1. Constructing new roads, tunnels, bridges, and overpasses.
2. Upgrading existing roads.
3. Repairing potholes on existing roads.

To develop the city’s road infrastructure and relieve traffic jams, at minimum, we would need to implement the following infrastructure projects:

- Building a two-level overpass at the intersection of Tamarashvili and University Streets.
- Connecting the new highway from Vere Gorge with the tunnel leading to Laguna Vere at Heroes’ Square.
- Arranging two levels of traffic through a tunnel on Marshal Gelovani Square near the Tiger and Knight Monument.
- Building a ramp on the left side of Galaktioni Bridge, where it crosses Ushangi Chkheidze Street.
- Arranging two levels of traffic at the intersection of Sheshelidze and Gobronidze Streets for vehicles moving from Mukhiani.
- Constructing a bridge connecting the Marneuli and Rustavi highways to the lower Samgori on the Mtkvari River.
- It is especially important to develop transverse connections in the city - building new bridges over the Mtkvari River, moving the railway, and constructing a bridge to the Tiger and the Knight monument.

Railway Relocation – The transport network on the streets adjacent to the railway is underdeveloped, and road connections and access are complicated. The nearest transport links are only four kilometers away. As a result, much of the central part of Tbilisi is unused and underdeveloped compared to the rest of the city and difficult to access in terms of transport. By relocating the railway, the surrounding streets would be completely relieved of traffic, and we would build a much shorter highway connecting Tbilisi to the east (Kakheti) and west (Mtskheta). Relocating the railway would also reduce the number of cars in the central parts of the city by two thousand per hour. We would build new road connections across the highway and refurbish and develop the transport network adjacent to the railway with several important new junctions. We would split the road around Isani Bridge in two, with one artery following the existing railway line and the other joining the new avenue.

12. What measures would you take to improve mobility within the city for people with disabilities?

It is especially important to create better infrastructure for pedestrians with disabilities by building sidewalks with ramps, installing special paths and signs for the blind, and having traffic lights equipped with audible signals. We need to ensure the free and safe movement of people with disabilities.

13. What measures would you take to address problems related to stray animals?

There are two ways to solve this problem: building shelters and spaying or neutering.

Culture and Education

14. What programs would you implement to enhance Tbilisi’s cultural life?

Cultural heritage is the history of our city – a treasure that is our most valuable and precious asset. Cultural heritage sites should be restored, strengthened, and fully refurbished.

In the case of the private sector complying with the rules and acting in the interest of protecting and preserving cultural heritage, we need to simplify the procedures necessary for investors to obtain documentation and receive tax benefits for acting in the interests of the city.

15. What measures would you take in your capacity as mayor to improve the quality of education and make it more affordable?

Our goal is to make sure Tbilisi becomes an education-exporting city.

Safety and Crime

16. What measures would you take to fight and prevent crime?

Crime is one of the main problems facing our population and negatively affects the country’s tourist and investment climate. The 2 October referendum and changing the government through early parliamentary elections would allow the law enforcement system to be rapidly reformed, depoliticized, and use all its resources to fight crime. To ensure the city’s security, the municipality should act within its jurisdiction and install lighting and external cameras in public spaces.

Healthcare and Social Policy

17. Please describe your social policies and the kinds of social programs you would implement to improve the quality of life in the city.

Poverty remains a significant challenge for Tbilisi, just like for the rest of the country. As part of our municipal job creation program (see our economic vision), we need to make sure that funds allocated for social security are spent properly and without any discrimination – especially on political grounds. Of

current programs, the free cafeteria program, which serves up to forty thousand citizens, needs to be significantly upgraded.

Many state programs need to be integrated at the municipal level and citizen participation in these programs simplified as much as possible. It is important for citizens to be able to receive social assistance packages on a one-stop basis. This would make administering these programs more efficient and increase their accessibility to beneficiaries.

18. How do you plan to improve general healthcare indicators in Tbilisi?

As the economy becomes more developed, healthcare expenditures from the state budget should increase, and this funding should cover everyone regardless of political affiliation. Improving healthcare depends largely on the country's economic development and the health and social policies implemented by the central government. The problem of coronavirus vaccination is particularly acute, and the effectiveness of municipal authorities plays an important role both in promoting vaccines and facilitating the vaccination process. In addition, we need to direct funds from Tbilisi's municipal budget allocated for healthcare to target groups more effectively.

19. How do you plan to improve social conditions for homeless people?

The municipality needs to address the problem of homeless citizens' civil registrations and include them in all state or municipal social programs.

Ecology, Recreation, and Sport

20. How do you plan to improve Tbilisi's ecological condition?

No existing recreational space should be sacrificed for construction. We need to improve existing recreational zones and connect them with each other. Based on specialists' conclusions, we need to consider the idea of cultivating a large central park on Arsenal Mountain.

21. What measures would you take to expand and develop recreational areas and parks in the city?

No existing recreational space should be sacrificed for construction. We need to improve existing recreational zones and connect them with each other. Based on specialists' conclusions, we need to consider the idea of cultivating a large central park on Arsenal Mountain.

22. How do you plan to improve sports activities, promote healthy lifestyles, and develop the city's recreation and sports infrastructure?

We need to rehabilitate playgrounds and build new ones. City Hall should be actively involved in constructing sports infrastructure and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Cultural Heritage

23. What measures would you take to preserve Tbilisi’s historical appearance?

We would use funds from the budget to completely renovate areas of the city with historical and tourist potential. We must maintain the authenticity of buildings during the restoration process, preserve the unique landscape of these areas, and consider the interests of residents.

24. What do you think about the possible demolition of the Art Museum?

Even the thought of demolition is a crime! This historic building needs complete and large-scale reconstruction. The plan for temporarily relocating exhibits should be fully transparent and implemented with the involvement of experts.

Other Issues

25. In July 2021, there was large-scale violence against the LGBTQIA+ community and journalists. What is your position on this issue?

Violence is unacceptable, and the perpetrators must be punished. The state must enforce the law. People cannot be discriminated against on any grounds.

26. As mayor, given the capabilities of the office and your political role, how would you protect and promote the right to freedom of assembly and association?

Freedom of speech and expression is one of the most fundamental values of democracy and must be guaranteed.

27. How would you address problems related to unfinished construction projects and derelict or damaged buildings?

We need to continue strengthening severely damaged buildings with funds from the budget and rehabilitating areas of the city with historical and tourist potential. At the same time, we need to create a special program to stimulate the construction industry and financial institutions in the process. By using budget funding and private investment effectively, we could solve the problem of thousands of damaged, demolished, and unfinished constructions.

Our approach would be as follows:

1. Relocating the railway from the existing area. This would make the surrounding environment safer and healthier and the real estate more attractive to investors. We would lift restrictions in the vicinity of the railway, making construction and development possible and solving the problem of damaged homes.
2. Creating and implementing targeted programs such as New Life in Old Tbilisi to build new houses on the site of damaged buildings in Tbilisi. These programs would assist and encourage builders to complete several unfinished constructions and solve residents’ housing problems.

3. Introducing development regulations in damaged areas facing emergencies. These plans would create projects for investors to build on the site of damaged homes. In developing each project, City Hall would need to determine the specific amount of development and the parameters that would make the projects attractive to investors and serve the interests of the city.
4. Continuing to refurbish severely damaged multi-apartment buildings with funds from the budget.
5. Changing legislation to allow the refurbishment of existing homes or the construction of new ones on privately owned plots only with the written approval of City Hall in areas of the city with single-family homes that are damaged and whose residents are facing difficult living conditions.

28. What is your position regarding the construction of the Tbilisi railway bypass?

Railway Relocation – The transport network on the streets adjacent to the railway is underdeveloped, and road connections and access are complicated. The nearest transport links are only four kilometers away. As a result, much of the central part of Tbilisi is unused, underdeveloped compared to the rest of the city, and difficult to access in terms of transport. By relocating the railway, the surrounding streets would be completely relieved of traffic, and we would build a much shorter highway connecting Tbilisi to the east (Kakheti) and west (Mtskheta). Relocating the railway would also reduce the number of cars in the central parts of the city by two thousand per hour. We would build new road connections across the highway and refurbish and develop the transport network adjacent to the railway with several important new junctions. We would split the road around Isani Bridge in two, with one artery following the existing railway line and the other joining the new avenue.

29. The Mtkvari River, an integral part of Tbilisi, is at this point underdeveloped. How do you think it could be used more effectively for transportation or recreation?

Our goal is to build bridges connecting the Marneuli and Rustavi highways to lower Samgori on the Mtkvari River and other additional bridges.