

League of Women Voters of Teaneck

Voters' Guide for Town Council Election 2022

Our voters' guide questionnaire and letter of invitation to the Candidates' Night, sponsored by LWV/Teaneck, were emailed to each of the candidates for Teaneck Township Council on September 15, 2022 with a deadline date of September 26th. In addition to asking them about their Teaneck residency, occupation, education, family & community involvement, we asked them to answer the following questions and to limit their three answers to a total of 500 words or less:

1. **What is your position regarding the Master Plan and how it relates to both recent development projects as well as future development?**
2. **How would you suggest improving transparency at council meetings and opening up the council's statutory & advisory boards to more community involvement?**
3. **Give specific suggestions on how to improve Teaneck's business districts, especially Cedar Lane and Teaneck Road**

The candidates' responses follow unedited, and in the order received:

Hillary Goldberg, 984 Queen Anne Road

Years residing in Teaneck: 38 years

Occupation: Finance Director

Education: B.A- Ramapo College of New Jersey, M.P.A- CUNY John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Family: Grandparents: Howard and Marilyn Reinert; Parents: Abbe and Yossi Rosner;
Son: Michael Goldberg

Community Involvement:

- Founding member of and first Editor- in- Chief of *Teaneck Voices* Newsletter
- Founder and Owner of *Teaneck Tomorrow* and *Teaneck Tomorrow Jr.*
- Member of Congregation Beth Shalom
- Member of One Town One Vote

1. The Master Plan is a social contract between the township and residents that is a vision for all development and land use, as well as and a decision-making guide for growth.
 - Development in recent years has not always been consistent with the Master Plan.
 - With variances and Areas in Need of Redevelopment becoming the new normal, the community has had limited opportunity to provide input on the new projects and the vision for Teaneck.
 - When it comes to development, it is not necessarily just what is being done, but the how and the where.
 - The last full master plan re-examination was done in 2007, with some changes in 2017. The Municipal Land Use Law requires municipalities to complete a re-examination every 10 years. I will advocate for a complete Master Plan re-examination with

community input. New development should always be consistent with the Master Plan, with variances being the exception.

2. In 2020, the Council passed an ordinance closing the 13 advisory boards to the public. Teaneck had a longstanding tradition to allow the public to attend and participate in advisory board meetings. I will advocate for repealing the 2020 ordinance and to re-open the advisory boards to the public for attendance and participation. At the time the agenda packet is issued, I will advocate for subcommittee and advisory board meeting minutes to be posted on the website, to provide opportunity for residents to read and prepare questions in advance of council meetings.

If any resident question or comment is not addressed in the Council's response to Good and Welfare (the period during a council meeting when residents are able to speak or ask questions at a public meeting), that resident should receive a follow up within 24 hours of the Council meeting addressing their concern and question. call - and we look forward to having discussions about our future with all our stakeholders.

3. All of our business districts should be revitalized to bring the modern retail experience to Teaneck.
- We should prioritize the construction of mixed-use development, which includes two to three stories of apartments on top of retail stores, in our business districts.
 - Work with all stakeholders- developers, landlords, tenants, Planning Board, Council, and Chamber of Commerce to address the best way to revitalize the four business districts, while minimizing financial disruption to the businesses and community.
 - By allowing people to live, shop, and work in Teaneck, specifically in our four business districts, will bring greater foot traffic, new businesses and shopping dollars to Teaneck.
 - Make our business districts inviting to shoppers with changes such as widening our sidewalks, a real street scape, promoting outdoor dining and benches. Our business districts should be a place people want to spend time and money.

Elie Y. Katz, 1000 Phelps Road

Years residing in Teaneck: 48 years

Occupation: Business Development

Education: College Degree

Family: Married, three children

Community Involvement:

- Teaneck Township Councilman, 1998 - present
- Deputy Mayor 2000-2002; Mayor 2006-2008
- Teaneck business owner
- Lifetime member, Teaneck Volunteer Ambulance Corps (joined at age 15)
- Chairman, Teaneck Youth Advisory Board, 1991-1992 (age 16)
- Teaneck Advisory Board on Community Relations
- Teaneck Fire Department Box 54
- Teaneck Police Crime Stoppers Program

1. The Master Plan is used as our guide on how we develop & keep up with it.
2. Suggest council members proactively go out in the community & individually spend time soliciting feedback & be accessible to all residents. Not just during times of elections.
3. Infuse more parking. Need to work on bringing in tenants that are going to be complementors to the community & not just a tenant paying rent to the landlord.

Danielle Gee, 83 Cranford Street

Years residing in Teaneck: 10 years

Occupation: Non-Profit Executive

Education: Princeton B.A, Public Policy; Harvard MBA

Family: Married with three sons ages 10, 8 and 2

Community Involvement:

- School Board Trustee (Finance, Personnel, Community Relations, Policy & Negotiations committees, Forum Liaison)
- Bergen County School Boards Association
- NJ School Boards Association
- Served on Superintendent's Beyond Diversity Committee
- Whittier School PTO, past President & Treasurer
- Bryant PTO, Corporate Fundraising Chair
- Bergen County Mocha Moms
- Jack and Jill (Bergen-Passaic)

1. The purpose of the master plan is to guide the future growth and development of Teaneck. It sets explicit goals and objectives that should inform how our governing bodies make decisions about land development. Our most recent master plan was developed in 2007 and it has since been reexamined three times in 2011, 2014 and 2017. Given the substantial changes in our town over the last 15 years, I would strongly advocate for the development of a new master plan to ensure that we make decisions based on the most up-to-date assessment of our town's dynamic needs. I would advocate that we continue to preserve the low-density residential character of the town but also consider the addition of mixed-use buildings to revitalize our downtown areas. Throughout the development process I would insist on the inclusion of community leaders and residents to ensure buy-in from all stakeholders with a particular focus on those most impacted by potential development changes. In addition, we must consider the impact of development on the current town infrastructure including school district capacity, circulation, local traffic, transportation, and all other shared services. Finally, to ensure that Teaneck is a place where all residents can thrive, I will advocate for more affordable housing and development to accommodate our aging residents.

2. In order to improve transparency at Council meetings, I would encourage the council to provide the public with more insight into their decision-making processes and also the rationale for how final decisions are made, barring instances where legally, confidentiality is mandated.

When residents believe that the decision-making process is fair and understand the reason why decisions are made, even when they might disagree with the final decision, they are more likely to accept or understand it. Strong two-way communication is also key to improving transparency. If elected, I would advocate for a new communication channel, perhaps entitled “Council Office Hours”, where the public would have the opportunity to meet with 3 or fewer Council members for open dialogue on a monthly basis.

One way to open up the council’s statutory and advisory boards to more community involvement is to educate residents on how to apply for positions on these boards. In addition, it would be beneficial to host broader educational programs on local civic engagement, building a pipeline of potential leaders who represent the diverse makeup of the township.

3. - Explore the availability of federal and state grants to support existing businesses as well as entrepreneurs.
 - Sponsor events to facilitate engagement between local businesses and residents.
 - Partner with Board of Education to create local job opportunities for students
 - Recommend investment in the streetscape to beautify aging streets and increase walkability.
 - Support the development of mixed-use buildings, combining residential units on upper floors and retail business on the ground floor.
 - Review circulation patterns and parking capacity to ensure that we have the infrastructure to support a bustling downtown.
 - Explore opportunities to reduce local car traffic such as bike-sharing services and adding bike lanes.

Chondra Young, 229 Irvington Avenue

Years Residing in Teaneck: 32 years

Occupation: Accountant/Financial Compliance Analyst

Education: B.A. Accounting (Stockton University); currently pursuing MA in Government Accounting (Rutgers University)

Family: Husband (married for 24 years); Daughters Jade & Deja

Record of Community Involvement:

- *Leadership Teaneck* Graduate – 201
- Teaneck Rd Business Community Alliance – since 2013
- Girl Scout Troop Leader – 2006 – Current
- Advisory Board on Community Relations – 2019-2020
- PTO Council President – 2015 – 2017 (Current)
- PTO Co-President (various schools) – 2012 -2022
- BOE Building Quality Management Team – 2011-2014
- BOE District Advisory Team – 2011-2014
- Volunteer Tutor Math and Word Play Adventures – 2010-2012
- Co-Campaign Manager, One Teaneck –2014 Election
- THS Girls Basketball Boosters, President – 2020 – 2022
- THS Track & Field Boosters, President – 2020 -2022

- 1.. Teaneck has become a town where developers’ grab property and propose multi-unit residential concepts that significantly violate our Master Plan and expect Council to accede. Before exploring options and getting corroboration that revenue for these projects will exceed what they will cost in public expense, Council makes unsupported claims. The Council’s 5-1 decision [Mayor absent] to approve development of 1500 Teaneck Road is a perfect example. The Council agreed to a Master Plan amendment and zoning excluding (despite neighbor support) any retail component. It has proclaimed huge tax burden benefits, but the Township’s planner said she did not believe the project would be a fiscal burden and projected no net revenue. We need a complete up to date Master Plan drawn up by the Township planner, experts, and input/open participation from the residents. The Master Plan needs to be reviewed/revise/revamped regularly according to the statute requirements so that Teaneck will have a clear guide for the direction it will take on development, land uses and community facilities.

2. Currently the public can only attend meetings of statutory & advisory boards if they are invited by the board chair and may only stay for the part of the meeting that pertains to their reasoning for being invited. The first step at improving transparency would be to overturn Ordinance 6099 (#15-2020) dated 8/11/2020, which restricts the public from participating in meetings. It is important that the Advisory Boards actively encourage public input. Council and Board members should be committed to full disclosure of, but not limited to conflicts of interest, sources of income, business and real estate interests related to the township. There should be a consequence for any member who fails to comply. The second step should be a re-examination of current board members to ensure to the residents that the best possible member, having expertise, and knowledge related to their board appointment. Third, we may want to consider term limits to allow for a continuous flow of new appointments as our town population continues to grow and may include some qualified professionals who may want to volunteer.

3. We need to emerge stronger especially after COVID by supporting small businesses, a thriving high tech environment and making necessary infrastructure improvements. The aesthetics and functionality is very important for a thriving business district. We have four business districts, Cedar Lane, Teaneck Road, DeGraw Avenue, and West Englewood Avenue/Queen Anne Road, known as “The Plaza”; I would suggest that we hire an Economic Development Specialist, to promote and encourage the economic vitality of Teaneck. The Economic Development Specialist would facilitate public meetings for discussion. I would also suggest that the Council co-sponsor with the Teaneck Chamber of Commerce, Teaneck Rd Business Community Alliance, and other local businesses, a career development program, or Business Initiative Course designed similar to *Leadership Teaneck*, but the goal is for residents to become business owners in the town. The course should include business basics, a mentorship component, and assistance with small business grants that are available.

Desiree Ramos Reiner, 105 Bergen Avenue

Years residing in Teaneck: 6

Occupation: Non-Profit Communications Executive

Education: B.A., Columbia University

Family: 2 children, Husband

Community Involvement:

- Volunteer organizer and event emcee, Teaneck Si Se Puede Mural
- Member of Planning Board
- Member of SPOT, Special Parents of Teaneck
- Member of SEPAG, Special Education Parents Advisory Group
- Member of PTO/PTA (previously Bryant, now Hawthorne)
- Former Governor Appointee to NJ Free Cuba Task Force
- Former Board Member, NJ Federation of Democratic Women
- Former Board Member, Latinas United for Political Empowerment (LUPE)
- Former PANYNJ Representative to Hudson County Chamber of Commerce
- Former Member, Union County Workforce Investment Board

1. A master plan captures a moment in time and is intended to be flexible to grow with a community. The Teaneck Master Plan calls for protection of zoning for multifamily housing, to encourage the rehabilitation of buildings and parcels and to preserve the character of existing low-density housing; goals I agree with. New developments have abided by the updated the Master Plan Reexamination, with the approval of developments that will help meet the Fair Share Housing obligation for 714 affordable housing units, built on vacant commercial properties, and/or in areas with existing apartment buildings.

2. As I go door to door, transparency is not an issue people raise. But they would love more information regarding programs, activities and how to get trees cut down or their roadway concerns addressed. To this end, the township website, which is being re-designed, needs to be more accessible and organized. Pushing more information through a variety of platforms - electronic and paper based for our non-technology using neighbors- can also help to keep people informed and engaged. However, we must also recognize that as a governing body, there are many topics that the council is restricted legally from speaking about in public until certain milestones are met.

There should be more opportunities to hear from residents in informal settings. The township could investigate hiring a fulltime director of law who can meet with residents to discuss ordinances and issues and help find solutions. As well as a public information officer or communications firm to help with sharing information.

We should reopen public participation for meetings of advisory boards to the Council and examine which boards the township needs. The advisory boards would work best and be a better volunteer experience with a defined goal/mission, consistent reporting, updates and holding individual members/chairs accountable.

Third, I want to increase community involvement, not only for those who are on a board. As council members, we need to meet our neighbors in their neighborhood and talk about the varied topics where they live, to develop solutions that are tailored to the unique experiences of various neighborhoods.

3. As someone who lives in the southern end of town, the revitalization of the business area near DeGraw Ave. should also be on this list. Attracting new businesses to our town is an

all hands on deck project. As a council member, I would use my experience to bring together existing business owners/stakeholders to listen to their challenges and innovative ideas. We need more than window dressing to attract new businesses and shoppers. As council members, we should be ambassadors who speak at forums and conferences about the exciting projects underway. As council, we should also work with the Chambers of Commerce at the local, county and state level to bring programming to our Town as an opportunity to showcase existing businesses and highlight opportunities for new businesses and developments. We need to actively say, early and often, that Teaneck is a great place to live, work and shop.

Latisha Garcia, 962 Farragut Drive

Years residing in Teaneck: Born & raised, 34 yrs (moved away 6 yrs)

Occupation: Finance

Education: Bachelors of Science: Accounting with a minor in Mathematics
And some Grad School (2yrs)

Family: Husband (Ronald Isley-Robinson), Two daughters (Alexia & Teralyn)
and one son (Calais)

Community Involvement:

- Girl Scout Troop leader (6 years)
- Teaneck Girl Scout Service unit member (6 years)
- Overpeck Park River Cleanup (3 years) w/ my GS Troop
- Helping Hands Food drive (2 Years) w/ my GS Troop
- Packathon for Haiti (4 years) w/ my GS Troop and independently
- Community Police and Fire Drive by Santa (1 year) w/ my GS Troop & Helping Hands Pantry
- PTA Executive Board Member (3 years Hawthorne)
- PTA Member: Bryant, Hawthorne, Thomas Jefferson (6 years)
- Teaneck Thanksgiving Feeding our First Responders (1 Years) w/ my GS Troop
- Veteran's Flag Ceremony St Anastasia (1 Year) w/ my GS Troop
- Teaneck Township Memorial Day (1 year) w/ my GS Troop

1.
 - a. In favor of the 2007 original Master Plan's Goals/Objectives
 - b. Not in favor of "Ratable Chase" (keeping property tax rates down is to discourage single residential development in favor of multi resident and commercial developments)
 - c. Seek developers interested in single townhome developments
 - d. Impose unit caps and height restrictions on all future developments to control the traffic, student body enrollment and maintain the integrity of our suburban lifestyle.

2.
 - a. Council Transparency: when voting on the ordinances mentioning them vs reading off numbers
 - b. Council's statutory & Advisory boards: Open to the public for listening purposes only. With a formal Q&A before any ordinances are adopted or presented to the council for voting. Allowing residents to voice their concerns or share opinions.

- 3.. a. Building renovations
- b. Parking adjustments/ updates
- c. Proper and adequate lighting
- d. Landlord tenant assistance program (helping landlords' source viable tenants)

Anthony Bruno, 209 Elm Avenue

Years Residing in Teaneck: 60 years

Occupation: Pharmacist

Education: St. John's University – College of Pharmacy

Family: Donna T. Bruno (wife) Antonietta Bruno (daughter) Alessandro Bruno (son)

Record of Community Involvement:

- Coached Junior Football

1. It appears residents (including myself) would want more senior housing. In these senior housing options, I would try to establish that Teaneck residents would get first priority. I would have no objection to affordable housing. For future development, Holy Name Hospital needs more attention to expand so that it can remain competitive with other hospitals in Bergen County. I am always in favor of recreation for both youth and our seniors. I would recommend the expansion of the Rhoda Center to create a separate wing as a senior center. When speaking in regard to development, most residents in town will complain if you do and if you do not. Examples are 60 Bergen Avenue and the new 1425 Teaneck Road for 55 years and over residents. I feel that the township should locate property as it becomes available, designate it as re-developments and change the zoning laws. This will allow Teaneck to own the property and building so that we can have 15-20% affordable housing. I am in favor of future development for seniors. The goal is to keep our seniors in town.
2. I would encourage community meetings and workshops throughout the year. Discuss issues that may come up with residents. Communication with residents is key. Also, having the correct information is vital. In general, I feel that the Township Council and Manager have been very transparent with the residents.
3. Have a marketing plan to promote and integrate both Cedar Lane and Teaneck Road. For example, the residents of the Northeast sector visit Cedar Lane, and residents of Southern Teaneck visit Teaneck Road. Speak to and work with realtors and landlords. The goal is to make Cedar Lane and Teaneck Road "destination locations" for Teaneck residents and other people visiting our town. Examples of these locations to emulate are Ridgewood Ave and Westwood Ave. We currently have excellent anchor attractions such as Movie theatre, Bischoff's, Butterflake, and Noah's Arch. I would suggest newer and more diverse eateries which stay open later. Bring in more "upscale" stores such as Starbucks, and brand-name clothing stores. Re-design current parking lots and possibly build parking decks. To avoid traffic concerns, we need to work with the police department and engineers to address the proper flow of traffic.

Denise Belcher, 39 Bogert Street

Years Residing in Teaneck: 40 years

Occupation: Real Estate Broker and Educator

Education: Bachelor of Science Degree – Morgan State University

Family: Two daughters

Record of Community Involvement:

- Board Director of New Jersey Multiple Listing Service (NJMLS)
- Member of NCBW Bergen Passaic Chapter
- Coordinator of Affordable Housing Forums
- Member of AA Chamber of Commerce
- Founding Officer of Teaneck Road Business Community Alliance
- Past President, Teaneck Chamber of Commerce
- Former Teaneck Planning Board Member
- PTO/PTA Involvement

1. My position regarding the Master Plan is that it should be our guide to development within Teaneck. There is a need to revisit and update the document. This should be done with the support of key stakeholders such as the Community, Town Management and Subject manager Experts that can add value to what and how we want development to progress. This should be a comprehensive plan to review all asset classes and not just limited to high rise apartment development. It should include single family and multi family, townhouse and condo development as well as mixed use. The Master Plan should span beyond brick and mortar but should include retail development, transportation and walkability of town, connecting business, districts and even Arts and Culture.

I do not agree with the recent AINR – Areas in need of Redevelopment approach to development of which 10 AINR have been implemented within the past 24 months. I believe it is a dangerous and slippery slope of criteria that can lead to developer assemblage and no control and public input on what the end result will be.

2. I would open up all advisory boards in particular statutory land-use boards to public input and visibility. When there are sub-committee meetings, minutes should be provided to the public. Once elected, I would implement quarterly and/or bi-annual Town Hall meetings giving residents that ability to speak openly about issues. I would institute Workshops and involve township management and residents so that that the public has insight and understanding the government. Such as budget, services and proposed development. I would make sure that the town attorney fulfills their role to not just protect the council from lawsuits but proactively seek and find ways that we can inform our constituents. I would institute the *Leadership Academy* where we would have regular cohorts of residents who learn about the working of our government and are prepared to step in open advisory board openings.

3. I would address Teaneck business districts, especially Cedar Lane and Teaneck Road, with an update to the Master Plan and a comprehensive review of retail space. I would reach out to commercial building owners and offer ways that public and private partnerships could be

formed to encourage local and regional retail tenants' occupancy. I would attend national and regional retail tenant conferences and promote Teaneck as the best place to come to open your business!

Keith Kaplan did not submit either biographical information or answers to the LWV's questions.

ELECTION DAY
Tuesday, November 8th
Polls Open 6am – 8pm

For information on candidates, voter registration and polling place locations, go to www.VOTE411.org

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE!

This Voters Guide has been prepared by the League of Women Voters of Teaneck, a nonpartisan group of local residents assuring that all eligible voters have the opportunity and the information to exercise their right to vote. Our organization works to improve our government; study local, state and national issues; and engage all citizens in the decisions that impact their lives.