

# **PATHWAY TO THE FUTURE**

**REPORT OF  
THE TEANECK COMMUNITY PROJECT  
August 2006**

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## **Visioning Statement**

Teaneck is a vibrant, active community that retains its small-town sensibility while taking full advantage of its proximity to New York City. Teaneck relishes its diversity and ensures that the needs, concerns and interests of all its residents are well-represented. Teaneck has maintained an efficient, nonpartisan form of government which represents and is representative of all ages, faiths, races and genders. There is a strong sense of personal connectedness that results in a high level of community involvement and volunteerism. We have demanding standards that result in excellent schools and social services. Our housing stock is aesthetically pleasing, and meets the needs and requirements of all who choose to live here. There are thriving business areas which capitalize on our multicultural population and are enhanced by relationships with the local university, hospital, and other township-based institutions. We live in harmony with our natural environment and with each other.

## **Background**

### **History**

Community relations have long been an area of concern within the Township of Teaneck. Discussion on this broad topic has taken place over many years, most recently in the late 1990s, by the Township Council, the Partnership Foundation (a community based non-profit group that supports projects and other efforts aimed at bringing together the diverse cultures of our town), the Township's Advisory Board on Community Relations, neighborhood block associations, and the Teaneck Clergy Council. Several proposals were made to employ a community relations specialist. The subject was addressed by the Township Council throughout this period but no consensus was achieved.

In January 2000, during the Township Council's Municipal Budget review, the hiring of a community relations specialist was again recommended by the Advisory Board on Community Relations. This time, the Council agreed to explore the possibility of developing a community relations plan for the township. The Township Council felt that such a plan would define the needs of the community and outline the areas which might be addressed by a community relations specialist.

- Township staff conducted extensive research on long-range community planning in the United States. Contacts were made with:
- Communities which had completed long range planning or "visioning" projects.
- Professionals and organizations involved in the field of long range community planning, including the National Civic League.
- Public and government oriented organizations.

In October 2000, a report was presented to the Township Council which concluded that there was a large volume of materials to review and a number of ways to proceed. The Township Council created a subcommittee, consisting of Councilmembers Jacqueline B. Kates, Elie Y. Katz, and Marie Warnke, along with Deputy Municipal Manager Helene Fall, to review the material and recommend a course of action to the Township Council.

Over the next few months, the subcommittee reviewed all of the documents obtained by the staff as well as additional materials provided by its members. A scope of services proposal was developed to obtain uniform bids on a process which would bring together all sectors of the Township, using verified and established procedures to identify problems, evaluate changing conditions, and build collective approaches to improve the quality of life in Teaneck and the well being of the members of Teaneck's diverse community. Specifically, the proposal requested bidders to provide technical assistance in order to:

- Develop a community vision and plan.
- Evaluate and strengthen collaboration between residents, local government, non-profits and businesses.
- Strengthen resident participation in our community decision making and problem solving processes.
- Strengthen relationships among diverse people with diverse perspectives.
- Evaluate and strengthen the community's ability to address conflict and collaborate to find solutions.

Technical assistance was to include strategic planning, visioning, facilitation and training from the start of the project through implementation of action plans. The expected timetable for the project was twelve (12) to eighteen (18) months. Throughout this time period, numerous approaches to this process were evaluated including study groups, community based cultural assessments, the development of sustainable community indicators to evaluate current quality of life (including development trends and possible strategies for making improvements), and a comprehensive community-wide visioning and strategic planning process.

### **Selecting a Facilitator**

In the fall of 2001, the subcommittee presented its initial findings to the Township Council and received approval to move forward with a Request for Proposal. Bids were solicited from twelve organizations, including from the private and non-profit sectors. (See Appendix 3 for a complete list of the organizations.). Over the course of the next several months, the subcommittee met and discussed the bids with interested individuals and organizations in Teaneck.

The subcommittee used the following criteria to evaluate the proposals:

- Did the proposed methodology include a broad-base of participants?
- Was participation included from every sector of the community (residents, businesses, government, education, non-profits)?
- Was the process open and transparent?
- Had the process been used successfully by many communities?
- Could the process be tailored to fit the specific characteristics of Teaneck?
- Would the initiative overcome expected skepticism of the process and project?

In May of 2002, the subcommittee recommended that the Township Council engage the National Civic League, headquartered in Denver, Colorado, to assist the community with the visioning and strategic planning process. The National Civic League was selected for two primary reasons:

- It is the United States' oldest nonpartisan organization which advocates for the issues of community democracy, where citizens are actively engaged in the process of self governance and works in partnership with the public,

private and nonprofit sectors of society and where citizens create active civic culture reflective of the diversity of community voices; and  
The League had considerable and verified experience in assisting municipalities in undertaking a community visioning and strategic planning process.

On October 22, 2002, the Teaneck Township Council awarded the National Civic League (NCL) a contract to assist the community by facilitating a visioning and strategic planning process at a cost not to exceed \$71,080. In January 2003, Drew O'Connor was selected by the NCL to assist our community in undertaking the visioning and strategic planning process.

### **Initial Planning**

The Township Council subcommittee determined that in order to build confidence in the visioning project, there had to be commitment of community leaders, including elected officials from the Township Council and School Board, the business community, other local institutions, and opinion leaders. In addition, the subcommittee concluded that these leaders would have to be supporters of the visioning process, rather than advocates for a narrow viewpoint, if the process were to succeed.

The subcommittee also recommended that the success of the project required a financial commitment (either in the form of direct financial contributions or in-kind services) from multiple sectors of the community, including government, education, nonprofit and local businesses. The Township Council authorized the seeking of partners which resulted in the following commitments:

- The Teaneck Board of Education offered its facilities for meetings.
- Holy Name Hospital provided \$20,000 in financial support.
- The Puffin Foundations contributed \$5000 in financial support.
- Fairleigh Dickinson University gave \$1000 in financial support.
- Community State Bank gave \$1000 in financial support.

In addition, various community groups throughout the Township including the Partnership Foundation, houses of worship and neighborhood block associations agreed to be active participants in the process.

### **Process**

There were four stages to the visioning process:

- **Preliminary interviews** with selected Township residents to identify major issues and to help select an Initiating Committee to plan the project.
- **Project planning** with an Initiating Committee to determine procedures and identify the stakeholders for participation in the visioning process.

- **The visioning effort** with the Stakeholders, under the direction of a Coordinating Committee.
- The analysis of the results and the development of a formal **Report and Recommendations** from the visioning process.

## **Preliminary Interviews**

The first step was to identify approximately thirty (30) community stakeholders to meet with the NCL facilitator to share their thoughts about **Teaneck**. The goal of the interviews was to solicit a range of ideas about the critical issues in **Teaneck**, the procedures that would be required to adequately address these issues, and the key groups and individuals that needed to be included in the process.

The stakeholders were identified by the Township Council subcommittee. They included prominent individuals in **Teaneck** as well as representatives from the following groups:

- Religious leaders.
- Educators.
- Neighborhood groups and block associations.
- Business people.
- Cultural and arts area.
- Project sponsors.

These meetings were conducted in February 2003, and they provided the NCL facilitator with a snapshot of **Teaneck**. In addition, the meetings introduced the visioning process and the overall goals of the project to potential partners whose support was deemed necessary for success.

## **Project Planning**

An Initiating Committee (IC) was then selected to plan the visioning project. The Initiating Committee consisted of individuals who reflected our diverse community and its members were selected by the Township Council subcommittee with input from other Councilmembers. The Initiating Committee members (see Appendix 2 for a complete list of the committee members) met for three hours every two to three weeks between March and June of 2003.

Over this period of time the IC undertook and accomplished the following tasks:

- Established ground rules for the process.
- Developed a project mission and goals.
- Developed a process design and timeline.
- Selected chairpersons for the project.
- Developed the project name.

- Developed a stakeholder analysis and recruitment process tailored for Teaneck.
- Selected suitable meeting locations for the stakeholder meetings.
- Set the agenda for the Kickoff Meeting and established a schedule of meeting dates for the project.
- Set the parameters for the development of a Community Profile.

The primary task of the Initiating Committee, however, was to lay the foundation for a successful visioning effort by identifying and recruiting stakeholders (members of the community) to participate in the process. These were individuals who were willing to devote the time and effort, over a nine month period, to examine the issues confronting the Teaneck community and to develop recommendations for addressing them.

The criteria for selecting stakeholders included:

- A demonstrated interest in community issues.
- A desire to contribute to the well-being of the community.
- An insightful approach to community issues.

Each member of the Initiating Committee was asked to identify 20 to 30 potential participants for the visioning process. A discussion took place to ensure that all segments of the community were represented among the list of potential stakeholders. The individuals on the list were then invited to participate in the visioning process, and an initial meeting was set for September 17, 2003 at the Benjamin Franklin Middle School.

The work of the Initiating Committee was completed by the end of June 2003. At that point, the IC divided itself into two committees, a Coordinating Committee to manage the visioning process, and the Outreach Committee, to oversee community outreach efforts, in order to ensure that the stakeholders were represented in the actual process.

The Coordinating Committee's charge was to guide the project through the stakeholder phase. This included:

- Analyzing and identifying emerging process issues.
- Reviewing feedback from the stakeholders as to the process.
- Community outreach.
- Preliminary planning for the next stage of the process (report writing, implementation).

The Outreach Committee was charged with communicating the visioning process to the wider Teaneck community. Specifically, their task was to:

- Define outreach strategies and develop a process for implementing them.
- Market the visioning process to the Teaneck community, through advertisements in the Suburbanite, direct mailings to over 100 organizations, groups, houses of

worship, posting notices on the Township's web site, and distributing information flyers to all Township businesses.

Recruitment efforts for stakeholders were initiated during the summer of 2003. Potential stakeholders were asked to attend approximately ten meetings between September 2003 and April 2004 in order to:

- Assess the pressing issues facing **Teaneck**.
- Analyze what made addressing these issues so difficult.
- Discuss the realities of community problem solving.
- Develop a vision and a strategic plan.

Prior to the launch of the Visioning Process, Municipal Manager Helene V. Fall and staff developed a Community Profile to provide stakeholders with basic information about **Teaneck**. The Profile included:

- The history of **Teaneck**.
- Critical data about **Teaneck**, including economic, environmental and educational indicators, demographics, and information about housing, transportation, and culture.
- Information about municipal services.
- information about religious and other institutions located within **Teaneck**.

### **The Visioning Effort**

The Project Kickoff was a success with almost 150 attending the initial session in Benjamin Franklin Middle School. Over the course of the year, the number of stakeholders attending the meetings varied, dipping as low as **40** on one occasion. However, the average number of attendees at Stakeholder Meetings was 70.

The stakeholders undertook the following actions over the course of the next nine months:

- They developed a vision statement to reflect the desired future for the Township of **Teaneck** reflecting the common values of the whole community.
- They identified those issues, trends and events that are within the control of the community and those that are not within its control.
- They evaluated the abilities, tools and skills the community needs in order to effectively identify, communicate and resolve problems.

The result of these initial efforts was the identification of six Key Performance Areas (KPA's):

- Education.
- Community-based programs for youth.
- Representative and responsive government.

- Community relations and communications.
- Economic development.
- Taxes.

The stakeholder group divided into task forces to study each of these **KPAs**. Each task force was led by a chairperson and vice-chairperson. The task forces met regularly between the larger stakeholder meetings to complete a number of tasks which included:

- Identifying the problems within each Key Performance Area.
- Developing objectives and goals for the problems.  
Developing short and medium term actions steps for each problem.
- Identifying the parties whose cooperation would be necessary in order to implement the actions.
- Identifying potential resource needs.
- Developing a **timeline** for each of these action steps.

Throughout this phase of the Project, each Task Force presented a progress report to the broader stakeholder group at the monthly meetings. These presentations provided an opportunity for feedback and were an important safeguard for the process to ensure that the final versions of the individual task forces reflected the thinking and vision of the larger stakeholder group.

On June 23, 2004, the final versions of Task Force reports were presented to the broader stakeholder group with each report gaining consensus approval in preparation for the next phase of the process - writing the final report.

### **Report and Recommendations**

To oversee the final phase of the project, a Transition Committee was established to carry on the work of the Coordinating Committee. Its charge was to complete the final report and to plan for the implementation phase. After a hiatus in the summer of 2004, the Transition Committee regrouped in the fall of 2004. At this time, the Committee subdivided itself into the following groups:

- A subcommittee tasked with drafting a final Report.
- A subcommittee tasked with reviewing and editing the draft Report.
- A subcommittee tasked with implementing the approved recommendations.

The Transition Committee agreed that the final report would include:

- Visioning Statement.
- Background.
- Process.
- Executive Summary.
- Summary of the Task Force Reports.

- Next Steps.
- Appendix.
  - Full Task Force Reports.
  - Complete List of Participants.
    - Initiating Committee.
    - Coordinating Committee.
    - Stakeholders.
    - Task Force Members.
    - Transition Committee.

As the Transition Committee moves from report writing and planning to the implementation phases of the vision project, some key principles must be in place to provide for successful implementation. They include:

- Clear, thoughtful and realistic action plans which were created in the planning process.
- Clarity and agreement on the mission, the expectations and the roles and responsibilities among the implementation team.
- An effective two-way flow of communication which continues among the implementation team, the implementation entities, the larger stakeholder group, and the community.
- Maintenance of the integrity of the stakeholder process through the implementation phases by making sure the processes continue to be collaborative, open and inclusive.
- Maintenance of a neutral and long-term perspective among all responsible parties.

Ultimately, this process and the Project have benefited from the maintenance of a mind set of patience and perseverance which needs to continue as implementation takes time!

## **Executive Summary**

Each of the six Task Forces of the Project developed recommended actions. These are summarized below. The individuals and entities who would take responsibility for implementing these actions, the estimated time to implement or begin to implement them and the estimated cost are provided in a summary table at the end. Important details are contained in the individual Task Force reports.

### **Search for Excellence in Education**

- Create an expectation of high achievement for all children.
- Improve pedagogical practices to ensure that all students learn at a high level.
- Create a volunteer Community Education Task Force to:
  - Act as a liaison between parents and the Board of Education.
  - Act as a resource for parents concerning educational issues.
  - Survey current research for effective programs, curriculum and methodology.
  - Explore factors that prevent people from becoming involved in their children's school experiences.
- Improve communications between **parents/guardians** and teachers, administrators and Board of Education.
- Expand parental involvement with the schools.
- Create an education page in Suburbanite.
- Announce and promote school activities on Township **website**, in the Library, and by means of a kiosk on Chestnut Ave.
- Develop an Administrative Education Council with a professional representative from each public, charter and private school in **Teaneck** to:
  - **discuss** common concerns.
  - facilitate sharing ideas and resources, where possible.

### **Community-Based Programs for Youth**

- Create a **Teaneck** Youth Council with adult and youth representation from all organizations serving youth.
- Hire a Youth Director to staff the **Teaneck** Youth Council.
- Develop and implement a leadership training program for youth members of the Council.
- Produce and regularly update a Directory of Youth Programs and Activities.
- Produce an inventory of facilities available for youth programming.
- Stimulate the creation of new youth programs, as needed.
- Enhance adult participation in youth programs.
- Establish a mentoring program for pre-teens and teens.

## **Representative and Responsive Government**

Appoint a Teaneck Ombudsperson to:

- Help residents with questions, issues and problems that arise.
- Help residents find solutions or services.
- Implement a complaint system for residents who feel that they have been treated unfairly or improperly by Township employees.
- Develop and implement an improved system to learn of and respond to employment concerns of Township employees.
- Provide diversity and leadership training to all Township employees and elected officials.
- Provide training to Township employees on the content and application of existing and new Township ordinances.
- Review old ordinances and repeal or revise, as appropriate.
- Review ordinance enforcement practice to determine which are ineffective and should be repealed and to ensure enforcement is consistent.
- Implement a 311 or equivalent telephone number.
- Create, distribute and post on the **website** information sheets that outline the services, mode of operation and how to reach each Township department.
- Improve the Township's **website**.
- Develop and implement with FDU a civics training program for Teaneck residents.
- Find ways to ensure greater and more diverse participation on statutory and advisory boards.
- Make voter registration forms more easily available to residents.
- Introduce performance measurement and reporting for government departments and schools.
- Establish a Government Study Committee to:
  - Research and recommend whether to change the electoral system so that the Town Council would include members elected from districts.
  - Research and recommend whether to change the electoral system so that the mayor would be directly elected by vote of the residents.
  - Work to change New Jersey law to enable all elections to be held on the first Tuesday in November.

## **"Teaneck Connects" – Community Relations**

- Hire a Community Relations Specialist to provide staff services for the Advisory Board on Community Relations (ABCR).
- Elevate the status of ABCR.
- Reorganize the ABCR to ensure better representation.
- Review and revise guidelines of ABCR.
- Provide training to members of ABCR.
- Conduct a survey to determine the status of inter-group relations.

- Monitor the status of inter-group relations.
- Initiate new mechanisms for inter-group interaction, including inter-group dialogues.
- Encourage establishment of additional block associations and other grass-roots organizations.
- Showcase and support groups that currently provide opportunities for inter-group interactions.
- Work more actively to resolve perceived or actual inter-group conflict.

## **Economic Development**

- Hire an Economic Development Specialist to staff the Teaneck Economic Development Corporation (TEDC), support SIDs and advise the Council.
- Expand purview and responsibilities of TEDC to encompass all economic development activities in the Township and provide guidance to ensure an appropriate balance between promoting economic activity (including to enhance tax revenue) and preserving quality of life.
- Encourage establishment of additional Special Improvement Districts.
- Review and consider revising footprint and height restrictions in areas zoned for commercial and mixed use and aesthetic-oriented restrictions on commercial structures.
- Explore trade-offs involved and desirability of rezoning to encourage additional commercial development .
- Coordinate grant applications related to economic development.
- Seek to maximize commercial benefit from envisioned Teaneck Center for The Arts.
- TEDC should have responsibility for developing plans for municipal and BOE properties that become surplus and for making recommendations concerning any unused commercial and industrial property.
- Pursue opportunities to enhance economic opportunities from commuter parking.

## **Teaneck Taxes**

- Explore opportunities for cost saving through:
  - staffing levels and salary schedules of municipal departments and the schools.
  - sharing staff, equipment and facilities.
  - privatization of municipal and BOE services.
  - checking residency of public school students.
- Limit annual rate of growth of Teaneck's municipal and school board expenditures to no more than the rate of inflation.
- Increase revenue from grants.
- Ensure that the amount of all fees, licenses, permits, and fines are set at the maximum allow by State law.

- Create a **Teaneck** Community Foundation to raise, hold and distribute funds to be spent for the welfare of **Teaneck**.
- Pursue increased funding of Township schools from State taxes.
- Advocate State legislation or constitutional amendment to reduce reliance on property taxes to pay for local services.
- Prepare, disseminate and update annually a "**Teaneck** Budget Guide" and a "**Teaneck** Policy Trade-off Guide" to explain how property taxes are used in **Teaneck**, what trade-offs have been made that affect tax revenue and use, and compare these to comparable towns.
- Prepare and disseminate educational materials that inform residents how property is assessed, how property taxes are calculated, and how the tax burden in **Teaneck** is distributed among taxpayers.

## Summary Tables

<b>SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible for Implementing</b>	<b>Estimated Time to Implement</b>	<b>Annual Cost</b>
Community Education Task Force BOE and Superintendent Launch within six months; then ongoing None			
Develop an Administrative Education Council.	BOE, Superintendent, Boards and Principals of Charter and Private Schools	Launch within one year; then ongoing	None
Other actions to ensure excellent education.	BOE, Superintendent, principals, teachers and parents	Launch within three months; then ongoing	To be determined

<b>COMMUNITY BASED PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible for Implementing</b>	<b>Estimated Time to Implement</b>	<b>Annual Cost</b>
Hire Youth Director. Council & Manager Hire within six months To be determined			
Create Teaneck Youth Council.	Council & Manager	Launch within six months	None
Other Actions to enhance youth development	Teaneck Youth Council, Youth Director, other organizations	Initiate within six months; then ongoing	To be determined

<b>REPRESENTATIVE AND RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible for Implementing</b>	<b>Estimated Time to Implement</b>	<b>Annual Cost</b>
Actions to improve governance and civic engagement. Council, Manager, and FDU In place To be determined			
Designate Ombudsperson	Manager	Designate within three months	To be determined
Establish a Government Study Committee.	Council	Launch within three months; report after one year	None

<b>“TEANECK CONNECTS’ - COMMUNITY RELATIONS</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible for Implementing</b>	<b>Estimated Time to Implement</b>	<b>Annual Cost</b>
Hire Community Relations Specialist. Council & Manager Hire within six months. To be determined.			
Actions to improve inter groups relations.	ABCR and Specialist with support of Council	Initiate within three months; then ongoing	To be determined

<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible for Implementing</b>	<b>Estimated Time to Implement</b>	<b>Annual Cost</b>
Hire Economic Development Specialist. Council, Manager and TEDC Hire within six months To be determined			
Other actions to promote economic development	TEDC, Council, and Manager	Initiate within three months; then ongoing,	To be determined

<b>TEANECK TAXES</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible for Implementing</b>	<b>Estimated Time to Implement</b>	<b>Annual Cost</b>
Limit annual rate of expenditure growth. Council, Manager, BOE, Superintendent Within a year None			
Explore opportunities for cost savings.	Council, Manager, BOE, Superintendent	Initiate within three months; then ongoing	To be determined
Increase revenue from grants.	Council, Manager, BOE, Superintendent	Initiate within three months; then ongoing	To be determined
Ensuring maximum revenue from fees, licenses, permits, and fines.	Council, Manager, BOE, Superintendent	Initiate within three months; then ongoing	None
Create a Teaneck Community Foundation.	Council and prominent residents	Launch within six months	Minimal
Engage in State-level advocacy.	Elected representatives and volunteers	Initiate within three months; then ongoing	None
Enhance understanding of taxes and the trade-off involved in setting tax rates	Council, Manager and volunteers	Initiate within six months	None

The pathway from our present state to the future will require contributions from all segments of the **Teaneck** community, including its governing institutions, the business world, the non-profit world, the religious leadership and, especially, the diverse ethnic, racial and religious communities from which our extraordinary Township is composed. Eleven principal recommendations emerged from the Visioning Process and are summarized below:

- Hire a community relations specialist to promote positive interactions among the many communities that make up **Teaneck** and serve as the administrative staff to the Advisory Board on Community Relations.
- Designate from within the existing Township staff an ombudsperson to assist citizens with problems and serve as an advocate for them.
- Establish a commission composed of public officials and laypersons to examine issues related to Town governance.
- Hire a Youth Director to develop youth programming for **Teaneck**.
- Create a Youth Council to provide our young people with a voice in programs that are directed to them.
- Create a Community Education Task Force to provide public school parents with a forum for ongoing discussions of educational issues and to serve as a liaison with the **Teaneck** Board of Education.
- Develop an Administrative Educational Council to provide liaison and support among the various educational institutions, public and private, serving the **Teaneck** community.
- Hire an economic development specialist to facilitate those actions to promote, enhance, and encourage the economic vitality of **Teaneck**.
- Create a **Teaneck** Community Foundation to raise, hold and distribute funds to be spent for the welfare of **Teaneck**.
- Limit the annual rate of growth of **Teaneck's** municipal and school board expenditures to no more than the rate of inflation.
- Institute periodic reviews of each unit of town government, including continual measures of economic efficiencies and outcomes of each department.

## Task Force Summaries Goals and Action Steps

### **SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION**

#### **Topic Area #1: Education in the Township of Teaneck**

**Goal:** Foster a positive perception and strengthen communal support for education.

**Action Steps:**

1. Request proclamations from Township, and Boards of schools in town to promote support for excellence in education.
2. Create a town-wide education page in the Suburbanite open to all schools members.
3. Advertise and list school events on library and town websites with links to all schools in the Township, to encourage participation from the wider community.
4. Create Teaneck Library bulletin board for all school events.
5. Include a kiosk at Chestnut Avenue "community gathering place" on Cedar Lane for education information.

#### **Topic Area #2: Partnership and Cooperation among Schools in Teaneck**

**Goal:** To create a dialogue among administrators in the Teaneck Public Schools, Teaneck Community Charter School, parochial schools and The Community School to increase understanding of shared values, needs, and mission of each system.

**Action Steps:**

1. Develop an Administrative Education Council with representatives from each school in Teaneck to discuss common concerns and possibilities of sharing ideas and resources.
2. Electronic sharing of minutes between various school boards.

### **Topic Area #3: Dialogue among Parents**

**Goal:** To develop town-wide programs that are of interest to all parents/guardians to help improve their children's learning and behavior and to increase understanding of shared values and reasons for choice of each system.

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Create a community education task force to:
  - A. Promote **and/or** publicize speakers on educational issues.
  - B. Provide practical hands on feedback on navigating the educational process.
  - C. Act as a resource for parents concerning educational issues.
  - D. Act as a liaison to **Teaneck** Board of Education setting up informal meetings with the community and representatives of the Board.
  - E. Provide access to user-friendly materials for parents.
  - F. Establish mentoring programs for school families.
  
2. Create mail list serve for Community Education Council and community members interested in participating.

### **Topic Area #4: Improving Communications with Parents**

**Goal:** To improve and extend lines of communication among families, teachers, administrators and the Board of Education.

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Create communication contract between schools and families.
2. Promote more after school academic supports during and outside the school year.
3. Ensure regularly revised syllabi that are flexible in providing guidance for both remedial and advanced students.
4. Maximize use of all media to promote information.

## **Topic Area #5: Expanding Parental Involvement with the Schools**

**Goal:** To bring more **parents/guardians** into the schools to be actively involved in their children's educational process.

### **Action Steps:**

1. Explore factors that prevent people from becoming involved in their children's school experiences.
2. Develop family mentoring program.
3. Create a pool of community volunteers to share their expertise within the classroom in areas such as of the arts, sciences and cultures.

## **Topic Area #6: Creating a Culture of Learning**

**Goal:** To strengthen an atmosphere where learning and achieving are highly valued and expected of all students and from all families in Teaneck.

### **Action Steps:**

1. Identify when and why students begin to disengage from the educational process.
2. Identify the factors that contribute to developing a strong learning culture and ways to raise **family/teacher** expectations.
3. Explore strategies and incentives for students to succeed in higher level courses.
4. Explore ways to increase recognition of Honor Roll students throughout the school year.
5. Create recognition opportunities for special **needs/remedial** students.
6. Expand and extend after school programs run by community members to support academics.
7. Extend restructuring to the middle school programs.
8. Establish mentoring programs for students at middle schools and high school.

## **Topic Area #7: Exploring Innovative Pedagogical Practices**

**Goal:** To seek out current research on effective programs, curriculum, and methodology that has been proven to positively affect student learning and achievement.

### **Action Steps:**

1. Define the scope of research.
2. Disseminate the results at a meeting of school administration and community at large.

## COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH

### **Goals:**

1. Create a Township-wide Youth Council sponsored by the Teaneck government to bring together all organizations that serve youth.
2. Facilitate increased accessibility and information about existing youth programs and activities through a township wide Directory of Youth Programs that is sponsored by the Township Recreation Department, Board of Education, profit/private organizations, businesses, places of worship, private, charter and religious schools.
3. Develop mentoring programs for youth-to-youth and programs for youth-to-adults/senior citizens as life-experience mentors and role-models.
4. Encourage and enhance adult /parent participation in youth programs at supervised locations.

### **Action Steps:**

1. Develop a job description for a paid part-time or full-time Youth director to be budgeted by Township Manager.
2. Begin recruitment for Teaneck Youth Council with Teaneck High School students representing grades 9 through 12 as an initiating body. This will provide continuity as each grade ages-out with graduation and a new 9<sup>th</sup> grade group is added.
3. Invite representatives from all identified youth organizations to send representatives for a series of organizational meetings. These meetings will define the Teaneck Youth Council mission statement, structure and operating plan.
4. Once a youth leadership team is identified, produce a leadership training program for them based on the **Project Adventure or New York City Outward Bound** educational model. This will provide them with leadership training as peer leaders and mentors.
5. Use results of youth surveys taken by the Youth Task Force to identify areas of interest from which to develop program.
6. Create a community-wide directory of youth activities so parents can readily find programs of interest for their children and encourage parents/adults to volunteer their time to assist these programs. This to include outreach to the senior center, Classic Residence, AARP and other adult organizations. This will provide senior residents with the opportunity to productively contribute their life-long skills back to the community as mentors and information seminar leaders.

7. Co-sponsor with the Teaneck Chamber of Commerce and other businesses, youth career development programs, internships, summer jobs and job placement, with a special emphasis on the Glenpointe business center.

# REPRESENTATIVE AND RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT

## Topic Area #1: Cultural Sensitivity.

**Goal:** To increase the cultural sensitivity of Township employees.

### Action Steps:

1. Cultural Competency Training: Provide all Township employees and elected officials with diversity/cultural sensitivity training.
2. Reporting/Resolution System: Implement a reporting system through which residents who feel they have been treated unfairly or improperly by Township employees due to their racial, ethnic, or religious background can launch complaints/investigations.

## Topic Area #2: Knowledge.

**Goal:** To enhance Township employees' knowledge of the ordinances, rules and regulations under which they work.

### Action Steps:

1. Updated Ordinance Training: Provide training to Township employees on the content and application of Township ordinances. When ordinances are amended, repealed, or added to the Municipal Code, employees should be provided with training/information regarding the procedural effects this will have on the duties they perform for the Township.
2. Leadership Training: Encourage elected officials and appointed members of advisory and statutory boards to participate in appropriate government leadership training.

## Topic Area #3: Enforcement of Government Ordinances.

**Goal:** To equitably enforce ordinances throughout the Township.

### Action Steps:

1. Ordinance Review: Old, inapplicable, and out-of-date ordinances need to be reviewed with a view toward evaluating their effectiveness and possible removal from the Municipal Code.

2. Survey: A survey of how, when and where ordinances are being enforced should be conducted to pinpoint those ordinances which are essentially ineffective or which are being enforced in an inconsistent/discriminatory manner.

Topic Area **#4**: Information Sharing.

Goal: To improve the lines of communication and promote a more efficient flow of information to and from the Township's governing bodies, administration, and residents.

Action Steps:

1. 211 System: A main number similar to the NYC 311 system where residents can call to get general guidance as to agencies, services etc., that can best provide them with information/help regarding specific issues.
2. Guide Sheets: Provide "guide-sheets" at each Township office which may be handed out to residents as to the operation of that department, the services it provides and how to utilize the services.
3. Township Website: Construct a more "user friendly" **website** for the Township. Include:
  - A. More links to departments with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section for use by residents in information gathering.
  - B. **Email** links whereby individuals can send questions/concerns to Township **Council/Administration** or Community Relations Officer.
  - C. Links whereby individuals can easily download commonly used forms, applications and other documents.
  - D. Clear and concise descriptions of Township governing and statutory bodies, their duties, and procedures.
4. Ombudsperson/Public Advocate: Appoint an individual to help residents with questions, issues, problems that arise and assist them in finding **solutions/services** within the Township that would best address their situation.

## **Topic Area #5: Responsiveness.**

**Goal:** To enhance the responsiveness of the Township's elected and appointed staff and its professional leadership.

### **Action Steps:**

1. Existing Mechanisms: Elevate the Status of the Advisory Board on Community Relations and redefine its functions and objectives.
  - A. *New Mechanisms*: Develop additional mechanisms for elected officials to hear the concerns of residents.
  - B. *Employer/Employee Relations*: Examine current training and evaluation practices of municipal and school district staff, recommending modifications as needed. Develop improved systems for response to employee concerns in order to prevent expensive litigation.

## **Topic Area # 6: Involvement by Citizens in Civic Affairs.**

**Goal:** To encourage citizen participation by providing opportunities for interested residents to gain additional information about local government function, operation and the political process.

### **Action Steps:**

1. Leadership Teaneck: Develop a training program in conjunction with FDU for citizens to learn about local government and the community in which they live.
  - A. *Grass-roots organizations*: Support the formation and viability of grass-roots organizations (e.g., block associations and ad hoc groups). Encourage them to sponsor a diverse pool of individuals to participate in all aspects of Teaneck's civil life.
  - B. *Advisory and statutory boards*: Obtain descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of all advisory and statutory boards. Encourage a diverse mix of residents to apply for membership on these boards. Explore state of the art ideas on how to be inclusive and nondiscriminatory. Provide for different venues for applications from the public.

## **Topic Area #7: Structural Changes in Teaneck Government.**

**Goal:** Investigate the impact of different government structures on representativeness and responsiveness of Town Government.

### **Action Steps:**

1. Electoral System: Establish a committee to research and report on an electoral system for the Town Council which would include representatives elected from districts.
2. Directly Elected Mayor: Establish a committee to research and report on the need for a mayor who is directly elected by vote of the residents rather than the Town Council.

## **Topic Area #8: Increasing voter awareness and turnout.**

**Goal:** Increase voter turnout and attention by citizens to local government.

### **Action Steps:**

1. Same Day Elections: Establish a committee to research and report on the feasibility of changing New Jersey law to hold all elections on the same day (first Tuesday in November) each year.
2. Voter Reaistration: Town should make available voter registration forms at all municipal facilities that are open to the public and to promote voter registration through its web site and published print materials.

# **“TEANECK CONNECTS” – COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

## **Topic Area #1: Problem Identification and Resolution**

**Goal:** To identify areas of significant disagreement and/or potential conflict among diverse ethnic, racial and religious groups in the community and propose remedies for conflict resolution.

### **Action Steps:**

1. **Community Relations Survey:** Conduct a professionally-designed township-wide survey of the status of inter-group and community relations in the Township of Teaneck.
2. **Community Relations Specialist:** Develop a job description for a paid professional in the field of community relations to be hired as a staff member or consultant (funded by public/private partnership) to manage the survey project, provide implementation and staff services for the Advisory Board on Community Relations, monitor the status of inter-group relations, and work with the community to resolve perceived or actual areas of conflict.

## **Topic Area #2: Advisory Board on Community Relations**

**Goal:** To enhance the effectiveness of the Advisory Board charged with monitoring and improving inter-group relations in the community

### **Action Steps:**

1. **Review and Analysis:** Review the guidelines for the Advisory Board and, if necessary, recommend changes to the Town Council.
2. **Membership:** Reorganize the Advisory Board to ensure representation from all segments of the community, possibly with representatives from each of the Township's 21 election districts.
3. **Training:** Provide formal training in inter-group relations to members of the Advisory Board.
4. **Inter-group Dialogue:** Formal inter-group dialogues will be developed by the Community Relations Specialist in conjunction with the Advisory Board on Community Relations, when needed.

### **Topic Area #3: Communication among Groups**

**Goal:** To improve and enhance communication among diverse community groups by creating opportunities to increase contact, foster connections, communication, relationships and respect, particularly across racial, ethnic, and religious lines.

#### **Action Steps:**

1. **Current Activities:** Inventory the opportunities for diverse groups within Teaneck to interact. Showcase and support groups that currently provide opportunities for interaction.
2. **New Activities:** Develop new mechanisms and programs for interaction among groups.
3. **Block Associations:** Establish block associations where they do not currently exist.
4. **New Residents Reception:** Invite new residents to a Township-sponsored reception to meet and interact with each other and Township leadership.

# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

## **Topic Area #1: Redevelopment and expansion of existing commercially zoned areas**

**Goal:** To promote, enhance and encourage the commercial economic vitality of Teaneck.

### **Action Steps:**

1. Following current Council study of funding and organization for Economic Development Corp. and additional SID(s), encourage or support a professional staff function (EDPSF) for economic development based in the Municipal Building.
2. Review and tabulate footprint dimensions and height restrictions for all commercially zoned areas. Identify areas that are currently "mixed use" or zoned as such.
3. Study existing commercial structures and evaluate esthetics of current and/or original architecture and condition of structure.
4. Identify and encourage consideration of further Special Improvement District (SID) establishment in other areas of Teaneck. It is understood that SIDs in separated areas of the Township can cooperate, coordinate and share resources and staff under an umbrella organization such as TEDC.
5. Coordinate grant applications for economic development to be submitted by TEDC and EDPSF) with overall township grants application function. Grants function could be by consultant on contingency basis.
6. Coordinate development of information kiosk(s) (suggested location at new plaza area on Cedar Lane). Consider electronic rather than billboard format and corporate sponsorship to cover costs.

## **Topic Area #2: Identify areas for rezoning for commercial or mixed use development**

### **Action Steps:**

1. Study trade-offs in establishing new areas for increased ratables at the expense of reduction of existing residential areas.
2. Cooperate with group developing Teaneck Center For The Arts so that new facility benefits from a commercial area location.

**Topic Area #3: Upgrade, enhance and fully utilize the transportation and parking options available to Teaneck and capitalize on the location of our community.**

**Action Steps:**

1. Study parking areas and consider designation of commuter or day long parking areas by resident permit or by fee.
2. Determine current railway plans and consider advocacy for change of those plans to consider commuter rail service from Teaneck. Also, include any "light rail" plans in the area in this study.
3. Consider reconfiguration of parking in areas such as the Armory and American Legion Drive.

# TEANECK TAXES

## Topic Area #1: Limiting Tax Growth

**Goal:** To limit the annual rate of growth of Teaneck's municipal and school board expenditures to no more than the rate of inflation.<sup>1</sup>

### Action Steps:

1. **Economic Development:** Promote additional economic development without harming the quality of life in Teaneck.
  - a. Provide Teaneck Economic Development Corporation (TEDC) with professional staff and expand its *de facto* purview and responsibilities to encompass all economic development activities in Teaneck.
  - b. Provide guidance for activities of TEDC to ensure the objective of generating additional tax revenue from non-residential property without causing the deterioration in the quality of life in Teaneck.
  - c. TEDC should develop plans for municipal and BOE properties that become surplus and should consider and make recommendations for the future of any unused commercial and industrial property.
  
2. **Cost Savings:** Explore opportunities for efficiencies and cost savings.
  - a. Review staffing levels, salary schedules and other expenditure levels of Public Works, Fire, Police, Recreation, and Township administration on a rolling basis in a five-year cycle with the intent of reducing cost and increasing efficiencies.
  - b. Review staffing levels and salary schedules of teachers, operations and maintenance, support services, and administrators and other expenditure levels on a rolling basis in a four-year cycle with the intent of reducing cost and increasing efficiencies.
  - c. Explore whether privatization of some municipal and Board of Education services would result in cost savings.
  - d. Explore whether efficiencies can be achieved if the municipality and Board of Education share staff, equipment and facilities.
  - e. Check residency of public school students, starting with a 10% random sample to determine benefit.
  
3. **Measures of Cost Effectiveness:** Introduce procedures to measure and report the outcomes and efficiencies of municipal departments, schools and administration (performance measurement and reporting).
  - a. Decide on appropriate indicators that will provide measures of outcomes and efficiency relevant to Teaneck residents for tax-provided services.
  - b. Identify data sources for indicators.
  - c. Provide results in annual reports and on Town website.

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<sup>1</sup> By "rate of inflation," we mean the regional CPI.

4. **Grants:** Increase revenue to the municipality and the Board of Education from grants.
  - a. Explore additional opportunities to fund ongoing municipal activities and new municipal initiatives from grants.
  - b. Explore additional opportunities to fund ongoing educational activities and new educational initiatives from grants.
  
5. **Community Foundation:** Create a **Teaneck** Community Foundation to raise, hold, and distribute funds to be spent for the welfare of **Teaneck**.
  - a. Research how other communities have set up foundations and how they are structured, managed and funded.
  - b. Determine the desired structure and initial management of a **Teaneck** Community Foundation.
  - c. Recruit a Board that is reflective of the Township.
  - d. Incorporate the Foundation.
  
6. **Fees and Permits:** Except for identified exceptions, the amount of all municipal and Board of Education fees, licenses, permits and fines should be set to ensure that the full cost of the associated service is recovered and that, therefore, are not less than the maximum allowed by State law.
  - a. Continue current biennial review by Council of all fees, licenses permits and fines.
  - b. The Board of Education should review its fees, such as room rental rates, annually.

## **Topic Area #2: Educating Residents**

**Goal:** Educate **Teaneck** residents and taxpayers so that they better understand what services are provided from our taxes, how budgets translate into property taxes, how the tax burden in **Teaneck** is distributed among taxpayers, and what trade-offs exist between keeping taxes low and preserving services and the quality of life in **Teaneck**.

### **Action Steps:**

1. **Documentation:** Document how **Teaneck's** municipal and school expenditures are allocated and how these expenditures compare with other, comparable municipalities.
  - a. Prepare and update annually a "**Teaneck** Budget Guide" that explains in easy-to-understand language and with appropriate charts how **Teaneck's** property taxes are used by major service and category and compares this to comparable towns.
  - b. Prepare and update annually a "**Teaneck** Policy Trade-off Guide" that explains in easy-to-understand language and with appropriate charts the policy trade-offs that have historically been made in **Teaneck** and how these affect the level and distribution of property tax dollars.

2. **Educational Materials:** Prepare educational materials that will inform Teaneck residents how property is assessed, how property taxes are calculated, and how the tax burden in Teaneck is distributed among taxpayers.
  - a. Prepare and review periodically a "Teaneck Guide to Property Taxes" that explains in easy-to-understand language how properties are assessed, how local governments raise funds from property taxes, and how this translates into the taxes paid by individual property owners.
  - b. Prepare and review periodically a "Teaneck Guide to Reassessment" that explains in easy-to-understand language how property taxes are affected by home renovation and rebuilding.
  - c. Create and update at least quarterly an online database, accessible through the Teaneck website that will enable residents to compare their assessment and tax burden to those of comparable properties.
3. **Dissemination:** Make the information and documents prepared under objectives 1 and 2 widely and easily available to Teaneck residents, inform Teaneck residents of their availability and encourage their use.
  - a. Determine a strategy to make the information and documents prepared under objectives 1 and 2 widely and easily available to Teaneck residents, including through the use of the Teaneck website.
  - b. Determine a strategy to inform Teaneck residents of their availability and encourage their use.
  - c. Implement both strategies.

### **Topic Area #3: Advocacy**

**GOAL:** Reduce the unusually heavy reliance on property taxes in Teaneck to pay for local services. With community support, campaign for changes in State legislation, regulations and funding formulae.

#### **Action Steps:**

1. **More State aid for schools:** Increase funding of Teaneck schools from State taxes.
  - a. Understand State formulae that determine level of State aid to local schools, why Teaneck receives one of the smallest percentages in the State, and the process by which the formulae are set and changed.
  - b. Create the case for an increase in State aid to Teaneck's schools.
  - c. Create a strategy for effecting a positive change.
  - d. Put the strategy into effect.
2. **Reduce reliance on property taxes:** Support State legislative change or a State constitutional amendment to reduce the reliance on property taxes to pay for local services in New Jersey.

- a. Clarify the implications for **Teaneck** taxpayers of shifting the funding burden for municipal services and schools from property taxes to State income taxes.
- b. Educate **Teaneck** residents about the implications of shifting the funding burden for municipal services and schools from property taxes to State income taxes.
- c. Hold town meetings to discuss the issue.
- d. Hold a referendum in **Teaneck** on whether to promote change in State law to implement a shift of the funding burden for municipal services and schools from property taxes to State income taxes.

# Task Force Report

## SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

**TOPIC AREA:** Education in the Township of Teaneck

**GOAL:** To foster a positive perception and to strengthen community support for education including reducing tensions that exists among different educational systems.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** There is no partnership among existing schools in the township; there is a reduction in the diversity of students attending the Teaneck Public Schools, and there are tensions between public school families and families choosing not to send their children to the Teaneck Public schools.

**Objective #1:** To form a partnership among school systems in Township--Teaneck Public Schools, Teaneck Community Charter School, parochial schools and The Community School--to create a dialogue among administrators in various school systems to increase understanding of shared values, needs, and mission of each system.

Action Step	Implementer	Resource	Benchmark
1. Request proclamations from Township, and Boards of schools in town to promote support for excellence in education of all student residents.	Town Council		Presentation and display of Proclamations to Community
2. Develop an Administrative Education Council with representatives from each school in Teaneck to discuss common concerns and possibilities of sharing ideas and resources that will meet annually.	Search for Excellence in Education [S.E.E.] volunteers Superintendent, of  TPS Director of TCCS Administration of private and parochial schools in town	Location Secretarial help Mailing costs	Agenda and minutes of meeting

**Objective #2:** To establish joint efforts to communicate information about all schools especially events that would be open to the whole community.

Action Step	Implementer	Resource	Benchmark
1. Create a <b>townwide</b> education page in the <b>Suburbanite open to all</b> schools members. Members from <b>Teaneck Community Project</b> should meet with newspaper staff to discuss.	S.E.E. volunteers Suburbanite School administrators	Public relations representative from each school Coordinator of page	Publication of page
2. Advertise and list school events on library and town <b>websites</b> with possible links to all schools in the township, especially to encourage participation from families not from that school.	S.E.E. volunteers Webmaster at library School administrators Webmasters	Time from Webmaster to post events	Bulletin board on <b>websites</b> Ability to see all school event calendars from one place
3. Create <b>Teaneck Library</b> bulletin board for all school events.	S.E.E. volunteers Library contact person School administrators	Cost of bulletin board	Creation of library bulletin board
4. Include a kiosk at Chestnut Ave. "community gathering place" on Cedar Lane that will have one side for education information.	S.E.E. volunteers Town Council <b>CLSID</b> School administrators	Funding for kiosk Coordinator to post information	Creation of kiosk
5. Electronic sharing of minutes between various school boards.	School administrators Webmasters		Availability of on line minutes for all school boards

**Objective #3:** To create a dialogue among parents through development of town-wide programs that are of interest to all **parents/** guardians to help improve their children's learning and behavior and to increase understanding of shared values and reasons for choice of each system.

Action Step	Implementer	Resource	Benchmark
<p>1. Create a community education task force to:</p> <p>A. Promote <b>and/or</b> publicize speakers on educational issues.</p> <p>B. Provide practical hands on feedback on navigating the educational process.</p> <p>C. Act as a resource for parents concerning educational issues.</p> <p>D. Act as a liaison to <b>Teaneck</b> Board of Education setting up informal meetings with the community and representatives of the Board.</p> <p>E. Provide access to user-friendly materials for parents including, but not limited to high school course books.</p> <p>F. Establish mentoring programs for school families.</p>	<p>S.E.E. volunteers Parent organization <b>School</b> administrators</p>	<p>Location Secretarial help Mailing costs Funding for speakers</p>	<p>Establishment of mission and series of <b>lectures/programs</b></p>
<p>2. Create-maillist for Community Education Council and community members interested in participating.</p>	<p>Volunteers from task force</p>		<p>Availability of list serve for community</p>

**GOAL:** To improve and extend existing communications with families and develop strategies to bring more families into the homelschool connection with teachers, administrators and Boards of Education within the township schools.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Actively involved parents/guardians feel that communication from schools does not adequately meet their needs. Teachers want to see more involvement from more families.

**Objective #1:** To establish lines of communication and involvement among families, teachers, administrators and Boards of Education.

Action Step	Implementer	Resource	Benchmark
1. Create communication contract between schools and families.	School Principals PTO leadership	Secretarial help	Number of contracts signed and returned
2. Promote more after school academic supports during and outside the school year.	High school students Community volunteers Teachers as appropriate	Location Educational materials Supervision Volunteers Transportation	Number of participants in programs Number of recurring participants
3. Ensure regularly revised syllabi that are flexible in providing guidance for both remedial and advanced students.	Teachers Subject Supervisors Principals	Planning time Printing costs	Parent/ guardian satisfaction
4. Maximize use of all media to promote information.	Public Relations Department PTO's	Cablevision, newspapers, bulletins at Houses of Worship, cottage parties, Internet	Increased awareness of school programs and events

**Objective #2:** To bring more parents/guardians into the schools to be actively involved in their children's educational process.

Action Step	Implementer	Resource	Benchmark
1. Explore factors that keep people from becoming involved in their children's school experiences.	Guidance Department PTO volunteers Outreach workers	Surveys Consultants to develop surveys	Completed study with proposals
2. Develop family mentoring program.	PTO's Parent/Guardian volunteers Education Task Force	Schools	Establish program
3. Create a pool of community volunteers to offer to share their expertise within the classroom in areas such as of the arts, sciences and cultures.	Coordinator for volunteers and classroom teachers	Identified coordinator	Number of volunteers scheduled for class presentations

**GOAL:** To strengthen an atmosphere where learning and achieving are highly valued and expected of all students and from all families in Teaneck.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Lack of a strong culture of learning and achievement among some students.

**Objective #1:** To promote a culture of learning and encourage it in all township schools.

Action Step	Implementer	Resource	Benchmark
1. Identify where downturn occurs in student attitudes and work habits, the factors that contribute to developing a strong learning culture and ways to raise family/teacher expectations.	Building administrators Teachers Guidance Counselors S.E.E. volunteers	School location Time	Develop assessment tools
2. Explore strategies and incentives for students to succeed in higher level courses.	Administration Guidance Counselors	School location Time	Guidance Dept. report
3. Explore ways to increase recognition of Honor Roll students throughout the school year.	Administration PTO's	Time and place	Number of students on honor rolls
4. Create recognition opportunities for special needs/ remedial students.	Director of Special Services Special education teachers Administrators	Time and place	Track number of students receiving awards
5. Expand and extend after school programs run by community members to support academics.	Working Parents Association Teaneck Community Education Center Volunteers	Location Educational materials Transportation	Number of students involved
6. Extend restructuring to the middle school programs.	Administration BOE	Staff Consultants	Redesigned curriculum, scheduling and organization
7. Establish mentoring programs for students at middle schools and high school.	S.E.E. volunteers and administration	Time Place	Number of students services by mentors

**GOAL:** To seek out current research on effective programs, curriculum, methodology, etc. that has been proven to positively affect student learning and achievement.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Need to explore innovative pedagogical practices that maximize learning for all students in Teaneck.

**Objective #1:** To explore professional literature to recommend programs for administrative review.

Action Step	Implementer	Resource	Benchmark
1. Create an ongoing Education Advisory committee of professional educators and lay citizens to undertake research.	S.E.E. volunteers	Town Council for location Secretarial help Mailing costs	Membership list Schedule of meetings Development of committee structure and goals
2. Define scope of research.	Chairperson	Secretarial help	Scope and sequence of research
3. Research defined areas.	Committee members	Computer Library Consultants Current school curriculum materials	Final report
4. Dissemination at annual meeting of school administration and community at large.	Committee members	Secretarial help Printing costs	Published presentation

# Task Force Report

## COMMUNITY BASED PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH

**PROBLEM STATEMENT #1:** There is no centralized Township sponsored youth development organization or department to coordinate and develop youth activities between the various organizations and agencies that exist in Teaneck.

**GOAL:** To create a Township Wide Youth Council that will be sponsored by the Teaneck government for the purpose of bringing together all the organizations that serve the youth to facilitate collaboration and communication (See attached proposed organizational chart).

### **Objective #1:**

To make the youth council responsible for developing a mission statement, a plan of action and for the implementation of the recommendations made by this Task Force.

### **Action Steps:**

1. Schedule and plan at least two organizational meetings to develop the mission statement and plan of action for the proposed council and to put together a job description of possible Youth Director Position.
2. Have a meeting with the Town Manager to discuss the following: The possibility of hiring a youth director, the allocation of resources (space/financial) or initial work to be done **Research/writing** of grants and business sponsorship of youth programs.

### **Implementers:**

Youth Development Task Force.  
Teaneck Government Administration.

### **Resources Needs:**

Office/meeting space.  
Access to telephone, computer, Xerox, fax.  
Postage stamps, stationery.

## **Objective #2:**

To appoint a part time ( ½, 113 time or per diem) paid Township wide Youth Development Organization Director until the funds can be secured to establish a permanent position. The Director will be expected to administer all youth programs and activities, insure continuity and make sure that the action plan is implemented.

## **Action Steps:**

1. To have the Director work in collaboration with the members of the current task force to put together the first organizational meeting of the youth organization and to contact all the organizations listed below to invite them to the meeting.
2. To have the Youth Director put together a youth leadership training for the youth representing the organizations. This training will take place on an ongoing basis and will be implemented using the model of **the Project Adventure of New York City Outward Bound Model**. The idea is to have a youth leadership team consisting of high school students for the purpose of serving as peer leaders and mentors to middle and elementary school students. The youth will also assist in the creation of programs that they feel will motivate and attract their peers to participate.

## **Implementers:**

Youth Director.

Members of the Youth Development Task Force.

Teaneck Government Administration.

Students.

## **Resource Needs:**

Funds to pay Youth Director.

Office/meeting space.

Access to telephone, computer, Xerox, fax.

Postage stamps, stationery.

### **Objective #3:**

To have the youth council meet on bi-monthly basis to:

- Share information.
- Share resources.
- **Discuss** concerns.
- Propose, plan and implement programs and activities.
- Put together a monthly calendar of youth related activities.

### **Action Steps:**

1. Invite the following organizations to be part of the Youth Council and attend an organizational meeting.

The Forum	Thomas Jefferson MS
Benjamin Franklin MS	Community Charter School
Puffin Foundation	Sport Leagues
Teaneck H.S	Recreation Center
Community School	The Al-Ghazaly School
Cultural Arts Coalition	Places of worship youth groups
Teaneck Alliance	Police Department
Ambulance Corps	Library
After school Programs	Fairleigh Dickinson
Jewish Schools	Holy Name Hospital

### **Implementers:**

Youth Director.  
Youth Task Force.  
Teaneck Government Administration.

### **Resource Needs:**

Office/meeting space.  
Access to telephone, computer, Xerox, **fax**.  
Postage stamps, stationery.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT #2:** There are many youth related activities and programs in Teaneck, many of these programs are provided by the local government agencies and others are provided by profit as well as by not for profit organizations; however many of these programs are unknown to many of our families, as result many failed to take advantage of them and sometimes travel out of town to find the services and programs that they need.

**GOAL:** To provide better accessibility and information about existing youth programs and activities by creating a township wide Directory of Youth Programs and Activities that are sponsored by township recreation department, board of education, profit/private organizations, businesses, places of worship, private and charter and religious schools.

**Objective #1:**

To facilitate the participation of youth in the programs and assist the parents in identifying what type of programs will benefit their children the most without making multiple telephone calls to research what programs exist in town Once the information for this directory is compiled, an assessment can be made as to what type of activities, programs and services are still needed in Teaneck.

**Action Steps:**

1. To have the Youth Director, a college intern or designated staff person put together a profile form to obtain all the necessary information from each of the agencies, organizations and programs. The form should include name, address, telephone, web page, contact person, description of programs, dates, hours of operation and any fees if applicable.
2. Once the profiles forms are collected and organized, put together the directory and distribute it in the Library, Recreation Department, Police Department, community organizations, private organizations, restaurants, schools, places of worship, businesses, and other appropriate places. The directory should be updated at least once a year.

**Implementers:**

Youth Director.  
Youth Council.  
Volunteers.  
Teaneck Government Administration.

**Resource Needs:**

Office/meeting space.  
Access to telephone, computer, Xerox, fax.  
Postage stamps, stationery.

## **Objective #2**

To have other organizations that operate in Teaneck initiate the youth programs that are still needed.

### **Action Steps:**

1. Approach the Teaneck Chamber of Commerce to discuss the possibility of co-sponsoring with the Youth Council a career development program, internships and job placements for high school students.
2. Reach out to the local AARP, Senior Center, Classic Residence, and other Senior Housing Complexes to co-sponsor a program of interviews of documentation and history and use the same approach with other agencies and organizations to explore the possibility of co-sponsoring similar programs and activities.
3. Come up with some type of rewards for the participating agencies, i.e., presentation of certificates for involvement, profile article in the local paper, TV channels, tax breaks, public recognition, etc.
4. Organize an all day youth community fair in the spring and the fall to address health issues, career development, mentorship opportunities, volunteerism, youth gangs etc.

### **Implementers:**

Youth Director.

Youth Council.

Teaneck Township.

Invited organizations.

### **Resource Needs:**

Office/meeting space.

Access to telephone, computer, Xerox, fax.

Postage stamps, stationery.

Funds for refreshments, entertainment.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT #3:** There is not enough **parental/adult** active participation in youth programs and activities and a lack of awareness by many of the adults of issues affecting the youth such as drug abuse, youth gangs and violence.

**GOAL:** To facilitate better communication, collaboration, respect and understanding between youth and adults.

**Objective #1:**

Develop an aggressive recruitment campaign in collaboration with Teaneck schools, PTO's, the Recreation Department, community organizations, businesses, senior center, the Classic Residence and the local AARP for the purpose of motivating /recruiting adults and vice-versa to volunteer in the various youth programs. This will provide our senior residents with an opportunity to still feel productive, give back to the community and understand that the community still needs them and that their talents, skills, knowledge and experiences are valued, needed and respected.

**Action Steps:**

1. Put together a recruitment brochure or flyer describing possible volunteer opportunities, i.e., mentors, speaker bureaus, coaches, chaperones, tutors, facilitators, grant writers, clerical assistance, etc.
2. Put together an adult training/orientation to assist the adults with the skills and information needed to serve as an adult youth volunteer. This training should be offered in an ongoing basis.
3. Required that the parents of the youth participating in any of the programs volunteer a minimum number of hours to the programs.

**Implementers:**

Youth Director.  
Youth Council.  
Teaneck Government.  
Adult volunteers.

**Resource Needs:**

Office/meeting space.  
Access to telephone, computer, Xerox, fax.  
Postage stamps, stationery.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT #4:** Lack of information about available and adequate facilities that are supervised and safe and that offer, or can be use for activities for youth to gather after school and on weekends.

**GOAL:** To provide youth with safe, supervised facilities to gather and have their programs. Having these facilities available to the youth will help prevent them from getting involved in unconstructive activities.

**Objective:**

To make an assessment of all possible indoor and outdoors spaces in order to make a directory of facilities that can be utilize for youth programming and help eliminate the need of spending additional funds for building and renovating a new facility.

**Action Steps:**

1. Contact all organization, schools, and places of worship, restaurants, hospitals, the Department of Recreation, and others, to inquire about the possibility of using their facilities. Find out the cost if any and policies of using the space as well as the physical conditions and security provided; once this is done we can better determine which facilities will be better suitable for the types of activities and programs we would like to offer our youth.
2. Once the assessment is completed put together the directory and give a copy to each of the member organizations of the Youth Council.
3. This directory should be updated at least once a year.

**Implementers:**

Youth Director.  
Youth Council.  
Adult volunteers.  
Teaneck Government.

**Resource Needs:**

Office/meeting space.  
Access to telephone, computer, Xerox, fax.  
Postage stamps, stationery.

# Task Force Report

## REPRESENTATIVE AND RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT

**TOPIC AREA #1:** Government's apparent lack of response to residents' complaints/concerns regarding the apparent cultural insensitivity of a number of Township employees.

**GOAL:** To decrease the increasing number of negative interactions residents experience in their dealings with Township employees wherein, a lack of cultural sensitivity plays a role.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Members of the community (across racial and religious lines) report an alarming amount of negative interactions/feedback when transacting business or other personal matters within the various Township departments, in particular, the lack of cultural sensitivity and offensive treatment they receive at the hands of many of those employed by the Township.

**Objective:** Provide employees of the Township with the cultural sensitivity that at this time is not being displayed during their interactions with citizens.

Action Step	Implementers	Timeline	Resources
<p><b>1. Culturally Competent Training</b> Provide all Township employees and government officials with diversity/cultural sensitivity training. This training should be mandatory and possibly repeated on an interim basis, e.g., every 2-3 years.</p>	Township Manager	1 year	<p>Outside Program/Curriculum</p> <p>Rachel Lawrence Diversity/Cultural Sensitivity Consultant/Instructor</p>
<p><b>2. Reporting/Resolution System</b> A means whereby residents who feel they have been treated unfairly, improperly etc. due to their racial, ethnic, religious background by Township employees can launch complaints/investigations, especially if the individual(s) display(s) a pattern of insensitivity.</p>	Township Manager	6 months	<p>Independent Investigation Panel consisting of residents, and administrators.</p> <p>Advisory Board on Community Relations</p>

**TOPIC AREA #2:** Continued flawed and imprecise information provided by Township employees which has lead to deleterious effects throughout the Township.

**GOAL:** To reduce if not eradicate the increasing incidence of "tenured" and new employees making erroneous decisions, giving inaccurate instructions etc. to residents which can and do have long-term detrimental effects upon individuals and neighborhoods.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Hasty, uninformed, misguided, and other such decision making by Township **officials/employees** have led to several, and continuing incidents wherein hindsight recognition of mistakes has cost the Township exorbitant legal fees, caused neighborhoods to lose or have their character marred, and forced individual residents to bear costs for correcting actions they took after consulting with or being provided with express permission from the Township.

**Objective:** Provide a means whereby Township employees are informed about the import of their responsibilities, and are more cognizant of the long-term effects of the decisions they make, information they provide, and authority they give to citizens to undertake certain actions within the Township.

Action Step	Implementers	Resources
<p><b>1. Updated ordinance Traininu</b>            Provide employees of the Township, especially those entrusted with carrying out duties in connection with the operation and enforcement of ordinances, with training regarding the content and application of those ordinances. When ordinances are amended, repealed, or added to the Municipal Code these employees should be provided with <b>training/information</b> regarding the procedural effects this will have on the duties they perform for the Township.</p>	<p>Township Manager  <b>Township Council</b></p>	<p>Planning Board            Board of Adjustment            Municipal Code</p>

**TOPIC AREA #3:** Perceived disparate enforcement of government ordinances throughout the Township.

**GOAL:** To promote a commitment to equitable enforcement of ordinances throughout the Township's differing regions.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** There is a perception in certain areas of the Township that the import of enforcing Township ordinances, which help preserve the quality of life in those neighborhoods, is undervalued and overlooked.

**Objective:** Promote an atmosphere wherein suspected non-enforcement of Township ordinances, in certain neighborhoods, is investigated, recognized if evident, and then addressed.

Action Step	Implementers	Timeline	Resources
<p><b>1. Old, allegedly inapplicable and out-of-date ordinances</b> need to be reviewed with a view toward evaluating their effectiveness and possible removal from the Municipal code.</p>	<p>Township Council  Township Attorney/Legal Department</p>	<p>2 years</p>	<p>All Statutory and Advisory Boards  Municipal Code  Township Attorney/Legal Department</p>
<p><b>2. Police and other enforcement personnel</b> need to be updated as to the Township ordinances and be instructed to enforce uniformly throughout the entire Township.</p>	<p>Teaneck Police  Health and Human Services Department  Building Department</p>	<p>6 – 9 months</p>	<p>Municipal Code  Township Attorney/Legal Department</p>
<p><b>3. A survey</b> of how, when and where ordinances are being enforced should be conducted to pinpoint those ordinances which are essentially of non-effect or which are being enforced in an inconsistent~discriminatory manner.</p>	<p>Township Council</p>	<p>6-9 months</p>	<p>Teaneck Police  Health and Human Services Department  Building Department</p>

**TOPIC AREA #4:** Breakdown of Communication between Government, Administration & Residents.

**GOAL:** To improve the lines of communication and promote a more efficient flow of information to and from the Township's governing bodies, administration, and residents.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Residents across all lines feel a disconnect with Township governing bodies and administration, and are often **overwhelmed** and discouraged by the inability to get "a straight answer to a simple question" or have their **concerns/issues** heard and addressed.

**Objective:** To prevent residents from feeling lost and frustrated while trying to maneuver through Township bureaucracy and to help residents utilize Township **services** more efficiently.

Action Step	Implementers	Timeline	Resources
<p><b>1. 211 System</b>            A main number similar to the NYC 311 system where residents can call to get general guidance as to agencies, services etc. that can best provide them with <b>information/help</b> regarding specific issues. This opposed to residents being forced to basically begin a phone chain before they can get to the right <b>person/department</b> (if they ever do) that can assist them.</p>	<p>Mayor             Township Council</p>	<p>1 year</p>	<p>Bergen County            211 System             NYC 311            System</p>
<p><b>2. Guide Sheets</b>            To prevent residents from being confused or misled by inconsistent and ambiguous information given to them by Township employees regarding services, procedures etc. provide "guide-sheets" at each Township office which may be handed out to residents as to the operation of that department, the services it provides and how to utilize the services.</p>	<p>Township            Manager</p>	<p>1 year</p>	

<p><b>3. Township Website</b>  Construct a more "user friendly" website for the Township. Include: (i) More links to departments with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section for use by residents in information gathering. (ii) Email links whereby individuals can send questions1 concerns to Township council/ administration or Community Relations Officer. (iii) Links whereby individuals can easily download commonly used forms, applications and other documents. (iv) Clear and concise descriptions of Township governing and statutory bodies, their duties and procedures.</p>	<p>Township Manager   Township Information Technology Department</p>	<p>6 months</p>	<p>Other Town and Municipal Websites for guide/examples as to formatting etc.   Alan Sohn  Teaneck Cares</p>
<p><b>4. Ombudsperson/ Public Advocate</b>  The role of this individual would be to help residents with questions, issues, problems that arise and assist them in finding solutions/services within the Township that would best address their situation. This would replace the ad hoc system currently in place where residents feel that their voices/complaints are not being heard b/c they have no one to whom they can present them in private outside of attending public meetings/hearings. Another outcome would be also cut down on the inefficient use of the Council and Township Managers' time wherein they are often forced to address issues that are not in their purview or spend time investigating and directing citizens to other resources.</p>	<p>Ideally, this individual should be independent of the council. Nonetheless, a councilperson elected from districts (in a Ward system) would serve the same purpose.   Township Council</p>	<p>9 months</p>	<p>Township Council   Community Relations Advisory Board</p>

**TOPIC AREA #5:** Advisory Board on Community Relations.

**GOAL:** To improve community relations and advocacy for the rights and interests of all segments of the township. To act as liaison between the Teaneck government and community.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Certain segments of the community lack trust of others. Some communities even feel excluded in matters that affect the township as a whole. Certain communities feel alienated from government and lack the resources to obtain the services they need.

**Objective:** To elevate the existing Advisory Board on Community Relations to statutory status and redefine its functions and objectives.

<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Implementers</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Benchmarks</b>
Task force to recommend new guidelines for Advisory Board and present then to the Town Council.  Town Council to ratify guidelines.	Task Force Township Council	3 to 6 months	Task Force Town Council Board Volunteers	Survey questionnaire after implementation, created and administered by Task Force.

**TOPIC AREA # 6:** Insufficient involvement by citizens in civic affairs.

**GOAL:** Leadership Teaneck (leadership development project).

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** There is a need for increased involvement in the community by residents of all backgrounds, in all aspects of civic life.

**Objective:** To encourage increased participation by providing an opportunity for interested residents to gain additional information about local government function, operation and political process. **Seminars/workshops** will be developed in partnership with the FDU School of Administrative Science focusing on Teaneck's history, form of government, local economic and land use issues, educational system, and cultural diversity--in addition to general discussion topics, such as public policy, decision making and problem solving, communications, team building, strategic planning, and other topics as decided.

Additionally, the formation and viability of grass-roots community organizations will be encouraged, and these organizations will be urged to sponsor a diverse pool of individuals to participate in all aspects of Teaneck's civil life.

Action Step	Implementers	Timeline	Resources	Benchmarks
<p><b>1. Leadership Teaneck</b> With approval of the Representative and Responsive Government Task Force, a Request For Proposal is sent to FDU School of Administrative Science to co-sponsor the project .</p>	Jackie Kates	March,2004	FDU offers to develop course curriculum in partnership with and at no cost to the Township and to recommend and secure (volunteer) instructors ; estimate additional \$3000 cost for materials, refreshments, miscellaneous	Informal agreement with Ron Calissi, Executive Associative Dean, Off-Campus Programs
Meeting with Ron Calissi, Paulette Laubsch of FDU.	Jackie Kates	March,2004	FDU	Draft proposal of curriculum prepared
Approval of concept and draft proposal by Representative and Responsive Government Task Force, and agreement to request support of Township Council.	Task Force	March,2004		Approval by Task Force

Approval of concept and draft proposal by Township Council.	Township Council	April, 2004		Approval by Township Council
Discuss Corporate Sponsorship with Dan Conte, Glenpointe Marriott, possible venue.	Jackie Kates	May, 2004	Marriott at Glenpointe	
Meet with Ron Calissi and Paulette Laubsch to refine curriculum draft and budget. FDU begins to contact potential instructors.	Jackie Kates	June, 2004	FDU	Estimate of additional costs reduced from \$3000 to \$500
Follow-up with Dan Conte to determine if Marriott will consider financial contribution in lieu of in-kind contribution.	Jackie Kates	June, 2004	Marriott at Glenpointe	Agreement with Marriott at Glenpointe
If no agreement with Marriott on funding, find other corporate or commercial sponsorship.	Jackie Kates	July, 2004	Other corporate or commercial sponsors	Agreement with other corporate sponsors
Develop public information and promotion plan; reach out to block associations and other community organizations.	Helene Fall, Township Council Task Force	July, 2004	Township of Teaneck	Ads, newsletters, <b>website</b> Cablevision, flyers to houses of worship, Block Associations, Community Organizations
Registration (consider using Citizens Police Academy registration process as model).	Municipal Clerk	July, August 2004	Township of Teaneck	Up to 30 residents register for course
Course begins 3 <sup>rd</sup> week of September, 10 weeks, 3 hours per week in Teaneck venue ( Marriott at Glenpointe or municipal facility)	FDU and selected instructors	Sept. – Dec. 2004	FDU, instructors, Township	Course ongoing with 10 instructors for 10 weeks
Evaluation	FDU, Helene Fall Township Council Task Force	January, 2005	Township of Teaneck	Consider modifications, continuation or elimination of program

<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Implementers</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Benchmarks</b>
<p><b>2. Grass-Roots Organizations</b> Encourage grass-roots community organizations (e.g., block associations, the Teaneck Peace and Justice Coalition, ad hoc groups) to sponsor a diverse pool of individuals to participate in all aspects of Teaneck's civil life.</p>	Task Force Volunteers	Establish committee by Oct. . 1, 2006.	Task Force members and Volunteers	Report back to Town Council and Visioning Process monitors by December 1, 2006.
Encourage the formation and viability of grass-roots organizations themselves.				
Establish a committee to research the two above steps and create a concrete proposal.				

**TOPIC AREA #7:** Representativeness and Responsiveness of Town Council

**GOAL:** A more representative and responsive town council.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Council has not been sufficiently responsive to all areas of the community.

**Objective:** Consider changes to the structure of government that would increase the representativeness and responsiveness of the Town Council.

Action Step	Implementers	Timeline	Resources	Benchmarks
<p><b>Electoral System</b> Establish a committee to research and report on an electoral system for the Town Council which would include representatives elected from districts.</p>	Town Council and Volunteers.	Establish committee by Oct. 1, 2006.	Members of current Representative/Responsive Gov't. Task Force, plus others who are interested, serving as volunteers.	Report back to Town Council and Visioning Process monitors by December 1, 2006.
<p>Directly Elected Mayor Establish a committee to research and report on the need for mayor who represents the entire town, not just a majority of Town Council members.</p>				
<p>Have the committee create a concrete proposal to implement such a plan.</p>				

**TOPIC AREA #8:** Insufficient voter awareness and turnout.

**GOAL:** Greater participation in elections and more citizen attention to all levels of government.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Low turnout and inattention by citizens in regard to lower-levels of government.

**Objective:** Increase turnout and attention by citizens to local government.

Action Step	Implementers	Resources	Benchmarks
<p><b>1. <u>Same Day Elections</u></b>            Establish a committee to research and report on the feasibility of holding all elections on the same day (first Tuesday in November) each year.</p>	<p>Town Council and Volunteers.</p>	<p>Members of current <b>Representative/Responsive Gov't. Task Force</b>, plus others who are interested, serving as volunteers.</p>	<p>Report back to Town Council and Visioning Process monitors by December 1, 2006.</p>
<p><b>2. <u>Voter Registration</u></b>            Town should make available voter registration forms at all municipal facilities that are open to the public and to promote voter registration through its <b>website</b> and published print materials.</p>	<p>Town Council</p>	<p>Township Administration</p>	<p>Task Force reviews implementation within a month's time.</p>

**TOPIC AREA #9:** Representative and Responsive Government

**GOAL:** Identify ways to get a diverse mix of residents on advisory and statutory boards.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Lack of knowledge of opportunities to volunteer for the boards.

**Objective:** Create a system to make the boards more representative of the town.

Action Step	Implementers	Timeline	Resources	Benchmarks
Obtain descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of all advisory and statutory boards.	Task Force Town Council	3 months.	Township Manager and Township Council.	Task Force review in 12 months.
Explore state of the art ideas on how to be inclusive and nondiscriminatory.	Task Force Town Council	3 months	Township Manager and Township Council.	
Provide for different venues for applications from the public. (Agree to a <b>policy/system</b> that recognizes equity or equal access to statutory boards.)	Jackie Kates Town Council	6 months	Township Council	
Establish term limits for serving on boards.	Town Council Town Manager	9 months	Town Code	

# Task Force Report

## Teaneck Connects – Community Relations

**Introduction:** The main effort of Teaneck Connects has been to begin to clarify the current status of inter-group relations in the township, as well as relations between the township governing bodies and the citizenry.

### Current Description of the Advisory Board on Community Relations

The mission of the Board is to advise the Teaneck Township Council on matters affecting community relations, and to help the Council create and maintain a harmonious atmosphere among the people of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds that make up Teaneck.

Through liaisons with various groups, such as public and private schools, religious institutions, the Police Department, recreation groups and the Township Council, the Board takes the pulse of the community. ABCR monitors cultural relations, and uses the information to create programs, suggest actions or undertake activities that generate understanding and empathy among individuals and groups that makes up the Teaneck community.

### Focus Area 1: Community/Inter-group relations

**Goal:** Conduct a professionally designed survey of the status of inter-group relations, identify areas of **significant** disagreement and conflict, and propose remedies.

**Problem Statement:** There is an unwillingness in this town to acknowledge that we are part of different groups that quite often have difficulty understanding each other. Some groups have little interest in cross-cultural understanding.

**Objective:** Employ an ombudsperson to manage the survey project; monitor on an ongoing basis the status of relationships between the various groups, and work to resolve perceived or actual areas of significant conflict.

Action Step	Implementers	Resources	Benchmarks
Hire an ombudsperson.	Committee appointed by the Township Council, the Board of Education, and citizens	Position funded 1/3 each by Council, Board of Education, and private sources. Suggest FDU course for grad students for survey project	Report back to Town Council, Board of Ed., and visioning process monitors by March 15, 2007

## Focus Area 2: Opportunities for inter-group dialogue

**Goal:** Improve understanding between the various township groups

**Problem Statement:** Racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and all other forms of prejudice and discrimination exist in Teaneck. While this is true in every community, the fact that so many different groups live in such a small area can create ongoing patterns of hostility and conflict.

**Objective:** Create mechanisms to improve understanding between groups, identify "flash points" where hostility or ignorance may lead to conflict, and work to improve the comfort level between residents from different groups.

Action Steps	Implementers	Resources	Benchmarks
1. Employ ombudsperson.	See above	See above	See above
2. Reorganize Advisory Board on Community Relations Advisory Board, staffed by ombudsperson, possibly with representation from each "district" in Teaneck.	Township Council, Board of Education, citizen committee (see above)	NA	Assess functioning of new ABCR by Mar. 1, 2007
3. Provide intergroup relations training to reconstituted ABCR.	Ombudsperson/committee (see above)	Fairleigh Dickinson leadership training and/or ombudsperson	Complete first round of training by May, 2007
4. Design formal opportunities for intergroup dialogue as needed.	Ombudsperson/reconstituted ABCR	NA	Ongoing forever
5. Examine current employee/management training and evaluation practices in municipal government and school district. Recommend additional training and evaluation procedures as needed.	Ombudsperson/reconstituted ABCR/Council/ Board of Ed	NA	Begin implementing process as needed by January 1, 2007

### Focus Area 3: Township governance<sup>1</sup> employee<sup>1</sup> citizen relations

**Goal:** Improve relations and responsiveness between governing bodies, citizens, and Township employees.

**Problem Statement:** There is a perception that the governing bodies in the township are not sufficiently responsive to the needs of citizens and employees. There is no forum for receipt of citizen concerns. There is no system for response to employee concerns that prevents personnel issues from leading to expensive lawsuits.

**Objective:** Establish an ongoing mechanism by which the cultural climate of township governance is assessed, monitored and improved.

Action Steps	Implementers	Resources	Benchmarks
1. Employ ombudsperson, empower <b>ABCR</b> .	Ombudsperson, <b>ABCR</b>	See above; plus reorganization of the <b>ABCR</b> to serve this function, staffed by ombudsperson	Conduct survey and make recommendations to governing bodies, employee groups, and citizen committee by Jan. 1. 2007
2. Encourage elected town officials, appointed leaders and citizens to participate in FDU or other educational institutions on government <sup>1</sup> leadership training courses.	Fairleigh Dickinson University Graduate School instructors and courses	Fairleigh Dickinson University Graduate School instructors and courses	Percentage of township elected and appointed leaders to complete seminar by Jan. 1, 2005; balance to complete by May 1,2007

## Focus Area 4: Communication between various groups

**Goal:** Create "areas of opportunity" to increase contact, connection, relationship and communication.

**Problem Statement:** Residents don't have contact or communicate with each other. Schools used to be the common meeting ground where intermingling occurred, but with a growing population that does not participate in the public school system these opportunities have decreased. Also with the increase of having both parents working, increasingly busy lifestyles and other pressures, the times and places for people to meet and communicate have decreased.

**Objective:** To encourage closer contact between residents, particularly across racial, ethnic, and religious differences.

Action Step	Implementers	Resources	Benchmarks	Examples
1. Take inventory of "gathering opportunities".	Ombudsperson, Re-organized Com. Relations Advisory Board, and ensure cross cultural/geographical representation	Room at Rodda Center	Report to 3-part committee (see above) by Dec. 1. Annual re-evaluation	
2. Enhance present groups that provide opportunities, create new ones.	Same	NA	Ongoing reports	Teaneck Volunteer Ambulance Corps "Mitzvah Day" Block Associations
3. Improve public relations efforts.	Same	Bulletin Board purchase	Ongoing	bulletin boards around town; new resident welcoming events; enhance, expand, and publicize current opportunities
4. Improve the digital communications infrastructure for Teaneck government and services.	Town Systems Administrator and Town/Board of Ed Webmaster	Improved hardware/software; training of existing personnel.	Ability to send emails to large groups; availability of township information in a user friendly format	<a href="http://www.teaneck.org">http://www.teaneck.org</a> needs to be more welcoming. Files/data need to be updated and links clarified. Posting of PDFs is not the only solution.
5. Establish more block associations where none currently exist.	Ombudsperson; Existing associations	Elsworth James & other block assoc. leaders; community policing	Increase the number of block events in 2007 and ongoing	Parties, fundraisers, garage sales, family night, etc.

6. New resident events for homeowners, renters and students	Town Council, Ombudsperson	Realtors, block assoc., clergy council, ABCR	Event takes place Good turnout	Englewood's new resident event.
7. Analyze the full set of volunteer committees in Teaneck and reduce duplication.	Ombudsperson, ABCR	Leadership from the various committees to conduct analysis and develop report	Reduced number of committees that are more focused on Township needs	

**Action Step 8:**

Consider a variety of ways to bring residents together. (Some **events/ideas** have already been implemented; the thought is that they should continue, with the intent to be more inclusive than they already are.)

- "Pickup" sports nights. Meet one **time/month** and pick new teams each time – can't pick someone you know.
- Thanksgiving interfaith service.
- MLK Birthday observance.
- First Night.
- Community Awareness **Day(s)**. Set up booths/tables at community events or at a specific event where people can find out about the various committees, groups, organizations etc. that exist around town.
- Teaneck Clean and Green.
- Votee Park Field Day for youth.
- Cultural Awareness **Day(s)**, perhaps in conjunction with Cedar Lane Alive or a similar festival in the Plaza area.
- Teaneck Book Club. Announce a book selection for the town to read – **readers/participants** can get together for organized book discussions; others can just have informal discussion with neighbors who are reading the same book.
- Turn Off the TV/Go Offline Night.
- Displays of cultural interest at key locations around town.
- Encourage local newspapers to have a weekly Teaneck "Focus" section with event and meeting lists.
- Food CO-OP.
- Expand concept of Cedar Lane Special Improvement District to other business areas such as Teaneck Road and the Plaza areas.

<b>Implementers</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Benchmarks</b>
Town Manager	Throughout the year	Volunteer Groups, Local Sponsors etc.	Events occur Well attended

# Task Force Report

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**TOPIC AREA:** Economic Development

**GOAL:** To promote, enhance and encourage the commercial economic vitality of Teaneck (through the next 20 years) (It is acknowledged that change and major proposals must be approached with full transparency and active communication with all areas of the community.)

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Teaneck lacks areas available for new commercial development and many commercially zoned areas are of the "strip" type with little depth from the street and close proximity to existing residential development. The Township has many aging structures, some of them updated or modified in disparate styles, and an infrastructure that may not be adequate if extensive commercial redevelopment is made. There is a lack of organization or focus in existing commercial areas other than the Cedar Lane Special Improvement District (CLSID).

**Objective #1:** Redevelopment and expansion of existing commercially zoned areas.

Action Step	Timeline	Implementer	Resource	Benchmark
1. Following current Council study of funding and organization for Economic Development Corp. and additional SID(s), encourage or support a professional staff function (EDPSF) for economic development based in the Municipal Building.	3 months	Township Council Municipal Manager	Township Council	TEDC By-laws Hiring of Professional
2. Review and tabulate footprint dimensions and height restrictions for all commercially zoned areas. Identify areas that are currently "mixed use" or zoned as such.	3-12 months	EDPSF Township Planner	Master Plan Ordinance Record	Production of report to be used in development and revisions to ordinances
3. Study existing commercial structures and evaluate esthetics of current and/or original architecture and condition of structure.	3-12 months	EDPSF Township Planner	Construction Official	Production of report to be used in development and revisions to ordinances

4. Identify and encourage consideration of further Special Improvement District (SID) establishment in other areas of Teaneck. It is understood that SIDs in separated areas of the Township can cooperate, coordinate and share resources and staff under an umbrella organization such as TEDC.	3-6 months	EDPSF Volunteer(s)	TEDC Township Merchants	Development and establishment of SID(s) or cohesive merchant groups in The Plaza, North Teaneck Road, Queen Anne Road / DeGraw Avenue, etc.
5. Coordinate grant applications for economic development to be submitted by TEDC and EDPSF with overall township grants application function. Grants function could be by consultant on contingency basis.	3-9 months	EDPSF Township Council Municipal Manager	Township Council Other KPA's with overlap on grants	
6. Coordinate development of information kiosk(s) (suggested location at new plaza area on Cedar Lane). Consider electronic rather than billboard format and corporate sponsorship to cover costs.	Now to 6 months	CLSID	Other KPA's with overlap on public communication and information	

**Objective #2:** Identify areas for rezoning for commercial or mixed use development

Action Step	Timeline	Implementer	Resource	Benchmark
1. Study trade-offs in establishing new areas for increased ratables at the expense of reduction of existing residential areas.	3 – 6 months	Township Planner	-Tax Assessor -TCP Taxation KPA -Master Plan	Development of new or modified commercial districts
2. Cooperate with group developing Teaneck Center For The Arts so that new facility benefits from a commercial area location.	Now to 6 months	TBA Deborah Ugoretz TCAC	- Excerpts from "Monograph" of June 2002 - CLSID & Karel Littman contacts with other commercial area property owners	Volunteer study of other regional areas with arts center and mutual benefit from commercial location (such as John Harms, Williams Center, etc.)

**Objective #3:** Upgrade, enhance and fully utilize the transportation and parking options available to Teaneck and capitalize on the location of our community.

Action Step	Timeline	Implementer	Resource	Benchmark
1. Study parking areas and consider designation of commuter or day long parking areas by resident permit or by fee.	3 - 12 months	Township Planner	-Township Council -Teaneck Police Neighborhood Groups	Establishment of parking ordinances or development of parking facilities
2. Determine current railway plans and consider advocacy for change of those plans to consider commuter rail service from Teaneck. Also, include any "light rail" plans in the area in this study.	3-12 months	West Shore Committee	-NJDOT -Bergen County Planning and Development -New Jersey State Planning Commission	
3. Consider reconfiguration of parking in areas such as the Armory and American Legion Drive.	3-12 months	Township Planner Township Engineer	-Township Council -Teaneck Police	Reconfigure areas to accommodate more vehicles Implement new parking areas

# Task Force Report

## TEANECK TAXES

We have compared Teaneck property taxes to other towns in Bergen County and found that Teaneck has the highest rate when compared to towns with similar assessed property values. Among these towns, Teaneck's tax of \$7,843 on an average property surpasses the next town by about \$500 and the average by about \$1500 (2003-2004).

There are a number of reasons for Teaneck's high rates compared to other towns:

1. Teaneck has very few industrial and commercial properties and, as a result, the tax burden falls largely on residential property owners.
2. Teaneck receives among the lowest amounts from the State to support its schools, 8% of the school budget, compared to an average of 34% in the State for towns with similar sized school districts.
3. Teaneck's school budget is high. (Approximately two thirds of Teaneck property taxes are for the school budget.) According to New Jersey Department of Education data for K-12 school districts in Bergen County in 2002-2003, Teaneck had the highest cost per pupil, \$2,000 or 21% above the average, not including transportation and special education.
4. Teaneck and only three other towns in Bergen County have a professional Fire Department. This represents 19% of municipal budget expenditures in 2003 and 7.7% of our overall tax rate (about \$600 per average house).

### **Municipal Budget**

Our comparison of Teaneck's municipal (non-school) budget to that of four comparable towns (with professional fire departments) showed a lower budget per resident for Teaneck. This suggests that our municipal budget is reasonable. However we have not done an extensive comparison with many towns from Bergen County.

### **Regressive tax system**

A major reason for Teaneck's high property tax rate compared to other towns in Bergen County is the regressive nature of property taxation when comparing from one town to another. This means that taxpayers in wealthier towns (with higher property values) pay a smaller fraction of their wealth in property taxes because each town needs to pay for roughly the same services per household. This results in Teaneck's property tax burden being higher than other, wealthier towns. We therefore propose in Goal C that we strongly consider whether switching to a more income-based system through State funding would be beneficial to Teaneck taxpayers.

### **Restricting growth of the Township budgets**

When considering our present taxes and budget one must consider the value received that contributes to the high quality of life in Teaneck. We do not advocate wholesale cuts in the township budgets. However, a careful review is necessary to evaluate how costs can be contained. In considering the municipal budget, the fire department stands out as a significant expense since many towns have volunteer departments, but it is also a valued safety net for the community. We have not had the time to research each municipal department as to whether their budgets are appropriate compared to other towns and the services received. We therefore propose in Goal A to review each town department to determine whether cost reductions and efficiencies can be achieved without significant changes in valued services.

We strongly support the public schools, but we have found that the school budget is significantly higher than most towns in Bergen County. We have found that the operations and maintenance costs per pupil are 44% above the average and teachers' salaries are 20% above the average. The higher teachers' salaries are largely due to the higher experience and number of teachers with master's degrees or above. About 75% of Teaneck's teachers and administrators have master's degrees or above compared to an average of about 54% in Bergen County and 37% in the State of New Jersey. We also found from New Jersey Department of Education data that Teaneck has a student-to-administrator and student-to-support personnel ratio near the lowest among the State's school districts with over 3,500 students. The reasons behind these facts need to be determined and these expenditures need to be scrutinized. Teaneck may decide that the value received through the school system is worth the investment, but we propose in Goal A that the school budget be carefully reviewed to constrain the growth of expenditures and to understand the tradeoffs necessary to provide a top quality education without having among the highest per student costs in Bergen County.

### **Commercial, industrial and non-taxable properties in Teaneck**

Taxes are also high in Teaneck due to the relatively low number of commercial and industrial properties. Commercial and industrial activity in Teaneck is limited by zoning ordinance (e.g. preserving the Route 4 Greenbelt, having an extensive park system, and limiting the height of buildings allowed in town) resulting in a town that is very highly residential and in which the property tax burden falls very heavily on residential property owners. These restrictions contribute to the quality of life in Teaneck. Nevertheless, limited and carefully planned economic development would generate increased tax revenues, reducing the tax burden on residents, while possibly also improving the quality of life by improving the town.

- The current restriction on high-rise buildings in Teaneck might be selectively relaxed in a manner that encourages economic development and lessens the tax burden on residential property owners without reducing the quality of life in Teaneck. An increase of \$6.5 million in total assessed property value in Teaneck would reduce the tax burden of the average taxpayer by \$20 per year.
- The university and especially the hospital might provide opportunities for economic development that would contribute to the Township's tax base.

We propose in Goal A that a rejuvenated Economic Developmental Corporation promote development without causing a deterioration of the quality of life in Teaneck.

We have also considered the relative level of tax-exempt properties in Teaneck. We find that Teaneck is 15th among the 70 towns in Bergen County in the proportion of tax-exempt properties. At 5.63% this is only slightly higher than the average of 5.13%. Much of this tax-exempt property is accounted for by Fairleigh Dickinson University and Holy Name Hospital. Thus it does not appear that the percentage of tax-exempt properties in Teaneck is notably high. There is also no legal basis in preventing tax-exempt organizations from owning property and these tax-exempt properties most often add to the quality of life in Teaneck and are even the reason that many people choose to live here. Nevertheless, where possible it is worthwhile encouraging the maintenance of tax-paying properties as any conversion of a property to tax-exempt status results in a higher tax burden on Teaneck residents.

### **Relative assessment of Township properties**

We have heard through the stakeholder process and otherwise that many Teaneck residents believe that the residential property tax burden in Teaneck is distributed inequitably across different sections of the Township. We have examined recent data that bear on this matter and spoken with real estate agents and our tax assessor. We have concluded that the residential property tax burden in Teaneck is, in fact, now distributed reasonably equitably, although this was not true a few years ago. The change is the result of normal market forces that have affected the value of residential properties in Teaneck. Teaneck residents should be helped to understand that the distribution of the residential property tax burden is not now inequitable.

### **Education of Teaneck Taxpayers**

Based on our own experience and that of others, we have concluded that most residents of Teaneck have a very incomplete and to some degree an incorrect understanding of what services are provided from our taxes, how municipal and Board of Education budgets translate into property taxes, how the tax burden in Teaneck is distributed among taxpayers, and what trade-offs exist between keeping taxes low and preserving services and the quality of life in Teaneck. We propose in Goal B efforts to help the residents of Teaneck obtain a better understanding of these matters.

### **State Aid**

Teaneck gets less State aid for public education than most other municipalities in the State, including many with demographic characteristics similar to Teaneck. Increasing the amount of State aid that Teaneck receives within the current legal framework would reduce the tax burden on Teaneck residents by transferring part of our local costs to all taxpayers in the State. It is unclear to us how State aid to Teaneck is calculated. We propose in Goal C to investigate how State aid is determined and to lobby for increased aid so that Teaneck receives its equitable share.

The dependence on property taxes to fund local government services, including public education, is higher in New Jersey than in any other state and in recent years the State

has reduced its funding of certain local programs, including public education. Other types of State aid have also declined. Until 1993, Teaneck received \$7.9 million in State aid, including density aid. This steadily decreased to \$4.6 million in 2004. The decline in real (i.e. inflation-adjusted) dollars is even greater. Reducing New Jersey's overall dependence on property taxes to fund local services might reduce the overall tax burden on Teaneck residents even though State taxes would inevitably rise and Teaneck taxpayers pay State income and sales taxes as well as local property tax. Teaneck residents might still benefit because the sources of State revenue are more diverse, with a large fraction of State tax revenue coming from businesses and wealthier towns. Relying more on State taxation, therefore, would to some degree compensate for the relative absence of taxable, non-residential real estate in Teaneck. We propose in Goal C to determine the benefit to Teaneck residents of shifting to a more income-based system and to lobby for changes in State laws.

### **Goals**

The high tax rate is a burden on many Teaneck residents and likely a deterrent for many to live in Teaneck. The ever-rising taxes pressure those with more slowly rising incomes and are a particular burden on those who live on fixed incomes. A significant number of Teaneck residents feel that they will not be able to afford to continue to live in their homes because of the property tax burden. Therefore, opportunities should be sought to limit the continued growth of taxes while preserving municipal services and the quality of life in Teaneck. To address the above problems we propose the following solutions as detailed below:

- Promote revenue growth by limited economic development, increases in fees and grants, and the establishment of a community foundation.
- Restrain expenditure growth by establishing rolling reviews of sections of the municipal and school budgets to identify appropriate levels of **staffing**, salaries and other expenditures, by identifying areas where savings and efficiencies can be obtained, and by introducing performance measurement so that the quality of services delivered can be compared to expenditures.
- Educate Teaneck residents as to where their taxes go and how they are assessed. The tradeoffs between taxes and services need to be clearly understood.
- Lobby for increased State aid for the school budget so that Teaneck receives its equitable share. Determine the effect for Teaneck residents of funding local government services by a more income-based system and lobby for changes if merited.

**GOAL A:** Limit the annual rate of growth of Teaneck's municipal and school board expenditures to no more than the rate of inflation<sup>2</sup>.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** There exist unpursued opportunities to increase non-tax revenue and to reduce both expenditures and the rate of growth of expenditures by the municipal government and the Board of Education. Institutional mechanisms need to be put into place to ensure that these opportunities are pursued vigorously on an ongoing basis.

**Objective #1:** Promote additional economic development without causing the deterioration in the quality of life in Teaneck.

ACTION STEPS	IMPLEMENTERS	TIMELINE	NEW RESOURCES NEEDED
1. Make the Teaneck Economic Development Corporation (TEDC) permanent with professional staff, expanding its purview and responsibilities, and perhaps including the current functions of Cedar Lane Special Improvement District (CLSID).	Council with input from TEDC, CLSID, other stakeholders and consultant	No more than 6 months (by 3/31/07) <sup>3</sup>	Cost of consultant: \$20,000  Cost of staff plus soft costs ~\$150,000
2. Provide guidance for activities of TEDC to ensure the objective of generating additional tax revenue from non-residential property without causing the deterioration in the quality of life in Teaneck.	Council with input from TEDC, CLSID, and other stakeholders, drawing on examples of other EDCs in similar settings	No more than 6 months (by 3/31/07)	Research time of a volunteer to find examples of guidance given to other EDCs in similar settings and draft guidelines for Teaneck
3. TEDC develop plans to: achieve maximum benefit from surplus municipal and BoE properties; preserve commercial and industrial uses of properties currently used for such purposes; and upgrade each of the current commercial districts .	TEDC with assistance from consultants	Gradually over two years (4/1/07 - 3/31/09)	None beyond professional staff

<sup>2</sup> By "rate of inflation," we mean the regional CPI.

<sup>3</sup> For the timeline, we assume that implementation will begin October 1, 2004.

**Objective #2:** Explore opportunities for efficiencies and cost savings.

<b>ACTION STEPS</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTERS</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>NEW RESOURCES NEEDED</b>
1. Review staffing levels, salary schedules and other expenditure levels of Public Works, Fire, Police, Recreation, and Township administration on a rolling basis in a five-year cycle with the intent of reducing cost and increasing efficiencies.	Township Manager, Superintendent of Schools and possibly paid consultant	Council has begun this, starting with Public Works. This should continue with a different department annually on a rolling basis.	Cost of consultant: \$40,000 - \$50,000 for one department each year. (Cost for current review of Public Works Department is \$40,000.)
2. Review staffing levels and salary schedules of teachers, operations and maintenance, support services, and administrators and other expenditure levels on a rolling basis in a four-year cycle with the intent of reducing cost and increasing efficiencies.	Board of Education, paid consultant, volunteer committee	Board of Education should initiate and continue a similar process	Cost of consultant: \$40,000 - \$50,000
3. Explore whether privatization of some municipal and Board of Education services would result in cost savings.	Township Manager, Superintendent of schools and possibly paid consultant	One year (9/30/07)	None. To be included in staffing review.
4. Explore whether efficiencies can be achieved if the municipality and Board of Education share staff, equipment and facilities.	Township Manager, Superintendent of Schools and possibly paid consultant	within six months (by 3/31/07)	Cost of consultant, if needed: \$10,000
5. Check residency of public school students, starting with a 10% random sample to determine benefit.	Board of Education with attendance officer and possibly consultant	Four months (by 1/31/07)	\$5,000 for initial sample

**Objective #3:** Introduce procedures to measure and report the outcomes and efficiencies of municipal departments, schools and administration (performance measurement and reporting).

ACTION STEPS	IMPLEMENTERS	TIMELINE	NEW RESOURCES NEEDED
1. Decide on appropriate indicators that will provide measures of outcomes and efficiency relevant to Teaneck residents for tax-provided services. <sup>4</sup>	Committee of volunteers created by and reporting to the implementation entity	Six months (by 3/31/07)	Time from volunteers
2. Identify data sources for indicators.	Committee of volunteers created by and reporting to the implementation entity with help from Township Manager	Three months (by 6/30/07)	Time from volunteers
3. Provide results in annual reports and on town website.	Teaneck website's webmaster	Three months initially (by 9/30/07) then annually thereafter	Time from Teaneck's webmaster

**Objective #4:** Increase revenue to the municipality and the Board of Education from grants.

ACTION STEPS	IMPLEMENTERS	TIMELINE	NEW RESOURCES NEEDED
1. Explore additional opportunities to fund ongoing municipal activities and new municipal initiatives from grants.	Township Manager, with assistance from staff and/or professional grant writer	Ongoing, starting immediately	Possibly cost of grants writer
2. Explore additional opportunities to fund ongoing educational activities and new educational initiatives from grants.	Superintendent of Schools, with assistance from staff and/or professional grant writer	Ongoing, starting immediately	Possibly cost of grants writer

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<sup>4</sup> Examples of outcomes for the police department include the number of reported crimes by category and percentage of crimes cleared within a specific time period. Examples of outcomes for the public schools might be performance on standardized tests, fraction of students who graduate from high school, and the fraction of high school graduates who go on to college.

**Objective #5:** Create a Teaneck Community Foundation to raise, hold, and distribute funds to be spent for the welfare of Teaneck.

ACTION STEPS	IMPLEMENTERS	TIMELINE	NEW RESOURCES NEEDED
1. Research how other communities have set up foundations and how they are structured, managed and funded.	Continuing Committee assisted by volunteers with input from Township Manager, Superintendent of Schools and lawyers	No more than three months (by 12/31/06)	Volunteers
2. Determine the desired structure and initial management of a Teaneck Community Foundation.	Continuing Committee assisted by volunteers with input from Township Manager, Superintendent of Schools and lawyers	By 2/28/07	Volunteers
3. Recruit a Board that is reflective of the Township.	Continuing Committee with input from Township Manager, Superintendent of Schools and lawyers	By 3/31/07	None
4. Incorporate the Foundation.	Designated Board of Foundation	By 4/30/07	Volunteer lawyer

**Objective #6:** Except for identified exceptions, the amount of all municipal and Board of Education fees, licenses, permits and fines should be set to ensure that the full cost of the associated service is recovered and that, therefore, are not less than the maximum allowed by State law.

ACTION STEPS	IMPLEMENTERS	TIMELINE	NEW RESOURCES NEEDED
1. Continue current biennial review by Council of all fees, licenses, permits and fines.	Township Council and Township Manager	No more than two months (by 11/30/06)	None
2. The Board of Education should initiate annual review of fees, such as room rental rates.	Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools	No more than three months (by 12/31/06)	None

**GOAL B:** Educate Teaneck residents and taxpayers so that they better understand what services are provided from our taxes, how budgets translate into property taxes, how the tax burden in Teaneck is distributed among taxpayers, and what trade-offs exist between keeping taxes low and preserving services and the quality of life in Teaneck.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Most Teaneck residents do not understand what services are provided from our taxes, how municipal and school budgets translate into property taxes, how the tax burden in Teaneck is distributed among taxpayers, and what trade-offs exist between keeping taxes low and preserving services and the quality of life in Teaneck. Without such information, Teaneck residents cannot hold reasoned opinions about either township budgets or the level of their and their neighbors' tax burdens. These subjects are sufficiently complicated and technical that special efforts must be made to enable untrained residents to understand them.

**Objective #1:** Document how Teaneck's municipal and school expenditures are allocated and how these expenditures compare with other, comparable municipalities.

ACTION STEPS	IMPLEMENTERS	TIMELINE	NEW RESOURCES NEEDED
1. Prepare and update annually a "Teaneck Budget Guide" that explains in easy-to-understand language and with appropriate charts how Teaneck's property taxes are used by major service and category and compares this to comparable towns.	Municipal and BoE staff, especially the Township Manager and Superintendent of Schools, supported by an advisory committee of interested residents	Four months (by 1/31/07) for first. Then update annually	Volunteers
2. Prepare and update annually a "Teaneck Policy Trade-off Guide" that explains in easy-to-understand language and with appropriate charts the policy trade-offs that have historically been made in Teaneck and how these affect the level and distribution of property tax dollars.	Municipal and BoE staff, especially the Township Manager and Superintendent of Schools, supported by an advisory committee of interested residents, with oversight by elected officials	Four months (by 1/31/07) for first. Then update annually.	Volunteers

**Objective #2:** Prepare educational materials that will inform Teaneck residents how property is assessed, how property taxes are calculated, and how the tax burden in Teaneck is distributed among taxpayers.

ACTION STEPS	IMPLEMENTERS	TIMELINE	NEW RESOURCES NEEDED
1. Prepare and review periodically a "Teaneck Guide to Property Taxes" that explains in easy-to-understand language how properties are assessed, how local governments raise funds from property taxes, and how this translates into the taxes paid by individual property owners.	Township Assessor, supported by an advisory committee of interested residents, and with oversight by Township Manager	Four months (by 1/31/07) for first. Then review periodically.	Volunteers
2. Prepare and review periodically a "Teaneck Guide to Reassessment" that explains in easy-to-understand language how property taxes are affected by home renovation and rebuilding.	Township Assessor, supported by an advisory committee of interested residents, and with oversight by Township Manager	Four months (by 1/31/07) for first. Then review periodically.	Volunteers
3. Create and update at least quarterly an online database, accessible through the Teaneck website that will enable residents to compare their assessment and tax burden to those of comparable properties.	Township Assessor and webmaster, supported by an advisory committee of interested residents, and with oversight by Township Manager	Four months (by 1/31/07) for initial. Then update quarterly.	Setup cost: \$1,500 - \$2,000

**Objective #3:** Make the information and documents prepared under objectives 1 and 2 widely and easily available to Teaneck residents, inform Teaneck residents of their availability and encourage their use.

<b>ACTION STEPS</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTERS</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>NEW RESOURCES NEEDED</b>
1. Determine a strategy to make the information and documents prepared under objectives 1 and 2 widely and easily available to Teaneck residents, including through the use of the Teaneck website.	Municipal and BoE staff, especially the Township Manager and Superintendent of Schools, supported by an advisory committee of interested residents, with oversight by elected officials	Two months (11/1/06 – 1/31/07)	Volunteers
2. Determine a strategy to inform Teaneck residents of their availability and encourage their use.	Municipal and BoE staff, especially the Township Manager and Superintendent of Schools, supported by an advisory committee of interested residents, with oversight by elected officials	Two months (11/1/06 – 1/31/07)	Volunteers
3. Implement both strategies.	Municipal and BoE staff, especially the Township Manager and Superintendent of Schools, supported by an advisory committee of interested residents, with oversight by elected officials	Ongoing from 2/1/07	Volunteers

**GOAL C:** Reduce the unusually heavy reliance on property taxes in Teaneck to pay for local services. With community support, campaign for changes in State legislation, regulations and funding formulae.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** The percentage of the Teaneck school budget that is paid by State funds is among the smallest in the State and is smaller than many other New Jersey towns with a similar demographic profile. In addition, New Jersey's reliance on property taxes to fund local government services, including public education, is higher than in any other state. Because wealthier and poorer towns require essentially the same services, when these are paid for out of property taxes, the result is that residents in wealthier towns pay a lower fraction of their income than residents of poorer towns. Increasing the percentage of the Teaneck school budget that is paid by State funds and substituting State tax revenues for some local tax revenue to pay for all local services would reduce the tax burden on Teaneck residents.

**Objective #1:** Increase funding of Teaneck schools from State taxes.

ACTION STEPS	IMPLEMENTERS	TIMELINE	NEW RESOURCES NEEDED
1. Understand State formulae that determine level of State aid to local schools, why Teaneck receives one of the smallest percentages in the State, and the process by which the formulae are set and changed.	Volunteers with help from BoE	One month (by 10/30/06)	Volunteers
2. Create the case for an increase in State aid to Teaneck's schools.	Volunteers with help from BoE	By 11/31/06	Volunteers
3. Create a strategy for effecting a positive change.	State elected officials and volunteers with help from BoE	By 12/31/06	Volunteers
4. Put the strategy into effect.	State elected officials and volunteers with help from BoE	2007	Volunteers

**Objective #2:** Support State legislative change or a State constitutional amendment to reduce the reliance on property taxes to pay for local services in New Jersey.

ACTION STEPS	IMPLEMENTERS	TIMELINE	NEW RESOURCES NEEDED
1. Clarify the implications for <b>Teaneck</b> taxpayers of shifting the funding burden for municipal services and schools from property taxes to State income taxes.	Township Council, Board of Education, State elected representatives and volunteers	Two months (by 11/31/06)	Volunteers
2. Educate <b>Teaneck</b> residents about the implications of shifting the funding burden for municipal services and schools from property taxes to State income taxes.	Township Council, Board of Education, State elected representatives and volunteers	Two months (by 1/31/07)	Volunteers
3. Hold town meetings to discuss the issue.	Township Council, Board of Education, State elected representatives and volunteers	By 2/28/07	Volunteers
4. Hold a referendum in <b>Teaneck</b> on whether to promote change in State law to implement a shift of the funding burden for municipal services and schools from property taxes to State income taxes.	Township Council, Board of Education, State elected representatives and volunteers	By 3/31/07	Volunteers
5. If referendum passes, help bring about State legislative change <b>and/or</b> a constitutional convention.	Township Council, Board of Education, State elected representatives and volunteers	2007 and 2008	Volunteers

# Appendix 2

## Participants

### Initiating Committee

Mr. Martin Greenwald	Chairperson, Advisory Board on Community Relations
Mrs. Jessie Barnes	Cedar Lane Business Owner, Resident, Active in Neighborhood Block Association
Mrs. Ester Benovitz	Resident
Mrs. Annekee Brahver-Keely	Realtor, Active Parent in <b>School/Parent</b> Organizations
Reverend Gary Nellis	Police Chaplain, Pastor of New Life Covenant Church
Mrs. Gwen Acree	Resident, Active in Neighborhood Block Association
Dr. Aaron Graham	<b>Bergen</b> County Schools Superintendent, Resident
Dr. Henry Pruitt	Retired Educator, Active in Neighborhood Block Association
Mr. Perry Rosenstein	Sponsor - Puffin Foundation, Resident
Ms. Catherine Yaxley	Sponsor Representative - Holy Name Hospital
Mr. Ted Greenwood	Resident
Dr. Jerry Milch	Resident
Mrs. Theodora Lacey	Educator, Community Activist, Resident
Mr. Kevie Feit	President, <b>Teaneck</b> Volunteer Ambulance Corps.
Mrs. Mabel Chu	Resident
Mrs. Jacqueline B. Kates	Mayor, former Board of Education <b>Member/President</b>
Mrs. Marie Warnke	Councilmember, former Board of Education <b>Member/President</b>
Mrs. Helene V. Fall	Municipal Manager
Mrs. Margaret Angeli	Resident, Current Board of Education President
Mrs. Cruz Sanchez del Vale	Resident, Active in <b>School/Parent</b> Organization
Mr. Abdul Waheed	Resident

## **Coordinatina Committee**

Mr. Martin Greenwald	Chairperson, Advisory Board on Community Relations
Mrs. Jessie Barnes	Cedar Lane Business Owner, Active in Neighborhood Block Association
Mrs. Annekee Brahver-Keely	Realtor, Active Parent in <b>School/Parent</b> Organizations
Reverend Gary Nellis	Police Chaplain, Pastor of New Life Covenant Church
Mrs. Gwen Acree	Active in Neighborhood Block Association
Dr. Henry Pruitt	Retired Educator, Active in Neighborhood Block Association
Mr. Ted Greenwood	Resident
Dr. Jerry Milch	Resident
Mrs. Theodora Lacey	Educator, Community Activist,
Mr. Kevie Feit	President of <b>Teaneck</b> Volunteer Ambulance Corps.
Mrs. Jacqueline B. Kates	Mayor, former Board of Education <b>Member/President</b>
Mrs. Marie Warnke	Councilmember, former Board of Education <b>Member/President</b>
Mrs. Helene V. Fall	Municipal Manager
Mrs. Margaret Angeli	Board of Education President
Mrs. Cruz Sanchez del Valle	Active in <b>School/Parent</b> Organization

## Transition Committee

Mrs. Annekee Brahver-Keely	Realtor, Active Parent in School/Parent Organizations
Reverend Gary Nellis	Police Chaplain, Pastor of New Life Covenant Church
Dr. Henry Pruitt	Active in Neighborhood Block Association and current Teaneck Board of Education Member
Mr. Ted Greenwood	Resident
Dr. Jerry Milch	Resident
Mrs. Theodora Lacey	Educator, Community Activist
Mrs. Jacqueline B. Kates	Mayor, former Board of Education Member/President
Mrs. Marie Warnke	Councilmember, former Board of Education Member/President, Task Force Co-Chairperson
Mrs. Helene V. Fall	Municipal Manager
Mrs. Kim Parson	Board of Adjustment Member
Mrs. Ruth Cowan	Resident
Mr. Art Lerman	Resident, Task Force Chairperson
Dr. Bob Weber	Resident, Task Force Vice Chairperson
Mr. Tom Duncan	Resident, Task Force Chairperson
Mrs. Susan Marie Griffin	Resident, Educator, Task Force Co-Chairperson

## **TASK FORCE CHAIRPERSONS AND VICE CHAIRPERSONS**

### Economic Development

- Mr. Tom Duncan, Chairperson

### Teaneck Connects - Community Relations

Mr. Martin Greenwald, Chairperson

### Community Based Programs for Youth

- Mrs. Cruz Sanchez del-Valle, Chairperson
- Dr. Bob Weber, Vice Chairperson

### Teaneck Taxes

- Mr. Ted Greenwood, Chairperson
- Mr. Bill Jackson, Vice Chairperson

### Representative and Responsive Government

- Mr. Art Lerman, Chairperson
- Mrs. Betty Williams, Vice-Chairperson

### Search for Excellence in Education

Mrs. Susan-Marie Griffin, Co-Chairperson

- Mrs. Marie Warnke, Co-Chairperson

## **Appendix 3**

# **List of Firms Solicited for Proposals**

Amdur Recruiting and Consulting Group  
593 Northumberland Road  
Teaneck, NJ 07666

National Civic League  
1319 F. Street, NW  
Suite 2004  
Washington, DC 20004

Profeta and Eisenstein  
100 Maiden Lane  
Suite 1616  
New York, NY 10038

Long Island University  
Social Science Division  
Southampton College  
Southampton, NY 11968

Vision First Collaboration  
22 Brookside Terrace  
North Caldwell, NJ 07006

Ren Associates  
707 Alexander Road  
Building 2 - Suite 208  
Princeton, NJ 08640

Fairleigh Dickinson University  
1000 River Road  
Teaneck, NJ 07666

Mr. Robert A. Isaacson  
135 Montgomery Avenue  
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

Fund for An Open Society  
603 Walnut Lane - Suite 15  
Philadelphia, PA 19128

Nelessen Associates  
135 Nassau Streets  
Princeton, NJ 08542

Institute of Public Administration  
New York University  
New York, NY

National League of Cities  
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20004

Dr. Philip J. Sabatelli, Ph.D  
2116 Marshall Court  
Lansdale, PA 194466

## Appendix 4 Stakeholders

Junaid Abbasi	M. Iqbal Abbasi	Talha M. Abbasi
Saeed Abbassi	Janet Abbott	Javid Abdul
Ibrahim Abdulmagd	Gwen Acree	Jeanette Adams
Sandra Adams	Raymond Addison	Carter Adkins
Deborah Adkins	Rabbi Yosef Adler	<b>Sajjad Ahmad</b>
Jahin Ahmed	Daniel Akins	Sandra Akins
Mir Amjad Ali	<b>Muhammed Munawar Ali</b>	<b>Muhammed I Ali</b>
Phyllis Allen	Eli Amdur	<b>Gladys Amin-Ramos</b>
Edna Anderson	Maria Andreu	Margaret Angeli
<b>Muhammed Anwar</b>	Evelyn Aponte	Ray Arons
<b>Clifton Arrington</b>	<b>Keni Ashby</b>	Sabahat Ashraf
Shoukat Avdulla	Albert Baird	Desiree Baird
David Bamgboye	Rachel Banai	Ray Barbarini
Terry Barbarini	Clarence Barnes	Jesse Barnes
Rev. John Baron	Pat Battle	John Bauer
Curtis Belce	Denise Belcher	Curtis Belle
Lenny Belmonte	Alice Benekin	Lenore Berck
Rabbi Ken Berger	Steve Berger	Judy Berk-Levine
Rod Bernard	Howard Bersch	Cathy Bicofsky
David Bicofsky	Kathryn Blair	David Blass
Naomi Blumenfeld	Adela Bolet	Joe Bonito
Stephanie Bostic	Annekee Brahver-Keely	<b>Hali Brevetti</b>
Vincent <b>Brevetti</b>	Pastor Victor Brown	Ron Brown
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Pat Butler	Patricia Butler	<b>Mohammed Ali Butt</b>
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Mohammad Charaf	Suaela Charaf	Muzette Charles
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Jeanette Cole	Rafael Collado	Portney and Company
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Kathy Cunningham	John Czeterko	Martin Dann
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Wendy Dessanti  
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Roswell Jackson	Anita Jacobs	Olu Jaiyebo
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Karen Pruzansky	Rabbi Steve Pruzansky	Ron <b>Prywes</b>
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Noam Sokolow	Elaine Solomon	Treva Spencer-Dupree
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Usman Waheed	Ardie Walser	Marie Warnke
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Margaret White	Robert White	Betty Williams
Clarissa Williams	Hazel Williams	Leroy Williams
Louise Williams	Reggie Williams	Paul Wilson
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Sydell Yegelwel	James Young	Leroy Young
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