

Chondra Young

1. What is the role of a town council member? Why are you running for Teaneck council?

A town council member's role is to serve as a representative for the residents, advocate for the community's interests, and make decisions regarding local laws, budgets, and development projects. As a council member, I would work to ensure that Teaneck remains a vibrant and inclusive town by fostering community engagement, addressing concerns, and implementing policies that benefit all residents. I'm running because I love this town and believe my experience, including over 26 years in accounting and community leadership, positions me to bring a fresh yet experienced perspective. My campaign is centered on "Engage, Educate, Embrace, and Empower" because I want to ensure every resident feels heard and supported.

2. How will you represent constituents from all of the diverse groups who live here? As a council member, what would you do to promote harmony and unity in the town?

Teaneck's strength is in its diversity. I will represent all residents by being accessible and actively listening to concerns and actively engaging with each group, whether it's the Asian, Black, Hispanic, Jewish, Muslim, or other communities. My ongoing meetings with community leaders, participation in Teaneck Race Amity, the NAACP, and the District Advisory Team, and experience as an engaged resident give me unique insight into fostering understanding. To promote harmony, I'll continue initiatives that bring people together, like creating spaces for dialogue, supporting inclusive events, and advocating for community programs that reflect our diversity.

3. Tell us about a time where you worked through a challenge with a team of people who did not agree on the best solution. How did you navigate conflicting views? How did you resolve the challenge?

A time I worked through a challenge involving conflicting views was during my years as a Girl Scout leader. We were deciding how to divide the proceeds from the cookie sales, which would be used to fund a camping trip. Some parents and scouts felt that the funds should be divided based on how much each girl sold, rewarding the highest sellers. Others believed that the proceeds should be split equally among all the girls, regardless of individual sales.

To navigate this, I led a discussion with the scouts and parents, emphasizing that Girl Scouts is about teamwork and shared experiences. I reminded them that while some girls may have sold more cookies, everyone had contributed in their own way, whether through promotion, attending booths, or helping with other troop activities.

To resolve the situation, I proposed a balanced solution: we would split the majority of the proceeds equally, but set aside a small portion as individual recognition for the top sellers in the form of special badges or small prizes. This allowed us to acknowledge the efforts of the highest sellers without creating division within the troop.

Ultimately, we agreed on this approach, and it strengthened our sense of unity as we all went camping together, funded by everyone's contributions. This experience taught me how to listen to all sides, foster collaboration, and find solutions that prioritize fairness and group cohesion.

4. Should the council engage in international issues?

While international issues are important, the role of the council is to focus on the everyday concerns that affect Teaneck residents directly, what I call "kitchen table issues." Things like property taxes, garbage collection, potholes, and public safety are the bread and butter of what the council should prioritize. My goal as a council member is to ensure that we are delivering efficient services and maintaining infrastructure to make life easier for our residents.

That said, international matters can sometimes intersect with local concerns. For instance, Teaneck's diverse population often feels the impact of global events. In these cases, the council can express solidarity with affected communities, as we did in showing support for residents after international conflicts or global tragedies. However, our primary focus must always remain on ensuring that Teaneck's roads are maintained, our neighborhoods are safe, and that local government services are running smoothly and cost-effectively. We need to focus on what impacts our residents every day, from lowering garbage costs to addressing property tax concerns.

5. Should the council meet more often? What ideas do you have to best engage Teaneck residents? Are there problems with good and welfare, and how should the council address them?

Meeting more frequently can be beneficial, especially when urgent matters arise, but it's essential to prioritize the quality of our meetings over sheer quantity. I propose we implement workshops and town halls, capped at 1.5 hours, to provide focused discussions on specific topics while respecting residents' time. This will help address the issue of excessively long council meetings and make participation more accessible.

To engage Teaneck residents effectively, we can also leverage digital platforms for online forums and surveys to gather input on local issues. Expanding these opportunities will encourage broader participation, especially among those who may not be able to attend evening meetings in person.

Regarding the good and welfare sessions, while they are vital for community input, I believe we need clearer guidelines to ensure discussions remain respectful and constructive. Incorporating technology for remote participation can make our meetings more inclusive, ensuring that all residents, especially seniors and those with disabilities, can engage in council discussions. Together, these initiatives will foster a more participatory and responsive local government.

6. How do you propose raising additional revenue for the town without increasing property taxes?

Raising revenue without increasing property taxes is essential, and I propose a multifaceted approach. First, we can promote responsible development through targeted public-private partnerships that attract sustainable businesses to Teaneck. This not only creates jobs but also enhances our tax base.

While many residents have concerns about PILOTs (Payments In Lieu of Taxes), it's important to emphasize how they can be structured to benefit the community. For example, if we negotiate PILOT agreements carefully, we can ensure that developers contribute to essential local services and infrastructure improvements that directly benefit residents. For instance, these funds can be earmarked for enhancing our parks, maintaining roads, or improving public safety services. Additionally, developers can be required to provide community benefits, such as affordable housing units, pocket parks or local job creation, as part of the agreement.

I also plan to push for initiatives like "Entrepreneurship Teaneck," which will provide resources and support for local entrepreneurs. This program will include workshops on business development, access to micro-grants, and networking opportunities that encourage residents to start and grow their own businesses. This not only fosters economic growth but also keeps the revenue generated within our community.

By balancing responsible development with community interests, we can create a thriving Teaneck that meets the needs of all residents while raising necessary funds without burdening them with higher taxes.

7. What is "responsible development"? What are your thoughts about the new Master Plan, particularly regarding new housing and retail, as well as the use of AINRs and PILOTs as a development tool?

Responsible development means creating growth that honors Teaneck's unique character while addressing the pressing needs of our community today and in the future. It's not just about new buildings; it's about fostering an environment where current residents feel heard and valued, and where new developments enhance our quality of life rather than detract from it.

The new Master Plan is an important step toward achieving these goals. I fully support the inclusion of diverse housing options, especially affordable housing, because everyone deserves a place they can call home. However, this development must be done thoughtfully, ensuring that we incorporate environmental considerations like stormwater management and the preservation of green spaces, which are vital for maintaining our town's natural beauty and resilience.

Regarding AINRs (Areas in Need of Redevelopment) and PILOTs (Payments In Lieu of Taxes), I believe these can be effective tools when used strategically and transparently. For instance, AINRs should focus on revitalizing underutilized areas in a way that attracts businesses and fosters community engagement. However, it's crucial that these projects include community input at every stage, ensuring they align with our residents' needs.

With PILOTs, many residents are understandably concerned about how these agreements affect funding for essential services, like education. As your council member, I would advocate for PILOT agreements that not only attract developers but also include provisions to support local schools and infrastructure improvements. This way, we can ensure that growth benefits everyone in Teaneck, providing a win-win scenario that fosters economic development while maintaining our commitment to the community's long-term well-being.

Ultimately, my approach to responsible development will prioritize transparency, inclusivity, and a focus on tangible benefits for our residents, ensuring that Teaneck grows in a way that reflects our values and meets our shared goals.

8. What do you think needs to be done to assure sufficient affordable housing in Teaneck?

To ensure sufficient affordable housing in Teaneck, we must take a comprehensive and innovative approach that sets us apart from other candidates. First and foremost, I advocate for a strategy that combines mixed-use developments with community needs. This means working with developers to not only meet housing demands but also to incorporate commercial spaces that can provide jobs and services to residents. By ensuring that new developments include a substantial percentage of affordable units, ideally at least 20%, we can create vibrant neighborhoods that are accessible to all.

Furthermore, I believe in leveraging partnerships with nonprofit organizations and housing agencies that specialize in affordable housing. These partnerships can provide both funding and expertise, allowing us to create sustainable, community-driven housing solutions. For instance, collaborating with local housing advocates can help us secure grants and other resources aimed at reducing the cost of construction for affordable units.

Additionally, I propose exploring innovative financing options, such as community land trusts, that allow us to acquire and maintain affordable housing in perpetuity, ensuring it remains available for future generations.

Another key aspect is to engage our residents in the conversation. I envision hosting community forums where residents can voice their housing concerns and ideas, ensuring that our plans reflect their needs. This engagement not only builds trust but also helps create a sense of ownership among residents regarding new housing initiatives.

Finally, we should actively promote and incentivize the renovation of existing properties to create affordable units. This can include providing tax incentives for landlords who commit to keeping rents affordable or for developers who convert underutilized commercial spaces into affordable housing.

In summary, addressing affordable housing in Teaneck requires a multifaceted strategy that prioritizes mixed-use developments, fosters community partnerships, revisits zoning policies, engages residents, and encourages innovative financing. By doing so, we can ensure that all Teaneck residents have access to safe and affordable housing, creating a more inclusive and thriving community for everyone.

9. What improvements would you like to see in our green spaces, parks, and recreational facilities?

I envision a Teaneck where our green spaces, parks, and recreational facilities are not only accessible but also vibrant hubs for community engagement and environmental sustainability. First and foremost, improving accessibility in our parks is critical. This means implementing universally designed pathways that allow seniors, individuals with disabilities, and families with strollers to navigate easily. During my tour at the Garden Club, I saw firsthand how important it is for everyone to enjoy nature, so I propose adding features like accessible picnic areas, seating, and sensory gardens that cater to various abilities.

Additionally, expanding recreational programs is vital. I want to see diverse offerings that cater to all age groups, from youth sports leagues to fitness classes for seniors, and arts and crafts workshops for families. By collaborating with local organizations and community members, we can identify what types of programs are most desired, ensuring our parks are utilized to their fullest potential.

Moreover, I advocate for increasing the amount of green space in Teaneck. This can be achieved through the creation of pocket parks in underutilized areas and the integration of green roofs and community gardens in new developments. Green spaces not only enhance our town's aesthetics but also contribute to biodiversity, improve air quality, and provide recreational opportunities.

Sustainability should also be a guiding principle in our parks' design. Incorporating eco-friendly elements, such as native plants, rain gardens, and permeable pavements, can significantly enhance our stormwater management efforts, protecting our parks from flooding and erosion. Upgrading existing stormwater systems to include bioswales and retention ponds will not only safeguard our green spaces but also improve water quality in nearby waterways.

I also believe in promoting community stewardship of our parks. Initiatives like "Adopt-a-Park" programs can engage residents in maintaining and improving these spaces, fostering a sense of ownership and pride in our community. Additionally, organizing

community clean-up days and tree-planting events can enhance our parks while bringing residents together.

Finally, enhancing communication about our parks and recreational facilities is crucial. A comprehensive online platform can provide residents with information on available facilities, upcoming events, and volunteer opportunities. This platform could also feature a feedback system where residents can suggest improvements or new programs.

In summary, I envision a comprehensive approach to improving Teaneck's green spaces and parks that prioritizes accessibility, expands recreational programs, increases green spaces, incorporates sustainable design, encourages community stewardship, and enhances communication. By taking these steps, we can create welcoming, inclusive, and environmentally friendly spaces that enrich the lives of all residents.

10. What is your position on cannabis in Teaneck?

As we navigate the implications of cannabis legalization in Teaneck, it's essential to strike a balance that acknowledges and respects the diverse opinions within our community. I recognize that there are residents who are both in favor of and opposed to cannabis, and my goal is to approach this issue with empathy and responsibility.

Allowing cannabis businesses in Teaneck must be done thoughtfully, with a focus on strict regulations that prioritize public health and safety. Before moving forward, we must gather comprehensive community input to understand the concerns of residents who oppose cannabis. By holding town hall meetings and conducting surveys, we can ensure that all voices are heard and taken into account in the decision-making process.

To address the concerns of those wary of cannabis, we can implement robust zoning regulations that determine where these businesses can operate, ensuring they are placed away from schools and residential areas. This will help alleviate worries about potential negative impacts on our neighborhoods.

At the same time, it's important to highlight the potential benefits of cannabis legalization. The tax revenue generated from cannabis sales can provide significant funding for local programs that benefit our community, addiction prevention programs, and public safety initiatives.

Additionally, I propose investing in community education efforts regarding responsible cannabis use, which can help inform residents, particularly youth, about the implications of cannabis consumption. This proactive approach can help mitigate fears and foster a well-informed community.

In conclusion, my position on cannabis in Teaneck is one of cautious support. By establishing strict regulations, prioritizing community engagement, and ensuring that the tax revenues benefit local programs, we can create a balanced approach that respects

the views of both supporters and opponents. My commitment is to ensure that whatever direction we take serves the best interests of all Teaneck residents, fostering a safe and vibrant community.

11. How can Teaneck best serve the needs of its senior citizens? What changes, if any, would you propose?

To truly serve our senior citizens in Teaneck, we must adopt a multifaceted approach that prioritizes accessibility, health, social engagement, and intergenerational connections. Seniors are a vital part of our community, and enhancing their quality of life is essential.

Transportation Enhancements:

We need to improve transportation options for seniors to ensure they can easily access essential services, social events, and recreational activities. I propose creating a dedicated senior shuttle service that runs on a reliable schedule, connecting them to grocery stores, medical facilities, and community centers. This service can include partnerships with local organizations to help seniors who may need assistance getting on and off the shuttle.

Accessibility Improvements in Recreational Facilities:

Our recreational facilities should be welcoming and accessible to everyone. This means not only making sure that buildings comply with ADA standards but also ensuring that pathways and seating areas in parks are leveled and well-maintained. I advocate for the installation of handrails and benches in key areas, as well as creating more shaded spaces to encourage outdoor activity and socialization.

Expanded Healthcare Services:

Access to healthcare is critical for our seniors. I propose working with local healthcare providers to establish wellness clinics in community centers where seniors can receive regular check-ups, screenings, and health education. Additionally, mental health resources should be readily available, including counseling services tailored to seniors facing challenges such as isolation or grief.

Intergenerational Programming:

Creating programs that bring together seniors and younger generations can foster community spirit and reduce feelings of isolation. I envision initiatives like "Adopt-a-Grandparent" programs where local schools partner with seniors for mentorship and companionship. This can include activities like arts and crafts, storytelling sessions, or gardening, which can help both age groups learn from each other while building meaningful connections.

Affordable Housing Options:

To ensure seniors have stable housing, we need to prioritize the development of affordable housing that is specifically designed with their needs in mind. This includes features like single-story layouts, no-step entries, and community amenities that

promote social interaction, such as communal gardens or activity rooms. Collaborating with local nonprofits and housing agencies can help us secure funding for these initiatives.

Access to Wellness and Social Services:

I propose establishing partnerships with local organizations to create a centralized resource hub for seniors that provides information on available wellness programs, social services, and community activities. This hub could be both a physical location and an online platform, ensuring seniors can easily find the support they need. Additionally, expanding outreach efforts can help us connect with seniors who may not be aware of the resources available to them.

Feedback and Involvement:

To truly understand the needs of our senior citizens, we must actively seek their input. I recommend forming a senior advisory committee that includes seniors from diverse backgrounds to share their perspectives and provide recommendations on services and programs. Their insights can guide our efforts and ensure that our initiatives are responsive to their actual needs.

By focusing on these areas (transportation, accessibility, healthcare, intergenerational connections, affordable housing, resource access, and senior involvement), we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for seniors in Teaneck. Our seniors deserve to thrive in our community, and by implementing these changes, we can enhance their quality of life and ensure they feel valued and engaged.

12. What is the ideal relationship between the council members and the town manager?

The council and town manager should have a collaborative and transparent relationship. The council sets the vision, and the town manager implements it. Open communication and mutual respect are crucial to ensure that policies are carried out effectively and that the town's needs are met.

13. It is our understanding that the current police chief may soon retire. What are the qualities of a police chief you would look for in a future candidate for the position of chief of police? What input would the council have in hiring the new police chief?

As Teaneck prepares for the potential retirement of our current police chief, it's essential that we select a candidate who not only possesses the requisite experience but also embodies the values and vision of our community. The qualities I would prioritize in a new police chief include:

A. Commitment to Community Policing:

The next chief should have a proven track record of community policing, which emphasizes building strong relationships between the police and the communities they serve. This approach fosters trust and collaboration, allowing officers to better understand and address the unique needs of Teaneck's diverse population. I envision a

chief who actively engages with community members, attends local events, and is approachable, making the police department a visible and positive presence in our neighborhoods.

B. Strong Communication Skills:

Effective communication is key to fostering transparency and understanding. The new chief must be able to clearly articulate departmental policies and decisions while also being a good listener. They should encourage open dialogue with residents and be responsive to their concerns. This includes not just speaking at community meetings but also utilizing social media and digital platforms to share updates and gather feedback.

C. Diversity and Inclusivity:

Given Teaneck's rich diversity, the next chief must prioritize diversity and inclusion within the department. They should demonstrate an understanding of cultural competency and work to ensure that the police force reflects the community it serves. This includes creating initiatives for recruitment and retention that focus on building a diverse workforce, as well as ongoing training in implicit bias and cultural awareness for all officers.

D. Prioritization of Public Safety and Crime Prevention:

The new chief should have a strategic vision for crime prevention that incorporates innovative approaches. This could involve leveraging data analytics to identify crime hotspots and deploying resources effectively while maintaining a focus on community engagement. Additionally, I'd like to see an emphasis on restorative justice programs that address the root causes of crime and foster rehabilitation rather than solely punitive measures.

E. Accountability and Transparency:

Transparency is crucial for building trust between the police and the community. The new chief should embrace accountability measures, such as body-worn cameras, regular reporting on use-of-force incidents, and community forums to discuss departmental practices. They must be willing to accept constructive criticism and work to implement changes based on community feedback.

F. Experience with Crisis Management:

In our rapidly changing environment, the new chief must be adept at crisis management. This includes having strategies in place for handling mental health crises, substance abuse issues, and community emergencies. The candidate should advocate for partnerships with mental health professionals and social services to provide holistic support for residents in crisis.

Input from the Council:

The town council's role in hiring the new police chief is crucial. The council often has the responsibility to ensure that the selected candidate aligns with the community's values and priorities, as well as to oversee the police department's operations and policies.

Additionally, we should conduct community forums to gather input from residents on the qualities they wish to see in the new chief. By incorporating their perspectives, we can align our search with the priorities and concerns of Teaneck's residents.

14. How do you feel about term limits on council and committees?

I support term limits as they bring fresh perspectives and prevent stagnation. It's important to have new voices and ideas in leadership positions while maintaining continuity through other long-serving public servants.

15. What aspects of Teaneck do you value most and why?

I deeply value Teaneck's rich cultural diversity, which is not just a statistic but a vibrant tapestry of backgrounds, beliefs, and traditions that make our town unique. This diversity enriches our community interactions, fostering a broader understanding of one another and creating opportunities for collaboration. I've witnessed firsthand how our residents come together to celebrate various cultural festivals, share culinary traditions, and support local businesses, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity and mutual respect.

Additionally, the strong sense of community in Teaneck is something I cherish. Whether it's neighbors helping each other during a crisis or local organizations mobilizing to support those in need, there is a palpable spirit of cooperation and compassion. I see this in my work with the Teaneck Race Amity group and my participation in events that bring people from different backgrounds together to discuss pressing issues. This commitment to community is what drives me to be an engaged resident and a candidate who prioritizes listening to and serving all constituents.

Moreover, our parks, schools, and libraries play a crucial role in fostering growth and learning. As Treasurer of the Library Board, I have seen the transformative power of our libraries as centers for education, innovation, and community gathering. They provide invaluable resources and programs that promote literacy, lifelong learning, and cultural enrichment. Our schools are similarly vital, serving not just as educational institutions but as community hubs where families come together to support their children's development and success.

Lastly, I value Teaneck's commitment to civic engagement, evident in how residents actively participate in local governance and community initiatives. This engagement creates an environment where ideas are exchanged, and solutions are collaboratively developed. As a council member, I would continue to promote this active participation, ensuring every voice is heard and respected in shaping the future of our town.