

# AT LARGE Council Candidate Survey Q&A



Rolando Lavarro



Daniel Rivera



Joyce Watterman



Esther Wintner



Esmeralda Trinidad



Sean Connors

At Large Council Candidates Brian Lane and Michael A Winds did not respond to our survey.

## QUESTION #1

In 2016, JC Open Data shows that there were 585 pedestrians struck by vehicles, a 3% increase over 2015 and a 12% increase over 2014, and the problem is equally chronic in every part of the city. Traffic safety enforcement has long been inconsistent at best and not a true priority, and our roads have become dangerous speedways. What will you do, if elected, to make this public health crisis a top priority for improvement for the next administration? (Source: JC Open Data, [tinyurl.com/peddashboard](http://tinyurl.com/peddashboard) )

## ANSWERS

**Rolando R. Lavarro Jr.** - Pedestrian safety will be of utmost importance in my second term. JC Police recently established a unit dedicated to traffic safety. This has resulted in 1500 tickets issued monthly. First, I will demand that this unit be expanded. I will also legislate reporting of these activities. This data & community feedback will prioritize the needs & will inform a traffic calming plan using speed humps, “daylighting” at high traffic corners, etc. In 2014, the Council reorganized government, establishing the Dept. of Public Safety. I will continue efforts to restructure the City’s public safety organization so that it places equal priority on and comprehensively addresses traffic, pedestrian & cycling safety needs.

**Daniel Rivera** - Under the Fulop administration, there has been an increase in enforcement and summonses issued which equates to roughly 1500 tickets issued monthly, as well as a newly formed Jersey City Police Department unit dedicated to traffic safety. A big concern is distracted driving as playing a major factor in these types of collisions, especially with drivers on their cell phones. Further, the city planned 30 additional crossing guard hires in the past few months. In a second term, pedestrian safety will continue to be of utmost importance.

**Joyce Watterman** - Continual with enforcement and summonses, because you are breaking a behavior.

**Esther Wintner** - Communicate with the public on issues of safety, speeding and fines. Promote the issue publicly and bring awareness through educating the public. Look into bringing signage to keep motorists constantly aware of cyclists and pedestrians. Review budget to find and include dedicated funding for 1) traffic enforcement 2) studies to improve road/street design 3) Paint road markings 4) Request that traffic signals be recalibrated to achieve optimum safety concerns.

**Esmeralda Trinidad** - We will use city resources to make public awareness on bicycle safety amongst drivers a priority. We need to enforce speed limits in roadways like C. Columbus Dr., JFK, 440 and Grand Street. Reestablish the motor cycle unit, which the police believes was a cause in the increase in fatalities that occurred in Jersey City.

**Sean Connors** - Education: starting early and teaching people safety is something that could grab a child early on at a school level. We can incorporate it with the police department’s school program. Unfortunately, due to technology, a persons attention is to a device at times more then ever. Most accidents occur while a driver is on a phone. Maybe there should be a portion of the State DMV Test addressing this issue.

Enforcement: In high volume traffic areas both Careless Driving and J-Walking should be addressed with a warning program and a summons program when needed. After that, we can utilizing the police computer system which records what kind of complaints need to be addressed and target those areas for an increase of safety.

## QUESTION #2

In 2011, the Council adopted a "Complete Streets" policy, which calls for design improvements on our streets to more fully accommodate road users of all ages and abilities more safely and allow access by all modes of transport (including bicycles and pedestrians). Complete Streets policies reduce speeds to within safe, existing limits and can improve traffic flow. However, this policy has yet to be enacted, citizens continue to get hurt or killed, and our auto insurance rates keep rising. Will you commit to making the application of Complete Streets policy a priority during your term, if elected? How?

## ANSWERS

**Rolando R. Lavarro Jr.** - Complete Streets will be a priority in my 2nd term. Complete Streets makes streets safer for everyone while encouraging walking and biking. To that end, it should be noted that over 22 miles of bike lanes have been added in JC over the past 4 years & a successful Citibike program was established. The complete streets policy on the books has a loophole that states it will be enacted "where feasible". I will strengthen the language to ensure that roads & areas of new construction follow a Complete Streets model. Moving forward, I will work with all stakeholders to seek routes that make Jersey City more bike & pedestrian friendly. As the city's Master Plan is redone, Complete Streets will be a planning priority.

**Daniel Rivera** - Since the beginning of the Fulop administration, there have been over 22 miles of bike lanes added in addition to partnering with citybike to allow for the city's first bikeshare program which has been a huge success. In addition, the administration has been vocal in support of the Hudson Loop. The Hudson Loop gives bike riders and pedestrians a 10-mile excursion juxtaposing both the New York and Jersey City waterfronts. Moving forward, we will continue to seek routes to make Jersey City more bike and pedestrian friendly.

**Joyce Watterman** - Yes, continual with bike share program and community input.

**Esther Wintner** - 1) Introduce a resolution for fellow council members to commit to making safer streets a priority. This must be a strong message that our elected officials are serious about this issue. 2) Pressure the mayor to seek grant funding for road improvement/streets 3) Insurance rates - one of my issues is the affordability of living in Jersey City. For me, this goes further than the cost of housing and extends to cable rates, car insurance and our water costs. Car insurance rates can be reduced if our crime (auto theft, car jacking), and pedestrian safety numbers are improved. These go hand in hand and I would like to work to see that these numbers are improved and then follow up with the state to try to have insurance rates lowered.

**Esmeralda Trinidad** - Team Matsikoudis FULLY supports the Complete Streets policy. Again, educating the public through meetings, social media and other outlets about the benefits of traffic calming measures and alternative means of egress like median crossing islands; audible cues for people with low vision, curb cuts; curb extensions, center medians, planter strips and protected bike lanes, greenways, and possibly bicycle lanes, neighborhood greenways, wide paved shoulders, and possibly Bus Rapid Transit.

**Sean Connors** - If elected, I would look into this policy as a body with the council to first see if it needs updating/enhancing since it is already 6 years old. After our review, which includes both police/engineering departments, we will place it into service updating our city ordinances with it. You are right... I think our city jumped on this too fast. We placed bike lanes out there without any continuity and guidelines of usage and enforcement. Example: do all bicycle riders have to use the street? Regardless of age? If a street has a lane, must it be used instead of traveling on it but not within the lanes? I support a biker lane program but we need guidelines as well to increase and ensure safety for all.

### QUESTION #3

The streets in Jersey City are generally not bike friendly and are dangerous to ride on. The bike lanes we do have are not connected in a network, nor are they enforced (often blocked by double parking, etc.). We have no protected bike lanes and lack sufficient racks at key transit and shopping hubs. What would you do to improve safety and access for bicycle riders throughout the entire city?

### ANSWERS

**Rolando R. Lavarro Jr.** - JC has developed 22 miles of bike lanes in the past 4 years; and the City recently committed to building a protected bike lane on Grand Street. Still, there is more to do to connect the bike lanes & build a comprehensive network. in the works. I will prioritize the expeditious development & implementation of the bike/walk master plan. When we look at Journal Square, we see bike racks that are packed every single day. We can partner with the Port Authority to develop solutions to the bike rack shortages & support plans like bike lockers. We will continue to grow the successful bike share. We can connect the bike lane network and make protected bike lanes using parked cars as the barrier between the bikes and pedestrians and the street.

**Daniel Rivera** - Jersey City in the past four years has developed 22 miles of bike lanes which were not there before and as recently as March, the city committed to build a protected bike lane on Grand Street. Further, the administration launched the successful bike share initiative, which riders can enjoy. The administration would continue to build on prior efforts in a second term.

**Joyce Watterman** - Have a community meeting in each ward and hear what works in each community. we have bike lanes, however some community do not think its in the best place.

**Esther Wintner** - There needs to be a plan for long term capital improvement for streets/roads throughout the city. Look into increased fines (as state statute would permit). Signage. Outreach to PA and businesses, SIDs for bike racks on those properties.

**Esmeralda Trinidad** - We need more bike parking at transit hubs, bike network with connected PROTECTED LANES and we need greenways to connect our two waterfronts.

**Sean Connors** - You are right... I think our city jumped on this too fast. We placed bike lanes out there without any continuity and guidelines of usage and enforcement. Example: do all bicycle riders have to use the street? Regardless of age? If a street has a lane, must it be used instead of traveling on it but not within the lanes? I support a biker lane program but we need guidelines as well to increase and ensure safety for all.

### QUESTION #4

“The truth about a city’s aspirations isn’t found in its vision. It’s found in its budget” – Brent Toderian. As a councilperson, what would you do to fund an expansion of Complete Street improvements to make our roads safer for all users?

### ANSWERS

**Rolando R. Lavarro Jr.** - As Council-At-Large, I will continue to support and increase funding for Complete Street improvements, including grants, general operating and capital improvement dollars. I would also explore establishing a dedicated fund that would provide an ongoing stream of revenue for street redesign and enhancements. Lastly, I will push for developers to design and construct any new public streets, which are part of their development project, as Complete Streets and at the developers’ expense.

**Daniel Rivera** - The key is to build upon the success of the administration. You have seen a number of innovative solutions to this key problem. Prior to 2013, there were no bike lanes or anywhere for bike riders to travel. You have seen exponential growth in this area, with almost two dozen new bike lanes, a successful bikeshare launch and strategic ways to get cars off the road and create more opportunities for alternate means of travel including foot and pedal.

**Joyce Watterman** - Continue to build from what the city has already implement.

**Esther Wintner** - Review budget line items to reign in spending (budget size has increased in last 3 years) to enable reallocation in funding for enforcement and education.

**Esmeralda Trinidad** - By tapping into the Local Transportation Capital Improvement of NJ to support transportation projects. This program can aid in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements in our City.

**Sean Connors** - As a council member I would first have to see the budget to find where resources could be allocated from. As we can see, our roads are in need of repaving, repairing, and so on.

#### QUESTION #5

“If you plan cities for cars & traffic, you get cars & traffic. If you plan for people & places, you get people & places.” – Fred Kent. Reducing dependency on cars is important for the environment, for safer and more pleasant neighborhoods, and for residents who cannot or who choose not to have a car. As density continues to increase, how will you ensure that new development promotes multiple modes of transportation with better connectivity between neighborhoods and to the region?

#### ANSWERS

**Rolando R. Lavarro Jr.** - I will order a review of our redevelopment plans. We can encourage bike rooms in larger buildings and push for Transit Oriented Development. I will advocate for NJ Transit bus funding so our bus system catches up with the City's development. If enabling legislation is enacted at the state level, I will introduce an ordinance that will oversee jitney operations in Jersey City with the goal of safely meeting JC's transportation needs. We also need to ensure that large buildings away from modes of transit are connected to the city. Lastly, I will urge our legislators & the next Governor to continue expanding PATH capacity to meet the needs.

**Daniel Rivera** - Investment in Transit it really important. More investment in transit means another car off the road and it's better for the environment and better for everyone. The CityBike program has been a huge success and more people are riding than ever before. You are seeing a step towards the right direction on that front and it will continue in a second term under the Fulop administration.

**Joyce Watterman** - To continue to fight for more transportation funds.

**Esther Wintner** - Larger developments to include shuttles to transportation hubs

**Esmeralda Trinidad** - All buildings should have parking for bikes. Our focus should not be parking garages, but complete streets.

**Sean Connors** - It is a good question but it is still the right of a person to pick and choose their means of transportation. Also, we do need to take into consideration: senior citizens and physically challenged residents/commuters as well. New development can have to adhere to city ordinances that are in place. Plus, conducting a survey that is cost effective and not time consumer of the particular area can create equality. As for getting from neighborhood to neighborhood: proper signs/visibility and bike lined streets can increase this.

#### QUESTION #6

Illegal, dangerous parking is not adequately enforced and often contributes to crashes and injuries to pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers alike. Parking Enforcement does not have sufficient staffing, training, or technology to adequately address violations, including dangerous illegal parking (blocked crosswalks, double parking, blocked bus stops, impaired sight lines with cars parked too close to corners, etc.). If elected, what will you do to increase capacity within the Parking Enforcement Division?

#### ANSWERS

**Rolando R. Lavarro Jr.** - Parking enforcement can pay for itself. The 2016 & 2017 budgets included funds to hire more parking enforcement officers (PEOs) which I pushed for. I will continue to make sure that future budgets include funding for a robust enforcement operation. I will prioritize developing a plan & investing in smart technologies that employ easy-to-use Apps, vehicle detection & other tools for on-street parking. In 2014, the Council reorganized and established a Dept of Human Resources increasing funding for general employee training programs. I will ensure Parking has additional funds to support professional development of PEOs & other staff.

**Daniel Rivera** - While staffing needs are only a fraction of the issue, the larger issue, as noted above is finding alternative means of transportation. Investment in Bikeshares, investment in transit are all important. We have seen success with the bike lane additions and more lanes, but the administration has also continued to fight for more transit and greater transit funding. Further, the Fulop administration is taking the lead 24 hour bus service from the Heights to NYC. Parking is just a small piece of the equation. As a whole, we need to think bigger.

**Joyce Watterman** - Parking division present a plan 3 year plan for division. The city has increase in population.

**Esther Wintner** - Staffing is a function of the Mayor and departments, council plays no role. However, as a councilperson, I would have say in the allocation of the budget. I would not approve what does not meet my standard of how our dollars should be spent. We are top heavy and need increased staffing at the enforcement levels as well as enforcement on other issues.

**Esmeralda Trinidad** - Illegal parking causes accidents. We need more parking enforcement on this violation and greater fines.

**Sean Connors** - Obviously through means of our budget hire employees and reassign employees within the agency that can be. This type of enforcement falls under "Quality of Life Issues". On the main streets: high traffic volume areas, increase this service to protect all.

#### QUESTION #7

Grand St. is one of the most dangerous streets in the city, and it is also a key artery filled with dense residential developments, shopping, schools, and other community facilities. Do you support the Grand Street Vision proposal to redesign dangerous Grand Street, including elements such as a road diet, pedestrian safety improvements, and protected/separated bike lanes? What will you do to ensure that the city's eventual plan for Grand St. is swift, bold, and comprehensive—not a watered-down patchwork compromised by its loudest opponents?

#### ANSWERS

**Rolando R. Lavarro Jr.** - I support the Grand Street Vision proposal to redesign Grand Street. The implementation of Grand Street will connect our neighborhoods and make Jersey City a safer place for all. I support a protected bike lane on Grand Street. Making sure that pedestrians, bike riders and drivers alike have a safe outlet to travel will continue to be a priority of mine. To expedite the process, we need to support the work of Stantec. Get them to community meetings, make sure stakeholders are at the table throughout the process, and connect them with local resources. We have to enforce deadlines and follow best practices. If we do that, Grand Street will be a model for the state.

**Daniel Rivera** - Investment in Infrastructure is always important. As we saw in 2015, the current administration blasted PSE&G for digging up roads and not returning them to their original state once the project is done. This was completely unacceptable and the administration called them out. Additionally, as noted before, earlier in 2017, the administration touted a protected bike lane on Grand Street so that is another important investment that can't be overlooked. Making sure that pedestrians, bike riders and drivers alike have a safe outlet to travel will continue to be an important part of the administration.

**Joyce Watterman** - Have a consulting for Grand St.

**Esther Wintner** - I support making changes to our roads. I have not read the study on this particular road modification or heard the presentation for the Grand Street proposal, only through photos. It is important for me to make certain that I have heard from all stakeholders on this proposal, including hospital, fire, police, engineers and the public.

**Esmeralda Trinidad** - YES! The state of NJ has a bike pedestrian master plan which will promote bicycling and walking events and activities, trails program and the usage of abandoned rail corridors which can access parks and other areas of the city, an example of this is Liberty State Park. We can connect to the park if access is allowed through Pacific Avenue around the railroad overpass. Again, educating and following through with a plan for bicycle and pedestrian walkways, put it out to bid and get it done.

**Sean Connors** - This is my first time on hearing of this plan. No, Im not going to \*Google it right now. My answer with limited knowledge, but safety knowledge would be to improve Grand Street from its current condition. You are absolutely right! It is one of our most priority roads with have in our city due to the JC Medical Center being on it. This high volume road must get safety improvements regularly!