

WARD D Council Candidate Survey Q&A



Michael Yun



Rafael Torres



Moriah Kinberg



Carmen Vega

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)

ANSWERS

Michael Yun - As cities grow and become more congested, they are going back to basics. European cities such as Copenhagen have nearly half of their residents commuting to work on bikes. Amsterdam is also high on the list. Portland, Oregon and Boulder, Colorado, have implemented safer streets for their bicyclists. Montreal, Canada has 600 km of paths exclusively for bikes! Bikes were in existence before the car, but when the car came into play, bikes were shoved to the side as recreational luxuries. Bikes produce no carbon emissions, but they also improve the health of those who use them. When people's health improves, insurance premiums go down. People live longer, have more energy and reduce traffic congestion and parking.

Rafael Torres - And in recent years, enforcement was answered when the Jersey City Police would aggressively ticket speedsters, then stop just a few weeks later. I like to somehow encourage enforcement as a quality of life initiative while enhancing public relation activities like softball and bowling within the Public Safety and first-responder agencies. While zero tolerance must be placed on today's distracted driver, creating a good working relation with Public Safety Officers like police officers and firefighters, can speed things up.

Moriah Kinberg - I would continue to work with residents to identify problem areas with speeding or accidents and then work with traffic and engineering and public safety to come up with the best solutions. A combination of traffic calming measures like speed humps and stops signs are needed as well as enforcement of speeding and parking illegal parking. Kennedy Boulevard which runs through the Heights was named the most dangerous road in Hudson County. State Senators Stack and Cunningham have proposed a great bill that would establish a safe corridor fund that doubles fines for roads, like our section of JFK, that could be used by Jersey City through a grant for safety improvements. I will make sure traffic safety continues to be a top priority.

Carmen Vega - We will use city resources to make public awareness amongst drivers a priority. We need to work with the JCPD to patrol roadways where speeding and fatal accidents are a problem, like JFK, 440 and Grand Street. We should reestablish the motor cycle unit, which Mayor Fulop abolished and that police believe was a cause in the increase in fatalities.

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

Michael Yun - My first responsibility as an elected official is the safety of all of our citizens. This INCLUDES motorists. In order to implement safe bicyclist policies, it has to fit-in smoothly with our motorist policies. That means, everyone shares the streets and with that, need educated and continuous enforcement. If laws/policies are not enforced, then they are just suggestions. Motorists, bicyclists & pedestrians are the same. One day, a person can be either. Therefore, all policies implemented to guarantee the utmost safety for everyone should be consistent and straightforward.

Rafael Torres - I am aware of this policy, and feel that it may be too soon to see it through (Without research) and without first addressing: 1: Illegal Parking and related activity that seems to put cars and delivery trucks in these lanes. 2: The lack of respect from vehicles vs bicycles and visa versa. 3: The lack of police enforcement. Suggestion: supplement fees or create a small one time bike-tax to help inform the public on new bikes bought in Jersey City. This public relations tax should also be explored to come from parking facilities or city owned meters.

Moriah Kinberg - Absolutely. The Fulop administration has made progress in including cycling as part of our streets by both adding bike lanes and encouraging alternative uses of transportation such as cycling and public transportation. Every time we have the opportunity to make infrastructure improvements we should take into consideration how we can implement aspects of 'Complete Streets'. I will continue to work with the administration to make 'Complete Streets' a priority.

Carmen Vega - Team Matsikoudis FULLY supports the Complete Streets policy. Again, educating the public through meetings, social media and other media 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.

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

Michael Yun - First, we have to work with the Traffic & Engineering Dept. to determine how traffic flows during different parts of the day. With that, we also have to determine which routes are the best & safest for bicyclists. Of course, I believe that bikes should have a protected lane separated by stanchions to prevent motorists & pedestrians from encroaching onto the lane. There should also be bike traffic signs to control the flow. Also, I believe bikes should be treated like cars & be registered in the City for better accountability.

Rafael Torres - Please note that the previous answer. I would add that while i was a Jersey City Firefighter, many concerns to address the community in Fire Safety could not be accomplished without engagement, community building, creating or supplementing city laws and ordinance, and again-enforcement. Suggestion: I would also like to fund Bike lanes/improvements with the agreement that all bicycles have a one time registration fee, thus making it easier for police to track personal bicycles. The renter providers should make some effort to improve access.

Moriah Kinberg - Now that we have a bike share program and bike lanes we should continue to build and improve this network. Regular street paving would also promote and make cycling safer. Making biking more accessible means making our streets safer for cycling. As you point out, more bike racks at transit hubs, shopping districts and at Government offices along with working to improve and increase protected bike lanes will help make our city more pedestrian, bike and driver friendly.

Carmen Vega - We need more bike parking at transit hubs and we need a bike network of connected PROTECTED LANES and we need greenways to connect our two waterfronts.

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

Michael Yun - Expanding main arteries in our traffic grid is costly & inconvenient to local businesses, not to mention impede buses & emergency vehicles. Expanding residential streets will remove parking for homeowners. I would recommend implementing bike paths in areas that are not frequented by motorists & pedestrians. Something similar to the bike path that is behind the major thorough-fares in Hoboken. There are old railroad tracks that are elevated and can be converted to bike lanes. Create pedestrian/bike bridges that are elevated over streets and highways. In the Village Section and also the back streets in JC can work well as bike paths that can link all of our wards together to get from Point A to Point B.

Rafael Torres - “This is why I said it would get there after we take bicycle steps” Private or Corporate funding from American Bicycle manufacturers should be pursued to help sponsor science fairs or poster art contest to help the idea along. As councilperson, I would support these efforts because I want to ride more. But to achieve this, I would agree it would cost money, and not every one rides or rents a bicycle. Suggestion: Exploring ideas like securing winter sites, where bikes can be turned into exercise machines, as well as, inside tracks can be explored.

Moriah Kinberg - I would work with our State elected officials on bills like the ‘Safe Corridor’ legislation that would generate funding for pedestrian safety improvements and ways to increase transit funding for our region. Every time we pave a road or build a development we should be taking into consideration and applying ‘Complete Streets’ improvements. Integrating aspects of ‘Complete ‘Streets’ into infrastructure improvements would reduce costs and streamline the process.

Carmen Vega - Cut patronage, come up cost to implement top measures at needed street and timeline to implement it.

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

Michael Yun - The City must offer incentives for people who choose to go car-less & to encourage people to use mass transportation & bikes. Place excise taxes on 2nd cars, add more bus services, provide more bike racks, increase parking fees, etc. These are some ways to change the mentality of car owners & drivers. Cars are a luxury & should be treated as such.

Rafael Torres - I like to suggest some of my anti-car initiatives and parking permit ideas, but do not wish to share them until I’m in a public forum. City wide problems will always be taking into consideration, especially the Safety of citizens of Jersey City. Public Parking facilities being planned in the Heights can help to support this program. If I’m giving the opportunity, I would be introducing one project that will help to cut traffic in the Height’s northern section.

Moriah Kinberg - I couldn’t agree with this statement more. As someone who travels regionally for work by public transit, I understand the importance of investing in it. Making public transit more accessible is good for the environment, for drivers and helps solve other issues like parking and pollution. Improving our public transit system is vital to the economic success of Jersey City Heights. As we develop our neighborhoods, public transportation needs to be part of the planning process for any new development and considered when we make infrastructure improvements. Connecting the Heights to the rest of Jersey City as well as the west side to the east side is an issue that neighbors have brought to me and I consider this a priority.

Carmen Vega - All buildings should have parking for bikes. Our focus should not be parking garages, but complete streets.

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

Michael Yun - The Parking Enforcement Division needs a complete overhaul. They need more educated employees, better pay so they take pride in their jobs, more chances of promotion and growth. There also needs more oversight.

Rafael Torres - Good Question. But there are too many cars. I like to introduce the above program, but only in a Public Forum. In short - communicating within this multi-cultural environment must be discussed and debated and to include working families and children.

Moriah Kinberg - Cities across the country are using technology to create more accessible, efficient parking enforcement and to reduce the costs associated with it. I would speak with and listen to the Parking Enforcement Division to identify those opportunities and any changes needed to make them a reality. I would continue to work with the Heights Parking Committee which is comprised of residents working on parking solutions as well as ways to improve transportation in the Heights in order to alleviate some of the parking issues.

Carmen Vega - Illegal parking causes accidents. We need more parking enforcement on this violation and greater fines.

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

Michael Yun - I do not support the Grand Street Vision. I do support safe bike paths, but not on such a busy street. Cars emit fumes that bikers will consume; delivery trucks need to park near the business for certain times during the day. We need to think of safe & convenient bike routes that will enhance the City, not disable it. Other options are available and we need to look into those. There are too many businesses and activity on this street. I am in support of more bike accessible options for our residents & commuters. It's a "win win" for JC.

Rafael Torres - I did hear this plan. I would consider a more watered down plan, unless you can figure in the very first bicycle bridge that can by-pass the Junction traffic areas. This bridge can be picked up to bring a bike or pedestrian across Liberty State Park and through Berry Lane taking a short cut downtown. (Just off the top of the head suggestion)

Moriah Kinberg - I support making improvements to Grand Street that will improve pedestrian, bike and safety for drivers. This would be a huge improvement for Jersey City. Implementing it in a way that is inclusive of all voices is needed to move more projects like this forward. It also provides us with a vision for other areas of concern throughout our city as we tackle this complex issue.

Carmen Vega - YES! Again, educate, come up with plan, put it out to bid and get it done. Simple.