

Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce Alderperson Candidate Questionnaire

Please tell us about yourself.

Your Name: *

Syed Abbas

Aldermanic District: *

District 12

Current Home Address: *

2513 Coolidge Street

Email: *

[REDACTED]

Phone: *

[REDACTED]

Campaign website, if any:

<https://www.syedfordistrict12.com>

Social media (Twitter, Instagram, etc.) handles, if any:

<https://www.facebook.com/syedfordistrict12>

Past education and work history (question optional; alternately you may send résumé to brett@madisonbiz.com)

Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce Alderperson Candidate Questionnaire

Instructions: Please state your position on the following issues. Please limit answers to 100 words. Any answers exceeding the word count limitations will be cut after 100 words.

If you have filled out this questionnaire before, you may skip starred** questions or modify previous answers to those questions. If you skip starred answers on this questionnaire, we will re-publish your 2017 answers.

****1. Why are you seeking this office?**

Working with people and helping my neighbors makes me come alive. After settling in Eken Park, my neighbors gave me such a warm welcome that I wanted to reciprocate their welcome by advocating for them in their own community. My first child was born in Eken Park and I'm more invested than ever in keeping the north and east sides of Madison a great place to live for all people, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. I want to use my voice to make a positive impact on the world around me.

****2. What in your background or experiences qualifies you to understand the unique needs facing small businesses?**

Over the past three years, I have actively volunteered on several committees. I served as Co-Chair of the Eken Park Neighborhood Association, Vice Chair of the Public Safety Review Committee, a member of the Oscar Mayer Strategic Assessment Committee, and a member of the Task Force on Equity in Music and Entertainment. I also currently work as an energy efficiency project manager for an independent nonprofit. With all these experiences, I have been able to work with a diverse group of people that have different backgrounds and priorities, all of which influence our communities and our local economy.

****3. What are the most important issues the businesses in your district face?**

The Northside is facing infrastructure related problems. People who would like to start a new business struggle with the outdated infrastructure of old buildings. Issues such as improper wiring, lack of energy efficiency in buildings lead to higher energy bills and slow internet for startups and modern businesses. This side of the city also has a lack of transportation connectivity for potential employees and clients, in addition to a history of not getting support from the city. All of these factors have led to economic decline and high unemployment rates in District 12.

****4. What is your perception of Madison's business brand? How do you think business in Madison is perceived locally, statewide, and nationally?**

Madison has a business brand of Information Technology. People within the state and out of the state see Madison as a hub of IT startups. However, the Northside is very much disconnected with the current brand of Madison. Northside businesses are more traditional and lack in innovations. With the current site of OSCAR Mayer we have an opportunity to create a food corridor and create opportunities for local businesses that can expand the notion of what Madison's business brand is and allow for this side of the city to connect with the rest of the city and beyond.

****5. How can the City of Madison best attract and retain a diverse and talented workforce?**

By bringing Innovative businesses and new start-ups, we will attract and create opportunity for diverse workforce. Madison is hub of Health and IT professionals, but to get the diverse workforce we have to use the resources like Madison College. Madison College provides an affordable, quality education and resources as well as training in much needed technical skills. By helping connect communities that are disadvantaged If we can help our diverse communities to get technical knowledge, then we have a good chance to keep the local talent at local businesses.

6. How can the City of Madison build an inclusive economy and ensure the advanced industries accelerating here provide opportunity for all?

To be inclusive we must work on a grassroot level with people. We need to listen people and make their voices heard. True diversity starts when all people are afforded the same opportunities without barriers or limitations. When this happens socially and economically, we will see a change in the businesses and services provided that will meet the needs of all people. On city council, I will fight to have policies that make our economy inclusive and representing everyone.

7. With Madison's economic momentum, a continued focus must be placed on infrastructure improvements. What strategies would you recommend for the city to meet the diverse needs of worker mobility and housing?

My first strategy is to enhance the skills of the Madison workforce by connecting the workforce system to other systems in the state and beyond that can support resident's employment and provide training opportunities like an apprenticeship program. My second strategy is to create more living wage job opportunities by potentially rezoning Madison. This could allow the East & North side to have light industry like automotive maintenance and repair, business supplies, landscaping, and construction. Lastly, building affordable housing close to amenities and businesses will stimulate the local economy and keep communities thriving.

8. How do you define economic development? Please elaborate.

I define economic development by looking at development indicators that show improvements in people's lives such as; median family incomes, literacy rates, life expectancy, and poverty rates. Improvement of economic well-being and quality life for a community is another way to see economic development.

9. The 115th Fighter Wing of the Air National Guard is an important driver of the Madison economy, providing an annual economic impact of over \$100 million, emergency and fire services for the Dane County Regional Airport, and over \$1 million in tuition assistance to area student guardsmen. Do you support the Wing as it seeks to continue its mission by acquiring next-generation F-35A jets? Please explain your answer.

I understand, community's concerns that noise pollution can be harmful to the well-being of a community and we should do our best to reduce noise pollution. I also understand economic growth of Madison is very important. Madison is already under very high debt and if we lose \$100 million, it will only increase more economic stress on taxpayers. I think the flights are not creating enough persistent noise pollution and they continue to bring economic stability in Madison. I will continue to support the local economy, but if needed, I will advocate for change on behalf of the communities affected.

10. If offered an endorsement from the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, would you accept it? *

Yes

No

By submitting this candidate questionnaire, you agree that the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce may publish it with the intent of sharing it with its membership and the general public. *

I acknowledge that the Chamber will publish my answers to this questionnaire

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