

Responses cannot be edited

Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce Candidate Questionnaire

Please tell us about yourself.

Your Name: *

Barbara McKinney

Aldermanic District: *

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Current Address: *

1209 Dayflower Drive Madison, WI 53719

Email: *

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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

I originally ran for this office two years ago because I believe all residents should have opportunity and access to a better quality of life. I ran - and run again - to support a strong, robust community that refuses to accept the imbalance of the notion that there are two Madisons. All residents should be able to live in healthy environments that are thriving and safe, and should have educational and economic opportunities. Community organizing is one of my key strengths, and I want to further the work I have done with residents to engage in strong community building efforts. These efforts are needed for our district, out on the far western edge of the city, to be connected to resources and policies that are concentrated in the center. We now have an engaged neighborhood association, Madison West Neighborhood Association, and we have built strong community engagement into the design of the new Southwest Employment and Training Center. I strongly supported both of these efforts and we have made measurable progress. In my next term, I will continue to hold community meetings to address community needs, including quality of life and public safety issues. Cohesion is a factor in the health of the community and I will continue to promote cohesion. My vision of community cohesion culminated in the success of the first Westfest Community Day event.

I stand on a record of delivering and therefore seek a second term as District 1 Alder: to deliver on my commitment to represent all constituents, to be accessible, responsive, and advocate on behalf of the issues important to constituents in my district as well as embracing the broader vision for the City of Madison. A strong foundation is emerging on the southwest side, and I want to continue my work in my supporting it. I am committed to be the voice for those most underrepresented to the table where those decisions are made.

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

I have an extensive background in community organizing, and I listen. I am always interested to listen and to learn more. I want to hear from you, the Chamber of Commerce, about the needs facing small businesses, as well as from individual entrepreneurs. One obvious need is the funding to start up a business. This is certainly a barrier if people come from communities where resources are scarce. I see that micro financing is a strategy that could be employed in line with the city's economic strategy proposal, but it is positioned as a second tier strategy. There is an emerging movement, sometimes called social entrepreneurship and sometimes called social innovation, that seeks to leverage business opportunities with meeting social needs. I would like to talk with you about the needs you are already aware and I would like to have a conversation about how people who already have the knowledge behind entrepreneurship could mentor and coach potential entrepreneurs from District 1.

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

When you look at a map of District 1, you can see that we are very largely residential, although we do have big boxes stores, the University Ridge Golf Course, the University's turf grass research facility and the University's cross country course. We also have some places for people to gather, enjoy a meal, socialize, such as the coffee shop where I hold my office hours in the community. Supporting these small local businesses means supporting the quality of life for the neighborhood residents who patronize them, including the public safety and economic security of neighborhoods. These businesses are very diverse, obviously, and do not all have the same needs.

I would also turn this question around. How can the businesses in my district best provide support for the processes of community development that are needed to build a strong social fabric on the far southwest side? How can businesses best learn the needs of the community?

4. What is the City of Madison's role in growing the economy? How can the City of Madison best support the growth and retention of jobs?

I take the work of staff in the Department of Planning and Community and Economic Development seriously. They study the issues, develop and work through strategies with members of the business community, and offer leadership to the city. City residents are involved in this work through the Economic Development Committee and that is an aspect of the city's job, to involve residents in planning processes. It is also the city's obligation to place equity at the center of these efforts. I am pleased to see equity as a focal point in the Connect Madison strategy report, right at the beginning, and interwoven throughout. Growing and retaining jobs is a hollow wish if opportunities are not there for people who are struggling the most in the current economy.

For myself as Alder, when I attend council meetings or attend committee or community meetings, I remain mindful that I must advocate for the district that I represent as well as representing the myriad of concerns and issues facing the city. I know the policy decisions we make impact city government, city services, and the efforts to move our city forward. In reality, sometimes district and city wide needs are not completely aligned, and then I listen and seek to find a point of balance.

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

In order to do this, we must be the city that we should be – one in which we have corrected the inequalities that are keeping so many people of color in poverty, struggling to survive, or just getting by. The Connect Madison strategy talks about focusing on “good jobs”, jobs that pay enough, in certain industries where Madison is already experiencing success and growth. The data summary in the report states that the median annual household income for African Americans is \$30,000 less than for white. For Latinos, it is \$20,000 less. I think we need to be asking ourselves if professional people of color in those successful industries, such as Biotechnology will want to work in a city where this is the case. Fortunately, the report, with its focus on equity, also points to actions toward correcting this injustice and my answer is we need to do everything possible about these racial disparities. I see them affecting the people in my district, I see them affecting people across the city, and I am deeply concerned.

****6. Do you support the use of TIF, and how do you believe it should be utilized moving forward? How would you rate the City of Madison's past use of TIF? (Would you describe the use of TIF as underutilized, over-utilized, or appropriate?)**

The city updates its TIF Policy periodically. Before I started my term as alder in 2015, a committee of alders reviewed and recommended changes to the policy with a good deal of input from the business community. The previous policy was from 2009. Since I have been serving on the Common Council, I have not see any evidence that we are either under or over-utilizing TIF. We do have to pay attention to the consequences of deferring the stream of tax revenue to the other tax districts that are impacted by city TIFs, the school district, Madison College, and the county.

I think everyone knows that TIF can be controversial. Along with a majority of the Common Council, I supported the Judge Doyle Square plan that included the downtown headquarters for Exact Sciences. This was an unusual circumstance, in that it did not work out and also that the site had already been the subject of controversy for so long. It was also unusual, in that it had special arrangements for a negotiating team and closed session reports to the Board of Estimates. I think we do need to balance our enthusiasm for development we view positively with financial risks, and be cautious about increasing the percentage of our budget that is taken up with debt service.

7. What specific initiatives in the Connect Madison economic development strategy

(<http://www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/economicdevelopment/economic-strategy-symposium/554/>) do you support, and which, if any, would you like to see modified? Why?

I have participated in a series of conversations with about 70 people including youth, to discuss the community needs on the far southwest side of Madison. These conversations happened through a federal grant Madison Police pursued, a Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation grant. From 11 community conversations, we learned about people's concerns. I reference these conversations because it is encouraging to see that strategies in the report are aligned with what people say is needed. In terms of the strategies, all three of the second tier approaches under supporting and encouraging small businesses look promising: Becoming a KIVA city in order to facilitate a micro-lending program, a minority contractor pipeline, and more collaboration with UW-Madison. About the second strategy, I would want to be part of the conversation about Madison Development Districts, and residents should be part of those conversations when an area is considered, but it is encouraging to think that targeted redevelopment could be directed toward community needs. It is also encouraging that targeted redevelopment will not focus on the downtown area, where much city attention has previously been concentrated. I understand "growing the tax base" is part of this strategy and I want to make sure we do not neglect the equity lens as we do this. Gentrification is an example of a process that could grow the tax base with negative consequences for people who are already vulnerable. Transportation is a very significant issue and I am glad to see it included in the report. Can people in my district get to where jobs are? Can there be jobs in the district that do not require people to cross the city, either by car or public transportation? If people do have to cross the city, Bus Rapid Transit would be very helpful. Finally, the focus on youth, educational opportunities and training also fits with the needs of District 1 residents. I would want the Southwest Employment and Training Center to be part of this conversation.

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

I expect this depends a great deal on who we talk with. Earlier, I mentioned the "Two Madisons." From the perspective of black and brown Madison, capable people suffering from severe barriers to opportunity, the question of business brand is a curious one, but people in those growing industries probably have a sense of Madison as a progressive and "happening" place. If one is a certain kind of person, there are exciting possibilities, and those possibilities are real. Innovations like Starting Block are encouraging and demonstrate the interconnections between business opportunities and satisfying social needs. I look forward to more and more youth having the kind of educational opportunities they can offer. At the level of the state, I expect it also depends on whose perspective. Some people will not say anything good about our city no matter how much revenue our successes might generate. Nationally, in those industries where we are expanding and leading, I am guessing the picture is pretty compelling, that we are a good place to be. I will be interested to hear more about different perspectives from people in the business world.

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

Question 4 asks about the City's role in growing the economy. Development is not just growth. If you do a google search for the term "economic development", that issue comes immediately into focus. Development is a framework that considers more factors, such as equity, and is connected to the quality of life and well-being for the population. Development points to a broader and more complex set of considerations. The Connect Madison strategy is an example that illustrates a development focus. It looks at what can raise the level of well-being for more people. Also, development should be sustainable. We cannot just do whatever is most profitable in the short run without consideration for the resources of the future. In an exclusive focus on growth, there is much less context.

10. The Chamber believes that equity and social mobility are achieved through wealth creation and that the surest way is through an entrepreneurial class of color. The Chamber is launching initiatives to support this goal. What do you believe is the City of Madison's role in creating an entrepreneurial class of color?

This is a question around which I very much want to engage. I am committed to be the voice to represent the people in my district, the voices of those most impacted, and the voice for those most unrepresented at the table where decisions are made. I did not run as a black candidate nor ran as the first woman of color to be elected a Madison Alder; but I am both! I would like to know what information you are taking as the starting point, as you undertake this initiative. Is it the Race to Equity report, is it information from resident roundtables across the city, or focus groups with business owners of color? Do you separate business owners from people who work in a professional capacity in a company they do not own?

In terms of equity and access to opportunity, I want to see the city follow the steps in the Madison Connect strategy, for example, with youth development, offering educational opportunities and training in the places where those are the most lacking. It is good if the city is aware of opportunities being undertaken by the business community and by the non-profit sector in the community, but it is better if we take a broad view of the existing programs and work together, both to strengthen efforts and to address gaps.

11. How can the City of Madison provide better customer service to new or existing businesses that seek approval through the permitting and planning processes? How do you define customer service in this case?

In order to answer this question, I would need to know more about the experiences people have had, as they engage with city staff around permit approval and planning processes. I would want to know how experiences might differ depending on the kinds of permits or the steps in the planning process. This question suggests that some people may wish for changes either in the process steps, which could include timing, or in the way the process is carried out. I bring my community organizer perspective to this question and would want to see that the people who come to the city with permit or planning applications and the people who process those applications have opportunities to talk face to face.

12. 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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