

# Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce Alderperson Candidate Questionnaire

Please tell us about yourself.

Your Name: \*

Keith Furman

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Aldermanic District: \*

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Current Home Address: \*

5235 Harbor Ct

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Email: \*

[REDACTED]

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Phone: \*

[REDACTED]

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Campaign website, if any:

[www.keithfurman.com](http://www.keithfurman.com)

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

@KeithWisconsin on Twitter and Instagram; <https://www.facebook.com/KeithWisconsin>

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

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/keithnet/>

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## 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?**

I have worked for and run small businesses for over 20 years and that work taught me a diverse set of skills that I think are highly useful in the position of Alder. Establishing effective partnerships, maximizing the use of limited resources and caring deeply about the people you work with and for are all things that are needed in our public sector. We live in an amazing city, and great cities don't happen by accident. I want to help this city thrive as it evolves in a time of growth, climate volatility and an ever-changing technological landscape.

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

As a small business owner and information technology consultant, I have had exposure to many different industries that required partnership-building with vendors and clients to keep businesses running. In my last position at a healthcare technology company, I was on the front line with the challenges of running a start-up. I had to see the big picture, communicate goals to the team and strategically allocate limited resources, all while keeping patient needs and safety as top priority. I understand it's a constant balancing act and how valuable it is to our city to have people willing to take that on.

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

Flooding, transportation and access to qualified workforce. Businesses all along the Odana St corridor were impacted by the flooding that began with the storm on 8/20/2018. As our city grows, transportation is a constant concern. To attract the best workforce, a city (with cold winters) has to be able to offer a great and affordable quality of life. Fortunately, all of these things are as important to every resident as they are to the businesses, so they are all core focuses of mine as Alder.

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

I grew up in the New York City area and when I told people I was moving here, everyone said “I’ve heard such great things about Madison.” I believe Madison’s business brand is tied to its brand as a city overall, which is positively recognized locally and nationally. With the university, a thriving start-up community, and an amazing food and arts scene, Madison has everything to offer businesses who want the benefits of a city with the friendliness and accessibility of a smaller town. That said, the City needs to do a better job of utilizing and engaging local businesses.

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

The City of Madison can best attract and retain a diverse and talented workforce by focusing on quality of life and addressing inequity. This means supporting efforts that produce affordable housing and childcare options, ensuring a culturally diverse arts and entertainment scene and having efficient and affordable transportation options for everyone. It also means working on the ground with neighborhoods to combat racism and the not-in-my-backyard mentality that sometimes prevents our community from being truly welcoming.

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

In addition to supporting affordable housing, smart development and BRT, which I discuss in other questions, the City should continue to pursue ideas like the application of TIF for incentivizing specific job growth. Accountability is key – too often, all over the country, developers and companies make promises that are never realized. The city can do a lot to help make Madison an attractive place for businesses and it can and should ensure that businesses are accountable to the community as well.

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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?

The biggest and most important opportunity for infrastructure improvement in the next few years will be the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). As the city grows, the amount traffic congestion, availability of affordable housing and overall health of the environment will determine whether it remains a place that people want to live long-term. I think BRT is a critical piece of dealing with Madison's growth and incentivizing public transit usage.

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

Economic development is made up of the policies and practices that help make Madison an attractive place for business. There are aspects that are directly related to businesses, like TIF use and tax incentives, and indirect aspects like ensuring that there is affordable housing and a strong arts and recreational environment to make people want to live and work here.

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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.

Yes, I'm supportive of the Wing's continued mission and its pursuit of acquiring next-generating F-35A jets. I believe the Air National Guard base has a positive economic impact on the Madison economy and the acquisition of the next generation F-35A jets will help keep the base open and valuable. I also support efforts that make sure the base is a good neighbor to residents in Madison, especially when it comes to environmental impact.

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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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