

# Madison Council Candidate Questionnaire

The first section of the questionnaire is for your basic contact information and campaign media

Candidate Full Name \*

Aslam Rakhangi

Aldermanic District \*

District 20

Home Address \*

[REDACTED]

Email Address \*

[REDACTED]

Phone \*

[REDACTED]

Campaign website (if applicable)

<https://rakhangi4madison.com/>

Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) accounts, if any

FB @Rakhangi4Madison T @RakhangiD20

## Questionnaire - Part 2

Please state your position on the following issues.

Please limit answers to 500 words (approx. 3,500 characters). Any answers exceeding the word count limit will be redacted after 3,500 characters.

If you have completed this questionnaire before, you may skip any question that is not starred (\*\*) unless you would like to modify or update an answer submitted in a prior year. If a question is skipped, we will re-post the most recent submitted answer in its place.

## 1 Why are you seeking this office?

I am a first-generation immigrant who has resided in the United States for 25 years and in Madison for over two decades, with 11 years spent specifically in district 20. I take great pride in the fact that my journey, which began with studying under the streetlights of Mumbai, has ultimately led me to earning an MBA from the prestigious University of Wisconsin-Madison.

I came to the United States with very little, only two suitcases filled with books and clothes. However, today, I am proud to call this country my home. I have built a life here, owning a house and raising my three daughters, which I consider to be my greatest wealth. I have been a frequent visitor at Elver Park. I want my daughters to have the opportunity to interact with other children and families that come to the park, but I often find myself hesitant to take them due to concerns about the environment not being suitable for young children. This realization made me question, if the park is not suitable for my children, how can it be suitable for others? Instead of focusing solely on my own needs, I want to create an inclusive environment where every parent feels welcomed and safe in the park and throughout the city. Improving the Elver Park for families is a personal goal for me, I want to make my small contribution to that by creating a safe and inclusive environment for families to enjoy.

The role of an Alder is to represent the constituents at the Common Council, but it is also to connect residents to each other and help build bridges between communities. These bridges can and should be used to lift each other up and inspire one another, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds, in the pursuit of equity and inclusion. I believe that by working together, we can create a more inclusive and equitable community for all.

My personal experience has taught me inclusivity, resource management and the importance of education to better life. There is a growing population of very affluent Asians that have unique requirements and a lot to offer in return. I will be able to tap those resources for the betterment of this city so that it continues to be a robust city that attracts talent from all around.

Throughout my life and career, I have been fortunate to have the support of friends, colleagues, and my community to help me get to where I am today. Realizing that I have only 25% of my active life remaining, I have a strong desire to give back to the community by dedicating my time and efforts to make the city of Madison an even better place for future generations. I see this nonpartisan position as an opportunity to influence the decisions that are made for the city and its population, and to make a meaningful impact on the community where I now call home.

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

Growing up in a poor and crime-ridden neighborhood, I was determined to improve my circumstances through education. Despite the challenges of living in a small 150 sq. ft. apartment with limited access to resources, I was motivated to challenge the status quo and empower myself through education. My high school education, through a catholic school that emphasized multicultural, multilingual, and multi-religious inclusivity and equality, instilled in me valuable lessons that have undoubtedly contributed to my success. Through my experiences, I have developed the ability to communicate effectively with people at all levels and to find solutions that benefit all parties involved. Art of diplomacy, listening and respecting opinions. I further honed my skills through an MBA program, which gave me a strong understanding of business practices and the importance of being outcome-focused. I am able to keep my eyes on day-to-day without losing the strategic focus or the purpose. As a Vendor Relationship Manager, I now negotiate with large global vendors to secure the best deals for my organization while also ensuring a mutually beneficial outcome. My background and skills have been instrumental in my success as a first-generation immigrant. I believe that small businesses face similar challenges. It is essential to invest in small businesses at the state and local level as they are crucial to the overall health of our economy. I am confident that my skills and experiences make me well-suited to work with organizations to improve the ease of doing business.

## 3. What are the most important issues facing businesses in your district?

The lack of workforce development and business opportunities in District 20 is primarily due to the area's dominant residential zoning. This zoning restriction limits the ability for brick-and-mortar businesses to open and operate in the area. However, this limitation presents an opportunity to support and encourage innovative startup ideas that can be run from home offices. These ideas often come from young entrepreneurs who struggle to navigate the administrative hurdles of starting a business due to limited resources.

To address this issue, it is necessary to actively engage non-native speakers and make the process of starting a business more accessible to them. This can be achieved by simplifying the administrative tasks and removing barriers to entry, such as providing resources and support to help with compliance and navigating regulations. By doing so, we can foster an environment that encourages and empowers young entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses in District 20, ultimately leading to increased workforce development and economic growth in the area.

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

Real and sustainable economic growth can be achieved by breaking down barriers and creating more opportunities for low-income individuals and communities of color. By implementing accountable public policies and making targeted investments, we can promote job creation and increase entrepreneurship, ownership, and wealth-building in these communities. The end result is a more robust and competitive local economy that benefits all residents.

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

Madison is widely recognized as a hub for innovative start-ups in the fields of biotechnology and information technology, as well as a vibrant college town. There are national international companies that have their roots in Madison. However, in District 20, businesses tend to be more traditional and lack the same level of innovation. I will advocate for the creation of diverse job opportunities and support for local businesses, as well as expanding opportunities for individuals from all socio-economic backgrounds. This will help to broaden the perception of Madison's business brand and promote economic growth and development within the District 20 community.

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6. How can Madison best attract and retain a diverse workforce?

To attract and retain a diverse workforce, it is essential to attract innovative businesses and new start-ups to the area. While Madison is already well-known as a hub for health and IT professionals, providing affordable housing options and a dependable public transportation system is crucial to ensure that all members of the community have access to these opportunities. By providing a robust infrastructure, we can create a more inclusive and equitable economy that benefits everyone in the community.

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7. What strategies would you recommend for the city to meet the diverse needs of workforce housing?

Implementing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a key step towards improving transportation efficiency for the workforce and connecting employees to job opportunities. Additionally, utilizing Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) and continuing to invest in land banking strategies can provide a means for promoting economic growth and community development. These strategies can help to create affordable housing and generate wealth, which will contribute to long-term sustainability and stability for low-income communities and communities of color. To achieve success, the City of Madison should prioritize the development of high-density workforce/affordable housing along the BRT route and take steps to curb urban sprawl. This will help to create a more livable and equitable city for all residents.

\*\*8. In what ways can city government support entrepreneurs of color working to start and grow an emerging business in Madison?

The City of Madison has implemented several positive initiatives, such as the Market Ready Program and the creation of a Public Market, to support local vendors and promote access to fresh food. Additionally, the City's partnership with organizations such as the Urban League of Greater Madison, Operation Fresh Start, and Maydm, which focus on empowering communities of color through technology training and education, is commendable. These initiatives help to create career and wealth-building opportunities for marginalized communities, and are crucial for promoting equity and inclusion in the city.

\*\*9. What is your assessment of Madison's transportation system? What priority improvements are needed to support mobility for a growing workforce?

As our city continues to grow, it is essential that our transportation system adapts to meet the needs of a growing population. This includes providing options that not only ensure accessibility but also align with our vision for Madison: a thriving downtown and robust neighborhoods, all supported by a strong economy that provides opportunities for all residents. The transportation system must reflect this vision and be designed to enhance, not detract, from the livability and vitality of our city. In certain areas, Madison suffers from a lack of reliable public transportation, making it difficult for low-income residents to commute to work. To address this issue, it is crucial to expand the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. This will improve mobility for the current and future workforce and increase access to job opportunities for low-income residents, promoting equity and inclusion in the community.

**\*\*10. A challenge that often comes with growth are issues impacting crime and safety. Some of these challenges are real; others perceived. In either case, it impacts livability and our ability to recruit and retain talent to Madison. Do you view Madison as a safe community and what is the Common Council's role in building safe communities?**

Ensuring safety in our community is not just about increasing policing or physical barriers, but also about promoting a sense of hope and positivity in our youth. To address criminal behavior and mental health issues, we must implement appropriate and effective solutions that address the root causes of these problems. As a society, we are all interconnected, and our success, reputation, and prosperity are closely tied to the well-being of our community. I have traveled around the world and in most large cities the rich neighborhood houses are walled. I certainly don't agree with this idea of being safe.

Programs that foster positive interactions with the community, promote mental health and wellness, and provide inclusive workforce development opportunities will reduce stress and encourage constructive contributions from the community. By addressing safety in a holistic and inclusive manner, we can build stronger and more resilient communities for all.

I aim to be a valuable resource for the Common Council when it comes to addressing the needs and concerns of Madison's diverse and growing population.

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**\*\*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 the Chamber will publish my answers to this questionnaire.

This form was created inside of Wisconsin Alumni Association.

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