

# Madison Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

Candidate Full Name \*

Bradley Hinkfuss

Aldermanic District \*

District 15

Home Address \*

[REDACTED]

Email Address \*

[REDACTED]

Phone \*

[REDACTED]

Campaign website (if applicable)

<https://sites.google.com/view/brad4madison>

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

<https://www.facebook.com/Brad4madison/>; <https://www.linkedin.com/in/brad-hinkfuss-565746109/>

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## 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 have seen and lived the difference that citizen involvement can make. For over 20 years I've been very involved in projects and issues in local neighborhoods. Many of these things have been issues that also have meaning for the entire city. Seeking an Alder position is an extension of that work. My candidacy is based on experience, and fueled by the optimism that the involvement of our local citizens, businesses, and organizations can make the best outcomes. At the risk of sounding cliché, I choose to work hard to be the change I want to see in Madison.

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

I am the executive director of a non-profit organization with substantial operations in the City of Madison. While the legal framework of non-profits may be unique, many of the challenges they face are the same as small businesses when it comes to finance, personnel, customer service, and management. I have also worked closely with small businesses as part of public works projects, expansions, and advocacy. I appreciate the crucial role that small businesses fill in creating strong communities.

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

A key issue at the moment is the availability of skilled and capable workers. There simply do not seem to be enough people to fill the available positions. Closely related to the availability of skilled workers is the increasing cost to pay those workers. The available workforce has higher expectations than they did several years ago. Along the themes of scarcity and cost, there is also a perceived shortage of affordable commercial space to rent for small businesses.

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

Economic development refers to the interplay between business, residents, resources, and policy to foster a better quality of life and stable economic activity for all. Economic development is not necessarily stable over time. Changing market conditions can profoundly impact the growth and stability of businesses over time, so government must remain responsive to business concerns just as the businesses themselves already are. Strong and positive economic development is born of effective cooperation and a mutual understanding between business interests, the public, and local policy.

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

The Madison business brand is one of innovation, growth, and cutting edge technology. Some of the biggest and most successful new businesses in the state have been founded or based here. There are also substantial business interests based in Madison that are not necessarily new, but form an important base of employment (e.g., government, university, insurance). Madison is perceived as a highly desirable destination for businesses and employment, as evidenced by the explosive growth in population of Madison and Dane County. This perception is not accidental. It is the result of the confluence of innovative thinking, private investment, and good public policy.

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

Retaining a diverse workforce must be an intentional activity. Both businesses and public policy must make it a priority to understand the needs and challenges that different populations face. Those may be cultural barriers, educational needs, transportation issues, language differences, discrimination, and more. Policies and resources must then be aligned to meet those challenges. A diverse workforce will often not happen accidentally. It is the result of decisions intentionally made to pursue diversity and offer the resources to support those decisions.

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

The city must pursue policies that align its limited resources with other state, federal, and private resources so that the one leverages the other. Those efforts must also emphasize the production of housing at the level at which it is needed. The housing market is segmented in the sense that different income levels do not benefit much from the production of housing at other income levels. That is, workforce housing benefits very little from the production of luxury condos. It also benefits very little from the production of highly subsidized public housing. City policy and resources can be aligned to promote the production of housing options that are accessible to the needs of workforce housing.

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

City government can support entrepreneurs of color by creating resources at the local government scale to foster the startup and growth of such businesses. A dedicated office and/or staff position can serve to do outreach to communities of color, as well as serve as a resource to help them navigate the process of starting & growing a business. City government can also consider offering startup grants or loans to entrepreneurs who might not otherwise have access to startup capital, or who may not qualify for traditional private sources.

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

Madison has a huge and very well developed transportation system in consideration of the network of roads that form the backbone of the local system. That being said, the existing network is frequently over capacity when it comes to automobile traffic. Any trip during morning or afternoon trips on the beltline or across the isthmus provides ample evidence of these limitations. The priority improvements need to focus on alternatives to over reliance on a singular means of transportation.

The new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system is a good example of diversifying the transportation system in ways that will meet workforce transit needs in an affordable fashion. The city has made other worthwhile investments in dedicated bike path & lane infrastructure.

Looking further afield, they city should also continue to push for a commuter rail connection between Madison and Milwaukee. The volume of vehicles taken off the road by such a system - while providing a far more safe and enjoyable transit option - would dramatically improve the state of all transportation in Madison.

In the end, transportation benefits from a diversity much like an investment portfolio. Over reliance on any one form is risky and prone to failure. Strength lies in making meaningful investments in a diverse set of options.

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**\*\*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?**

Yes, I do view Madison as a safe community. That being said, I fully recognize the privilege of my personal neighborhood and background. I typically feel safe but there are many people in many areas of the city who do not enjoy that same feeling. I have experienced that lack of safety very directly through my work with housing the homeless and vulnerable populations.

The issue of safety is complex in that it is not just an issue of police enforcement. Many issues of safety need to be reframed. The homeless do not feel safe. The unemployed do not feel safe. Minority populations often do not feel safe. The solutions to the safety of these examples and many others will be born out through strong local efforts to address those shortcomings on their own terms. It is often the deficiencies in some areas that give rise to crime by disaffected individuals. This presents an opportunity for the Common Council to address underlying issues. Viewed this way, the Common Council plays a central role in building safe communities.

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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.

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