

Madison Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

Candidate Full Name *

Colin Barushok

Aldermanic District *

2

Home Address *

[REDACTED]

Email Address *

[REDACTED]

Phone *

[REDACTED]

Campaign website (if applicable)

<https://www.colinbarushokforalder.com/>

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

[https //www facebook com/colinbarushokforalder](https://www.facebook.com/colinbarushokforalder)

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'm running for District 2 Alder because after living in downtown Madison and working in public service for almost a decade, I'm ready and able to serve the residents of District 2

I learned the value of constituent services while working in the State Senate. I want to serve my neighbors in District 2 by communicating with them frequently about projects and plans in the district. I want to help them navigate city government and make sure they are able to get in touch with the relevant city offices when they need service. I will always work to make sure that the needs of residents and local businesses shape our agenda in City government by advocating for their interests at the Common Council and other committees, commissions, and boards. In conversations with my neighbors, I already know that they are concerned about the cost of housing, traffic safety on downtown streets, preserving historical landmarks, and other issues. I believe my experience makes me the most capable candidate to understand the concerns of my neighbors, learn from experts and stakeholders, and work with other alders and the mayor to solve the problems facing our city.

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

I am the only candidate with almost a decade of experience in public service. My first role was at the Associated Students of Madison, where I advocated on behalf of UW-Madison students and served as a steward over student segregated fees.

Before I came to Madison, I grew up in a small business family. My father ran his own pest management business. I witnessed how government policy affects businesses and how lobbying efforts on the part of businesses can affect public policy. I was intrigued by this interplay, and I was ultimately drawn into service in the public sector.

Then I worked in the State Capitol as support staff for the State Senate. I spent many hours every week observing the legislative process. I got a front row seat to the creation of legislation, and the debates and compromises necessary to make policy in a deliberative body. I also defended the public's right to observe their government and helped them understand the legislative process so they could more easily participate. I fully intend to continue assisting the public participate in government.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I went over to the Department of Safety and Professional Services and reviewed applications for medical licenses. I learned how legislative decisions impact crucial programs and affect the way the government can respond to a crisis. I worked hard providing service to physicians and other healthcare professionals, helping them navigate the licensure process and get to work in the healthcare industry. I saw how decisions by politicians can impact the employees and the customers who interact with those programs.

Now, I am back at the State Senate, where I learned how important and valuable it is for an elected official to keep in touch with his constituents. State Senator Tim Carpenter is my boss, and he is a master of constituent services. I help him with casework and with creating responses to every constituent who writes or calls. I plan to use what I learned and practiced to maintain a dialog with the residents of District 2, so they can help me represent them and I can help them understand the intricacies of city policy debates.

Finally, I served on two city committees, the Vending Oversight Committee and the Alcohol License Review Committee, and I was present at every meeting. Vending Oversight was the lead committee on the permanent implementation of Sreatery, and I proudly voted yes to recommend the ordinance changes to the Common Council. On the Alcohol License Review Committee, I've stood up for business and residents, and made sure to carefully weigh their sometimes competing interests to make the best possible decision for the city.

No other candidate for District 2 Alder has the diversity of experience nor my demonstrated dedication to public service.

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

The most important issues facing businesses in District 2 are regulation and high downtown rents. The city government was wise to codify the pandemic era Streatery Program and create a permanent pathway for street cafes. The city must continue to find ways to update ordinances and ensure that we have the best possible climate for businesses. We must make sure the process by which we issue alcohol licenses and street vending permits is fair and consistent, work to improve the ordinance on 21+ entertainment licenses, and work with residents and stakeholders to determine when and how to incorporate food trucks, in addition to carts, into our street vending program.

State Street is the most central feature of the city's mall concourse, and businesses there drive traffic and contribute to the vibrancy of the rest of downtown. That's why we must continue to discuss ways to improve State Street, including making it more walkable and further reducing automobile traffic. The Common Council should pass a resolution that authorizes city staff to work with the Downtown Coordinating Committee to further study changes to State Street and make the 400 through 600 blocks more similar to the 700 and 800 blocks. As district 2 Alder, I will work with constituents, stakeholders, and other downtown alders to fully understand the challenges associated with making a State Street "pedestrian mall" on those blocks and inch us closer to achieving it. A more walkable State Street is better for businesses because dining, shopping, and street vending improve with less disruption of automobile traffic.

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

Economic development is the creation of policies that increase wealth in a certain area. These policies should result in a feedback loop whereby expansion of the economy leads to further expansion and continues to increase wealth for its participants. Good economic development policies should lead to greater demands for goods and services and the best possible environment for businesses to meet that demand, resulting in increases in profits for business, higher wages for employees, a more vibrant community, and increased revenue for the local governments.

While Streatery was put in place to help businesses survive the pandemic-era economic downturn, businesses found value in keeping street cafes even after dining and drinking was able to be brought back inside. Making Streatery permanent is an example of good policy that creates economic development by giving businesses more flexibility to use public streets at a manageable cost. Programs like Streatery, or any others that give businesses more flexibility, should encourage investment in labor, more jobs, more options for residents and visitors to downtown, and a more diverse workforce and clientele.

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

Madison is known nationally for beautiful lakes, an excellent fitness culture, great restaurants, and high quality entertainment offerings. Our top-notch research university and the State Capitol attract visitors from all over the country and the world. Madison excels in several industries, especially technology and health care.

Madison has earned a reputation for being one of the best communities to live in for all age groups, with residents that are as sophisticated and engaged as they are friendly. All of these great qualities are what make Madison the fastest growing city in Wisconsin.

Madison has an exceptionally high nonprofit per capita rate, and we are a growing hub for startups. We support local businesses and have several long standing bars and restaurants frequented by generations of UW students, alumni, residents, and visitors.

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

To attract and retain a diverse workforce, Madison must continue to build housing units so that everyone has a place to live. If rent outpaces wages, new workers will not be able to move here and our economy will suffer.

Madison must provide the amenities expected from an excellent modern city. This means great public transportation, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, enough places to buy groceries, and nice restaurants, taverns, and entertainment opportunities.

Finally, Madison must support a healthy environment for business so they continue to hire new workers and pay them living wages.

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

To keep up with the demand for housing, the city government must create policies that encourage building 2,000 new housing units every year and 3,000 housing units immediately.

Such policies include zoning incentives for creating housing density, creating transit overlay zones that encourage density along transit routes, more by-right zoning and quicker turnaround times in discretionary approval processes for development proposals.

In addition to increasing housing supply, the city must protect renters by providing a tenants right to counsel. The city should create a program that provides legal representation to qualifying tenants in eviction proceedings. This will mitigate the power imbalance between tenants and landlords which will keep landlords accountable and increase housing stability for tenants.

The city should create a program or partner with nonprofits to provide assistance with the first month's rent and security deposit for qualifying renters. This will increase access to housing and further serve to attract and retain a diverse workforce.

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

The City government would be wise to partner with local nonprofits to identify and incubate entrepreneurs. This should start in areas with high concentrations of BIPOC and other underrepresented individuals, and the promotion of the program can be targeted to those populations. The City can then support non-profits that administer grant programs and provide educational opportunities to promising individuals to increase their likelihood of starting and maintaining a successful business.

Madison is already engaged in similar efforts through the Pop-Up Shop program. We should continue pursuing Pop-Up Shop. It seeks to create a diverse and vibrant downtown by supporting small business and filling vacant storefronts.

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

Madison's transportation system is due for an improvement, and so far it looks like BRT will bring the welcome improvement. The Common Council must keep a close eye on BRT and provide oversight to ensure that outcomes of BRT are equitable. The Common Council should be ready to tweak the program if concerns about prioritizing ridership over coverage are confirmed.

Madison needs to improve infrastructure for regional and intercity transportation. Approving the development on Lake and State Street to provide apartments on top of a new regional bus terminal is a good start. The city must fight to bring an Amtrak station to Madison and consider thoughtfully the best possible place for it with a strong listening ear and taking into account the opinions of city residents and businesses.

****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?

I view Madison as a safe community. Perceptions of crime damage a city's image, so we must work hard to prevent crimes and promote the factual narrative about crime in Madison.

The school district and the city should provide adequate after school supervision for school aged children. Psychologists who study these issues agree that supervision is one of the most reliable ways to address the root cause of youth delinquency. Policymakers must advance housing access policies, drug and alcohol intervention programs, and gun safety education to address crimes committed by adults.

Policymakers should listen to law enforcement experts when making decisions about alcohol and entertainment licenses in the downtown area. The Common Council should provide adequate resources so that police can spend more time doing general patrol in addition to responding to calls for service. Finally, the police department should be given adequate resources for enhanced training on anti bias policing, de escalation, and use of force.

****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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