

2025 Madison Common Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

Candidate Full Name *

Amani Latimer Burris

Aldermanic District *

12

Home Address *

[Redacted]

Email Address *

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Phone *

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Campaign website (if applicable)

AmaniForWisconsin.com

Social media (Facebook, X [formerly Twitter], etc.) accounts, if any

@Amani4Wisconsin; AmaniForWisconsin

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 running for reelection because I'm working to make Madison a better place. Madison is my home.

I was born here, raised here, and my family has contributed to this city for generations. I've seen firsthand what makes Madison special, but I also recognize its challenges. Our city has great potential—potential for growth, inclusivity, and stronger connections between our neighborhoods and government.

I want to ensure that as we build the future of Madison, we do so in a way that prioritizes equity, sustainability, and opportunity for all.

One of the most important aspects of leadership is ensuring that all voices are heard.

District 12 is experiencing more development than any other district in the city, which brings both opportunities and concerns. We must balance growth with environmental conservation, public safety, and affordability.

That is why I have prioritized community engagement, hosting over 20 in-person meetings to hear directly from residents. Over 1000 people have come out to voice their concerns. I have helped facilitate discussions on traffic, conservation, housing, and development so that we can shape policies together, rather than imposing one-size-fits-all solutions.

My experience in public service has prepared me to navigate complex challenges. I have worked in the Wisconsin State Senate for Senator Taylor, where I focused on policy analysis and constituent services. I also have experience advocating and lobbying on local, state, and national campaigns, which has strengthened my ability to translate policy into real solutions.

I believe that Madison must continue its progress while ensuring that no one is left behind.

Environmental sustainability is a key priority in District 12. I have worked alongside community members and local advocates to ensure our district leads the way in environmental protection. A key accomplishment was funding Madison's first PFAS filtration system, which will provide clean drinking water to thousands of residents. Additionally, advocated to double the marshland near the Oscar Mayer site, ensuring that we balance development with protecting vital ecosystems.

Every time I think about stepping away, I remember people like Dorothy—an 80-year-old resident still fighting for a better future, even for generations she may never meet. That's the kind of dedication that inspires me to get through what at times can be totally toxic.

We are at a critical moment in Madison's history, and I want to continue the work of making sure our neighborhoods are thriving, our businesses are supported, and our policies reflect the values of the people who live here. With your support, I will keep working to make Madison the best version of itself—one that honors its past while embracing a more inclusive and sustainable future.

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

I understand small businesses because I have lived it and it's in my blood. I've owned several main street businesses, managed a public relations firm and worked in real estate development.

My grandfather, was a critical part of the historic Greenwood Community in Tulsa—also known as Black Wall Street—where he owned and operated restaurants, grocery stores, and a meat distribution company alongside my uncles who were architects and builders responsible for building hundreds of homes and public places in this historic place.

My father continued this legacy in a different way, running nonprofit organizations that employed people and provided vital enjoyment to the community.

Single-handedly, my mother grew and managed a successful local magazine for 30 years, which is now produced and managed by the Urban League. Her mother established a credit union for the sole purpose of helping teachers get loans to buy homes.

These experiences gave me firsthand insight into the financial, operational, and regulatory challenges that small businesses face. I understand the struggle to stay afloat, navigate city processes, and grow a business in an increasingly competitive economy.

As Alder, I have brought this understanding into my work. I have championed the development of the Public Market, which will provide local entrepreneurs with affordable space to expand their businesses. I support FEED Kitchens and their work as a nonprofit that offers resources and training to food entrepreneurs, including food truck operators and individuals rebuilding their lives after incarceration.

I've backed the Black Business Hub in expanding its commercial kitchen, creating new opportunities for underrepresented entrepreneurs.

Beyond policy, I work directly with small business owners and business dreamers in District 12 to help them move their ideas forward.

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

All things streets and transportation; the environment and environmental concerns; micro/small business growth; attainable housing and managing growth; and public safety

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

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

****6. How would you characterize Madison's current workforce housing landscape? What strategies would you recommend for the city to meet the diverse needs of workforce housing?**

Awe are we are definitely working towards building more workforce housing. One of the first pieces of legislation I wrote, called for and outlined the creation of a Madison Madison in Housing Task Force which sought to bring all the partners and various industry industries and players to the table; including individuals and organizations that one may normally normally not think affect housing.

Although my resolution went through various iterations (as it went through the political process) the end result call needed in a Housing Strategy Committee report put out by the housing strategy committee.

This report, of which I, signed on as a co-sponsor suggest a variety of potential solutions to help Madison address the larger and ongoing issues around housing.

One major concern that I don't think we have a clear answer to is the astronomical rise in the cost of an apartment or buying a house. We must address this issue with expediency and bringing people together to test a variety of ideas.

After doing a deep down into housing and participating in some of the Dane County Regional Housing Strategy sessions, I'm grounded in the fact that we do not have all the answers yet, and we will need to continue to look for solutions.

****7. How do you view Madison's continued population growth? What are the opportunities and challenges that come with it?**

In the simplest terms, we are going to have to balance growth and the need to develop the future , right now.

This involves listening, engaging and respecting the people who live here now (meeting their needs) as well as looking towards the future (anticipating what the future may look like).

It's a balancing act that will not be won by pitting people against one another, nor operating out of tag lines or talking points.

It will not be accomplished by simply referring to people as YIMBYS (Yes in my backyard) or NIMBYS (Not in my backyard) which if you take a look at it only works to shut down the conversation entirely.

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

I think we have a high-quality and variety of transportation modes and we will continue to develop new methods.

The next generation seems to be interested in traveling via rideshare so I think looking at transportation from the lens of people who are in different phases of their lives and building a system around what they are likely to use will serve the needs of the city and its residents.

****9.** With declining aid and rising costs, local leaders must find creative ways to be more efficient. Some examples include merging services or operational reforms. Please identify ways the City of Madison government can potentially be more efficient.

Efficiency in government starts with transparency, integrity and accountability. It grows with accessibility and process support. Madison already has strong foundations, but we can do better by making city processes easier to navigate.

Although I haven't yet had the chance to work on this as deeply as I want, in observation, I have come to the understanding that we as a city have an opportunity to help small business and help expedite the approval process which will help local small business owners manage the demands of running a business while getting through what many of them see as bureaucratic hurdles that overwhelm their ability to get started, survive and wastes their precious resources.

My observation and on-the-ground experience as Alder reinforced my initial thought that we need a dedicated small business concierge in Madison—someone dedicated to helping entrepreneurs navigate city regulations, secure permits, and access funding, and deconstruct the process for them.

Small businesses are the backbone of District 12. They provide jobs, create a sense of community, and drive local economic growth. That noted, when we work to incubate and support small business development, cut through red tape, prioritize funding and streamline the processes (just as we have prioritized these elements for developers), we can empower local, small businesses to thrive which will help us create an excellent city with a diversity of things to do, places to shop, eat and play within the city.

I realize that my background as a business owner and policy advocate uniquely positions me to understand their needs and fight for real solutions. Whether through policy initiatives, direct advocacy, or hands-on assistance, I am committed to ensuring that small businesses in Madison have the tools and support they need to succeed.

By prioritizing efficiency, transparency, and engagement, we can make Madison's government more effective and responsive. I am committed to ensuring that our systems work for the people—not against them—so that our city continues to grow in a way that benefits everyone.

This is long-term and tedious work that will be hard to do

**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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