

# 2025 Madison Common Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

Candidate Full Name \*

Isadore Knox, Jr.

Aldermanic District \*

14

Home Address \*

[Redacted]

Email Address \*

[Redacted]

Phone \*

[Redacted]

Campaign website (if applicable)

electisadoreknox.com

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

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?

My main priority is to continue to represent the interests of and be a voice for the residents of district 14 and the City of Madison citizens. My priorities include responsive city services, public safety priorities, accessible transportation services, increasing affordable and various housing options, promoting neighborhood enhancement, and supporting economic development, small business development and employment opportunities, as well as senior and youth services.

I also believe I can represent a common sense, proactive approach to City of Madison decision making that would serve the interests of all residents, city staff and the business community.

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

I understand the challenges that small businesses face to survive and thrive on a daily basis. As a teen and a young adult, I worked as an apprentice in my father's photography studio and assisted in my stepmom's seamstress shop and fashion boutique. I experienced firsthand the challenges of marketing, maintaining enough capital for inventory, purchasing fabric and equipment, conducting shop renovations and build-out, and providing quality products and customer service. Essentially small businesses have to do it all. I was also a photographer in my teens and earlier adulthood, shooting weddings, parties, and individual portfolios. I currently manage a consultant business providing education and training in DEI and manage a small nonprofit. In my former role as director of Dane County's Office of Equal Opportunity, I sponsored Minority Educational Business Seminars in partnership with the UW-Madison Small Business Development Center, SBA, and the Wisconsin Minority Business Development Office (Supplier Diversity Program).

---

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

Capital for start-ups, buildouts or locations, maintenance, and expansions to support existing and proposed businesses. For example, during my recent term a business hub has been constructed and opened to support many small, minority businesses helping them get their business off the ground and providing them with the location to launch their business.

In addition, there need to be more destination businesses that serve the residents in the area, as well as customers who may be passing by daily going back and forth to work. Park street is one of the busiest highways into the City of Madison heading to UW and Downtown. There is a critical need for infill development south of Wingra Street to the beltline on Park Street. Also, along Badger Road, Fitch Hatchery Road and off Broadway Ave. Several new business developments are currently opened (Black Business Hub and Centro Hispano) and are being planned or constructed (Madison College Early Learning Center and Center for Black Excellence) and priorities in the recently updated South Madison Plan will need to be implemented in the coming years. In addition, new business services such as the DMV, Summit Credit Union, and future retail services, i.e., grocery outlet and a restaurant are needed.

---

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

Economic development means encouraging pro-business programs, policies and activities that improve the economic well-being and quality of life for the community. Government's role should be to help stabilize prices, encourage high employment and sustainable growth. This should increase the per capita income and thereby improve the standard of living for the community residents. For example, local governments may utilize a variety of tools such as TIF and TID districts to encourage and stimulate economic development by jointly investing in development or redevelopment, by not collecting the full amount of taxes to be reinvested and leveraged short term for financial gains in the future. Such tools of economic development are used in blighted or underdeveloped areas.

The City of Madison should encourage business friendly zoning practices that stimulate business development and eliminate governmental red tape and barriers.

---

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

Attract new businesses and encourage current employers in the region to hire and train a diverse applicant pool. There needs to be a focus on smaller businesses which make of the bulk of all businesses in the region. A strong focus on diversity recruiting in the government sector here in Madison (State, UW, Dane County, City of Madison and MMSD) is critical. Also, a renewed commitment to DEI principles will be necessary.

Recruiting primarily in the Midwest, specifically in the large urban areas within 10 hours driving distance. West to Kansas City including Des Moines; north to Minneapolis/St. Paul; south to St. Louis including Chicago, Indianapolis, and Cincinnati; and east to Cleveland including Milwaukee and Detroit. Perspective hires are willing to relocate within days driving distance to their relatives and are familiar with the Midwest. You may also recruit in smaller cities with those boundaries.

It is important to emphasize that there are major diverse cities within short driving distance from Madison in Milwaukee, Chicago, and Minneapolis/St. Paul for cultural and entertainment purposes. Madison needs to encourage support for other cultural entertainment venues. Highlighting the advantages of Madison's parks, recreation, lakes, educational institution, and top ranking should also be emphasized. It is also helpful to offer employment opportunities in Madison for their spouse or significant other. Offering on the job peer diverse support and mentoring is very important for retention.

---

**\*\*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?**

Currently Madison continues to have a low vacancy rate, under 5%. This is insufficient for the current population in all types of housing and for future estimated growth. I agree with the city's strategy of supporting the housing fund so it can leverage opportunities to develop more affordable housing citywide. It is important that housing be guided by three principles: diverse, attainable, and equitable. Diverse meaning a wide variety of housing at a range of costs, types, and tenure. Attainable means cost appropriate for a range of households, or no exclusion based on financial capacity. Equitable means meeting households where they are and supporting those disproportionately excluded from opportunities.

As all neighborhoods have differences, I support the concept of scattered site housing. The city should utilize land banking or purchasing small vacant lots within neighborhoods and sell them to residents or develop them for owner occupied duplexes or low-density multi-unit dwellings, such as four-unit apartments, row houses, town houses. These units can be rent subsidized for affordability and tax credits, or city low interest loans can be made available for affordable purchases. Selling these units to residents versus large developers can also increase wealth building opportunities for residents, reduce the vacancy rate, avoid the problems of high-density concentrations, and contribute to healthy mixed income neighborhoods.

I support Housing Forward that encourages rezoning, allowing for backyard cottages and home additions that may provide more affordable housing options. I also encourage more flexible zoning policies that are in agreement with neighborhood housing plans developed with those residents involved. Such housing options should be available near transportation options to places of employment. Encourage some employers to purchase and provide housing near their work sites and provide shuttles services to transportation hubs. Non-profits such as the YWCA also offer transportation services from the neighborhood sites. Most importantly, employers must ensure that salaries are a living wage that working people can afford housing at less than 30% of their incomes.

---

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

Currently Madison continues to have a low vacancy rate, under 5%. This is insufficient for the current population in all types of housing and for future estimated growth. I agree with the city's strategy of supporting the housing fund so it can leverage opportunities to develop more affordable housing citywide. It is important that housing be guided by three principles: diverse, attainable, and equitable. Diverse meaning a wide variety of housing at a range of costs, types, and tenure. Attainable means cost appropriate for a range of households, or no exclusion based on financial capacity. Equitable means meeting households where they are and supporting those disproportionately excluded from opportunities.

As all neighborhoods have differences, I support the concept of scattered site housing. The city should utilize land banking or purchasing small vacant lots within neighborhoods and sell them to residents or develop them for owner occupied duplexes or low-density multi-unit dwellings, such as four-unit apartments, row houses, town houses. These units can be rent subsidized for affordability and tax credits, or city low interest loans can be made available for affordable purchases. Selling these units to residents versus large developers can also increase wealth building opportunities for residents, reduce the vacancy rate, avoid the problems of high-density concentrations, and contribute to healthy mixed income neighborhoods.

I support Housing Forward that encourages rezoning, allowing for backyard cottages and home additions that may provide more affordable housing options. I also encourage more flexible zoning policies that are in agreement with neighborhood housing plans developed with those residents involved. Such housing options should be available near transportation options to places of employment. Encourage some employers to purchase and provide housing near their work sites and provide shuttles services to transportation hubs. Non-profits such as the YWCA also offer transportation services from the neighborhood sites. Most importantly, employers must ensure that salaries are a living wage that working people can afford housing at less than 30% of their incomes.

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

Madison has recently implemented the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) east-west route and soon will implement the north-south routes. It is critical that these proposed routes are accessible to the growing workforce and will meet the ridership levels and price points for the future population. It is important that the BRT will efficiently and effectively get riders to employment and retail centers at a cost that does not overburden the city's transportation budget. Negotiating regional compensation from area municipalities for extended routes will be necessary as the population grows on the fringes of the city.

Pursuing multimodal transit routes within and out of the city will be imperative and must be sustainable. This would include Amtrak, connecting bike trails and upgrading our roadways such as Park Street/HWY151. Pedestrian safe routes are another priority.

**\*\*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.

Interdepartmental and interagency mergers could be an efficient way to save costs. There are some departments that may perform similar functions and can possibly find savings merging or sharing tasks. For example, Parks and Forestry could share tasks for savings with tree trimming, cutting lawns and shared equipment. Smaller departments could share fiscal and accounting functions or even office space. On a larger scale, certain departments could be merged within the city, such as the independent monitoring functions could be moved to DCR or Parks and Forestry for example. Also, the City shares similar functions with Dane County departments such as fiscal and accounting systems, employment relations, information technology, civil rights and equity and inclusions, etc.

The Public Health Department of Madison Dane County is an example of a city-county merger that has worked well over the years. A detailed analysis of possible mergers interdepartmental as well as with Dane County should be investigated for feasibility. Many of the issues faced by city government have become regional and maybe duplicated in Dane County.

**\*\*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.

Google Forms