

2025 Madison Common Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

Candidate Full Name *

Ryan Koglin

Aldermanic District *

District 15

Home Address *

[Redacted]

Email Address *

[Redacted]

Phone *

[Redacted]

Campaign website (if applicable)

ryan4district15.com

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

<https://www.facebook.com/share/1KDxXBxBzQ/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

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 District 15 alder because I am deeply committed to fostering a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable community. Having lived on Madison's near east side for 15 years, I've witnessed the incredible strength and resilience of our neighborhoods and understand both the opportunities and challenges we face as a district.

My work as the SASY Neighborhood Association Board President, alongside my active participation in environmental, preservation, and development committees, has shown me the power of collaboration. Through these roles, I've successfully advocated for thoughtful development, sustainability initiatives, and policies that protect and empower our neighbors. As alder, I will work to ensure that District 15 continues to be a place where all residents feel seen, heard, and supported.

As the owner of Dirty Paws Hiking, a small business rooted in our community, I understand the importance of supporting local entrepreneurs and creating an environment where small businesses can thrive. I've seen firsthand how small businesses contribute to the vibrancy of our neighborhoods and will work to ensure their success through equitable economic policies and investment.

District 15 is a diverse and vibrant part of Madison, and I'm running to ensure that our growth is intentional, our voices are represented, and our values are reflected in the decisions that shape our future. Together, we can build on what makes our community special while addressing systemic challenges with creativity and bold action.

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

My background uniquely qualifies me to understand the needs of small businesses because I own and operate my own small business, Dirty Paws Hiking. I've experienced firsthand the ups and downs that come with running a small business, from managing day-to-day operations and balancing finances to navigating challenges and building relationships with customers. This hands-on experience has given me a deep understanding of the hard work, resilience, and creativity required to succeed as a small business owner.

I am committed to supporting and helping small businesses grow by advocating on their behalf at the city level when appropriate. Beyond advocacy, I will work closely with business owners and neighbors to foster collaboration and ensure the best possible outcomes for both businesses and the community. By bringing people together, I aim to create solutions that strengthen our local economy, preserve the character of our neighborhoods, and meet the needs of all stakeholders. Supporting small businesses means working as a partner to help them thrive while ensuring their success positively impacts the broader community.

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

Small businesses in District 15 often struggle with the financial burden of rent or the cost of owning their commercial space, which can significantly impact their ability to thrive and grow. These costs consume a large portion of revenue, leaving businesses with limited funds to invest in employees, inventory, marketing, or operational improvements. In District 15, as in many areas, rent prices in desirable locations are often driven up by competition with larger corporations that can afford higher rates, further marginalizing small, local businesses.

For those seeking to own property in District 15, the challenges are even greater. The initial cost of purchasing commercial real estate requires significant capital or access to financing, which can be difficult for small business owners who may not have the credit history or collateral needed for loans. Rising property values, fluctuating interest rates, and increased property taxes in District 15 add additional financial strain, making ownership an elusive goal for many entrepreneurs.

The threat of displacement due to redevelopment or gentrification is another issue that District 15 businesses face, as landlords may prioritize more lucrative tenants, leaving small businesses with few affordable alternatives. Policy and community support tailored specifically to District 15's needs are crucial to addressing these challenges. Programs that offer rent subsidies, access to low-interest loans for property ownership, or protections against predatory practices can help. Encouraging mixed-use developments with affordable commercial spaces and providing tax incentives for landlords who prioritize local small business tenants are also strategies that can help alleviate the financial pressures faced by entrepreneurs in District 15. Supporting these efforts is vital to preserving the district's vibrant, community-oriented business environment.

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

Economic development is about creating a resilient, inclusive, and thriving community where businesses, workers, and families can all succeed. A well-rounded approach incorporates the following key elements:

Economic development should involve a comprehensive, long-term strategy that addresses interconnected systems such as workforce development, infrastructure, housing, and access to resources. This ensures that growth is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable across all segments of society.

Support for Small Businesses: Recognizing small businesses as the backbone of local economies, economic development efforts should prioritize policies, funding, and technical support that help entrepreneurs thrive. This includes access to capital, resources for innovation, and platforms for scaling up.

Intentional Development Near Transit: Strategic investments in transit-oriented development (TOD) ensure that economic hubs are accessible to workers, residents, and consumers. This approach reduces reliance on personal vehicles, enhances connectivity, and promotes sustainable urban planning.

Affordable Workforce Housing: Ensuring that workers can afford to live near their places of employment is critical to maintaining a stable and reliable workforce. Economic development must include measures to increase affordable housing stock and combat displacement, particularly in high-demand areas.

Attracting a Diverse Workforce: By combining these efforts—small business support, transit-oriented development, and affordable housing—communities can create a welcoming environment that attracts a diverse, talented workforce. Additional elements like equitable access to education, childcare, and healthcare further enhance the appeal to a wide range of individuals.

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

Attracting and retaining a diverse workforce requires intentional strategies supported by the following key elements:

Systemic Approach: Address interconnected systems like housing, transit, and workforce development to ensure equity and accessibility for all.

Small Business Support: Foster entrepreneurship among underrepresented groups through access to capital, mentorship, and resources.

Transit-Oriented Development: Ensure jobs are accessible through reliable and affordable public transit, reducing economic and geographic barriers.

Affordable Housing: Provide workforce housing near employment centers to prevent displacement and support economic stability.

Inclusive Environment: Invest in equitable access to childcare, healthcare, education, and professional development to meet diverse workforce needs.

These strategies build a thriving, inclusive community where diverse talent can succeed and stay long-term.

****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?**

Madison's worker housing landscape is marked by significant challenges. Affordability is a growing issue, especially for middle-income workers who struggle to find housing near employment hubs. A lack of density in business districts further exacerbates the issue, pushing many workers to the outskirts of the city or neighboring communities. Additionally, insufficient transit options make it difficult for people to commute efficiently, increasing costs and further limiting access to opportunities.

To improve this landscape, Madison must take a proactive, multi-pronged approach:

Increase Housing Density in Business Districts: Relax zoning restrictions to allow for more mixed-use and high-density developments. Incentivize developers to include workforce housing by offering density bonuses or tax incentives.

Expand and Modernize Public Transit: Invest in reliable, high-frequency transit systems that connect affordable housing areas to employment centers. Transit-oriented development (TOD) should be a priority, creating vibrant, connected neighborhoods where people can live and work.

Utilize Public Land and Public-Private Partnerships: Partner with nonprofits, developers, and employers to build affordable housing on city-owned land, with a focus on workforce housing that serves middle-income earners.

Adopt Innovative Housing Models: Explore creative solutions such as co-housing, micro-units, modular housing, and live/work spaces in business districts to cater to diverse needs and income levels.

By investing in housing and transit, Madison can create a more equitable, vibrant city where workers of all income levels can afford to live, work, and thrive.

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

Madison's population growth brings both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, it can spur economic activity, cultural diversity, and innovation. On the other, it raises concerns about housing availability, job opportunities, environmental sustainability, and infrastructure demands like traffic management.

Housing affordability and availability will require a systemic approach to ensure growth does not exacerbate existing inequalities. Solutions might include policies to encourage mixed-income housing developments, increasing density in key areas, and preventing displacement through careful zoning and tenant protections.

Job growth should align with equitable economic development, providing opportunities across industries and income levels, while supporting local businesses and innovation hubs.

The environmental impact of population growth must remain a central focus. Preserving green spaces, minimizing urban sprawl, and investing in renewable energy and sustainable urban planning will be critical to balancing growth with climate goals.

Finally, traffic and infrastructure will need significant investment in public transit, bike lanes, and pedestrian-friendly designs to support mobility and reduce congestion.

A strategic and systemic approach means bringing together policymakers, community leaders, businesses, and residents to create a unified vision. It will require clear priorities, inclusive decision-making, and sustainable planning to manage growth effectively while enhancing quality of life.

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

As Madison grows, so do the needs of our transportation system. Our city deserves a system that balances current use with future growth while keeping our workforce and community connected, accessible, and thriving.

Balancing Today and Tomorrow: Investing in transit solutions that meet the needs of today's commuters while planning for future population growth and development.

Smart Transit Solutions: Enhancing services in key business districts to support economic growth, ensure employees can get to work efficiently, and reduce congestion.

Expanding Access: Creating equitable transportation options so every Madisonian, regardless of location, has reliable ways to get to work, school, and other essential destinations.

Staying Adaptable: Consistently assessing what works, listening to the community, and being willing to adjust to meet evolving needs.

****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.

I will prioritize asking thoughtful and intentional questions to ensure that decisions are made in the best interest of our community. Serving as a responsible steward of the tax dollars entrusted to us is one of my highest commitments. With the recent referendum, residents have made it clear that they expect the city to manage finances responsibly and efficiently. This means taking a closer look at how taxpayer dollars are being allocated and ensuring that every dollar spent provides meaningful value to our community.

Building trust and fostering transparency around how money is spent will be a cornerstone of my leadership. Residents deserve to know where their tax dollars are going and to have confidence that those funds are being used wisely. This requires a deep commitment to open communication, accountability, and a willingness to explore innovative ways to save money and reduce waste.

We also need to take a hard look at city operations to identify opportunities for increased efficiency. By streamlining processes, improving collaboration across departments, and leveraging new technologies, we can maximize both the time and resources invested in city services. My focus will be on ensuring that the city operates effectively, without unnecessary delays or expenditures, while delivering high-quality services that meet the needs of our growing community.

****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.

