

2025 Madison Common Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

Candidate Full Name *

Anthony (Nino) Amato

Aldermanic District *

19

Home Address *

[Redacted]

Email Address *

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Campaign website (if applicable)

AmatoForMadison.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?

I am running to represent the growing concerns expressed by 19th District residents and the ongoing frustrations by small businesses, in dealing with some city agencies. Equally important, there is a urgent need for increased government accountability and transparency in our city government, which is fundamental to a building a healthy community and in the development of Madison's long-term economic and environmental sustainable future.

Sad for me to say, but no longer is our city agencies responsive to the concerns of citizens and businesses that work, live and invest in Madison. I have witnessed first hand, a broken public engagement process, which has primarily involved one-way communication's of pre-determined city staff plans, that have been politically influenced by the ideological extreme political agenda of Progressive Dane (nonprofit political action group).

Over the last five years, our city government staff who run public information meetings (PIMs) often portray themselves as "We Know Best" for district constituencies and for businesses, while pushing their top-down approach to community engagement that is more autocratic than collaborative. As a result, city officials have created lost opportunities for leveraging the vast expertise of city residents, our business leaders and our world renown UW-Madison experts, who all have gained their knowledge through lived experiences, allowing them to provide grounded, realistic insights that might be missed by those who are solely immersed in "costly feel-good and ineffective public policy decisions."

That is why I am running for the 19th Aldermanic District, with a focus on representing the concerns of our residents and small businesses and be their voice on the Madison Common Council. If I am fortunate to be elected, please be assured I will dedicate my work 40 years of public and private sector leadership, to improve and reform the unfortunate top-down autocratic mentality that has impacted some of our city agencies and the city council.

As a former City of Madison Alder, who has chaired numerous mayoral task forces and city committees and commissions, no longer is our forward looking city government, focused on meaningful conversations between elected city officials with their constituents and with local business leaders. As a result, city officials have created lost opportunities for leveraging the vast expertise of city residents, business leaders and world renown UW-Madison experts, who gained their knowledge through lived experiences, allowing them to provide grounded, realistic insights that might be missed by those who are solely immersed feel good public policy.

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

I have over forty years of senior executive leadership and management experience in private industry, government and the nonprofit world. Equally importantly, I grew up working in our family's restaurant and retail businesses and was the Director of the UW-System Small Business Development Center, providing meaningful business consulting to over 400 small business in a six of Wisconsin Counties. In light of our family business and seeing the struggles, the challenges and excitement of small business owners, I also have the understanding and empathy for the challenges and opportunities small businesses faces during good times and bad times.

As a two term member of the Wisconsin Technical College Board of Directors and Co-Vice Chair for Governor Tommy Thompsons Task Force on Building a Quality Workforce in Wisconsin, I bring an in-depth knowledge of the needs in developing a quality workforce and technical and vocational training for essential workers.

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

Inflation, finding good, reliable employees and maintaining good employees and the lack of capital and cash flow for future growth. On a personal level, both small and some of our larger business owners who live in the 19th District, have the challenges of the ever changing competitive environment; and lastly all businesses FEAR of a future pandemic and a tariff trade war, given the many products that are imported outside of the U.S .

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

A primary focus of economic development for any community is business retention & expansion and the development of innovative business technologies. Now apply today's reality of our ever changing climate and the increase destruction by extreme weather events and the hundreds of billions of dollars in weather related destruction - I'd define ED as; A For-Profit Sustainable Economic Development model, in which businesses balances the need for lowering their CO2 Greenhouse Gas Emission Footprint, through renewable energy resource management, while remaining competitive in today's ever changing market places.

If we act collectively and embrace new carbon free energy technologies, I believe sustainable economic development and smart growth policies, will meet the needs of future generations to live in a safe environment – which is in everyone's economic interest. It will however take maximizing low-carbon and renewable energy resources and the technological advancement of micro-nuclear power plants, which are being developed in France, Sweden, Norway, Finland and in the State of Wyoming by Bill Gates. Such a path for a carbon free energy future, will decouple the myth, that sustainable economic development needs to take a back seat to mitigating climate change. They are both economically compatible.

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

This is an exceptionally challenging question with no easy pathway to success. It will take a collaborative public and private partnership with Madison-Dane County Corporate CEO's and key governmental decision-makers at UW-Madison, Madison College, Madison's Mayor & Dane Co. Executive, along the faith-based community leaders in Madison and Dane County, to all come together under one nonpartisan framework and work collaboratively in addressing the stigma that Madison and Dane County are not a friendly environment for citizens of color. We most recently lost one of our most distinguish CEO's of the YWCA (Vanessa McDowell Atlas) who spoke truth to power by saying; "Madison touts itself as a progressive city, but the way this city operates makes it even harder for communities of color to thrive." And that is where we must start, asking the Vanessa McDowell Atlas's of our community, why is it harder for communities of color to thrive in Madison? If we truthfully identify those hardships and begin to address them, then and only then, will we be on the right path to attract and retain a more 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?**

The last time Business & Industries Leaders work together with City, County and UW-Madison leadership, was when Kathleen Falk became the new Dane County Executive and Sus Baumann become the Mayor of Madison and at the end of State Street, UW-Madison John Wiley and MATC all came together and worked collaboratively and weekly under a public-private partnership called the Dane County Economic Summit Council. I chaired the Summit Council and the first order of business was the joint funding of a workforce assessment study within the first 90 days, that helped the Council develop and launched a "career ladders" program in addressing the growing workforce shortage of healthcare works and professionals. That same template public-private partnership model and leadership commitment can immediately be developed to launch a Workforce Housing Landscape Needs Assessment Study to report back in 90 days and from that point, the leaders can begin the development an action plane, with clear objectives, milestones, goals and timetable, backed up with shared expenses, to start addressing the needs and solutions to workforce housing.

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

Without growth cities die. Not literally. But they do struggle and Milwaukee is an example of a large urban city strugglingly, with out growing. So having the challenges of dealing with an ever increase in population for Madison and Dane County, is a good thing, so long as we implement "Smart Growth & Sustainability Policies and Planning." Unfortunately, the City of Madison is off in one direction and the MMSD is off in another and Dane County is currently in transition with new leadership. First, we must recognize that unprecedented population growth is right now transforming Madison and Dane County in a dysfunctional and piece meal approach. That is not good because the the surge in population represents more than just an increase in new residents therefore new housing is needed. This unprecedented growth in our population is a complex transformation that affects every aspect of today's community life and the demands on Madison and Dane County's budgetary challenges are enormous. Worse yet, the vast majority of the members of Madison Common Council and our mayor is not taking a "holistic approach to dealing with this growth" and in my opinion are unintentionally making it worse with the so-called Pro-Zoning ideology. That's why the Chamber, the UW-Madison and our new Dane County Executive needs to take the lead and work with "Madison's real estate and Madison's commercial developers" to work together in developing a SWAT Assessment, such as dealing with (1) Infrastructure Strain & New Demands, (2) Housing Affordability, (3) Traffic Congestion & Transit Options, (4) Social and Economic Racial Disparities, (5) Environmental Sustainability Challenges, (6) Public Safety and Social Services Demands, (7) Public Health Infrastructure & Demands and (8) a Developing a City and County Emergency Preparedness Plan, that addresses the new anticipate surge in population. As a member of the City Council, I will act as a catalyst to move our elected leaders and public officials, in a collaboration with business and industry to start the process in developing a Comprehensive Holistic Strategy for the challenges and opportunities before us.

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

The current rush to build Madison's BRT system, without taking into consideration building a North-South BRT line first, where the urgent need for public transportation was and is the greatest - is a political failure in public "transportation equity." Now add the change of administration in the White House and in Congress, its is very unlikely Madison will not receive a penny more of new federal funds for the BRT expansion and for other needed public transportation infrastructure. Simply put, the current leadership failed to see the unintended consequences of their rush to build the BRT, when others of us clearly saw the forth coming crisis. If I am elected to the Madison Common Council, this issue needs to be address sooner rather than later and no one has the answers at hand to this self-mitigated public transportation fiscal crisis.

****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.**

The last time the City and County came together to look at the efficient ways to merge city and county services was under Mayor Sue Baumann and Dane County Exec. Kathleen Falk who named me and Co. Board Supervisor Mark Pocan as Co-Chairs for the unification and merger of the Madison and Dane County Public Health Depts. We were finally successful in meagering the city and county public health departments but it took Mark and I nearly a year to politically accomplish our goal and we were meeting weekly to move the merger along with one hell of a lot of inside political resistance. But to the credit of Mayor Baumann and Co. Exec. Falk, they stood hand in hand with our "unification report recommendations" and the merger was approved by the city council and the Dane county board. If elected, I am willing as a member of the Madison City Council to play a similar role in looking at several oppourtunities for improving government efficiency and the consolidation of city and county services and back-room administrative services.

****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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