

# 2025 Madison Common Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

Candidate Full Name \*

Elias Tsarovsky

Aldermanic District \*

4

Home Address \*

[Redacted]

Email Address \*

[Redacted]

Phone \*

[Redacted]

**Campaign website (if applicable)**

[eli4madison.com](http://eli4madison.com)

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

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/eli4madison/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/people/Eli-Tsarovsky-4-Madison-Common-Council/61567767069075/>

**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 Madison Common Council to bring fresh leadership to downtown Madison. Having grown up here, I've watched our city flourish, and I'm committed to advancing our bright future. My extensive experience in community organizing, neighborhood leadership, public health, and public policy will help bring our community together for meaningful discussions about our city's future.

As a candidate for District 4 Alder, I've reflected deeply on what makes downtown Madison special and how we can preserve our beautiful lakes, unique residents, caring community, and cherished local businesses in the heart of our downtown for future generations. Having lived, worked, studied, and enjoyed life in downtown Madison throughout my life, I understand the importance of making this area stronger and more inclusive for everyone.

Many people and groups I've spoken with don't feel fully welcome in Madison—this is a problem. The fact that Lake Monona has Wisconsin's highest PFAS pollution levels and our tree canopy lags behind comparable cities is also concerning. I envision downtown Madison as a place where people can live, work, and be their authentic selves. I want our city's natural beauty to be celebrated as a defining feature of our capital city. While Madison has traditionally been safe, recent safety concerns reflect our growing downtown center. This growth requires thoughtful urban planning, robust social services, and evidence-based public safety measures.

As District 4 Alder, I will ensure that both our established neighborhoods and previously excluded voices have a seat at the table as we address our housing challenges, safety concerns, and our commitment to protecting our environment.

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

For the past 10 years, I've been involved with the Madison Futsal League, first as staff and later as a league leader. Under the mentorship of the League Director, I learned the intricacies of running a futsal league. This experience taught me crucial lessons about investing in the right people and managing financial challenges—from facility rentals and hiring to funding improvements. My mentor taught me about both the consequences of hiring decisions and the value of developing top talent to ensure business continuity. I helped the league grow and survive through challenging times, including a pandemic that devastated many small businesses.

As President of both CNI (Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc.) and CANA (Campus Area Neighborhood Association), I've connected deeply with Madison's small business community and heard their pandemic experiences firsthand. Business owners have shared their anxieties about taking out loans and hoping for sufficient fall revenue to avoid financial distress. Through my involvement with DMI and discussions about State of Downtown reports, I've learned how rising rent prices are deterring new businesses from establishing themselves on State Street.

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

Downtown Madison businesses face several critical challenges: safety concerns for their establishments and staff, increasing operational costs from inflation, escalating State Street rents, and the difficulty of finding affordable housing for employees within a reasonable commuting distance. I believe that we can support local businesses through these issues by increasing downtown Madison's draw as a valuable economic hub and collaborating with business owners and property owners. Additionally, changes in immigration policies create retention challenges for many downtown Madison businesses. I plan to work with existing organizations and the Greater Madison Chamber to develop equitable policies that support our immigrant community downtown.

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

Economic development creates policies and programs that build resilient systems and favorable conditions for businesses and entrepreneurs. It makes business ownership accessible and builds a strong economy by helping communities support new ideas through grants, tax credits, subsidies, and business incubation programs.

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

Madison can best attract and retain a diverse workforce by investing in various cultural experiences and addressing the cost of living throughout the city. Supporting culturally relevant businesses and events helps create an integrated community where people feel they truly belong and want to stay. This looks like collaborating with the different Chamber to center the needs of underrepresented and first-time entrepreneurs and small businesses that they support. It also includes working with the city to make it more affordable to live in Madison by addressing the major cost centers of new recruits and existing businesses' employees' budgets, specifically housing costs, childcare, transportation, and groceries. Not only do different cultural experiences attract a diverse workforce and advocacy to get employees' needs met, but diverse businesses and ownership attract a diverse workforce. This looks like collaborating with business owners and property owners to find opportunities to support business incubator programs in places like downtown, like the previous Culture Collective Pop-Up Shops, that support underrepresented entrepreneurs. Also, it looks like working with top recruiters in Madison and the Greater Madison area to understand barriers and opportunities to retaining 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?**

Madison's workforce housing landscape urgently needs improvement. The city should reassess its Tax Increment Financing (TIF) policy and explore ways to attract more workforce housing through strategic Tax Increment Districts (TIDs) citywide. Additionally, we need to evaluate economic development opportunities for exploring opportunities in our zoning regulations to promote workforce housing, "missing middle" housing, and necessary density in suitable areas. This will help create opportunities for peoples' progress toward ownership and developing generational wealth.

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

Madison's greatest fiscal challenge is managing our growth effectively. As we expand, we must plan strategically for our future. My priorities for District 4 include making housing and business ownership more affordable, maintaining a robust affordable housing fund, exploring opportunities to use TIF to capitalize on growth to support public investments and development, and creating opportunities for first-time and underrepresented entrepreneurs downtown. We must also strengthen our support for unhoused neighbors—current funding hasn't adequately addressed this crisis. The city needs to expedite the implementation of the new men's shelter and reduce pressure on The Beacon. I'm committed to investing in spaces that unite our community, such as public parks and green spaces. This includes supporting key projects like the Madison Lakeway and the redevelopment of State Street's upper section at Philosopher's Grove and Mifflin Plaza in District 4—investments that will benefit generations to come. These spaces should also advance our environmental goals. I will collaborate with scientists, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and other First Nations to restore our lakes' health, with attention to Lake Monona in District 4.

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

Madison Metro needs to improve reliability and consistency across both local and Bus Rapid Transit routes. A dependable bus service forms the backbone of a thriving, equitable city, and I'm committed to supporting initiatives that strengthen our transit system. I'll work to enhance bike and pedestrian infrastructure beyond minimum standards, making Madison a '10-minute' walk to parks while improving our city's walkability score for accessing essential amenities. We must also address downtown parking to ensure reliable access for visitors, workers, and residents. Madison's transportation future requires a comprehensive approach—one that makes our city accessible for everyone, no matter how they choose to travel. We must also work to bring Amtrak to Madison to expand our regional connectivity and strengthen our economy.

**\*\*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 city can be potentially more efficient through our city planning process. Design alterations that are within design criteria should be able to receive staff approval rather than going through unnecessary approvals. This takes away from the necessary review of new projects in Madison that require a more lengthy review due to the number of aspects in development. I think an operational reform that would be beneficial to the city is a merging of the function of the Urban Design and Plan Commission to improve communication between commissioners, city staff, applicants, and the public. This could also look like a shifting of the authority of the Urban Design Commission to the Plan Commission. This would help with streamlining information meetings to city commissions and help the public attend the correct meeting to provide feedback on projects they are interested in. Ultimately, this would make the process more streamlined and not only help make it easier and more streamlined for people to share public input on the projects but also more efficient for the planning process in Madison.

**\*\*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.

