

Madison Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

Candidate Full Name *

Dina Nina Martinez Rutherford

Aldermanic District *

15

Home Address *

[REDACTED]

Email Address *

[REDACTED]

Phone *

[REDACTED]

Campaign website (if applicable)

<https://dinaninaformadison.com/>

Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) accounts, if any

[https //www facebook com/dinaninaformadison/](https://www.facebook.com/dinaninaformadison/); [https //www instagram com/dinaninaformadison/](https://www.instagram.com/dinaninaformadison/);
[https //twitter com/dinaninaformsn](https://twitter.com/dinaninaformsn)

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?

As a transgender comedian and entrepreneur, I understand the importance of representation and inclusivity I am the founder and owner of Lady Laughs Comedy LLC, an award winning small business; a member of the KW2 Diversity Board; and an innovative problem solver I am hard working and committed to making a positive difference in my community

Some of my priorities include affordable housing, improving neighborhood infrastructure, and promoting social justice I am also deeply committed to LGBTQIA+ representation and the rights of underserved communities

My unique perspective and diverse background make me well suited to serve on the Common Council, and I am eager to get to work on behalf of the people of my community I am confident that with my energy, vision, and dedication, I can make a real difference on the Madison City Council

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

I know the challenges facing the Madison business community first-hand. As the owner of an entertainment business, I experienced the detrimental effects of COVID-19 and know the challenges they created, as my programming and course offerings were in-person prior to the global pandemic. I understand that small businesses must feel supported and able to thrive and enjoy the benefits of being a member of a rapidly-growing city.

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

District 15 has abundant and diverse small businesses, though much of the district is residential. Several areas are in a state of transition as our development plans, transit goals, and the City's Comprehensive Plan call for more density to support a growing and thriving community. Ensuring we meet the needs for housing while also ensuring the voices of our community are at the table and reflected in city decisions has been an important issue for our district.

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

Economic development must grow our middle class and support our goals of being an affordable, transit-oriented, welcoming and thriving city. Small businesses must be able to succeed. People should be able to afford to live in our city, rent in our city, and afford to stay in their homes. Economic development means equitable growth and diversity in businesses, and that our city is creating an atmosphere where everyone has access to the great opportunities our city has to offer.

5. What is your perception of Madison's business brand? How do you think Madison is perceived locally and nationally?

Madison's brand is that of a rapidly-growing, inclusive, highly-educated, and fun place to live and raise a family. Madison is not only home to the University and a thriving public sector as the state seat, but also home to myriad technology companies.

When I moved to Madison over a decade ago, I didn't know what to expect. Moving from the coast to the middle of the country was daunting, but I was met with kindness and acceptance in a way that I never expected.

I am passionate about Madison and the community that I call home. I will work hard every day to ensure Madison lives up to its promise to all of its residents.

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

We need to practice our values by ensuring people have options for affordable places to live throughout our city, accessible and helpful transit options, and business owners must reflect the diversity of our community. We need to have diverse voices at the table when making decisions that impact our workforce. As a transgender woman, small business owner and someone who's experienced what it is like to struggle in Madison, I bring these experiences to the table.

7. What strategies would you recommend for the city to meet the diverse needs of workforce housing?

I understand the impact that rising housing costs have on individuals and families. We have a housing crisis in our city. It is very expensive to rent and homeowners are also struggling to afford to stay in their homes. The city has worked hard to increase the amount of housing but rental vacancy rates are still well below a healthy 5%. We need to support and encourage housing of all types including the elusive "missing middle" housing to make it more affordable for young families to live in our city. We need to ensure affordable housing, especially for lower income levels, is built where we have good transit, access to groceries, childcare and critical services. We need to support density where we have good transit, and we need to ensure small businesses are positioned in areas where there are enough residents to support their success.

**8. In what ways can city government support entrepreneurs of color working to start and grow an emerging business in Madison?

We must prioritize programs that allow for blooming businesses run by underrepresented communities, such as the Commercial Ownership Assistance Program, KIVA Madison and the Cooperative Business Enterprise Program. We need diverse voices at the table, making decisions that impact our business community. The city must continue and ramp up the ways in which it engages with organizations that represent the interests of entrepreneurs of color, such as the Black Chamber of Commerce, the Latino Chamber and The Progress Center for Black Women.

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

Our transit system is in a state of transition and many immediate-term and long-term improvements are coming, with the Transit Network Redesign and Bus Rapid Transit. These are critical to the success of our city. We must prioritize transit and options that reduce the number of cars on the road as we see our main arteries, such as East Washington Avenue, projected to become extremely congested over the next few years. We need to also prioritize the walkability and bike-ability of our city, and develop in ways that achieve walkable neighborhoods, with businesses that can easily serve their communities.

****10. A challenge that often comes with growth are issues impacting crime and safety. Some of these challenges are real; others perceived. In either case, it impacts livability and our ability to recruit and retain talent to Madison. Do you view Madison as a safe community and what is the Common Council's role in building safe communities?**

Ensuring we have strong, safe neighborhoods is a critical priority for local government. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their homes and in their communities. We need to treat crime with a multi-pronged approach. Any violence in our community is unacceptable, and we need to treat it as the public health crisis that it is. I support programs such as Public Health Madison and Dane County's Violence Prevention Program and their Roadmap to Reducing Violence. I support partnerships with organizations doing important work in addressing and preventing violence such as Focused Interruption. I am committed to expanding mental health programs like CARES and connecting the community to the resources available to them.

****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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