

# Madison 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)

[sites.google.com/view/electisadore/home](https://sites.google.com/view/electisadore/home)

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

<https://www.facebook.com/profie.php?id=100088408403176>

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## 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 represent the interests and be a voice for the residents of the district 14 neighborhood residents and the City of Madison. My priorities include responsive city services, public safety priorities, accessible transportation services, increasing affordable and numerous housing options, promoting neighborhood enhancement initiatives, and supporting economic development and employment opportunities, as well as senior and youth services.

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

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## 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 bases. As a teen and latter 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, shop renovations and build out and providing quality product and customer service. Essentially small business have to do it all. I was also a photographer in my teens and earlier adulthood, shooting weddings, parties and individual portfolios. 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 up, build outs or locations, maintenance and expansions to support existing and proposed businesses For example, currently a business hub is being constructed so many small, minority business will have a structure and support services to get their business off the ground and have a temporary location to launch

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 developments currently being planned (Black Business Hub, Centro Hispano, Center for Black Excellence) and priorities in the recently updated South Madison Plan, will need to be implemented in the coming years

## 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 district to encourage and stimulate economic development by jointly investing in the 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.

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

Generally, Madison's business brand is perceived as a governmental, educational, biotechnology and medical communications business sector. These areas are dominated by the government sectors of the State of Wisconsin, the University of Wisconsin, Dane County, the City of Madison, three major hospitals with medical clinics; and biotechnology and medical communication businesses. I also understand that 80% of the businesses in the region are actually small businesses, not in the above businesses.

I assume Madison is perceived as a liberal or progressive, governmental, educational, service industry city. An educated, professional, and affluent population that is predominately white. In actuality, Madison is much more diverse, if not in numbers, in the variety of different races, ethnicities and persons of various national origins.

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

Recruit 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. 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. Recognizing potential as well as knowledge and experience is very important. Be willing to offer development opportunities and value different perspectives.

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

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 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. Such housing options should be available near transportation options to places of employment. Some employers (SSM) have also purchased and provided housing near their work sites and provided shuttles services to transportation hubs. Non-profits such as the YWCA also offer transportation services from the neighborhood sites.

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

The City can support by funding nonprofit programs like WIBIC, the YWCA, the Urban League of Greater Madison and the Boys & Girls Club's trade and entrepreneurial center. These programs provide training and education to individuals who have a desire to become future entrepreneurs of color. In addition, support the exiting Latino Chamber of Commerce and the Black Chamber of Commerce. City government should also collaborate with other state, federal and county government agencies who provide start-up and business plan resources, as well as seminar and business mentoring. Examples of such agencies would include Small Business Administration (SBA), UW-Madison Small Business Development Center, and the Wisconsin Minority Business Development Office (Supplier Diversity Program). The city may want to create a competitive fund or low interest loan program to support entrepreneurs of color. This could also, be a micro-loan program, where the fund will be replenished by the loan repayment of the entrepreneurs once they graduate from the programs. Perhaps entrepreneurs who end up certifying and doing business with the City of Madison, can earn a waiver of repayments. These city contractor entrepreneurs of color should be recognized and rewarded by the City for their successes. Ultimately doing more business with entrepreneurs of color will increase the City's Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE) program goals.

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

The current Metro bus transportation system in Madison is adequate at best. While the communication regarding routes and changes is effective, there seems to be too much bus transferring to get to many destinations. It is vitally important that the bus routes become more accessible to the neighborhoods and run on a timely basis, especially at peak hours. It is also important that the bus routes effectively get to major commercial, retail and employment centers, and park and rides at the convenient times for workers and customers. But the most important priority for the future will be funding, especially for the implementation of the proposed Rapid Transit bus proposal. Affordability and customer feedback is critical to increased ridership.

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**\*\*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?**

Madison is a very safe city and has ranked consistently in the top ten safest cities according to US News and World Report (2021). Like most medium sized cities between large urban areas (Milwaukee, Chicago) Madison is experiencing urban growing pains with increasing level of crime associated with rapid growth.

It is vitally important that the common council promote policies that help keep its citizen's safe. This includes funding and supporting public safety and accountability measure to ensure that the citizens receive effective and responsible police services. The council must also promote polices and resources that help support issues related to domestic violence, mental health crisis, youth delinquency, auto traffic safety and pedestrian safety. This should include everything from additional police officers and mental health specialists, youth delinquency aides, violence reduction professionals, traffic aides and family educational professionals. Utilizing technology and the resulting data, particularly from street video surveillance, body cameras and personal home video are also effective tools promoting safety.

Ultimately it is the citizens working cooperatively with city professionals and nonprofit organizations, along with the council providing the appropriate resources and policies, that will help make a community or city safer. We must remember as Aristotle said : "Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime". If the council provides resources and support policy that address poverty, it will help reduce crime.

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**\*\*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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