

Madison Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

Candidate Full Name *

John Phillip Guequierre

Aldermanic District *

District 19

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Phone *

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Campaign website (if applicable)

Under development - john4madison.vote

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

Instagram [johng4madison](https://www.instagram.com/johng4madison)

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?

Madison has repeatedly been recognized as one of America's most livable and vibrant cities. It will take hard work to keep it livable for all of its citizens and to sustain its economic trajectory. Madison is an economic engine for the entire state. I believe I have the experiences and skills to contribute to this worthy effort, carrying on my family's long tradition of public service.

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

I have spent my life in business. Just after graduating from UW Madison, I joined a Fortune 500 manufacturer and learned much. I eventually had the opportunity to join a management group that bought one of that first employer's subsidiaries. We grew it from something small to a \$375 million annual sales public company. Today it is a part of Berkshire-Hathaway. I then started several other companies, eventually selling them. I have served as a CFO, COO, and CEO of multiple enterprises of varying sizes, including small start-ups. I have been consulting in the realm of construction technology since 2016, often advising startups. I am an active volunteer with MERLIN Mentors, advising new technology startups, and in 2020 I founded Otologic Technologies in Wisconsin to commercialize AI for ear disease diagnosis. Madison is a great place for small business, albeit with some challenges. I have also served at the chairman level of multiple not-for-profit organizations, learning their issues that are quite different than those of private enterprises.

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

There are undoubtedly differences between the many small service businesses and the larger growth engines like Exact Sciences and a variety of companies in Research Park. A common challenge is attracting and maintaining a work force with the necessary skills, and that means growing and sustaining the stock of affordable housing in Greater Madison. It also means attention to transportation systems that move people and goods efficiently, and general infrastructure that is in good condition. Strong regulations are essential for maintaining a livable and equitable community, but regulations and regulators need to be efficient too, and not an obstacle that inadvertently stifles growth and opportunity for all. It is not on every business's radar, but those who are aware of Madison's festering structural deficit know that we have to deal with it or face some grim choices.

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

To me, as an economics major at UW Madison, economic development has a statistical definition - an upward trend in GDP within defined boundaries. It is so much more when we consider all of the factors which enable that growth, the degree to which the economic benefits of that growth are retained locally and recycled, the quality of life of those who generated the growth, and the equity with which the generated wealth is distributed. In my experience, an essential prerequisite of sustained economic development is a continuing healthy collaboration of government, business, and (especially in Madison) those government-funded entities like UW. Development does not just happen. The great ideas of the future (and they tumble out of UW and Greater Madison's technology hot spots) need to be nurtured and supported.

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

I suspect that Madison's business brand is obscured by long-standing perceptions of its famously liberal population. Across the state and nation, well-informed people are aware that businesses in the Greater Madison area are creating well-paying jobs at an unprecedented rate through important technologies with a future. Yet elsewhere in Wisconsin, especially in the kind of small towns in which I grew up, Madison is a vilified enemy of a vanishing way of life, and Madison business is either invisible in that narrative or considered a willing handmaiden. We have work to do to dispel those damaging perceptions and rebuild the sense of shared community. Madison business has such a compelling story that there must surely be a way to communicate it. With the pandemic hopefully now endemic, let us keep those conventions and meetings coming to our beautiful city, taking the opportunity to share our business story.

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

This is the hardest question in this survey. The Chamber's "Advocacy Agenda" has probably identified many of the key ingredients. Over the Holidays I read through the names of all 8,637 registered voters in District 19. I was not surprised to see the significant numbers of Asian, South Asian and Middle Eastern surnames. Based on my own years on the Wexford Village board, our immigrant friends and their children are engaged, productive, and ambassadors for the degree to which they are integrated and respected. District 19 is too light on African and Hispanic Americans. When the area was developed, I suspect that was an objective. The statistics on the income and educational gaps in Madison are dismal. It will take time, but, if we can put a dent in those pathetic statistics, I think we will have the diverse workforce we need. I am just another privileged white guy. I would like to believe that the current initiatives by Black and Latino leaders in Madison, such as the South Park projects, are worthy of supporting. If elected I will certainly listen to those voices.

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

I have spent the last several decades focused on affordable housing. Two of my current consulting projects involve designing affordable homes and apartments and the factories to build some of their components. What I have learned is that it is a complicated challenge with some politically difficult aspects. Efficient building is just one component, probably the one I best understand, and which could use a helping hand from building code and zoning authorities. Affordable housing requires greater density than the current average in large parts of Madison. Changing neighborhood densities when the opportunity arises is one of the political challenges. American's have so much of their wealth invested in housing, that NIMBYISM should not be a surprise. Madison's development approval process is famously arduous, providing numerous avenues to block increasing density, especially with an affordability component. Still, having participated in the public meetings for the Odana and East Towne development plans, and impressed with some of the newest affordable housing developments, Madison has made more progress than some cities. Financing such projects is the third component, and another challenge. It takes hard work, but there are solutions. Finally, I know that "workforce housing" is the term du jour, but I do not like it. To me it sounds too much like the housing that was built out-of-site behind the plantation mansion.

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

I have had the privilege of mentoring entrepreneurs of color through my involvement in MERLIN Mentors. The needs are somewhat different than those of our typical white, technically educated client in that they may not have grown up surrounded by parents, relatives or friends who operate or have started a small business. I am impressed and excited about the goals of the Center for Black Excellence and Culture and the Black Business Hub and about the on-going programming at the Latino Chamber of Commerce. Supporting those initiatives seems like the best course. There will inevitably be some obstacles and disappointments. Let us help those impressive leaderships through those hard times.

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

I am an enthusiastic user of Metro and our wonderful Madison bike lanes and paths. The soon-to-be-implemented changes in Metro routes require a longer walk, and some of my District 19 neighbors are very upset about losing their nearby stops. We are human and hate to give up what we have. I have read through much of the discussion and logic behind the latest plan and the related BRT strategy. It makes sense to me. Metro and BRT are one part of the broader Transportation Demand Management ("TDM") initiative and Complete Green Streets, and I have spent some time comprehending those big plans. They also make sense, although I suspect that some tweaking will be necessary as we come to understand the inevitable unintended consequences.

****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?**

Statistically, Madison is a very safe city, but I know people who are needlessly scared. We have to deliver facts through the haze of sensational reporting. Every generation of my family has had a member of a Wisconsin police force since 1870. I remember too well the call to get to the hospital in Fort Atkinson where my youngest brother was fighting for his life after being injured in the line-of-duty. Policing has been a part of family discussions forever, not only the plea for respect and understanding, but also the things that need to be done better. We ask too much of our police. I am a strong advocate for the CARES program, and I was delighted but not surprised by the positive outcomes in the first annual report for CARES. I would like to see the Council continue and expand the program. If elected, I plan to meet quarterly with the West and Mid-Town stations that serve District 19, to stay current with concerns, to be honest about funding, but always conveying that I want MPD to be successful.

****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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