

Madison Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

Candidate Full Name *

Juliana Bennett

Aldermanic District *

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Home Address *

[REDACTED]

Email Address *

[REDACTED]

Phone *

[REDACTED]

Campaign website (if applicable)

<https://www.julianafordistrict2.com/>

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

Facebook [https //www facebook com/julianafordistrict2/](https://www.facebook.com/julianafordistrict2/)

Instagram [https //www instagram com/julianafordistrict2/](https://www.instagram.com/julianafordistrict2/)

Twitter [https //twitter com/JuForthePeople](https://twitter.com/JuForthePeople)

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 seeking re-election as the District 2 Alder, because I would like to continue working on downtown and city-wide issues, including affordable housing, equitable transportation, violence prevention and more. I ran for office back in 2021 as a community organizer who wanted to be a part of the solution of making Madison an affordable, equitable, and inclusive place for all.

Two years later, I am proud to say that I have kept my campaign promises. I have been a part of the entitlement process of several new developments that will add about 5000 new units to the downtown area, about 250 of them being affordable units. I spearheaded a \$100,000 affordable student housing study. I consistently voted in favor of increasing funding to our CARES unit and providing alternative programs reduce gun violence and sexual violence. I supported the Metro Transit Network redesign and Bus Rapid Transit. Overall, we made significant progress over the past two years, but there is still more work to be done.

When re-elected, I will prioritize handling the rapid growth in Madison and the additional pressures it places on all areas of our system. The rapid growth in Madison is certainly felt in our downtown area. After speaking with local residents and businesses, there is a legitimate concern about who can live, work, and do business in downtown Madison. I am committed to finding solutions where people of all backgrounds can thrive in Madison.

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

I have direct experience with the unique needs of small businesses as the daughter of a small business owner. I grew up watching my dad manage our family's restaurant. When my dad was diagnosed with congestive heart failure, I took over managing the restaurant at 15 years old while my dad recovered. The experience was transformational for me and helped me understand the passion and perseverance it takes to own a small business.

My experience running my family's restaurant is what encouraged me to pursue acceptance into the inaugural cohort of the Business Emerging Leaders Program at the University of Wisconsin Madison. I recently completed my studies in December 2022 and graduated with degrees in Real Estate and Political Science. My academic course load helped me understand an entrepreneurial perspective to doing business.

Beyond my personal and academic experiences, I have connected with the needs of small businesses in my capacity as an alder. As a downtown alder, I regularly find myself in spaces with local businesses. For example, I have built a relationship with DMI leaders, attended the LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce National Coming Out Day breakfast, and hosted meetings with downtown business owners. Being a part of these spaces with local businesses allows me to understand the importance of building partnerships and utilizing local government to help small businesses thrive.

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

The issues facing local businesses in District 2 can be felt and seen on State St. More and more local businesses are closing and being replaced with large national chains. The change is in part due to how some local businesses have not yet recovered from the effects of Covid-19. It is also due to the rapid growth of luxury developments that naturally attract national food chains in lieu of local businesses. My conversations with local businesses led me to understand that they are struggling with the pressures of being priced out of the downtown area due to competition with national chains.

This is why it is essential for alders like me and the rest of the Common Council to partner with and provide financial resources to small businesses for them to succeed in the downtown area. As an alder, I will continue to assist local businesses by connecting them to financial resources, supporting our Madison Pop-Up Shop Program, and promoting events such as the Madison Night Market. Furthermore, I will continue to encourage new developments to accept small, local businesses as tenants. All in all, I plan to listen to the needs of local businesses and respond accordingly.

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

I view economic development through an equity lens. Equitable economic development distributes wealth fairly across our community and creates opportunities for all. To me, this means going beyond simply working within our current networks while expanding our reach to communities that are often overlooked. I plan to create opportunities for people who aspire to generate value in the community through entrepreneurship. Economic development requires us as local leaders to help communities identify barriers and build bridges to success.

Economic growth requires us to look at improving all areas of our system. We must create a city that is affordable and accessible. Thus, I will be championing affordable housing solutions, improving our transportation system, and elevating Public Health's Violence prevention Roadmap.

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

I view Madison's business brand as a place that welcomes innovation and entrepreneurialism with room for improvements on diversity and inclusion. When I entered the Wisconsin School of Business, I was greeted with an array of alumni that encouraged us to seek innovative ideas and rely on our networks to bring them to reality. Some innovators had success. For example, Eat Street was founded in Madison. More recently, a UW-Madison grad opened a bakery in Middleton. Our community has an environment that is welcoming to creative and passionate entrepreneurs. It is one of the reasons while Madison regularly ranks at the top of national lists of best places to live and work.

The other end of this equation is the social and racial disparities that exist in our community. In the recent council debate about the Transit Oriented Design (TOD) overlay, I relayed my support for the TOD overlay to create additional housing types, by reminding the council that Madison is an excellent place to live if you are white. The racial disparities in our communities are evident by simply looking at the 2020 census data map and seeing how wealthier neighborhoods are predominantly white, while the less well-off neighborhoods are predominantly Black and Brown people. The racial disparities that exist in Madison taint the view of who can actually do business and succeed in Madison. Hence, it is all the more important to center equity in the conversation of economic development.

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

Madison can attract and retain a diverse workforce by (1) building healthy and safe communities and (2) listening to and uplifting the needs of people from diverse backgrounds. As Madison leaders, we cannot shy away from the topic of diversity or simply view it as a checkbox. We must instead embrace the reality of our current status and center equity in all areas of improvement.

We can attract a diverse workforce by accommodating underserved communities' needs for affordable housing, healthy food, and safe environments. We can retain a diverse workforce by making Madison more welcoming and inclusive. In conversations I've had with community members of diverse backgrounds, I have heard some of the barriers of feeling included is the lack of spaces to build community with people that share their culture. We can improve these areas by supporting community spaces like the Black Business Hub and hosting entertainment events that center cultural diversity.

Nonetheless, solutions for attracting and retaining a diverse workforce need to include and center the voices of communities of color. It is our responsibility to meet people where they are and actively seek out their input as to how they would like us to make Madison more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

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

Increasing affordable housing, including workforce housing, is one of my top priorities for the upcoming term. My plan to increase housing is to identify areas that we can update our zoning code, provide financial incentives, and streamline the development process.

Our Madison zoning code needs to be updated to allow for increased density in underdeveloped areas. I understand there is a fear of bulldozing over neighborhood character to build new housing. However, I believe we can find a balance between preserving neighborhood housing, especially naturally-occurring affordable housing, and building for our need for increased density. For example, I am currently working with city staff to create a zoning-type incentive that will allow developments to receive additional stories (within our current height limits) if they provide a certain amount of affordable units.

We also need to provide financial resources for providing affordable housing, like opening up our city TIF policy and increasing our land banking fund. As alder, I sponsored a TIF policy change that removed restrictions on using TIF for student housing. I also supported increasing our land banking fund in the 2022 budget cycle. Over the next two years, I plan to work with my colleagues and the mayor to open up our TIF policy and increase our land banking fund.

Lastly, we must continue working on streamlining the development process. As an Urban Design Commission (UDC) member, I was flabbergasted by a recent debate where UDC members voted against a new development that would provide 550 units of workforce housing for arbitrary reasons. I was the only commissioner that spoke in favor of the development, because of the benefits it would provide our city. When re-elected, I will actively seek opportunities to streamline the development process, specifically for developments that provide affordable and workforce housing.

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

The city can continue to support entrepreneurs of color working to start and grow businesses through continuing to fund and collaborate with programs specifically designed to serve entrepreneurs of color. As alder, I am proud to say that I supported programs such as Madison Pop-Up Shops, Thursday night markets, and the Madison Public Market. When re-elected, I will continue to support such programs and ensure our budget includes grant resources for entrepreneurs of color. Beyond programming, we must make our city services more accessible to entrepreneurs of color who may not have experience working with our institutions. In essence, I return to the idea of building relationships with and listening to the needs and ideas of entrepreneurs of color. I am willing to work within networks like the Chamber and DMI to actively reach out to and support entrepreneurs of color.

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

Madison has a decent transportation system if you live downtown. Our transportation becomes difficult to access in the periphery areas of our city. I believe Madison should be a 15 minute city, meaning anyone can get anywhere in the city within 15 minutes. The Bus Rapid Transit, Metro Network Redesign, and Vision Zero program all helped improve our transportation. Still, better is possible and necessary.

In my capacity as alder, I will be supportive of providing additional bus transportation services to the periphery areas of our community and late night bus services to get residents home safely at night. I will also advocate for a downtown location of high speed rail, during the rail study. A good transportation system cannot be solely reliant on our bus transportation. Thus, I will be supportive of improving safe right-of-ways for bikers and pedestrians. I will also support making our parking enforcement laws clear and accessible to residents. Overall, I share the vision of getting people out of cars. However, we need to create a transportation system where anyone can bus, bike, or walk efficiently in the city.

****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?**

I view Madison's issue with safety in terms of our ability to tackle root cause problems that lead to violence. As an alder, I have consistently championed tackling these root causes. When re-elected, I will advocate for and submit budget amendments that expand the CARES unit to a 24/7 model. I will work to reduce gun violence and sexual violence through elevating Madison and Dane County Public Health's Violence Prevention Roadmap. I will advocate for increasing funding to support services that provide trauma-informed care for survivors. I understand how trauma and distrust for policing still afflicts our community. In my capacity as alder, I want to involve community voices in MPD's 5-year plan. This is important to place our community's public safety needs in the hands of residents.

In terms of gun violence, this looks like using a predictive model to identify and prevent gun violence before it happens. This data-driven approach has already helped reduce gun violence by 14%. When re-elected, I will continue to advocate for the reduction of gun violence by investing in community response teams and a data-driven approach that identifies the root cause problems that lead to gun violence.

As for sexual violence (SA), we know 1 in 4 women experience SA during their time at UW-Madison. I am one of them. This is why I am a staunch advocate for eradicating sexual violence within our community. Over the next two years, I will advocate for increasing funding to support services, such as DAIS, that provide trauma-informed care for survivors. This is especially important to ensure survivors feel safe, seen, heard, and properly represented when reporting their cases and receiving follow-up services. Furthermore, in my capacity as an alder, I will work with local advocacy groups to ensure safety for downtown residents during bar time on State St and Langdon St, when there is a higher risk of experiencing sexual violence. Overall, it takes all of us to raise awareness of and fight against sexual violence in our communities.

Finally, as a community organizer, I understand how trauma and distrust for policing still afflicts our community. In my capacity as alder, I want to involve community voices in MPD's 5-year plan. This is important to place our community's public safety needs in the hands of residents.

****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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