

# Madison Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

Candidate Full Name \*

Matt Phair

Aldermanic District \*

20

Home Address \*

[REDACTED]

Email Address \*

[REDACTED]

Phone \*

[REDACTED]

Campaign website (if applicable)

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

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

[https //www facebook com/phairformadison/](https://www.facebook.com/phairformadison/)

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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?

I am running for Council because I love this city and I want to see it continue to grow and change so (all) our kids see themselves having a future here as workers, leaders, activists, investors, etc I bring a combination of experience, accomplishments, and steady leadership that, I believe, is needed right now There has been a lot of turnover on the Council in recent years and promises to be again this election In this moment it wouldn't be a bad thing to have someone back on the Council who understands city processes, has trusted relationships with City staff, business and other community leaders, and has proven to be willing to work with anyone who has the best interests of Madison in mind

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

As a high school teacher I know that for many small businesses to survive and hopefully thrive, they need educated, responsible young people who have the skills to work in their stores, shops, labs, offices, etc. In some ways it has never been more challenging to train our kids for the work that our community businesses require. On the other hand, I know that the kids in our high schools right now are intelligent, creative, tolerant and generally dynamic people. Somehow, we need to put our heads to together to square this circle.

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

District 20 as it is currently construed has very few businesses, especially relative to other Council districts. However, access to qualified, reliable workers is an issue here and everywhere. The threat to public safety, real or perceived, is an issue for some businesses in West/Southwest Madison. But I would say the biggest issue is the relative lack of economic and community vibrancy. I believe we should be looking to our west side neighborhoods and corridors like Raymond, Schroeder, Gammon, High Point, McKee and others as the next places to reimagine and develop. There's no reason we can't begin planning for economic, cultural and community hubs with business, housing and transit development in these parts of the city.

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

From my perspective as Alder I think economic development can be put into two categories. First, economic development is POLICY that the City sets to assist and encourage businesses to grow, innovate and thrive in Madison. Examples of policies may include tools like TIF, land banking, development friendly zoning, opportunity zones, or business improvement grants. The second category is PARTNERSHIP. In some ways I hesitate to talk about partnerships because "public/private partnerships" can be a cliché in city politics with little backbone to the language. And yet, I think strong, genuine collaboration between the business community and city government is essential. By definition the two sectors will always have different goals and objectives but we should strive to work together as much as possible to ensure that Madison's exciting pace of growth leads to shared prosperity for all. This means we need high levels of communication and dialogue, we need to be transparent whenever possible, we need to find areas and issues that make sense to work together on (youth mentorship and employee training come to mind), and we need to be willing to compromise when both sides are working in good faith. All that said, to me economic development is really about creating a city that is vibrant, innovative, creative, equitable and affordable. Again, the question we should ask ourselves all the time is: do all of our kids, regardless of background, see themselves as potential leaders here and will they be able to afford to stay?

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

I think our brand is mixed, if we're being honest. On the one hand, we're recognized as one of the best places to live in the country year after year by various outlets. We have several top-notch companies that have either grown here or relocated to Madison. We're the fastest growing county in Wisconsin and one of the fastest in a country for a lot of positive reasons. We attract big conventions, national events and major concerts. And yet we can't deny that all those good feelings and facts aren't felt or experienced by everyone. That part of our reputation I have to believe is out there as well. So, our great challenge continues...are we one city or a tale of two?

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

We attract and retain a diverse workforce by being affordable. We do it by not talking about equity but doing equity. We do it by promoting and supporting a creative, diverse arts and music scene. We do it by supporting emerging entrepreneurs of color. We do it by supporting a second to none food and restaurant scene. We do it by supporting our public schools and pushing them to be the best they can be so parents want to send their kids there. We do it by creating convenient, accessible transportation options. We do it by investing in community development in our most challenged neighborhoods. We do it by rejecting NIMBYism and diversifying our residential zoning codes. We do it by attracting innovative, growing businesses and corporations who want to hire a diverse, talent workforce.

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

Part of this answer is to continue what we're already doing - invest in affordable housing leveraging State and Federal resources, upzone to allow for more density in traditionally single family neighborhoods, expand the Transit Oriented Development overlay when the time comes. Sometimes the best solutions are already there in front of us and we need to have the fortitude to attentiveness to see them through. Beyond that, we need to be as creative and entrepreneurial, if you will, as we can to develop more dense neighborhoods to address the housing affordability problem. It's going to take all of us to stay the course and continue to innovate in order to meet the challenge.

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

I think the City's relationships with the Black and Latino chambers have strengthened in the last few years and that's definitely a good thing. We should continue to evaluate the effectiveness of our grant programs and grow them if need be. We should look at more seed grant and financial literacy program funding. The Public Market getting off the ground will be beneficial for many businesses owned by people of color and we should replicate programs like Market Ready in other sectors.

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

Bus Rapid Transit, the Metro redesign and Transit Oriented Development are all examples of significant improvement. As I said earlier, now we need to see them through - evaluate them as they grow, make tweaks and improvements as conditions warrant. My biggest priority is build a transportation system that best connects workers to jobs and consumers to businesses.

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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?**

Overall, and relative to other big cities, I view Madison as a safe place. But we all know that it sometimes feels like we're on the edge of sliding into a less safe city as we continue to grow at such a rapid pace. I have a pretty long history of setting violence prevention as my biggest priority and I'm proud of the work I've done in this regard.

Oftentimes the debate revolves around City funding of our police department. I've always felt that is a narrow and ineffective framing for an important discussion. Police are, and always will be, a part of making our neighborhoods safe, but to build a sustainable Madison that is safe for everyone we need a comprehensive approach. One that includes a strong, flexible police department as a partner in a much larger public safety effort.

I have a record of accomplishments toward that goal and ideas for how we can improve on the work we've done:

- Support MPD in their efforts to reduce crime and to collaborate with community groups and Public Health

- Allow our Public Health department to enhance its violence prevention unit and strengthen its partnerships with the community

- Increase funding for youth and young adult employment programs

- Invest in youth mentoring programs - something the City does not currently do

- Continue building the CARES program which provides mental health assistance for people in crisis and diverts them from the justice system

- Double down on focused interruption programs

- Support the County's effort to build a Mental Health Triage and Restoration Center

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**\*\*If offered an endorsement from the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, would you accept it?**

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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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