

Madison Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

Candidate Full Name *

Syed Abbas

Campaign website (if applicable)

<https://www.syedfordistrict12.com/>

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

<https://www.facebook.com/syedfordistrict12>

Questionnaire

Please state your position on the following issues. Please limit answers to 500 characters. Any answers exceeding the word count limit will be redacted after 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 want to contribute to making the world a better place for future generations, including my two small daughters. The drive and passion for wanting to make a difference in the world was always there in me; I went to school for public policy and human development originally because of that drive. It has been a hard year for all. We are living through many things, but none as profound as this new wave of a civil rights movement. I am part of that movement and I want to bring a real change.

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

As an incumbent alder who has a history of listening to my constituents, working with diverse voices, and advocating for every voice in my district, my background qualifies me to understand their unique needs and to help small businesses. Currently, I am actively working with Madison stakeholders, including mayor, small business community and the City of Madison Economic Development office to help many of our small businesses in District 12 with resources and funding.

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

Of course, the impact of the pandemic is one of the most important issues facing businesses in District 12. However, we are also facing issues like the proposed F-35 fighter jets bed-down, PFAS contamination, public safety, and lack of density and connectivity. The northside has a lack of connectivity for potential employees and customers. With the launch of the BRT there is hope that connectivity can be improved and attract more employers and employees to this side of the town.

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

Madison has a business brand of healthcare, information technology and the University of Wisconsin. Locally and nationally, Madison is perceived as a hub of IT startups, a political town being that it's a state capitol, and an academic university town. Meanwhile, the northside is disconnected from the current brand of Madison and has fewer businesses than other parts of the city. Most of the zoning is still industrial and this needs to change.

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

By bringing innovative businesses and new start-ups to Madison, we will attract and create opportunities for a diverse workforce. Redevelopment of downtown and the East Washington Corridor creates connectivity, entertainment, and housing, attracting a diverse workforce. Cities that provide sustainable housing, an efficient transportation system and opportunities to grow attract young professionals. Also, by creating workforce / affordable housing we can retain diverse workforce.

6. How can the City of Madison build an inclusive economy and ensure the advanced industries accelerating here provide opportunity for all?

On a city level, to be inclusive we must work from a grassroots level with people. We need to listen to people from all our communities and make business decisions for the city that take our communities' voices into account. True diversity starts when all people are afforded the same opportunities without barriers or limitations. On the City Council, I fight for the policies that make our economy inclusive and represent everyone.

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

It is very important that we focus on connectivity and housing. Developing a BRT system is a step in the right direction which helps the workforce to connect efficiently with employees. On the affordable housing front, I supported five affordable housing projects; this is the highest in any district in the last two years. I also supported four market rate projects. If the City wants to be successful, the City needs to focus on developing high density workforce/affordable housing on the BRT route

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

True economic development comes to a local economy by dismantling barriers and expanding opportunities for low-income people and communities of color. Through accountable public actions and investment, economic development increases the number of quality jobs and increases entrepreneurship, ownership, and wealth. The result is a stronger, more competitive city.

**9. What can the city do to support small businesses, particularly those hardest hit by the pandemic?

It is important for the City to work collaboratively with the Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders to understand the needs and challenges of businesses. The city does have limited funds, but we should allocate funding as equitably as possible. As an alder, I am working hard with to connect local businesses with city staff to connect the businesses with the resources and information they need to survive this pandemic and succeed. When our small businesses succeed, the community succeeds.

**10. As an alder, how would you work to achieve equilibrium in our local response to the pandemic in balancing the pivotal interests of public health, economic health and public confidence?

It is vital for all the stakeholders to work together. We saw in the past that business stakeholders and the Mayor's office did not include Council Leadership in the discussion of Smart Reopening of Dane County Plan which created a gap among policy makers and business community. To create confidence among the public it is important to work jointly and create a committee which represents City, County elected officials and Public Health officials, business community members and other stakeholders.

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

Yes

**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.