

# 2026 Madison Common Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

Candidate Full Name \*

Yannette Figueroa Cole

Aldermanic District \*

10

Home Address \*

[REDACTED]

Email Address \*

[REDACTED]

Phone \*

[REDACTED]

Campaign website (if applicable)

<https://www.yannette4madison.com/>

Social media accounts, if any

<https://www.facebook.com/YannetteDistrict10/>

## Questionnaire - Part 2

Please state your position on the following issues.

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 use your most recently submitted answer.

### 1. Why are you seeking this office?

I'm running for re-election in District 10, keeping my campaign promises to focus on community members' health and safety. My approach centers on serving our most vulnerable community members, knowing that our entire community thrives when we strengthen support for those who need it most. I will continue to fight for services that benefit our community, for more transit options, for housing near existing resources, and for providing the essential services that keep our community thriving.

## 2. What qualifies you to understand the unique needs facing small businesses?

As a Business Analyst, I bring to the table extensive experience in system implementations, end-user training, and support of multiple CRM and ERP systems. I am adept at learning and applying new skills and technologies. I have worked for startup biotech companies that developed innovative technology, attracting companies like Roche Diagnostics and Johnson & Johnson to the City. I understand the importance of businesses being agile while maintaining quality assurance, producing high-quality products, and remaining competitive. My ability to quickly adapt to changing environments with flexibility and agility, along with my excellent analytic reporting skills, has been a key factor in my success. UW's partnerships with the biotech industry are a perfect example of how to promote economic growth; they drive innovation and attract a vibrant, diverse workforce. These companies help Madison gain attention and visibility from people worldwide, creating opportunities for economic development. I am acutely aware of the challenges involved in small businesses accessing city resources and navigating existing tools. My professional experience enables me to identify process failures and provide effective solutions that streamline processes. I have a proven track record of breaking down complex issues into understandable components, making them more manageable for others. I continue to work with the clerk's office to implement process improvements to the liquor license review process, which has seen an increase in non-English-speaking license applicants, including Latinas. The licensing process, particularly for non-English speakers, can be daunting. I continue to work directly with the clerk's office and zoning to break down silos, develop cross-training, and streamline the process. By removing barriers for non-English speaking applicants, we can enhance the experience for all applicants.

---

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

The district lacks walkable and accessible street connections. During my time as an alder, we completed the Hammersley Road redesign, which narrowed the street and added a path for all ages and abilities, making it safer for everyone to commute. District 10 has a handful of shops and restaurants, mainly concentrated in high-traffic areas, making access by other modes of transportation more challenging. The area also lacks economic investment and services; some areas are considered a food desert. Having a full-size grocery store would serve the area's food needs and create job opportunities.

---

4. How would you characterize Madison's current workforce housing supply? What strategies would you recommend for the city to meet the diverse needs of workforce housing?

Madison's current workforce housing supply remains constrained and unevenly affordable. The City's Housing Tracker shows steady production of about 2,328 net new homes in 2025, slightly above recent annual averages, only 398 units affordable to households at or below 60% of Dane County's Area Median Income (AMI), and 59 units at or below 30% AMI for the year. In Dane County, the 2025 AMI is \$90,900 for a single person and \$116,900 for a three-person household. The 60% AMI, the benchmark used for workforce affordability, means income limits are above what many essential workers actually earn. That makes it hard to create housing truly affordable to lower-wage workers without deeper subsidies.

I have sponsored multiple zoning changes in recent months to support a diverse range of housing choices:

- ADUs by right and expanded ADU capacity to allow more gentle infill;
- Lot divisions that reduce frontage/depth barriers so new lots and homes are easier to create; and
- Support for courtyard and other missing-middle housing forms

Because the County's AMI is relatively high, achieving true affordability for low and moderate income workers requires subsidies and policy interventions beyond market production alone. Otherwise, many workforce households remain priced out of units technically defined as 'affordable'. Public & private partnerships and land banking are essential to support nonprofit development of deeply affordable and workforce units.

---

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

We need to continue to support BRT and the expansion of routes to neighboring municipalities. which will generate revenue, strengthen relationships, connect people, and support economic development in the region. The Lake Way Project and the John Nolen reconstruction make a rail station near Monona Terrace a great option for the entire downtown area and a central location for commuters. The top priorities for transportation are making our road infrastructure safe for all modes of travel, continuing to invest in accessibility for pedestrians, bikers, and people of all ages and abilities, and making streets welcoming to all residents.

---

6. With declining aid and rising costs, local leaders must find creative ways to be more efficient. Some examples include merging services or operational reforms. Please identify ways the City of Madison government can potentially be more efficient.

My record shows a commitment to finding efficiencies since my first vote at the council. I will continue to do so while maintaining the level of services our residents enjoy. More work is needed, and I am committed to working for my constituents. The reality is that due to significant population growth, the City is currently running under capacity; we would need over 200 more employees to keep up with demand. Instead of cuts, we must work together, lobbying the state to pay the money they owe the City for services provided and give Madison an equitable State Shared Revenue.

This year, we invested in a lobbyist to increase communication and collaboration at the state level. Additionally, the new West Side Streets Division operations building will reduce staff travel time, fuel consumption, and equipment wear and tear.

---

**\*\*7. Do you consider Madison's property taxes to be too high, too low, or appropriate? Please explain your reasoning and provide specific examples of any fiscal changes you would recommend?**

Do you consider Madison's property taxes to be too high, too low, or appropriate? Please explain your reasoning and provide specific examples of any fiscal changes you would recommend.

Madison's property taxes are an investment in our communities; they directly impact the health and safety of every resident in our city. Reducing critical services is not reducing taxes; it is shifting the burden to other agencies and to the most in need of support in our city. Wisconsin's municipalities' main source of income is property taxes, and the state formula does not account for inflation. That means that municipalities like Madison have to do more with less.

Over the past couple of years, we have implemented a 5-year budget planning process for the operating budget and have made significant advances on the Results Madison initiative. Both of these efforts will increase clarity regarding budget management and the city's needs.

In the meantime, the new West Side Streets Division operations building, opening this year that will reduce staff travel time, fuel use, and equipment wear. Demonstrating our ongoing effort to manage resources, and sustain quality services.

During my first council meeting in 2021, we made a crucial move to enhance efficiency. We shifted the Parking Enforcement Officers from MPD to Parking Utility, transferring the cost of this service from the city levy (property taxes) to the parking utility enterprise. We also created job descriptions that combine the rotation of duties throughout the year, from Parks, Forestry, and Engineering. I introduced a Park Volunteer Coordinator position that enhances community engagement and pays for itself, given the savings from reduced volunteer hours. My record shows a commitment to finding efficiencies since my first day at the council. I will continue to do so while maintaining the level of services our residents enjoy, and I appreciate the community's support with the referendum to further these efforts.

---

\*\*8. The City of Madison is in the process of updating its economic development strategy. What policies or initiatives would you like to see incorporated into this plan?

[City of Madison Economic Development Strategy](#)

Economic development is an ecosystem that must balance growth, profit, and quality of life. The plan should prioritize living-wage job creation and retention, expanded housing options, walkable neighborhoods, and reliable public transit, while aligning workforce development, small business support, and tourism with long-term community stability.

Rising homelessness in Madison directly impacts local businesses and public spaces, especially in the downtown area. Where people are often denied access to basic facilities like restrooms, yet are then criminalized or shamed for unmet human needs in public spaces. This dynamic harms individuals, workers, and business owners, and it reflects a failure of systems, not of personal responsibility.

The Economic Development strategy must integrate practical, coordinated solutions, including accessible public restrooms, business liaison and support programs, and formal outreach partnerships that connect businesses to social service providers. The strategy must include training and programming for business owners and employees focused on de-escalation, dignity-centered response, and service referral pathways. Business owners must be part of the solution and should be supported with tools and not forced into enforcement roles. Economic development is also a public safety strategy. Communities are safer, healthier, and more prosperous when people have access to housing, transportation, employment, and basic human dignity. That principle should guide Madison's growth planning.

---

**\*\*9. While data centers are not new to Madison or the region, they are emerging as a major policy issue at all levels of government. What are your positions and views on data center development, and as an alder, how would you approach large development proposals like data centers?**

Allowing the development of data centers cannot be an all or nothing game. It is not prudent to rush into decisions that will shape Madison's economy, infrastructure, and environment for decades to come. The economic arguments for moving fast without understanding the impact or educating the broader community are short-sighted. The long-term impacts on our natural resources and public infrastructure matter just as much as the economic gains.

I understand the importance of signaling that Madison is open to large scale investment, as well as the impact on the workforce (construction, information technology, innovation) and the tax base. Still, we cannot bypass processes or skip due diligence. Any new technology or system that arrives with big numbers and tight timelines puts pressure on people to create an illusion of urgency and fear of missing the boat. We cannot afford to lose sight of the bigger picture. Foxconn showed Wisconsin what happens when we rush! The project moved quickly, relied on unverified assumptions, and involved major public commitments without strong accountability. We saw the damage to public land and other resources, significant public expense, and an economic return far short of the promised level.

The rush for data centers renews the concern about making the same mistakes again. As with any other development, data centers should only move forward if they are transparent, sustainable, consistent with the City's land-use and policy goals, and in compliance with City ordinances. The current moratorium allows us to account for the factors that directly impact our community, including land-use compatibility, long-term infrastructure costs, and water systems.

Our TIF policy needs to be clear about whether to consider related utility upgrades or physical infrastructure expansions. Data centers may promise economic benefits, but we must find ways to benefit without the costs of increased flooding in low-income neighborhoods, degraded water quality, or infrastructure costs that drive up property taxes.

Madison does not need to prove it is "open for business" by rushing into deals without a clear understanding of the long-term sustainability of the project. Taking the time to do proactive work and update our ordinances and policies with the support of a diverse set of stakeholders will foster confidence in our decision-making process.

---

**\*\*10. How do you view Madison's continued population growth? Is it an opportunity or a challenge?**

Population growth is a challenge and an opportunity. What sets Madison apart from other cities is the high-quality services our residents receive. The City provides superior essential services and invests 2/3 of the budget in Public Safety. As alders, we create policies that attract developmental opportunities for mixed-income levels, from low-income to affordable to market-rate housing. Moreover, we must continue to promote walkable neighborhoods and invest in transit options that support the growth of small businesses and ensure access to services.

---

**\*\*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.

This form was created inside of Wisconsin Alumni Association.

Google Forms