

Responses cannot be edited

Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce Candidate Questionnaire

Please tell us about yourself.

Your Name: *

Sara Eskrich

Aldermanic District: *

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Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce Candidate Questionnaire

Instructions: Please state your position on the following issues. Please limit answers to 100 words. Any answers exceeding the word count limitations will be cut after 100 words.

If you have filled out this questionnaire before, you may skip starred** questions or modify previous answers to those questions. If you skip starred answers on this questionnaire, we will re-publish your 2015 answers.

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

As a growing city, Madison faces a variety of social, economic, and community challenges, including population growth, racial inequities, and environmental stewardship. We have smart, dedicated people working to find solutions, but we need more coordination. I have a track record of successful consensus building and the public administration skills and experience to tackle issues effectively. I feel passionately about giving back to my community and I know I can do so at my best by serving as alder. I am running because I have the experience and skills to improve our local government and make it serve us better.

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

My background working for small, non-profit organizations makes me acutely familiar with the challenges of unstable funding, the importance of networking and messaging, and an all-encompassing job description. I serve on boards struggling with health care costs and options for small, independent organizations. I engage regularly with small business owners in my district and my husband and I have personal experience in small business, including our engagement with his family's fifth-generation family business. In my role at Deloitte Consulting, I am privy to ample thought leadership and training on business concerns in our new and changing economy.

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

I have the pleasure of talking with many business owners throughout my district regularly, including the Monroe Street Merchants Association, Meriter and UnityPoint St. Mary's Hospitals, and Brittingham/Wingra Boats. Many are small, locally owned businesses, and others are large institutions like the hospitals and universities. All are strongly invested in our community. They are concerned about encouraging smart growth and clear development processes, disruptions caused by upcoming road reconstructions, and limited parking options. The businesses contribute to the vibrancy of our neighborhoods, and they want to be sure that this strong character and dynamic continue as we grow.

4. What is the City of Madison's role in growing the economy? How can the City of Madison best support the growth and retention of jobs?

The city must be a resource and partner with the private sector to grow the economy. This means providing quality public services, clearly articulating policies and regulation that encourage innovation, and ensuring that Madison stays one of the best places in the nation to live, work, and play. The city must put resources behind projects and initiatives that encourage growth in a variety of sectors, supporting our community's vision of equity. These resources should be both direct financial resources and indirect investment in corollary efforts.

5. How can the City of Madison best attract and retain a diverse and talented workforce?

Madison must provide programs and services that extend access to quality resources for all residents. This means investing in public education, transportation, public safety, and a built environment that protects natural areas and promotes health. We need to continue to grow arts and cultural amenities, including our exceptional local food scene. Residents who grow up here or move here for our great higher educational institutions must have a reason to stay, with family supporting jobs that promote their full participation in city life.

****6. Do you support the use of TIF, and how do you believe it should be utilized moving forward? How would you rate the City of Madison's past use of TIF? (Would you describe the use of TIF as underutilized, over-utilized, or appropriate?)**

Madison has been extremely successful in our use of TIF. As a city, we have limited policy and financial tools to incentivize development. When TIF is used responsibly and appropriately, it is a tool I support. We should continue to use TIF for projects that would otherwise not happen and when we have high confidence they will succeed in contributing to an increased tax base. When TIDs are successful and pay back their debt, we should maintain our commitment to our partner taxing jurisdictions, close the TIDs, use the financing for a year of affordable housing, and return the increased taxes to prioritized budget items throughout the city.

7. What specific initiatives in the Connect Madison economic development strategy

(<http://www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/economicdevelopment/economic-strategy-symposium/554/>) do you support, and which, if any, would you like to see modified? Why?

I was happy to participate in the development of the strategy, but it took far too long to be published. The strategy highlights the nature of our changing economy; this economy will require government to transform as well. I believe the Business Assistance Team can make a big difference for small business owners, especially if it partners with the Office of Civil Rights on their initiatives. Madison Development Districts also has potential, if we ensure they are done in tandem with examination and assessment of our development and land use approval processes – with transportation needs and opportunities at the forefront.

8. What is your perception of Madison’s business brand? How do you think business in Madison is perceived locally, statewide, and nationally?

Madison’s business brand continues to grow and change, thanks in large part to the private sector and business organizations. Certainly, hospitality, technology, and healthcare figure prominently in our brand, but not exclusively; we have a diverse economy from manufacturing to beer brewing. The City should take a more proactive role in celebrating and marketing our success. We have so many resources and opportunities in Madison, and are responsible for much of our statewide economic growth. We need to make this known better nationally and statewide.

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

Economic development is the product of private and public efforts to improve the health and well-being of a community through increased access to opportunity. Examples include promoting job creation or retention, supporting healthy, educated communities to support a robust workforce, and ensuring transparency in government regulatory processes to make entrepreneurship and business development processes easier.

10. The Chamber believes that equity and social mobility are achieved through wealth creation and that the surest way is through an entrepreneurial class of color. The Chamber is launching initiatives to support this goal. What do you believe is the City of Madison’s role in creating an entrepreneurial class of color?

The city of Madison must continue working towards being a city where people of color feel safe, welcomed, and supported. This includes investing in art and cultural amenities, schools, and providing targeted programs to support entrepreneurs of color through financial and staff support. As a city we have been investing significantly as a city in youth jobs, which provide mobility for young members of our community and highlights the ripple effect economic development to other community priorities, like public safety and community development. It allows young people of color to grow, see their opportunities, and stay in our community.

11. How can the City of Madison provide better customer service to new or existing businesses that seek approval through the permitting and planning processes? How do you define customer service in this case?

Customer service in this case must include providing business owners with timely, accurate, and accessible information and taking a consumer-focused approach. We have work to do encompassing these principles more fully into Madison processes. The economic development strategy's Business Resource Team is a good first step, but they will only be successful if we reassess the impacts of our internal policies and procedures. Good customer service means providing full information in various formats, and providing assistance through multiple methods.

12. 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 that the Chamber will publish my answers to this questionnaire

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