

Responses cannot be edited

Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce Candidate Questionnaire

Please tell us about yourself.

Your Name: *

David Handowski

Aldermanic District: *

District 1

Current Address: *

18 Chautauqua Trail, Madison, WI 53719

Email: *

[REDACTED]

Phone: *

[REDACTED]

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

Madison is a wonderful community to raise a family, and I have been lucky to raise two boys here. It has diversity of culture, industry, and recreation. My leadership roles in both Homeowners and Neighborhood Associations have provided insights into the economic challenges and opportunities we now face, and fortunately my business experience has taught me to be decision maker and problem solver. I want to continue to make a contribution to this great community, and bring the right solutions and priorities to Common Council—priorities that will better represent residents in my District and Madison

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

I'm a retired business professional with over 30 years of experience across IT infrastructure and service industries, and hold a BA in Business Administration. My experience has taught me that details matter—every cost, every hire and every investment must be evaluated to minimize risk, especially for a small business owner. Every decision is personal and affects the bottom line, their employees, and their future quality of life. I saw this first hand when I worked full-time for a small business owner while I put myself through college. These daily lessons were invaluable.

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

Many of the businesses in my district are facing challenges of hiring and retaining workers, traffic congestion and issues related to public safety. Businesses face surprising difficulties and costs associated with hiring and retaining people in Madison. Job vacancies include full and part time positions, even when employers offer incentives and benefits. Our district is also experiencing significant growth and traffic issues—these problems are coming faster than the fixes to road infrastructure. Increases in traffic have also attracted panhandling, which businesses and employees are forced to manage themselves, placing employees and patrons at risk due to Common Council inaction.

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 of Madison has a significant role in enabling business growth to fuel the economy, particularly driving greater private sector expansion. Madison must establish the vision and strategies to attract growth, and we must have business-friendly policies and adequate infrastructure in place to enable successful development. The City needs to work to retain both jobs and young people in Madison by attracting higher wage paying companies, making it easier for them to expand, and by investing in city amenities that make Madison a great city to live.

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

Madison grows and retains a talented workforce through the attraction of jobs across small, medium and large businesses. This also fosters a diverse workforce across social and educational backgrounds, and provides a means for upward economic mobility. Madison must diligently work to resolve the economic inequity that exists in our city. This is best accomplished by building skill development and job training programs from diverse industries and across multiple business types. This will provide a strong base for talent and workforce retention.

**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?)

TIF is a valuable tool for the city to drive economic development, and I agree with the use of TIF. However, I would support future use of TIF based upon actual lessons learned. For example, are core objectives of TIF being attained in every district? Are specific measurements in place to determine if commitment to job growth, business development, public infrastructure and neighborhood revitalization being achieved? My future support in TIF specifics will be guided by the measurements, accountability and equity of use across all of Madison.

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 support the current strategies, but would suggest adding a balance of both medium and large size business to Strategy 1, and adding key road infrastructure initiatives to Strategy 4. The gap is widening between low and high incomes, and I believe it is necessary to have a mixed blend of employment and career choices. This diversity will expand financial opportunity and improve professional mobility, while retaining a successful workforce in Madison. A robust and stable road infrastructure is the foundation for economic development and a precursor to more innovative transportation systems.

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

My perception of the current business brand is frankly mixed. Although Madison is widely regarded as a great place to live, with good schools and plentiful outdoor recreational opportunities, it's tough to do business here. Low unemployment, high cost of living, and high taxes are hard on our local businesses, and Madison is not generally perceived as business-friendly. Residents here and outside of Madison have seen companies move away to neighboring communities, and few relocate to Madison. Real changes need to be made to address the underlying factors negatively impacting the brand.

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

Economic development is the improvement in a community's standard of living that comes from new business activity. This increased activity fuels better paying jobs, greater professional opportunities for our young people, and enhanced city amenities. Economic development needs to be prioritized first and then enabled by local government -- objectives should be clearly defined and communicated, then qualifying investments in infrastructure and workforce development are put in place. Accountability for real results throughout is critical. Municipal, business and neighborhood leaders all bring a unique perspective, and must actively participate in the process to achieve successful economic development.

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?

Madison has a critical role in supporting success here through both public and private investment in programs that provide better understanding and assistance with the business startup and ownership processes. This assistance should benefit entrepreneurs from all backgrounds and be offered in multiple languages. Aside from the development of this program, city officials should work to generate awareness of these programs and promote the opportunity it offers to all residents. Madison should work all ends of the opportunity spectrum, employment to ownership, to drive wealth creation and close the equity gap.

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?

Civil engineering firms and developers know Madison has phenomenal people in City Planning. However, challenges in end-to-end processes add cost and delay development, frustrating those investing in Madison. Months of effort and expense to obtain conditional approvals for development are often repeated when input is received after the conditional approval was granted. This increases risk to investors and raises the cost of housing. Better customer service in this case means finding solutions that drive efficiency into the process, reduce cost and risk of development, and make housing more affordable.

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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