

Responses cannot be edited

Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce Candidate Questionnaire

Please tell us about yourself.

Your Name: *

Steve King

Aldermanic District: *

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Current Address: *

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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?**

I want to use my skills and experience to be an active and engaged part of the conversation and collaboration necessary to continue to make Madison an incredible place to live. The role of alder requires a balancing act between issues facing your district and the City as a whole. In most cases there is a high degree of alignment: Public safety, providing effective and efficient public services and access to job opportunities. There are also broader policy issues such as equity, economic development strategy and affordable housing that need focus to protect, promote and sustain Madison's vitality.

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

I've spent the majority of my career working in organizational development in a variety of settings. In those roles, I've learned and experienced a lot about the pressures facing businesses in general. As an alder, I have been on the Economic Development Committee and the Plan Commission and I've had a number of interactions with small business owners, including on projects in and around my district. These experiences have helped me gain a deeper understanding of the issues they are confronting in Madison and their importance to the health of our economy.

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

District 7 is on the far southwest side of Madison sandwiched between Verona and Fitchburg. Current businesses face a lot of competitive pressures from project areas in these neighboring municipalities. While the district is primarily residential, the open areas for development face difficulty in competing with the development process and location advantages of neighboring open space.

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 needs to be a collaborative partner with the stakeholders that create a vibrant economy: The business community, particularly the GMCC and MadREP, our school districts and other interest groups. We need strategies and policies that promote economic development and job creation in a sustainable and equitable way. The City also needs to do its part in providing public safety services and a reasonable return on the taxes it levies on businesses and residents in terms of the services it provides. We cannot create and retain jobs without providing all of the factors underpinning our great quality of life.

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

Everyone in the business and political communities should read Richard Florida's "Rise of the Creative Class" (2002) and/or "Cities and the Creative Class" (2004) to help understand what drives the attractiveness of certain places for entrepreneurial and highly skilled/talented individuals. We should focus on providing an environment that promotes tolerance and diversity and technological and educational infrastructure, all within a context of urban planning that supports a culture of innovation and environmental stewardship. Fortunately for Madison, we are leaders in almost every respect in providing these characteristics, but unfortunately we are located in a state whose government doesn't get it.

****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?)**

I fully support the use of TIF and I think it is one of the most important tools the City has to promote economic development. It needs to be used creatively and responsibly to attract significant development projects and the funds generated need to be used in innovative ways to help achieve various other economic development goals (small cap, etc.). The City has an excellent track record with its use of TIF, but I believe it should be more creative, aggressive and flexible so it can compete with neighboring municipalities and focus more on job creation.

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?

Connect Madison has had an extensive community and stakeholder input process and is in the final phase of approvals, including at the Common Council. What's important at this stage is not asking what needs to be changed, but how the Economic Development Division is going to create and prioritize a project work plan to follow through on the strategies and projects. Everything can't be done at the same time given our resource constraints. I think the priority strategies should be centered around the Business Assistance Team and targeting of the Business Retention and Expansion program to high job growth sectors.

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 is solid and improving. Through various important initiatives, such as the rewrites of the zoning code and TIF policy, and the hard work of the Office of Business Resources and the Planning Division, the City is doing its best to help connect the dots between our words and actions regarding economic development. The City has strong partnerships with a vibrant and active business community which is active in promoting Madison's brand, and through Connect Madison we have collectively outlined a list of solid strategies to move forward and continue to improve.

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

Let me define economic development first by stating what it's not. It's not the same as economic growth. Economic growth, usually measured simply as the increases in metrics such as the number of jobs or housing starts, is important but it's a static snapshot of some simple indicators. Economic development is about good paying and sustainable jobs and creating the conditions necessary to attract and retain businesses that have a sustainable model in the future economy with the ability to attract and retain those jobs. A call center would be nice, but I'd much rather someone start the next Epic!

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's primary role in creating an entrepreneurial class of color is to ensure that its processes, policies and institutions are fair and equitable for all residents. I am reassured when I see Connect Madison's economic strategies articulated through an equity lens, but I am much less confident when I see the racial disparities in areas such as employment and housing. "Creative Class" entrepreneurs of any color are not going to be attracted to a community with such disparities. The reality of the diverse world around us is moving much faster than our perceptions about – and reactions to – those changes.

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?

Connect Madison has articulated a vision for a Business Assistance Team to help provide services to new and existing businesses. The Office of Business Resources continues to provide guidance when contacted as well. The creation of the Development Assistance Team within the Planning Division have also helped to provide some guidance to developers in navigating the planning process and getting feedback. Customer service is defined here similarly as it would be in other contexts: Within policy and resource constraints, give the customer (new and existing businesses) what they need and want to the best extent possible.

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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