

Dane County Democratic Party Candidate Questionnaire

Laura Cristina Valderrama
President
shorewoodhillsforall.org

Professional Experience:

Mother, former conversational English teacher (as expat living in Austria) and Legislative Aide to NJ Assembly

Political/Service Experience:

Lead Organizer | Wisconsin for Bernie, 2019-20

77th Assembly District Representative, Dane Dems Executive Board 2019 - 20

President | Entrepreneurship and Innovation Class of 2016-18, Vienna University of Economics and Business

Social Media and Event Coordinator | Austro-American Society of Upper Austria, 2015-18

Alumni Trustee | Warren County Community College Board of Trustees, 2010-11

Executive Board Member | Artistic Academy Student Council, 2007-08;

President | Warren Hills Regional High School Key Club, 2004-07

Why Are You Running In This Election?

One of the reasons I decided to run for president is because this seat has been unchallenged for several election cycles, and uncontested races are not healthy for democracy. Voters now have the choice between maintaining the status quo of an exclusive Shorewood Hills or working together to create a more socioeconomically diverse and inclusive Shorewood Hills that welcomes all.

What Are The Three Most Important Issues In Your Race?

The insidious racism, classism and sexism that exists in the Village of Shorewood Hills affects the most vulnerable populations in and around our municipalities. I am committed to addressing them.

What Are The Largest Environmental Concerns You Aim To Deal With In Office?

We have the opportunity to create a 2-acre park that would grant direct access to green space for folks who live along the University Avenue corridor. This would benefit the entire Village and parts of Madison because it could help address rainwater quantity and quality.

How Will You Use Your Position To Create More Equitable Opportunities And Help Those Living In Poverty?

Thank you for this important question! We need to address homelessness and no longer pretend it is a non-issue in the Village. We also need to work to create opportunities for workforce housing. The first step is actually committing to these concepts, and I am certainly committed to them. I will work hard to collaborate with the City of Madison, agencies and developers to create more equitable housing solutions. We also need to emphasize that housing variety should take place all over the Village, not just on University Avenue. We could easily create

housing co-ops in some of the houses that are currently unoccupied.

How Do We Address Racial Inequality?

The first step is acknowledging our racist history and current policies and practices that continue to perpetuate the dark legacy of white supremacy. Then, we must start enacting new policies and practices that will enable Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to have access to the wealth they have historically been denied. In the Village, that means creating a housing program that would focus on moving working class families of color into the Village, not because Shorewood Hills can improve their lives but because the long-term residents of the Village have much to learn from those who have experienced systemic oppression that has unjustly benefitted the wealthiest.

How will you promote restorative justice and address abusive and racist practices by the police force?

By ensuring that everyone has a safe place to live, can feed their families, pay their bills, and live in peace, we will dramatically reduce the rate of crime. This means investing in housing, education, food programs and other programs that make these rights a reality. Racist practices and policies by the police need to be made illegal and anyone who violates the law or abuses their position of power should be held accountable. Being held accountable does not mean being put behind bars. Our current system only further exasperates broken people and practices. Racist, abusive people need to unlearn their hate and learn how to truly love themselves and those they fear. This is done through community service, emotional education and therapy.

Due to the ongoing economic impact of Coronavirus, many local governments are expecting unprecedented budget shortfalls. What would you prioritize in the budget? Where would you make cuts?

Shorewood Hills needs to increase its tax levy in order to create a larger budget. I would prioritize stormwater management and other environmental justice systems, like parks.

How have you elevated diverse voices in government and public discourse? How would you continue to do so if elected to this office?

After the murder of George Floyd, the Village Board supported my desire to create a Social Justice Committee. I have worked hard to ensure that the committee members are folks who come from historically-marginalized communities, including Black, immigrant, LGBTQ+ residents. I always try to empower others, especially women, to consider running for a seat at the table. Andi Funk, the daughter of a working-class immigrant family who resides in the Garden Homes neighborhood, rose to the occasion and we are running a coordinated campaign together.

What Are The Largest Transportation Issues You Wish To Work On And How Will You Address Them?

Distracted drivers are an enormous safety issue here in the Village. I am committed to encouraging folks to use public transportation and/or walk or bike to as many places as possible to reduce how many cars are moving in and out of the Village.

Any Other Issues/Topics You Wish To Discuss?

Thank you for your time and consideration!