

## Dane County Democratic Party Candidate Questionnaire

Mike Verveer  
Madison Alderperson, District 4  
N/A

### **Professional Experience:**

Attorney

### **Political/Service Experience:**

Madison Alderperson since 1995. Served several terms as Common Council President.

### **Why Are You Running In This Election?**

I am proud of my accomplishments and would like the opportunity to continue the privilege of working on behalf of downtown Madison residents.

### **What Are The Three Most Important Issues In Your Race?**

My main priority is to create more affordable housing in our community, especially downtown. Another important priority of mine has always been to improve the quality of life for downtown residents. That will not change. Downtown neighborhoods must be clean and safe, have quality housing and receive excellent City services.

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

The 2018 catastrophic flooding was a local demonstration of the devastating effects and real costs of climate change. Combating

climate change requires a significant investment. We need to do much more to achieve the goals in the Madison Sustainability Plan. I support every possible effort to reduce CO2 pollution, to increase renewable energy, and to achieve net-zero carbon goals. By implementing Madison's 100% Renewable Energy Zero Net Carbon Plan, expanding existing sustainability programs and developing new sustainability initiatives, we have a clear path forward. Smart stormwater management and erosion control, especially prioritization of green infrastructure, is also a critical component.

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

The lack of affordable housing is a significant crisis. The housing cost burden continues to be very difficult for far too many residents. The City budget appropriates significant resources to affordable housing initiatives. Most notably, the Affordable Housing Fund that assists in the creation of new rental housing is no longer limited to Section 42 Low-Income Housing Tax Credit project developments. I was proud to support those initiatives. However, Madison must do much more to help people struggling in our community. Prioritization of affordable housing initiatives must continue in our annual budget process. Tax Increment Financing is another financial source that the City hasn't utilized to its full potential to create affordable housing. We need to develop significant incentives in the zoning code to encourage affordable housing creation. For example, density and height bonuses. We need to foster and support creative strategies like tiny homes. We must redouble our efforts using a "Housing First" model to combat homelessness.

### **How Do We Address Racial Inequality?**

Too many in our community face systematic racism. We are now finally experiencing long overdue policy discussions about systematic racism. The legacy and continuing impact of injustice for BIPOC members of our community is visible in areas with which City of Madison government concerns itself daily – access to housing, transportation, health care, protection of civil rights and countless additional services. Justice demands solutions that are equally systemic. I am committed to seeking equitable solutions to these injustices in our community. We must ensure that all of our decisions in City Hall are made through a meaningful equity lens.

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

It is imperative that the Common Council make it a clear priority to ensure the success of the relatively new Police Civilian Oversight Board and the Independent Police Monitor. Civilian oversight of the Madison Police Department is critical to ensuring that the Police Department responds to the needs and concerns of the community, thereby building and strengthening the community's trust. In my opinion, the creation of each entity represents the most meaningful of the 177 reforms recommended by the 2019 Ad Hoc Committee. The Council must respect and support the role, responsibilities and work of both the Civilian Oversight Board and Independent Police Monitor. I strongly supported the creation of the board and the monitor managerial position, and pledge to support each in the future. The Council must continue to provide the full resources, both financially and otherwise, to each entity. Their role and responsibilities are each codified in Madison General Ordinances. The Council should be receptive to considering any modifications to the enabling ordinances if recommended by the Civilian Oversight Board or

Independent Police Monitor. In addition, the Council must avoid any efforts to weaken the role and responsibilities of each and vehemently respect their independence.

**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?**

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic economic downturn, the Common Council has done a good job balancing competing interests and providing basic services to our community during our recent annual budgeting process. We need to protect and increase funding for social programs and services. The significant loss of room tax and other revenue has stressed our financial condition. It is imperative that the federal government provide direct appropriations to local governments. The most marginalized have suffered the most from this public health crisis. We must prioritize our support to assist homeless individuals and families. Small businesses and entrepreneurs of color need to continue to be supported by the City. For example, through the City's recently launched Small Business Equity and Recovery Program. Our recovery from the pandemic will certainly continue well past 2021. There has been a call to reallocate or redirect funding away from the police department to other more worthwhile purposes, especially underfunded human services. I supported this call consistently during the most recent City budget deliberations. In both Finance Committee and Council meetings, I supported all amendments that reallocated executive budget police funding, and I opposed all amendments to provide the police additional resources. I plan to continue to correct this disproportionate funding.

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

I have worked to facilitate and amplify the diverse voices in our community, especially downtown stakeholders. I'm extremely excited to work with my new Common Council colleagues that will bring the much needed perspectives of BIPOC and other marginalized communities to City Hall. I look forward to assisting them in any way possible. I hope to work very closely with new alders, especially those from these backgrounds. Their experiences, values and voices will enrich the Council decision-making process in unprecedented ways, and ensure that our decisions are made through a meaningful equity lens.

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

The hallmark of a thriving city is a robust transit system that provides residents with viable transportation choices and improves the quality of life. Metro Transit needs to continuously improve bus service, especially to customers and neighborhoods that need access to public transit the most. Increased ridership would benefit from expanded routes, increased frequency and longer service hours. However, achieving a truly equitable and growing transit system is largely dependent on the creation of a Regional Transit Authority and its funding. Bus Rapid Transit implementation provides an exciting long-term opportunity to provide faster and more convenient transit service. I have consistently supported bringing a first-class Bus Rapid Transit system to Madison, and I will continue to do so. Bus Rapid Transit has the potential to greatly benefit the downtown. Public transportation is critical to the health of a community, especially its downtown. I appreciate the tremendous amount of valuable work done on downtown Bus Rapid Transit route alternatives over

that last few years. I look forward to the likely arrival of Bus Rapid Transit here in 2023-2024.

**Any Other Issues/Topics You Wish To Discuss?**

Balancing the tremendous growth and development downtown without negatively affecting the quality of life remains a major issue facing the community. Growth and quality development is critical for a healthy downtown. I will continue to foster responsible infill development while maintaining neighborhood character. We must continue to successfully balance competing interests in our land use planning and development review process. The City should observe development priorities identified in the Downtown Plan and other plans. We must prioritize pedestrian-friendly development, preserve green space and respect historic preservation. I will continue to facilitate meaningful neighborhood input on all development proposals downtown.