

Dane Dems Endorsement Questionnaire

Thank you for seeking an endorsement from the Dane County Democratic Party. You do not need to answer all of the questions below, but please answer all of the ones you feel are pertinent to your campaign. We will ask more detailed questions and followups during our interview, if we choose to have one, so feel free to answer these questions as briefly or thoroughly as you desire. These answers will be shared in full with our membership before they vote on your endorsement.

Email *

gloria@reyesformayor.com

Candidate name *

Gloria Reyes

Position you are running for (include municipality) *

City of Madison Mayor

Campaign website

reyesformayor.com

Professional Experience *

I am on the board of Porchlight, Vera Court, and the Madison Public School Foundation. I am also a member of the Latino Consortium of Action, United Way Law Enforcement and Leaders of Color Collaboration, and Ending Deaths From Disparity Taskforce.

I most recently served as the CEO of Briarpatch Youth Services, where I brought \$2.5 million to the city to support youth homelessness through the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project.

Political/Service Experience *

I began my career as a law enforcement officer with the Madison Police Department, because I wanted to be the change in building trust between our communities of color and law enforcement. I created a program called Amigos en Azul (Friends in Blue) that is composed of officers dedicated to dissolving cultural barriers and building trust between the City of Madison Police Department and the Latino Community. I also began and led the Diversity & Inclusion Team which included a diverse group of employees to review and assess the Madison Police Department through a racial equity lens and diversity efforts to address barriers in employment, development, and promotional opportunities. In 2014, I was appointed as Deputy Mayor under Mayor Paul Soglin, where I led the city through public safety challenges while overseeing the implementation of racial equity & social justice within city government operations. In 2019, I was elected the first Latina President of the Madison Metropolitan School District School Board, where I led the school district through the pandemic & invested in programs to support vulnerable youth, promote safety & advance restorative justice practices in schools. The same year, I co-founded and served as President of Adelante, a political action group that partnered with the Democratic Party to prepare and support candidates of color to run for political office.

Why are you running for this seat? *

I was drafted to run for mayor by the residents of our city because they are dissatisfied with the direction we are moving in and know that I care enough to fight for the change they wanted to see. Unlike our leaders today, I will not govern by ideology, but with pragmatism and heart. We need an experienced leader who understands our values, our history, and how we can move Madison forward together. I have experienced Madison in its past, engaged Madison in its present, and will lead Madison into its future.

What are the three most important issues in your race? *

The first is Economic Development. Together, we must cultivate an equitable Madison by retaining, growing, and attracting businesses that pay greater than a minimum wage. We will retain businesses by engaging local business organizations and directing the City's economic development Committee to devise 10 actionable strategies to support small businesses. We will grow businesses by investing in the school to workforce pipeline, with emphasis on the trades, retaining talent from our high schools, colleges, and universities. We will create a Madison Public Market that is accessible to new & minority owned businesses, reinvigorate State Street, and build a startup community that attracts capital. We will attract large employers to Madison to create working class jobs that pay more than a livable wage.

The second is attainable housing and homelessness. It is no secret that Madison is not just facing a housing shortage, but an attainable housing crisis. Changes to the zoning code by redefining the definition of unrelated parties do not solve the housing crisis. I believe that my housing plan creates a pathway for affordable single-family home ownership for all our residents. We must focus on building public-private partnerships with law enforcement, businesses, neighborhood associations & planning councils to deliver quality workforce housing that works for all Madisonians. Moreover, we must be intentional in finding opportunities for employing traditionally marginalized communities so that they have the economic freedom to afford housing that they want and that fits their needs. We cannot continue to label and box our black and brown communities into a singular definition of what attainable housing for them should look like. I will establish a Mayor's Housing Advisory Committee, consisting of neighborhood associations, planning council representatives, developers, property managers, realtors, a school board representative, and residents to assess housing needs in the city. We must internally streamline the process for local developers to build additional multi- and single-family housing units by leveraging existing resources, such as Section 8 Vouchers.

Public safety is of critical importance for our community. We need a comprehensive approach to ensuring safe neighborhoods. I will revert to the good work I started as Deputy Mayor and reinvigorate our public safety plan which will include an office of violence prevention that will consist of a community approach to prevention and intervention. A collaborative approach that involves stakeholders who are impacted by violence and supporting the good work that our police officers do every day.

What are the largest environmental concerns you aim to deal with in office?

I have a three-pronged plan to help create positive environmental change. The first is through providing support to the community to incentivize rehabilitating buildings and businesses to operate more efficiently. The second is through creating change within the city's systems. This includes city vehicles, city buildings, and continuing to locate areas that could provide rooftop canopies to the community. It also includes making sure our drinking water is safe. After the PFAS issue in well 15, the city government must work to ensure that every resident in Madison has permanent access to clean water. The third is through community engagement with a community that all cares about their environment. Cleaning the parks, planting more trees, and ensuring that our lakes are clean and beautiful. As a city, we pride ourselves on our beautiful surroundings and we should.

I believe that a mandated approach to climate change that imposes massive repeated costs on local businesses may make it harder for the city to get where we need to be. We must take advantage of the fact that we have a community that is so engaged in managing our impact on our world. To do this, we need to work with businesses and residents instead of imposing expensive regulations.

How will you use your position to create more equitable opportunities and help those living in poverty?

I will initiate an equity analysis process of all city government services to identify any policies or procedures that are not effectively serving our residents living in poverty. I will also add an equal rights investigator that was not approved by the mayor and council to ensure the protections and rights of our residents who were living in the Town of Madison and are now residents of our city. We will build a strong pathway to the workforce that pays more than a living wage to move people out of poverty.

What will you do to address racial inequality?

I will use a targeted universalism approach to our policies, budget, and practices that set universal goals through targeted approaches. For instance, building housing for all Madisonians but with targeted approaches to ensure we are uplifting residents of color into homeownership and affordable housing. I will continue the good work I started as Deputy Mayor to infuse equity principles in every decision we make both within city government operations and city council to ensure that we are not making policy decisions that impact our most vulnerable communities.

How will you promote restorative justice and address racially biased policing?

As a neighborhood officer, I started a restorative justice process for our youth on the South Side. As School Board President, we launched and invested in restorative justice in our schools. I will continue to use my experience in restorative justice practices to look for ways in which we can reduce arrests of young people and deter them away from the criminal justice system. I started my own consulting business, providing expertise around racially biased policing to cities across the country through my work with the National League of Cities and Race Forward. I started my own Badge of Equity training working with the WI Department of Justice in providing training to Police Departments throughout the county. I will continue to lead the city of Madison in investing in training on the negative impacts of racially biased policing.

How will you improve the public health of our community in your position?

As Mayor, I want our public health employees out in our communities working in neighborhoods to educate and inform residents of public health risks. They will be part of a community safety neighborhood team that I will implement through my Office of Violence Prevention. This community safety neighborhood team will not only serve as the eyes and ears of our residents to communicate health and safety concerns in the community, but work on a grassroots level to provide resources and communicate best practices to promote health and safety.

What are the largest transportation issues you wish to work on and how will you address them?

The current Mayor's Bus Rapid Transit redesign has been funded by one-time COVID money which is sending our city into a fiscal deficit, while further marginalizing our communities that depend most on public transit. We are focusing on creating an expensive BRT that is not supported by local businesses or consumers. This plan also requires us to focus on housing and density as an afterthought to get more traffic on the proposed BRT redesign that would impact our communities disproportionately. The BRT is creating a structural deficit for our city which will reach up to \$32 million in 2027. We must have a transit design that is equitable and works for all who need it. The current BRT redesign plan is not only inequitable but is jeopardizing our city services. I will work on the inequities that currently exist with the BRT and rapid redesign to ensure that our seniors, BIPOC, and disability communities can access public transit without having to walk 2-3 additional blocks.

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

As a police officer, I started a group called Amigos en Azul to build trust and relationships with Madison police and the Latinx community. This allowed the opportunity for Latinx residents to have a voice in our MPD policies and procedures. Due to this, we were able to change our immigration policies and ensure our material was translated into Spanish.

As Department of Civil Rights Director, I led and launched the language access plan to ensure that residents who speak different languages can engage in city processes.

As Deputy Mayor, I oversaw the Racial Equity and Social Justice work to ensure that we internally implemented best practices to ensure racial justice while engaging residents of color to have a voice in the process and decisions.

I started Adelante, a political action group to ensure that we prepared and elected people of color to run for office so that we had diverse voices at the table while making school board, city council, and county board decisions.

As Mayor, I will continue this work to create a cultural shift within city government by ensuring that we are using the equity analysis toolkit in every decision-making process that we started employing while I was Deputy Mayor. Bringing people to the table that are most impacted by the decision at hand ensures a racially equitable decision-making process that includes diverse perspectives.

Any other issues/topics you wish to discuss?

I am beyond humbled that so many people have asked me to run for mayor and to share my vision for a Madison that we can build together. It is not lost upon me that I am the first Latina to run for Mayor in Madison. With that being said there are different expectations for me than a lot of other people. My intention is not only to live up to those expectations but exceed them. I am committed to solving the attainable housing crisis, working with the business community to create jobs that pay more than a living wage, and making our families feel safe. It is important for us to understand the upbringing of our leaders to understand their vision. As a single mother, daughter of hardworking migrant farm workers, former law enforcement officer, deputy mayor, school board president, and private sector CEO, my values are built on my experiences as a lifelong Madisonian, dedicated to serving my community and fellow residents. Unlike our leaders today, I will not govern by ideology, but instead with pragmatism and heart.

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