

# Dane Dems Endorsement Questionnaire

Thank you for seeking an endorsement from the Dane County Democratic Party. **This questionnaire is due by no later than Friday, January 24, at 11:59 PM.**

**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 and mark the questions you do not feel are pertinent N/A.** 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 \*

eli@eli4madison.com

Candidate name \*

Eli Tsarovsky

Position you are running for (include municipality) \*

District 4 Alder, Madison Common Council

Campaign website

eli4madison.com

## Professional Experience \*

My career reflects a deep commitment to community well-being and a dedication to improving lives. As a Suicide Prevention Project Assistant at University Health Services, I've gained valuable insights into mental health challenges and the importance of accessible support systems. I serve on the Suicide Prevention and Harm Reduction Coalition through Safe Communities to increase collaboration on strategies in Dane County. This experience, coupled with my work as a Community Health AmeriCorps Coordinator at UW Health, fostered a deep understanding of health inequities and the critical role of community partnerships in addressing them. Leading Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc. has honed my skills in community organizing, consensus-building, and navigating local government processes. Through these diverse experiences, I've developed a strong foundation in community engagement, public health, and policy advocacy, equipping me with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively serve as an elected official and advocate for the needs of our community.

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## Political/Service Experience \*

My commitment to community well-being is deeply rooted in my experience as a grassroots organizer. As President of Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc. and President of Campus Area Neighborhood Association, I've led efforts to address critical issues facing our downtown community. I've spearheaded initiatives to lower housing costs, improve public safety, and ensure equitable development that centers on the needs of residents. I've built strong coalitions across generations and backgrounds, empowering neighbors to advocate for their interests and hold elected officials accountable. I serve on the Board of Directors of Downtown Madison Inc. as part of my commitment to making a community-centered downtown. My work on the Isthmus Safety Initiative demonstrates my commitment to addressing complex issues like sexual violence through a public health lens. I've consistently prioritized community engagement, facilitating open dialogue and creating spaces for residents to learn about local government and participate in the democratic process. This experience has equipped me with the skills and passion to effectively represent our community and advocate for policies that improve the lives of all residents.

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## Why are you running for this seat? \*

I am running for Madison Common Council to bring a fresh, new chapter of leadership to downtown Madison. Having grown up in Madison, I have been excited to watch our city grow, and I am excited to keep us moving into our bright future. I will use my extensive knowledge in community organizing, leading neighborhood associations, public health, and public policy to bring our community together and have fruitful discussions on what lies ahead for our city. Running for District 4 Alder has forced me to think critically about what makes the heart of Madison special and what we can do to keep Madison's special treasures for future generations. Some things that are special to downtown Madison are our beautiful lakes, our unique people, our caring community, and our treasured local businesses. Living, working, going to school, and having fun in downtown Madison for my whole life have shown me how important it is to invest in making downtown Madison a stronger and more inclusive area for our community.

A variety of people and groups that I have talked to still don't feel welcome and a part of Madison – this is a problem. I learned recently that Lake Monona is the most polluted lake for PFAS in Wisconsin and that our tree canopy is less than that of other comparable cities – this is a problem. I want downtown Madison to be a place where people can live, work, and play as their authentic selves. I want people to talk about downtown Madison's nature as a main topic of conversation for what makes Madison a beautiful capital city. Madison has been a safe city, but we have seen new safety concerns that indicate Madison is a growing downtown center. As Madison grows, we need more intentional urban planning, substantial social service investments, and an evidence-based approach to public safety. As the District 4 Alder, I will bring our neighborhoods and people who have yet to feel included to the table when making decisions about our housing problem, our increased safety concerns, and our needed commitment to protect our environment.

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

The three most critical issues in the District 4 race are increasing housing and community affordability, sustainable practices, and community safety and wellbeing.

### Increasing Housing & Community Affordability

We need to make it more affordable for people to live and open up a business in District 4. We can do this by working with neighbors, developers, and businesses.

We need to bolster city departments and ordinances that protect tenants and workers in Downtown Madison. We can do this by working with workers and tenants to address concerns people see today.

### Increasing Sustainable Practices

We need to incentivize infrastructure that makes it the easiest choice to protect Lake Monona and Lake Mendota. We need to continue to create policies that protect our air, lakes, and trees in Madison by making it the easy choice through city ordinances and zoning that incentivize responsible stewardship of our environment. We can do this by working with scientists, builders, transportation professionals, and neighbors to craft more environmentally friendly policies.

### Increasing Community Safety and Wellbeing

We need to work with our downtown community to invest in solutions that create safer pedestrian and cyclist environments during the day and at night. We also need to work with the community to address homelessness in Madison. We can do this by collaborating with our neighbors, local service providers, and first responders to address recurring problems and develop community-based solutions.

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

I want to continue my work on increasing sustainable practices by pushing our city and local developers to build more environmentally friendly buildings and incorporate more green infrastructure in downtown Madison. I also aim to improve stormwater management to reduce pollution in our lakes and increase access to the city's green space.

We also need to plan for climate change and extreme weather events. We need to build climate-resistant infrastructure to mitigate the heat island effect, severe thunderstorms, tornados, flooding, and extreme cold and heat. This will require working with city forestry, transportation, and other city departments to properly integrate the Complete Green Streets guide into our city.

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

I will use my position as the next District 4 Alder to advocate for my working-class neighbors trying to make ends meet by looking at the major cost centers of their budgets, specifically housing costs, childcare, transportation, and groceries. I will do this by advocating for workforce housing and exploring opportunities in the zoning code to ensure we are incentivizing and making it easier to lower the cost of housing throughout the city. I will work with city staff and other elected officials to explore how we can incentivize more mixed-use buildings that incorporate childcare so we are building for families across the city and downtown. I will work with city officials and build on the progress by working to increase access to the number of greenspaces like our city of parks by looking for opportunities in the zoning code for pocket parks that give safe spaces for children to play throughout the city through quasi-public and public spaces. I will work on transportation by making we continue to work to make Madison a 15-minute so that it is an easy choice for people to use public transportation to get to work and school can get around Madison by continuing to work with my future colleagues to make sure that BRT stays rapid and keep ridership up through advocating for community partnerships with my council colleagues. I will work with my colleagues on the council and city for opportunities to decrease food deserts throughout Madison by looking at available avenues through zoning codes, tax credits, and other public-private partnerships to ensure all people in Madison have access to healthy and affordable food.

What will you do to address racial inequality, promote restorative justice, and/or address racially biased policing?

The data shows that it is undeniable that the Madison Police Department needs to reform its practices. I am also aware that the city needs to maintain the same level of service as the year before to meet the “Maintenance of effort requirements” that the State Legislature requires to keep funding other services at the current level. However, I am eager to explore and discuss continued shifts toward an effective, community-centered policing model. This approach emphasizes proactive engagement with the community and a focus on building trust and collaboration.

We need to prioritize community violence prevention initiatives that ensure equitable resource allocation, address root causes of violence, and implement evidence-based interventions. This involves supporting programs that address systemic issues such as access to safe and affordable housing, mental health services, and poverty reduction. I specifically want to support non-profits like Focused Interruption, which builds community resilience and builds relationships with those at the highest risk of gun violence, and other programs that can provide wraparound support. We must also address environmental factors that contribute to crime, such as poorly lit urban landscapes and poorly connected neighborhoods. We also need to support successful re-entry programs to reduce recidivism rates in Madison. I will work towards funding community-centered programs that provide alternative solutions to public safety.

Last but not least, we also need to ensure that we protect and support our immigrant neighbors in Madison. Like other cities, this means ensuring that no city department or school district complies with ICE raids.

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

As a public health professional who has worked on suicide prevention, intimate partner violence prevention, mental health promotion, and reproductive justice, I will bring my understanding of how policies affect communities and their health to the Common Council.

Community violence, such as intimate partner violence and gun violence, are significant issues in our city and are prevalent in the downtown area. We will need to work with our community service providers to support evidence-based and survivor-informed programs to reduce intimate partner violence and gun violence in our city. Community violence leads to serious mental health concerns for people. To meet the needs of our community, we will need to fund our community-based mental health programs and support the CARES program so that they can provide 24/7 service and increase their service area.

Additionally, we know that safe, quality housing is a super determinant of health. To effectively address homelessness, we must prioritize investments in comprehensive support systems. This includes creating an actionable City and County plan for income-based housing (\$0-\$12,000/year) as part of our comprehensive affordable housing plan. We also need to staff community shelters adequately by assigning screeners and case managers to shelters like the Beacon and Safe Haven at least five days a week and require daily case management at The Beacon, and have trained crisis workers onsite daily to address safety and support needs. We also need to continue working with Dane County to ensure access to reproductive care. This means improving access to housing, as we know that reliable access to housing is a major health factor.

Ultimately, we know that every policy decision has a health impact. I will use my background in Public Health and Public Policy to consider the impacts of council decisions on the people of Madison. The top issues I want to elevate are access to safe, quality, low-cost housing and access to mental health support services in Madison. We can work with our neighbors, local community service providers, and business leaders to find sustainable solutions and address the root causes of these health issues.

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

Madison Metro needs to improve its reliability and consistency in both its local routes and Bus Rapid Transit routes. Since BRT began, they have had major cancellations or delays frequently, and I want to look into why and what can be done to reduce them. A reliable bus service is vital to a thriving and equitable city. So, I want to support solutions that ensure that our bus system improves. I also aim to go beyond compliance in improving the bike and pedestrian infrastructure to make Madison a '10-minute' (<https://10minutewalk.org/>) walk to parks and ensure that our city has a good walkability score for access to necessary amenities. We also need to work on public parking in downtown to provide consistent access to businesses and amenities downtown for visitors, workers, and residents. The future of transportation in Madison is multifaceted, and we need to consider all of our options so that all of Madison is accessible regardless of how you travel.

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

Through the past 5-6 years of neighborhood and campus advocacy, I have elevated diverse voices in government and public discourse. As a neighborhood president at the Campus Area Neighborhood Association and now Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc., I have created forums and other ways of participating in local government for people from all different backgrounds. This has included holding meetings at different times of the week to accommodate different work schedules of people who may work the 2nd and 3rd shifts. This has been bringing forums to spaces where people feel comfortable contributing authentically and in the space of their peers. This has included forums related to debates for District 2, District 4, District 8, and the Mayoral elections in downtown Madison for people to meet candidates in person and virtually. This has created new ways for people to participate in neighborhood meetings through virtual and in-person meetings related to the new developments and alcohol licenses downtown.

I did this as the Chair of PAVE-UW (Promoting Awareness Victim Empowerment) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where my team created and implemented an anti-oppression framework that included our commitment to co-sponsoring and paying speakers to come to campus to talk about Black Abolitionist Feminism and the fight to end intimate partner violence, Native American Activists fighting to end sexual and intimate partner violence, and convening our local advocacy agencies including RCC, Unidos, DAIS and other community partners to talk with students and community members on how they could be involved in working to end violence.

As the next District 4 Alder, I will continue to create spaces for people of all different identities and backgrounds to work on pressing issues downtown, like increasing ownership of business among underrepresented groups in downtown's businesses, convening meetings related to downtown topics in the different spaces in downtown Madison's nonprofits so people can participate in forum related to our city's future in spaces they are comfortable in. I will use my position to educate and encourage underrepresented groups in politics to be involved in Madison at the different levels of government here.

Any other issues/topics you wish to discuss?

It is crucial that local elected officials push for progress in their communities. As a renter, I'll advocate for updated tenant rights ordinances to protect residents as our city grows. Collaborating with unions is essential to protect workers' rights and ensure our essential workforce, including immigrant communities, feels safe and respected in Madison. As a son of an immigrant, I understand the importance of creating a welcoming community for all. As a reproductive justice advocate, I'll support local programs that improve access to reproductive healthcare and work with community providers to protect reproductive freedoms. As an ally to the LGBTQ+ community, I will work with city officials to continue to protect and uphold our progress in creating a city where everyone can be their authentic selves and where we continue to protect LGBTQ+ rights. I understand the interconnectedness of public health and human rights in my advocacy in Madison. I will bring this action-oriented collaboration to the Madison Common Council.

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