Karen McCandless, Orem City Mayor: Questionnaire for ULCT Board Nomination

1. Why do you want to serve as a Board member or Officer (2nd VP)?

I am interested in serving as a Board member because I strongly believe the value of local government and its role in helping communities thrive. We are the government closest to the people, and while state and national issues gain a lot of attention, people are most concerned about what is happen right outside their door, whether it is traffic, taxes, garbage service, or neighbors parking in front of their homes.

I bring a unique combination of municipal experience, nonprofit management, land use planning in the public and private sectors, community service and extensive chaplaincy training. This background has given me a broad perspective I want to contribute to the League. I have learned to listen, collaborate, and problem solve.

I also want to learn from other communities. With hundreds of cities and towns, there is so much to learn. What may be Orem's "first rodeo" may be another city's third or tenth rodeo. Or vice versa. I believe we are stronger when we share ideas, join together as a group to advocate, and work together to solve issues.

2. What do you see as the biggest challenges (legislatively and generally) facing cities and the League and how do you want to be part of the solution?

One of the biggest challenges I see is both legislative and general. That is cities in Utah are so diverse that working toward something that helps everyone is extremely difficult (one size misfits all). For example, some communities are experiencing explosive growth while other, like Orem, aren't. Some are very concerned about data centers because they have a lot of open space and others aren't. Legislatively, all cities are facing increasing interest by state elected officials to wrest local control from cities. I want to be part of the solution, but listening, studying, learning, being a vocal advocate, and working toward balanced solutions that can meet individual needs as much as possible.

3. What goals for the League would you like to initiate or support during your time on the Board?

I believe the League is going in a great direction. It has the respect of elected officials and is an effective advocate. It carefully listens to all members. I have four goals I would like to work on: 1. Continue to strengthen the partnership between local and state government. 2. Expand collaboration among cities of all sizes. 3. Help prepare cities for the challenges they face, such as growth, transportation, taxation, etc.; 4. Support the existing opportunities for personal education and growth among elected officials.

4. What specific skillsets or interests do you have that you feel you can contribute to the League? (Note: ULCT appoints more than 70 city leaders to state boards and commissions as well)

I believe one of my greatest strengths is listening and bringing people together. I have experience in municipal government, nonprofit leadership, community service, and chaplain training. These experiences have taught me to listen carefully, be respectful, understand differences, and work toward solutions. I am especially interested in continuing to strengthen relationships between cities and the State, as well as larger cities and smaller, more rural cities.

Having served 13 years on the Orem City Council (2001-2014) and now serving as Mayor, as well as my professional experience as a land use planner in the public and private sectors, I have a very strong understanding of challenges and opportunities for Utah cities. I am very interested in land use, housing, growth, transportation, and neighborhood preservation.

5. There are designated seats on the board for the 8 geographic regions of the state as well as cities of the first and second class and towns. The remaining seats are at-large. How would you engage with your region (including with state and federal leaders) and/or city leaders around the state?

In my first year as mayor, I have worked hard to strengthen relationships between Orem and state and federal officials. The feedback I have received has been positive. As the CEO of Community Action Services and Food Bank, I served on a state-wide board of community action agencies and worked closely with those from rural areas. That gave me the opportunity to deeply understand the most pressing social issues in rural areas.

I would engage with leaders the same way as I am doing now: Taking the initiative to visit and listen. Just because I represent a large city doesn't make me an expert on all cities. I am eager to learn and help bring people together.

6. Please describe you and/or your city's past and/or current participation within the League.

The City of Orem has a long history of partnering with ULCT, with past elected officials serving on the board and in leadership positions. I currently serve on a housing subcommittee, the homeless mitigation fund working group and the LPC. I enjoy being involved and being a retired empty nester, have the time to fully participate.

7. When does your term of office expire? Do you intend to seek re-election?

My term expires January, 2030 and I haven't decided if I will seek re-election.

8. What else do you want the Nominations Committee to know about you and your city?

I have spoken to many groups since I began serving as mayor. Nearly all my remarks contain the following two statements: 1. Serving in elected office is a privilege; and 2. All people have inherent worth and are deserving of our respect, no matter who they are. Additionally, I would bring a unique combination of skills and experiences to the board.

Orem is a strong supporter of the League and tries hard to be an effective partner as we all work toward thriving communities.

KAREN McCANDLESS

MAYOR OF OREM • MUNICIPAL & COMMUNITY LEADER

Urban & Regional Planning | Nonprofit Executive Leadership | Statewide & Community Service

Orem, Utah

PROFILE

Municipal and community leader with more than two decades of experience in local government, urban and regional planning, nonprofit executive leadership, housing and neighborhood revitalization, statewide service, and cross-sector partnerships. Currently serving as Mayor of Orem following 13 years on the Orem City Council.

MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP

Mayor | City of Orem
January 2026–Present | Orem, Utah

- Lead a growing Utah community with established neighborhoods, a major university, an active business community, and significant transportation and infrastructure needs.
- Work with residents, city staff, elected officials, regional partners, state agencies, and community organizations on growth, housing, infrastructure, transportation, economic development, and fiscal stewardship.

Elected Member | Orem City Council
February 2001–January 2014 | Orem, Utah

- Served 13 years on the City Council; appointed for 10 months and elected at-large three times (2001, 2005, 2009).
- Served several terms as Mayor Pro Tempore and participated in decisions involving land use, growth, development, infrastructure, budgeting, and community priorities.

Commission Member; Chair 2020–2021 | Utah County Planning Commission
December 2014–December 2021

- Advised the Utah County Commission on land-use matters, applying formal urban and regional planning education to countywide growth and development.

EXECUTIVE & HOUSING LEADERSHIP

Chief Executive Officer; earlier Community Strategies leadership roles | Community Action Services and Food Bank
March 2013–June 2025 | Provo, Utah

- Provided executive leadership for a major community organization focused on poverty elimination and self-reliance; led community strategies, advocacy, grant development, education, and partnerships.
- Worked extensively with government agencies, community organizations, volunteers, donors, and other stakeholders; certified Bridges Out of Poverty trainer, grant writer/educator, and AmeriCorps VISTA supervisor.

Board Member | NeighborWorks Mountain Country Home Solutions & Sun Country Homes
April 2017–June 2025

- Supported affordable housing, pathways to homeownership, housing quality, neighborhood revitalization and stabilization, and community pride.

STATEWIDE & CROSS-SECTOR SERVICE

Council Member | Utah Homelessness Council
November 2022–April 2024

- Served on the statewide council responsible for homeless services funding, strategic planning, and coordination; also served on the Executive Committee until legislative changes dissolved the commission.

Commissioner; Vice Chair; Chair | Utah Commission on Service and Volunteerism
May 2017–December 2022

- Worked to strengthen volunteerism and civic engagement across Utah communities.

HIGHER EDUCATION & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Advisory Board Member | Utah Valley University, College of Health and Public Service
May 2022–Present
Member | Utah Valley University Interfaith Community Advisory Board
October 2019–Present
Committee Member | BYU Civic Engagement External Advisory Committee
February 2015–January 2026
Board Member | UCCU Events Center at Utah Valley University
January 2013–January 2016

- Served with Utah County Commission and UVU leadership on a seven-member board overseeing the financial and physical aspects of the Events Center.

Board Member | UVU Continuing Education
January 2010–January 2013

- Advised on community educational opportunities, messaging, enrollment, service gaps, opportunities, and strategic priorities.

COMMUNITY BOARD LEADERSHIP

Utah Valley Interfaith Association	Board Member, 2017–2025 | Secretary • Vice Chair • Chair
Family Haven	Board Member, 2014–2025 | Board President, 2017–2018
Hale Center Theatre Orem	Board of Trustees Member, 2014–2024
Intermountain Healthcare Women's Advisory Council	Board Member, 2010–2016 | Vice Chair • Chair
Congressman John Curtis Women's Advisory Council	Member, 2019–2024

EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Bachelor of Science, Geography | Brigham Young University
Emphasis: Urban and Regional Planning **Chaplaincy /**
Spiritual Care | Utah Valley Hospital *2016–2017*

- Completed four Clinical Pastoral Education units toward board certification, developing advanced listening, communication, and pastoral-care skills.

SELECTED HONORS

Two-Time Fab 40 Recipient • Utah Valley Magazine | 2022 & 2026 **Chamber Champion** • Utah Valley Chamber of Commerce | 2023 **Woman of the Year** • Utah Business | 2022
Walter C. Orem Award • City of Orem | 2017
Catherine Caputo Hoskins Emerging Leader Award • Community Action Partnership of Utah | 2016
Champion of Inclusion: Community Partner • Utah Valley University | 2016

LEADERSHIP THEMES

Local government • Land use & planning • Housing & neighborhood revitalization • Fiscal & organizational leadership • Community & economic development • Government partnerships • Board governance • Civic engagement • Consensus building • Public service

