

**Oakland Drive/Winchell Neighborhood Association  
Board of Directors Election Questionnaire**



This questionnaire is intended for use in helping the ODWNA board establish the candidate election slate as well as informing Association voting members of your interest in becoming a board member. This will be your best tool for telling the neighborhood why you would like to be an ODWNA board member. **The information provided below will be distributed to voting members of the Association with their ballots so that they might contact the applicant to learn more about them.**

**Contact Information:**

**Name:** Diana Morton-Thompson

**Street Address:** [REDACTED]  
(for internal board use only; will NOT be published)

**Phone:** 1) [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]  
(for internal board use only; will NOT be published)

**Email:** [rockclimber1330@gmail.com](mailto:rockclimber1330@gmail.com) (this email address will only be active through the election)  
(will be provided to voting members)

**Education:** B.S. Geology; M.A. Geology; Post-Graduate education in environmental law.  
Extensive continuing education includes geology, geophysics, hydrogeology, and environmental evaluations and remediation.

**Occupation:** Geologist **Employer:** Recently retired (and deciding what to do next)

**BOARD POSITION YOU ARE RUNNING FOR:** Member at Large

**1) What are your reason(s) for wanting to serve on the ODWNA board?**

I would like the opportunity to give back to the neighborhood and community I love so much.

In addition to the experience I have gained as an ODWNA and community volunteer over the past many years, I believe my technical experience/expertise as a professional geologist (including litigation support, and managing and participating in numerous environmentally-related projects in Kalamazoo and the surrounding area) makes me uniquely qualified to: 1) lend perspective to, and actively participate in, the implementation of the Neighborhood Plan, particularly the Environmental Responsibility section goals and actions; 2) share my network of other people and organizations involved with Nature/the environment/natural sciences; and 3) lend practical science-based perspectives to discussions related to our neighborhood's natural resources, particularly in terms of resource sustainability and land use.

Further, in addition to my corporate experience, as the co-managing partner of a small Kalamazoo-based business for ~25 years, I have substantial experience in business management, program/project design and management, technical writing/editing, and outreach/communicating (written and orally) to people with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints. I believe these are all skills that have direct application to successful ODWNA Board governance, and successful ODWNA neighborhood activities.

2) **Please give your background, experience, or expertise, which you feel will be of value to the ODWNA.**

**BACKGROUND**

**EXPERTISE and TECHNICAL EXPERIENCE**

Like a doctor, engineer, or attorney who is licensed to practice their profession, I am a registered (licensed) professional geologist (P.G.) and AIPG certified professional geologist (C.P.G.). These are the credentials required by entities like the State of Michigan to conduct evaluations and remediation of contaminated soil/sediment/rock, surface water (e.g., lakes and streams), and ground water. Further, C.P.G. is the credential accepted by entities like the European Union and countries like Canada, et al. to practice geology in their territories, particularly as related to environmental contamination, Brownfield redevelopment, water, and geohazards like flooding, slope stability/landslide potential, etc. (in other words situations where decisions are made that have direct impacts on human health, safety, and the environment; situations we also face in the City of Kalamazoo and in our neighborhood). According to the AIPG website as of 10-23-2022 only 2852 geologists have C.P.G. status.

Through the course of my career I have been fortunate to work on many types of geologic programs/projects both in Kalamazoo, southwestern Michigan and overseas. However, I will always have a soft spot in my heart for what originally attracted me into geology, and what are my areas of special expertise: 1) depositional systems, particularly fluvial (rivers and streams) and lacustrine (lake) systems; and 2) depositional processes (e.g., erosion-sedimentation). I never get tired of figuring out, and helping others understand, why a lake or river, mountain or canyon is where it is – how it looked in the past, and how it could look in the future depending on human activities. But regardless, my favorite type of geologic project always involves building teams to address the understanding and sustainable management of, and co-habitation with, our beautiful and fragile natural resources. I sincerely believe that the most successful of these projects begins at the neighborhood level.

**WHY DO I LIVE IN THE OAKLAND DR. – WINCHELL NEIGHBORHOOD**

In 1992 my husband and I decided to leave the big city corporate “rat-race” and move to Kalamazoo. This is because we wanted to be part of a smaller community where we would actually know our neighbors, and where we could better use our geologic skills to make positive differences in other people’s lives, and in the overall health of Nature. As a result we started a small geologic consulting company, focusing on projects to evaluate and sustainably manage natural resources both in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and overseas.

We could have chosen to live anywhere in the Kalamazoo area, but we chose to live in the Oakland Drive – Winchell Neighborhood (ODWN) because we were drawn to its: glacially sculpted lakes and hillsides; tree-lined streets; and the number of people outdoors - walking with their friends, children, and dogs, or chatting amiably with neighbors while tending to their yards.

**HOW DID I BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE ODWNA**

In October 2009 I was recruited to serve as the ODWNA Treasurer because of my business experience. In August 2018 I stepped-back from that position to serve as an ODWNA Board Member at Large, the position I currently hold. The reasons for becoming a Member at Large was so that I could better use my skills and technical expertise as a professional geologist to work on the development and implementation of the Neighborhood Plan, and to lend perspective to environmentally-related issues in the Neighborhood and the City.

**VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE (ODWNA and/or CITY OF KALAMAZOO)**

I believe that all volunteer experiences are valuable as they help broaden our perspectives while helping serve our communities. However, for the purposes of this application I am focusing only on my volunteer activities that are directly connected to the ODWNA and/or linked to the City of Kalamazoo as these are the most directly applicable types of volunteer experiences that will help ODWNA successfully move forward into the future (see question 5 for additional volunteer experience/ information).

**ODWNA TREASURER-SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES:**

- Collected dues, donations, and fees for eNews advertising and payed bills.
- Tracked budgets (projected and actual).
- Kept records and made monthly written reports to the Board and the membership.
- Tracked (providing/receiving) contracts to/from new and renewing advertisers.

ODWNA BOARD MEMBER - ROUTINE ACTIVITIES (basic):

- Attend and help with public meetings, including the Annual Car Show.
- Attend and provide input at monthly Board meetings.
- Help with routine activities (e.g., Speaker Series; Car Show).

ODWNA BOARD MEMBER - ROUTINE ACTIVITIES (as needed/requested by the Board):

- Draft/edit various documents, including but not limited to position statements for entities like the ZBA.
- Attend various City meetings and give position statements on behalf of the Board.
- Attend various meetings (e.g., Planning, ZBA, Park & Rec., City Commission) where topics relative to the Neighborhood are being discussed, and report the proceedings back to the Board.
- Liaison to other groups (e.g., Oakwood Neighborhood Association).  
Latest example is liaison/volunteer to help with the Woods Lake 2023 Earth Day Celebration.

ODWNA SPECIAL ACTIVITIES:

Neighborhood Plan – Co-chair Good Governance Committee and  
Co-chair Environmental Responsibility Committee

- Attended numerous planning meetings with and without City staff.
- Helped organize and attended neighborhood-wide ODWN outreach workshops encouraging, receiving, and documenting resident's input.
- Compiled resident's input and developed draft goals and supporting actions for the Good Governance Committee and for the Environmental Responsibility Committee. These data formed the foundation for the sections of the Neighborhood Plan with the same names.
- Worked with City staff, Committee members, ODWNA Board members, and individual residents through a very extensive writing/reviewing/editing process to derive a mutually-agreed upon language and illustrations for the Good Governance and the Environmental Responsibility sections of the Neighborhood Plan.
- Provided input into the Neighborhood Plan as a whole, including recommendations/edits to add additional information, and help clarify document language.

ad hoc Environmental Responsibility Committee - Chair

(Committee formed to provide input into the W-A-L-K Nature Route, part of the Neighborhood Plan Environmental Responsibility actions, and the Board's choice for recipient of the City "Quick Win Funds" to implement that action/project.)

- Mapped existing signage along Nature Route and identified potential number and locations for Nature Route wayfinding and informational signs.
- Sought input/suggestions from other team/committee members with expertise in the natural sciences and experience in community outreach regarding: sign number and locations; sign contents and overall design; and the additional informational/educational content that could be accessed with the QR codes on the informational signs (different information for each informational sign along the Route).
- Liaison with City staff to: finalize the number and specific locations of wayfinding and informational signs; costs of signs and lead time; confirmed City specification requirements for in-street graphics; and researched preliminary costs for in-street graphics.
- Researched and generated a draft document containing QR code informational/educational content for the Board's consideration.

RELATED CITY OF KALAMAZOO SPECIAL ACTIVITIES:

Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 (Master Plan)

First as a representative of the ODWNA, then becoming Chair of the City-wide Great Neighborhoods Workgroup.

- Attended numerous planning meetings.
- Provided input into Imagine Kalamazoo Strategic Goals/Vision and Master Plan, including recommendations/edits to help clarify document organization and language.
- Helped organize and attended Imagine Kalamazoo citizen outreach workshop for the ODWN, Oakwood, and Parkview Neighborhoods encouraging, receiving, and documenting resident's input.
- Attended citizen outreach meetings in other neighborhoods, encouraging, receiving, and documenting resident's input.

#### Vermulen Team / Technical Team

(Team convened by the City in response to concerns related to the proposed development of the parcels located on the SE corner of Drake and Stadium, adjoining the Asylum Lake Preserve.)

First as a representative of the ODWNA, this group evolved into the Vermulen Technical Team providing technical input in regard to issues related to the proposed development of that property.

- Attended numerous meetings with City staff, the developer/property owner, and their legal counsel.
- Provided input into issues related to: top of slope location; slope erosion control; stormwater management; erosion-sedimentation; and Asylum Lake water quality.

#### Natural Features Protection (NFP) Technical Team

(Team convened by the City to aid staff in crafting ordinance language and standards to practically implement the Natural Features Protection Overlay designation referenced in the City Master Plan.)

- Attended numerous meetings with City staff.
- Researched and sought input from other geoscientists with experience in crafting similar ordinances in other states/cities to find out what was and was not practical/effective.
- Provided input on what natural features should be protected, and the practicalities of ordinance enforcement (e.g., the need to establish a technically-based NFP Review Board).
- Provided technical input on specific language and specifications related to the protection of: slopes; water resources (i.e. surface water such as a lake, stream, or impoundment); and wetlands.
- Provided input on what parcels in the City should consider for being covered by the NFP overlay (Phase I Map). Later reviewed and provided detailed input/recommendations for additional parcels in the ODWN to be reviewed by the City for inclusion in the NFP overlay area (Phase 2 Map).

### 3) **How could the ODWNA better meet the needs of the people living in our neighborhood?**

#### #1 Revise the ODWNA Constitution

The ODWNA has grown over the years, and consequently the Constitution needs to be updated to account for the substantial increase in the number, scope, and complexity of issues that the ODWNA now needs to simultaneously address, and to insure clarity/transparency in governance of the organization. ODWNA operational policies, both formal and informal, should also be updated and made publically available.

#### #2 Increase Proactive Intra-neighborhood Communication

This is particularly necessary on issues where there is a wide range of opinions and multiple possible plans of action. For example, a well-publicized electronic survey could be sent out to all households on substantial issues that affect the entire neighborhood. If a given issue has the potential to disproportionately impact nearby homes or businesses then those responses could receive more consideration when the data are tallied (much in the same way that the City gives a general notice of pending actions but only sends out written notices to property owners within a specified distance of a proposed change in land use).

In addition: 1) if not already in-place there should be a formalized process for establishing and maintaining active communication with other groups/organizations active in the neighborhood (e.g., ALPA, ALPMC, Girl and Boy Scouts, PTAs, SGP, Stewards of Kleinstuck, Woods Lake Association, etc.); and 2) in every ENews and at every monthly meeting: a) give committee summary reports; and b) ask for more volunteers to join existing committees and/or form new committees (see Question #4). These are only suggestions. The real answers will only be found by directly asking, and listening to, the residents.

#### #3 Proactive Inter-neighborhood Communication

As per the Good Governance section of the Neighborhood Plan, if not already in-place there should be an active formalized process for establishing and maintaining active communication with adjacent neighborhoods, particularly neighborhoods where we share natural features and infrastructure that benefit resident's quality of life (e.g., parks, streets, shopping areas, etc.)

#### #4 More Neighborhood-based Activities

This is a big neighborhood. We need to find ways to get to know each other better and enhance everyone's quality of life. In addition to the monthly speaker series, and the Annual Car Show, other neighborhood-wide activities might include: 1) social activities (for example: croquet tournament; children's chalk art show on the sidewalks; golf putting contest; picnic with singing and/or dancing; etc.); 2) learning activities (for example: small group walks/talks on neighborhood architecture, geology, or biology); 3) special interest groups (for example: a group interested in exploring and preserving neighborhood history); and 4) activities that specifically incorporate the W-A-L-K Nature Route, including our neighborhood parks/green spaces. These are ideas. The real answers will only be found by directly asking, and listening to, the residents, and having the neighborhood volunteers to lead and participate in these activities.

#### #5 Diversity/inclusion

Different ways are needed to engage more neighborhood residents in ODWNA activities, regardless of their age, ethnicity/race, gender, or neighborhood area. This is a big task, but a necessary one that will likely require a host of dedicated volunteers and a host of different communication styles and strategies to successfully appeal to the different demographics. Again, the real answers will only be found by directly asking, and listening to, the residents, and having the volunteers to help reach-out to underserved/represented residents in our neighborhood.

#### #6 Active Standing and Ad Hoc Committees

Getting these committees up-and-running is absolutely necessary to address items #1- #5 above, and to have everyone in the neighborhood feel welcome and that their personal volunteerism is not only needed, it is encouraged and valued. Residents should be directly asked: 1) what Standing Committees they would like to work on; 2) what goals or actions of the Neighborhood Plan they would like to help implement, along with what related ad hoc committee(s) would need to be formed; and 3) what ad hoc committees should be convened to address topics of interest not specifically covered by the Standing Committees or the Neighborhood Plan.

#### **4) Are there any specific neighborhood and/or city issues that you feel the ODWNA needs to become more involved in?**

I believe that over the past several years ODWNA has developed a strong track record of open communication and active involvement/partnerships with the City on topics ranging from land use planning and zoning (including the NFP), streets and infrastructure (street maintenance, complete streets and safe routes to school, etc.), park maintenance and improvements, public safety, etc. To successfully serve the neighborhood these relationships must be maintained, but like any relationship this requires considerable ongoing effort.

Topics ODWNA should try to become more involved with also fall under the Environmental Responsibility section of the Neighborhood Plan:

- **Inventorizing and sustainable management of the tree canopy.**  
With partners ODWNA could help the City's effort by being more proactive in educating residents and businesses on topics such as: 1) how to identify and systematically report trees in the ROW and City parks that need to be evaluated for disease or dead branches overhanging roads/sidewalks/power lines; 2) what tree species are present in their yards, and the condition of those trees; 3) what times of the year it is best to prune certain tree species (better to trim than have a tree shatter in an ice storm); 4) what tree species will be best suited to a given location in the face of changing weather and wildlife patterns; and 5) what tree species can and cannot be planted on parcels covered by the Natural Features Protection (NFP) overlay.
- **Promoting plant biodiversity, particularly with species that are beneficial to pollinators.**  
With partners ODWNA could help the City's effort by being more proactive in educating residents and businesses on topics such as: 1) the importance of planting to feed the pollinators; 2) what can and cannot be planted in the ROWs (i.e., height and distance specifications), and does the City need to be notified prior to planting; 3) what times of the year it is best to plant certain species; 4) what plant species will be best suited to a given location in the face of changing weather and wildlife patterns; and 5) what plant species can and cannot be planted on parcels covered by the Natural Features Protection (NFP) overlay.

**5) List other community boards, clubs, organizations, etc., to which you now belong or have belonged in the past.**

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Current:

ODWNA Board  
Treasurer (Oct 2009 through Aug. 2018)  
Member at Large (Sept 2018 through present)  
Stewards of Glen Park  
Member  
Kalamazoo Nature Center  
Member  
Wild Ones  
Member  
WMU Dept. of Geological and Environmental Sciences (GES) Advisory Council  
Member  
Student Outreach Committee

Past:

Legal Aid of Western Michigan  
Volunteer  
Children's Nature Playscape  
Volunteer

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Current:

Michigan Basin Geological Society (MBGS)  
Member  
(includes co-leading field trip to UP)  
  
American Institute of Professional Geologists (AIPG)  
Member

Past:

Various geologic national/international associations and societies  
Member  
National Committee (at national/international level)  
Committee Member  
Chairperson  
Chaired technical sessions at multiple national/international meetings.  
Co-authored and/or gave oral presentations of technical work at national meetings.  
Developed/conducted technical short courses held overseas at international meetings.  
Visiting Geoscientist  
(part of volunteer team giving geologic presentations and providing outreach to college students on a national/international basis).

In addition, as an individual I have been a guest speaker at colleges and universities, K-12 classes, senior facilities, and community organizations (e.g., banks, Rotary Clubs and neighborhood associations). I have also co-instructed a community outreach geology-based short course, and co-instructed semester-long graduate level classes (WMU – Environmental Law).

**6) Have you received, read, understand, and agree to meet the criteria/expectations of an ODWNA board member if elected?**

YES.

*\* Applicants are welcome to attach additional information such as a current resume, if available.*

Signature: Diana Morton-Thompson Date: March 21, 2023