

Midway City Council
19 March 2019
Work Meeting

Open Space Evaluation Form
for Landowners

15 March 2019

City Council, Mayor,

Attached you will find a document intended to assist in evaluation of potential open space properties. The OSAC is developing 2 such 'forms', one focused on the landowner (attached) and one focused on the City process of OS project evaluation (forthcoming). They will likely differ in layout but not in evaluation criteria. It is important that criteria we communicate to landowners and the public be fully consistent with how Midway evaluates properties.

Furthermore, it is important that the criteria we use are based solidly on the General Plan, as the Open Space Bond language contains:

“. . . pay all or a portion of the costs to preserve open space (as open space is defined and is consistent with the Midway City General Plan and as permitted by the laws of the State of Utah) and related improvements, . . .”

THE LAND OWNER 'form' (attached) is intended to allow an immediate and purposeful follow-up with the landowner after receiving the NOI (application) and to engage the landowner from the beginning in understanding and meeting MIDWAY criteria. We believe early involvement by the landowner in evaluating the suitability of the project to MIDWAY criteria will be invaluable in preventing misunderstandings and frustrations later in the process. To this end, you will note the questions are intentionally open-ended, but we believe the MIDWAY criteria are fully explored therein.

THE CITY EVALUATION 'form' is a work in progress but, subject to City Council approval, will necessarily address the exact same criteria. We intend this form to provide a more structured and concise evaluation by the OSAC and, to the limited extent possible, be more objective. At a minimum, it should provide an orderly and concise way of presenting Committee Findings to the Council for deliberation.

We shall be happy to receive any questions, comments or recommendations you have.

Respectfully,
Open Space Advisory Committee

Midway Open Space Evaluation

Landowner's Perspective

Midway Land Owner,

Thank you for your recent submission of a NOTICE OF INTEREST, indicating an interest in the preservation of currently open land you own. As you are aware, a preservation project is a multi-step process involving various evaluations and reviews as multiple players are brought together to fund your project. The purpose of this form is to help you begin that process by providing Midway with your perspective on how well your land meets the Midway open space criteria as set out in the Midway City General Plan.

Funding for your project will most likely come from a variety of sources, including Federal, State, private foundations, etc., and Midway City (via Open Space Bond). Not all funding sources will be interested in a given project; they all (including Midway) have their own criteria for the type of projects they will fund. Each of these funding sources will review your project against its criteria. Since there will likely be more projects than money, advocacy for your project in the context of each agency's unique criteria is important. A non-profit Certified Land Trust (CLT) can assist you through that process – it's what they do. We can help you get in contact with them if you have not already done so.

Midway City will evaluate your project with respect to Midway criteria prior to committing Open Space Bond funds. To start this process, please complete this form in as much detail as possible. This will allow you to advocate the value of your project in the context of Midway criteria. It will also serve as a useful tool for Midway City to evaluate the comparative suitability of multiple projects. Although a preliminary indication of Midway City interest in your project will be valuable as you move forward, please understand that the City Council makes the final commitment after review of the entire preservation package, including funding from other sources.

Please feel free to contact any member of the Open Space Advisory Committee if you have questions, would like help with this form, or would like to further discuss related issues.

Midway City Open Space Advisory Committee

MIDWAY CITY OPEN SPACE EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Midway City General Plan – in particular Ch 10, “Open Space Element” – lays out the City’s goals, objectives, and criteria for open space preservation. Before the City Council can spend public money on an open space project, it must be satisfied that the project is consistent with the Midway City General Plan. Excerpts from the 10 Year Plan are provided below. With each of these please provide your assessment on how well your proposed project fits these criteria. Use additional pages as necessary. Please understand these are not hard “check off” requirements; rather, projects will be evaluated on the degree to which criteria are met.

The 10 Year Plan contains four open space design objectives; three are specifically focused on open land preservation that contemplates expenditure of open space bond funds.

PRESERVE INTER-CITY SPACE

Today Heber Valley-wide views – such as seen driving into the valley – provide a clear sense of separate cities: Midway, Heber, Charleston. These are connected only by expanses of “rural-ness”/agriculture. As seen in many places – Wasatch front in particular – cities tend to “sprawl” together into a single urban mass. As one of the fastest growing counties in the USA, Wasatch is certainly susceptible to this. Preserving Midway City’s unique rural setting in relation to other population centers in the Heber Valley might involve, for example, acquisition of non-development buffer zones in strategically located places. These buffer zones will preclude the urban sprawl that could turn Midway into an undifferentiated collection of roof tops in an ever-expanding asphalt and concrete landscape.

Please provide your assessment on the ways your project matches the above design objective.

(Among other factors you consider relevant, please consider the size and location of the land and describe how it will further the goal of precluding “urban sprawl.” Is it adjacent to other open land that enhances your land’s use as a buffer? What specific urban centers does your land “buffer” if preserved as open space? What sort of development do you foresee overtaking your land if it is not preserved?)

PRESERVE MIDWAY’S UNIQUE CHARACTER

Midway City has a multi-faceted character, including clearly rural older areas, and newer developments with typical suburban character. The historic rural areas provide the city with a unique character / atmosphere, supported by readily visible in-town agriculture (cow & pasture ambiance), country-feel roads (grassy shoulders, open ditches), in-town barns and other historic buildings, etc. Preserving this character may require not only acquisition of selected in-town open space currently in agricultural use but may also require city code and planning support. Unlike the concept of buffer zones to counter urban sprawl, this objective focuses on potentially non-contiguous areas where this unique character is readily visible, and is intended to prevent its destruction from further development.

Please provide your assessment on the ways your project matches the above design objective:
(Consider historic structures or barns, “in-town agriculture”, leverage of adjacent properties to create larger open space, etc.)

PROVIDE PUBLIC RECREATION VENUES

This objective primarily focuses on parks, trails, and outdoor recreational or athletic venues. A separate chapter in the General Plan addresses these. They are included here in acknowledgement of their importance in an overall open space plan, and the potential use of open space public debt financing in their acquisition / construction.

Please provide your assessment on the ways your project matches the above design objective, if applicable:
(Do you envision public access to your land? If so, to what degree, and what use do you contemplate as the public use? Please address whether your proposed project would provide trail easements.)

The 10 Year Plan values “visual access”.

. . . since significant aesthetic value is a clear benefit of most of the different [open space] design objectives, the acquisition or preservation projects should ideally be located in positions of clear and frequent visibility to a maximum number of Midway citizens – for example, along main access or collector roads, roads frequented by many on day to day travel, or from viewpoints shared by many.

Please provide your assessment on the level of “visual access” your project provides:
(Consider view of the project from scenic viewpoints; from trails; from arterial, collector, or local roads. Would future development in an adjacent property impact this view? What existing viewshed(s) would be preserved by this project? How much of Midway citizenry might regularly benefit, etc.)

The 10 Year Plan indicates the intent to “leverage” Midway bond funds to maximum extent possible.

Leveraging and Partnerships: Where possible and practical, the City will work with other organizations, agencies, groups, and individuals who will share the costs of open space preservation projects.

Important evaluation criteria will be 1) an assessment of the value of your property’s development rights from a Certified Land Appraiser, and 2) the percent of that appraised value that would be covered by sources other than Midway City. Certified Land Trusts (CLT) will provide great assistance with these issues.

With which CLTs are you currently speaking in regard to project funding; with which do you anticipate speaking? May we contact them regarding your project?

An important aspect of open space preservation is that it be maintained generally in its current use/condition. Easements require this by contract. Please provide your view on how this maintenance would be provided.

(Please address permanently available water rights associated with the land; who would provide maintenance; can manpower and other costs of maintenance be reasonably sustained over the long term; your willingness to negotiate a maintenance contract, etc. The CLT can be of assistance with these items.)

What other collateral benefits accrue to Midway from this project?

(Consider wildlife habitat, contiguous with other open space, public education, surface water management, etc.)

Please describe any special conditions or reserved rights you are seeking with respect to this project
(Such as zoning variance, use permits, density reduction, etc.)

Are there any other issues you wish to have considered in the evaluation of your project?
