

Open Lands Property Evaluation

Property Name Sylvan Dale Cedar Park CE

PROJECT IS BEING EVALUATED FOR THE FOLLOWING SHADED VALUES:

Scenic	Significant Plants/Natural Communities	Geological
Buffer	Outdoor Recreational	Paleontological
Wildlife Habitat	Historical/Archaeological	Educational
Wetlands	Agricultural	Other (explain)

EVALUATION CRITERIA

These criteria establish evaluation strategies that can be applied to properties proposed for acquisition under the Open Lands Program. These criteria are guidelines and will be used as a tool in determining properties that may be suitable and appropriate for acquisition.

This scoring system is an index, not a precise measurement, and is used as a guideline for setting priorities and making recommendations.

High (H), Medium (M), Low (L), Not Rated (NR)

I. Context

Rating: High

1. To what extent is the property located adjacent to or near other protected lands or open space?
 - Although not immediately adjacent, there are an additional 1,600 acres of Sylvan Dale land already protected by conservation easements.
2. Is there potential that surrounding property may be protected with this property's protection?
 - Adjacent US Forest Service lands will benefit by having this private land protected from future development.
3. Does this property add to a more sustainable whole?
 - Yes—see #1
4. Is protecting this property a strategic move to protect a larger area?
 - Yes—see #1
5. What is the potential that the property will be developed or changed in land use?
 - Although there is already residential development on 5-acre lots in the immediate area, the most likely development scenario would involve creation of 35-acre lots, with minimal land use planning.
6. How compatible are the adjacent land uses with this proposed protection and use of this property?
 - The area is zoned O-Open, which would permit 10-acre lots if a development were to be approved by the County. Existing development includes 40-acre parcels (north), USFS (south and east), and 5-acre platted lots to the west, but not adjacent). This CE provides a buffer between existing/potential development and USFS.

II. Environment/Ecology

Rating:

Medium

1. How important are the wildlife habitat qualities and plant communities?
 - The property contains a native biotic community of foothills grasslands and native shrubland species and ponderosa pine woodlands.
 - Many wildlife values exist on the property including native amphibians and reptiles, migratory and breeding birds including wild turkeys.
 - Mammals including mule deer, bighorn sheep, black bear, mountain lion, occasional elk and numerous non-game species use the land.
2. To what extent does the property provide a buffer to minimize the disruption of ecological processes on already protected land?
 - Adjacent to USFS lands, this property provides a larger connected protected landscape including protection of continuity of several riparian corridors.
3. To what extent are there important and/or sustainable wetland or riparian areas (note also water rights availability)?
 - There are several drainages that support riparian vegetation that is in good condition on the proposed CE land.
4. How manageable are any exotic plant/animal species on the property?
[-Note exotics on the property - Point out noxious weeds present]
 - There are limited weeds on-site and those present (primarily Canada thistle) are managed by Sylan Dale regularly.
5. If applicable, what is the potential for habitat restoration? Not Applicable.

III. Scenic/Aesthetic/Sense of Place

Rating:

No rating

1. Does the property provide vistas or important scenic backdrop?
[-Sense of openness - Views of physical features -Ridgelines -Hogbacks -Timbered slopes - Unique color or textures or other visual interest -Does this property provide a sense of community identity?]
 - Minimal visibility from beyond the property.
2. What is the property's visual exposure from roads, trails or other prominent locations?
 - Minimal
3. Does this property serve as a community buffer or separator?
 - No, but it serves as a buffer to USFS lands.

IV. Outdoor Recreation/Public Use

Rating:

No rating

[-Appropriateness -Desirability -Feasibility]

- Property is not being rated for potential recreational use.

V. Historical/Archaeological

Rating:

Medium

1. Does the property contain significant archaeological or historic resources based upon State Historic Preservation Office criteria or National Register of Historic Places standards?

- Unknown

2. Does the property contain other significant archaeological or historic resources of concern to local research institutions, professionals, interest groups or other agencies?

- The “Cow Camp” area includes a large rustic wood barn and homestead dwelling, as well as several other rustic structures. There is also a very old lumber mill site, with equipment remaining in place.

VI. Agricultural

Rating:

No Rating

- Property is not being rated for agricultural purposes, although it is used for cattle grazing to some extent.

VII. Geological/Paleontological

Rating:

No Rating

- This property is not being evaluated for its geological value.

VIII. Environmental Education

Rating:

No Rating

- This property is not being evaluated for environmental education purposes

IX. Political Factors

Rating:

Low

1. Is this a high profile acquisition from the public perspective?

- No

2. Will acquisition of this property serve as a catalyst for other acquisitions?
 - Perhaps.
3. Will acquisition of this property in the manner proposed serve as a positive example for other landowners?
 - Yes. Sylvan Dale is giving a 100% donation and continues to serve as a positive example for land protection efforts in their partnership with Larimer County.
4. Does the project contribute to the Open Lands Program balance based on:

[-Geographic distribution? - Project type? - Urgent/immediate demands and long term/farsighted goals? - Population distribution?]

 - The project contributes to a balance in that it is in the southern portion of Larimer County, it is a conservation easement and contributes to a long-term goal to protect this area. In addition, it is in proximity to Loveland, the second largest population center in the County.

X. Price

Rating:

High (Good)

1. Is the price reasonable given current supply and demand and net present value?
 - The value/price is based on a current appraisal – and is a 100% donation.
2. Is the landowner willing to reduce the cost to the county for charitable or tax purposes?
 - Yes, the landowner is donating 100% of the value of the conservation easement.
3. Is cost sharing with partners significant?
 - The landowner is a significant partner with Larimer County.
4. Can the goals of the Open Lands Program be achieved with less than fee acquisition?
 - Yes, and they are being achieved in this instance via conservation easement.
5. Will the property become more expensive or unavailable if not acquired now?
 - The land value and conservation easement value will very likely increase.
6. Are the projected annual management and maintenance costs acceptable and reasonable?
 - Annual costs to Larimer County as the conservation easement holder would include monitoring costs only.

Scoring System

The scoring system is used by Larimer County Parks and Open Lands Department staff with input from appropriate professionals and/or experts to evaluate various properties against the evaluation criteria so that the Open Lands Advisory Board can make reasoned decisions for recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. The scoring system is an index, not a precise measurement, and is used as a guideline for setting priorities and making recommendations.

The process shall consist of an index of a high, medium, or low ranking for each of the criteria applicable to the property in question. There may be situations on some properties where a particular evaluation criterion is not applicable and therefore not ranked.

Adopted by the Open Lands Advisory Board, August 22, 2000
Adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, August 28, 2000