Red Fields to Green Fields
National Research Project – City of Denver

Team Members

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DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY

DENVER
MOUNTAIN
PARKS

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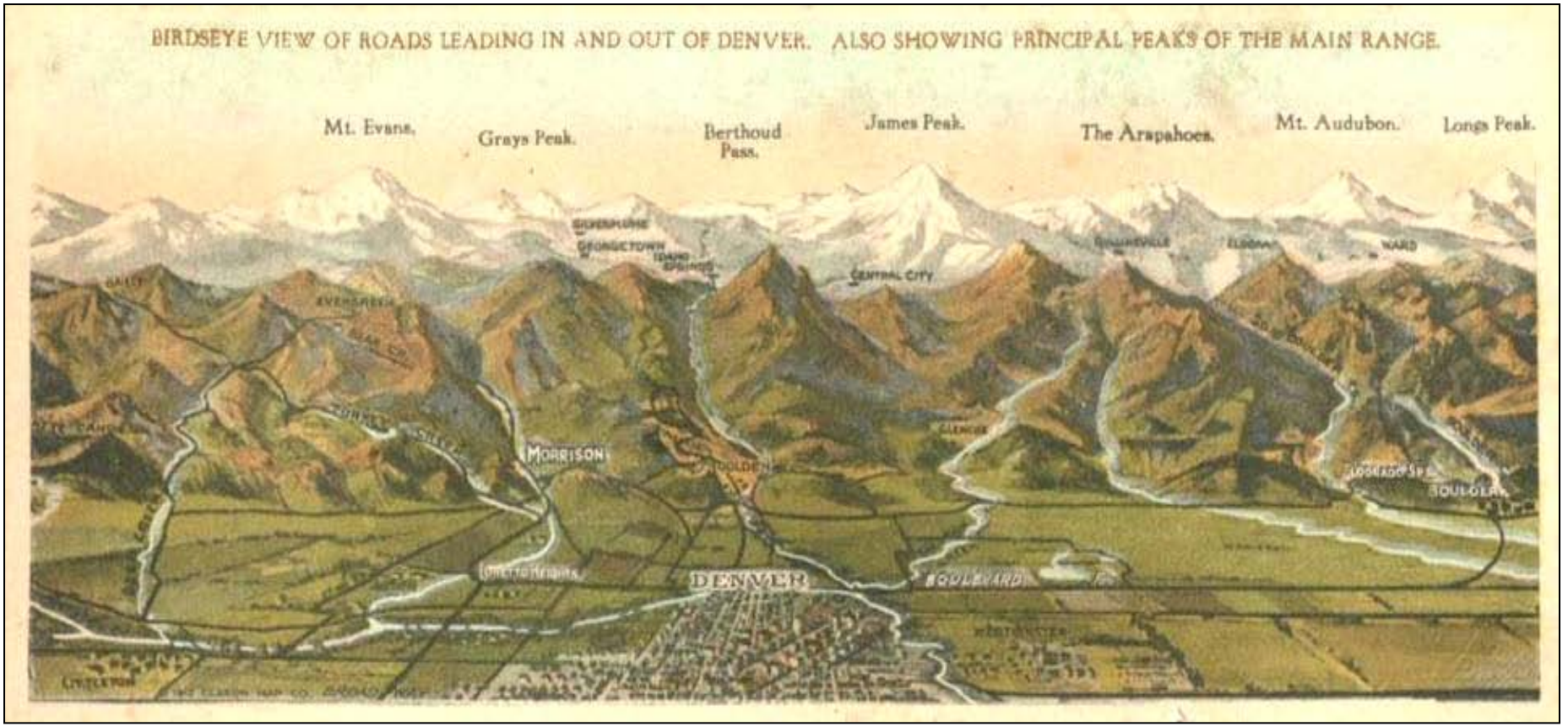
Park System Background



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Park Land Statistics

•Approximately 240 parks and natural areas, equaling 6,000 acres of park land within the city limits.
•Annual operating budget of $24 million with an additional $10 million budgeted for capital improvement projects (includes any land acquisition)
•Approximately 10 acres of park land per 1,000 residents in Denver. Represents a relatively average ratio for an intermediate density city (Trust for Public Land).
•Approximately 6% of Denver city area consists of park land. Represents the bottom third of cities for an intermediate density city (Trust for Public Land).

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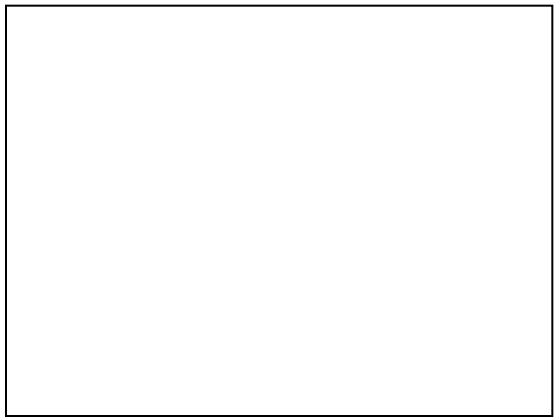
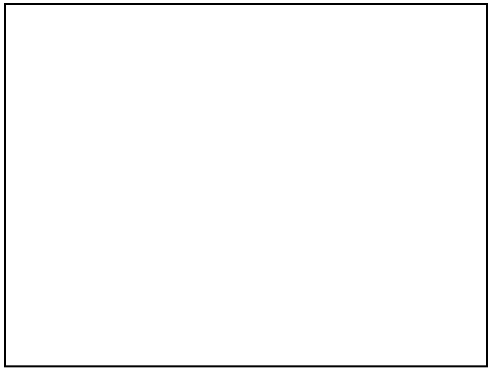
Mountain Parks & Natural Areas

•14,000 acres of mountain open space land outside the Denver city limits
•Iconic park destinations utilized by residents throughout Colorado.
•Planned by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and a strong Mayor Speer in the early 1900's.
•Represents one of the first municipal open space preservation programs in the Country.
•Mountain Parks funding competes with City Parks funding & acquisition





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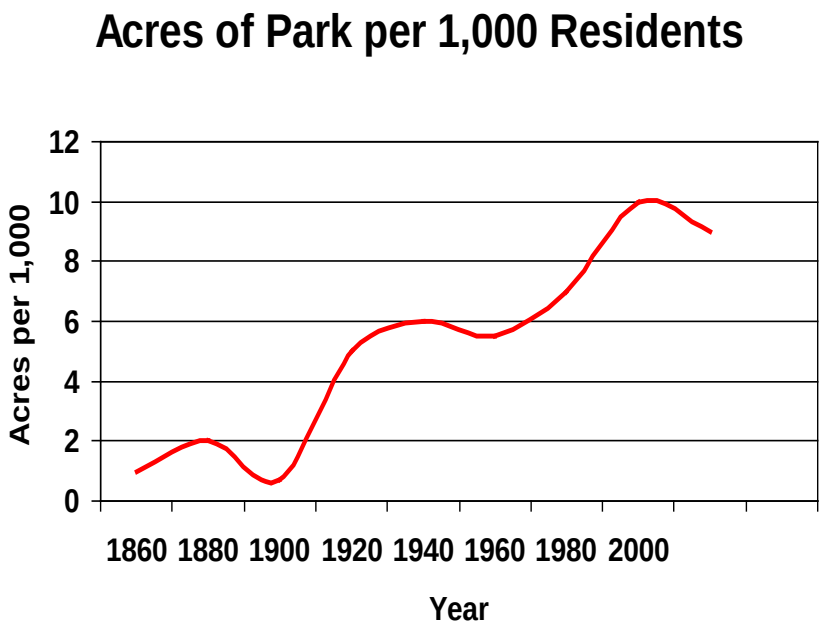
Key Issues & Constraints

- Rapidly growing population expected to continue over next 20 years.
- New zoning code in Denver will increase residential density in areas already underserved by parks.
- Limited development regulation to ensure adequate park land dedication or funding in lieu of.
- Denver has no dedicated funding source for park land acquisition.
- Land acquisition must compete internally against all capital improvements and the mountain park system.



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Key Opportunities

- The geographic areas most desired for park land are also those occupied by underutilized commercial and industrial land along the South Platte River and planned light rail system (FastTracks).
- Denver's economy remains relatively strong. Lower unemployment rate than most areas of the country (7%) and real estate values remain relatively stable (also a constraint).
- Strong political and citizen support for expanding the park system.
- Clear recent examples (particularly along the South Platte River) of major park projects which have transformed industrial land into park land, spurring major economic development ($5 billion in new commercial/residential in LoDo).
- Significant outside funding sources available for parks in Colorado (Great Outdoors Colorado – Lottery Funds)

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Key Opportunities – Land & Jobs

- Land values in Denver's four geographic "focus areas" identified for the Red Fields to Green Fields Project range from $70/sq ft-$3/sq ft.
- Assuming 60% of $2.5 billion would be used for acquisition ($1.5 billion), and an average value in the "focus areas" of $10/sq ft…… Denver could acquire approximately **3,500 acres of new park land.**
- This increase would represent a 60% increase in park land and bring Denver's ratio of park land per 1,000 residents from 10 acres to 16 acres per 1,000.
- It has taken **50 years** for Denver to acquire it's last 3,500 acres of park land.
- $500 million (20% of $2.5 billion) spent on design and construction of future park land could add as many as 14,000 jobs in Denver (FHWA). Does not accounts for any multiplier effect or indirect jobs.
- One park maintenance employee per 20 acres of formal parks (Denver standard) would equate to an additional 175 park maintenance-related jobs.

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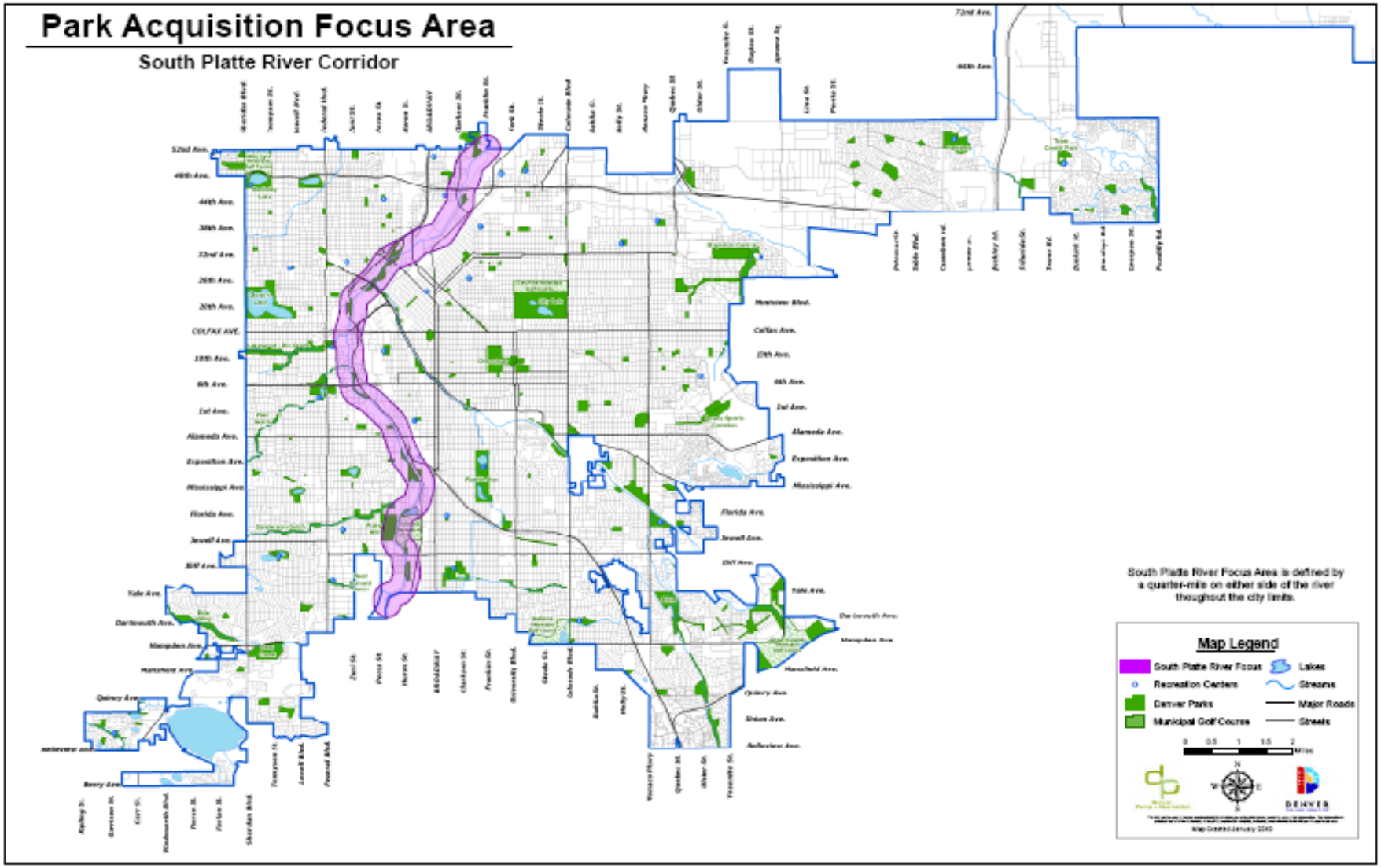

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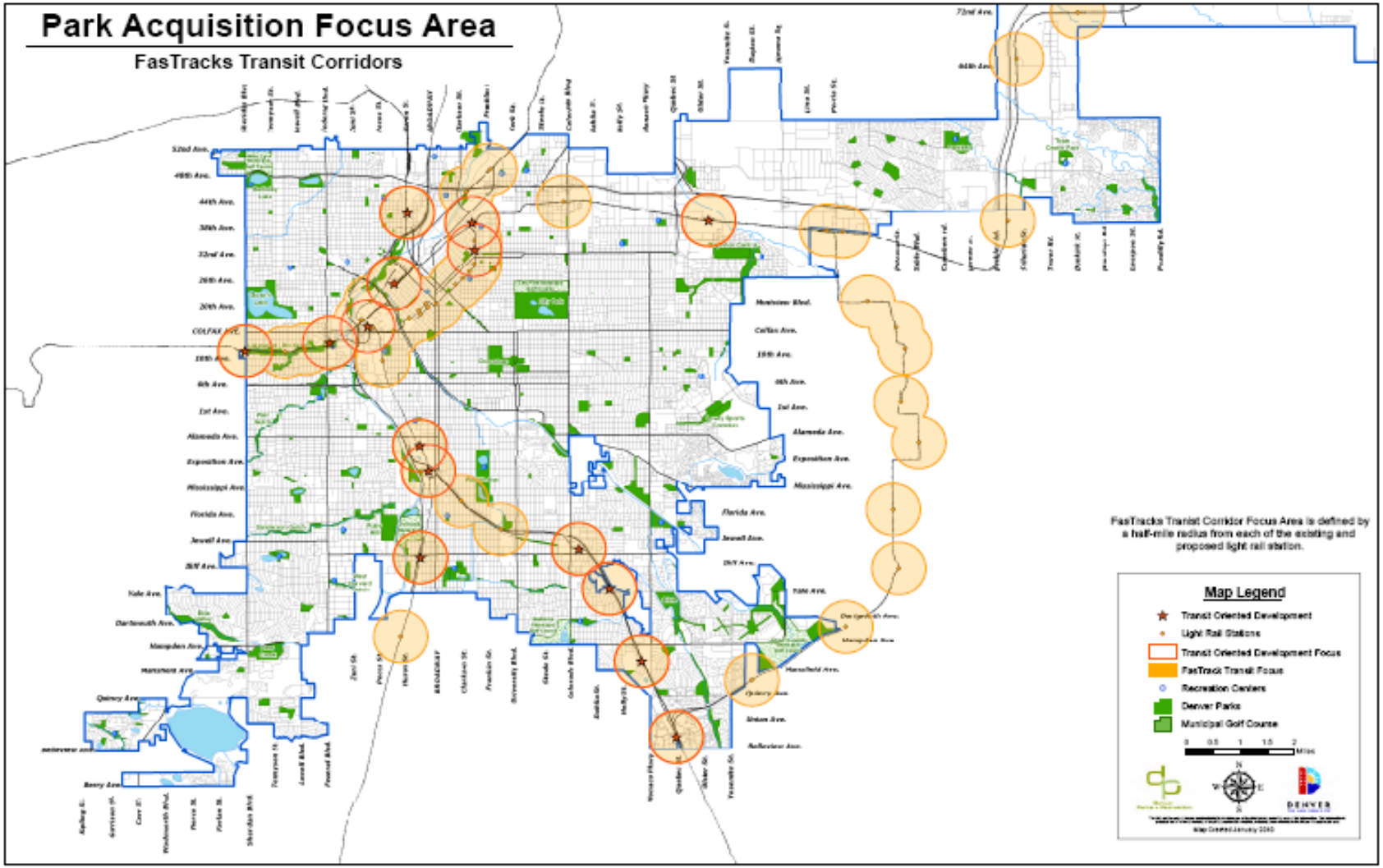

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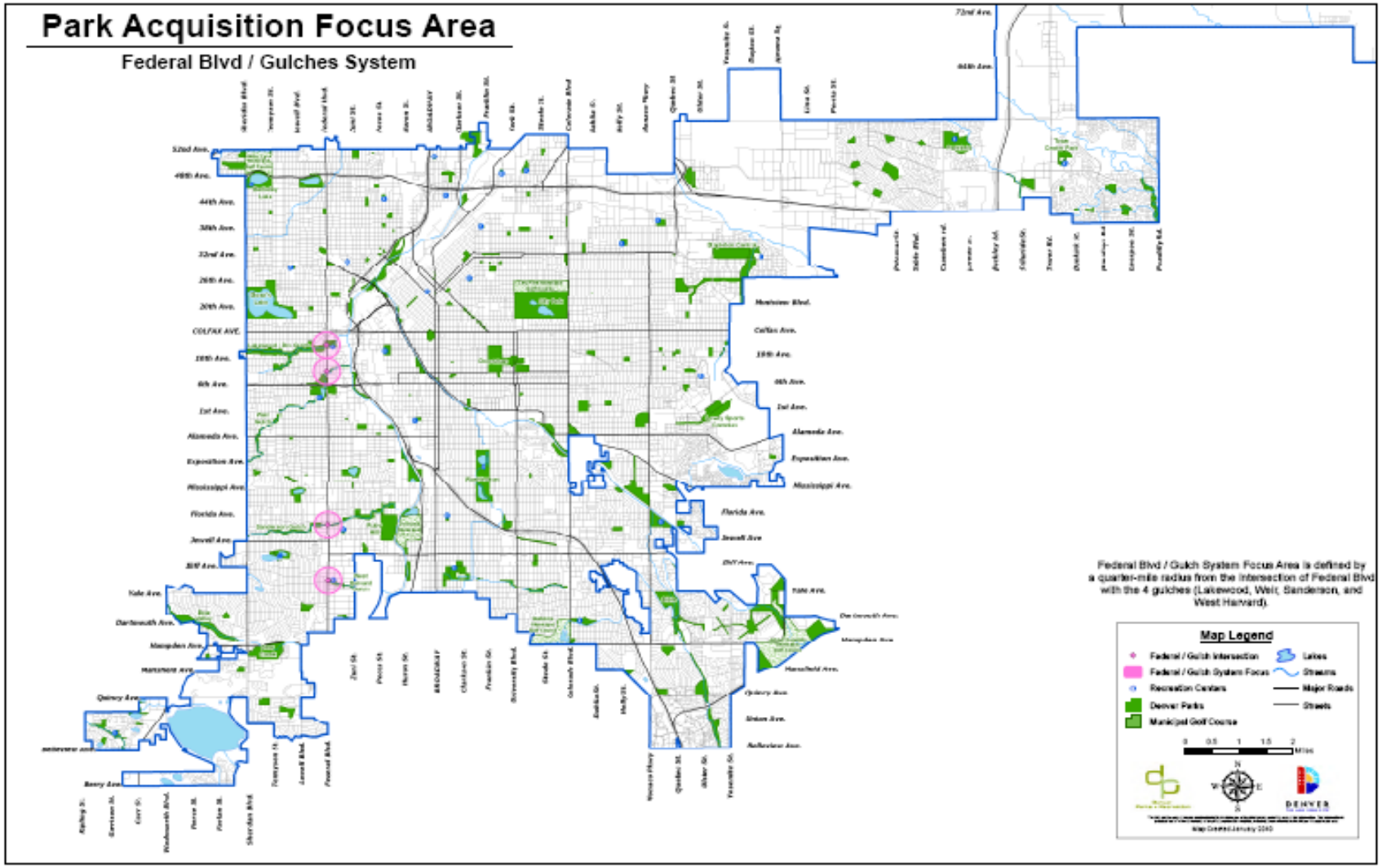

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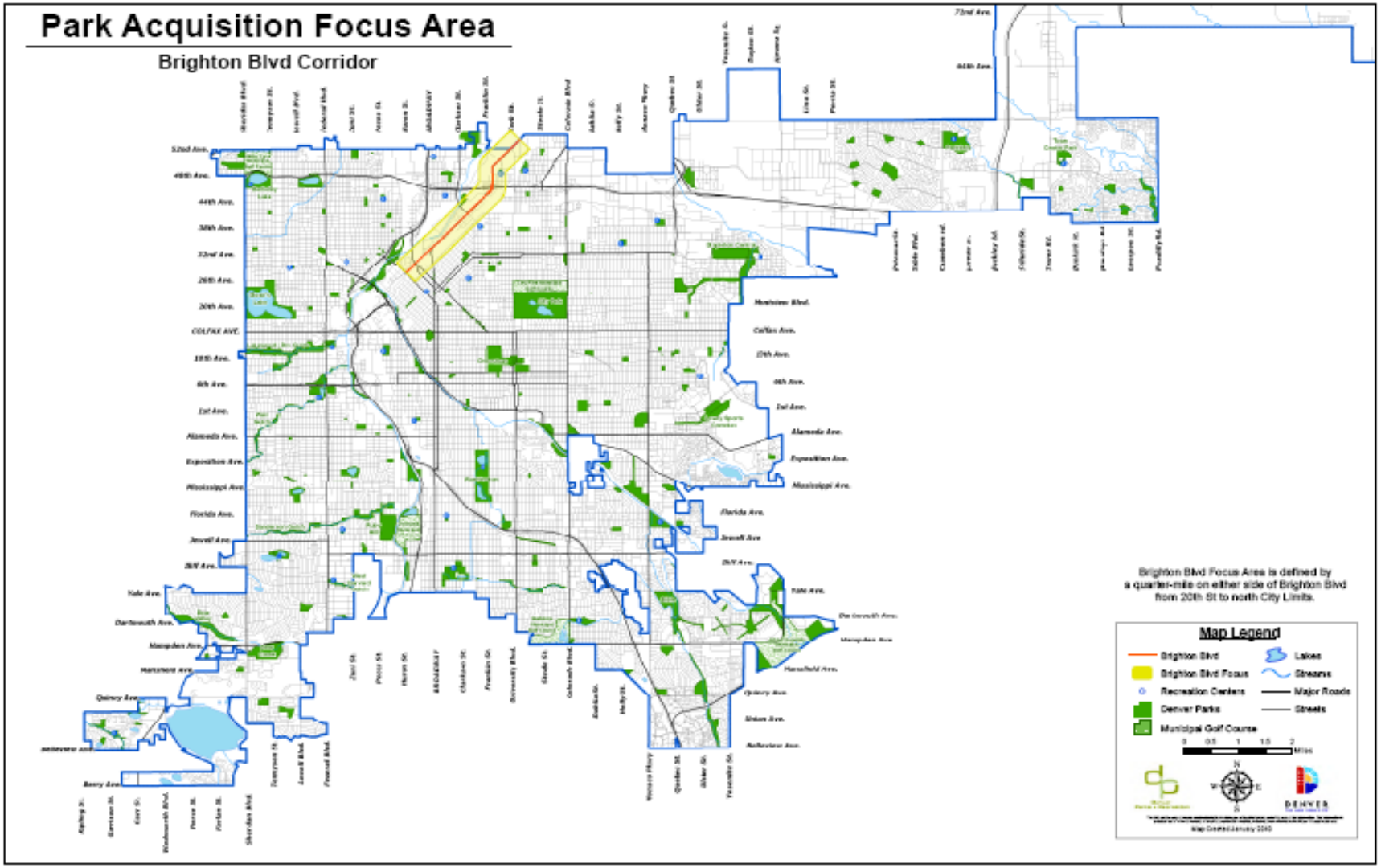

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"Legacy Park" – An Example of Potential Public/Private Partnerships

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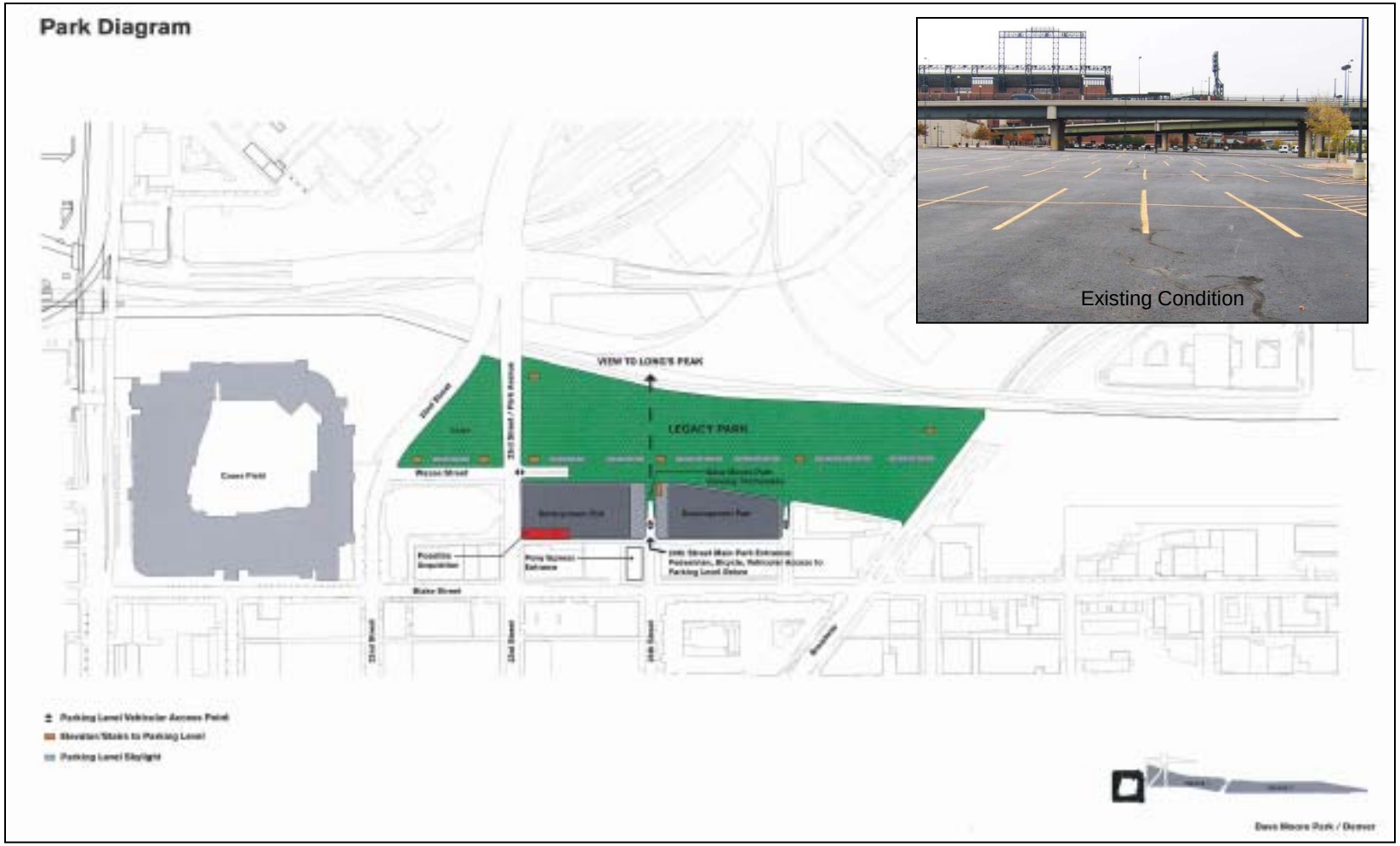
"Legacy Park" – An Example of Potential Public/Private Partnerships



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Public Private Partnership Opportunities – “Legacy Park”

Highline Park N.Y.C example