



The History of Urban Park Development in Seattle 1900 – 2000: An Emergent Phenomenon?



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PURPOSE

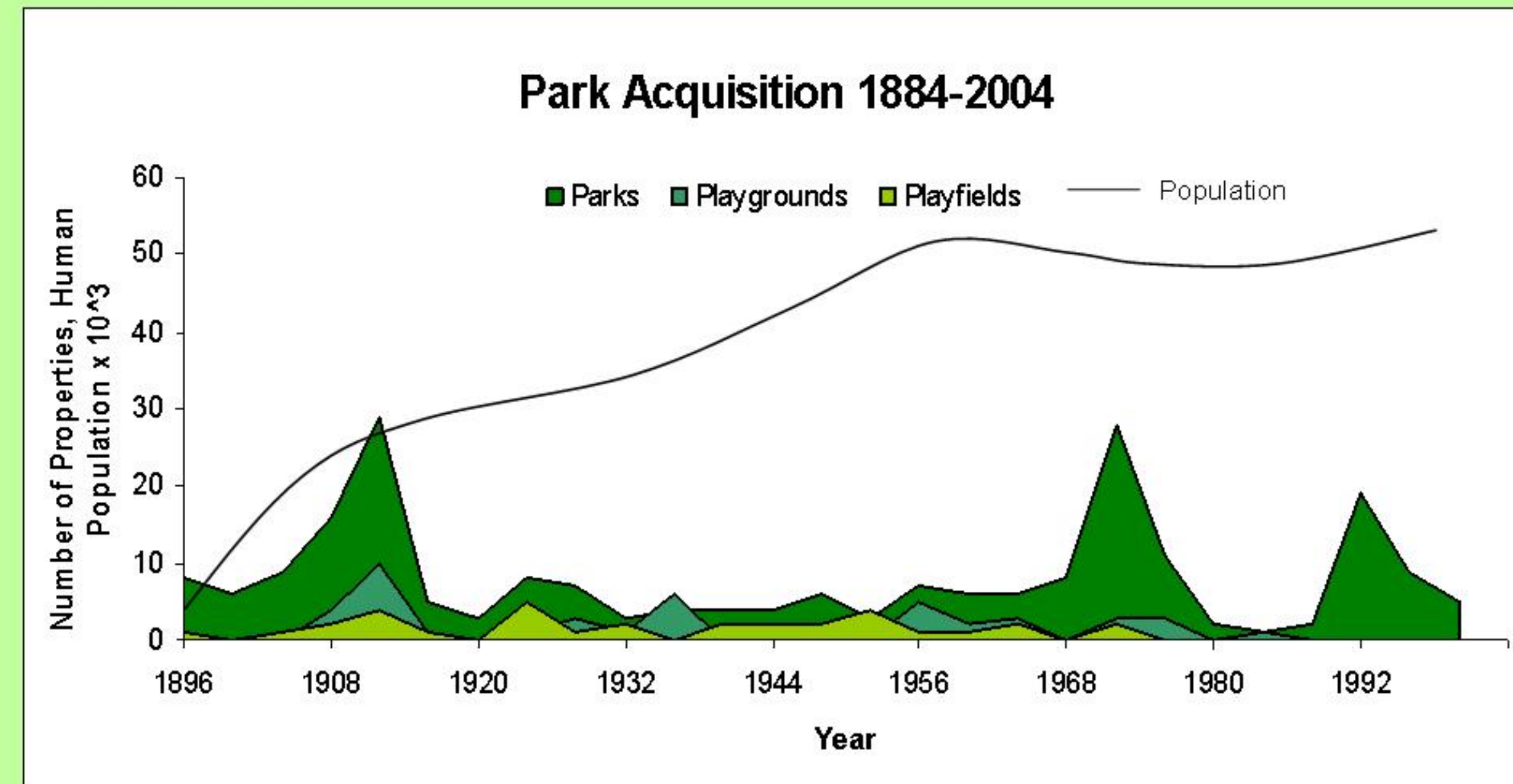
- Use emergent theory to illustrate park development in Seattle.
- Measure the temporal and spatial distribution of park-owned land from 1900-2000.
- Describe three distinct eras of park development, detailing environmental events and social movements, which have directly impacted park acquisition, distribution, and use.

GOALS

- Develop a social, ecological, and historically conscious analysis of park development in Seattle
- Design a multi-methodological framework that integrates quantitative and qualitative data for historical analysis
- Identify lessons learned from our case study of Seattle to aid city parks departments, urban planners, park historians and citizens anticipating future park opportunities

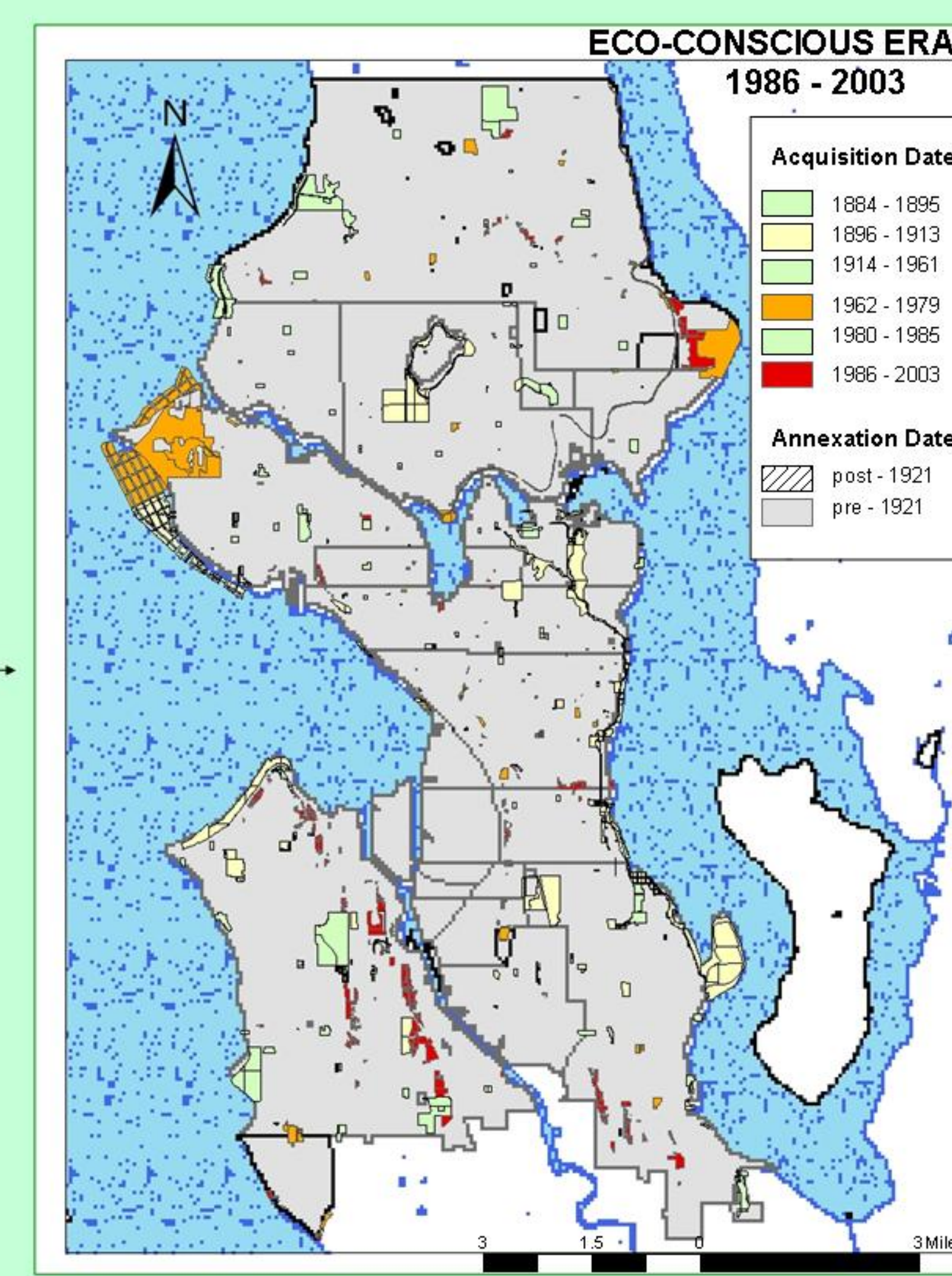
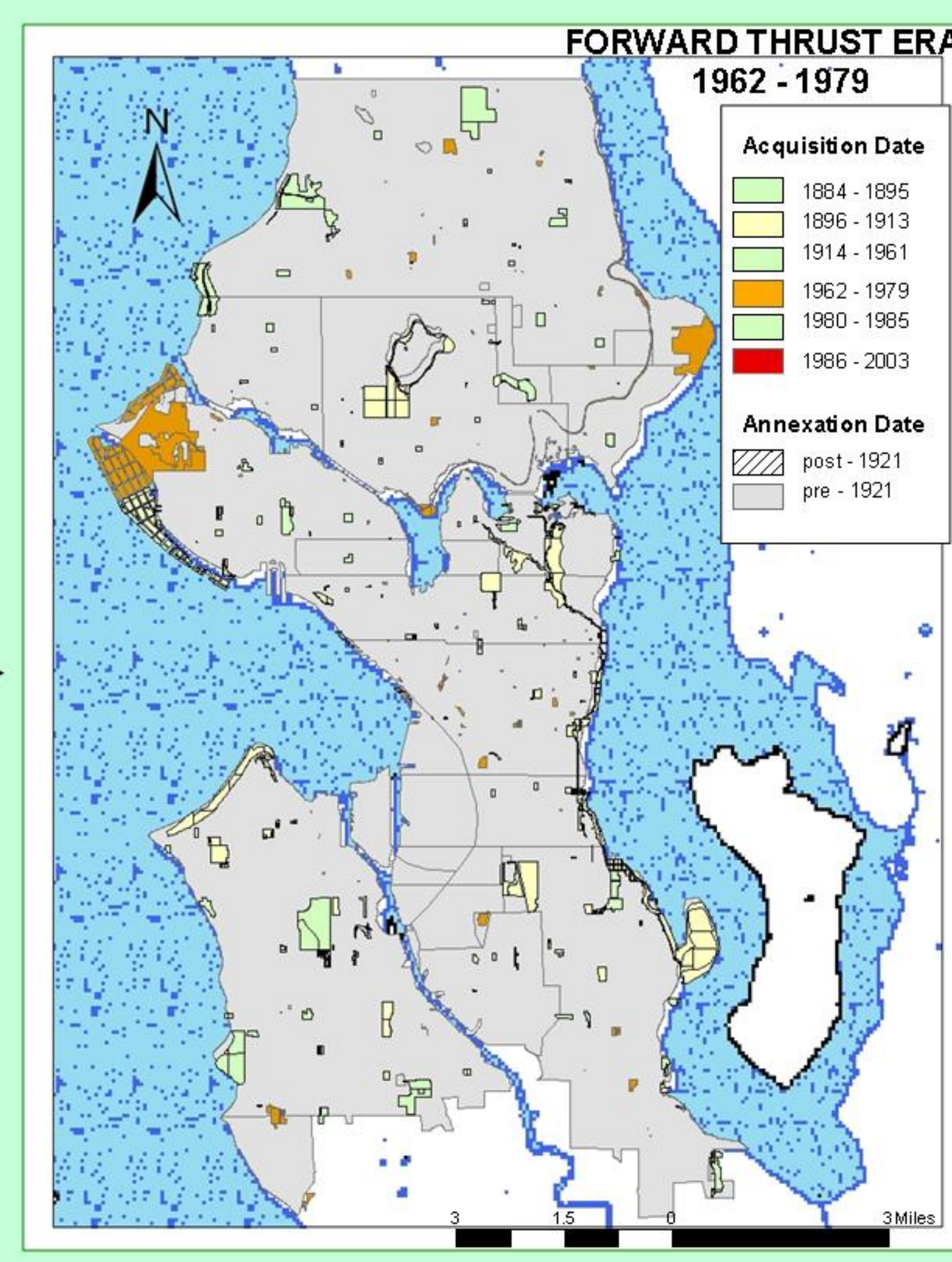
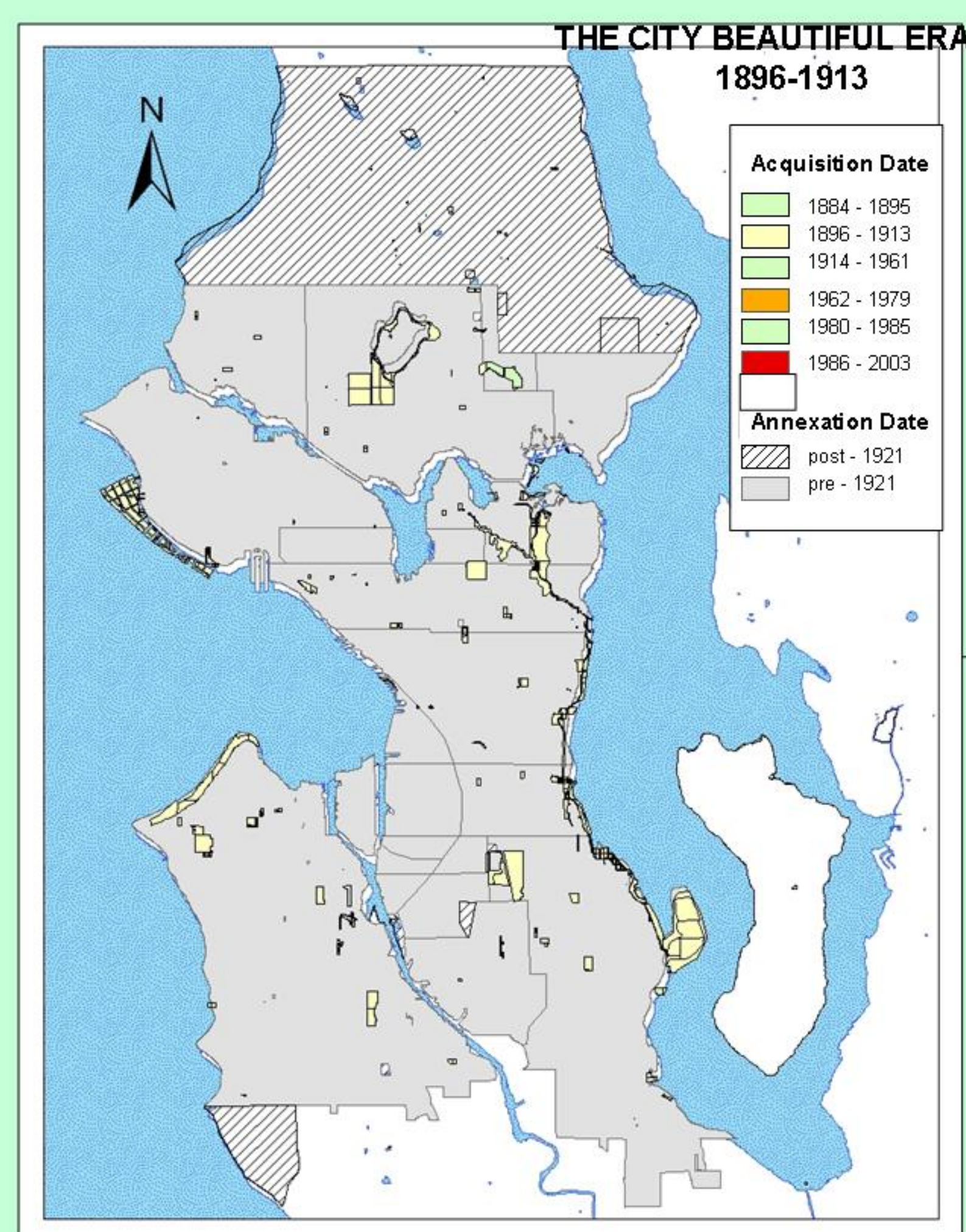
CONTEXT

Seattle is the oldest and largest metropolitan center in the Pacific Northwest. A long history of park designation and planning in Seattle, began with the historic Olmsted Plan of 1903 that sought to create an 'emerald necklace' of parks across the city. Currently, 9% of city land is publicly designated as parkland.



METHODS

- Collection of park acquisition and loss dates.
- Production of a series of geo-referenced maps for each pulse.
- Seattle Parks Department annual reports
- Parks Department interaction with local groups, city council, and the budgetary process
- Economic conditions and acquisition decisions
- Environmental events, park use and purchases.



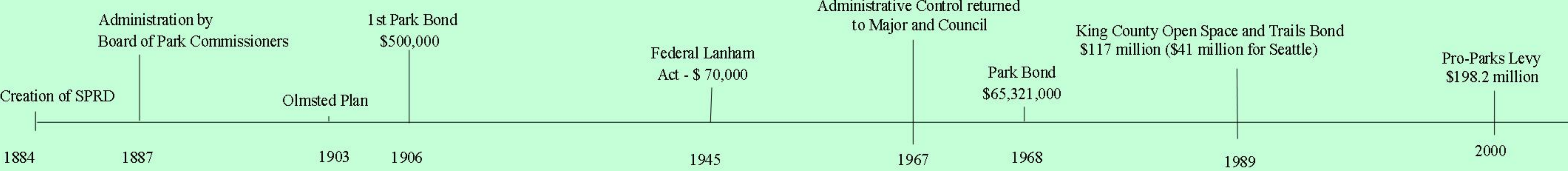
EXPECTED RESULTS

Applied

- Baseline information on the types and spatial distribution of parks in Seattle.
- Insight into the relationships between policies, economies, agendas, and park development.
- Seattle's park system is a result of the interactions between economics, politics, culture, and biophysical factors
- identify threats to established parks and recommend strategies for creating and maintaining parks

Theoretical

- the spatial configuration of parks,, demonstrate qualities consistent with emergent phenomenon –non-linear, unpredictable rates and patterns of change.



The City Beautiful Era

• "Nature has blessed Seattle with a magnificent setting for a beautiful park system" 1903 Report of Park Commissioners

Progressive Movement
• "Our citizens were quick to realize that with nature's endowment we had before us a wonderful opportunity to develop a park system" 1912 Report of Park Commissioners

Social Reform
• "Proper provision should be made for a system of parks and avenues as an agent of humanizing and refining the community..." 1893 Report of Park Commissioners

Spatial Equity
• "...planned to have a park or playground within half a mile of every home." 1922 Report of Park Commissioners

Forward Thrust Era

Prioritizing access for all citizens
• "The park authority has the obligation to provide ... opportunities for recreational pastimes" (1958 Annual Report)

The new active recreational space → Water
• "... the citizenry of these urbanized communities is turning more and more to this last ...obtainable area – our water surface". (1958 Annual Report)

National Environmental Events → Energy Crisis
• "... the energy crisis emphasized the importance of providing adequate local recreational opportunities in the Seattle area." (1973 Annual Report)

Parks as functioning urban infrastructure
• "... resisting ... requests to devote parklands to non-parks related uses." (1979-1980 Annual Report)

The Ecologically Conscious Era

Citizen involvement as community building.
• "Listen to the citizens of our city and involve them from the beginning in decisions affecting the nature of their parks and recreation system"(2000 Annual Report)

Explicit incorporation of ecological priorities.
• Urban wildlife habitat conservation plans; stewardship focus; environmental education focus

• "Strengthen our city's unique relationship with the natural environment, the land and the water"

