

3.3 PARKS AND RECREATION

Public parks and recreation facilities within the City are important community resources. The parks are open to the public for various outdoor recreation activities, including bicycle and pedestrian trails, roller-blading, jogging, and educational uses (such as, nature walks, riparian and wetland studies, and elementary classroom activities and programs).

This section addresses the impacts of the No Action Alternative, the Existing I-25 Alternative, and the Modified I-25 Alternative on parks and recreation facilities located within the study area. The analysis considers the affected environment and the environmental consequences of each of the alternatives. Mitigation measures to offset potential impacts from each Build Alternative are presented at the end of the section. While all park and recreational facilities in the study area were considered in the analysis and evaluated for impacts, only those that would be directly or indirectly affected by the project are addressed in this section.

Two key pieces of legislation were enacted in the 1960s to provide protection for public parks and recreation facilities. One is Section 4(f) of the United States Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (known as Section 4(f)), and the other is Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (LWCF).

The Section 4(f) legislation provides protection for publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife or waterfowl refuges, and historic sites from conversion to a transportation use. The Secretary of the United States Department of Transportation may not approve a project that requires the use of any publicly owned land from a public park, recreation area, wildlife or waterfowl refuge, or historic site of national, state, or local significance unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of land from the property and the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from such use (23 CFR 774.3). Section 4(f) analyses were conducted for the project, and the results are documented in **Chapter 4 – Section 4(f) Evaluation**.

Section 6(f) of the LWCF ensures that federal investments in the LWCF are maintained for public outdoor recreation use. These properties include parks and recreation facilities that have been acquired through the use of LWCF grants. Six LWCF grants have been used to acquire three different parks in the corridor. The Existing I-25 Alternative and Modified I-25 Alternative would not impact any of the Section 6(f) properties. See **Appendix B** for a letter from the Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation concurring with the finding of no impact on Section 6(f) properties in the project area.

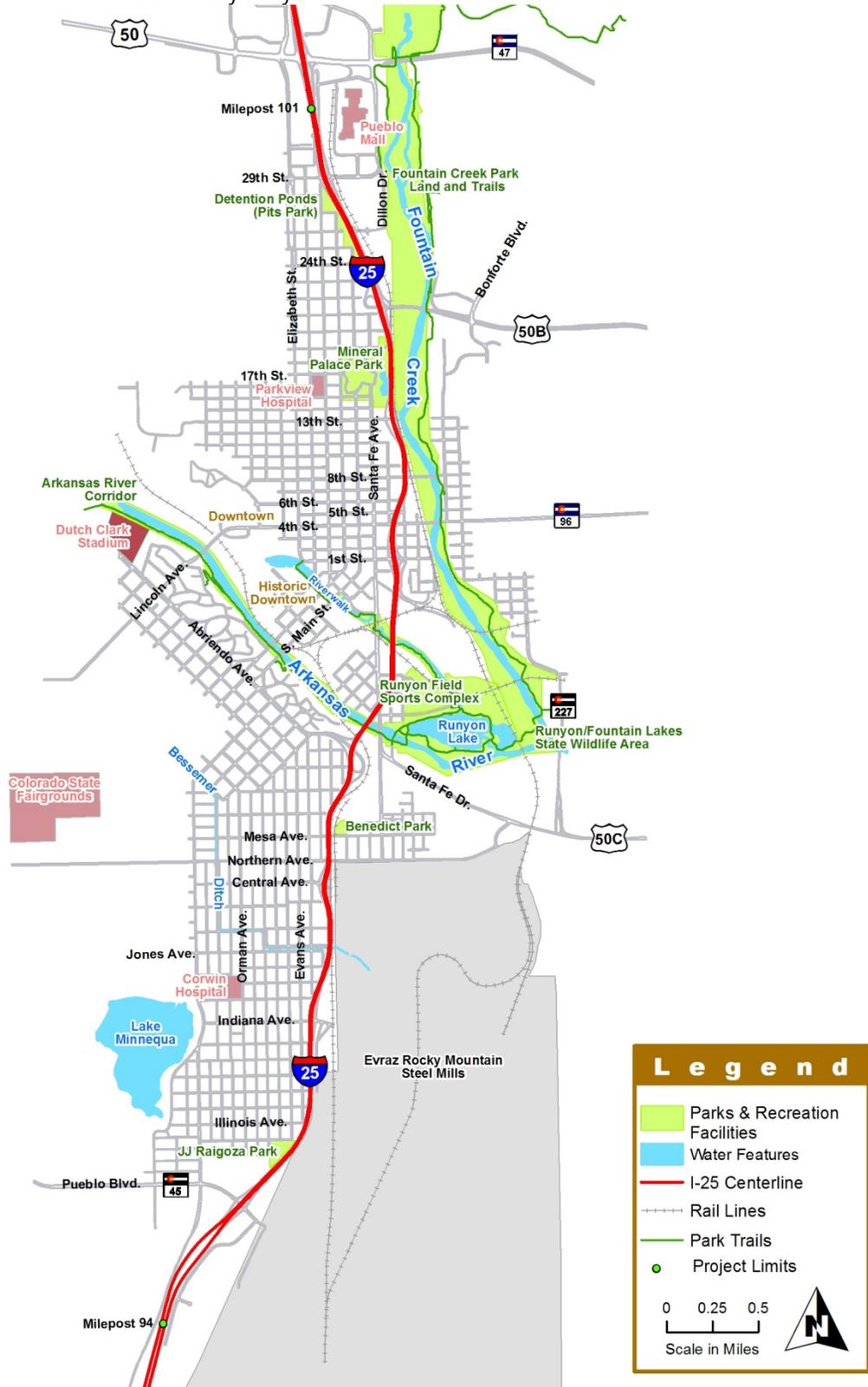
3.3.1 Affected Environment

Pueblo has numerous parks and recreation opportunities within the City and in the regional area, including small and large neighborhood parks, an extensive river trail system, sports ballparks and facilities, golf courses, auto and dog racing tracks, a zoo, nature center, and the Lake Pueblo State Park. The study area includes the following parks and recreation facilities, from north to south (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1**):

- ❖ Detention ponds between 29th Street and 24th Street adjacent to I-25
- ❖ Mineral Palace Park
- ❖ Fountain Creek Park Land and Trails
- ❖ Runyon Field Sports Complex
- ❖ Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area
- ❖ Arkansas River Corridor
- ❖ Benedict Park
- ❖ JJ Raigoza Park

All of the parks are owned by the City except the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area, which is owned by the Pueblo Conservancy District and operated and maintained by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) as a State Wildlife Area, and the Runyon Field Sports Complex, which is owned by Pueblo County. A detailed analysis of each park and recreational facility was conducted in the study area. Brief descriptions of each park, from north to south, are provided in the following sections.

EXHIBIT 3.3-1
Parks and Recreation Facilities in the New Pueblo Freeway Study Area



3.3.1.1 Detention Ponds Between 29th Street and 24th Street Adjacent to I-25

The detention ponds between 29th Street and 24th Street adjacent to I-25 on the west side of the highway (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1**) are commonly referred to as “Pits Park.” The ponds were constructed and are owned and maintained by the City Parks and Recreation Department for the primary purpose of providing flood control and water detention along the west side of I-25 (to intercept and impound surface water runoff); however, this area is also used for informal and unprogrammed recreation uses. The site consists of two areas: a 0.49-acre area at 23rd Street and Main Street, and a larger 11.16-acre area located between 24th Street and 28th Street along the west side of I-25. Each area is covered with turf and maintained by the City Parks and Recreation Department. The turf area is used by nearby residents as playfields for soccer and other recreational sports activities.



Detention Ponds (Pits Park)

3.3.1.2 Mineral Palace Park

Mineral Palace Park (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1** and in greater detail in **Exhibit 3.3-4**) is Pueblo’s second largest park (after City Park). It is located on the west side of I-25, north of downtown. The 50.07-acre site is bounded by 19th Avenue on the north, 15th Avenue on the south, Court Street on the west, and I-25 on the east. A chain-link fence on the eastern boundary separates the park from the highway. Mineral Palace Park contains the maintenance headquarters for the City Parks and Recreation Department. The park features a small lake (Lake Clara) as well as an extensive network of flower gardens and landscaped park areas. Historic

structures in the park include a band shell, pedestrian bridge, and boat house.

Historic Mineral Palace Park served as a tourist attraction from 1896 to 1943. In the early 1900s, the park extended south to 11th Street and east to the freight rail line that is currently located on the east side of I-25. The park was over 60 acres in size, and Lake Clara was three times larger than it is today. The original Mineral Palace building housed gems and minerals from around the world. In the ensuing years of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the park began its decline. For financial reasons, the City drained half of the lake and sold all of the parkland south of 14th Street.



Original Mineral Palace Building

During the late 1930s, due to a series of Works Progress Administration Projects (WPA), the park experienced a revival, and most of the existing walls and structures seen in the park today were constructed during the WPA era. After 1935, both Lake Clara and the park were again reduced in size as US 85/87 was constructed along the eastern edge of the park. The western edge of the lake was filled in, and a large lawn was created as a seating area for the band shell between the boathouse and the lake. The Mineral Palace building was removed in 1943, marking the end of its period as a tourist attraction.

Other additional uses were added to the park after World War II, deviating from the original design of the park. These included the public swimming pool and the regional parks maintenance facility. With the construction and opening of I-25 in 1959, Lake Clara was resituated and reduced in size, and Mineral Palace Park was reduced to its current size of approximately 50.07 acres.

Today, the boat house is used by the Pueblo Art Guild, and the band shell is not used as a music venue. Recreational amenities include a swimming pool, tennis courts, picnic tables, and playground equipment. According to the City Parks and Recreation Department staff, the park is currently undersized based on current uses and community needs. The eastern edge of the park is currently underutilized due to noise from I-25 and the freight rail line, which runs parallel to I-25. A portion of the northeastern area of the park is isolated (including the tennis courts) and is, therefore, underutilized. The existing swimming pool facilities are aging and require a significant amount of maintenance and repair. Maintenance of the small, irregularly shaped lake is difficult due to issues such as poor water circulation and algae growth.



Lake Clara at Mineral Palace Park

3.3.1.3 Fountain Creek Park Land and Trail

The Fountain Creek Park Land, owned and managed by the City, is entirely located within the Fountain Creek floodplain. The parkland was purchased in 1971 with funds from the U.S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (a former federal agency that was abolished in 1981) and consists of open space, a trail that serves regional and local bike traffic, a pedestrian trail, a location for environmental education opportunities at the elementary-school level, and a wildlife and naturally-vegetated corridor (City of Pueblo, 2004).

The parkland (shown in Exhibit 3.3-1) is approximately 400 acres of undeveloped, semi-arid high plains, predominantly covered with sagebrush, cactus, willow, cottonwood, and native grasses. Surface waters, riparian areas, and wetlands adjacent to the highway provide habitat for wildlife. Stormwater runoff from I-25 currently runs untreated into Fountain Creek and the wetland areas in the

parkland, causing sedimentation issues and impacting wildlife habitat.

Fountain Creek Trail (shown in Exhibit 3.3-1) extends south along the Fountain Creek floodplain from an area north of SH 47 to the confluence of Fountain Creek with the Arkansas River. The trail parallels I-25 on the east side of the highway from north of 29th Street to the Arkansas River. Paved bicycle and pedestrian trails are located along the east side of Fountain Creek, along with a few picnic tables. There are also a number of trailheads adjacent to the trail.



Fountain Creek Park Land

3.3.1.4 Runyon Field Sports Complex

The Runyon Field Sports Complex (shown in Exhibit 3.3-1) is located on the east side of I-25, north of the Arkansas River. It is a heavily used community recreational facility with a rich baseball history and is considered a regional recreational amenity. The complex consists of four lighted baseball fields, including two regulation-sized diamonds, an intermediate field, and a small youth field. Associated with all four fields are concession stands, announcing booths, a clubhouse, permanent seating (bleachers), and paved parking.



Runyon Field Sports Complex

The Runyon Field Sports Complex was first established in the 1930s. In 1985, two additional fields were added to the complex, and a fourth field was added in 1994. In 1999, a new \$300,000 club house was constructed and the original fence around Runyon/Hobbs Field was replaced. The land and facilities associated with the complex are owned by Pueblo County, and the complex is operated by the Runyon Board of Directors, a nonprofit organization.

In 2010, more than 1,600 games were played by more than 97 youth teams (age 14 and under) at the complex. In addition, 21 high school and college teams use these fields. High school and middle school girls' softball teams also play home games at the Runyon Field Sports Complex. The baseball/softball season runs six days per week from April to October. All the fields are lighted, and night games are frequent. Access to the Runyon Field Sports Complex is from the Ilex Street interchange from I-25. The traffic generated by events at the complex has been known to back-up through the interchange, often extending as far as I-25.

3.3.1.5 Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area

The Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1** and in greater detail in **Exhibit 3.3-2**) is a 40-acre wildlife protection area owned by the Pueblo Conservation District and maintained and operated by the CDOW. The lake and park area are located along the Arkansas River east of Santa Fe Avenue and south of the Runyon Field Sports Complex. The wildlife area provides public recreation opportunities, including shore fishing, hiking, picnicking, and wildlife watching. The park facilities include restrooms, three Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant fishing piers, a biking and hiking trail, park benches, a memorial park bench, and a gravel surface parking lot, as shown in **Exhibit 3.3-2**. Downstream of the Arkansas River levee, a pedestrian bridge over the river connects the Fountain Creek and Arkansas River trails. North of Runyon Lake, the Thomas Phelps Creek Trail connects Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area to the Historic Arkansas Riverwalk of Pueblo (HARP).

3.3.1.6 Arkansas River Corridor

The Arkansas River Corridor (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1**) extends east from the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area to Lake Pueblo State Park. The area encompasses 280 acres of land in the corridor, including the water surface of the Arkansas River and the channelized embankment of the river. It serves as the site for the Arkansas River Trail that parallels the river and connects to various amenities in the community. In addition, the Pueblo Whitewater Park is a kayaking course on this section of the river that starts at the 4th Street bridge and continues to the Union bridge at Corona Street, upstream of the I-25 crossing of the Arkansas River. The area beyond the Union bridge is not used for recreation due to dangerous conditions such as debris or hydraulic backwash from a low-head dam.

3.3.1.7 Benedict Park

Benedict Park (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1**) is located east of I-25 adjacent to the former St. Mary's School, now home to the St. Mary's Genealogy Center and John Gornick Slovenian Library. The 1.92-acre park was once associated with the school, but St. Mary's turned the site over to the City in 1980. Since that time, the City has maintained it as a neighborhood park, primarily serving the nearby residents in the Grove and Bessemer neighborhoods. The site is located on East Mesa Avenue east of I-25 and west of Eilers Avenue. Amenities include informal athletic fields, a basketball court, ADA-compliant playground equipment, and picnic tables.



Benedict Park

EXHIBIT 3.3-2

Facilities at the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area



3.3.1.8 JJ Raigoza Park

JJ Raigoza Park (shown in **Exhibit 3.3-1**) is a 7.85-acre park roughly bound by Maryland Avenue to the north, Pine Avenue to the west, and I-25 to the southeast. The park primarily serves the Bessemer Neighborhood with amenities that include a tennis court, basketball court, playground equipment, restroom, and picnic table.



JJ Raigoza Park

Further detail on parks in the project area may be found in the *Parks Technical Memorandum, New Pueblo Freeway* (CH2M HILL, 2010c).

3.3.2 Environmental Consequences

To help the CDOT Project Team avoid and/or minimize impacts to the parks, a Park Advisory Committee (PAC) was established. The PAC was made up of local citizens and staff from the City Parks and Recreation Department, the City Planning Department, and the County Parks Department. Through a series of workshops, the PAC helped develop park mitigation plans. More information about the PAC activities can be found in **Chapter 6 – Comments and Coordination**.

This section analyzes impacts to parks in the corridor. **Chapter 4 – Section 4(f) Evaluation** also provides detailed descriptions of impacts and mitigation measures for Mineral Palace Park, Fountain Creek Park Land, Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area, and Benedict Park.

3.3.2.1 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would not have any direct impacts to any parks in the corridor.

Existing effects to the park facilities due to the proximity of roads to the parks, including noise and visual impacts,

would continue. Access to the Runyon Field Sports Complex would remain difficult before and after sporting events, with queues extending onto I-25.

Under the No Action Alternative, continued sedimentation and pollutant loading from stormwater runoff into surface waters, riparian areas, and wetlands adjacent to the highway could adversely affect wildlife habitat in the Fountain Creek Park Land.

3.3.2.2 Build Alternatives

This section describes the impacts of the Build Alternatives to each of the parks and recreation facilities adjacent to I-25.

North Area

As shown in **Exhibit 3.3-3**, both Build Alternatives would directly impact Mineral Palace Park and the Fountain Creek Park Land. The detention ponds between 29th Street and 24th Street adjacent to I-25 and the Fountain Creek Trail would not be directly impacted by the Build Alternatives; however, there is a potential for noise impacts. Direct impacts to parks and recreation facilities in the North Area are described in detail below and featured in **Exhibits 3.3-4, 3.3-5, and 3.3-6**.

Detention Ponds between 29th Street and 24th Street Adjacent to I-25

Widening I-25 adjacent to the detention ponds would not impact the recreational uses of the ponds. The detention ponds are currently maintained by the City, and maintenance access would be retained. The two Build Alternatives include noise barriers to be built in CDOT right-of-way (ROW) to protect the detention ponds and surrounding neighborhoods from noise. With the noise barriers in place, the ponds would experience noise levels of approximately 58 to 61 A-weighted decibels (dBA), which is less than noise levels experienced at the park today. Noise impacts are detailed in **Section 3.5 Noise**. No property acquisition would occur as a result of the Build Alternatives.

Mineral Palace Park

As shown in **Exhibit 3.3-3**, I-25 is located between Mineral Palace Park to the west and an active historic rail line to the east, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Both the park and the railroad property

EXHIBIT 3.3-3
Impacts to Parks and Recreation Facilities in the North Area



EXHIBIT 3.3-4
 Mineral Palace Park Features and Impacts of the Build Alternatives

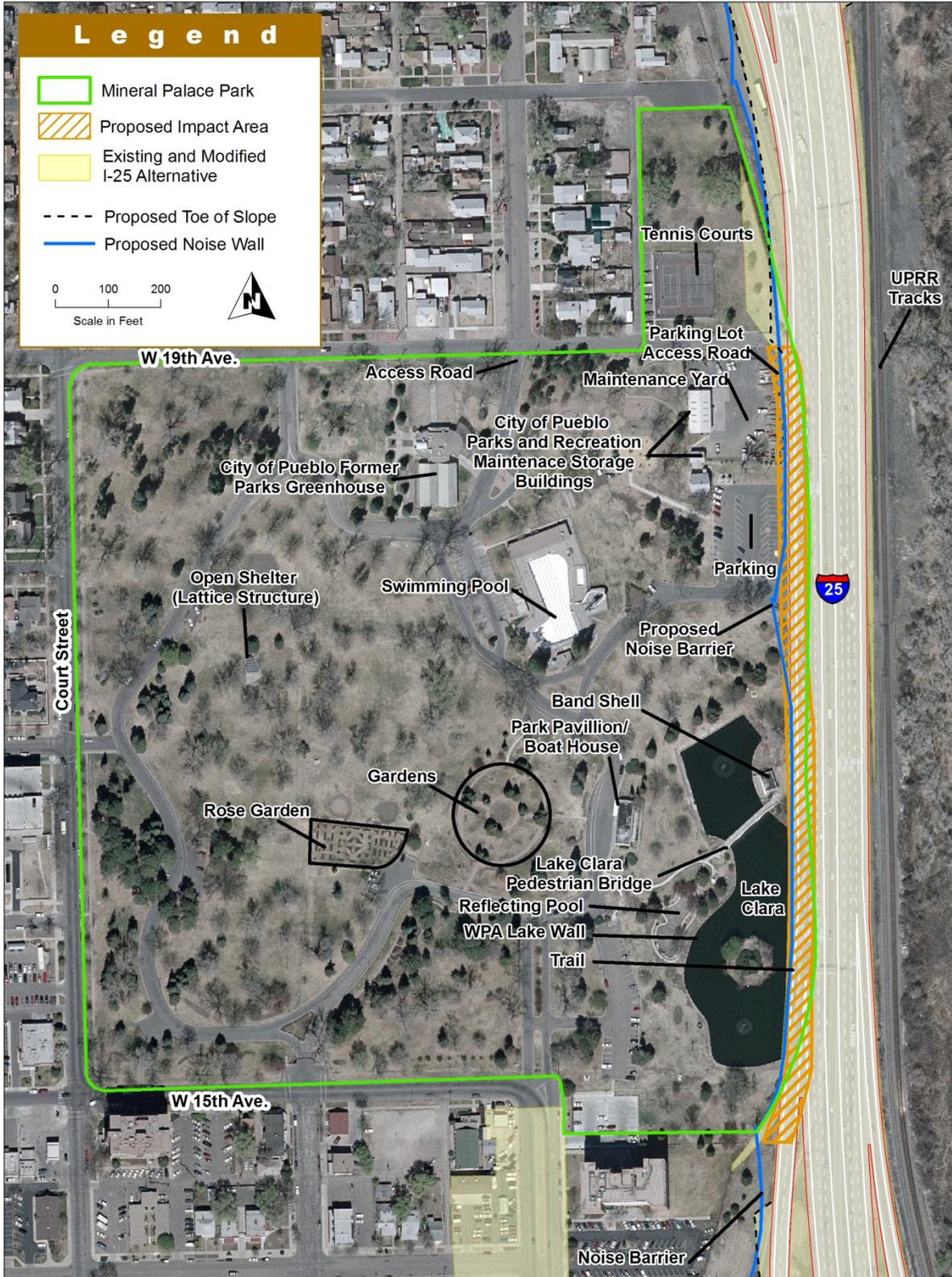
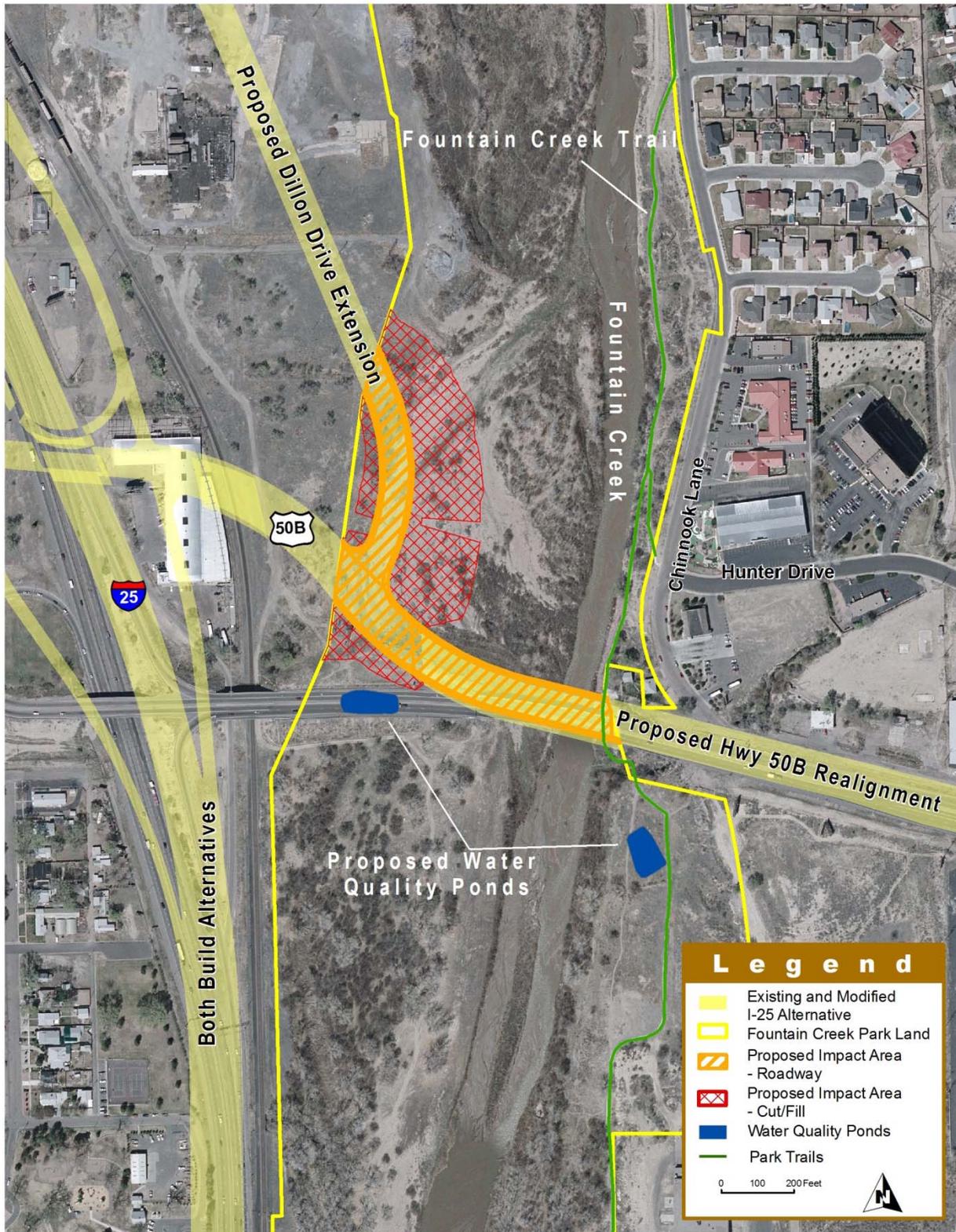


EXHIBIT 3.3-5
 Fountain Creek Park Land and Impacts of the Build Alternatives at 8th Street



EXHIBIT 3.3-6
Fountain Creek Park Land and Impacts of the Build Alternatives at US 50B



are directly adjacent to CDOT ROW, which presented a design challenge for widening the highway.

Both Build Alternatives would impact Mineral Palace Park as follows:

- ❖ Widening I-25 adjacent to the park would result in loss of a strip approximately 50 feet wide along the eastern 1,500-foot edge of the park, which translates into approximately 1.69 acres (3 percent of the 50.07 acre park). This is the part of the park that is not currently used by recreationists because its current noise levels are approximately 65 dBA.
- ❖ The loss of the eastern portion of the park would result in loss of the northeast park road leading to a parking lot, as well as about 40 parking spaces, grass, small shrubs, and approximately 20 mature trees.
- ❖ Fifteen to 20 percent of Lake Clara would be eliminated, rendering it unable to function as a viable lake. The lake has been reduced in size several times in the past, making the un-functioning lake small and irregularly shaped and making healthy water circulation difficult. Highway improvements will further exacerbate the lake condition.
- ❖ A section totaling approximately 40 linear feet of a WPA lake wall would be eliminated along Lake Clara.
- ❖ Approximately 13 percent of the existing acreage of the park maintenance yard, located in the northeast corner of Mineral Palace Park, would be lost.
- ❖ The informal path that generally follows the eastern fence would be severed and would have to be reconnected.
- ❖ Construction of noise barriers would be needed to protect the park from additional noise impacts. With noise mitigation in place, the park would experience a decrease in noise levels of approximately 5 to 7 dBA. Noise impacts to Mineral Palace Park are detailed in **Section 3.5 Noise**.

The project impacts described above are shown in **Exhibit 3.3-4**.

Fountain Creek Park Land and Trail

As shown in **Exhibit 3.3-5** and **Exhibit 3.3-6**, the Build Alternatives would impact the Fountain Creek Park Land and Trail as follows:

- ❖ The extension of Dillon Drive to US 50B requires acquisition of undeveloped parkland along the east

side of Fountain Creek, north of US 50B. This area around the extended road is made up of low-quality riparian habitat. Both the Existing I-25 Alternative and Modified I-25 Alternative would use 4.97 acres of parkland for the Dillon Drive extension.

- ❖ The relocation of US 50B to the north and widening of US 50B over Fountain Creek would use approximately 2.93 acres of the parkland.
- ❖ An improved connection to 8th Street on the east side of I-25 would require acquisition of approximately 0.43 acres of the parkland. The improvements would include the addition of two new sidewalks along the bridge.
- ❖ Stormwater detention features included in the Build Alternatives would impact 1.42 acres of the parkland. These facilities will capture stormwater runoff and reduce the amount of pollution and sediment that reach surface waters, riparian areas, and wetlands adjacent to the highway. This would have a beneficial effect on the Fountain Creek Park Land.
- ❖ Temporary detours and/or closures of the Fountain Creek Trail would be required to protect the public when construction is occurring above the trail (typically when bridge girders are set or bridge decks are poured).

South Area

JJ Raigoza Park is the only park located in the South Area of the project. As shown in **Exhibit 3.3-7**, neither Build Alternative would require ROW from JJ Raigoza Park. The Build Alternatives include a noise barrier to protect the park from noise. With the noise barriers in place, the park would experience noise levels of approximately 63 dBA, which is less than noise levels experienced at the park today. Noise impacts to JJ Raigoza Park are detailed in **Section 3.5 Noise**.

Central Area

Existing I-25 Alternative

As shown in **Exhibit 3.3-8**, the Existing I-25 Alternative would not impact the Runyon Field Sports Complex; however, this alternative would affect the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area, the Arkansas River Corridor, and Benedict Park. Impacts to these resources are described in detail below.

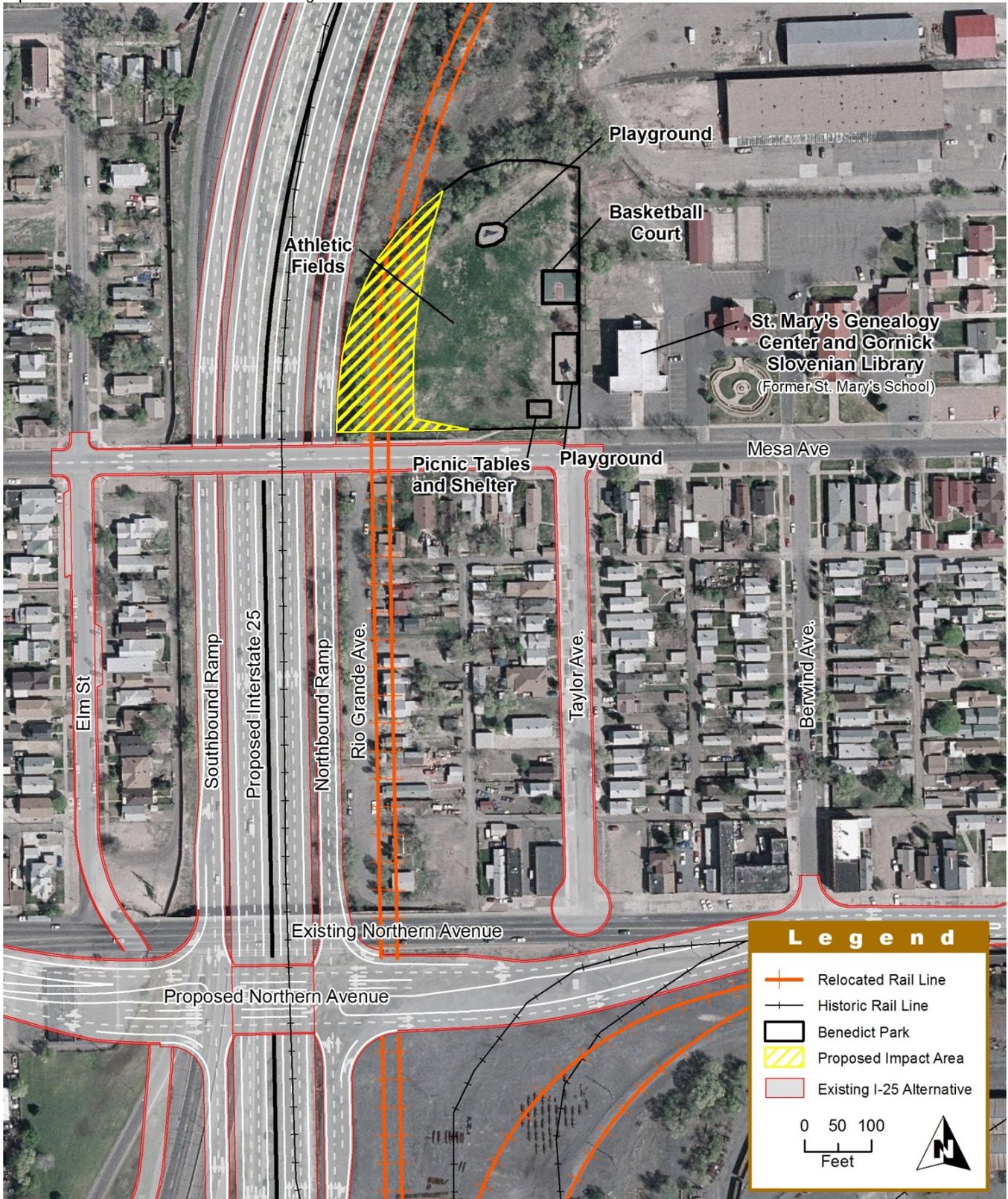
EXHIBIT 3.3-7
Impacts to Parks and Recreation Facilities in the South Area



EXHIBIT 3.3-8
Impacts to Parks and Recreation Facilities in the Central Area under the Existing I-25 Alternative



EXHIBIT 3.3-9
Impacts to Benedict Park under the Existing I-25 Alternative



Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area

Construction of the Existing I-25 Alternative would temporarily impact the Thomas Phelps Creek Trail, which is a part of the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area. Temporary detours and/or closures of the trail would be required to protect the public when construction is occurring above the trail (typically, when bridge girders are set or bridge decks are poured). No other impacts to the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area are expected.

Arkansas River Corridor

The Existing I-25 Alternative would require construction of a new bridge just to the east of the current I-25 bridge crossing the Arkansas River. Temporary detours and/or closures of the Arkansas River trail would be required to protect the public when construction is occurring above the trail (typically when bridge girders are set or bridge decks are poured).

Benedict Park

The Existing I-25 Alternative would impact the west side of Benedict Park as follows:

- ❖ The relocation of the historic freight rail line to the east of the current location would require the use of approximately 0.42 acre of the western edge of the park. This means that 1.50 acres of the park would remain, leaving a smaller park that would still function as a neighborhood “pocket” park.
- ❖ The informal athletic field would be eliminated; however, the playgrounds and basketball court could continue to be used by the neighborhood.

The impacts of the Existing I-25 Alternative to Benedict Park are shown in **Exhibit 3.3-9**.

Noise levels at the current park location would reach 66 dBA under the Existing I-25 Alternative, which is considered impacted by noise under CDOT’s noise abatement criterion for recreation areas (CDOT, 20011a).

Coordination between CDOT and the City resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in March 2010 in which the City agreed to allow CDOT to use Benedict Park for the New Pueblo Freeway Project and CDOT agreed to mitigate the impacts to the park as described later in this section (see **Appendix F**).

Modified I-25 Alternative

As shown in **Exhibit 3.3-10**, the Modified I-25 Alternative would have impacts to all of the parklands in the Central Area. These impacts are described in detail below.

Runyon Field Sports Complex

The Modified I-25 Alternative would have no direct impact to the Runyon Field Sports Complex. Under the Modified I-25 Alternative, Stanton Avenue would be extended north and west to Santa Fe Avenue and south to Santa Fe Drive. Access to the Runyon Field Sports Complex would be provided from Stanton Avenue, allowing visitors to reach the park from the local street system rather than the off-ramp from I-25. This new road network would eliminate the queues of vehicles traveling to the Runyon Field Sports Complex that extend onto the highway, resulting in a benefit to the users of the complex and I-25. This benefit is not possible under the Existing I-25 Alternative.

Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area

Impacts of the Modified I-25 Alternative to the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area are shown in **Exhibit 3.3-11** and detailed below.

- ❖ The Modified I-25 Alternative realigns the current I-25 alignment to the east, starting south of Ilex Street. The new highway alignment would require the construction of four new bridges over the Arkansas River and within the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area. **Exhibit 3.3-11** illustrates how most of the I-25 mainline and adjacent ramps would bridge over park property; however, bridge abutments on the south side of the river would be placed in some of the State Wildlife Area.
- ❖ Stanton Avenue would be extended south on a bridge over the State Wildlife Area and the Arkansas River.
- ❖ Eighteen new bridge piers would be placed in the State Wildlife Area to support the bridges for I-25 and for the extension of Stanton Avenue. The existing bridge piers that support I-25 would remain within the State Wildlife Area to carry Santa Fe Avenue. The old Santa Fe/US 50B Bridge over the Arkansas River would be removed, which would remove one pier from the State Wildlife Area.

EXHIBIT 3.3-10
 Impacts to Parks and Recreation Facilities in the Central Area under the Modified I-25 Alternative



EXHIBIT 3.3-11
 Impacts to the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area under the Modified I-25 Alternative

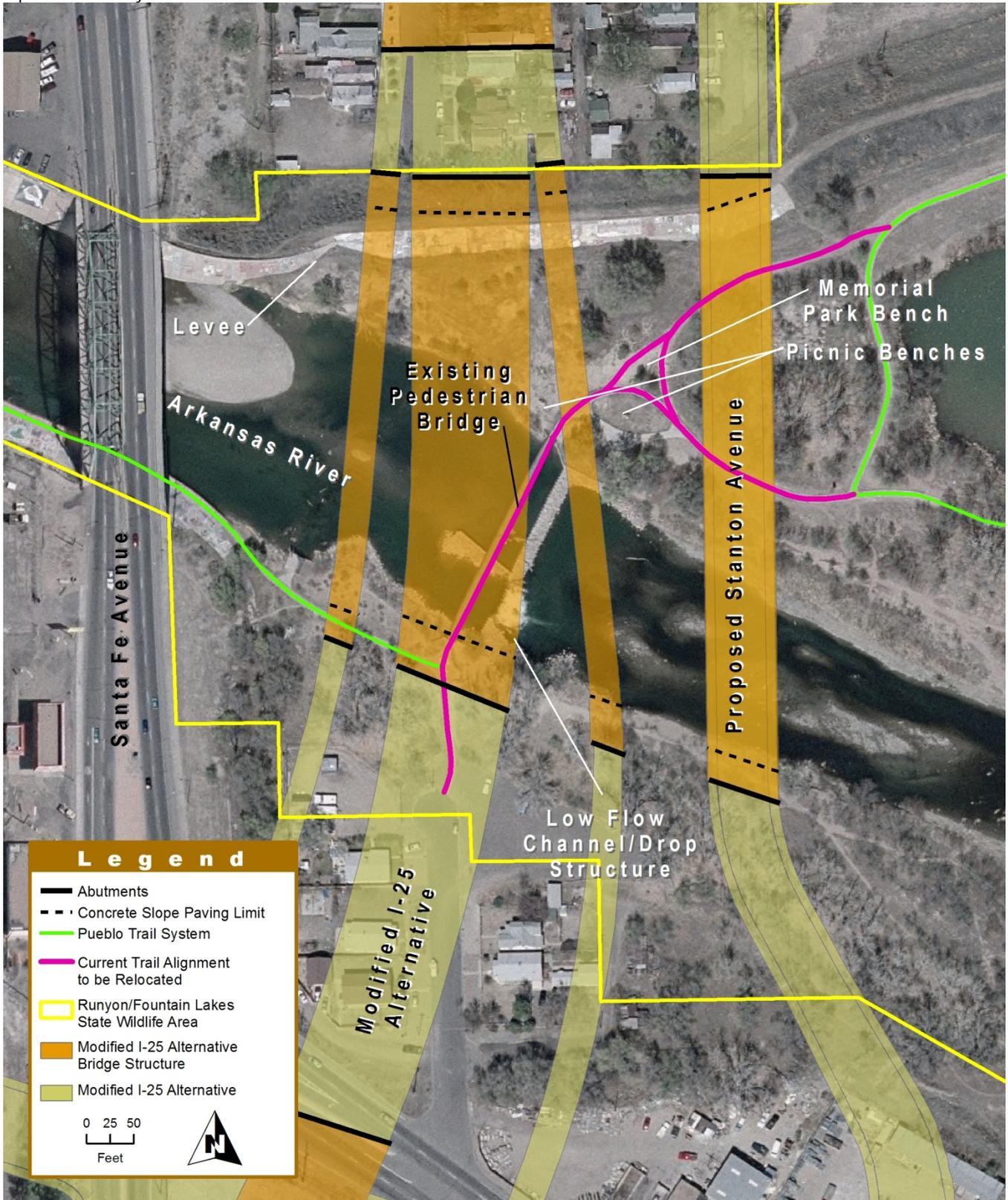
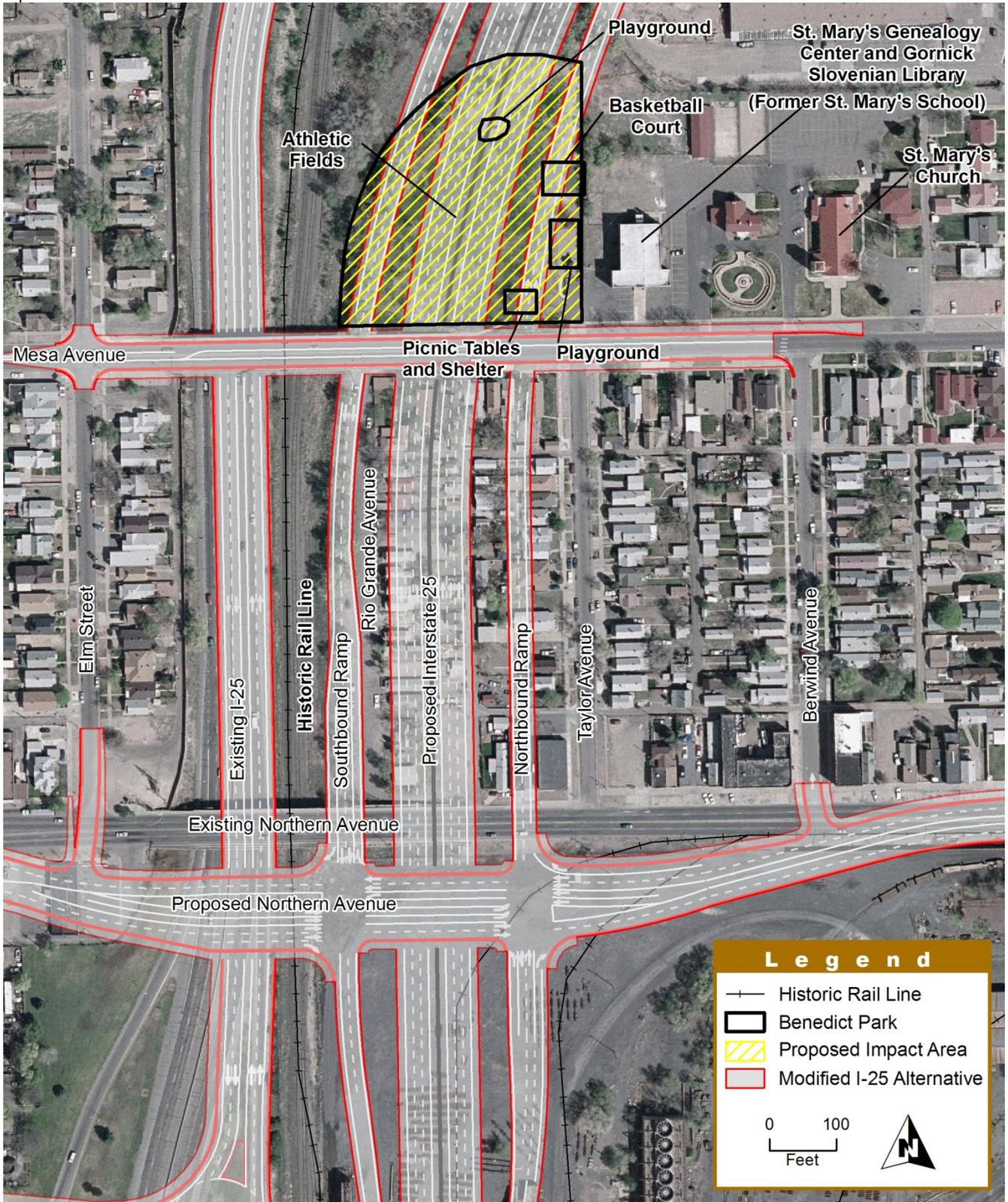


EXHIBIT 3.3-12
Impacts to Benedict Park under the Modified I-25 Alternative



- ❖ The existing pedestrian bridge that crosses the Arkansas River, connecting Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area on the north side of the river to the Arkansas River Trail on the south, would be removed to allow room for the I-25 bridges to span the river.
- ❖ The trail that leads to the footbridge would be relocated with a bridge that allows for crossing the Arkansas River and reconnecting to the Arkansas River Trail. The park benches and the memorial park bench would be moved to the east.
- ❖ The Thomas Phelps Creek Trail would be temporarily impacted by the construction of the I-25 mainline. Temporary detours and/or closures of the trail would be required to protect the public when construction is occurring above the trail (typically, when bridge girders are set or bridge decks are poured). No other impacts to Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area are expected.

Arkansas River Corridor

Under the Modified I-25 Alternative new bridges east of the current I-25 bridge crossing the Arkansas River would be constructed. Temporary detours and/or closures of the Arkansas River trail would be required to protect the public when construction is occurring above the trail (typically when bridge girders are set or bridge decks are poured).

Benedict Park

The Modified I-25 Alternative would impact Benedict Park by completely shifting the highway east onto park property. The freight rail line would stay in its current location. The informal athletic fields, two playgrounds, picnic tables and picnic shelter, and a basketball court would all be removed. Impacts to Benedict Park are illustrated in **Exhibit 3.3-12**.

Noise levels at the current park location would reach 66 dBA under the Modified I-25 Alternative, which is considered impacted by noise under CDOT's noise abatement criterion for recreation areas (CDOT, 20011a). However, under this alternative, the location of Benedict Park is moved south, as described in Section 3.3.3, where noise modeling indicates that noise would not reach impact levels.

Coordination between CDOT and the City resulted in a MOU in March 2010 in which the City agreed to allow CDOT to use Benedict Park for the New Pueblo Freeway Project and CDOT agreed to mitigate the impacts to the park as described later in this section (see **Appendix F**).

3.3.3 Mitigation

Unless otherwise specified, the following mitigations apply to both the Existing I-25 Alternative and the Modified I-25 Alternative. The following mitigation actions were developed in cooperation with citizens to be implemented during final design and construction activities.

Detention Ponds between 29th Street and 24th Street, Adjacent to I-25

To alleviate potential noise impacts from I-25, CDOT will place two noise barriers between 29th Street and 24th Street on the east side parallel to I-25, starting at the north end and ending in the south. The barrier will mitigate potential noise from traffic on I-25 after roadway improvements have been made. Noise mitigation is detailed in **Section 3.5 Noise**.

Mineral Palace Park

City staff and citizens participated in an extensive public involvement process to determine adequate mitigation for impacts to Mineral Palace Park. This process resulted in the development of a restoration plan for the park that is illustrated in **Exhibit 3.3-13**. The restoration plan will adhere to a theme of celebrating the past and connecting to neighborhoods. The restoration plan is a master plan for the park restoration in general, not a design plan. Key components of the plan include the following:

- ❖ **Increase the size of Mineral Palace Park to 52.38 acres.** Land will be added adjacent to the park, south to 13th Street and north to the US 50B loop. Implementation of the mitigation measures for the park have been stipulated in a MOU between the City and CDOT (see **Appendix F**). The MOU contains commitments from CDOT to construct park improvements and lays out the responsibilities of the City to accept ownership and maintenance responsibility for those improvements, once completed.
- ❖ **Relocate the swimming pool.** The existing swimming pool will be moved out of the existing park to a location near 13th Street and Santa Fe Avenue. Although the pool is an important community amenity, it is not consistent with the historical uses of the park.

EXHIBIT 3.3-13
Mineral Palace Park Master Plan - Mitigation



- ❖ **Add new parking.** The parking that will be lost as a result of the I-25 widening will be replaced with new parking lots that include several handicap parking spaces in both the southern and northern parts of the park.
- ❖ **Construct a pedestrian bridge.** A pedestrian bridge will be constructed over I-25 to connect Mineral Palace Park to the Fountain Creek Park Land.
- ❖ **Add noise walls and earthen berms.** Noise mitigation features (walls and berms) will be added to reduce noise from I-25. Noise mitigation is detailed in **Section 3.5 Noise**.
- ❖ **Add vegetation.** Vegetation will be planted along the proposed sound wall and berms to soften views into and out of the park. More trees will be planted in the park as a nursery crop to replace the current shade trees that are on the decline because they are well over 100 years old.
- ❖ **Enlarge Lake Clara.** Lake Clara will be expanded so that it will function as a healthy lake with adequate space.
- ❖ **Move the maintenance facility.** The maintenance facility will be relocated out of the park to add more usable parkland.
- ❖ **Construct a fountain.** A fountain will be constructed to look similar to the original fountain that was once present in the park and was removed prior to the development of this project.
- ❖ **Relocate activities.** Facilities and activity areas that are not noise sensitive will be moved closer to the highway.
- ❖ **Increase access to the park and within the park.** Increased access will be provided by adding additional trail connections and improving the internal roadway and walk systems within the park.
- ❖ **Construct an amphitheater.** An amphitheater will be constructed to help reintroduce concerts and events to the park.
- ❖ **Construct a palace plaza.** A plaza will be constructed at the site of the original Mineral Palace to provide a place in the park where historical interpretation of Mineral Palace Park can be displayed.
- ❖ **Improve handicap access.** Handicap-accessible ramps and parking areas will be constructed, along with appropriate surfaces throughout the park.

- ❖ **Reconnect the boathouse with Lake Clara.** Lake Clara will be enlarged so the boathouse will be reconnected to the lake.
- ❖ **Introduce traffic calming features.** State-of-the-art traffic-calming techniques will be incorporated, where appropriate, to slow traffic along the perimeter of the park.
- ❖ **Restore the gardens.** Some of the gardens around the park will be restored to their historic splendor.

Fountain Creek Park Land and Trail

The following mitigation measures for the Fountain Creek Park Land and Trail would be implemented for both Build Alternatives.

- ❖ CDOT will construct water treatment ponds to improve water quality in Fountain Creek and in the riparian and wetland habitat areas adjacent to the creek. CDOT will provide a pedestrian bridge, soft surface trail, and additional picnic tables.
- ❖ CDOT will construct a pedestrian bridge to provide access to the parkland from Mineral Palace Park and its surrounding neighborhood, resulting in an enhancement to the parkland. The addition of the trail will also enhance Pueblo's trail system and provide an east-west linkage over I-25.
- ❖ CDOT will provide advance notice to the public of temporary trail detours and/or closures of the Fountain Creek Trail during construction. Access will be maintained throughout construction to minimize impacts to users.

Arkansas River Corridor

CDOT will provide advance notice to the public of river closures or temporary detours and/or closures of the Arkansas River trail during construction. Access will be maintained as much as possible to minimize impacts to users.

JJ Raigoza Park

CDOT will construct a noise wall and berm to reduce the noise impact to the Evans area between Maryland Avenue and Nevada Avenue. Noise mitigation is detailed in **Section 3.5 Noise**.

3.3.3.1 Mitigation for the Existing I-25 Alternative

The following mitigation measures would be implemented specifically under the Existing I-25 Alternative.

Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area

CDOT will provide advance notice to the public of temporary detours and/or closures of the Thomas Phelps Creek Trail during construction. Access will be maintained as much as possible to minimize impacts to users.

Benedict Park

CDOT will construct a 2.13-acre expansion of Benedict Park to the south of the existing park. The expanded park will total 4.05 acres, which will include remnant parcels of the land required for the relocation of the railroad, as described in **Section 3.1 Transportation**. The existing playground equipment and a paved basketball court will remain.

The mitigation for Benedict Park is illustrated in **Exhibit 3.3-14** and **Exhibit 3.3-15**. The new park plans proposed under the Existing I-25 Alternative will address several issues at the existing park, including lack of parking (the new park plan includes on-street parking along Taylor Street) and the need for a shelter house, trees, and improved lighting.

To alleviate potential noise impacts from I-25, CDOT will construct a noise barrier on the west side of the park, parallel to I-25. The barrier will mitigate potential noise from traffic on I-25 after roadway improvements have been made. Noise mitigation is detailed in **Section 3.5 Noise**.

3.3.3.2 Mitigation for the Modified I-25 Alternative

The following mitigation measures would be implemented specifically under the Modified I-25 Alternative.

Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area

The following mitigation measures were developed by the CDOT Project Team with input from the public and City staff.

- ❖ The pedestrian bridge over the Arkansas River will be relocated just east of the proposed Stanton Avenue bridge to allow room for the new bridges that will span the river east of the current I-25 alignment.
- ❖ The trail that leads to the current pedestrian bridge will be relocated over the new pedestrian bridge to allow for crossing of the Arkansas River and reconnecting to the Arkansas River Trail.

- ❖ After construction, the trails will be fully usable by passing under the I-25 bridges and the Stanton Avenue bridge. Mitigation measures will protect and maintain the primary recreational components of the park.
- ❖ CDOT will provide advance notice to the public of temporary detours and/or closures of the Thomas Phelps Creek Trail during construction. Access will be maintained as much as possible to minimize impacts to users.

The mitigation for the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area is illustrated in **Exhibit 3.3-16**.

Benedict Park

CDOT will construct a new 4.30-acre Benedict Park south of the existing park location between Mesa Avenue and Northern Avenue. The new park will be constructed on remnant parcels of the land required for the changes in access due to the closures of Taylor Avenue and Rio Grande Avenue, as described in **Section 3.1 Transportation**. Playground equipment from the original Benedict Park will be relocated to St. Mary's Church property.

The mitigation plan for Benedict Park is illustrated in **Exhibit 3.3-17** and **Exhibit 3.3-18**. The new park plans proposed under the Modified I-25 Alternative will address several issues at the existing park, including lack of parking and the need for a shelter house, trees, and improved lighting.

Improvements to Benedict Park under the Modified I-25 Alternative, which include a larger contiguous park area, more amenities, and improved access, will result in an overall positive impact to the park when compared to the No Action Alternative and the Existing I-25 Alternative. It is not possible to provide a contiguous park under the Existing I-25 Alternative.

EXHIBIT 3.3-14
Mitigation for Benedict Park under the Existing I-25 Alternative



EXHIBIT 3.3-15
Mitigation for Benedict Park under the Existing I-25 Alternative

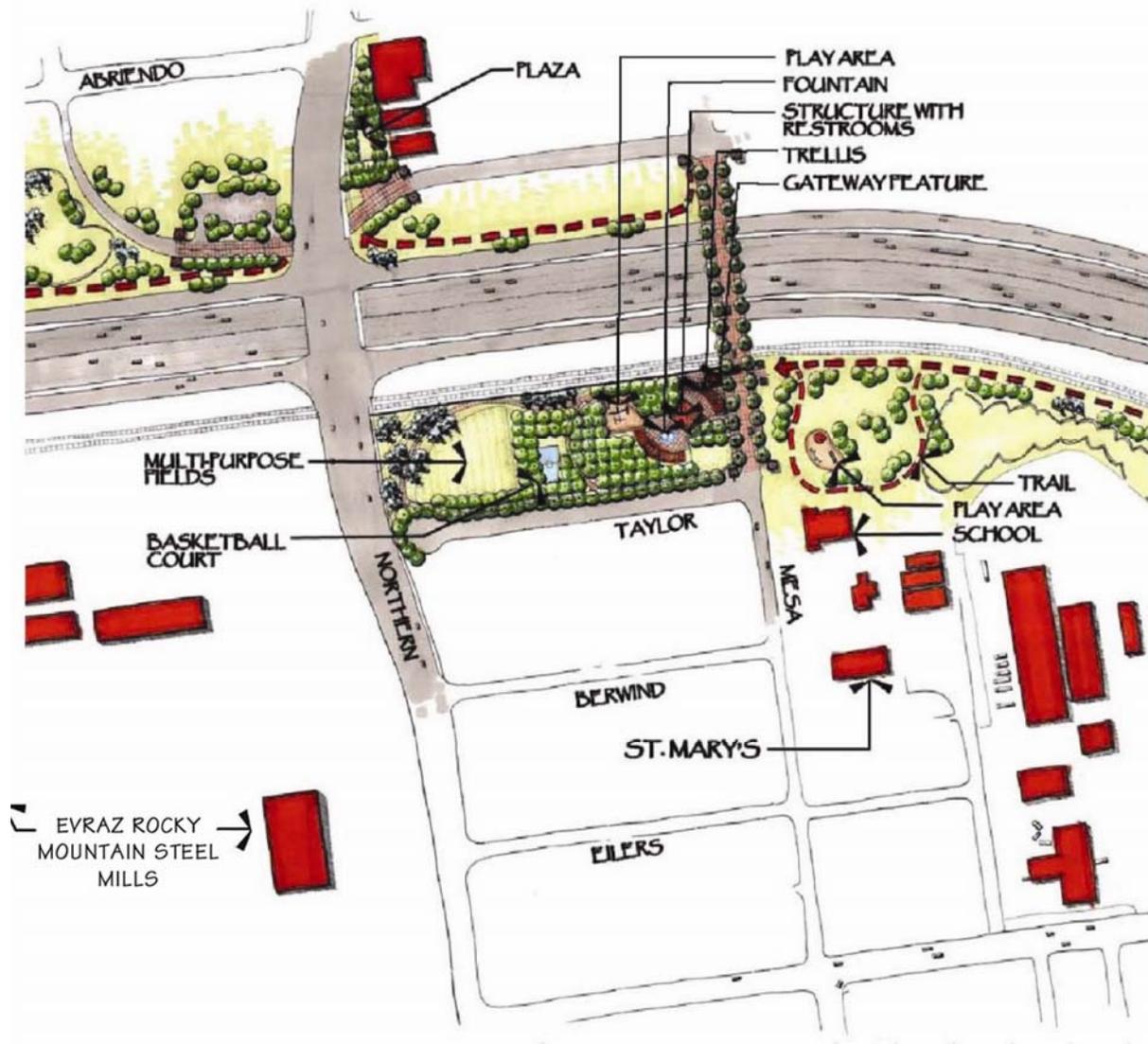


EXHIBIT 3.3-16
Mitigation for the Runyon/Fountain Lakes State Wildlife Area Features under Modified I-25 Alternative

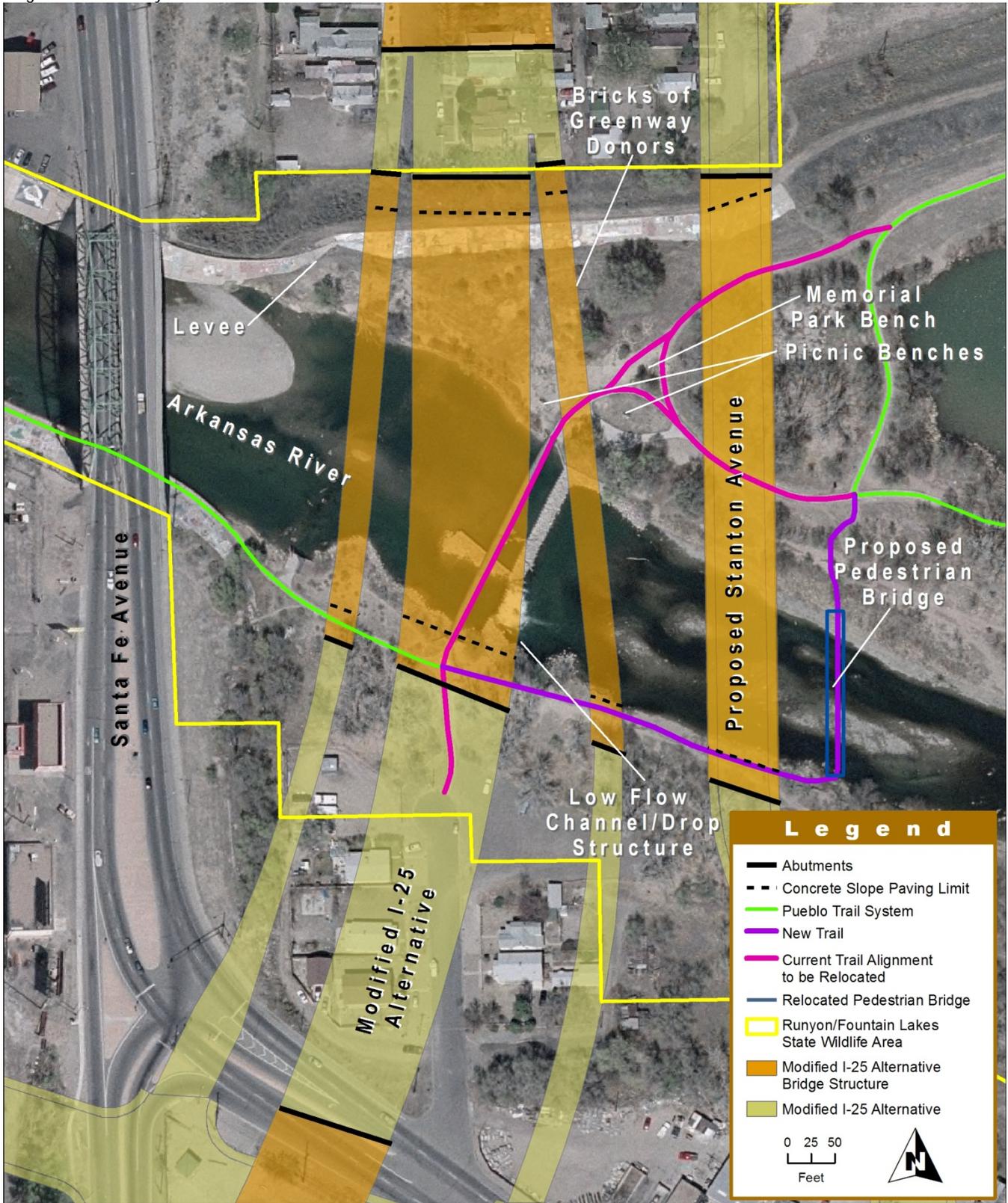


EXHIBIT 3.3-17
Mitigation for Benedict Park under the Modified I-25 Alternative

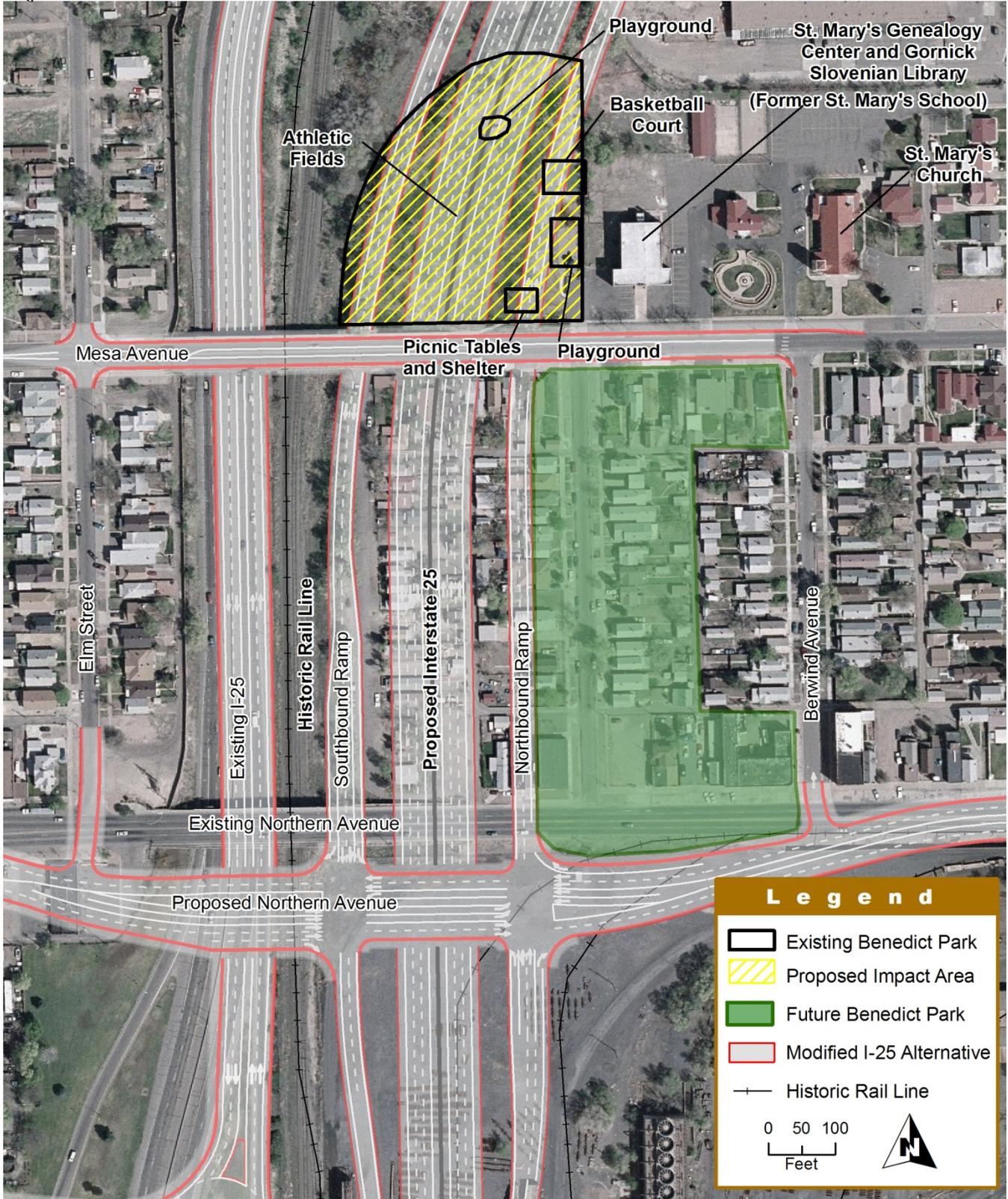
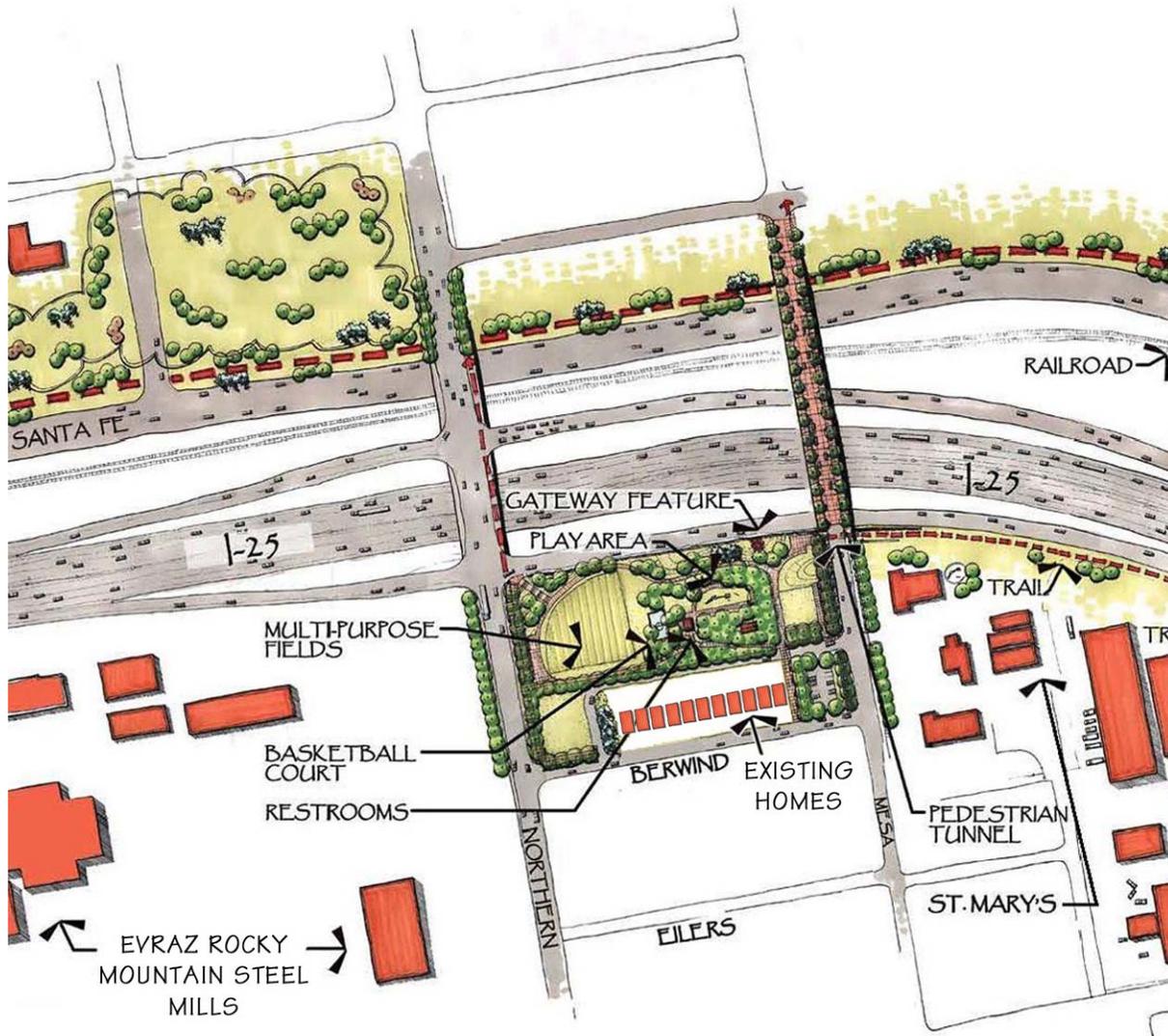


EXHIBIT 3.3-18
Mitigation for Benedict Park under the Modified I-25 Alternative



Legend

- BIKE TRAIL

Graphic Not to Scale