



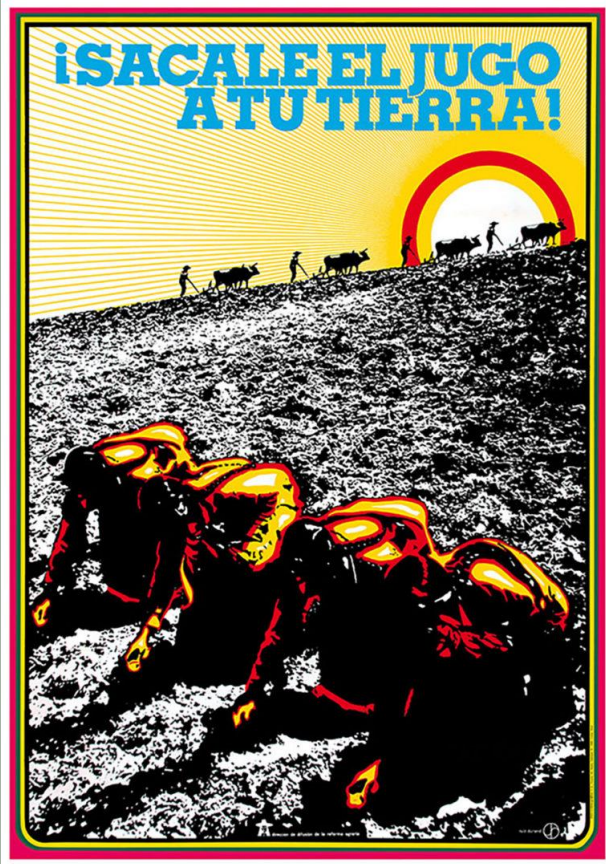
# *Where are the Landowners?:* Effects of Absenteeism on Farmworker Communities' Economic Development in the Eastern Coachella Valley

Mapping Pathways  
to Economic  
Revitalization

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Plurinational Land Reform in CA Working Group

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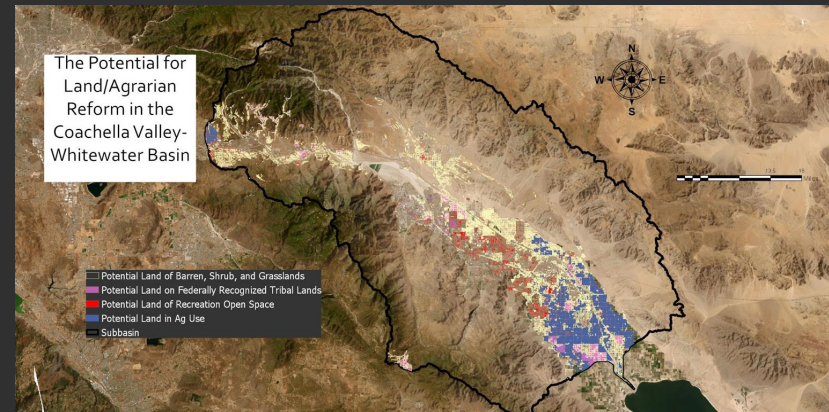
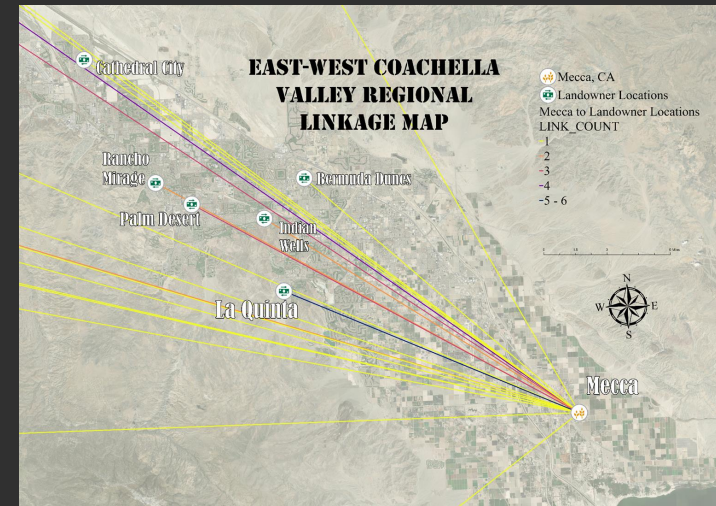


# Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Absent Landowners around Mecca, CA
3. Value Chains, Wealth Transfers, and the Financialization of Farmland
4. Land-Use for Land Access Mapping
5. Concrete Examples for Land Access

# Introduction

This presentation will provide summarized insights on **two mapping projects** focused on the Coachella Valley. **The first** utilizes network mapping and property data to demonstrate the spatial relationship that agricultural landowners have with the farmworker community of Mecca, CA, and how **landowner absenteeism siphons economic investment across our farmworker communities**. **The second** map displays the various land-use across the Coachella Valley and the corresponding **policy pathways** which Riverside County, the state of California, and other public entities may implement to **improve land access for farmworkers and revitalize the economically-underdeveloped communities** across the Eastern Coachella Valley.





# STATEWIDE LANDOWNER LINKAGE MAP

☀ Mecca, CA  
🏠 Landowner Locations  
Mecca to Landowner Locations  
LINK\_COUNT  
- 1  
- 2  
- 3  
- 4  
- 5 - 6  
- CA\_State

0 80 160 320 Miles



## Map 1: Network Mapping

Around the farmworker community of Mecca, CA there are 36 unique landowning entities whose registered agents are settled across 21 locations.

These range across the regions of

- **LA Metro**
  - Los Angeles, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, Pasadena, San Marino
- **Southern Coast**
  - La Jolla, Aliso Viejo
- **Desert Cities**
  - Cathedral City, La Quinta, Palm Desert, Bermuda Dunes, Rancho Mirage, Indian Wells
- **Central Valley/Coast**
  - Bakersfield, San Luis Obispo
- **Inland Empire**
  - Riverside, Chino Hills
- **North-Central Coast**
  - Hollister, Los Gatos, Salinas
- **Lake Tahoe – Incline Village, NV**

## Map 1: Network Mapping

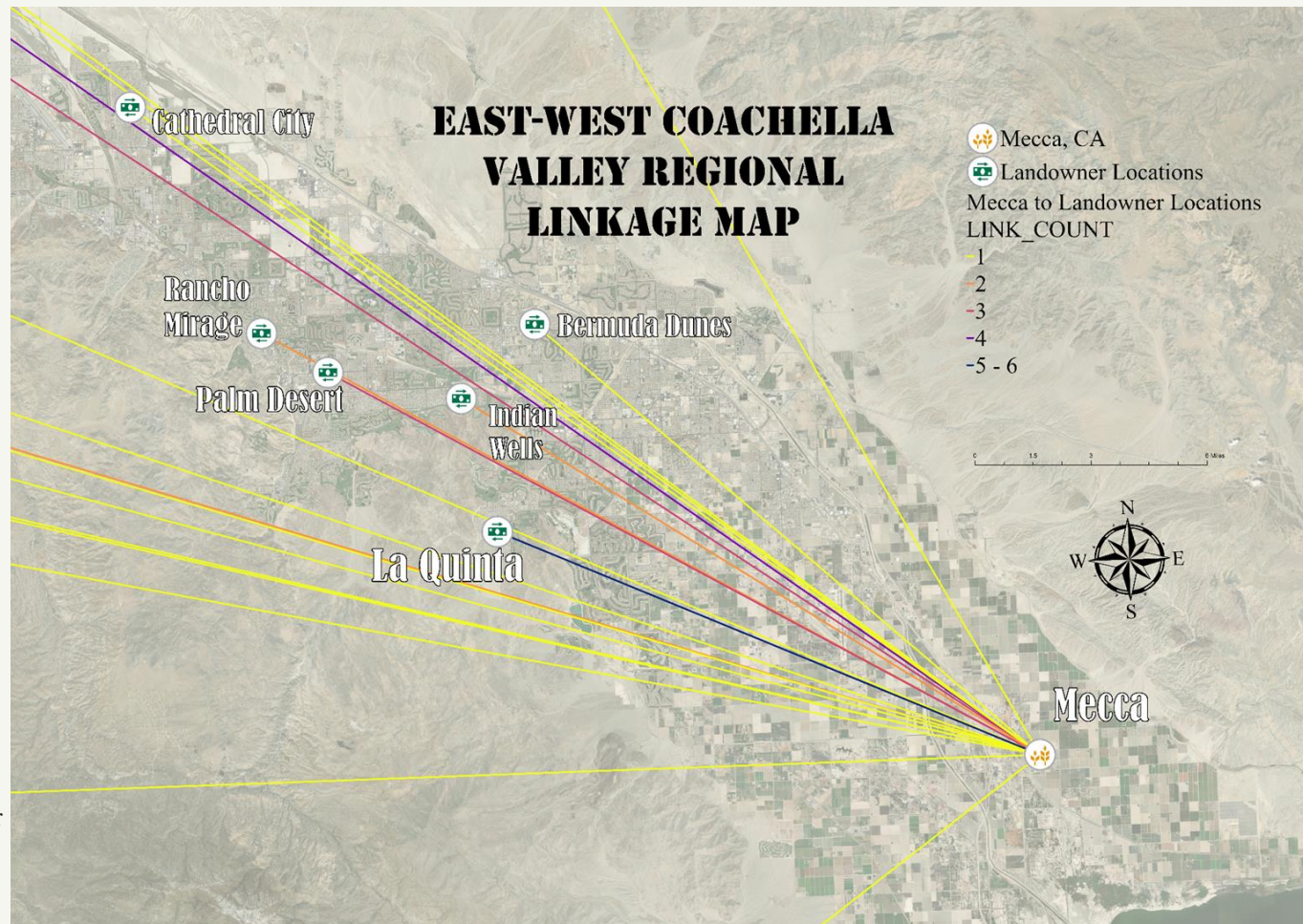
We'll zoom on the *Desert Cities region*, which may also be defined as the western Coachella Valley.

This includes:

**Cathedral City, La Quinta, Palm Desert, Bermuda Dunes, Rancho Mirage, Indian Wells.**

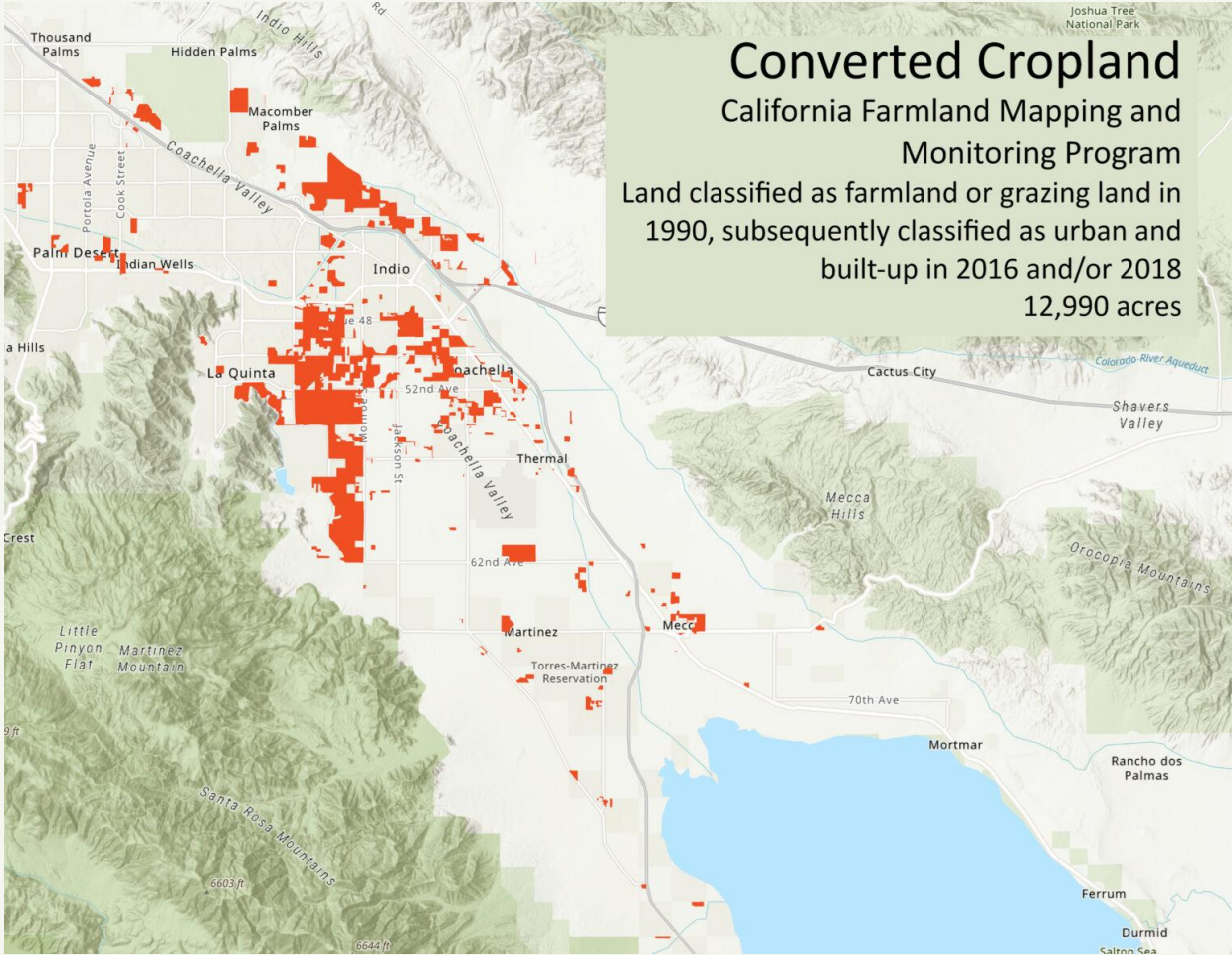
Here, we see the **highest linkage amount between Mecca and La Quinta at 6**, followed by Bakersfield for 4 links, Palm Desert & Salinas tied with 3 links, with finally Rancho Mirage, Indian Wells, and Pasadena tied for 2.

The **La Quinta-Mecca relationship** demonstrates a wealth transfer between Mecca's median households earning \$27,771 (1st percentile in USA) while La Quinta's median household income of \$97,628 (84th percentile). However, the average household income is \$148,598 which is swayed by the approximately 19.8% of households earn over \$200,000 annually, which is almost 5 times the national average of 4%.





# California Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program from the California Department of Conservation



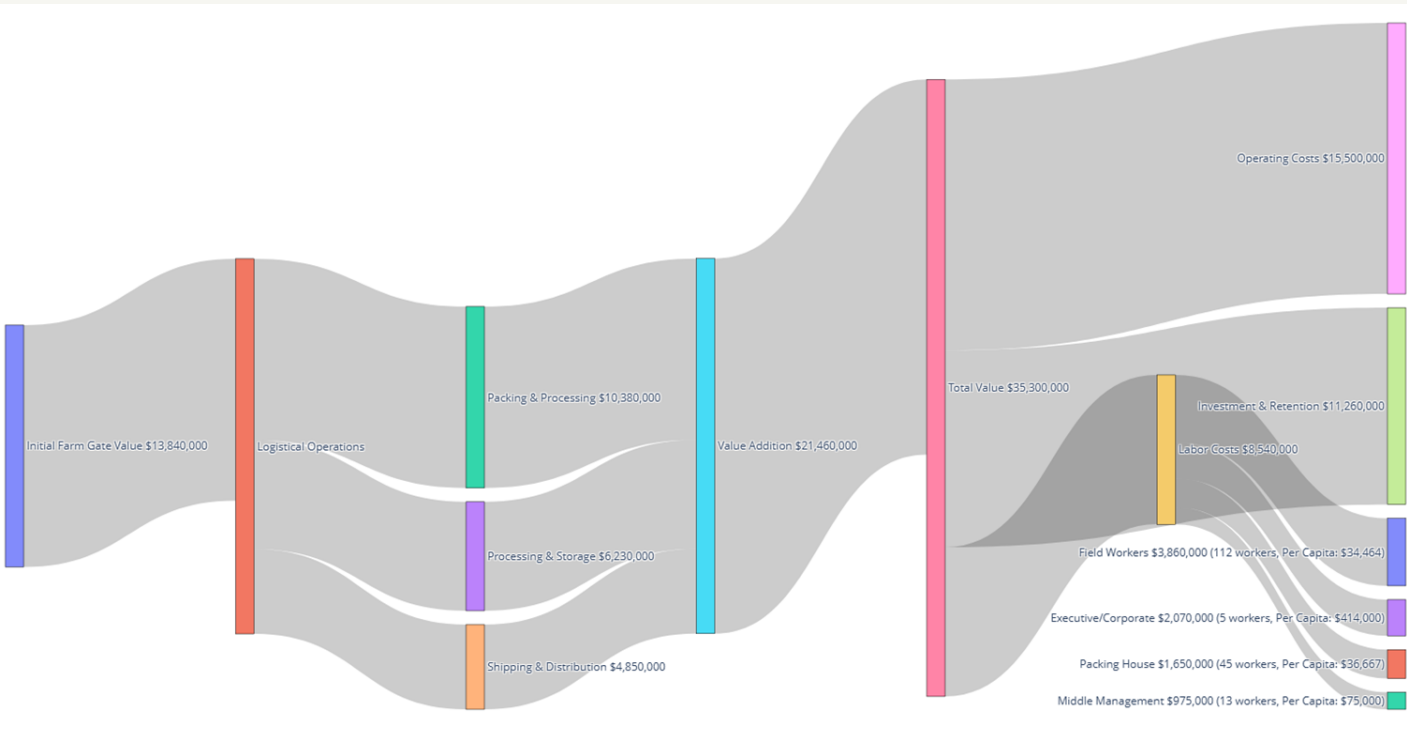
# Value Flows and Wealth Transfers: Case Study of 2,037.62 acres of a Vertically-Integrated Citrus & Table Grapes [La Quinta] Grower based in Mecca, CA

## Data and Variables:

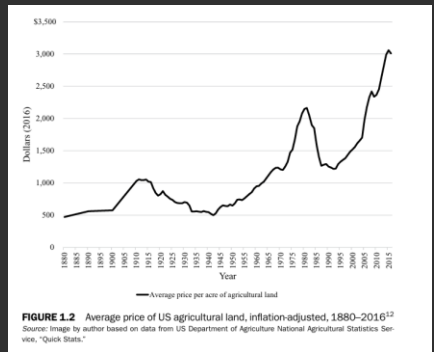
- 2023 Agricultural Crop Report – Agriculture Commissioner Office of Riverside County for Value per acre and ton
- Crop cover percentage data across the 2037.62 acres
  - Total Citrus Acres: 1,033.10 acres
    - Estimated Citrus Value: \$6,941,118
    - Using average yield of 10.75 tons/acre
    - Using average price of \$625/ton (averaged between oranges and lemons)
  - Total Grape Acres: 522.95 acres
    - Estimated Grape Value: \$6,902,875
    - Using average yield of 5.5 tons/acre
    - Using average price of \$2,400/ton

## Industry averages:

- For 2,037.62 acres:
  - Estimated 5-6 workers per 100 acres
  - Approximately 102-122 field workers needed
  - Average farmworker wage in Coachella Valley (2023): \$15.50-17.50/hour
  - Packing House Workers average wage: \$16-19/hour
    - Estimated 40-50 workers for estimated yield calculated
  - Field supervisors (4-5): \$45,000-55,000/year
  - Packing house supervisors (2-3): \$50,000-60,000/year
  - Quality control managers (2-3): \$55,000-65,000/year
  - Operations manager: \$80,000-120,000/year
  - Sales manager: \$90,000-130,000/year
  - Financial manager: \$85,000-125,000/year
  - General manager: \$120,000-160,000/year
  - Total upper management: ~\$375,000-535,000
  - CEO/President: \$200,000-400,000/year
  - **Registered Agent/Corporate Officers:**
    - **Typically 2-5% of gross revenue**
    - **Estimated range: \$706,040-1,765,100**
- Packing & Processing adds the most significant value in percentage terms, creating 75% of additional value from the initial farm gate value.
- Processing & Storage adds 45.0% of value.
- Shipping & Distribution contributes 35.0% of additional value.

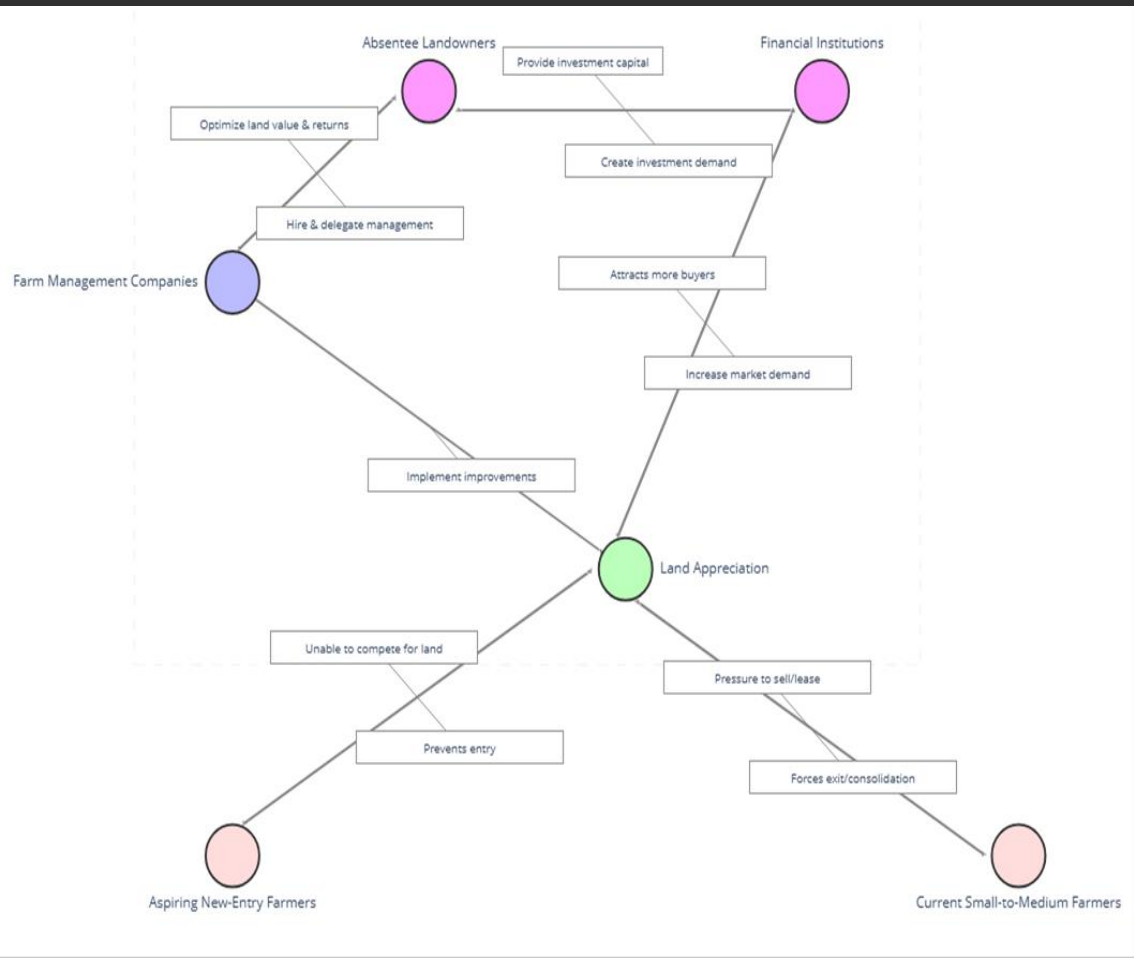


# Absent Landowners, Farm Management Companies, and the Financialization of our Farmland



**Riverside County, CA Sold Land**

TOTAL SALES 61,593



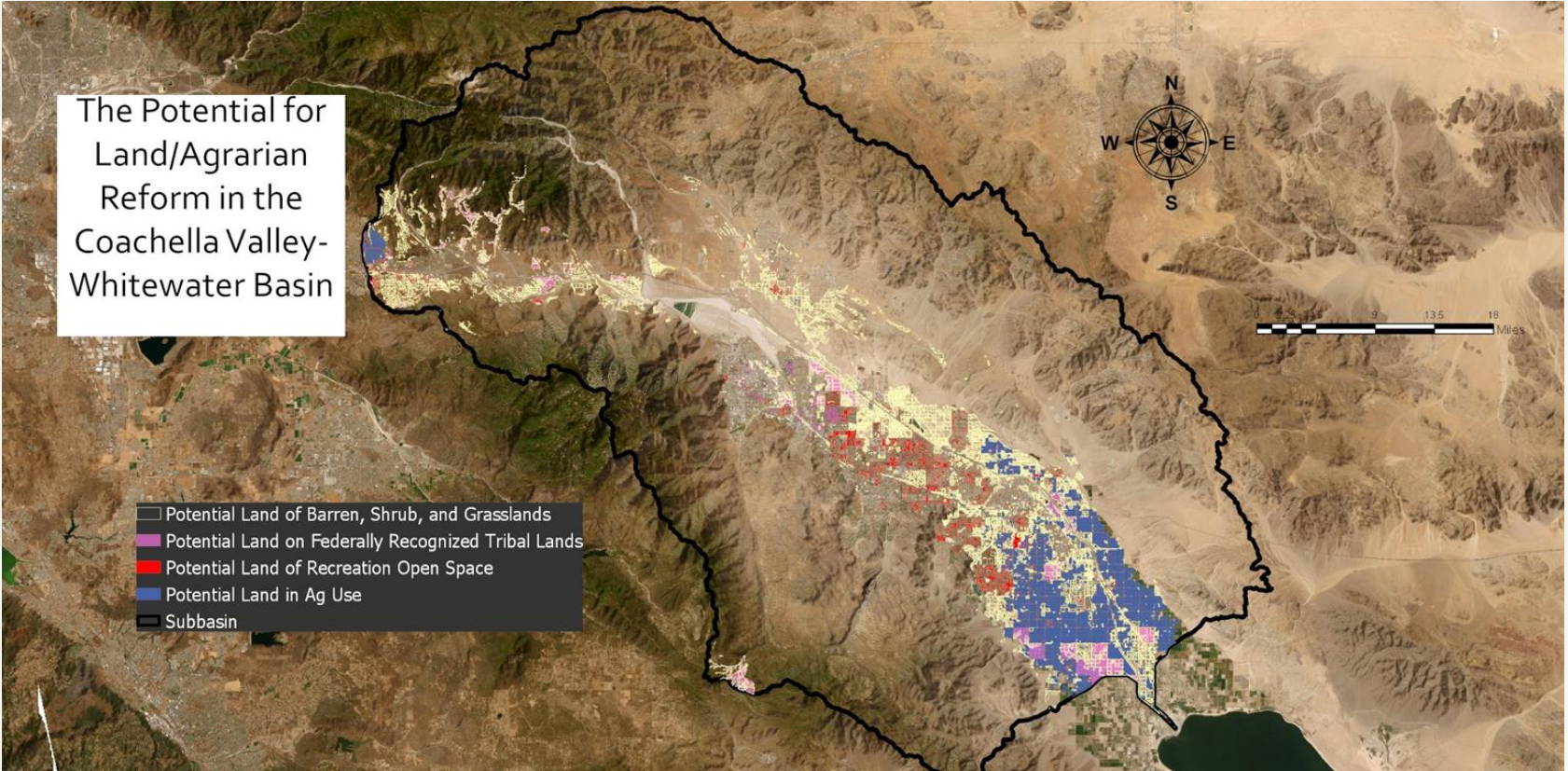
**TABLE 1.3** Institutional investors in agriculture/farmland by type

INVESTOR TYPE	PROPORTION OF INVESTORS (%)
Public pension fund	20
Endowment plan	14
Foundation	12
Private sector pension fund	12
Family office	6
Government agency	6
Asset manager	5
Investor company	5
Other	20

Source: Preqin, "Special Report: Agriculture."



# Map 2: Land-Use for Land Access Mapping



## Agricultural Land

The blue parcels of land would require negotiations with current private landowners to sell their land, especially as they approach retirement age. A state government which supported land access would help you all get access to the funds to acquire such land as well as provide proper incentives to negotiate with the private landowner.

## Vacant Land

The state could adopt a land-use change policy which seeks to cultivating unused, productive land: a policy applied worldwide when expanding land access to landless populations — the Williamson Act already provides a legal and tax incentive basis to maintain/advance agriculture on these land; more robust state-constitutional reforms such as a social function of property clause could provide more robust legal foundations for communities to self-advocate and gain access to this land. Environmental concerns surrounding this land may involve the degradation of the environment given the intensification of agriculture in these areas which already suffer from water shortages. However, combining agroecology with these newly opened lands provides us opportunities to increase economic opportunities for farm workers seeking land, as well as protecting our environment.

The red parcels of land would require change in land use codes by the state/county/city. This may be more difficult considering the fact that residents, especially those who wield significant political power, may want to maintain their golf courses and hiking trails. This, however, is not impossible and would just require extensive coalition building and innovations of agroecological, communitarian use. Utilizing urban agriculture tax incentives could provide financial stability for park transformations, along with Williamson Act incentives present for hiking trails — this is especially important for land located on federal tribal land.

Similar to the last point, many of reservation lands are also zoned as “conservation” and “recreation” (note the Morongo Reservation and Los Coyotes Reservation). Contemporary state tribal land buy-back funds and external foundations may provide the necessary capital to transform this land into enrolled tribal members, who have increasingly expressed criticisms of “landback” transactions being restricted to conservation land-use.

## Recreational Land

## Federal Tribal

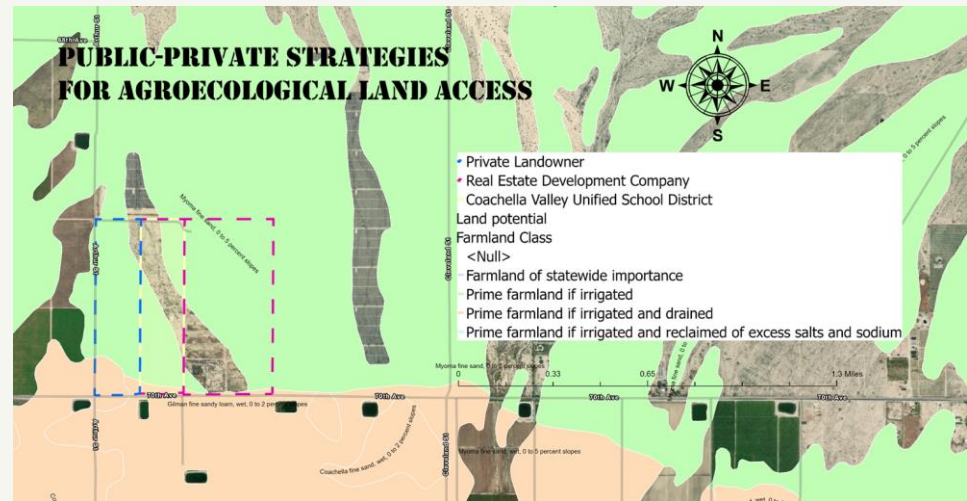
# Concrete Applications of Lessons Learned

Around 70th Avenue & Arthur Street:

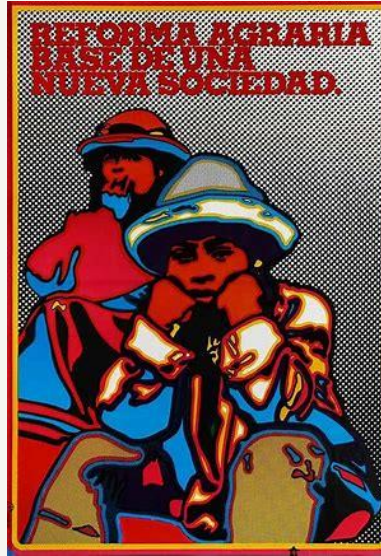
This map visualizes public land owned by the Coachella Valley Unified School District (about 40 acres), how it overlays with prime and non-prime farmland, and how the state and/or county government can serve as a liaison with (individual and associated) private landowners to transfer the title to farmworkers aspiring to become new-entry farmers.

Private Landowner: 38 acres, \$878k

Real Estate Development Company: 79 acres, \$2m







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# Thank You!