

**Clinchco, VA: Clinchco Recreational Park Revitalization
Conceptual Site Master Plan
& Connectivity Plan to Future Recreation Area at Palmer Street**



Executive Summary

Prepared for the Town of Clinchco Town Council
February 2023

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Conceptual Site Master Plan
& Connectivity Plan to Future Recreation Area at Palmer Street

Project funding provided in part by the US Forest Service in cooperation with the
Virginia Department of Forestry Urban and Community Forestry Program



21UCF04



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PROJECT TEAM

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The **Community Design Assistance Center** (CDAC) is an outreach center in the College of Architecture, Arts, and Design at Virginia Tech that assists communities, neighborhood groups, and non-profit organizations in improving the natural and built environments. Assistance is provided in the areas of landscape architecture, architecture, planning, and interior design. Working with communities, the conceptual planning and design provides communities with a graphic vision of their project that can then be used for grant applications and fundraising for the next steps toward implementation.

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Mayor, Town of Clinchco

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and

Those who volunteered their time for the betterment of Clinchco.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Background

Clinchco, Virginia is a small community of about 350 people located in the northern portion of Dickenson County in the valley of the McClure River and near the West Virginia line. It is accessed by Routes 63 and 83, which pass through the town.

Clinchco started as a coal mining town in the late 1800s. The town was built by the Clinchfield Coal Corporation to support their mining efforts and later founded in 1917. As part of the establishment of the town, Clinchfield Coal Corporation constructed well-built homes for the workers. Like many coal communities, the mines attracted workers from all over the world. Other early industries included lumbering for the Yellow Poplar Lumber Company and building the railroad. Clinchco reached peak population and economic success in the 1940s. During this time the streets would be packed on Saturdays when people from Clinchco and nearby communities would come into town. This boom continued until the 1950s when the decline began.

Clinchco is striving to move forward, “reconstructing itself” for a better future. As one of the first steps in this process, a town-wide master plan and a downtown master plan were created by CDAC with community input through an EPA Brownfields Assessment grant in 2021.

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Project Description

As a step toward implementing aspects of the plans, the town would like to provide recreational spaces for residents and visitors. Longer term, a network of trails would connect the downtown, points of interest around town, downtown green space, become UTV and golf cart friendly, and create opportunities for overnight stays. Shorter term, the town would like to improve and augment Clinchco Recreational Park, a small recreational area in the Carson Street/Mill Creek area as well as provide a trail connection from this park to a future recreation area at the end of Palmer Street, which could serve both locals and visitors.

The town has been actively pursuing grants to begin implementing aspects of the master plan. One of these areas is near the Community Center, basketball court, and across Mill Creek from the Community Center where a vacant mobile home sits. Together the area is referred to as the Clinchco Recreational Park. The town received funding from Dickenson County to purchase new playground equipment for the tot lot playground located within the fenced area by the Community Center and new basketball goal posts and bleachers for the basketball court. The town would like to improve the area where the mobile home sits with a small skate park once the mobile home is removed and improve the playground equipment at the Community Center. A conceptual master plan was needed for this grouping of recreational sites to create the Clinchco Recreational Park.

The Mill Creek banks are overgrown with weeds and will soon be cleaned up. A plant

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palette of riparian plants was also needed. Riparian plants that grow along streams can help control erosion and help filter and clean water.

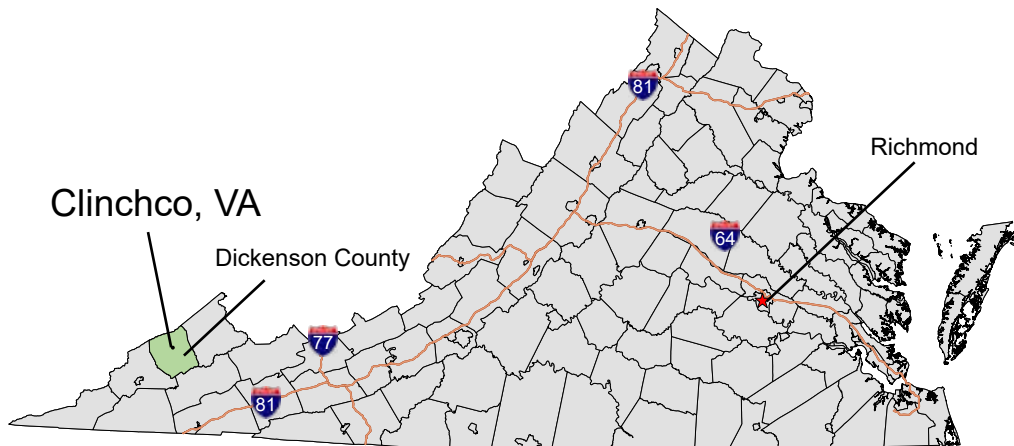
A conceptual connectivity master plan was also needed to depict a trail connection from the Clinchco Recreational Park to the future recreation area at the end of Palmer Street (no official name for this park exists yet).

CDAC worked with a stakeholders committee to create the conceptual site master plan for Clinchco Recreational Park and the connectivity plan to the Future Recreation Area at Palmer Street.

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Project Location



The Town of Clinchco is located within Dickinson County in the Appalachian Plateau region of Southwest Virginia along the Virginia/Kentucky Border (above). Within Dickinson County, Clinchco is located approximately eleven miles west of the Town of Clintwood and seven miles east of the Town of Haysi. Dickinson County borders Buchanan County to the east, Russell County to the south, Wise county to the west, and Pike County, Kentucky to the north (below).

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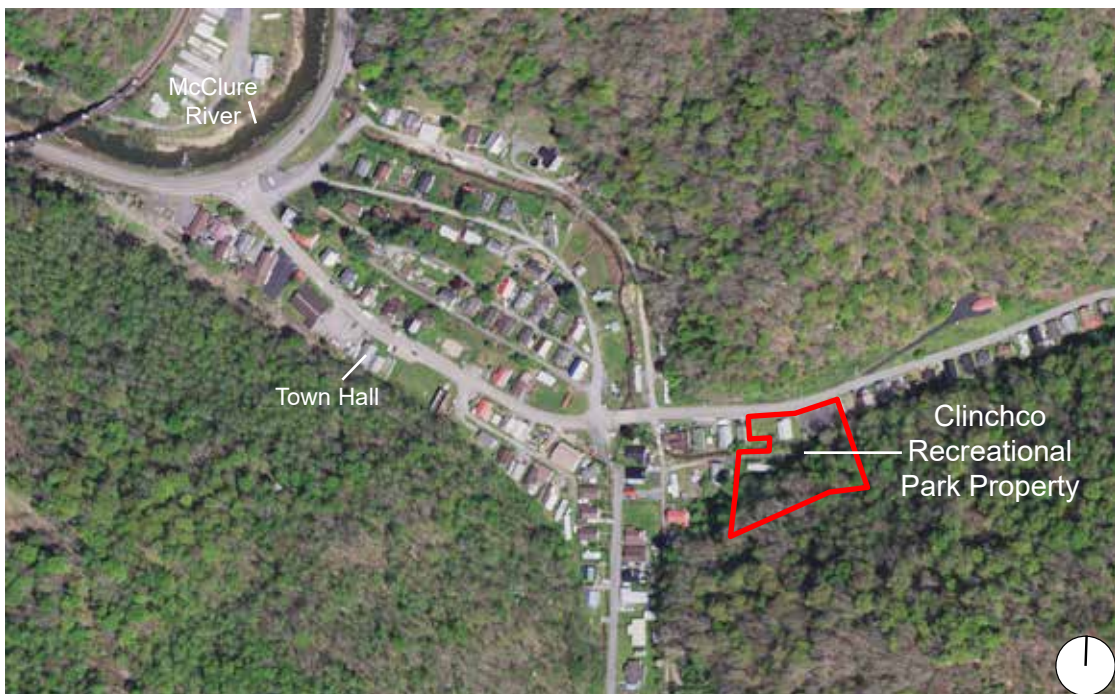


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Clinchco is approximately 2.7 square miles in size and is characterized primarily by its mountainous terrain (above). The Clinchco Recreational Park is located immediately east of the downtown area (below).



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Design Process Summary

The design process began with a site visit on August 30th, 2022, where the project team met with stakeholders from town council at the Town of Clinchco Town Hall and discussed their vision for the recreational park and connectivity plan. The CDAC team had the opportunity to visit the park and surrounding areas with stakeholders to further understand their vision. Input and site photos created a comprehensive foundation that the CDAC team used to develop two preliminary conceptual site master plans for the reimagined Clinchco Recreational Park and a comprehensive inventory for discussing the connectivity plan.

The CDAC team presented the preliminary design concepts to stakeholders at Town Hall on December 14th, 2022. Following the presentation, stakeholders provided feedback about what they liked and disliked about each design. Final design concepts were presented virtually on February 1st, 2023.

Meeting notes from the stakeholder input session and preliminary design presentation can be found in the appendix.

PART 2: FINAL DESIGN CONCEPT

FINAL DESIGN CONCEPT

Conceptual Site Master Plan Design Description

The final conceptual design envisions Clinchco Recreational Park as a connected space that offers recreational opportunities for a variety of age groups. Carson Street is transformed into a pedestrian walkway throughout the park property and a sidewalk connects the park to downtown Clinchco and trails throughout town.

Playground

The playground equipment is oriented so the widest side of the primary play structure is running perpendicular to Clinchco Main Street, with its largest slides facing north toward the street. Additional equipment in this area includes the recently purchased “moon climber” and “leaf balance beam” play elements, two refurbished swings, and a small playhouse that could be prefabricated or constructed out of recycled wood. This concept also includes additional bench seating throughout the playground area.

Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF) acts as safety surfacing and covers a contiguous area consisting of most of the fenced playground area to meet minimum safety use zone requirements.

Basketball Court

The basketball court is re-stripped to reflect the installation of two new goal posts. The newly re-stripped court would be the approximate dimensions of a regulation court for junior high school basketball (74' x 42').

Replaced Vegetation around Mill Creek

The final design includes a plant palette that recommends eight different native grasses, sedges, and herbaceous perennials that could be used to replace the vegetation around Mill Creek and help control erosion. Plants were selected based on their ability to thrive in wet, poor-quality clay soils and control erosion; their disease, pest, and deer resistance; their ability to thrive in part shade; and their low maintenance requirements and visual attractiveness. Between July and October, pink, blue, and white blossoms provide additional color throughout the site. Selected plants have a mature growth height of between one and seven feet, with the idea that taller plants would be planted closer to stream banks for an average of 2-3 feet of vertical plant growth from ground level to allow for increased visibility.

Covered Pedestrian Bridge at Carson Street

This concept proposes a covered pedestrian walkway with benches at the existing Carson Street bridge location. A covered walkway in this location would offer a shaded and covered vantage point of the basketball court, skate park, and edible forest garden. To meet clearance requirements for overhead power lines, the structure would need to be approximately eight feet tall in its entirety, requiring a minimally pitched roof to maximize overhead space. This structure could be fabricated out of metal, which is typically lighter and more weather resistant than wood. A metal structure would require fewer support beams compared to a wood structure of similar

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size, which could allow it to be anchored to the ground on either side of Mill Creek, minimizing the need for additional reinforcements.

This structure would include backless benches to allow visitors to choose whether to face the basketball court, the edible forest garden, skate park, and community center, or one another in conversation. Safety rails are added around the edges of the existing bridge structure for added security and visitor comfort.

Prefabricated Pedestrian Bridge

The final concept envisions an additional pedestrian connection spanning Mill Creek between the playground and skate park areas in the form of a prefabricated pedestrian bridge. This prefabricated bridge offers connectivity between the two areas, and would include a gate on the playground side for added safety.

Skate Park

The skate park proposed in the final design is approximately 2500 square feet and consists of a variety of compact poured concrete elements. CDAC recommends Clinchco work directly with a skate park design and installation company for the final skate park design to ensure its success and longevity.

To address drainage concerns created by the skate park without significantly impacting surface runoff into Mill Creek, a small rain garden would be located within the skate park to capture and retain its surface runoff. This rain garden will also serve as an educational opportunity for the community; since a properly functioning rain garden can offer a fairly simple solution to small-scale drainage issues, this installation can also serve as an educational model for community members wanting to learn more about rain gardens or those considering installing rain gardens on their own properties. This should also be discussed with the skate park design and installation company.

Edible Forest Garden

The final design concept proposes a tiered edible forest garden consisting of multiple varieties of compact edible trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants. This garden would consist of three tiered levels of planting beds to utilize the natural slope of the land south of the current mobile home area to construct terraces that maximize sunlight. Recommended plantings include a palette of edible dwarf, semi-dwarf, and small fruit trees, shrubs, and herbaceous perennials that have the potential to survive and produce fruitful harvests in poor, wet, and clay soils on a north-facing slope. Selected varieties have shown tolerance to partial shade and clay or poorly-drained soils, though some healthy, well-drained soil would need to be brought to the site in most edible gardening installations in Clinchco. The tiered planters help prevent the erosion of this soil. Selected varieties also handle moist, humid climates like that of Clinchco better and with more disease and mildew resistance compared to other varieties within the same species.

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To simplify the purchasing process and verify regional plant availability, varieties were selected from stock at Edible Landscaping, an edible plant nursery located in Afton, Virginia. CDAC is not affiliated with Edible Landscaping and cannot confirm the continued availability of these varieties or officially recommend their services, but attempted to suggest varieties that could be reasonably obtained from a single source within Virginia. There may be nurseries closer to Clinchco that also sell edible plants.

Edible forest gardens provide multigenerational recreation and education opportunities while also providing fresh, healthy food for the community. Routine maintenance and upkeep will be required, especially when plants are first establishing themselves, but selected varieties may require considerably less maintenance than other varieties within the same species. Co-planting with edible nitrogen-fixing plants will allow for more successful harvests year after year with fewer fertilizers compared to a monoculture garden.

Grass Play Area

Since the home adjacent to the playground immediately to the west on Clinchco Main Street will be removed as part of an upcoming FEMA project, this area will become open space managed by the town. The final design concept envisions this property as an open, grassy play area adjacent to the playground. This area could be left open or fenced similarly to the playground area. The fence between this property and the playground could either be retained for delineation of space or removed to connect the two spaces and increase the overall playground area.

The following pages contain the conceptual site master plan, perspectives, and precedent images.

Key:

- A Playground
 - Recently Purchased Equipment
 - Added Playhouse
 - Refurbished Swings
- B Existing Picnic Shelter
- C Community Center
- D Basketball Court
 - Restriped to Reflect Recently Installed Equipment
- E Replaced Vegetation
- F Covered Pedestrian Bridge
- G Prefabricated Pedestrian Bridge
 - Safety Gate at Playground Entrance
- H Picnic Area
- I Skate Park
 - Approximately 2500 SF
 - Poured Concrete Base
 - Rain Garden for Drainage
- J Edible Forest Garden
 - Companion Planting to Minimize Maintenance and Fertilizer Requirements
 - Tiered Beds to Maximize Sunlight
- K Grass Play Area

 Potential Entry Sign Location
 Existing Fence
 Approximate Site Boundary
 Perspective Viewcone








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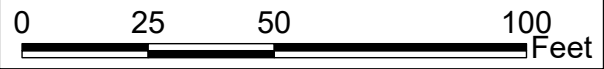
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Final Design Concept
Site Plan
February 1st, 2023

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 Potential Entry Sign Location
 Existing Fence
 Proposed Fence
 Approximate Site Boundary
 Perspective Viewcone



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Final Design Concept
 Alternate Site Plan - Expanded Playground Fence
 February 1st, 2023



Perspective 1: View from Carson Street

This perspective shows a view from Carson Street behind the playground. The replaced vegetation at Mill Creek, playground picnic shelter, community center, and pedestrian bridges are visible to the left of the pedestrian path. The edible forest garden, picnic tables, and skate park are visible to the right.

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**Final Design Concept
 Perspective 1: View from Carson Street
 February 1st, 2023**



Perspective 2: Covered Pedestrian Bridge

This perspective shows the covered pedestrian bridge located at the existing bridge across Carson Street. The covered structure stands at 8' tall to allow adequate clearance for the power lines above and features added rails around the existing bridge for safe observation. Backless benches allow visitors to face each other in conversation or have a covered view of the park or basketball court. The edible forest garden is visible in the background.

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Final Design Concept
 Perspective 2: Covered Pedestrian Bridge
 February 1st, 2023



Perspective 3: Playground

This perspective shows the updated playground with recently purchased equipment, refurbished swings, and an added playhouse. The house located at the adjacent property west of the park has been removed and its lot now provides additional open play space. The prefabricated pedestrian bridge, edible forest garden, and skate park are visible in the background.



**COMMUNITY DESIGN
ASSISTANCE CENTER**
VIRGINIA TECH.

College of Architecture, Arts, and Design
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

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Final Design Concept
Perspective 3: Playground
February 1st, 2023



An example of a prefabricated pedestrian bridge, which would connect the playground to Carson Street, the skate park, and the edible forest garden.



A small covered pedestrian bridge at Carson Street would provide shade and rain cover near the basketball court.



The covered pedestrian bridge could use a metal frame and be anchored around Mill Creek, limiting requirements for additional supports and reinforcements.



Backless benches beneath the covered pedestrian bridge give visitors the option to face Mill Creek, the playground, the basketball court, or one another in conversation.



A poured concrete skate park can pack a variety of elements for skaters of all levels in a compact space and last many years with limited maintenance.



A small rain garden within the skate park provides an educational opportunity and can capture surface runoff and mitigate additional drainage concerns around Mill Creek.



The property adjacent to the park on the west side will be demolished and the land could be repurposed as a grassy play yard for young children.



An example of tiered garden beds, which help protect and drain soil and ensure plantings receive adequate sunlight.



A playhouse like the one pictured above can provide additional play opportunities for younger children and maximize playground space.

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Bushy Bluestem, *Andropogon glomeratus*
Clump-forming, warm-season native ornamental grass easily grown in full sun in wet soil. Virtually maintenance-free, pest and disease resistant. Attracts birds and butterflies.

Height: 3 to 6 feet
Spread: 2 to 3 feet
Bloom Time: August to November
Bloom Description: White, sometimes pink
Sun: Full sun to part shade
Water: Medium to high moisture
Maintenance: Low



Sallow Sedge, *Carex lurida*
Tufted native sedge easily grown in moist soil. Best for rain gardens and around bodies of water. Pest resistant and excellent for erosion control.

Height: 1.5 to 3 feet
Spread: 1 to 2 feet
Bloom Time: March to May
Bloom Description: Green/Yellow
Sun: Part shade to full sun
Water: Medium to high moisture
Maintenance: Low



White Turtlehead, *Chelone glabra*
Clump-forming, leafy-stemmed native perennial best grown in wet soil in part shade. Slowly spreads by rhizomes. No serious insect or disease problems and good for erosion control.

Height: 2 to 3 feet
Spread: 1.5 to 2.5 feet
Bloom Time: August to October
Bloom Description: White/pink
Sun: Part shade to full shade
Water: High moisture
Maintenance: Low



Joe-Pye Weed, *Eutrochium fistulosum*
Tall and showy native perennial easily grown in low moist ground. No serious insect or disease problems. Flowers are very attractive to butterflies.

Height: 4 to 7 feet
Spread: 2 to 4 feet
Bloom Time: July to September
Bloom Description: Pink
Sun: Part shade to full sun
Water: Moderate to high moisture
Maintenance: Low



Woolgrass Bulrush, *Scirpus cyperinus*
Grass-like native aquatic sedge easily grown in moist to wet soils including mud and shallow standing water. No serious pest or disease problems.

Height: 3 to 5 feet
Spread: 2 to 4 feet
Bloom Time: May to June
Bloom Description: Green/brown
Sun: Part shade to full sun
Water: Medium to high moisture
Maintenance: Low



Tussock Sedge, *Carex stricta*
Dense and rhizomatous native evergreen sedge easily grown in moist to wet soils and standing water. No serious pest or disease problems. Excellent for erosion control.

Height: 1 to 3 feet
Spread: 1 to 2 feet
Bloom Time: May to June
Bloom Description: Red/brown
Sun: Part shade to full sun
Water: Medium to high moisture
Maintenance: Low



Great Blue Lobelia, *Lobelia siphilitica*
Clump-forming native perennial with dark blue tubular flowers easily grown in wet soil. No known serious insect or disease problems.

Height: 2 to 3 feet
Spread: 1 to 1.5 feet
Bloom Time: July to October
Bloom Description: Blue
Sun: Part shade to full shade
Water: High moisture
Maintenance: Low



Culver's Root, *Veronicastrum virginicum*
Large and showy native perennial easily grown in medium to wet soil and full sun. No serious insect or disease problems. Blooms attract butterflies.

Height: 4 to 6 feet
Spread: 2 to 4 feet
Bloom Time: June to September
Bloom Description: White
Sun: Full sun to part shade
Water: Low to high moisture
Maintenance: Low

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Tennosui Pear, *Pyrus communis x Pyrus pyrifolia*
 Small tree thought to be a cross between a Tennessee European pear and a Hosui Asian pear. Self-fertile and exceptional pest and disease resistance compared to other pears.

Height: 12 to 15 feet
 Spread: 12 to 15 feet
 Harvest Period: July to August
 Sun: Full sun
 Water: Medium to High
 Maintenance: Low to medium
 Self Pollinating: Yes



Celeste Fig, *Ficus carica 'Celeste'*
 Also known as sugar fig. Small tree or large shrub with hardy, sweet fruits and excellent pest and disease resistance. Tolerant of part shade and well-drained clay soils.

Height: 5 to 10 feet
 Spread: 5 to 10 feet
 Harvest Period: August to September
 Sun: Full sun to part shade
 Water: Medium to low
 Maintenance: Low
 Self Pollinating: Yes



Sweet Scarlet Goumi, *Elaeagnus multiflora 'Sweet Scarlet'*
 Medium shrub with attractive foliage and juicy, scarlet red aromatic fruits with flavor similar to pie cherries. Good fresh and in preserves. Nitrogen fixer.

Height: 5 to 6 feet
 Spread: 5 to 6 feet
 Harvest Period: July
 Sun: Full sun to part shade
 Water: Medium to high
 Maintenance: Low
 Self Pollinating: Yes



Virginia Wild Strawberry, *Fragaria virginiana*
 Ground-hugging herbaceous plant with tiny, tasty fruits. Good for underplanting around taller plants. Fibrous root system excellent for erosion control.

Height: 0.5 to 1 feet
 Spread: 0.5 to 1 feet
 Harvest Period: May to October
 Sun: Part shade to full sun
 Water: Low to medium
 Maintenance: Low
 Self Pollinating: Yes



Stanley Plum, *Prunus domestica 'Stanley'*
 Small tree with large, high quality plum with a dark blue skin and a greenish-yellow flesh. Good fresh and canned. Also good dried as prunes.

Height: 8 to 12 feet
 Spread: 6 to 10 feet
 Harvest Period: August to September
 Sun: Full sun
 Water: Medium to High
 Maintenance: Medium
 Self Pollinating: Yes



Regent Serviceberry, *Amelanchier alnifolia 'Regent'*
 Hardy shrub with good red fall color and abundant white flowers in spring with sweet, blueberry-like fruit. Excellent for fresh eating. No serious maintenance issues.

Height: 4 to 6 feet
 Spread: 4 to 6 feet
 Harvest Period: June
 Sun: Full sun to part shade
 Water: Medium
 Maintenance: Low
 Self Pollinating: Yes



Cherry Red Currant, *Ribes rubrum*
 Small shrub with large, bright red, tasty and flavorful sweet/tart berries. Also good for jams and jellies. Mildew resistant and very shade tolerant.

Height: 3 to 5 feet
 Spread: 3 to 5 feet
 Harvest Period: July to August
 Sun: Part shade to full sun
 Water: Low to medium
 Maintenance: Low
 Self Pollinating: Yes



Jewel Black Raspberry, *Rubus idaeus 'Jewel Black'*
 Vigorously producing variety of early-fruiting, native black raspberries great for eating, canning, and baking. Very good pest and disease resistance.

Height: 2 to 3 feet
 Spread: 2 to 3 feet
 Harvest Period: June to July
 Sun: Full sun to part shade
 Water: Medium
 Maintenance: Medium
 Self Pollinating: Yes

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FINAL DESIGN CONCEPT

Connectivity Plan to Future Recreation Area at Palmer Street

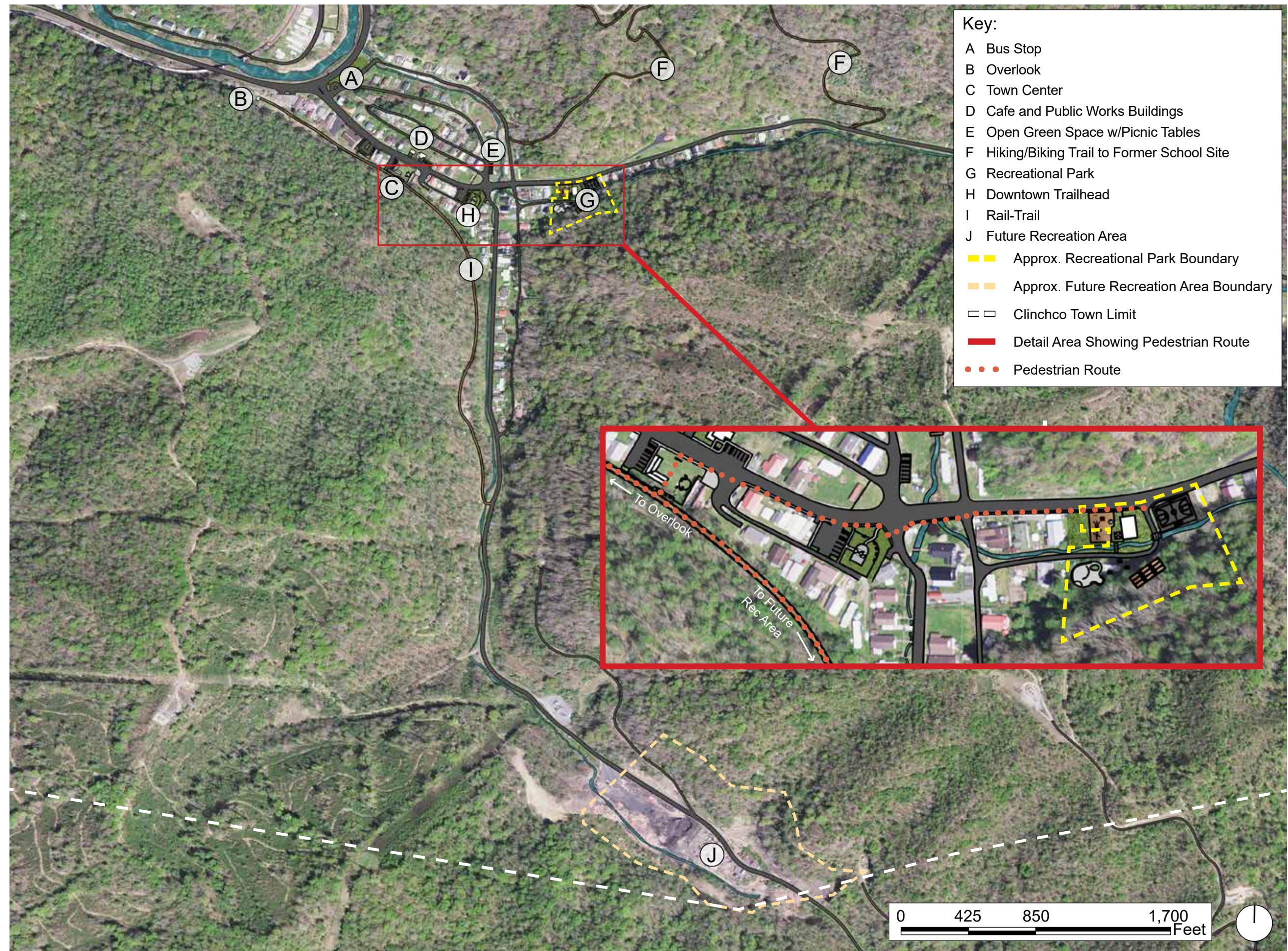
Design Description

The plan to connect the Clinchco Recreational Park with the future recreation area located at the former ballfield site on Palmer Street draws upon the larger town-wide master plan created by CDAC for Clinchco in 2021. This plan shows the sidewalk connection from the park to downtown Clinchco, where visitors could connect to the proposed Rail-Trail via access steps at town center and travel south towards Carson Street.

The following page contains the final conceptual connectivity plan.

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