



TRAIL PARTNER

Trail Partners are businesses and property owners along the trail that are willing to share amenities with trail users in exchange for free marketing and promotion from the Ecusta Trail.

Eligibility for Program Consideration

- The business or property must be directly adjacent to the trail or located near an established safe crossing to connect to the trail, as determined by Staff.
- Must be willing to share amenities with trail users.

Amenities

- Parking spaces
- Bike rack / bike parking
- Water fountain
- Bathrooms
- Benches / seating
- Pet waste station
- Nighttime lighting on trail

Potential Benefits

- Name or business on website (County & FOET)
- Appearance on other materials
- Business location on ET maps
- Business added to recommended trail loops
- Positive media attention
- Business / property owner may set specific times / days when the amenity is available for use
- Eligible for use of official Ecusta Trail logo (digital use)

TRAIL SPONSOR

Trail Sponsors are businesses or properties, regardless of location, that wish to support the Ecusta Trail in providing amenities to trail users.

Eligibility for Program Consideration

Anyone can participate in this program. Sponsorship can be direct financial support to the County to acquire an amenity, or a partnership with an entity along the trail to help them supply an existing amenity.

Example Sponsorship Opportunities

- Parking spaces
- Bike rack / bike parking
- Water fountain
- Bathrooms
- Benches / seating
- Pet waste station
- Nighttime lighting on trail
- Landscaping
- Safety features

Potential Benefits

- Name or business on website (County & FOET)
- Appearance on other materials
- Name or business on the amenity itself when appropriate (i.e. "parking lot sponsored by ____")
- Business location on ET maps (if applicable)
- Positive media attention
- Charitable contribution benefits

AMENITY LEASE PROGRAM

A lease option could be available to qualifying businesses or properties in proximity to the trail who wish to lease certain key amenities to the County for trail users.

Eligibility for Program Consideration

A business or property must qualify and have a needed amenity that can be leased *in full* to the County (i.e. a church parking lot leased in its entirety to the County for trail use except when needed for church services or events).

TRAIL SUPPORTER

For businesses and properties that are *not* directly adjacent to the Ecusta Trail who still wish to provide services, sponsorship, or other forms of support for the trail.

Eligibility for Program Consideration

Any business owner or property owner is welcome to become a Trail Supporter as long as the service or amenity provided does not create a safety concern for trail access.

Examples of Support

- Monetary donations
- Stewardship
- Promoting the trail to your business patrons
- Donated time or material

Potential Benefits

- Free advertising on Henderson County's website and Friends of the Ecusta Trail website.
- Name, logo, and location on Ecusta Trail maps.
- Featured on route recommendations

EXAMPLES FROM OTHER TRAILS

Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail, VT [Trail Friendly Business Program](#)

The Program highlights local businesses on a map and in a directory that cater to the needs of trail users. A checklist of amenities determines eligibility.



Delaware & Lehigh Trail, PA [Trail Friendly Business Program](#)

Businesses may participate in the program if they provide amenities or services to trail users. A guide of how to become a Trail Friendly Business is provided.

Fort Wayne Trails, IN [Trail Friendly Business Program](#)

Businesses that provide amenities or discounts to trail users are mapped and advertised through the trail.



Loveland Bike Trail, OH [Interactive Map](#)

Businesses along the trail that opt in to the program can be part of the interactive map and included in suggested trips with local businesses to visit on the way.

ECUSTA TRAIL FAQs



ECONOMIC

How much will the trail cost?

The latest construction cost estimate is \$43 million for the entire 19-mile trail. Phase I will cost \$10,126,120 to construct per the bid submittal. Phase II design is underway and will cost \$1.8 million due to the complexity of designing for wetlands, major erosion control measures, and the French Broad River bridge. The true costs of future sections are unknown until engineering / design are done, but it is expected that the received grants will cover most costs.

How will trail construction be paid for?

Henderson County has applied for 5 different grants and has been awarded every single one. Friends of the Ecusta Trail received 2 grants from the state for trail construction. These grants will pay for the majority of the trail's design and construction. Unfortunately, the use of these funds is restricted and cannot be used to build amenities.

Will the trail affect my property taxes?

Property taxes directly alongside the trail will not immediately change as a result of the trail, but it is expected that over time property values and property taxes will increase due to the presence of the trail. The economic impact from tourism will help property taxes to stay low. There will be no special taxes related to the trail.

What is the predicted economic impact of the trail?

A 2012 study estimated \$9.4 million annual return from visitor spending, health cost savings, and tax revenue from the Ecusta Trail. The Swamp Rabbit Trail in SC fetches \$6.7 million from trail visitors a year (2013, Furman University), and the Virginia Creeper Trail brings \$2.5 million in visitor spending a year (2014, Rails to Trails Conservancy). The Ecusta Trail will bring in higher spending in today's dollars given inflation and regional growth since the 2012 study.

How many expected users will the trail bring?

The 2012 Economic Impact Analysis estimated that the trail could attract 20,300 users per year. A study along the Swamp Rabbit Trail found that 26% of weekend users are from out-of-state, meaning the majority of users are from the community or the region.

SAFETY

Do trails attract crime?

Trails **reduce** crime and vandalism by generating more foot traffic and creating an atmosphere of natural surveillance. The presence of a trail is much safer than an abandoned rail corridor thanks to the added positive activity it brings. The Ecusta Trail will have a designated website where any suspicious activity can be reported anonymously, but users can always call 911 in the event of an emergency.

How will the trail be maintained?

Henderson County and the City of Brevard are working with the other jurisdictions as well as the Friends of the Ecusta Trail to coordinate maintenance efforts. Funding will be shared between the impacted jurisdictions.

Who will provide security for the trail?

The Friends of the Ecusta Trail have an ambassador program to model behavior for trail users. For law enforcement needs along the trail, response will be provided by the jurisdiction where the incident happens. In the case of an emergency on the trail, 911 dispatch would determine response by proximity of emergency services. 95% of the trail is covered by at least one cell phone service provider.

How will trail users access the trail?

Designated trailheads will be along the trail at regular intervals, and signage will guide users to trail entrances or exits.

What is an *encroachment* and how will they be handled along the trail?

An encroachment is anything that crosses the trail corridor, including property access, structures, and access to the trail. Henderson County will work with property owners on an individual basis to discuss specific scenarios and work out the best solution for all encroachments currently in the trail right of way. The County has an encroachment policy for the Ecusta Trail that will apply to all new developments and future encroachments.

PROJECT TIMELINE

When will Phase I be complete?

The trail groundbreaking was October 28th 2023, with Phase I construction (Main St in Hendersonville to Battle Creek Rd in Horse Shoe) beginning in December of 2023. Phase I is estimated to be complete by the beginning of 2025.

Is Phase I of the trail open? No, the first 6 miles are closed for your safety

The first 6 miles of the trail are closed while under construction. All train trestles were removed, creating missing sections. Once the prefab bridges have been installed, those sections will be usable again. Some road closures may occur where there are intersections with the trail. The County is working with NCDOT and affected property owners to minimize inconveniences. Contact the County Engineer with any questions.

When will the entire trail be done?

While any construction project is difficult to predict due to the multitude of factors involved, the trail should be complete within 3 - 5 years. The finished trail will be paved and compliant with ADA standards.

TRAIL PARTNERS PROGRAM

What is required to be part of the program?

If your business or property has any amenities you'd be willing to allow trail users to access, you can be considered for the program! Amenities could include parking spaces made available to trail users (you can designate which spaces and the days/time when use is allowed), a bathroom facility, water fountains, and/or bike racks.

How does the program work?

Fill out the survey before you leave today to share your information with Henderson County to participate in the program. The program won't go 'live' until the first part of the trail is constructed. It is fully voluntary, and you may leave the program if it is not a good fit for you or your business. The amenities you offer may be tailored to your business to fit your operating hours, available resources, and comfort of your customers.

What benefits would my business get for taking part in the program?

Your business will receive free marketing from trail materials and will be featured on Ecusta Trail maps and on the website. As more of the trail is built, there may be more opportunities for formal marketing.

If I don't want to be a Trail Partner, can I still be involved?

Yes! Being an Ecusta Trail Supporter or Trail Sponsor are options for entities or trail-oriented businesses that are supportive of the trail but are unable to offer amenities directly. This support is vital to the success of the trail at all stages. Support can be given in many ways including time, resources, or financially. This type of relationship, like Trail Partners, is not meant to be burdensome and is meant to be mutually beneficial. Please see program details on the Trail Partners exhibit, and contact staff for additional information or if you would like to be involved.

OTHER QUESTIONS

Can I connect my business or property to the trail?

Clear and safe connection to the trail is vital. There will be designated entry points to the trail (trailheads) along the length of the Ecusta. If you think your business or property would be a good location for a trailhead, please refer to the Henderson County encroachment policy and contact staff. We encourage businesses to support safe connection to those designated entry points for their customers and to refrain from creating unofficial connections that violate the encroachment policy.

How can the public get involved?

Henderson County's Rail-Trail Advisory Committee (RTAC) meets the second Wednesday of the month at 10am in the King Street Meeting room at 100 N. King Street, Hendersonville unless otherwise posted. The Brevard/Transylvania County Ecusta Trail Advisory Board meets the 4th Wednesday at 3:30pm at the Brevard City Hall Council Chambers. All meetings are open to the public.

Want to know more about the Ecusta Trail?

Visit the [Friends of the Ecusta Trail webpage](#) to find other frequently asked questions about the trail!

Read the [Economic Impact Analysis](#) for the Ecusta Trail completed in 2012.

Learn more about the [Trail Partners Program](#).



CONTACT

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[www.hendersoncountync.gov/
greenway-network](http://www.hendersoncountync.gov/greenway-network)



What is an encroachment?

An encroachment is any structure or access point within the trail right-of-way.

Scan here to view the
Henderson County
Ecusta Trail
Encroachment Policy



Safe Trail Access

Henderson County has formalized the process for property owners to connect the trail to ensure the safety of trail users. Each new access point creates what's called a **point of conflict**, where traffic is moving in a perpendicular direction than those on the trail. This can create dangerous conditions. It's also important for Emergency Services to know where all access points are in the case of an emergency.

If you would like to apply for a trail connection, please contact the County Engineer, **Marcus Jones** for an application.



Are you located within
a municipality & want
to learn more about
their land use
regulations?

*Contact the following for specific
information regarding each
jurisdiction:*



City of Hendersonville

Matthew Manley
Strategic Projects Manager
mmanley@hvlnc.gov

Brent Detwiler
Public Services Director
bdetwiler@hvlnc.gov

www.hendersonvillenc.gov



Town of Laurel Park

Alex Carmichael
Town Manager
townmanager@laurelpark.org

www.laurelpark.org



Image Credits: Carolina Village

the Ecusta Trail

Henderson County, NC

Trail Partners
&
Supporters

ABOUT THE TRAIL

When complete, the Ecusta Trail will be a **19.4-mile** paved, multi-use greenway connecting downtown Hendersonville & Brevard, NC. The trail follows along a now rail-banked railway, formerly known as the Watco Railine.

This trail will provide opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists to explore a variety of landscapes, from the French Broad River to rolling hills and mountains. Eventually, the Ecusta Trail will connect users to the **Pisgah National Forest** in Transylvania County.



The trail design is broken into two "phases". **Phase I** (A,B,C), extends from Main St in Hendersonville to Battle Creek Rd in Horse Shoe. **Phase II** (D) extends from Horse Shoe to the Henderson-Transylvania County line.



Are you interested in becoming a trail-oriented business?

The County has created a program to assist local businesses to benefit from the Ecusta Trail in multiple ways. Evidence suggests trails increase customer traffic and sales for many businesses located near them. Businesses have the opportunity to reap financial benefits as well as assist the County during the construction period. Although amenities are designed for Phase I of the trail, they will not be installed upon trail opening. During this interim period, the County will need help to provide amenities such as parking and restrooms.

Amenities offered to trail users could include:

- Bicycle parking facilities
 - Bike racks
 - Bike fix-it station
- Vehicle parking
- Restrooms
- Water refill and/or distribution



The Ecusta Trail Partners and Supporters Program is a voluntary collaboration between Henderson County and local entities located along the Ecusta Trail.

The Program is broken into four different categories, depending on the type of support and amenities provided:

Trail Partner*

An entity volunteering amenities to share with trail users in exchange for marketing. **Only for properties directly adjacent to trail.*

Trail Sponsor

Any entity not adjacent to the trail that wishes to pay for a trail amenity or sponsor an adjacent business to provide an amenity.

Trail Supporter

Any entity not adjacent to the trail that wishes to volunteer time or resources to support the trail.

Trail Lease Program

For qualifying entities willing to lease amenities to the County for trail users.

About the Program

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Friends of the Ecusta Trail

Scan here to learn more about the trail!



www.ecustatrail.org/



Rails to Trails Conservancy

What is Railbanking? Scan here to learn more!



<https://www.railstotrails.org/trail-building-toolbox/railbanking/>

THE SWAMP RABBIT TRAIL

TRAVELERS REST - GREENVILLE, SC

"When I was growing up, we always went 'downtown' to Greenville to shop and dine out. Now everyone is coming 'uptown' to Travelers Rest. It has become one of the new hot spots in the Upstate, thanks to the Swamp Rabbit Trail and the Whistle Stop. I'm very proud of it."

-Vickie Hawkins, Owner



Whistle Stop at the American Cafe

The Whistle Stop at the American Cafe has been a family-owned and operated restaurant since 1945. It's the oldest café in the upstate – originally built in 1932!



Swamp Rabbit Brewery & Tap Room

The Swamp Rabbit Brewery & Taproom was opened in 2014 by brewmaster Ben Pierson and his wife Teresa. The brewery hosts weekly events in TR and is only a hop, skip and a jump away from the SRT.



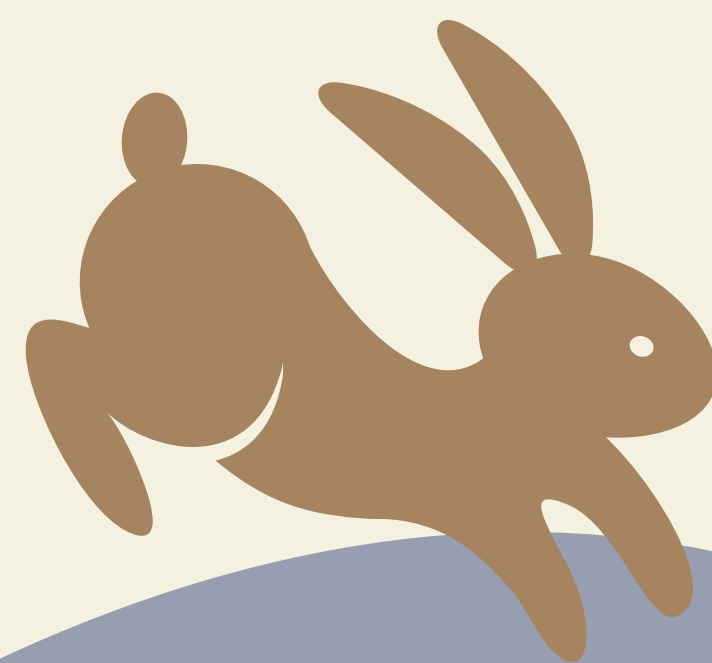
As The Page Turns

As The Page Turns is a new and used bookstore along the SRT, owned and operated by a lifelong resident of TR.



"Having the Swamp Rabbit Trail in Travelers Rest has heavily increased foot traffic to As the Page Turns. This is on a daily basis but even more so on the weekends. People come from all over just to walk or bike on the Trail. We have seen a huge increase in cycling traffic we receive in store as well. It plays an even bigger role because the Swamp Rabbit Trail hosts a number of races throughout the year which brings participants from all over the East Coast who come into town days before the races and shop in the store the days before the race. It has seemingly only had a positive impact on the town and specifically, As the Page Turns."

-Amy Williams, Owner



The Community Tap

The Community Tap offers craft beer and wine, while also running two SRT-based clubs. The "SRT Trotters" and "SRT Blazers".



Cohesive Coffee

Cohesive Coffee is a locally owned and operated Coffee Shop located along the new SRT extension in Greenville.



"We've seen a massive change almost immediately...We've definitely seen an uptick of probably around 15 percent. We have people every day saying we didn't know you guys were here. Because while this location is in the exact middle of the city, it's off the beaten path a little bit."

-Josh Williams, Owner



PROJECT HISTORY & TIMELINE



1894
Henderson County builds the 19-mile rail line, extending it to Brevard.

1939
Ecusta Corp. opens a paper mill on the rail line.

1983
President Reagan signs "railbanking" into law, allowing trails on out-of-service rail corridors.

THE ECUSTA RAIL TRAIL

The former rail line that served the Ecusta Paper Mill has the potential to create an uninterrupted, nearly 20-mile trail for pedestrians and cyclists separated from vehicle traffic.

In addition to improving health, trails around the country attract visitors and boost spending at local businesses. The Ecusta Trail could be transformative for the quality of life and economy of Henderson County.

2002
Ecusta Paper Mill closes and the rail activity on the 19-mile spur line ends.

2009
Hendersonville passes resolution to support the rail-trail, followed by Flat Rock, Laurel Park, Brevard, and other organizations.

2010
Friends of the Ecusta Trail nonprofit forms.

2012
Hendersonville publishes the Ecusta Trail Economic Impact Study.

Summer 2018 - Summer 2019
Henderson County adopts the Greenway Master Plan.

Summer 2019
Henderson County partners with Conserving Carolina to apply for a TAP grant through NCDOT for trail acquisition.

Summer 2020
Henderson County receives a \$5 million construction & PE grant for the first 6 miles of trail in Henderson County.

June 2021
The entire 19-mile rail corridor is railbanked through the federal Surface Transportation Board.

Aug. 2021
The rail corridor is purchased for \$7.8 million to be developed into a trail.

Nov. 2021
Henderson County's Rail Trail Advisory Committee formed.

Nov. 2021
Conserving Carolina leases Henderson County the 11-mile portion of proposed trail for 150 years to build and operate the trail as a linear park.

Sept. 2021
Rails and cross ties start being removed for trail.

Aug. 2021
Ribbon cutting in Hendersonville to celebrate trail project launch.

Summer 2022
NC General Assembly approves additional funding for trail construction to the Friends of the Ecusta Trail.

Winter 2023
90% design approved for Phase I.

Summer 2023
Henderson County awarded \$8.7 million to build & design the trail via the RAISE & NSFLTP grants.

Summer 2023
Construction bid opened for Phase I.

Fall 2023
Groundbreaking Ceremony

December 2023
Phase I construction begins

We are here!

2025
Phase I estimated completion.

2027 - 2029
Ecusta Trail to be fully built out.



While Phase I of the trail is under construction, it is **closed** to the public to ensure your safety. Check HCGreenways.org for updates.



The Ecusta Paper Mill originally served by the 19 mile rail line spur.



The rail corridor today.



The imagined future rail trail.



Rail bridge over the French Broad River.

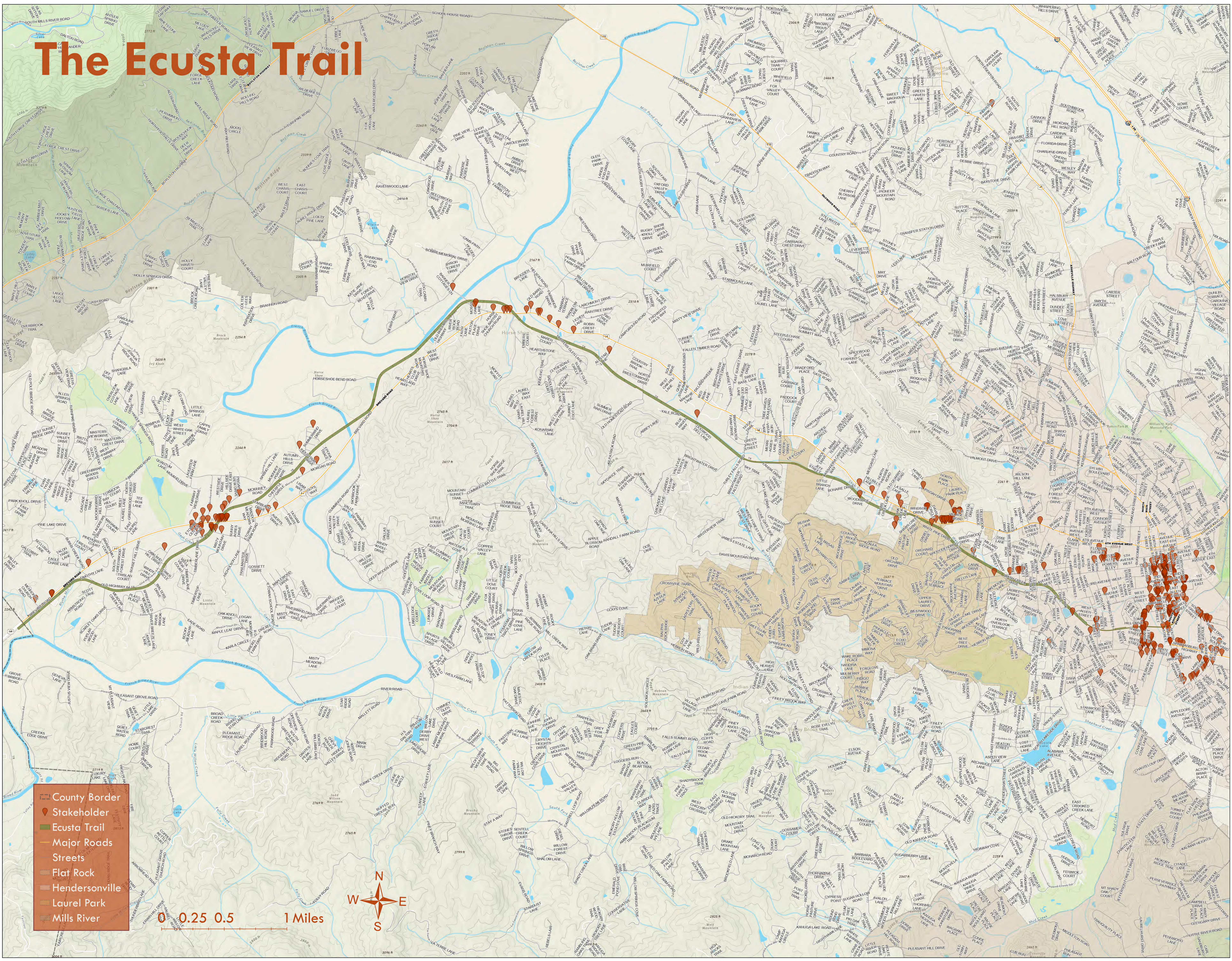


Groundbreaking Ceremony on 10-28-2023



The trail will pass by many businesses along the corridor.

The Ecusta Trail



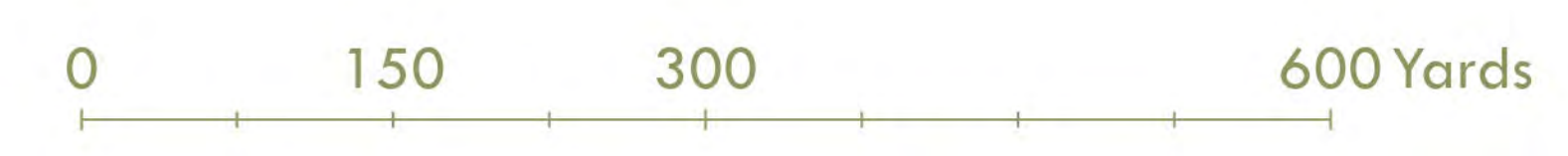
- County Border
- Stakeholder
- Ecusta Trail
- Major Roads
- Streets
- Flat Rock
- Hendersonville
- Laurel Park
- Mills River

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

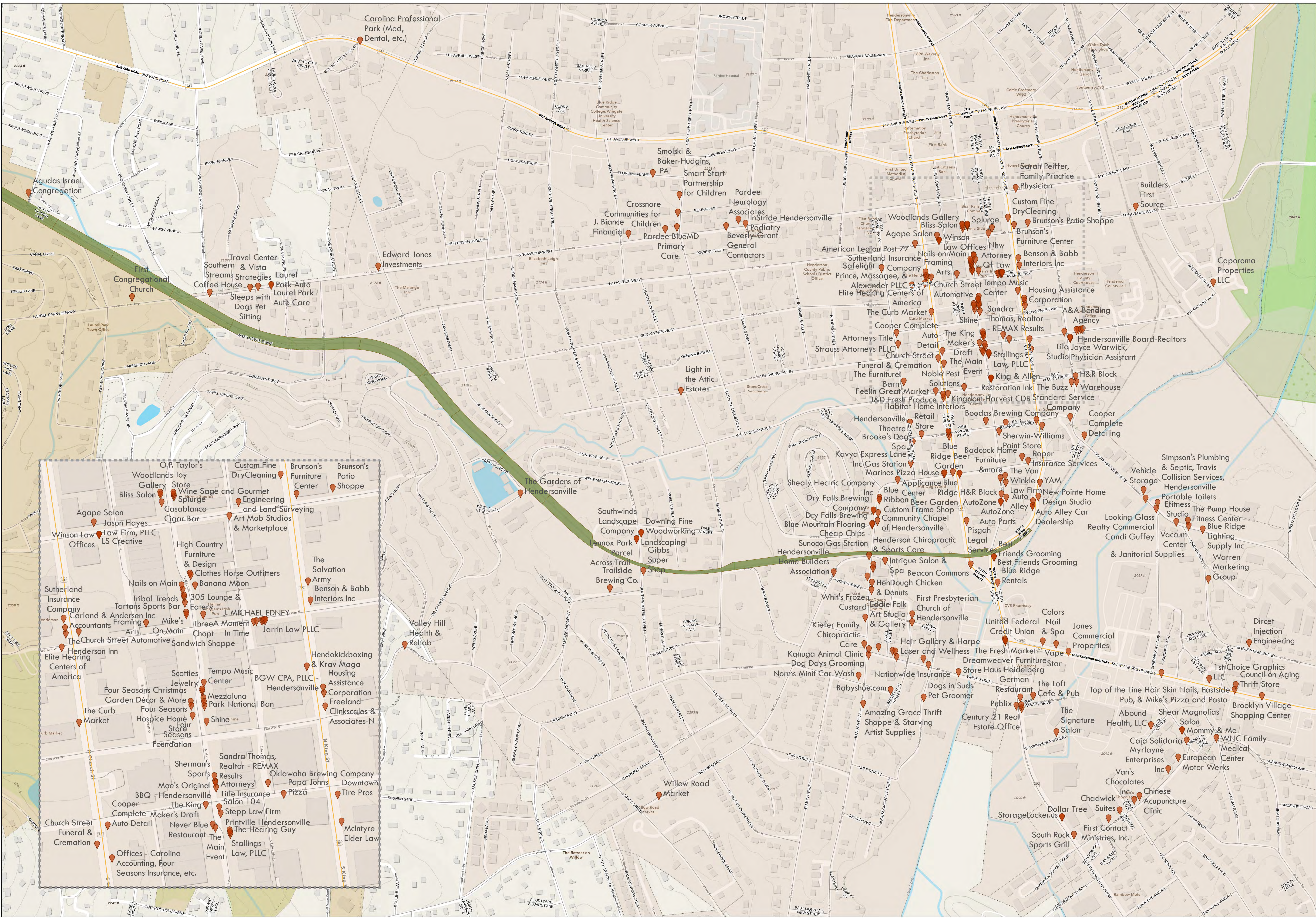


The City of Hendersonville Area of the Trail

Ecusta Trail Phase I



- Stakeholder
- Ecusta Trail
- Major Roads
- Hendersonville
- Laurel Park

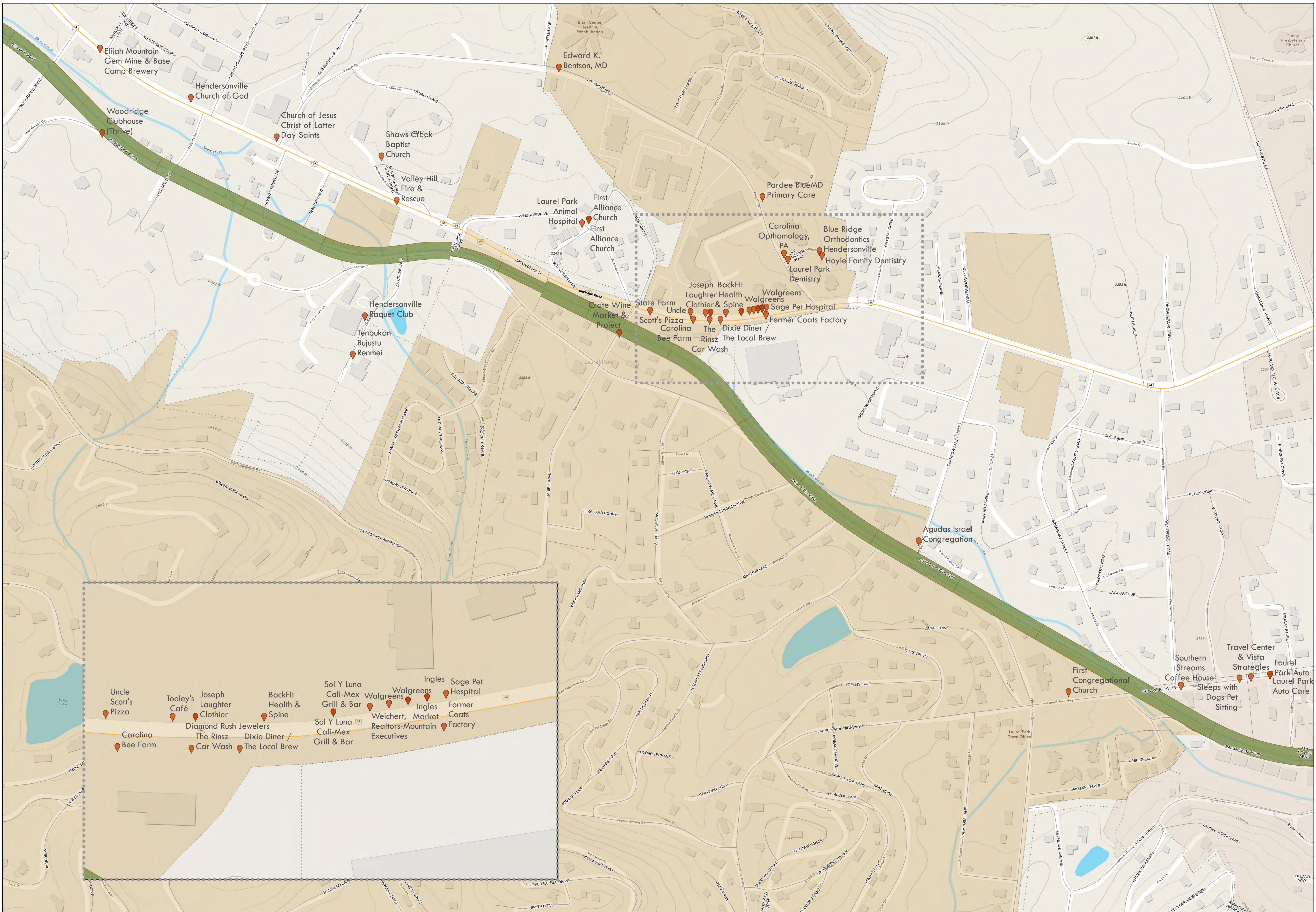


The Town of Laurel Park Area of the Trail

Ecusta Trail Phase I

Legend:

- Stakeholder
- Ecusta Trail
- Major Roads
- Hendersonville
- Laurel Park



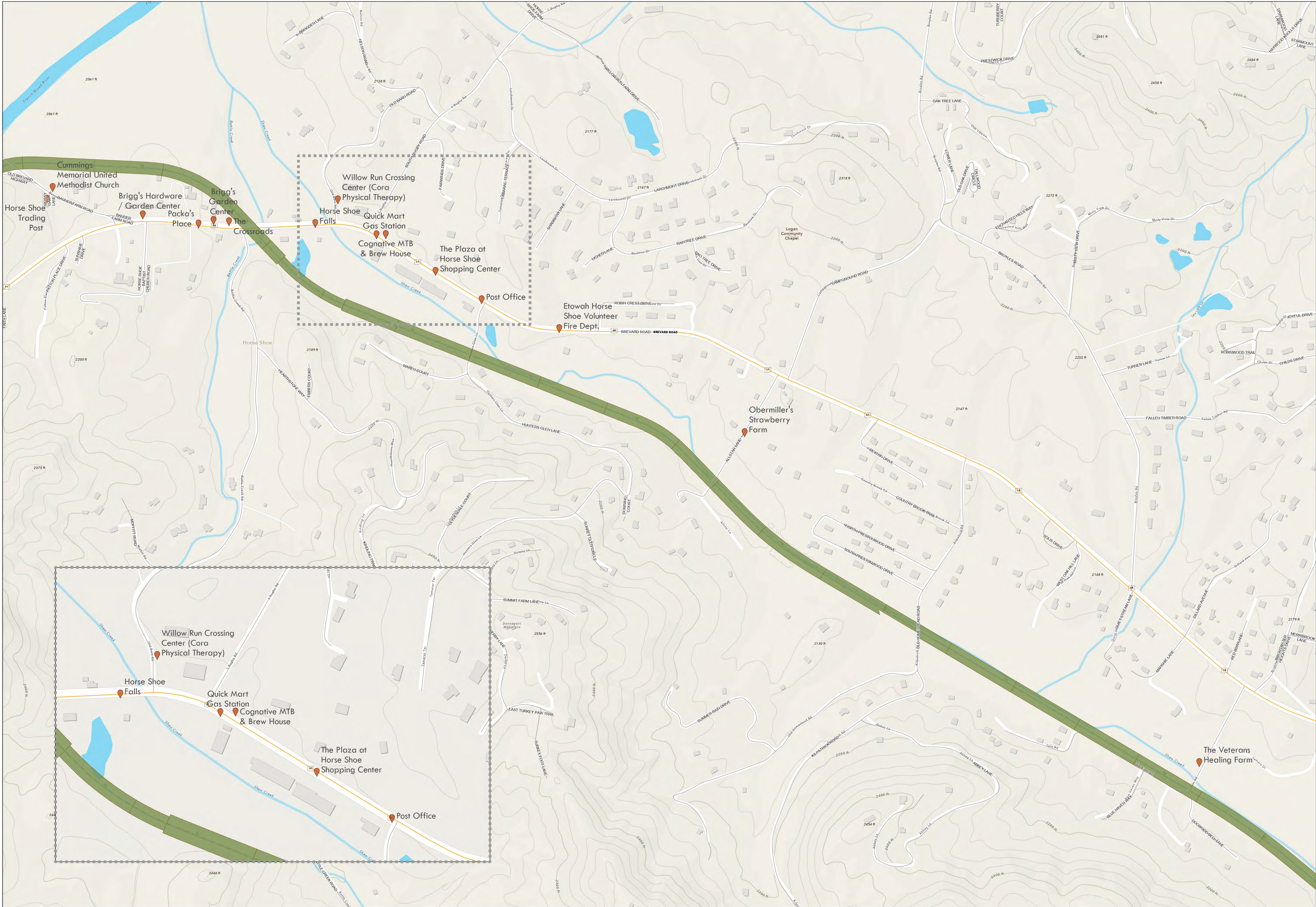
County - Unincorporated Area of the Trail

Ecusta Trail Phase I

0 150 300 600 Yards



- Stakeholder
- Ecusta Trail
- Major Roads



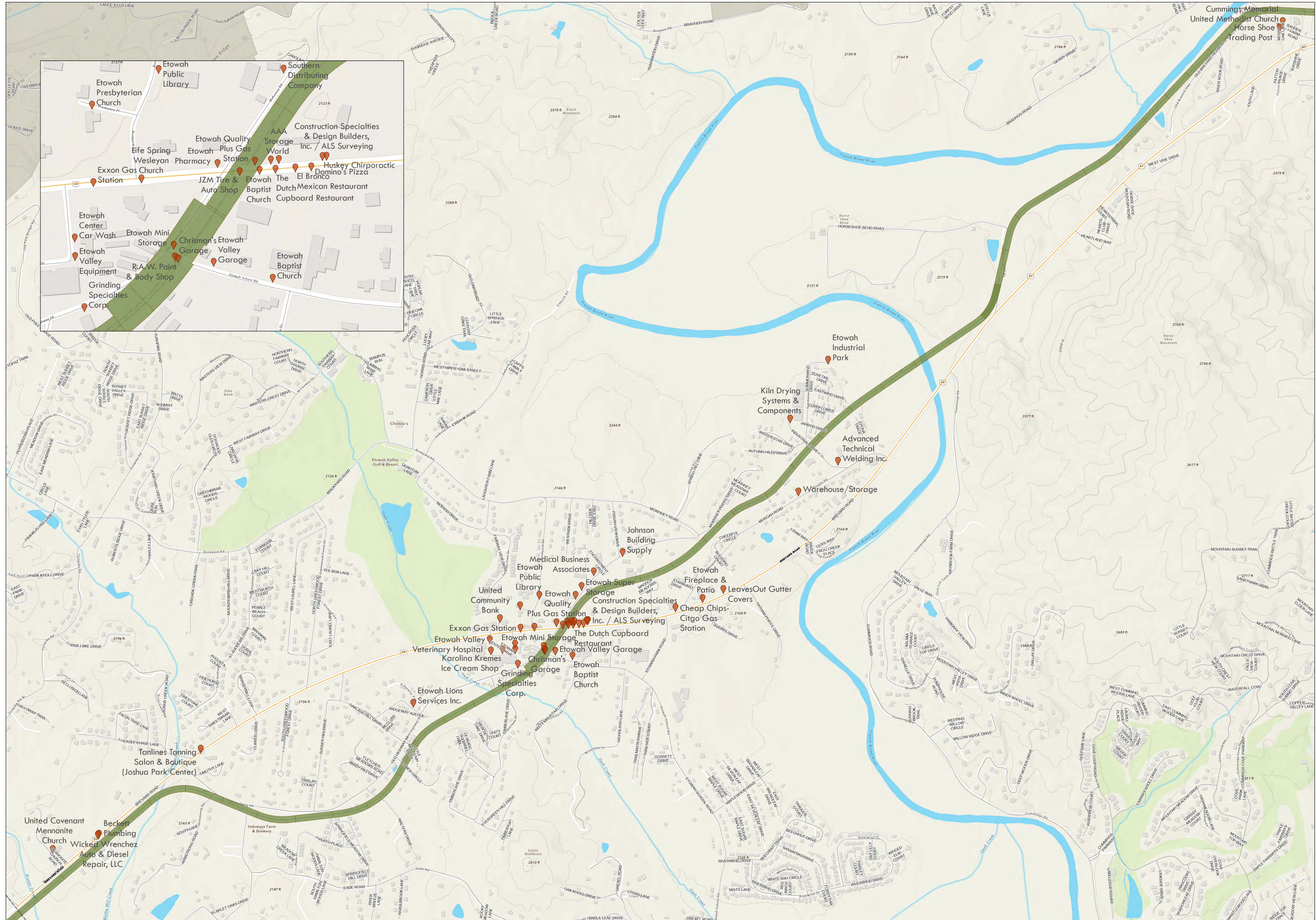
Unincorporated Area of the Trail

Ecusta Trail Phase II

- Stakeholder
- Mills River
- Ecusta Trail
- County Border
- Major Roads



0 275 550 1,100 Yards



Inset Map Labels:

- Etowah Presbyterian Church
- Etowah Public Library
- Etowah Quality Plus Gas Station
- Eife Spring Wesleyan Church
- Exxon Gas Station
- Etowah Center Car Wash
- Etowah Valley Equipment
- Etowah Mini Storage
- RA.W. Paint & Body Shop
- Grinding Specialties Corp.
- Southern Distributing Company
- AAA Storage World
- Construction Specialties & Design Builders, Inc. / ALS Surveying
- JZM Tire & Auto Shop
- Etowah Baptist Church
- The El Bronco
- Huskey Chiropractic
- Domino's Pizza
- Etowah Valley Garage
- Chrisman's Garage
- Etowah Baptist Church
- Cupboard Restaurant