

ECUSTA TRAIL FAQs

ECONOMIC

How much will the trail cost?

The latest construction cost estimate is \$43 million for the entire trail. Phase I in Henderson County will cost \$10,126,120 per the bid submittal. The true costs of future sections are unknown until engineering and design are completed, but it is expected that the received grants will cover the majority of the 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 a \$9.4 million annual return from visitor spending, healthcare cost savings, and tax revenues from the Ecusta Trail. The Swamp Rabbit Trail in SC generates \$6.7 million from trail visitors a year (2013, Furman University), and the Virginia Creeper Trail brings in \$2.5 million in visitor spending each year (2014, Rails to Trails Conservancy). The Ecusta Trail is likely to bring in much 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 as a whole.

SAFETY

Do trails attract crime?

Trails actually *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 they bring. 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 exhibit 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.

Want to know more about the Ecusta Trail?



Visit the Friends of the Ecusta Trail webpage by scanning the QR code to find other frequently asked questions about the trail!



Scan this QR code to read the Economic Impact Analysis for the Ecusta Trail completed in 2012.



Scan this QR code to learn more about the Trail Partners Program.

PROJECT TIMELINE

When will trail construction begin?

Phase I (Main Street in Hendersonville to Battle Creek Road in Horse Shoe) is scheduled to begin construction Fall/Winter 2023.

When will phase I of the trail be usable?

The trail currently has gravel surfacing, but will be paved and have new bridges in 2024. The trail will be upgraded to federal DOT standards and ADA compliant. Portions of the trail will be officially closed during construction and appropriate signage will be posted and alerts as applicable will be given to affected property owners. Please 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.

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. A database is being created, but 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 is an option for adjacent, non-residential entities or trail-oriented businesses that are supportive of the trail but are unable to offer amenities. 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 contact staff for additional information or if you would like to be involved.

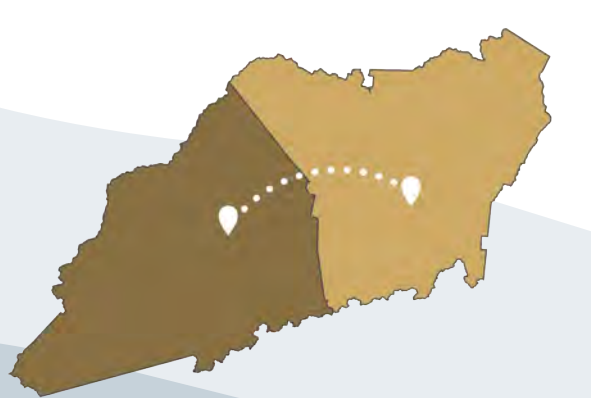
OTHER QUESTIONS

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.



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.

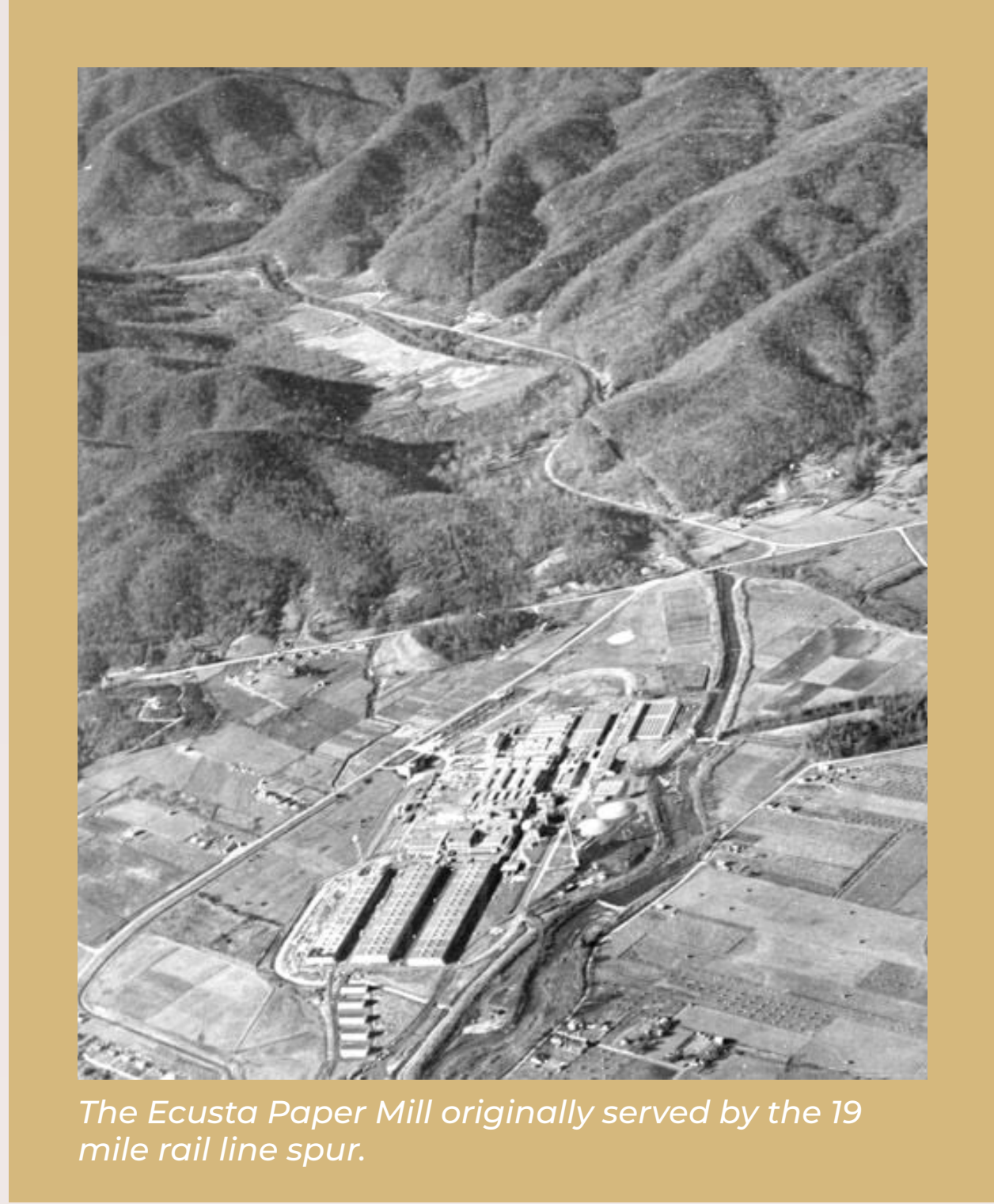
2009
Hendersonville passes resolution to support the rail-trail, followed by Flat Rock, Laurel Park, Brevard, and other organizations.

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.



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



Rail bridge over the French Broad River.



The rail corridor today.

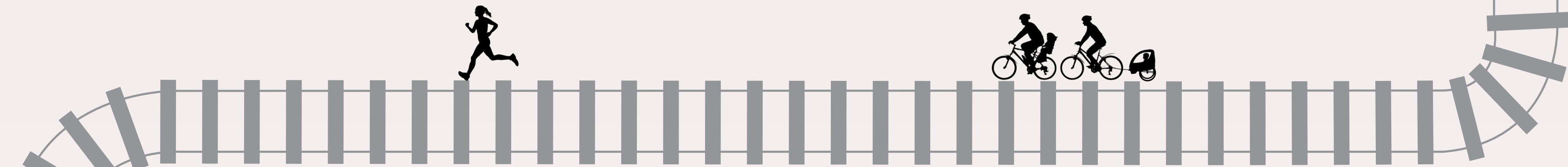
The imagined future rail trail.

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.



Temporary gravel surface on the future 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.

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



The trail will pass by many businesses along the corridor.

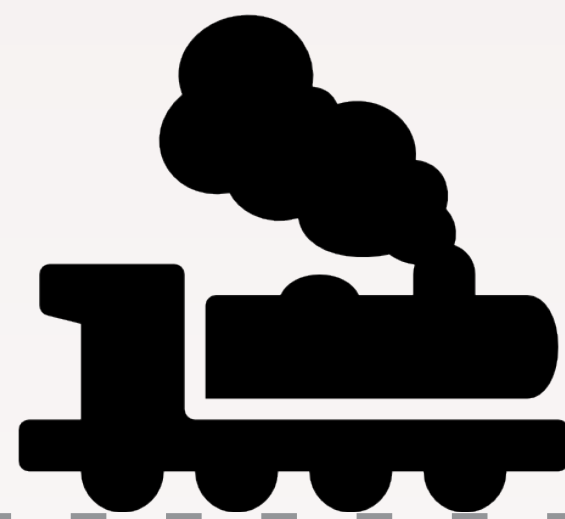
Summer 2022
NC General Assembly approves additional funding for trail construction to the Friends of the Ecusta Trail.

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.

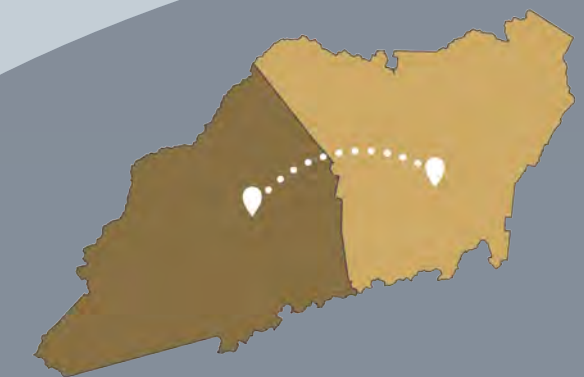
We are here!



Fall/Winter 2023
Phase I construction to begin.

2024
Phase I estimated completion.

2027 - 2029
Ecusta Trail to be fully built out.



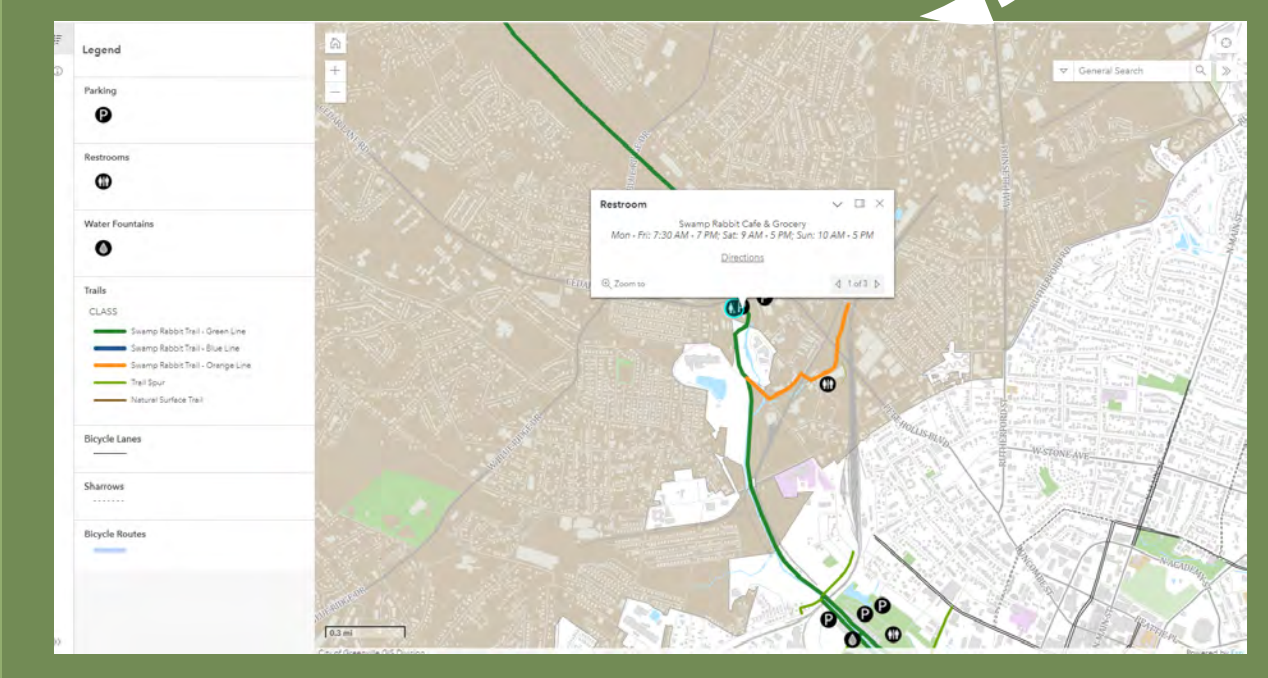
Images courtesy of Transylvania Times, City of Brevard, Conserving Carolina, and Henderson County staff.

The Ecusta Trail Partners Program



The Ecusta Trail Partners Program is a voluntary collaboration between Henderson County and local entities located along the Ecusta Trail. A trail partner is a business or non-residential entity that volunteers amenities to trail users in exchange for advertising on trail marketing and other materials.

The County will feature businesses and other stakeholders that become a "Trail Partner" on an interactive web-based map. See an example from the Swamp Rabbit Trail in Travelers Rest, SC below.



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Examples of Trail Amenities offered can include:

- Parking spaces
- Restrooms
- Bicycle racks/parking
- Bike fix-it stations
- Water distribution

Ecusta Trail Economic Impact Analysis: Tourism

- \$2 million in total expenditures
- \$1.2 million increase in tourism spending
- 20,000 trail visitors per year
- 27 jobs created
- 3% yearly increase in trail users



Staff had the opportunity to visit the Swamp Rabbit Trail and meet those involved in its creation. The Swamp Rabbit, located only 30 miles south of downtown Hendersonville, shares similar elements as the future Ecusta Trail. For example, the Swamp Rabbit Trail is also a paved, multi-use path that passes through and connects various smaller municipalities to a larger city, Greenville, SC. Keep reading for examples of trail amenities and marketing from the Swamp Rabbit Trail!

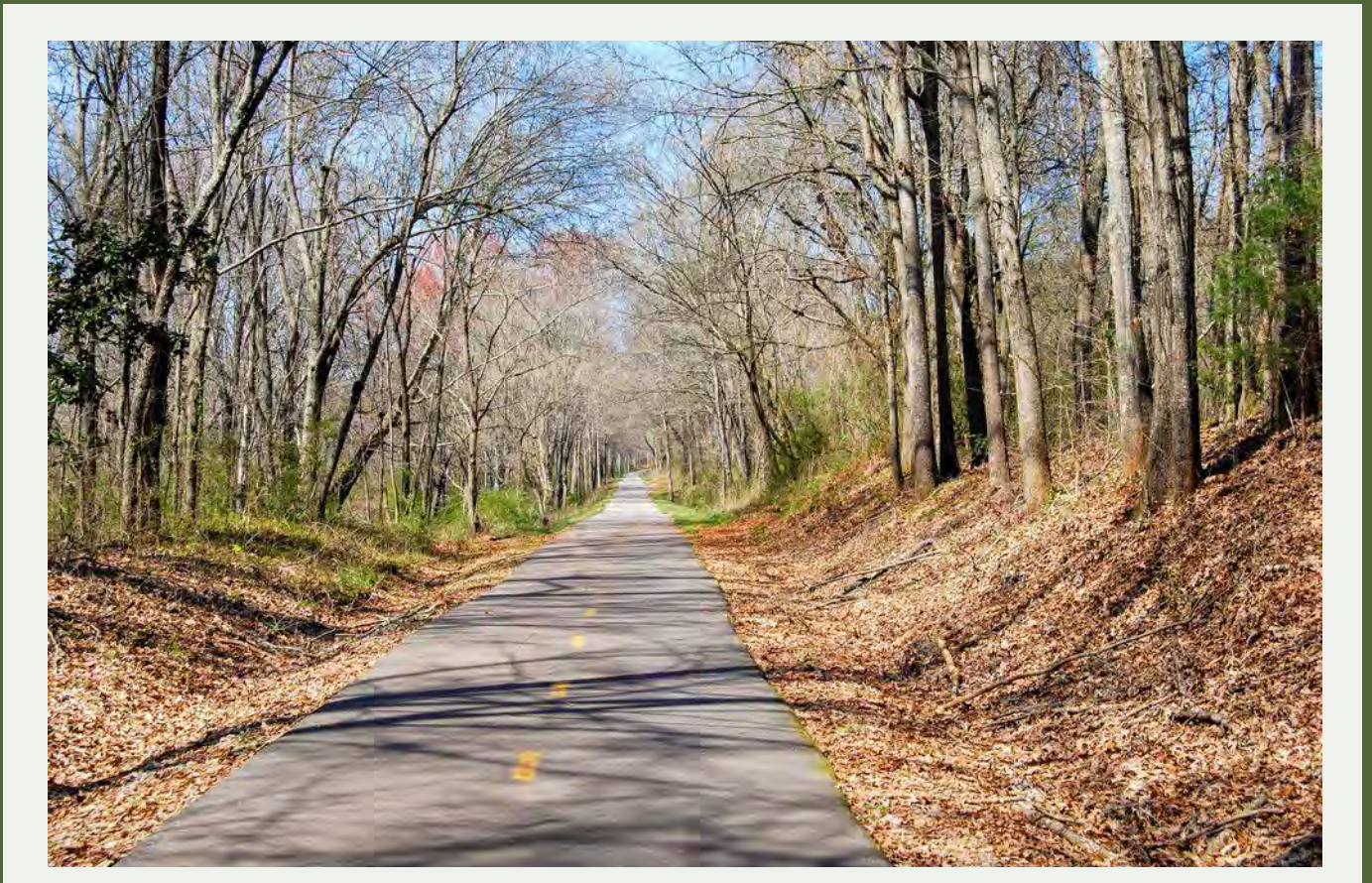


The Swamp Rabbit Trail

Travelers Rest, SC



The Swamp Rabbit Trail stretches 22 miles, only 3 miles longer than the Ecusta Trail when complete. The Swamp Rabbit connects the town of Travelers Rest, SC, and the city of Greenville, SC. This walking and biking trail runs along the former Reedy River railroad corridor, similar to the Watco rail line the Ecusta follows. The Swamp Rabbit also offers a variety of scenic views from rural woodlands to urban centers.



Swamp Rabbit Trail



Ecusta Trail

Booming Business from Travelers Rest to Greenville

"We've probably quadrupled our number of downtown businesses...We used to have dozens of empty buildings on Main Street. Now there are only a handful. Even on U.S. 25, which is our bypass, we've seen considerable growth. I think Travelers Rest has more media exposure and people are more enticed to come here and make an investment because of the trail."

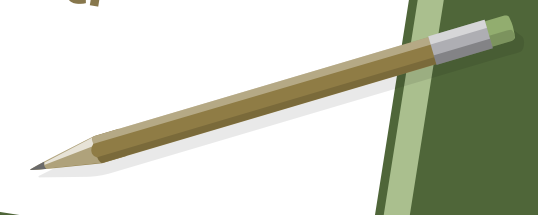
-Dianna Turner
City Administrator for Travelers Rest

"When this opportunity arose with the Swamp Rabbit Trail right behind the property, it was sort of a no-brainer for us."
-Home Team BBQ
Greenville, SC

"I'd definitely eat here more often because it's one of the most convenient ones now for a bike workout."
-Trail User & Patron



Henderson County can learn a lot from the opportunities and challenges presented to the Swamp Rabbit Trail.



Local Business Spotlight

The Swamp Rabbit Café & Grocery

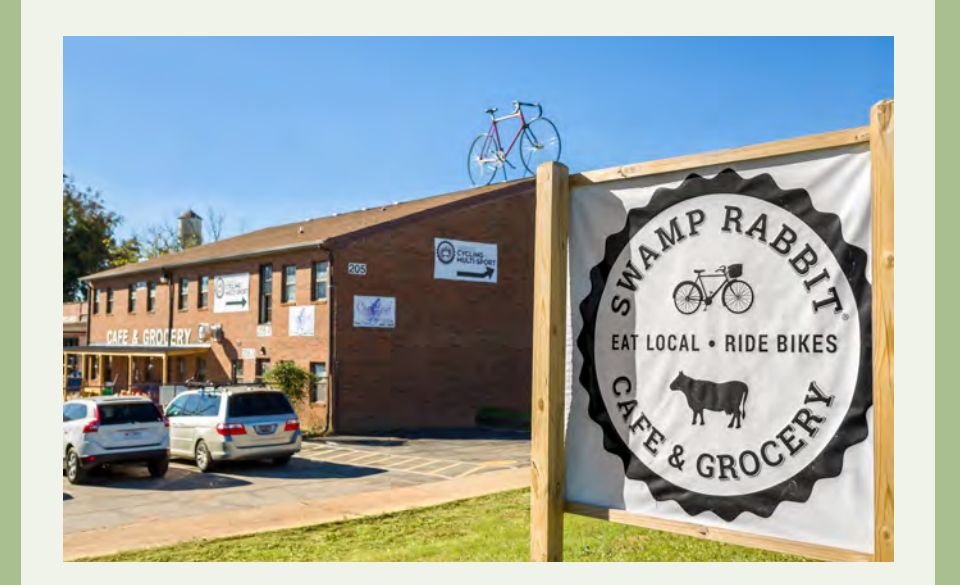
Opened in 2011, the Swamp Rabbit Café and Grocery offers made-to-order food and beverages. Through collaborations with local farmers and artisans, a wide variety of local products are also available to purchase.

Joyce and Nancy McCarrell spoke on how their business started because of the future Swamp Rabbit trail.

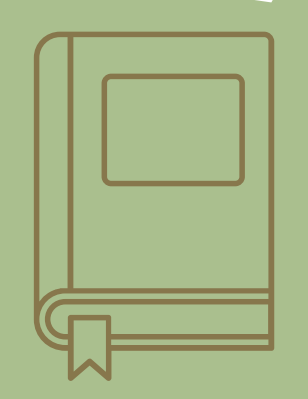
"We drove along Main Street and wondered, 'Where are people going to go to buy a bottle of water?' At the time, there was nothing for them. So that was the genesis of our business — having a place for people to buy a bottle of water when they got off the trail."

"We now have 118 employees," co-owner Mary Walsh said, "and being on the SRT provides us the opportunity to reach far more people and allows us to buy food from over 300 local farmers and food artisans."

-Greenville Post, August 2023



The Proof is in the Numbers: Furman University Trail Study



Two studies of the Swamp Rabbit Trail, conducted by Dr. Julian Reed, show widespread benefits to the community and business owners since the trail opening.

The Furman University professor found that the estimated number of users increased from 359,314 in the first year to 403,323 in the second year.

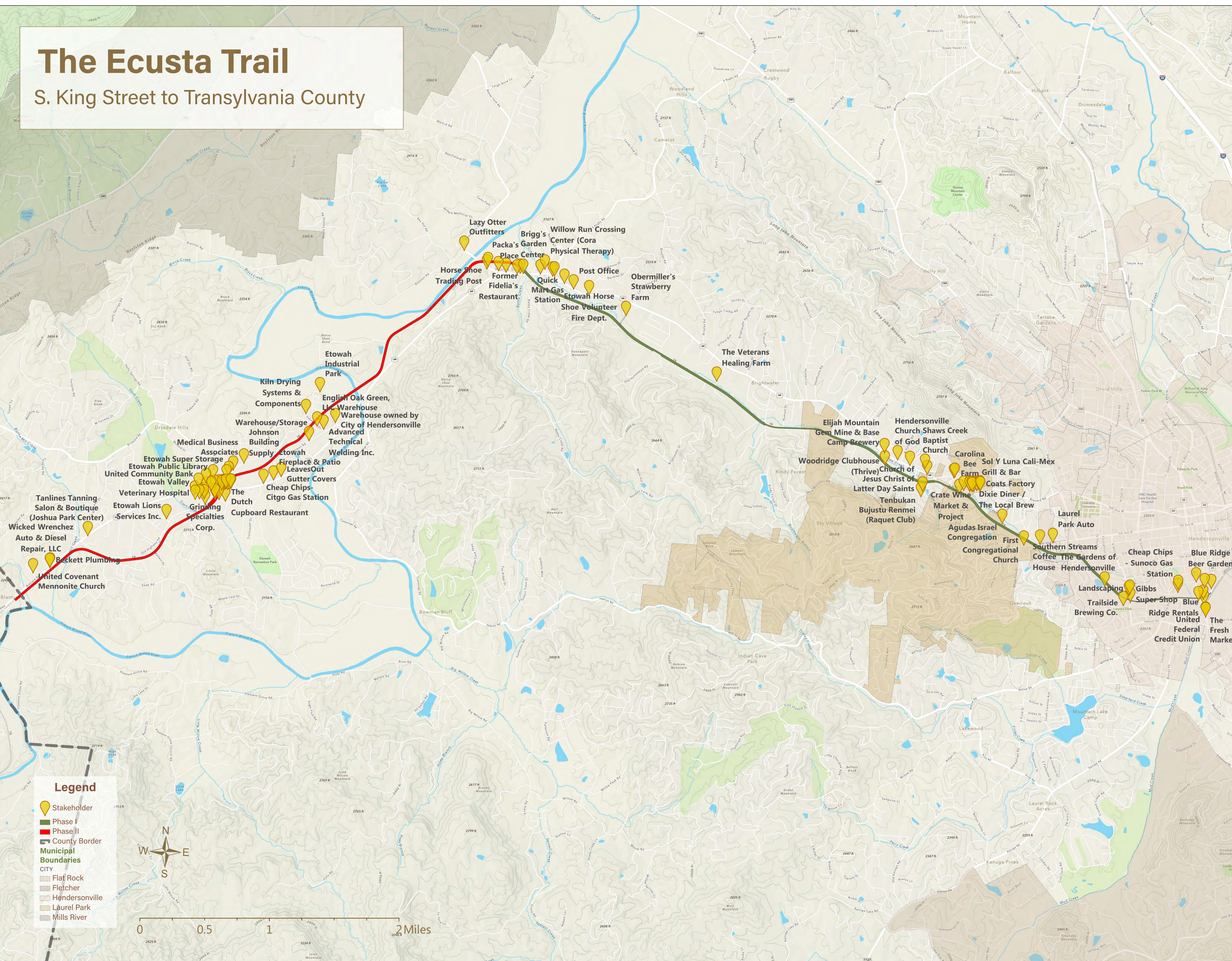
In the first year, businesses reported sales increases from 30% to 85%. In the second year, this number was 5% to 100%.

Example Trail Marketing



The Ecusta Trail

S. King Street to Transylvania County



- Stakeholders (Yellow Pins):
 - Lazy Otter Outfitters
 - Packa's Garden Place Center
 - Willow Run Crossing Center (Cora Physical Therapy)
 - Horse Shoe Trading Post
 - Former Fidelia's Restaurant
 - Quick Mart Gas Station
 - Post Office
 - Stowah Horse Shoe Volunteer Fire Dept.
 - Obermiller's Strawberry Farm
 - The Veterans Healing Farm
 - Elijah Mountain Gem Mine & Base Camp Brewery
 - Hendersonville Church Shaws Creek of God Baptist Church
 - Carolina Bee Sol Y Luna Cali-Mex Farm Grill & Bar
 - Woodridge Clubhouse (Thrive) Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
 - Tenbukan Bujustu Renmei (Raquet Club)
 - Crate Wine Market & Project
 - Dixie Diner / The Local Brew
 - Agudas Israel Congregation
 - First Congregational Church
 - Southern Streams Coffee The Gardens of House Hendersonville
 - Laurel Park Auto
 - Cheap Chips - Sunoco Gas Station
 - Blue Ridge Beer Garden
 - Landscaping Trailside Brewing Co.
 - Gibbs Super Shop
 - Ridge Rentals United Federal Credit Union
 - The Fresh Market
 - United Covenant Mennonite Church
 - Wicked Wrenches Auto & Diesel Repair, LLC
 - Beckett Plumbing
 - Tanlines Tanning Salon & Boutique (Joshua Park Center)
 - Etowah Valley Veterinary Hospital
 - Etowah Lions Services Inc.
 - Etowah Public Library
 - United Community Bank
 - Etowah Valley
 - Medical Business Associates
 - Etowah Super Storage
 - Johnson Building Supply
 - Etowah Fireplaces & Patio LeavesOut
 - The Dutch Cupboard Restaurant
 - Gutter Covers Cheap Chips
 - Citgo Gas Station
 - Warehouse/Storage
 - Etowah Warehouse
 - Advanced Technical Welding Inc.
 - English Oak Green, LLC
 - Kiln Drying Systems & Components
 - Etowah Industrial Park

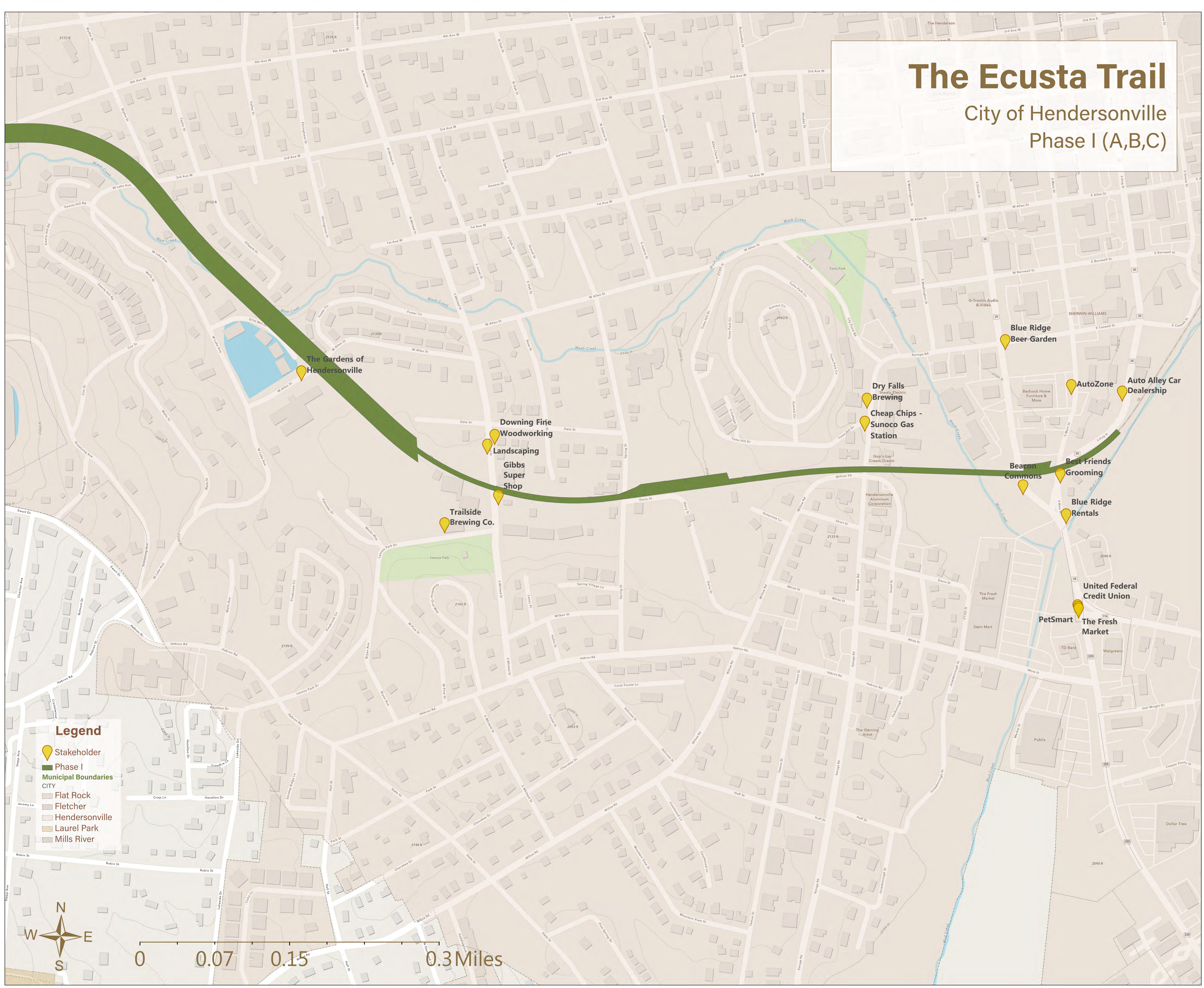
- ### Legend
- Stakeholder
 - Phase I
 - Phase II
 - County Border
 - Municipal Boundaries
 - CITY
 - Flat Rock
 - Fletcher
 - Hendersonville
 - Laurel Park
 - Mills River



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

The Ecusta Trail

City of Hendersonville
Phase I (A,B,C)



The Gardens of Hendersonville

Downing Fire Woodworking
Landscaping
Gibbs Super Shop

Trailside Brewing Co.

Dry Falls Brewing
Cheap Chips - Sunoco Gas Station

Blue Ridge Beer Garden

AutoZone **Auto Alley Car Dealership**

Beacon Commons

Best Friends Grooming

Blue Ridge Rentals

United Federal Credit Union

PetSmart **The Fresh Market**

Legend

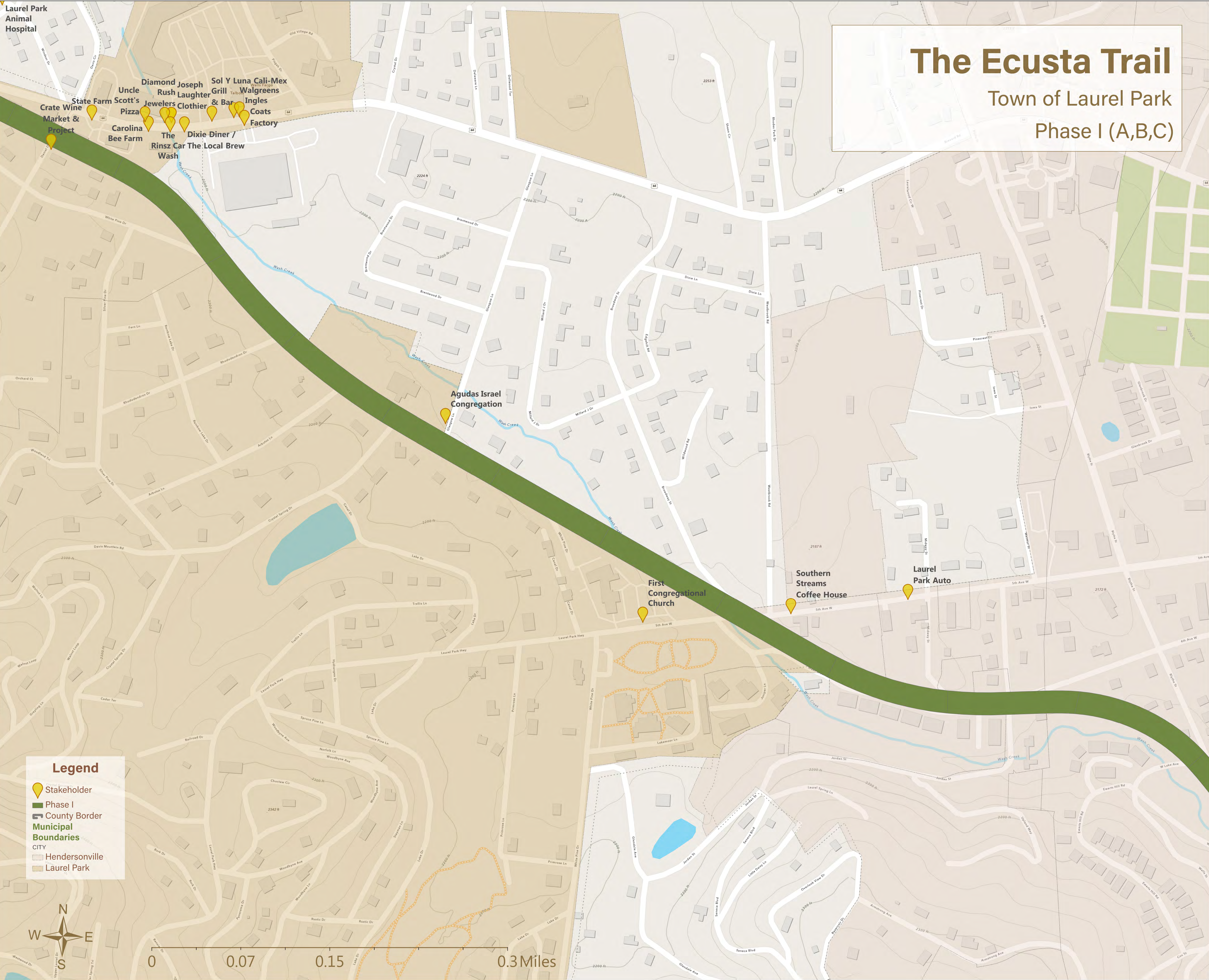
- Stakeholder
- Phase I
- Municipal Boundaries
- Flat Rock
- Fletcher
- Hendersonville
- Laurel Park
- Mills River



0 0.07 0.15 0.3 Miles

The Ecusta Trail

Town of Laurel Park
Phase I (A,B,C)



Legend

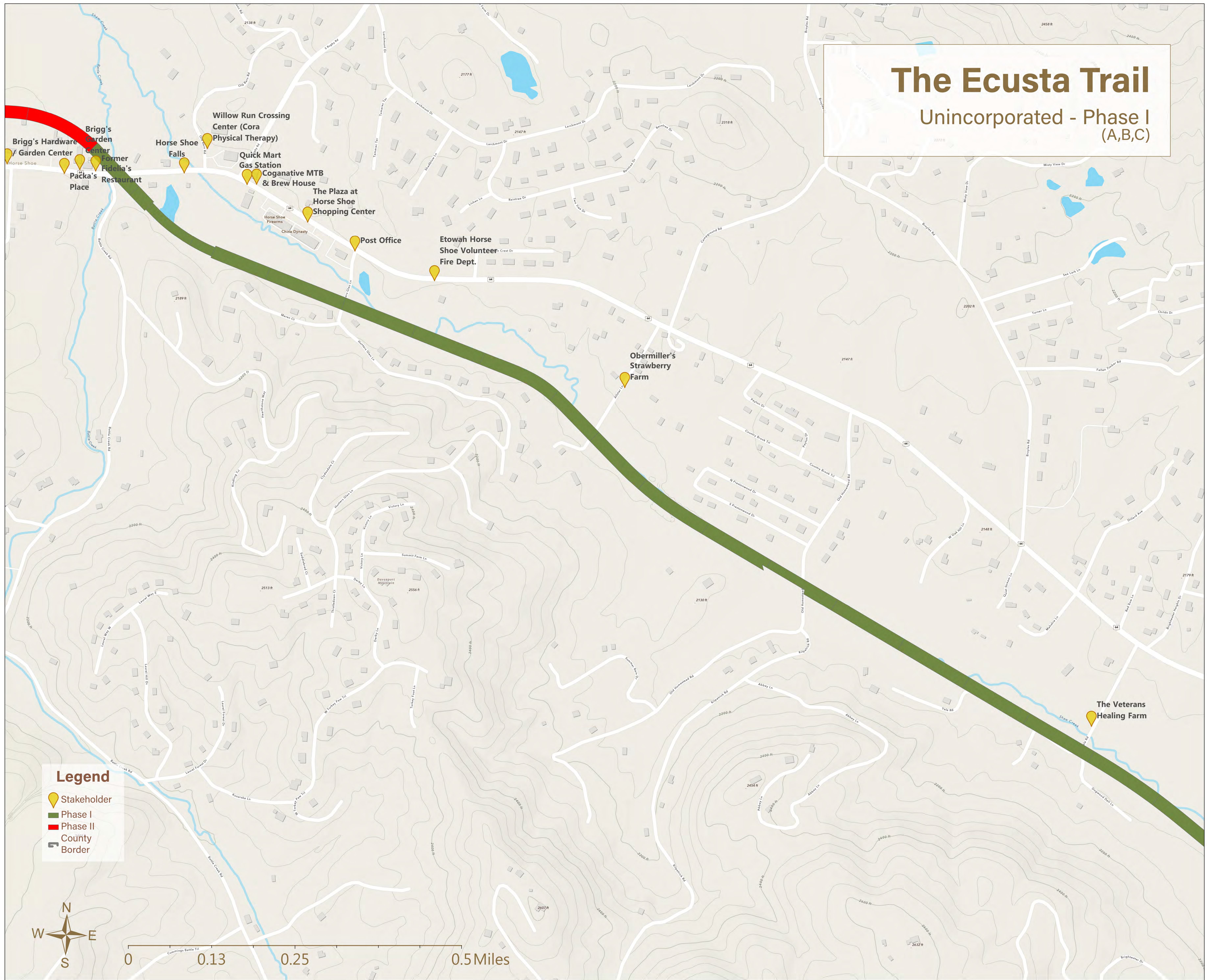
- Stakeholder
- Phase I
- County Border
- Municipal Boundaries
- CITY
- Hendersonville
- Laurel Park



0 0.07 0.15 0.3 Miles

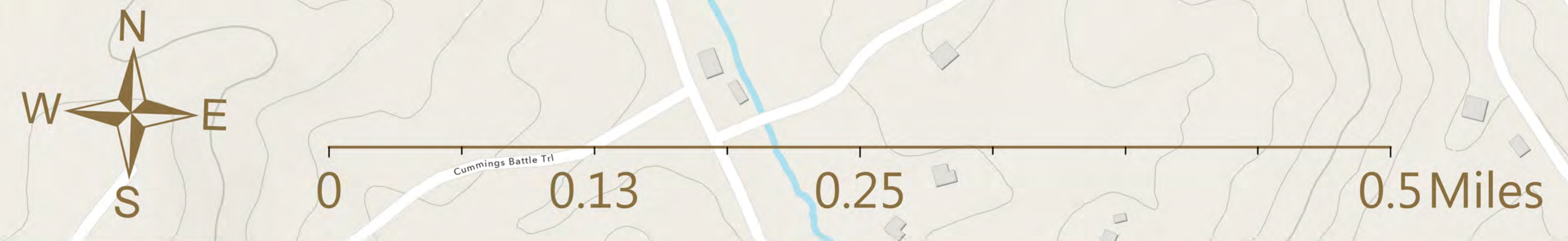
The Ecusta Trail

Unincorporated - Phase I
(A,B,C)



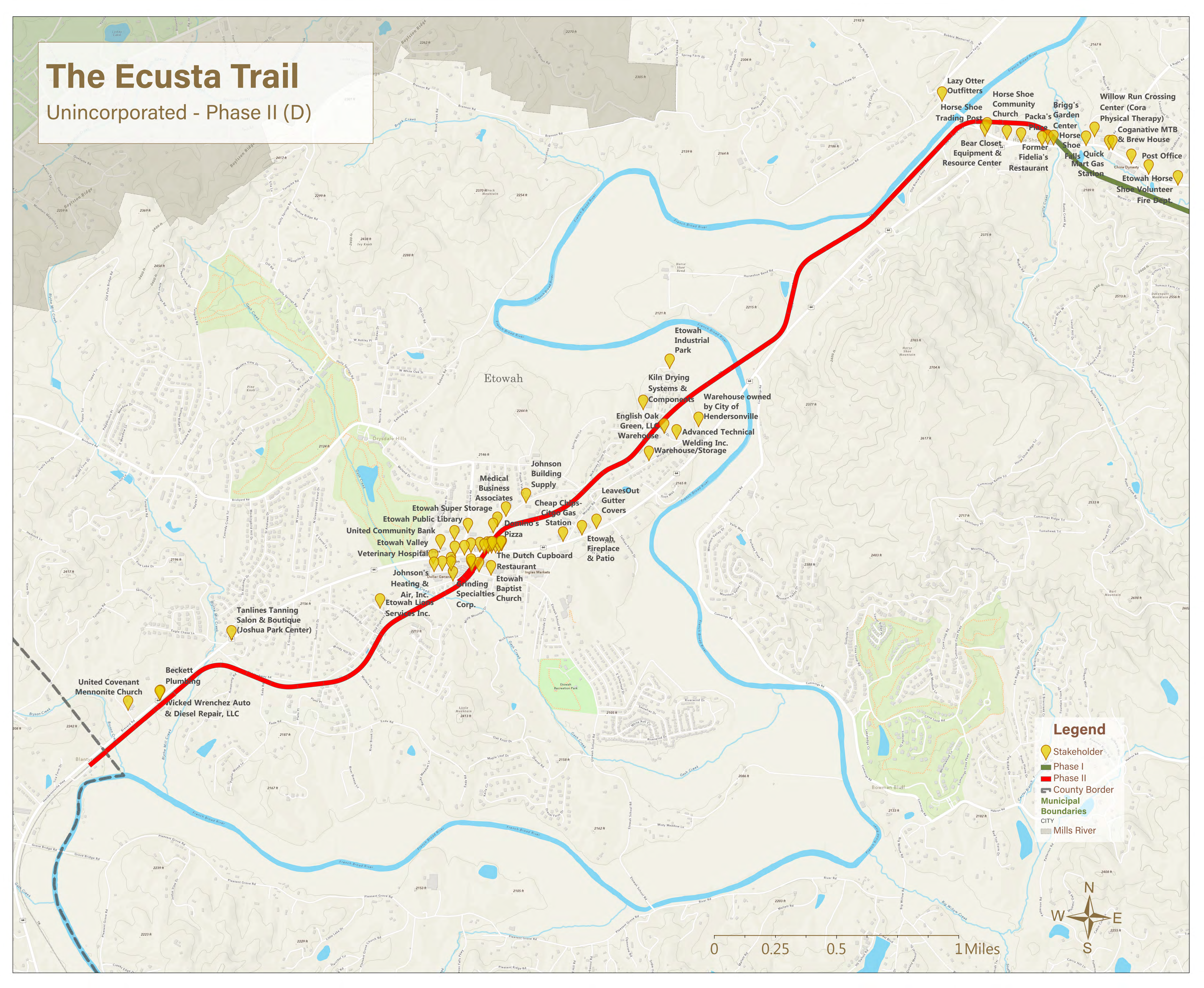
Legend

- Stakeholder
- Phase I
- Phase II
- County Border



The Ecusta Trail

Unincorporated - Phase II (D)



Lazy Otter Outfitters
Horse Shoe Trading Post
Horse Shoe Community Church
Pack's Garden
Brigg's Center
Willow Run Crossing Center (Cora Physical Therapy)
Coganative MTB & Brew House
Post Office
Etowah Horse Shoe Volunteer Fire Dept
Bear Closet Equipment & Resource Center
Former Fidelia's Restaurant
Horse Shoe Falls Mart Gas Station
China Dynasty
Quick Mart Gas Station

Etowah Industrial Park
Kiln Drying Systems & Components
Warehouse owned by City of Hendersonville
English Oak Green, LLC Warehouse
Advanced Technical Welding Inc. Warehouse/Storage
Johnson Building Supply
LeavesOut Gutter Covers
Etowah Super Storage
Etowah Public Library
United Community Bank
Etowah Veterinary Hospital
Johnson's Heating & Air, Inc.
Etowah Licenses Services Inc.
Brinding Specialties Corp.
Etowah Baptist Church
The Dutch Cupboard Restaurant
Etowah Fireplace & Patio
Medical Business Associates
Cheap Chips-City Gas
Domino's Station
Pizza
Etowah Recreation Park

United Covenant Mennonite Church
Beckett Plumbing
Wicked Wrenchez Auto & Diesel Repair, LLC
Tanlines Tanning Salon & Boutique (Joshua Park Center)

Legend

- Stakeholder
- Phase I
- Phase II
- County Border
- Municipal Boundaries
- CITY
- Mills River

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

