

Opportunities and Constraints



Overview

An important part of this study included an assessment of opportunities and challenges throughout the study corridor. Opportunities and challenges were determined based on work in the field and client feedback. Field review and GIS mapping also highlighted opportunities and challenges.

The maps on the following pages represent corridor-wide existing conditions and a preliminary identification of opportunities and constraints related to implementation of a rail-to-trail project in the study corridor.

The maps and identified opportunities/constraints are based upon the field work completed by a team comprised of professionals from Alta/Greenways and Seamon Whiteside and Associates.

Opportunities

Several conditions were identified that would support the implementation of a rail-to-trail project. One widespread condition that was observed along the corridor were the numerous connections that a rail-to-trail project could potentially provide. The rail ROW passes near or through residential neighborhoods, schools, parks, recreation facilities, existing state bike routes, business centers, retail areas, community centers, and unique natural areas. A trail connecting all of

these areas would allow residents greater ease of access to area resources by foot and bike. It could serve as a commuter link between residences and places of employment in Hendersonville and Brevard. There is also an increased interest in alternative transportation and access to recreational activities by industries looking to relocate to communities offering these amenities. An attractive, well connected biking, walking, and equestrian trail would attract both visitors and employers to help stimulate the local economy.

Our study found that even in rural areas, a trail along the railroad ROW would be well served by restaurants and convenience stores, benefiting both trail users and businesses.

A trail along the existing rail ROW would greatly improve access to natural features for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities. The railroad line has expansive, natural views in the more rural parts of Henderson and Transylvania Counties. In addition, it intersects or passes nearby significant natural areas, such as the French Broad River, the Davidson River, and Pisgah National Forest.

A rail-to-trail along the study corridor would not only connect visitors and residents to unique natural and historical resources, but with the addition of learning elements, such as interpretive signage, the trail could be an effective educational tool as well.

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A trail on the railroad ROW could connect to the existing greenway trail in Brevard. This would allow for connection to downtown Brevard, area schools, recreation facilities, retail along US highway 64, and Pisgah National Forest.

The railroad ROW typically follows the least arduous route between Hendersonville and Brevard, and its length is a very attractive and manageable distance for bikers living in or visiting the area. It also maintains a fairly consistent grade with adjacent areas and roadways, and would be accessible from many different locations along the study corridor.

- especially in more rural parts of Henderson and Transylvania counties - there are limited opportunities for connections. A common alternative is to propose the trail run alongside roadways. In many places, though, roadway shoulders are narrow or steep, so this option may not be feasible.

Constraints

While there are significant opportunities supporting a rail-to-trail project along the study corridor, there are also some challenges that will have to be addressed in the planning and implementation process.

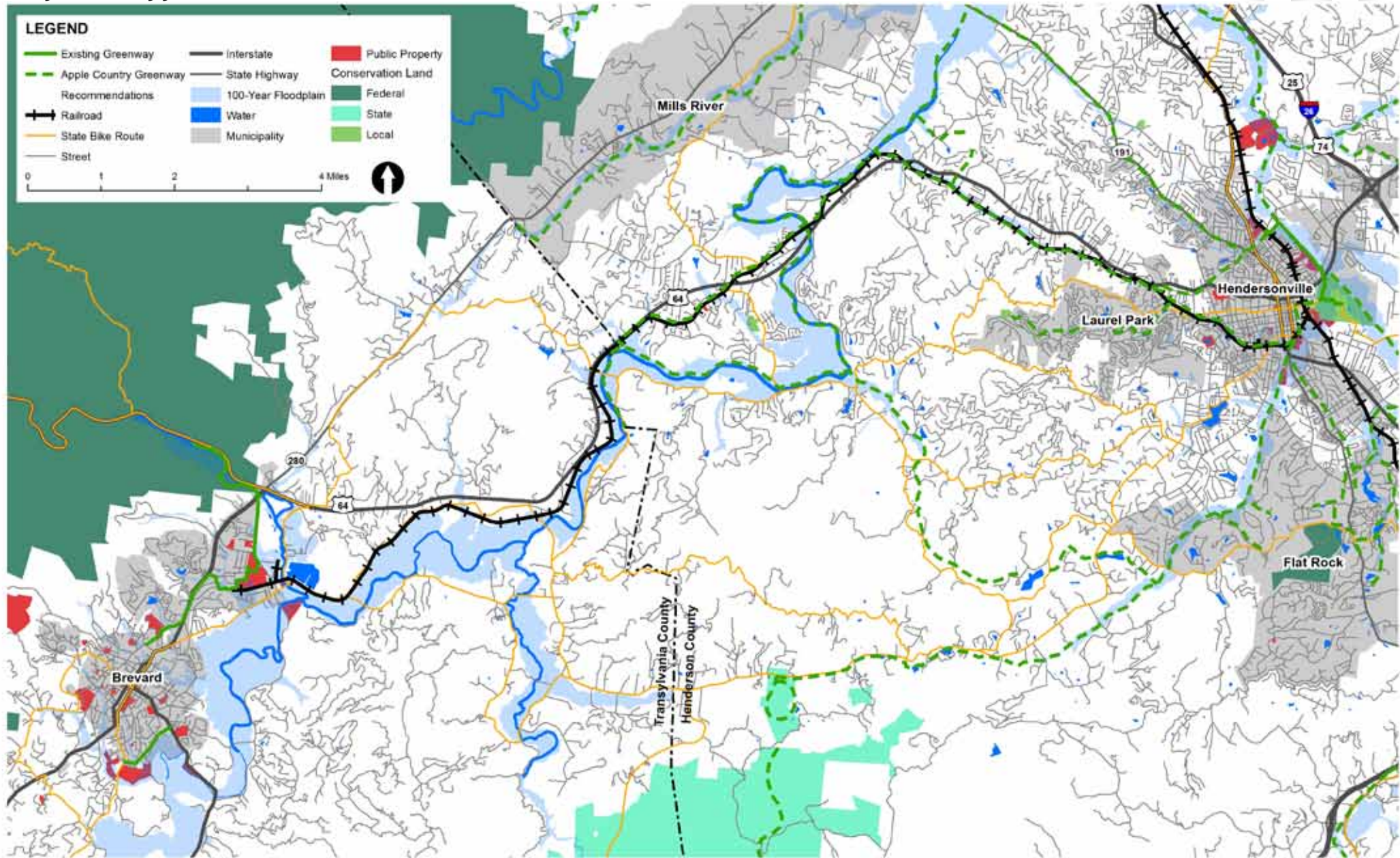
While many of the intersections between the railroad and roadway along the study corridor are relatively low-hazard crossings for pedestrians, there are a few intersections where high-speed traffic or low visibility will have to be addressed for pedestrian safety.

Our team also identified a few sites where the railroad passes near industrial areas, residential areas, or individual homes. In these areas, additional ROW acquisition or screening for the trail may be necessary.

There are some areas where the railroad passes through wetland areas and creek beds. Some of these areas appear to have existing environmental degradation as a result of the railroad's construction techniques or adjacent development. While these areas could potentially be unique, natural features along the trail, environmental mitigation may be required for the protection of these areas as well as the safety of trail users.

Lastly, if railbanking opportunities are denied

Map 3.1 – Opportunities and Constraints Overview





1 Opportunity - The existing southeast spur from the main rail line - the beginning of the potential trail corridor - is in an opportune location near downtown. The corridor holds potential as a commuter link between downtown Brevard and downtown Hendersonville.

Opportunity - There is ample horizontal clearance along the railroad ROW, which could be used for trail waysides or interpretive areas. Restaurants, retail spaces, and residential uses are within a five minute walk from the line.

2



3 Opportunity - Plenty of pedestrians were out and about in the area, despite the lack of facilities in some locations. This demonstrates a need for non-motorized transportation alternatives.

Opportunity - The City of Hendersonville's Gateway Park provides a location for a trail connection in the center of a developing area of town.

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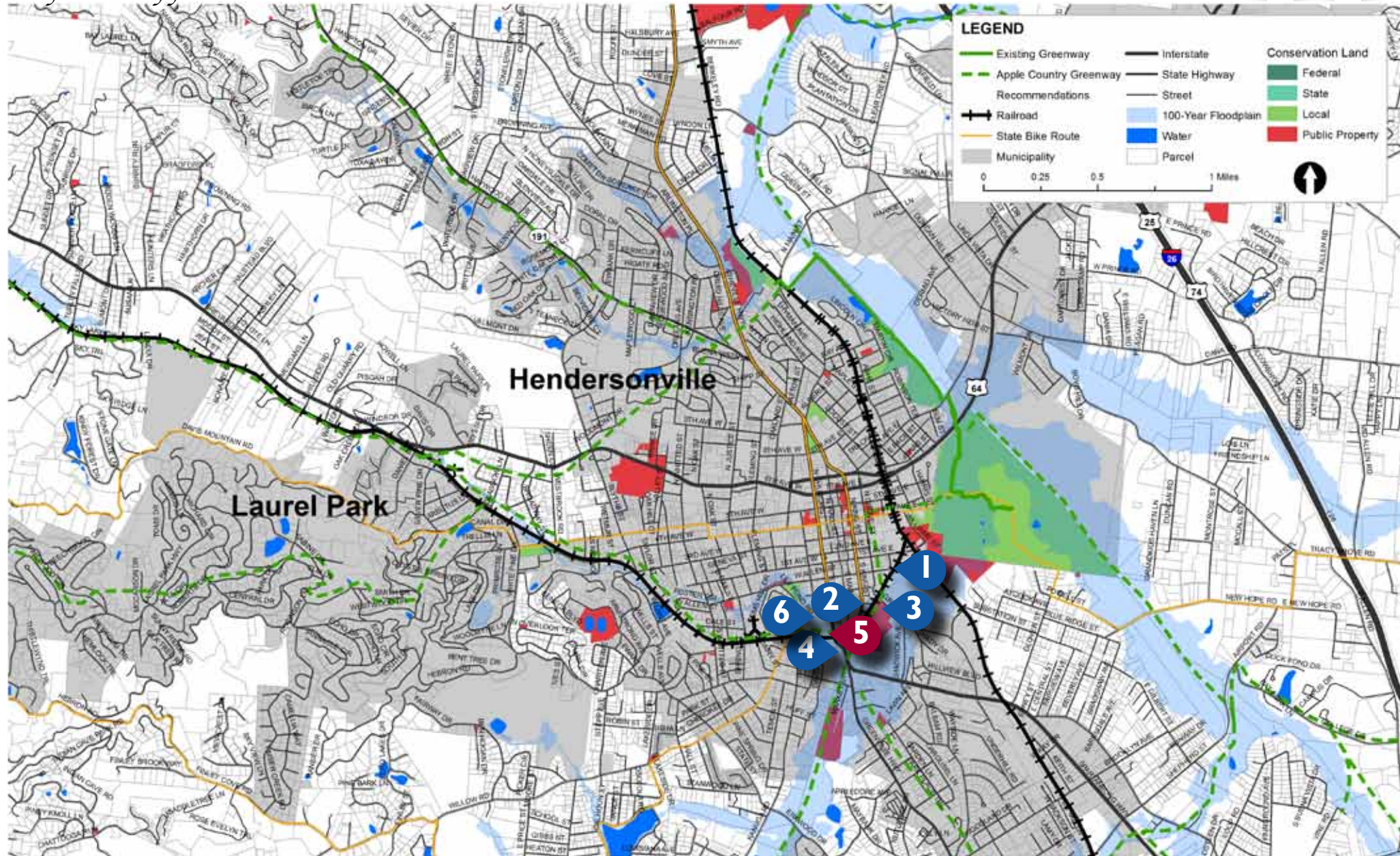
5 Constraint - The existing creek crossing may need structural reinforcement to support pedestrian activity, as well as additional support, such as railing.

Opportunity - Adjacent to Church Street, there is a new mixed use complex and retail center next to the railroad line. There are opportunities to connect the trail to these locations.

6



Map 3.2 – Opportunities and Constraints Hendersonville Area





7 Opportunity - A large, flat, open area west of the proposed location for Gateway Park has the potential to accommodate a trailhead or other recreational facility.

Opportunity - The existing railroad corridor is very accessible from the roadway and adjacent lands. Converting the line to a trail will require very little additional engineering to meet the existing grades.

8



9 Opportunity and Constraint - Although a quiet, historic neighborhood, the acquisition of a trail easement through the Lenox Park historic district will require the support of the landowners along the corridor. Additional features may be necessary to protect the privacy of nearby residents, such as vegetative screening or fencing.

Constraint - Adjacent industrial buildings may require privacy screening measures along the corridor to protect their facility operations and management.

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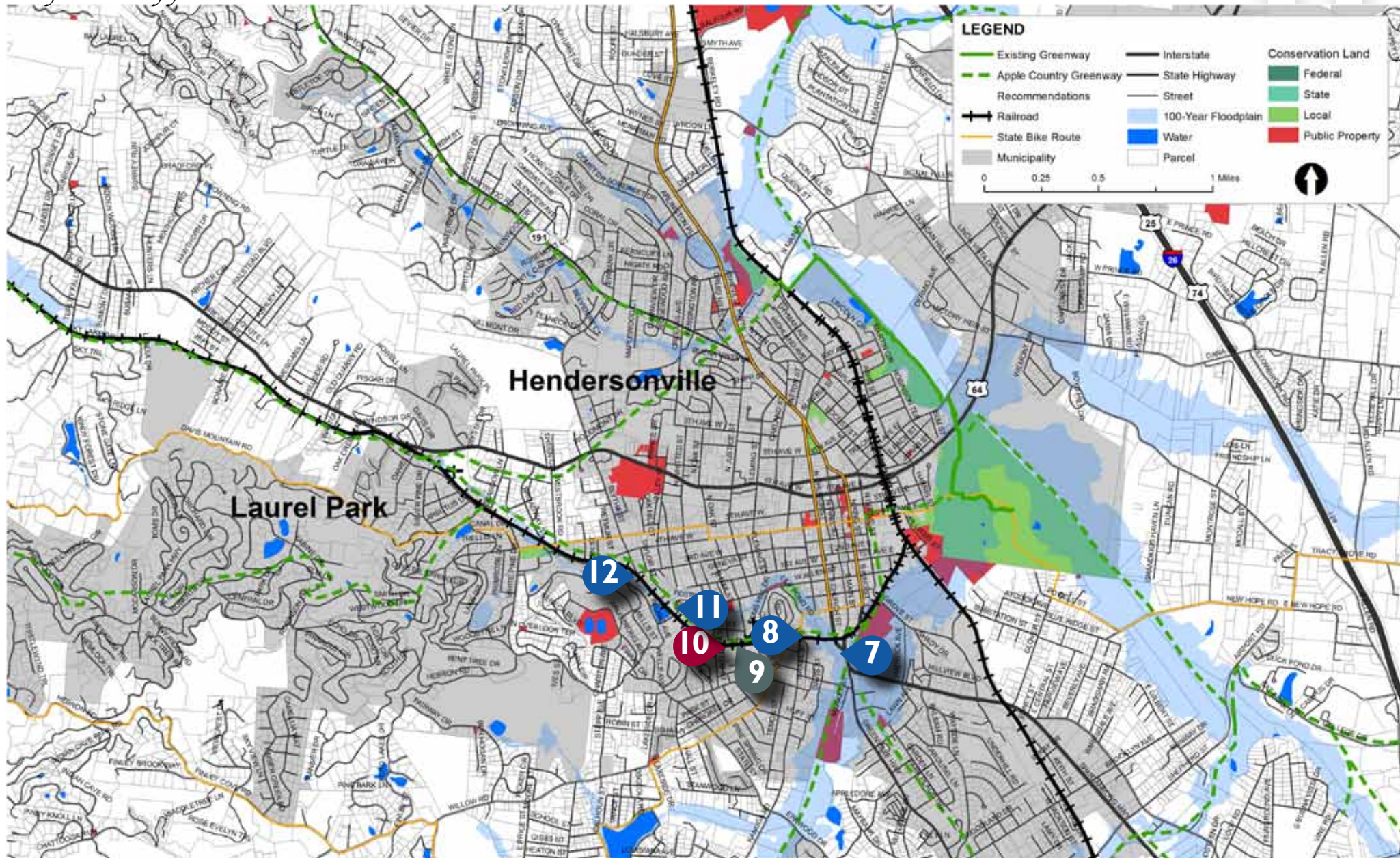
11 Opportunity - There are potential connections to a senior center and a low income housing development; the residents may rely on non-motorized transportation and would benefit from a trail that connects to downtown Hendersonville.

Opportunity - A typical roadway crossing at Blythe Street and 3rd Avenue West. These intersections are quiet two-lane roadways with low traffic volumes.

12



Map 3.2 – Opportunities and Constraints Hendersonville Area





13 Opportunity - An existing sidewalk paralleling a newer neighborhood in Lenox Park indicates a potential connection. A few residents were seen walking their dogs in the area.

14 Opportunity - There are numerous opportunities to connect to Laurel Park, including through the existing sidewalks, open space, and high density residential neighborhoods at the edge of the town limits.



15 Opportunity - Pedestrians are currently using the corridor to walk to and from destinations. A trail would help connect residents and tourists to their destinations safely, and it would encourage the use of non-motorized transportation.

16 Opportunity - The opportunities for nearby connections are practically infinite, and include civic facilities such as this church community garden off of State Road 1173.

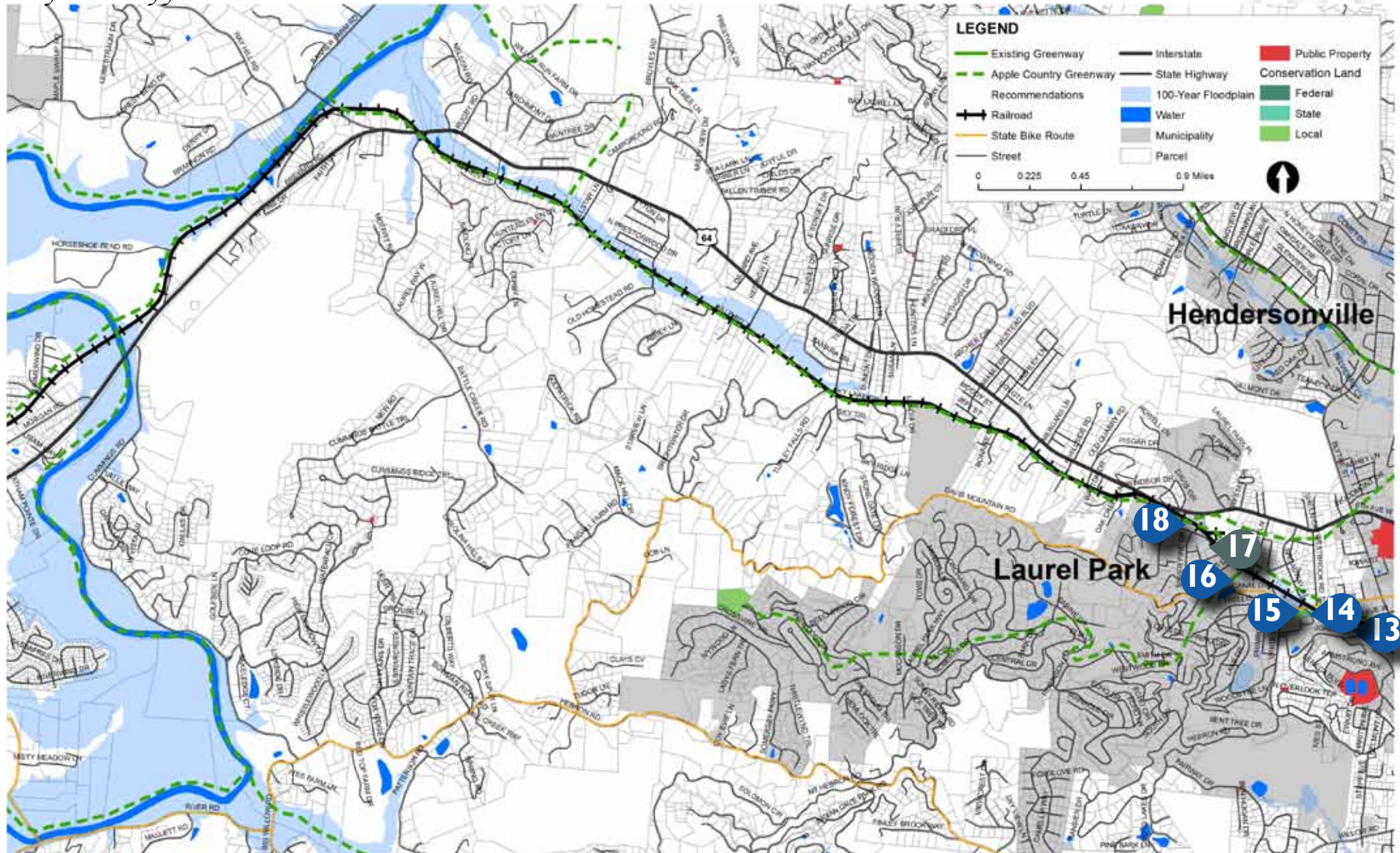


17 Opportunity and Constraint - The corridor parallels State Road 1173 in this area. The road is busier at this location, with higher speeds (45 MPH). However, the opportunity for an off-road trail is still present given the width of the ROW.

18 Opportunity - Small businesses such as these could benefit from having a trail nearby.



Map 3.3 - Opportunities and Constraints Hendersonville West





19 Constraint - When the railroad corridor begins to parallel US Highway 64, the ROW narrows. If implemented, the trail will have little flexibility to deviate from the centerline of the tracks.

Constraint - Near Turley Falls Road, there is a railroad bridge that may need repair and additional features to make it compatible with pedestrian use. **20**



21 Opportunity - The trail takes on a different character outside the Hendersonville city limits that is more remote. Open pastures and mountain backdrops are scenic draws that create a unique sense of place. Education signage along these sections could highlight Henderson County's rich agricultural history.

Opportunity - Most of the roadway intersections along the southern stretch of Henderson county are at-grade, either paralleling or adjacent to quiet rural roads. **22**

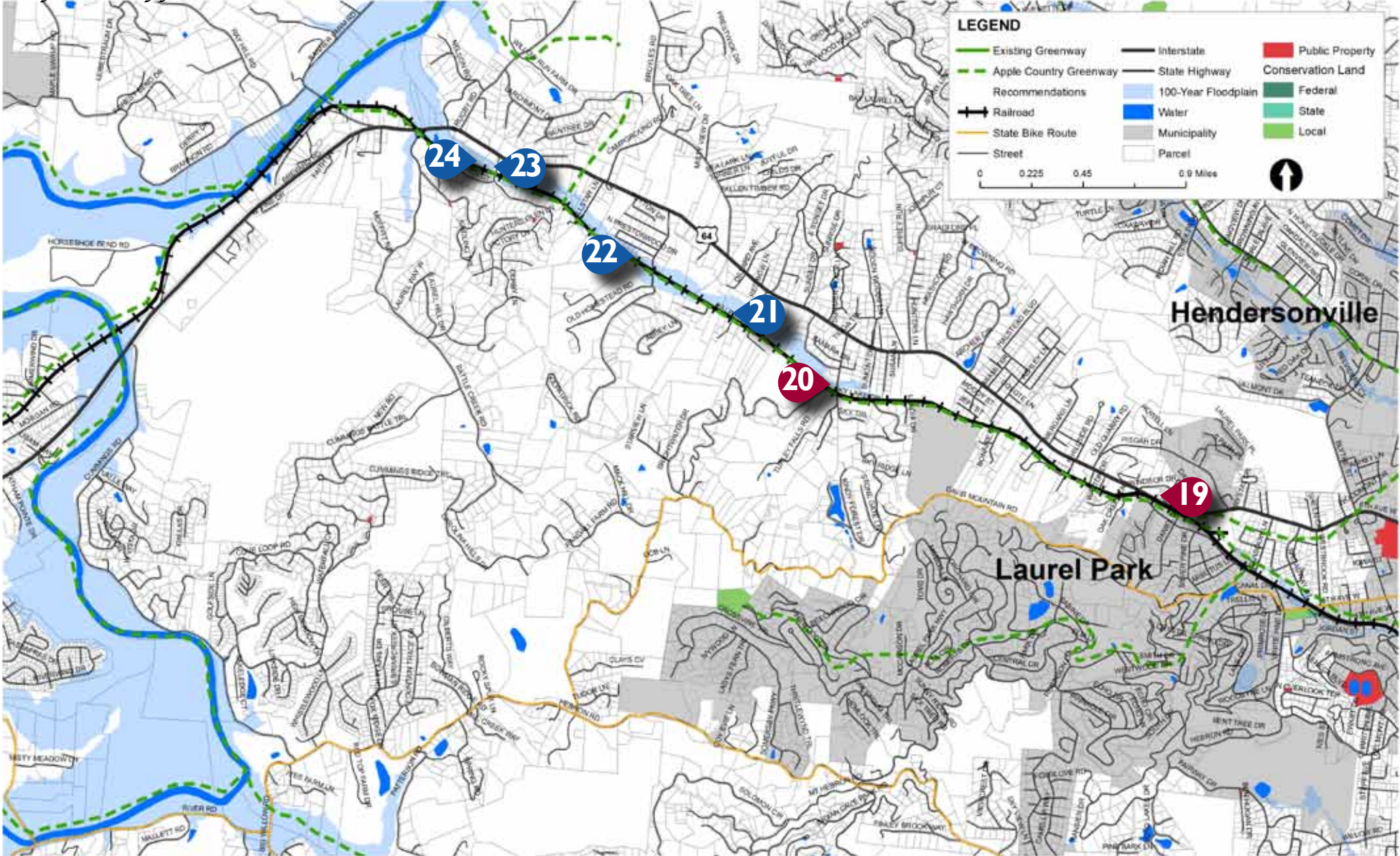


23 Opportunity - There are opportunities to connect with existing neighborhoods, such as Hunter's Glen neighborhood, which has already made improvements for passive recreation and includes foot trails adjacent to the corridor.

Opportunity - More practical connections are possible along the corridor, such as the post office. **24**



Map 3.3 - Opportunities and Constraints Hendersonville West





25 Opportunity - Despite being outside the city limits, there are still opportunities to connect the trail to local businesses, enhancing local economic development in the area.

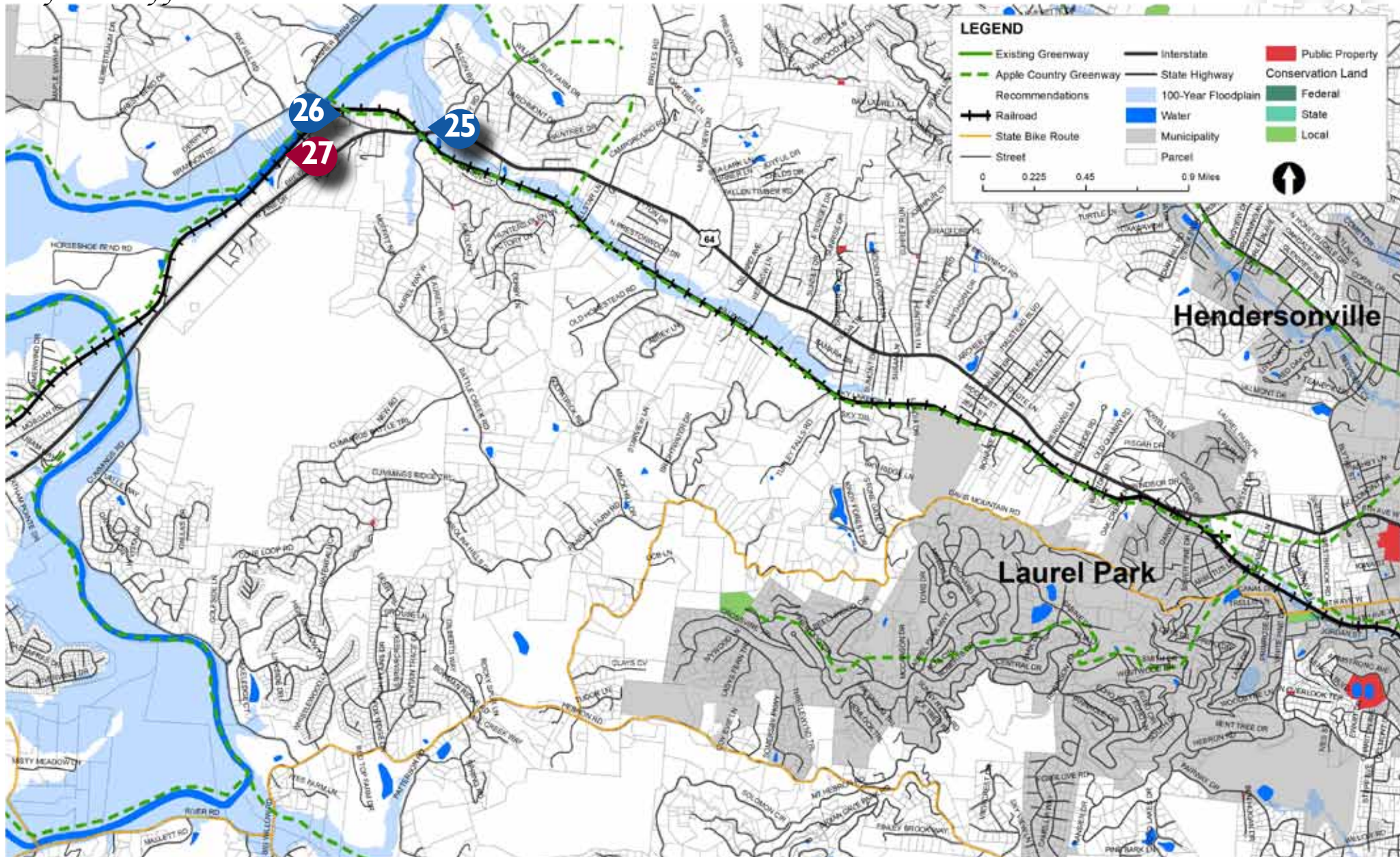


26 Opportunity - Educational and interpretive areas could put residents and visitors to the area in touch with more of Henderson County's natural features, such as the French Broad River.



27 Constraint - Private roads and nearby homes may require privacy screening or cross access agreements.

Map 3.3 - Opportunities and Constraints Hendersonville West





28 Opportunity - In Etowah, the railroad crosses adjacent to an existing four-way traffic signal. Crosswalks and pedestrian crossing signals could be easily installed and incorporated into the existing four-way traffic signal.



Opportunity - In Etowah, there are several stores, restaurants, and other businesses that could benefit from the foot traffic a nearby trail would attract. **29**

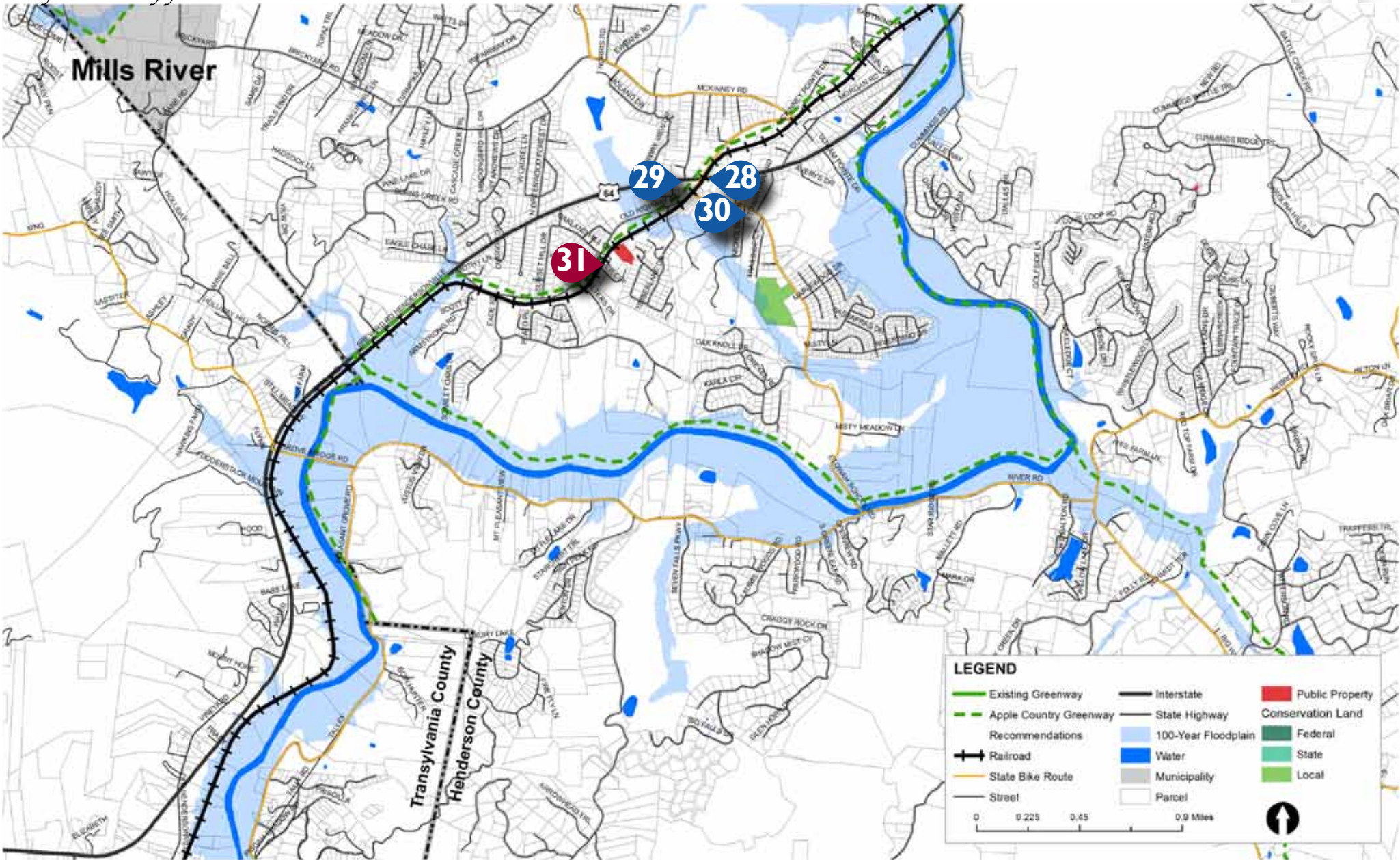


30 Opportunity - A nearby trail could allow more children to walk or bike to Etowah Elementary School from surrounding areas, especially if a spur trail were extended from the main trail to the school.



Constraint - The track passes through a trailer park as well as in front of a few houses in the vicinity of Etowah. These areas may require privacy screening. **31**

Map 3.4 - Opportunities and Constraints Etowah Area





32 *Opportunity and Constraint - The railroad passes through a few wet sites and runs adjacent to a creek at Armstrong Road. While these sites would add natural, aesthetic interest to a future trail, additional engineering or environmental mitigation may be required for the protection of these areas.*

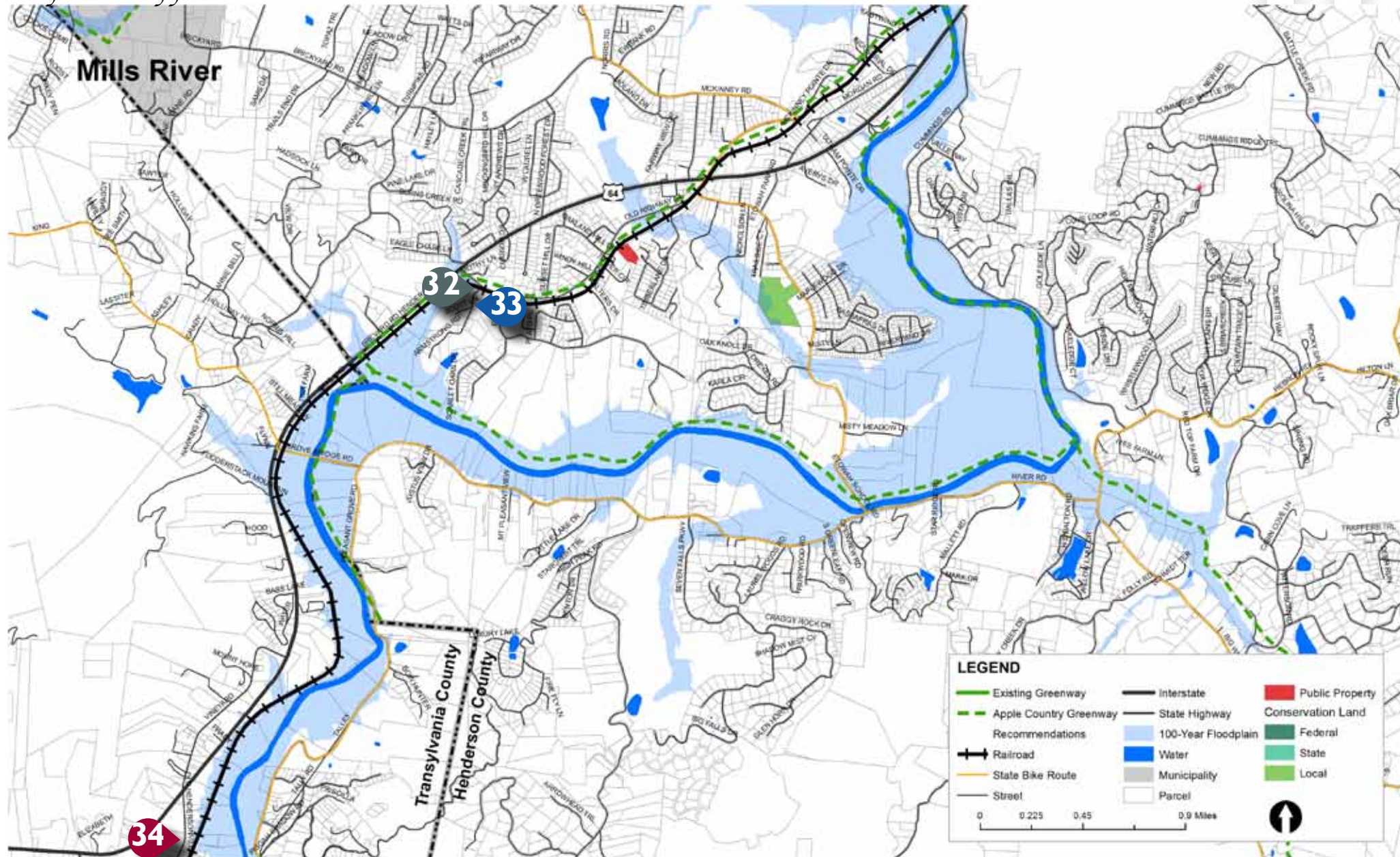


33 *Opportunity - Existing railroad crossing signs and signals along roads and private drives could potentially be converted for use as trail crossing signs.*



34 *Constraint - The potential for alternate routes is limited spatially in rural areas near Brevard.*

Map 3.4 - Opportunities and Constraints Etowah Area





35 Opportunity - The railroad ROW offers expansive, beautiful views when it passes through more rural areas.

36 Opportunity and Constraint - Drivers turn quickly at the intersection of Old Hendersonville Highway and Everett Rd. Adequate pedestrian crossing markings would have to be installed at locations such as this one. This is also one of several points where the railroad ROW intersects state designated bike routes.



37 Constraint - Due to poor environmental practices in the past, there may be potential health and environmental issues where the railroad runs behind the paper mill reservoir, dam, and spillway near Brevard

38 Opportunity - While the railroad trestle crossing the Davidson River is in substantial disrepair, there may be an opportunity to bypass it with a trail alongside Old Highway 64. However, repairing the bridge and retrofitting it for pedestrian crossing would surely add interest to a potential trail.

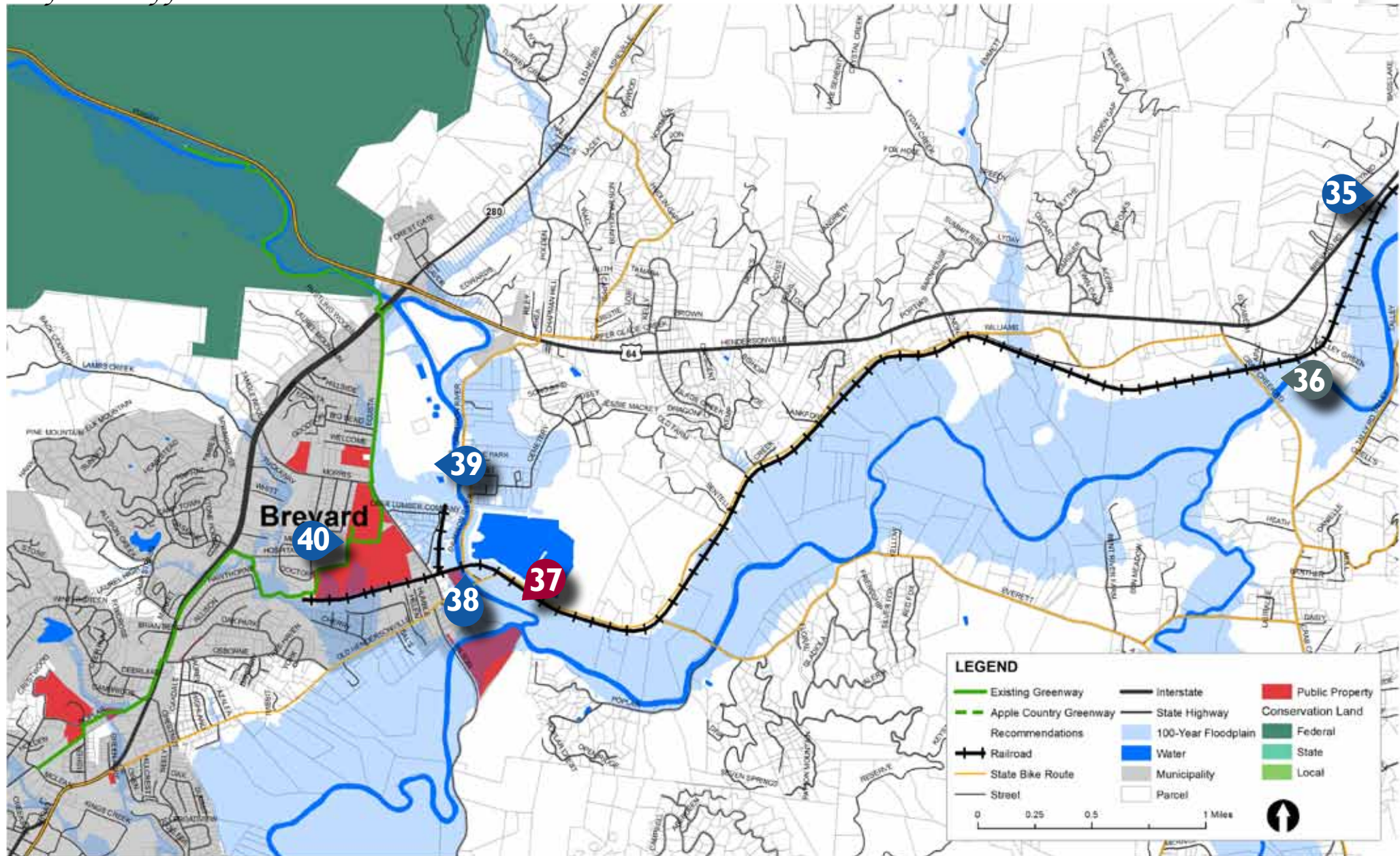


39 Opportunity - A trail on the railroad ROW could provide a connection to the residents of a large, planned residential development proposed on the old Paper Mill site in Brevard. The old rail spurs to the paper mill site could be converted into connector trails.

40 Opportunity - A trail on the railroad ROW could connect to the existing greenway trail in Brevard. This would allow for connection to downtown Brevard, area schools, recreation facilities, retail along highway 64, and Pisgah National Forest.



Map 3.5 – Opportunities and Constraints Brevard Area



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