

STREETS '27 Steering Committee

Meeting – February 26, 2026

1:00 pm - Ithaca Town Hall

MEETING NOTES

ATTENDING (11)

- Town of Ithaca: Rod Howe, Justin McNeil, CJ Randall, Joe Slater
- Cornell Univ: Susan Riley, Leslie Schill
- Forest Home community: Robin Blakely-Armitage, Jennifer Loucks, Ruth Mahr, Charlie Trautmann
- ITCTC: Tom Knipe

AGENDA

1. Update on STREETS '27 consultant procurement
2. General feedback on the draft Project Charter and SOW
3. Review of main FHIA comments on draft Project Charter and SOW

NOTES

1. Update on STREETS '27 consultant procurement

C.J. updated the Committee on the process of hiring a consultant and next steps:

- The Town and FHIA reps interviewed two candidates: LaBella Associates and Whitham Planning and Design; and Fisher Associates.
- After review, the Town and FHIA reps selected Fisher Associates as the preferred candidate, pending further negotiations.
- Fisher Associates has received the draft Project Charter and SOW to use in developing a Project Management Plan and for estimating their costs.
- Upon confirmation that Fisher Associates can work within the budget available, C.J. will coordinate with the Town's attorney (Guy Krogh) to initiate the formal contracting process. She doesn't anticipate any major issues.
- C.J. anticipates requesting final approval from the Town Board at the March 23rd or April 13th meeting Following approval, the Town will issue a Notice to Proceed.

2. General feedback on the draft Project Charter and Scope of Work

Committee members shared the main concerns and questions emerging from their review of the draft documents, starting with Charlie, representing Forest Home.

Main issues emerging from discussion with Forest Home residents include:

- The Project Purpose should restate the FH community’s goals and be consistent across the two documents.
- It’s important to clarify key terms in the Charter, SOW, and the upcoming Public and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (PSEP), such as “community”, “public”, and “stakeholders”. (Who do we mean? Is there overlap? Should we differentiate between “key” stakeholders and “other interested parties” who are important but not part of the Steering Committee and its general communications)
- Remain open-minded about potential solutions at this stage and remove specific references e.g., “one-way pilots”.
- Under Roles and Responsibilities, consider establishing a direct line of communication between Charlie and the consultant, only to facilitate community engagement logistics.
- The Project Charter should include the Town Board’s adoption of the STREETS ’27 Final Report/Recommendations, under “Approvals”.

Charlie noted that some members of the FH community feel that the recommended concepts should support a consistent Forest Home neighborhood aesthetic—even though a variety of solutions may be proposed. This detail can be discussed with the consultant.

Tom observed that the federal funding landscape is changing and emphasized that as the consultant works together with the public and stakeholders, it will be important to hedge against recommendations that are too expensive to implement.

Leslie stressed the importance of developing practical, fundable solutions and of planning for phased implementation. She has observed that often it’s the engineering design phase (i.e., after the conceptual phase) that reveals the physical impediments and costs that will determine whether a design concept can actually be implemented. She has also observed that people can get attached to the visualizations of solutions they see during the conceptual phase – and then can’t “unsee”— and stressed the need to be realistic.

Tom added that it’s good to triage concepts as “quick-build”, short-term, and long-term priorities.

C.J. reminded the Committee that the SOW/Task 4.3 “Costs, Phasing & Funding Strategy” tries to address these concerns, and that we don’t want to get beyond concepts in this initial phase.

Leslie recommended clarifying expectations about the number of priority locations to be considered under the SOW and number of renderings produced for each.

3. Review of FHIA comments on draft Project Charter and SOW

Charlie presented the FHIA proposed edits and questions in detail, in the documents. C.J. emphasized that the objective for the meeting was to understand the edits; the Town will take them into consideration and produce an advanced draft that integrates comments. Key points from the discussion of the proposed edits include the following:

- C.J. advised against adding excessive detail to the SOW and said that the Public and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (PSEP) will address many of the FHIA’s concerns.

C.J. said she was comfortable integrating the FH community’s goal statement in the Project Purpose, and she and Rod wanted to ensure that “balancing historic preservation requirements” remained in the Purpose. However, because C.J. views STREETS ’27 primarily as an active transportation project, she questioned whether “enhancing the beauty of Forest Home’s streetscape” should be one of the main goals. Jennifer pointed out that the Town’s Complete Streets policy envisions that *“Landscaping and amenities shall be encouraged to provide shade, create buffers, and promote aesthetically welcoming environments within the right-of-way,”* and that the Forest Home community has been thinking along these lines. Together, Committee members suggested “Maintaining or enhancing the Forest Home streetscape”, as alternative language. C.J., Rod, and Charlie agreed to meet within one week to finalize wording for the third objective.

- C.J. said she was comfortable with several of FHIA’s proposed edits, including: omitting specific mention of a “one-way pilot”; adding the Town’s adoption of the STREETS ’27 Plan under “Approvals” in the Project Charter; mentioning additional community engagement activities (walking tours, observations of key locations, surveys) in the SOW/Task 3; and including consideration of landscape designs that enhance the community streetscape and historic character in the SOW/Task 4.
- Charlie asked whether the Town would consider payment by time and materials instead of lumpsum, to enable flexibility in the SOW as the project unfolds and to facilitate better project management (and prevent the consultant from running out of money at the end with critical work remaining to be done.) C.J. said she thought

the consultant would address these concerns through their detailed budget and that the contract language (i.e., “not to exceed a total amount”) would provide the guardrails the FHIA is looking for.

- Reiterating her earlier comment about the importance of practical, fundable solutions, Leslie suggested adding “education about various agencies’ funding requirements” to the focus of the consultant’s public engagement work.
- C.J. confirmed that creation of the comprehensive community map that the FHIA has requested would come under the PSEP.
- Tom asked about “microsimulations” and C.J. confirmed that it refers to modeling.
- Tom asked to clarify the geographic extent of STREETS ’27 analysis and whether STREETS ’27 will consider potential impacts on traffic *outside* of Forest Home. (He shared that although ITCTC is unable at present, it will eventually build the capacity to conduct traffic impact studies.) Rod replied that STREETS ’27 will be aware of impacts outside of Forest Home but that a full traffic impact study is beyond the scope of this project. Robin emphasized that STREETS ’27 is focused on safer and more controlled traffic. Ruth asked to confirm that modeling data would underpin analysis and discussion of alternative options, and that the modeling data would include traffic volumes.
- Leslie suggested including the Village of Cayuga Heights as a stakeholder because their residents contribute to Forest Home through traffic. Ruth suggested including TCAT. The Committee agreed that law enforcement (Cayuga Heights Police, Tompkins County Sherrif’s Office, CUPD) should also be included, because of their role in enforcement.
- C.J. agreed it would be wise to extend the project timeframe from 12 to ~18 months. She said the project schedule should consider Cornell University’s calendar, e.g., to capture Cornell-related traffic in the analysis, and anticipated funding opportunities, such as through the Town’s Capital Improvement Plan and the NYS Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) summer deadline. C.J. reported that there may be new CFA funding available under a “Climate Smart Communities” rubric.

The next meeting will be scheduled once the Town has formally onboarded a consultant.

Submitted March 19, 2026

JLL/CHT