

FOREST HOME IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Working Report of the 2024 FHIA Planning Study

By: FHIA 2025 Planning Study Coordinating Group

Charlie Trautmann, Chair

Other members: Tom Campanella, Herb Engman, David Kuckuk, Ruth Mahr

December 31, 2024

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Scope. This report summarizes the results of a community-wide planning study, undertaken by members of the Forest Home (_FH) community under the auspices of the Forest Home Improvement Association (FHIA) in 2024. The study sought to engage the entire community in setting priorities for the FHIA's work for the next 3-5 years, with the broad theme of "How can we make Forest Home an even better place to live for all residents."

We asked participants to suggest specific actions the FHIA could take to make improvements in addressing the issues mentioned, rather than just naming issues. The suggestions we heard during the study were broad and included quality-of-life issues, events, infrastructure such as pathways, roads, and traffic, plus other ways to build the spirit of community in Forest Home.

Some people suggested short-term actions that could be taken during the coming year (such as additional potluck dinners, presentations, and trash cleanup), while at the opposite end of the time scale, others called for improvements to traffic and circulation patterns, which could take years to plan, fund, and implement.

Our approach was to gather ALL suggestions, regardless of cost or timeframe, and to flag the priorities that were mentioned most frequently as regular concerns (such as traffic, walkways, and safety, among others). We report here all suggestions but leave the setting of priorities for a follow-on group to set, based primarily on:

- interest of residents to lead or serve on specific task groups, and
- availability of funding, if needed, for each initiative.

The primary goal of this report is to document the suggestions offered by community members at this time. Since priorities may change in the coming years, this report is a

snapshot. ***To repeat, implementation of any specific suggestion will rely on interest and funding availability.***

Background and Process. The study emerged from discussions of a small task force, set up in early 2024 by FHIA immediate Past President Herb Engman, to look at longer term planning of infrastructure issues in FH. The group initially established a charge for the study (see Appendix A), which broadened the goals considerably beyond infrastructure to include community cohesion, events, and other quality-of-life issues.

The group started by reviewing the 2007 Forest Home Traffic Calming Study, which is available on the FHIA website at <https://www.fhia.org/traffic/>. Some elements of this study, such as community entrance features and brick-like road borders in some portions of FH, have been implemented, while other elements have not yet been implemented. In addition, the group reviewed maps of the area, realizing that FH shares *all* of its borders with Cornell University.

The committee, which met four times during 2024 to frame and conduct the study, included:

- *Tom Campanella* (300 Forest Home Dr; professor of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University)
- *Herb Engman* (120 Warren Rd; Study Group Chair, immediate past-president of FHIA, ret. Senior Extension Associate in Human Development at Cornell University)
- *David Kuckuk*, 229 Forest Home Dr; ret. architect)
- *Ruth Mahr* (103 Judd Falls Rd, past-president of FHIA, ret.)
- *Charlie Trautmann* (304 Forest Home Dr; professor at Cornell University current FHIA president, principal author of this report and planning study lead)

The planning process was intended to be as inclusive as possible and included three principal ways for the approximately 110 households of FH (owners, renters, students, friends and former residents) to submit their suggestions, including:

- **Online survey** (see Appendix B) delivered electronically to all members of the community via the FH listserv, with paper copies available as well (36 responses)
- **Two community listening sessions**, facilitated by Charlie Trautmann and David Kuckuk, at Forest Home Chapel. These sessions consisted of written

brainstorming with read-outs and subsequent discussion. All suggestions were written down for all to see and then posted on the FHIA website (32 participants - Appendix C)

- **Online comment box**, via a separate email address (4 responses)

All three input options for suggestions were widely publicized via in-person community events (Summer 2024 picnic, Fall annual FHIA meeting, multiple posts to the FH listserv, and personal invitations to a number of residents by other residents.

A total of 72 (non-unique) responses via the three options were received, with some duplication, such as when a person attended a listening session and returned a survey, or when two people from the same household answered the survey. Both of these situations were relatively rare, however. *In summary, more than one-half of the households in FH responded to the request for input to this planning process.*

Acknowledgments. We are grateful to many individuals, groups, and organizations that made this study possible. In addition to the Planning Study Coordinating Group, we are grateful to the FHIA Board, which supported this effort all year long. We thank Forest Home Chapel for the generous use of space for various meetings and for their support of and participation in the study. We appreciate the Environment and Community Relations Lab at Cornell's Department of Psychology for its assistance with the study, which included faculty effort and the support of licensed software (Qualtrics for carrying out the survey, and Atlas.ti for qualitative analysis of the results of the survey, community listening sessions, and email comment box). We are also grateful to the Einhorn Center for Community Engagement at Cornell for their financial support of the survey and analysis process.

RESULTS

Members of the FH community offered a total of over 350 suggestions via the three channels for input to the study. Once duplicated ideas were combined, 152 unique suggestions remained. The complete listing of suggestions (see Appendix D) were sorted into seven broad categories (with the number of unique suggestions for each category in parentheses):

- Events (21)
- Governance of the FHIA itself (40)
- Infrastructure (70)
- Information technology (8)
- Neighborhood services (9)

- Social groups (4)

The top aspirational priorities mentioned throughout the study were:

- Developing a strategy for reducing traffic throughout the community, but specifically on Forest Home Drive between the bridges and on Judd Falls Rd
- Developing or improving all walkways throughout the community
- Improving pedestrian and bicycle safety throughout the community, particularly at intersection with Pleasant Grove Rd at the downstream bridge

Solutions to these priorities will require thoughtful, long-term planning, and cooperation with the Town of Ithaca, Cornell University, and other agencies (such as Tompkins County, Bolton Point, Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit, NYSEG, and various others). Significant funding will likely be needed as well, which will likely require working with local, state, and federal funding sources. To achieve its goals, Forest Home will need a long-term, consistent, and reliable presence among various agencies and funding sources. In the view of the study group, this effort will best be characterized by creativity, collaboration, and cooperation over a period of years, and by developing consistent, mutually supportive relationships with all agencies that will need to be involved. The 2007 FH Traffic Calming Study forms a strong foundation for planning certain elements of the infrastructural aspirations expressed by the community; and because so many changes have taken place in the 18 years since that document was developed, the study group suggests that it should be an integral, though not the only basis for future action by the FHIA relative to its priorities and planning efforts for traffic reduction and safety improvements.

Many other excellent suggestions emerged from the 152 items that participants provided during the study. A few examples below indicate the breadth of contributions to the study:

- Additional improvements and amenities for Forest Home Park at the downstream bridge, such as a play area for children, better and defined parking, additional benches, etc.
- Better clean-up of trash along streets in the neighborhood
- Trimming of overgrowing vegetation along existing walkways or blocking signs

- Additional events, such as potluck dinners, talks by residents, etc. A number of these events could be implemented quickly and with little funding, as soon as a champion/volunteer for each event comes forth or can be recruited
- Improvements to governance of the FHIA itself, such as adding a Volunteers Committee and updating its 30-year-old bylaws

Other relatively inexpensive and easy-to-do ideas on the list could also be implemented if volunteers could be identified to coordinate them. **We encourage all readers of this report to review the suggestions in Appendix D and consider which ones they feel passionate about and would be willing to help implement, with the overall goal of making Forest Home an even better place to live.**

The Planning Study Group summarized its preliminary findings to the community in October 2024 at its Annual Meeting and in early December 2024 in a written message to the FH listserv, along with a sign-up sheet allowing interested volunteers to indicate their area of interest. Once more of these sign-up sheets are returned to the planning study group, it can work with the FHIA Board to encourage several high-priority items for implementation in 2025 and coming years. We anticipate that priorities can be established in 2025, based on this report, by a new planning task force, working in coordination with the FHIA Board.

In summary, the Planning Study Group thanks the entire community for its participation and looks forward to implementing a number of the excellent suggestions offered.

APPENDIX A

Committee Description – FHIA Planning Group

7/31/24

Purpose & Goals:

- To identify a set of potential initiatives that will improve Forest Home as a neighborhood
- We are looking for ways to improve the physical and cultural environment of Forest Home that will enhance the quality of life and sense of community here.
- To accomplish this, we will solicit input from our neighbors on how they view the quality of life and sense of community here, such as:
 - what they see is working,
 - what community strengthening activities they would like to see,
 - what infringes on quality of life in the Forest Home neighborhood,
 - what they see as possible solutions to those problems.

Scope, Focus, & Boundaries

- Physical area limited to the Forest Home neighborhood
- Initiatives will be primarily strategic, typically medium-to-long term, rather than short-term tactics (such as planning of the directory, events, or community relationships)
- Funding limits of initiatives should not be a constraint for initiatives
- Budget for any expenses in creating the plan: \$1,000 (NB: in the end, there were no out-of-pocket costs to the FHIA to conduct the study. All work was donated by volunteers, and other services were donated as well)

Specific Deliverables

- Draft report completed by 12-31-2024 (done)
- Report approval by the FHIA officers in early 2025 (done)
- Report sent electronically to the community for review and comments (in progress)
- Update presented at the next FHIA community meeting in Fall 2025

Broad Phases:

- Jul to Sept – Project description, gathering of ideas (done)
- Late Sept - preliminary progress report sent to community for feedback (online and at a community meeting) (done)
- Oct – Nov: Revision, additional community input, discussion of draft plan with legislators (done: discussed 3X times with Town of Ithaca supervisor and 2X with staff; also with three staff at Cornell)
- Dec - Report writing (done)

Guidelines:

- Meetings monthly – quorum of 3 members, schedule set by the group (done)
- Group will consist of 5 minimum members of the FH community, preferably 6-7 (done: 5 members and one online advisor)
- Group will solicit input from community, both online and in person (done)
- Group will report out along the way, goal is maximum input and buy-in (done)

Decision-making Process:

- Group will try to work on a consensus basis, but if it cannot reach consensus, then the group will decide by majority vote of all its members
- Group will operate as an advisory committee to recommend projects, initiatives and priorities for the FHIA officers
- FHIA officers will approve the report (approval to come after community review)

APPENDIX B

Fall 2024 Planning Survey (in Qualtrics)

FHIA Planning Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q10 Forest Home Improvement Association is interested in your thoughts on how best to improve the quality of life in our neighborhood, through both infrastructure and cultural improvements. The survey is anonymous, unless you would like to tell us who you are.

We appreciate your time and your feedback.

Q1 Do you *currently* live in Forest Home?

- Yes (1)
- No - I once lived in FH and now live NEARBY (2)
- No - I once lived in FH and now live FAR AWAY (5)
- No - I have never lived there (3)

Q9 Drag the slider to indicate approx. years you *have ever lived in Forest Home*

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Number of years I have ever lived in
Forest Home ()



Q11 What are some *characteristics of your ideal community*?

Q5 What's *working well* in Forest Home as a neighborhood?

Q4 What *community activities* would you like to see (new or continued)?

Q3 What infringes on the quality of life in Forest Home? *Please be as specific as you can.*

Q2 If you could wave a magic wand and make anything happen, what INFRASTRUCTURE and/or CULTURAL changes would you make in Forest Home? (please be as specific as possible: e.g., not just "reduce traffic" or "build walkways," but *where*)

Q8 OPTIONAL - Please tell us any additional comments or suggestions you may have:

Q6 OPTIONAL - Your name (in case we'd like to follow up)

Q7 OPTIONAL - Your email address (in case we'd like to follow up)

End of Block: Default Question Block

APPENDIX C

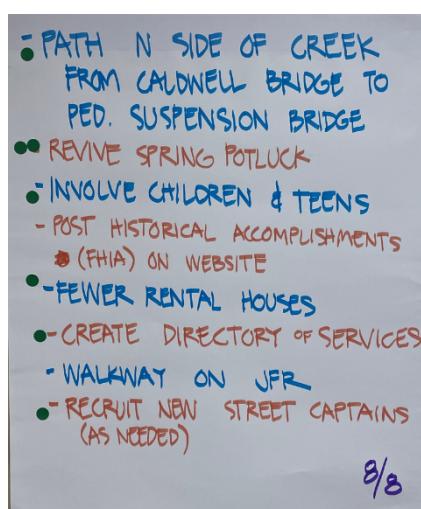
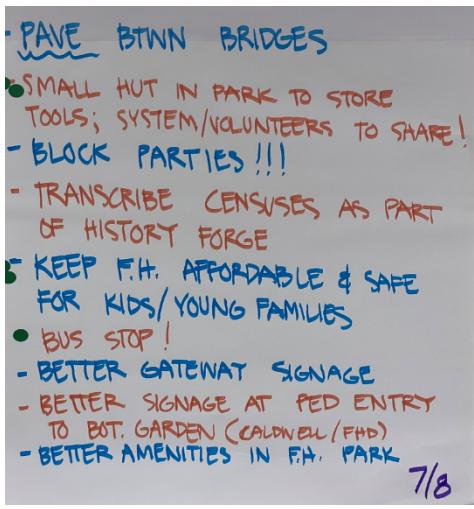
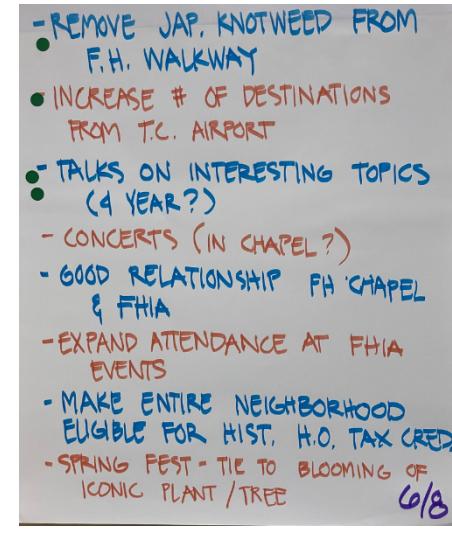
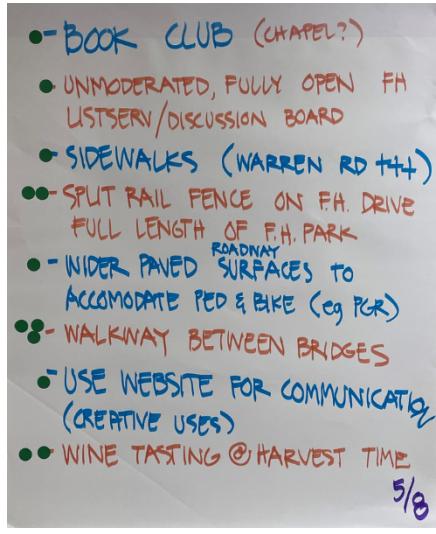
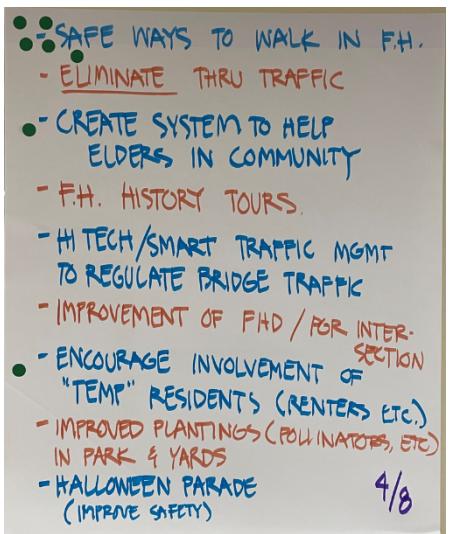
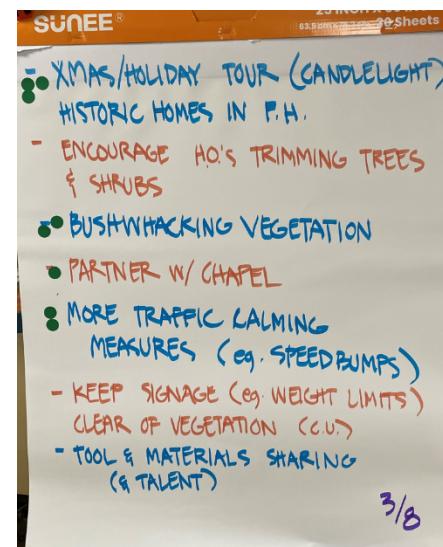
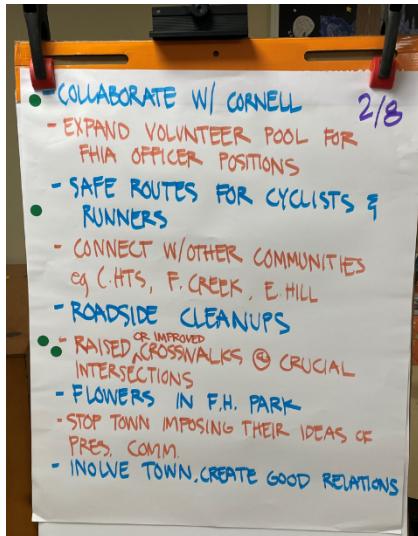
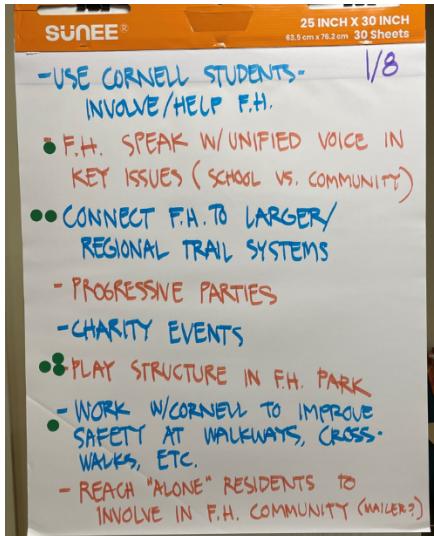
Community Listening Session Results

Note on community listening sessions: Using a large square table, each participant was given a sheet of paper at the beginning and asked to: 1) write down one brief suggestion, and 2) pass the paper to the left one person. They were then instructed to read what they were handed, write down a different idea and pass the paper on. In this way, duplication was minimized and participation maximized.

Once everyone had run out of ideas, all ideas were read aloud and recorded on newsprint sheets by one of the facilitators.

Finally, five colored dots were given to each participant to place on their top priorities. Participants could use all five dots separate items, all on one, or some combination (sometimes called “dotocracy” voting). These votes, which represented only those in the particular listening session, were loosely used to aid in identifying some of the highest priority suggestions from that listening session. However, because of the intentional process of not duplicating suggestions, these votes should not be taken as a mandate for the FHIA.

The first group of 8 images represents suggestions offered at the first community listening session (10 participants). The second group comes from the second session (22 participants).



- REDUCE TRAFFIC 1/5U
 - CHARADE NIGHT @ FHC
- SIDEWALKS & BETTER SIDEWALKS (im Mulholland)
- REDUCE # OF ROAD SIGNS
- FHIA LISTSERV GROUP FOR "STUFF" (SELLING/GIVING/ETC)
- CLEAN UP GARBAGE !! •
- ANNUAL YARD/GARAGE SALE @ FHP & FHC LOT
- EXAMINE & REVISE BYLAWS
- POTLUCK DINNERS @ FHC.

- - BRIDGE NIGHT (CARDS) @ CHAPEL 2/5U
 - ADD COMPOST COLLECTION @ FH. PARK
 - POLLINATOR GARDEN @ FH PARK?
- - CLEAR VEGETATION FROM WALKWAYS
- - MAKE BACKING OUT OF DRIVE EASIER/SAFER (MIRRORS)
- - PLAYGROUND IN FH. PARK
- - REMOVE UTILITY POLES
- - GARDENING CIRCLE
 - SHARE PLANTS,
 - TOURS, SPEAKERS

- ADD OFFICERS TO FHIA (VOLUNTEER OUTREACH COORD, EG.) 3/5U
- - NEARBY TCAT BUS STOP
- - TRAFFIC CALMING •••
- - PAVED SIDEWALKS FHD & JFR
 - NARROW DRIVING LANES
 - REDUCE SPEED LIM. TO 15mph
 - POKER NIGHT AT FHC.
- - BUILD SMALL LABYRINTH IN FHP. (UNOBTRUSIVE)
- - BETTER ENFORCEMENT OF (10mph?) CORNER
- - MORE COMMUNITY GATHERINGS •

- LESS NOISE FROM CU AG QUAD 4/5U
 - SUPPORT BOTANIC GARDENS
- - LANDSCAPE TOOL LIBRARY
- ENGAGE CU, TCAT & (??) RE: TRAFFIC CALMING
- - SMALL/LOW LIGHTING ALONG PATH
- - IMPROVE CHILD SAFETY
 - NEIGHBORHOOD BUYING GUIDE FOR SERVICES (TRADES)
- - MITIGATE JAPANESE KNOTWEED
- - NEIGHBORHOOD MULCH DELIVERY

- - HALLOWEEN PARADE (KIDS & ADULTS) 5/5U
 - SMALL "SUB NEIGHBORHOOD" GATHERINGS & COMPETITIONS
 - MIN. PROPERTY CARE LEVEL
 - REVISE HOW "FH NEWSLETTER?" WORKS - AUTOMATED RESPONSE
 - - UPDATE & SHARE FH. HISTORY
 - HOUSES - FAMILIES - OTHER
 - HELP WITH BATS IN HOUSES
 - SIGN # OF CARS ACROSS BRIDGES EACH WAY.
 - - TALKS BY FH. EXPERTS/LECTURE SERIES

- - BIKE SHARING LANES / SLOWER TRAFFIC 6/5U
 - HOLIDAY CAROLING
 - SMALL (BUT LOVELY) PUBLIC ART
 - COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD @ FHP OR FHC
 - PICNIC TABLES @ FHP
 - METERED PARKING AT FHP
 - RATIONALIZE INTERSECTION AT FHD & PGR (OFF BRIDGE)
 - - MAKE FH. LOOK MORE LIKE A PARK WHEN DRIVE THROUGH.
 - "WELCOME BASKETS" TO NEW NEIGHBORS → STUDENTS, RENTERS •

- - ARRANGEMENT WITH MGMT CO. FOR SUPPORT / MAINT. 7/5U
 - COMMUNITY GARDEN •
- - NEIGHBORHOOD HELPING TREE FOR HELP W/ HOME PROJECTS
- - "AGE IN PLACE" SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE
- - WAYFINDING SIGNS ON WALKING PATHS.
- - EASY TO FIND CONNECTIONS TO CU (& TOWN) RE: ISSUES
- - LIGHTING REVIEW (LISTSERV/WEBSITE)

- - (REGULAR) POSITIVE CONTACT W/ OTHER INSTITUTIONS & ENTITIES (CU, TOWN, COUNTY, OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS) 8/5U
 - OFFER BASIC LANDSCAPING HELP TO RESIDENTS
 - WINDOW LIGHTS DURING WINTER HOLIDAYS

APPENDIX D

Comprehensive Listing of Suggestions from FH Residents and Friends

This listing includes more than 150 individual ideas, which are grouped into seven categories and then alphabetized. The suggestions are compiled from a Fall 2024 survey distributed to all residents via the community listserv; two community listening sessions held at Forest Home Chapel; and comments sent via an online comment box, which was publicized as the dedicated email address: fhPlanningSurvey@gmail.com.

FHIA 2024 IDEAS & SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES	
EVENTS	
Cultural Events	
Cultural - Charity event	
Cultural - Concerts	
Cultural - Potluck dinners	
Cultural - Talent show	
Cultural - Talks on interesting subjects	
Cultural - Tours of historic houses	
Festivals	
Fest - Halloween parade or party	
Fest - Holiday caroling	

Fest - neighborhood games
Fest - Picnic spring
Fest - Picnic summer
Fest - Spring, tie to blooming of iconic plant
Game nights
Game night - board games
Game night - Bridge
Game night - Charades
Game night - Poker

Sales	
Sale - Bakesale	
Sale - Farmers Market in FHC parking lot	
Sale - Yard sale FHC parking lot	
Walking events	
Progressive party	
Walks on nearby trails	
GOVERNANCE	
FHIA	
Add Committee - Volunteers, local talent	
Add Committee - Youth involvement	
Add FHIA officer positions for new committees	
Forest Home - Internal	
Advocate for dogs on lease	

Cafe or shop
Communicate directly about issues, not thru listserv
Encourage better maintenance of houses
Encourage neighbors to connect w each other
encourage reduced lawn, increase native plants
Extend presidential leadership beyond two terms
FH News revisions - automated response
Help people with bats in houses
Involve children and teens
Involve CU students

Involve FH Chapel
Involve temporary residents in FHIA
Minimum property care standards
Newsletter for FH
Recruit new street captains as needed
Reduce rental houses
Reduce vacant houses
Share info about possible impacts of town on FH
some homes not well maintained
Speak with one voice on issues
Support Cornell Botanic Gardens
Tags on wildlife
Too many rentals
Transcribe censuses as part of history forge

Update FH history (houses, families)
Update FHIA bylaws
Window lights during holiday season
Forest Home - External
Advocate for lower fire taxes
Discuss concerns over historic designation
Increase # destinations from TC airport
Keep FH affordable for families w kids
Make all of FH eligible for historic tax credit
Promote community corners as vibrant shopping, dining
Stronger advocacy with local govt

Stronger connection w Cornell Botanic Gardens
Stronger connection w nearby communities
INFRASTRUCTURE
TOP PRIORITIES OVERALL
*BIKE LANES
*PARK - Play structure
*TRAFFIC REDUCTION
*VEGETATION
*WALKWAYS, SAFE CROSSINGS
FH Park

Park - Community garden
Park - Community info kiosk at Park or Chapel
Park - Compost collection station
Park - Flowers
Park - generate power from creek
Park - metered parking
Park - more picnic tables
Park - Neighborhood mulch pile
Park - Pollinator garden
Park - shed for park tools
Park - shelter for people to play games
Park - Surface labyrinth

Public art
Lighting
Lighting - lights along FH Walkway
Lighting - Review lighting in community
Lighting - some streets need lights for walkways
Quality of Life
Make FH more of a park when driving thru
Make JFR a park like Arboretum Rd
Noise - Less noise from CU events, quad, buildings
Safety
Better enforcement of speed limit on corner of FHD

Improve child safety
Mirrors for blind turns, driveways
Signage
Signage - # cars in bridge groups
Signage - at bridges
Signage - encourage walkers to use path near Beebe Lake instead of road
Signage - entrance to arboretum from wildflower garden
Signage - gateway entrances
Signage - Reduce number of road signs
Signage - Wayfinding signs on walkways
Traffic & Transportation
Improve FHD - JFR intersection
Traffic - Eliminate thru traffic
Traffic - get people to stop at FHD-JFR intersection

Traffic - Implement one-way on some streets
Traffic - implement traffic calming plan asap
Traffic - Narrow our driving lanes, speed to 15 mph
Traffic - pave the dirt road to Hasbrouck for wheelchairs
Traffic - proactive, collaborative approach to traffic
Traffic - reduce truck traffic
Traffic - Re-engineer FHD between bridges
Traffic - Use technology to regulate bridge traffic
Traffic Calming Plan (2007) - Key remaining items

Conspicuous crosswalks
Granite curbing at all intersections
Improve walkways (3-4 ft) on all major roads
Install cobbled shoulder bands
Keep two-way traffic - to be discussed
Limit pavement widths to 18 ft
Plant vegetation to reduce apparent width
Provide for winter walkway maintenance
Provide pedestrian lighting on side paths
Reduce size of intersections to min. req.
Vegetation
Planting plan for FH
Vegetation - Clear from walkways
Vegetation - promote attractive natural lawns, pollinator gardens
Vegetation - Remove Knotweed from FH Walkway
Vegetation - Trim bushes
Walkways & Pedestrians

Advocate for bus stop
Build path on N side of creek from FH to Suspension Bridge
Walkway - caldwell to vet school
Walkway - Connect with regional trails
Walkway - FH walk to hanshaw
Walkway - flashing light at pedestrian crossings
Walkway - Poles in way in places
Walkway - raised crosswalks

Walkway - Rationalize crossing at intersection of FHD, PGR
Walkway - upper bridge to Flat Rock
IT
Create equipment, service sharing process
Landscape tool lending library
Listserv - better manager software (Google Groups?)
Listserv - less moderation
Listserv - more moderation
Neighborhood buying guide (services, trades)
Neighborhood helping system for home projects
Post accomplishments on FHIA website
NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES
Elder support system for FH
Encourage spirit of mutual aid
Help arrange property management for seniors

Help with aging in place
landscaping help to residents
More welcoming for families with kids
Reach out to residents who are alone
Volunteers for park
welcome process for new residents

SOCIAL GROUPS

Book club

Embroidery Club revival

Gardening circle to share plants, tours, speakers

Gardening group to garden together

