

Forest Home Improvement Association

Report on preparation of printed directory October 2019 to October 2021

Overview

The Forest Home directory aims to support neighborhood engagement by making it easy to contact neighbors and facilitate urgent communication. The directory information supplements the Forest Home news mailing list and website. The directory was printed in May 2021 and distributed in the summer of 2021. Given the long period of time between updates and printings, we established a new database to make updates easier. It remains to be seen if this new process and database can simplify the process of getting an updated printing. Thank you to the street captains and to Caroline Arms, Claudia Fuchs, Connie Stirling-Engman, Xinyu Zhang, and Jon Miller for helping the project achieve its goals. Thank you to David Muller for providing the cover photo.

Background

The directory has been a vital tool for the Forest Home community to learn more about the community, neighbors and keep in touch with neighbors who have moved away. Previously, Forest Home printed the directory in December of 2017. Cornell Print Services printed this directory in May of 2021.

Goals of 2021 Directory

- Keep personal information secure from external parties, potentially malicious, outside of Forest Home.
- Make updates incremental and simplify going to print.
- Minimize use of contact information for spam.
- Maintain a hardcopy approach to reach people who prefer not to use online tools.

Objectives

- Get the most accurate and up to date information from residents.
- Print out a copy for every resident and deliver it.
- Maintain the household and alphabetical listings.

Contact Database

The Board established a new contact database in a spreadsheet by copying the 2017 directory and documentation. This database roughly matches the contact list used for distributing FHIA news by email but is not linked so it will need to be updated separately. The database is focused on a “household” view of the contact database that gives a consolidated view of the neighborhood.

Update Process

A request for volunteers was made and we got a number of volunteers to help. Street captains and volunteers contacted each household on the list to check the accuracy of the information. Contact was made bearing in mind Covid restrictions, typically by email or by messages left on doorsteps.

Finalizing the Data and Draft

After the updates were received by the volunteers, Jeff Holden wrote a script to convert from the database to the printable format. This was time consuming and not recommended to others taking on the task in the future. Caroline Arms, the president, had to do some significant “typesetting” to get everything to print properly on that page. These steps combined made it seem like it might just be easier and just as accurate to manually edit all the entries for the household and alphabetical listings for this system.

Printing Process

Cornell Print Service provides excellent service for small volumes and is close to the neighborhood making it convenient. The cost was \$152.50 for 135 booklets. This seemed reasonable considering the parameters of the job and other printing jobs of a similar quantity.

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Recommendations

- Multiple people recommended switching to an online contact database and this should be investigated to see if it is possible to meet the goals of the directory for a reasonable cost.
- Utilizing something like Google Forms to capture updates could speed the updating process but may overlook residents who do not use online tools.
- Since the email addresses are kept up to date and changes are frequently requested, it might be effective to use the Google Contacts to store the information database. Google Contacts can import and export files.

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