

Forest Home Improvement Association

President's Annual Report

October 2024 – September 2025

As I finish up my second year as president of FHIA, it has been a pleasure to work with many of you and witness the amazing energy and camaraderie that has driven our community for 200+ years. I am particularly indebted to Ari Lavine, VP, who ably took the FHIA reins as Acting President while I was on sabbatical and out of the country during Summer 2025. Here are some highlights of the activities conducted by all of you.

Spring Roadside Cleanup

Thanks to Herb Engman and his band of volunteers, the roads in Forest Home have been kept clean by those who have adopted them. Many of you also pick up trash in front of your homes and when out walking, which helps a lot. Thanks to all of you!

Park Maintenance

Connie Stirling-Engman has continued to maintain the flowers in two boxes at the Forest Home Park, which significantly dresses up the neighborhood. Thanks Connie!

Holiday Party

Lindsay and Ari Lavine shared their beautiful home for another well-attended holiday party in December. Thank you both!

Annual Picnic

The Annual Picnic on September 6 in Forest Home Park was a great success. The weather was perfect, and everyone enjoyed good conversation, lawn games, superb potluck food and ice cream. We are MOST grateful to Connie Engman for overall coordination and a special shout out to Cindy Bowman for a large amount of work organizing, buying, and staging the food (somehow she estimates the quantities exactly). Many other residents volunteered to serve food, grill, set up, and clean up. We are grateful to ALL of you.

Infrastructure Improvements

During the past year, Judd Falls Rd and Forest Home Drive were milled and repaved by the Town of Ithaca with 1.5" of asphalt. Forest Home Chapel completed its new entrance ramps and

steps, making it attractive and truly accessible to all. FHIA also thanks the Town of Ithaca and its staff for many smaller improvements and maintenance, from tree-trimming, sign vegetation removal, street light maintenance, and the willingness to meet with the FHIA to address maintenance and improvements.

Forest Home Planning

Last Fall and winter, the FHIA conducted a comprehensive community-wide conversation to help inform its priorities for the coming 3-5 years. Almost one-third of homes in Forest Home took part via in-person sessions, an online survey, and an email comment box. The report from this project was completed and approved by the FHIA officers in December 2024.

In Spring 2025, a group of 5 residents (Robin Blakely-Armitage, Ari Lavine, Jennifer Loucks, Ruth Mahr, and Charlie Trautmann) began meeting regularly with the Town of Ithaca, Cornell, and Tompkins County to address our priorities for infrastructure improvements to intersections, streets, pedestrian pathways, area beautification, etc. We have had an excellent working relationship with all of our partners during this process and are grateful to them for their efforts on our behalf.

We are pleased to report that as of this writing, the Town of Ithaca assembled a total of \$75,000 from the Park Foundation and a matching appropriation for the next step, which is to conduct an engineering study. The goal of this study is to review previous planning work, such as our 2007 Traffic Calming Plan, look at changes that have occurred in the past two decades, and provide updated cost estimates for improvements to the community's infrastructure. These improvements will address:

- Safety
- Impacts of traffic
- Beautification

Our goal is to begin this engineering study in 2026, in preparation for subsequent fundraising and eventual construction of the planned improvements. All of this will take several years, but we are glad to see the progress to date.

Electoral Districts

Electoral districts were adjusted this year, based on the 2020 US Census. Forest Home is split between two electoral districts, which are described on the website under Local Links.

Behind-the-Scenes Activity

Many other contributions to our community occur quietly behind the scenes but are important to the FHIA. Caroline and Bill Arms do a superb job of maintaining the website, which this year saw major improvements. Thanks Bill! Caroline also provides many of the alerts on

construction, street closings, and other issues that keep us informed. Bruce and Doug Brittain spend a good bit of time on maintaining walkways and keeping an eye on roads and construction activities. Many more volunteers leap into action when asked and are too numerous to be listed here. Finally, the officers of the FHIA – Ari Lavine, VP; Valerie Hans, Treasurer; and Connie Stirling Engman, Secretary, and Herb Engman, past president – contribute far more than their titles imply, assuring the smooth functioning of the Forest Home Improvement Association. The entire neighborhood is grateful to you all for your service.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlie Trautmann
President, Forest Home Improvement Association