

E-governance and Horizontal Citizen Participation in Creative Placemaking:
A Case Study of the East Franklinton Neighborhood

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Abstract

The development of information and communication technology has promoted e-governance, which enables citizens to consume information quickly and participate in public administration actively. Active citizen participation is fundamental for the governance of creative placemaking in a culture of democracy, as it requires an understanding of local needs and the building of a sustainable strategy for a healthy arts district. During COVID-19, information and communication technology has become an alternative tool for arts districts to communicate with citizens. The local government should consistently communicate with citizens to perceive their needs and prevent the displacement of arts and cultural bearers in its region. To ensure authentic citizen participation, arts districts should explicitly assess the progress of citizen participation to avoid tokenism and build trust with their communities. This research includes a case study of the East Franklinton neighborhood using a field study and document analysis to examine how the local government has utilized e-governance to create an inclusive decision-making process in creative placemaking and provides recommendations on how to prevent cultural assimilation and develop a community-driven arts district. While the City of Columbus has swiftly transitioned to an online platform, there is a need for better dissemination of information on how citizens can actively engage in the online decision-making process.

Keywords: e-governance, creative placemaking, citizen participation, participatory democracy, information and communication technology, online communication, decision-making, arts district

E-Governance and Citizen Participation

The information technology revolution and the democratic movements in the 1980s have accelerated the spread of citizen participation in various fields of governance. Advances in communication technologies have enhanced citizens' access to information and their ability to participate in public governance (United Nations, 2009). Information and communication technologies such as computers, the Internet, live broadcasting, and mobile technology have stimulated the democratization of knowledge, empowerment of individuals, and informed interaction between citizens and government sectors. These technologies increase citizens' accessibility to monitor and participate in the process of public administration. The emergence of new information and communication technologies and New Governance, has led to a rapid spread of citizen participation worldwide, in support of civil society.

With the expanding role of citizens in public administration, a new theory 'New Governance' emerged in the early twenty-first century. New Governance, which Rhodes (1996) defines as "governing without a government", transformed the government from an overseer to a facilitator that encourages vigorous civic engagement in the creation of an inclusive, diverse, and equitable society. This new form of governance emerged in response to deficiencies observed in central government and market-based governance, which heavily depends on a singular entity such as the economy or the nation. By closely collaborating with citizens, the government can mitigate the risk of delivering incorrect services and avoid wasteful spending, ensuring the provision of optimal products for citizens. As New Governance enhances citizen involvement in public administration, citizens are inclined to proactively contribute to their community and collaborate in constructing a sustainable system that supports the well-being of all individuals.

E-governance, also known as electronic governance, is a pivotal catalyst driving the implementation of New Governance in this global and digital society. It is a representative form of modern government that uses a web-based instrument to promote citizen participation and horizontal communication between citizens and government (Fang, 2002; Bannister & Connolly, 2012). Within the framework of New Governance, good governance is characterized by principles aligned with liberal democracy, emphasizing transparency, equity, inclusivity, participation, effectiveness, and efficiency (Rhodes, 1996; United Nations, 2009). E-governance has significantly contributed to carrying out good governance through: 1) Enhancing communication between citizens and the government to improve public services, 2) Increasing efficiency and effectiveness in government processes by reducing costs and managing performance, and 3) Establishing extensive partnerships between the government and diverse communities (Heeks, 2001; Lal & Haleem, 2002). Thus, E-governance has increased transparency in public administration and given individuals the flexibility to participate in public decision-making.

Through the execution of E-governance, local governments can cultivate engagement with citizens beyond geographical boundaries, facilitating collaborative efforts to address social and economic challenges. During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments were able to collect enormous amounts of data from citizens and increase their capacity to analyze and communicate economic and social impacts by using various online platforms (Ullah et al., 2021). As citizens and government communicate more actively through information and communication technologies, local policies become more citizen-oriented, strengthening citizens' trust in their local government (Hartanto & Siregar, 2021). Therefore, e-governance has enabled governments to rapidly understand and address prevailing issues, advancing the welfare of citizens.

Citizen Participation in Creative Placemaking

Creative placemaking is a human-centered planning approach that brings community members together to employ arts and culture to address local issues (American Planning Association, n.d.). Arts districts have been a popular mechanism for carrying out creative placemaking practice in the early twenty-first century (Frost-Kumpf, 2001). As local arts and culture are major drivers of creative placemaking, citizens play a vital role in developing a healthy arts district. However, gentrification which often involves a sharp increase in rent and the removal of original inhabitants, is a persistent problem in successful creative placemaking (Ley, 2003; Smith, 1979). The displacement of initial inhabitants can erode the arts district's distinctive regional identity. To prevent this problem, the local government should establish accessible communication channels and stimulate two-way communication with citizens to support an inclusive and equitable decision-making process.

Citizen participation is a process by which citizens can influence government decisions and become involved in service delivery (Langton, 1978; Rhodes, 1996; Holum, 2022). It has been taken in various forms, such as public hearings, surveys, interviews, and social media in creative placemaking. Citizen participation enables the government to understand public needs and citizens to monitor governmental performances (Creighton, 1981). Participatory democracy prioritizes meaningful citizen engagement to embrace an inclusive set of local cultural knowledge and values, reflected in agenda setting, program implementation, and assessment in creative placemaking (Arroyo, 2017). Creative placemaking practitioners should systematically scrutinize the process and outcome of citizen participation to ensure their genuine engagement.

A horizontal decision-making process should be sustained throughout the various stages of development to create an equitable and inclusive arts district. This process requires consistent citizen participation from diverse groups, as well as providing affordable housing and political freedom for artists and low-income workers to sustain their living conditions and actively engage in the decision-making process for their neighborhood development. As Zukin and Braslow (2011) assert, creative districts must be committed to supporting the creative production of arts and culture bearers in the long run. Social exclusion and inequality are antithetical to the primary role of the arts, which is to foster learning, sharing, and diversity. In 2012, creative placemaking leaders introduced a new framework that transcends economic growth and promotes social equity and belonging through the place, with the goal of building a creative city that values diversity and inclusivity (Webb, 2014). Citizens with tacit knowledge of their neighborhood should contribute to the preservation of the unique regional features of the arts district. Local governments should actively seek out ways to increase citizen participation to flourish distinctive creativity and culture in their region.

Key Components of Diverse Citizen Participation

While e-governance is effective in reaching out to diverse communities and expanding citizen involvement, it must be underpinned by a solid democratic system that carries out an inclusive decision-making process. Accessibility, equity, and adaptability are key ingredients for attracting citizen participation from a broad spectrum of society (Kim et al., 2001). These elements should be considered in e-governance to carry out authentic citizen participation.

Table 1. Key Components of Diverse Citizen Participation in Arts Districts

Key Components	Description
Accessibility	Providing citizens with easy and transparent access to information about regional development, policy, and history
Equity	Being open-minded to accept different perspectives and consider the potential benefits and costs for all the arts district stakeholders
Adaptability	Periodically review creative placemaking policies and practices in light of changing environment and new knowledge

Note. Adopted from *East Franklinton Creative Community District Plan* by The City of Columbus, 2012, p.27-28, Copyright 2012 by The City of Columbus

The digital divide, which refers to the gap between individuals with and without access to information and communication technology, is still a major obstacle to the inclusive decision-making process in e-governance. Citizens may face a variety of barriers to participating in e-governance such as availability, affordability, quality of service, and digital literacy. The novel COVID-19 pandemic prompted governments to rapidly transition from in-person decision-making processes to digital strategies, raising concerns about public data security and the digital divide. As the digital divide is not caused by a single factor, local governments should have a clear understanding of the various barriers that prevent citizens from participating in the online decision-making process. This study investigates online citizen participation in creative placemaking and offers recommendations to local governments on how to promote citizen participation in sustainable development initiatives for their arts districts.

Methodology

This is a single-case study of the East Franklinton neighborhood, which is the location of the emerging arts district, Franklinton Arts District. It conducts a mixed-methods approach, combining document analysis and field study. The field study involves the observation of the decision-making process of the ten online East Franklinton Review Board meetings from October 27, 2021 to September 28, 2022. The document analysis includes the review of agendas, reports, and the arts district plan. By analyzing these documents and observing the online meetings, this study addresses its primary research question: How does the internal and external structure of East Franklinton Review Board meetings promote inclusive e-governance and horizontal citizen participation in creative placemaking?

Case Selection: East Franklinton

Franklinton Arts District is situated in Columbus, the capital city of Ohio, the second-largest city in the Midwest, and the 14th most populous city in the United States (U.S. Census, 2020). Franklinton, located on the west side of Downtown Columbus, is known as the city's most historic neighborhood. It is the first Anglo-American settlement in Central Ohio, also the territory of indigenous communities of Adena, Hopewell and Shawandasse Tula, Wyandotte, Delaware, and Seneca (Franklinton Development Association, n.d.). Franklinton Arts District is surrounded by a wide range of historical and cultural assets such as arts, architecture, food, and traditions that construct a unique regional identity.

A collaboration between local government and citizens has been a key tactic to bring

back economic and community vitalities in Franklinton and build the Franklinton Arts District. Franklinton used to be a flooded area that devastated the land and lost a significant number of residents throughout the twentieth century (City of Columbus, 2020). In 2004, the City of Columbus built a floodwall in Franklinton that opened up its regional development. Franklinton Development Association, a nonprofit organization, proposed a revitalization plan that would create an attractive and accessible place for artists and local businesses (Franklinton Development Association, n.d.). The Franklinton Arts District was founded in 2008 through a collaborative effort between the municipal government, community leaders, and residents. It continues to work with these stakeholders to preserve local arts and cultural assets. The Department of Development at the City of Columbus has created a planning division East Franklinton Review Board, which consists of local community leaders to construct a cohesive aesthetic in Franklinton (City of Columbus, 2023). In 2012, the City of Columbus also published the *East Franklinton Creative Community District Plan* which has become the criteria for East Franklinton Review Board to review new development plans. The local government has been providing a platform for community leaders, citizens, and public officials to collaborate in preserving the unique placeness of Franklinton.

Franklinton is largely divided into two regions by Route 315; East Franklinton and West Franklinton. The concentration of redevelopment in East Franklinton has led to concerns about displacement and rising living costs among West Franklinton residents (Lagatta, 2020). A majority of Franklinton residents reside in West Franklinton, which has the highest poverty and infant mortality rates in Columbus (Ghose, 2019). Some major areas have also been designated as Racially or Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty which have over 40% of the poverty rate and more than 50% of the non-white population (City of Columbus, 2020). According to *Franklinton Target Area Plan*, more than 30% of adults in Franklinton lack a high school diploma or equivalent, and there are only 171 residents both living and working in Franklinton (City of Columbus, 2020). The ongoing massive development of the Franklinton Arts District is likely to widen the economic gap between East Franklinton and West Franklinton, displace original inhabitants, and compromise regional integrity. To safeguard the creative and cultural community in the Franklinton Arts District, arts district stakeholders, and public officials must consistently communicate with citizens to identify local concerns and collectively develop solutions to address these problems.

When social distancing became mandatory during COVID-19, online platforms emerged as an alternative channel for arts district to sustain its relationship with local communities. The City of Columbus uses its YouTube channel to livestream East Franklinton Review Board meetings and share them with the public. Despite external environmental barriers, public officials and arts district stakeholders could communicate with each other to identify and address their needs, thereby minimizing economic and social damages from the pandemic. Although the City of Columbus rapidly transitioned its communication platform from offline to online, it is imperative to evaluate the level of citizen participation on this new platform to bring equitable and inclusive decision-making. Therefore, this research examined citizen participation in the decision-making of creative placemaking from two sides: 1) external structure 2) internal structure of the online East Franklinton Review Board meetings. Conclusively, the study identifies the barriers to citizen participation in Franklinton Arts District and provides recommendations to create more inclusive decision-making processes.

eField Study

Field study is a qualitative method that uses written observations recorded during or immediately following participant observations in the field (Allen, 2018). Qualitative research is mostly used to explore the social interaction between individuals and their world, capturing their interconnected nature (Crabtree & Miller, 2022). At the end of the twentieth century, the Internet became a vast repository of research materials, allowing researchers to easily accumulate information by visiting websites. Researchers began to utilize the Internet as a research medium before, during, and after fieldwork (Sanjek, 2015). The rise of online platforms has given rise to a new research method, eField study. This method involves collecting data from online sources, such as social networking sites, online forums, and chat rooms. eField study can be used to study a variety of phenomena, including social behavior, cultural norms, and political discourse.

Citizens use a variety of online communication tools, such as web posts, chat functions, blogs, and videos, to express their ideas and share them with broader communities. Each medium has a different way of conveying the message to audiences, which has increased the complexity of online communication. Investigating verbal and non-verbal communication through information and communication technologies enables researchers to perceive any barriers that may impede the communication process. This research scrutinizes the online platform of the East Franklinton Review Board meetings on YouTube to explore how technologies have impacted citizen participation in the decision-making process of a local arts district.

Data Collection and Research Site

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, the City of Columbus has held East Franklinton Review Board meetings via the videotelephony software program Webex and live streaming on the City of Columbus YouTube channel, which has 6.22k subscribers. The study period was determined based on the public availability of East Franklinton Review Board meeting resources.

YouTube has increased the public flexibility to access the video records of meetings. Anyone with access to YouTube should be able to watch the videos at any time and any location. If users subscribe to the City of Columbus channel, they will be notified of upcoming East Franklinton Review Board live meetings. Citizens can find the previous meeting records in the Special Meeting Coverage playlist and other supporting documents, such as agendas, staff reports, and development plans, on the City of Columbus website¹.

The East Franklinton Review Board meeting is typically held on the fourth Wednesday of every month. The board is composed of seven members: three East Franklinton residents, local business owners, landscape architects, an attorney, and a design and historic preservation professional (City of Columbus, 2022). The members are appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. Each application review usually lasts 30 minutes and the entire meeting may last up to two hours, depending on the number of applications and the scale of the project.

Online audiences can view four screens that broadcast the East Franklinton Review Board meeting. The first screen displays applicants presenting to the board, the second screen serves as a microphone for the board and staff, the third screen provides an establishing shot of the meeting room, and the last screen presents supplementary materials that have been shared by public officials. Users can turn on the English subtitles that have been automatically generated

¹ <https://www.columbus.gov/planning/efrb/>.

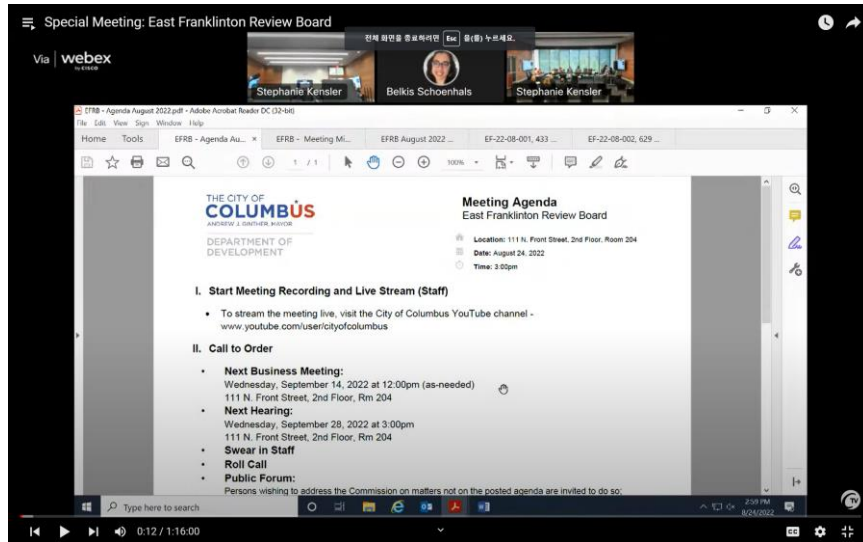


Image 1. Meeting Agenda, PC Screenshot of 08/24/22 East Franklinton Review Board Meeting
 – Source: Author’s Field Note

by YouTube. However, the City of Columbus has prohibited the use of the YouTube live chat function during the live stream. Users can leave comments after the record of the East Franklinton Review Board meeting has been posted on YouTube.

Assessment of Online Citizen Participation in Franklinton Arts District External Structure of the East Franklinton Review Board Meeting

This section evaluates the accessibility of East Franklinton Review Board meetings to citizens. Factors such as technology, the online meeting platform, resources, and other communication channels are taken into account in the assessment of the external structure of East Franklinton Review Board meetings. This analysis also addresses the strengths and weaknesses of online citizen participation in the Franklinton Arts District.

Easy and flexible access to online meeting resources

The online platform has facilitated public access to East Franklinton Review Board meetings and regional development easily. Anyone with access to YouTube can watch the meetings at any time and from any location. The public can find supplementary materials for upcoming meetings, such as the agenda, staff report, and applications on the City of Columbus website. The website links to a cloud storage system, hosted on Box, where citizens can download and save the documents to their personal computers. These resources are available one week before the scheduled meeting date, and citizens can submit written comments 24 hours before the meeting time. If citizens want to share their comments in person, they must submit a speaker slip at least 2 hours before the meeting (City of Columbus, 2023). Because all of these meeting resources are available online, citizens can take as much time as they need to review the development plans and clarify their understanding. Easy and flexible access to the East Franklinton Review Board meetings provides citizens with more opportunities to learn about regional development and participate in the decision-making process.

Limited accessibility and implementation of Information and Communication Technology

To facilitate an inclusive decision-making process, both the City of Columbus and online audiences must have quality equipment to promote citizen participation. Technology is essential for every online meeting, as it allows the host to deliver messages to audiences and the audiences to engage in the meeting. The basic equipment needed for all participants to share their opinions at an online meeting includes a webcam, speaker, microphone, computer device, and Internet access.

The quality of citizens' experience in the online meeting relies significantly on the communication devices used by the City of Columbus. As information and communication technologies are the means of connecting online audiences and the East Franklinton Review Board, technological disruptions will negatively impact citizens' engagement and participation in online meetings. Several sound and visual problems occurred while observing the online East Franklinton Review Board meeting:

- The staff's sound seems quieter than other board members' sounds. (02/23/22 Meeting Field Note, November 10th, 2022)
- The applicant's camera was shaking which distracted audiences to continue watching the screen. (03/23/22 Field Note, November 16th, 2022)
- Unlike previous meetings, the sound quality of the meeting was low today. The background noise disturbed audiences to hear what board members and staff were discussing. (09/28/22 Field Note, October 20th, 2022)

Several consequences were observed due to the inadequate camera setup, wherein not all participants' faces were fully visible, causing confusion among online audiences regarding the speaker. The microphone was also positioned too far from board members, impeding citizens' clear hearing of their statements.

The effective use of communication technologies is essential for both the local government and citizens to participate in online meetings. If citizens lack the necessary equipment or digital literacy, the City of Columbus will be unable to achieve its primary goal of making inclusive creative placemaking policy decisions through online meetings. Therefore, it is crucial that both the meeting host and the audience have access to quality information and communication technology.

Citizen participation in the passive online platform

While YouTube has increased public flexibility to access the East Franklinton Review Board meeting, it still remains a passive platform for the public to participate in decision-making. There were limited communication instruments for citizens to actively share their opinions during the meeting. The City of Columbus has disabled the live chat function during the live stream, restricting online audiences from discussing the meeting in a real-time. Although YouTube users can leave comments under the video, the City of Columbus does not consider these comments as the official public record for its decision-making. Throughout this field study of ten East Franklinton Review Board meetings, there were only a total of four comments left by two users. Image 2 depicts that active public discussion about the Franklinton development plans was not happening on the YouTube channel.

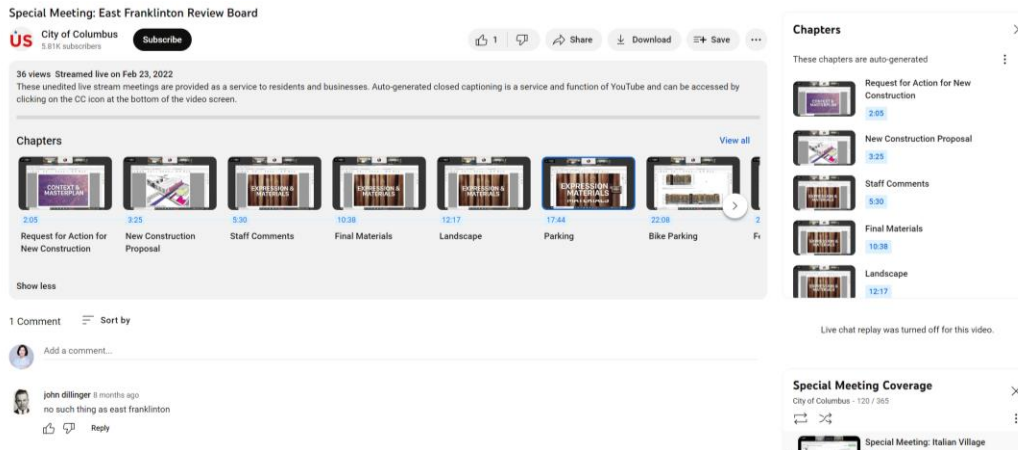


Image 2. Comment from YouTube User 1, PC Screenshot of 02/23/22 East Franklinton Review Board Meeting – Source: Author’s Field Note

Limited citizen awareness of the East Franklinton Review Board meeting

The City of Columbus has built an online platform for citizens to engage in the decision-making process of their arts district, but the lack of citizens' awareness of how to participate will result in tokenism. The virtual East Franklinton Review Board meeting platform, which is hosted on YouTube, does not provide clear instructions on how citizens can contribute to the decision-making process. Based on the findings from field notes, the average viewership of the online East Franklinton Review Board meeting was 42. This number includes multiple views from the same user and aggregates all views when a user watches the video for at least 30 seconds. The total population of Franklinton stands at 16,282 residents (U.S. Census, 2020). Even under the assumption that each view corresponds to a distinct individual, this only represents 0.02% of the Franklinton residents who may be aware of the online platform's existence. Additionally, the supplementary materials for East Franklinton Review Board meetings are not accessible on the YouTube channel, but only on the City of Columbus website. This lack of clarity means that even if the local government provides resources and platforms for citizen participation, citizens may not be able to use them. As a result, the online platform may only serve as a token gesture of participation, rather than a meaningful opportunity for citizens to speak up for their community.

Internal Structure of the East Franklinton Review Board Meeting

This section delves into the internal structure of the decision-making process during East Franklinton Review Board meetings, analyzing in-person interaction among board members, public officials, and current or prospective residents. Additionally, it examines the inclusivity of the meeting structure to explore the extent to which the East Franklinton Review Board has facilitated citizen participation in preserving unique regional characteristics.

An inclusive meeting structure that invites all attendees to participate

The inclusive structure of the East Franklinton Review Board meeting promotes every participant’s clear understanding and collaboration with citizens to build Franklinton Arts District. The East Franklinton Review Board meeting always begins with a structured agenda, also available on the City of Columbus website in advance of the scheduled meeting. Image 3 illustrates an example of the meeting agenda for an East Franklinton Review Board meeting.

Commissioners Present: Box, Fergus, Manfrass, Way

Commissioners Absent: Overly, Szymanski

Staff Present: Marc Rostan

I. Call to Order (3:03 PM)

- **Next Hearing:**
Wednesday, November 22, 2021 at 3:00pm
111 N. Front Street, 2nd FL, Room 204
- **Swear in Staff**
- **Roll Call**
- **Public Forum**

II. Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting

DISCUSSION:
MOTION: To approve the September 22, 2021 minutes.
MOTION BY: Way/Box (4-0)
Approved

III. New Business

- 1) **EF-21-10-001**
566 W Rich St.
Noah Mabry (Applicant)/Wilber Enterprises LLC (Owner)
Exterior Building Alteration and Change-in-use

DISCUSSION:
MOTION: To approve the application as submitted.
MOTION BY: Manfrass/Way (4-0)
Approved

IV. Adjournment (3:16 PM)

Image 3. Supplementary Materials: Meeting Minutes, PC Screenshot of 10/27/21 East Franklinton Review Board Meeting – Source: Author's Field Note

Prior to the board's discussion of new businesses, participants have a chance to share any concerns they may have about the most recent applications that have been reviewed. Once all the board members have approved the minutes from the previous meetings, public officials will share the preliminary review report of a new development plan. This report gives an overview of the application and addresses any potential issues that may be raised by a new construction project. If the applicant is a returning applicant, public officials will briefly provide a summary of the previous meeting, as follows:

- **Stephanie Kensler (staff):** The last meetings were held in April and July 2022. The first recommendation from the board was to make the exterior of the building more dramatic. The board was generally supportive of the proposal, but they encouraged the applicant to make the design more dynamic including looking at the materials and transparency of the southeast corner (09/28/2022 Meeting Field Note, October 20th, 2022).

The staff report provides an overview of the development plan, enabling all participants to be on the same page. Additionally, after the staff report, there is always a question-and-answer session where board members and applicants can ask questions or clarifications to the public officials. Setting a comfortable atmosphere that encourages individual engagement and participation is vital to bringing about a democratic decision-making process. At the end of each application review, the public official takes time to clarify the board members' recommendations and ensure that applicants understand their revision direction. Sometimes, the public official even asks the applicants to rephrase the board's recommendation to ensure that they grasp the

next steps. She also asks the board members to confirm her understanding of their recommendations:

- Each board member clarified his or her concern about the height and massing of the building. One board member was concerned about the elevation of the building. (02/23/2022 Meeting Field Note, November 10th, 2022)
- While wrapping up the meeting, the board chair stated the approval statement in his language and confirmed it with other attendees. The public official also changed his statement in her own words to assure everyone was on the same page (09/28/22 Meeting Field Note, October 20th, 2022).
- Applicants have asked the board and public officials to clarify the customers for bicycle parking spaces. The public official answered that bicycle parking space is for accommodating and encouraging biking. The board and staff also asked each other to reword their statement (03/23/22 Meeting Field Note, November 16th, 2022).

The board and public officials made a concerted effort to clarify all decisions made at the East Franklinton Review Board meeting. A clear summary of the meeting provides applicants with a concise revision guideline, which can help accelerate the process of regional development that is aligned with the current neighborhood.

Comprehensible visual aids that support the local decision-making

Visual elements can support individuals' comprehension of regional development and the formulation of a final decision that aligns with the current characteristics of Franklinton Arts District. A majority of citizens do not have expertise in creative placemaking or regional planning, which can discourage their active participation in the local decision-making process. In this context, images can be a powerful tool for disseminating comprehensive regional development processes to citizens. The East Franklinton Review Board requires applicants to include detailed images of their development plan and building materials, which allows the board and public officials to better assess the suitability of the new development plan with the existing neighborhood. Therefore, visual representation elevates citizens' motivation to participate in the decision-making process and fortifies their attachment to the place.

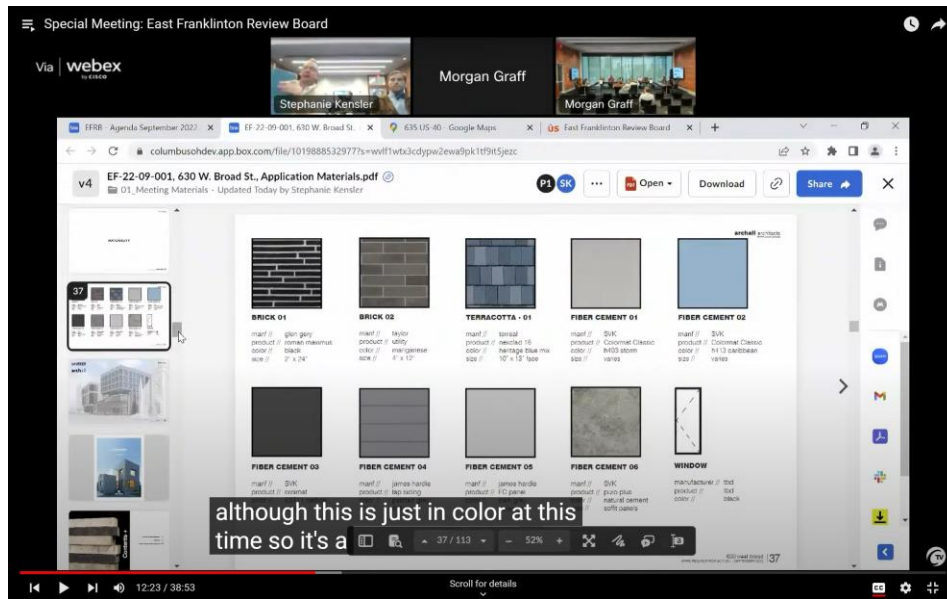


Image 4. Building Materials, PC Screenshot of 09/28/22 East Franklinton Review Board Meeting – Source: Author’s Field Note

To maximize the effectiveness of visual aids, they must be properly navigated to support future development plans. Although images can help citizens understand the context of an application, improper navigation can be detrimental to their engagement in East Franklinton Review Board meetings. Overall, the public official had a comprehensive understanding of the application and professionally navigated the visual aids to support the applicant's arguments. However, there were some moments when her navigation interfered with citizens' engagement in the meeting:

- The staff kept changing the slides which disturbed online audiences to look at the slides. The speed of changing the slides was too fast, and the visual aids were not related to the applicant’s argument (02/23/22 Meeting Note, November 10th, 2022).
- Since the applicant was not navigating the visual aids, there were some moments that made him struggle to find the right slide to support his statement (11/16/22 Meeting Note, March 23rd, 2022).

Simply utilizing communication technologies does not guarantee a surge in citizen participation. Improper use of images may even divert the citizens from engaging in the decision-making process.

A clear benchmark to prevent cultural assimilation in Franklinton

The East Franklinton Creative Community District Plan, published by the Department of Development at the City of Columbus in 2012, has been a benchmark for the East Franklinton Review Board in maintaining the intrinsic regional characteristics of the area. Former Mayor Michael B. Coleman advocated for the growth of a creative class of residents who would play a central role in creative activity and entrepreneurship. The East Franklinton Creative Community District Plan is one of the cornerstones of Columbus's growth as a creative city. The plan introduces community-based principles to guide and shape East Franklinton as an arts and

cultural district. Five features are supported by these principles: 1) walkable and connected 2) diverse and affordable 3) distinctive 4) civic and sustainable 5) achievable (The City of Columbus, 2012). Table 2 displays examples of creative placemaking practices aligned with these principles at the East Franklinton Review Board meetings.

Table 2. Community-based Practices in East Franklinton Review Board Meetings

Community-Based Principles	Creative Community District Plan Strategies
Walkable and Connected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a conducive environment that facilitates both residential and professional activities in close proximity • Increase accessibility to arts and cultural venues to enrich individual well-being • Enhance local public transportation to expand public accessibility to the arts district and reinforce the connections with other regional destinations
Diverse and Affordable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop affordable housing and workplaces for creative workers and a broad spectrum of income levels within the arts district neighborhood • Provide real estate tax benefits to prevent the displacement of low-income residents engaged in creating and distributing local arts and cultural assets
Distinctive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve unique artistic and cultural identities and creative activities in Franklinton • Install public art that reflects the vision and vitality of the Franklinton arts community
Civic and Sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a secure environment that encourages visitors to explore the arts district • Promote more “eyes on the street” throughout the Franklinton neighborhood to strengthen residents’ attachment to their community • Integrate civic and cultural elements, including parks and neighborhood schools, into private development and rehabilitation plans for comprehensive urban development
Achievable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the current resources within the arts district to formulate efficient and effective development plans

Note. Adopted from *East Franklinton Creative Community District Plan* by The City of Columbus, 2012, p.27-28, Copyright 2012 by The City of Columbus

The preliminary report for a new development plan always concluded with the Creative Community District Plan statement:

- Stephanie Kensler (staff): Overall, the proposal is generally consistent with the East Franklinton Creative Community District Plan (09/28/22 Meeting Note, October 20th, 2022).

- Stephanie Kensler (staff): Overall, the project supports the East Franklinton Creative Community Plan.” (03/23/22 Meeting Note, November 16th, 2022)

This demonstrates the board and local government's commitment to fulfilling the initial goals of neighborhood development while also building trust between the local government and citizens. The Creative Community District Plan is designed to meet the needs of both new and long-term residents, allowing them to collaborate to strengthen a unique sense of place in their region.

Gentrification has long been a problem in creative placemaking, leading to the displacement of initial residents. The East Franklinton Review Board values diverse demographics, which has led them to develop strategies that provide affordable housing and protect creativity and cultural bearers in the Franklinton Arts District. Throughout the meetings, the board has positioned itself as a current resident and discussed potential issues of new development plans to protect the current neighborhood.

Conclusion

The global pandemic has accelerated the adoption of e-governance in various sectors to expand citizen participation in public administration. The Franklinton neighborhood was no exception to this trend, and the City of Columbus swiftly launched a YouTube channel to maintain its connection with citizens. Nevertheless, merely offering an online platform was insufficient to achieve genuine citizen participation in creative placemaking governance. Throughout the case study of the East Franklinton Review Board’s virtual meetings, effective e-governance demands a robust system that oversees the democratic decision-making process and sustains the horizontal network between the government and citizens.

First, the digital divide must be bridged to draw active citizen participation by resolving the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor. As information and communication technology are the prerequisites for e-governance, both citizens and the City of Columbus should possess basic video conferencing equipment, including internet, cameras, microphones, speakers, and computers, to implement successful online decision-making. Given that certain residential areas in Franklinton lack access to the Internet, the local government should consider providing an alternative platform for residents to attend virtual East Franklinton Review Board meetings. This can be initiated through collaboration with public libraries or local community organizations. Additionally, the City of Columbus needs to inspect the operation and settings of its equipment to broadcast the best quality meeting for citizens. Since the local government is livestreaming the East Franklinton Review Board meetings, citizens’ engagement depends heavily on the quality of the broadcast. While the City of Columbus has a limited amount of equipment for these meetings, there is a need to identify settings to optimize technology and improve citizens' online experience in virtual decision-making.

Not only the communication environment but also the communication process should be critically assessed from both the sender's and receiver's perspectives. The primary purpose of E-governance is to facilitate effective governance and citizen engagement. The efficacy of the online platform is contingent upon citizens' ability to receive messages and resources. If citizens are unaware of the platform’s existence or unfamiliar with accessing the virtual meeting platform, online meetings would be rendered meaningless. An advisable recommendation is for

the City of Columbus to utilize the YouTube description function as a means to disseminate supplementary meeting documents to citizens. Prioritizing the increase of citizens' awareness regarding their opportunities for involvement in the local decision-making process is essential to fostering an inclusive and equitable arts district.

Through an examination of the external structure of East Franklinton Review Board meetings, the research highlights the significance of a simple and user-friendly interface in eliciting citizens' interest and fostering active participation in civic affairs. Since Franklinton houses a population characterized by low levels of educational attainment and economic status, conducting workshops on online citizen participation could serve as an effective mechanism to enhance individual digital literacy. Furthermore, the City of Columbus can utilize the YouTube live chat function, subtitles, and visual aids to enhance citizens' comprehension of the meeting agenda and draw active participation. The incorporation of various languages can encourage participation from broader communities, including English as a second language learners and individuals with special needs. A comprehensive understanding of demographic characteristics and regional infrastructure is paramount for the local government in devising solutions to overcome the digital divide.

Overall, the inclusive internal structure of e-governance engenders a congenial environment for citizen involvement. East Franklinton Review Board provided several opportunities throughout the in-person meeting for prospective Franklinton residents to clarify their understanding and share their ideas. The board worked with applicants to mediate their conflicts and finalize the decisions that address the needs of both current and future residents. The board who has a profound understanding of Franklinton, anticipated potential development issues that could adversely impact the existing neighborhood. Although the applicants lacked the authority to finalize a decision, they actively participated in the decision-making process during the East Franklinton Review Board meeting within a supportive environment.

As information and communication technology becomes increasingly embedded in people's daily lives, the prevalence of e-governance in contemporary society continues to grow. However, e-governance is not simply centered around establishing an online platform for citizen interaction with the government. It also entails providing accessible tools to promote citizen participation. These tools encompass the capacity for citizens to engage in dialogue with government officials, provide feedback on government policies, and participate in decision-making processes. Local governments should consistently evaluate their communication process with citizens to ensure diversity, inclusivity, and equity in e-governance.

The research outcomes offer insights into the impediments confronting citizens participating in e-governance. With the single-case focus on the Franklinton neighborhood, the generalizability of these findings to other creative placemaking regions in the United States may be limited. Future studies could employ quantitative analysis to investigate the correlation between demographic characteristics and barriers to citizen participation in e-governance, with the goal of creating a more inclusive decision-making process in creative placemaking.

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