Greenville
NORTH CAROLINA

ECU

Greenville
Involved

a playbook for public engagement

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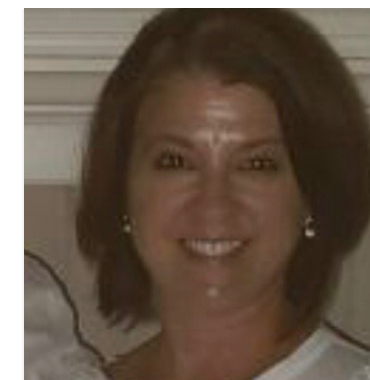

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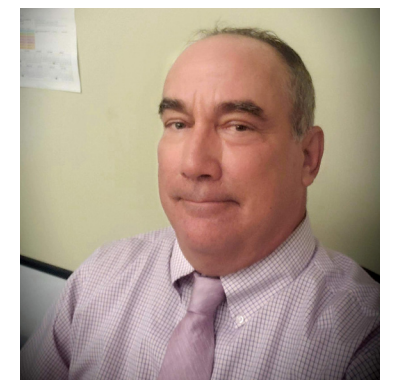
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Introduction

Executive Summary

Greenville Neighborhood and Services Department

East Carolina University Community and Regional Planning Department

In response to the evolving needs of the City of Greenville's Neighborhood and Business Services department, a strategic collaboration has been established with the ECU BS Community and Regional Planning program. Under the direction of Tiana Berryman, Director of Neighborhood and Business Services, and supervised by Tony Parker, the Neighborhood liaison, this research project engages senior students in the Planning Studio capstone course.

The primary focus of this research project is the development of a comprehensive "playbook" aimed at transforming community engagement and communication practices within Greenville's neighborhoods. This project is driven by a commitment to address current challenges and to strategically guide city staff in implementing best practices for fostering meaningful interactions with the community. The overarching objective is to deliver a comprehensive public engagement playbook that not only meets the immediate needs of the Neighborhood and Business Services department but also serves as a strategic resource for city staff. The playbook encompasses practical, coordinated, and research-driven best practices tailored to enhance the quality and depth of interactions with the community.

Simultaneously, the research project involves a visionary redesign of the Neighborhood Advisory Board, intended to encourage sustained and meaningful engagement in the future. This collaboration represents a high-level endeavor which will provide the City of Greenville with actionable insights and innovative methodologies. Through "Greenville Involved" Greenville is poised to advance its public engagement initiatives, ultimately contributing to the community's long-term development and quality of life.

History

Greenville, North Carolina, originally established as Martinsborough, was incorporated into North Carolina in 1771, taking on the new title of Greenville in 1787. Greenville currently sits on the Tar River in eastern North Carolina, approximately 90 miles east of the capital city of Raleigh. Greenville is the current county seat of Pitt County and serves as the largest community in the county as well. Much of the growth of this community, once known as the "Queen City on the Tar," can be attributed to the railroad, tobacco, and education.

During the early days of Greenville, the city served as a hub for industry, as steamboats could travel the Tar River for commerce. With the construction of a bridge in the 1830s, the city thrived and saw new prosperity. The town's prosperity began to fade in the 1840s as many wealthy North Carolinians left the South in a mass exodus to newly established Southern and Western territories. The Civil War did not have a major impact on the city's development. The city's location within the Tar River allowed Greenville to function as a sort of "no man's land."

The 1870s brought much-needed renewal to Greenville, and with the arrival of the train in the 1890s, the City of Greenville was opened to the global market, breathing new life into the city. With this prosperity, the tobacco crop became the top cash crop, and Greenville took its rightful place as the largest and most expansive tobacco market in Eastern North Carolina. With the increase in wealth, the City of Greenville expanded and developed new, larger homes, businesses, and industries. Within years of the establishment of the rail line, the North Carolina Legislature founded the East Carolina Teachers College, now known as East Carolina University. When the school opened in 1909, Greenville became the educational mecca of Eastern North Carolina. Today, Greenville retains its history as a vital center in the region, with a strong legacy of industry, commerce, and education that persists.

ECU, Joyner Library Special Collections, Ross-Kammerer Photo Archive, #308 and #309
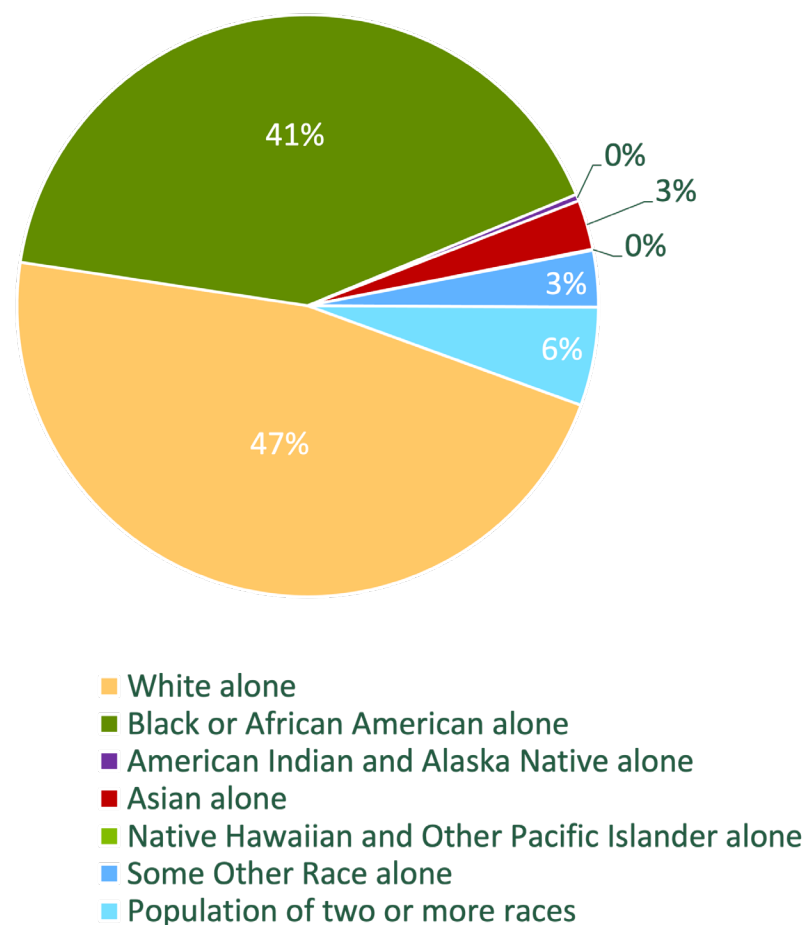
Demographics

Population

Since 2000, Greenville has seen explosive growth growing 44.9% from a population of 60,385 in 2000 to a population of 87,521 in 2020.

Race

Between 2010 and 2020, Greenville's demographics have become more diverse. Between 2010-2020 Greenville's largest demographic, the white population fell 13.85% from 47,579 in 2010 40,991 in 2020. The white population is still Greenville's largest demographic cohort, making 46.84% of the population. The second largest demographic cohort is the Black or African American population which makes up 41.36% of the population and has seen a 15.75% growth between 2010 and 2020. The percentage of citizens in Greenville identifying as two or more races has grown 158.96% from 1,852 people in 2010 to 4,796 people in 2020.

Racial Makeup (2020)

- White alone
- Black or African American alone
- American Indian and Alaska Native alone
- Asian alone
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone
- Some Other Race alone
- Population of two or more races

41% 0% 3% 0% 3% 6% 47%

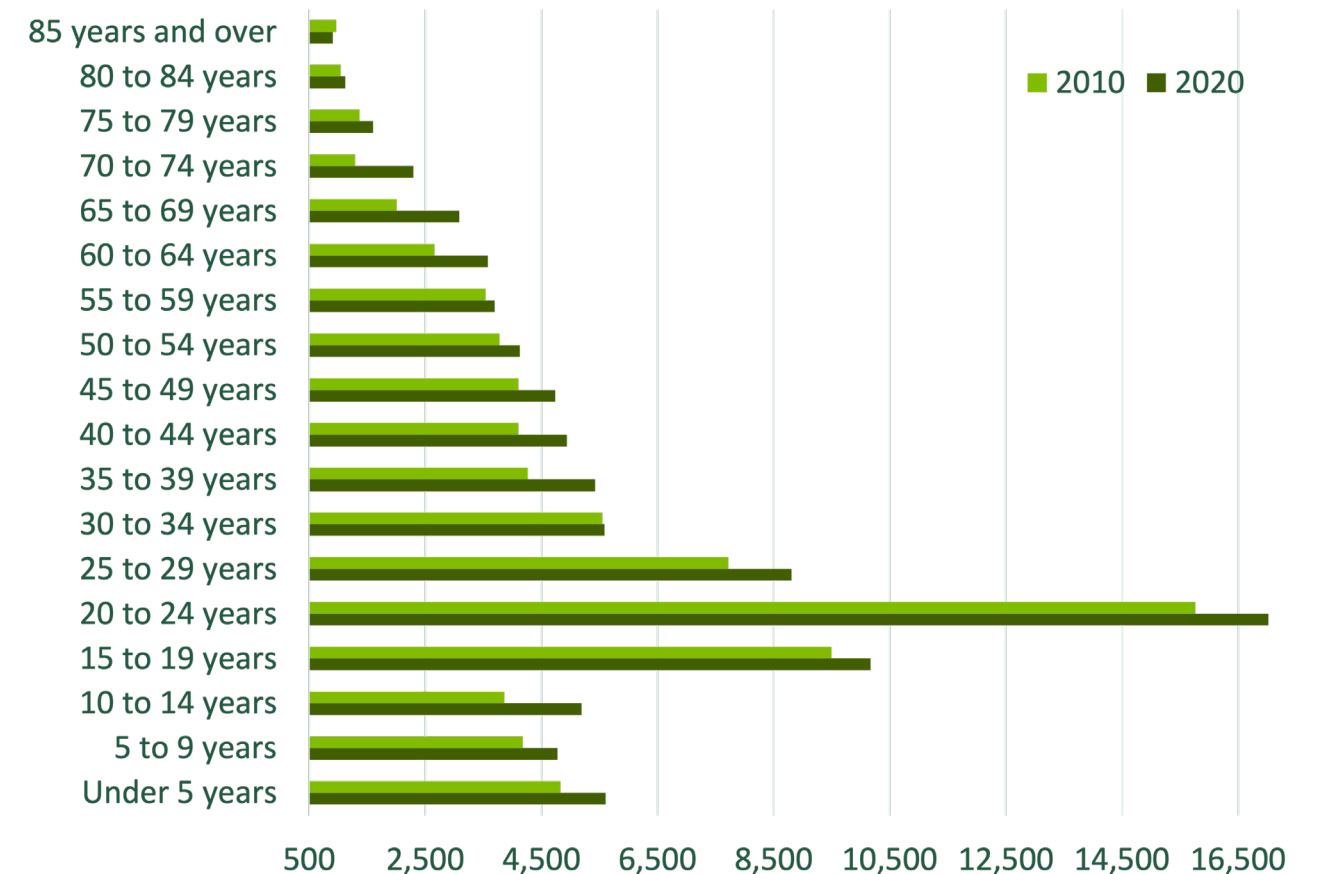2010-2020: DEC Redistricting Data

Age

Between 2010 and 2020, age cohorts have remained consistent. Greenville's largest age cohorts are the 20-24-year-old group and the 15–19-year-old age group making up 18.5% and 11.0% of the population respectfully making up 29.5% of Greenville's population. Greenville has a large student population residing within it causing different housing and age demographics than the North Carolina average. 27.7% of the population is under 20 years old, and 31.8% of the population are between the ages of 25-50.

Age Cohorts (2020)

■ 2010 ■ 2020

85 years and over
80 to 84 years
75 to 79 years
70 to 74 years
65 to 69 years
60 to 64 years
55 to 59 years
50 to 54 years
45 to 49 years
40 to 44 years
35 to 39 years
30 to 34 years
25 to 29 years
20 to 24 years
15 to 19 years
10 to 14 years
5 to 9 years
Under 5 years

500 2,500 4,500 6,500 8,500 10,500 12,500 14,500 16,500

2010-2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables

Income

Between 2000 and 2020, the median household income in Greenville rose 49% from being $26,648 in 2000 to a median household income of $42,612 in 2020. Compared to Pitt County ($49,337) and North Carolina ($56,642), Greenville has a low median household income. A cause of this could be contributed to the large student population and higher income earners living in county or other municipalities jurisdiction.
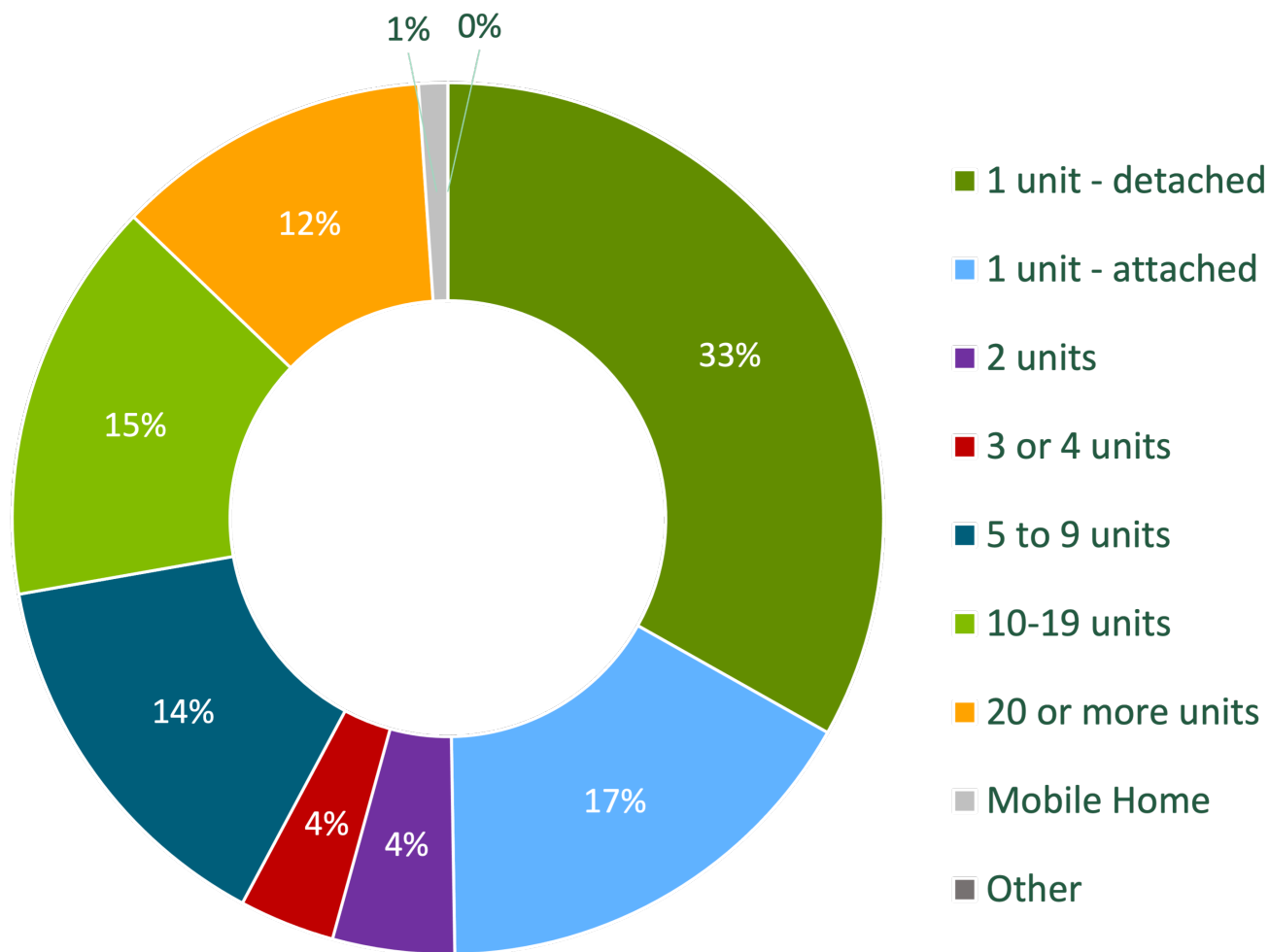
Housing

Between 2000 and 2020, 15,613 housing units or 36.3% of Grenville's current housing stock was constructed. This construction boom rose the number available housing units in Greenville significantly (11%).

The largest percentage of housing type in Greenville is Single-Family homes making up 33.2% of the housing stock. Because of the large student population, Greenville's has a high percentage of 5-9 and 10-19- and 20 or more-unit apartments for a city of its size (together making 41.1% of housing stock).

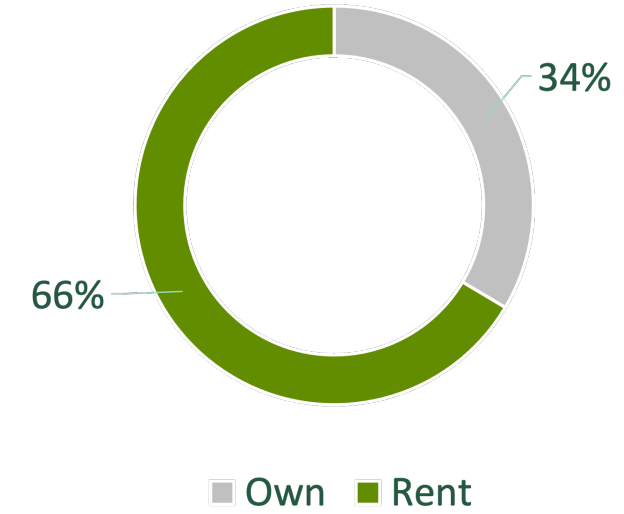Additionally, because of the high student population and the presence of ECU Health (formally Vidant Health), 66.4% of all housing units are renter occupied. This could have contributed to the falling attendance of the Neighborhood Advisory Board as only 33.7% of houses in Greenville are owner occupied, and that short term renters are less likely get involved in community initiatives as they are not invested in the neighborhood's longevity.

Greenville Own/Rent (2020)

34%

66%

■ Own ■ Rent

Housing by Structure Type

1% 0%

12%

15%

14%

4% 4%

17%

33%

- ■ 1 unit - detached
- ■ 1 unit - attached
- ■ 2 units
- ■ 3 or 4 units
- ■ 5 to 9 units
- ■ 10-19 units
- ■ 20 or more units
- ■ Mobile Home
- ■ Other

Greenville compared to likewise cities around North Carolina

% of Households Renter Occupied (2020)
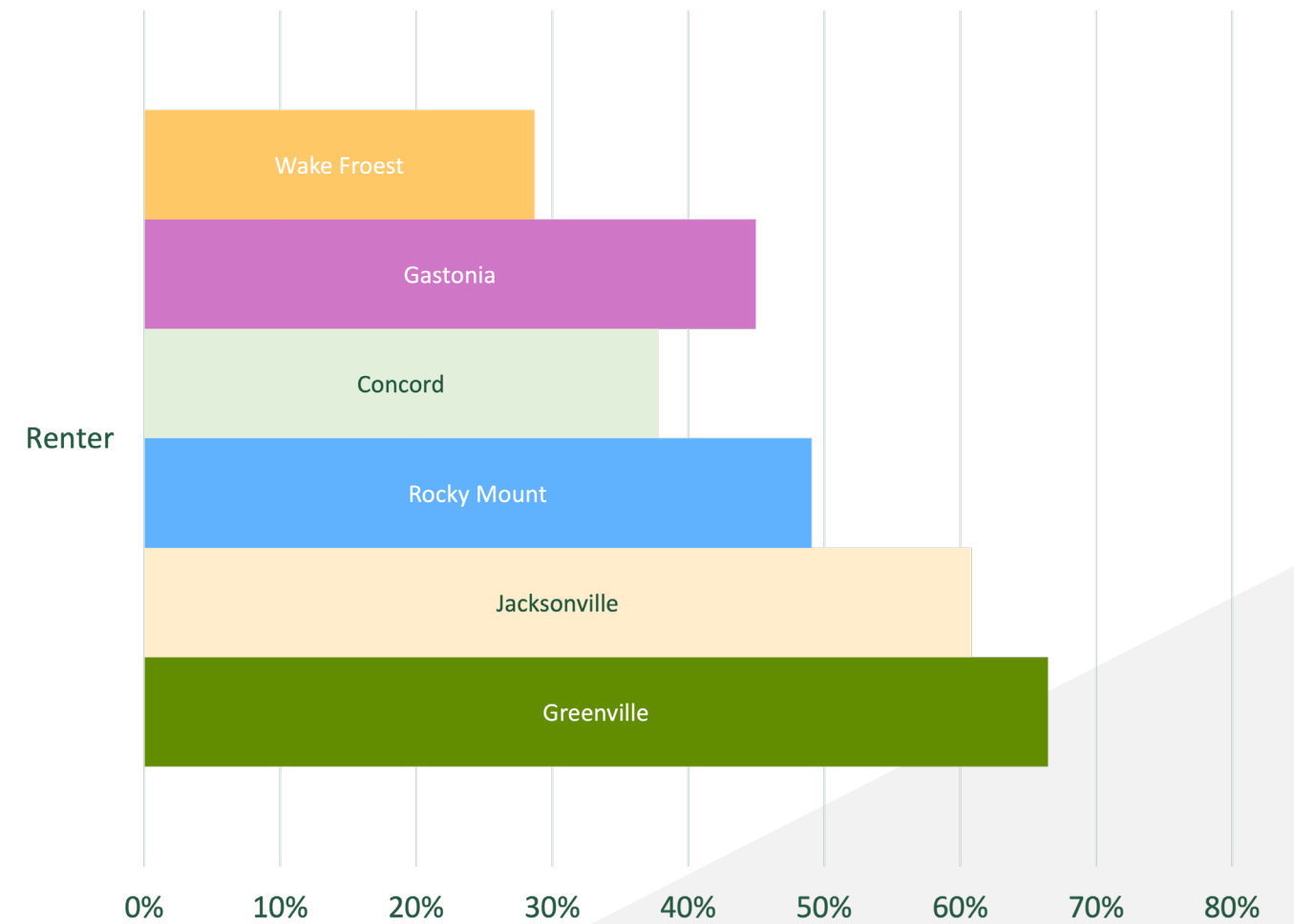
Renter

Wake Froest
Gastonia
Concord
Rocky Mount
Jacksonville
Greenville

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

Public Engagement History & Issues

The Neighborhood Advisory Board (NAB), established in 2008, functions as a conduit between neighborhood associations and the local government, facilitating discussions on shared concerns and advocating for collective solutions. However, issues related to representation have surfaced over the years. Although the NAB consists of 10 members with 2-year terms, a significant problem lies in its lack of inclusivity. Recent records reveal that active members and alternates only represent Districts 2, 3, and 4, leaving Districts 1 and 5 without representation. This deficiency underscores a substantial gap in the NAB's effectiveness, limiting its ability to address the diverse concerns of the entire community.

In conjunction with the NAB's challenges, the Horizons 2026: Greenville's Community Plan, adopted by the City Council on September 8, 2016, stands as the long-range comprehensive plan for the city. While featuring a chapter dedicated to public engagement during the process of creating the Horizons 2026 plan in 2016, the plan notably omits explicit mention of a future community engagement strategic plan.

The NAB faced persistent challenges, including inadequate representation from all districts, hindering its ability to address the unique concerns of each neighborhood effectively. Another issue is the lack of focused discussion topics in NAB meetings, impeding the development of comprehensive strategies to meet diverse community needs. The absence of virtual streaming options for NAB meetings further limits transparency and public engagement compared to the City Council's efforts.

- 👥 **Attendance** within the Neighborhood Advisory Board (NAB) has been a recurring issue
- 🏛 **Lack** of focused discussion topics in NAB meetings
- ⚠ **Demand** for virtual streaming options
- 👤 **Absence** of defined leadership positions
- 💡 **Reluctance** to embrace new ideas and approaches
- 📊 **Challenge** in fostering innovation and adaptability within the neighborhood associations

Project Goals

Issues related to public engagement in Greenville, NC, present multifaceted challenges that impact the effectiveness of initiatives like the Neighborhood Advisory Board (NAB). A significant concern is the absence of a dedicated public engagement section in the Horizons 2026 plan, hindering the city's ability to involve residents in decision-making processes. The lack of structured outreach mechanisms has made it challenging to implement policies aimed at promoting community involvement. Within the NAB, attendance issues persist, and the board struggles to provide representation from all city districts, limiting its capacity to advocate for comprehensive solutions addressing diverse neighborhood concerns. Furthermore, the absence of virtual streaming options for NAB meetings hampers transparency and accessibility, contrasting with efforts made by the city council to offer the public greater access to information.

During the recent Glen Arthur neighborhood meeting on October 3, 2023, significant communication challenges were observed among members. The meeting aimed to establish a new neighborhood association within the Glen Arthur neighborhood. Unfortunately, the absence of defined leadership positions contributed to disorganization, hindering the coordination and execution of the neighborhood's mission to organize and create a new association. This lack of effective leadership also reflected a reluctance to embrace new ideas, illustrating broader difficulties in fostering innovation within neighborhood associations.

Most notably, a stark lack of attendance and representation mirrored the issues faced by the Neighborhood Advisory Board, leading to the recent disbandment of the Glen Arthur Neighborhood Association. Residents, both property owners and tenants, not only expressed dissatisfaction with the dishearteningly low meeting attendance but also voiced a palpable frustration. This underscores the critical need for enhanced community engagement strategies, emphasizing the importance of addressing these challenges with a pragmatic and collaborative approach to rebuild a more robust foundation for community involvement and cooperation.

Support neighborhoods, and affinity groups

Promote project engagement

Enhance civil engagement

Greenville Involved Objectives

To address the identified challenges in public engagement in Greenville, NC, a comprehensive approach is proposed to improve community involvement. These objectives were identified by the City of Greenville Neighborhood and Business Services Office and the ECU Community and Regional Planning team.

Firstly, we encourage staff to utilize this playbook to familiarize themselves with tools that enable active participation in neighborhood engagement within the community. The Greenville Involved public engagement playbook provides a strategic framework that fosters neighborhood engagement on a range of issues affecting the city. Staff are recommended to acquaint themselves with these approaches for potential implementation in their future engagement methods.

Implement Engagement Hub **strategies to centralize communication and interaction with residents.** This involves investigating the feasibility and benefits of such a platform. Examples of successful implementation in other communities will be examined to gather insights into best practices. The envisioned hub will offer a user-friendly interface, providing citizens with easy access to information and opportunities to engage with the city.

Establish a citizens advisory board to enhance community involvement and representation. This advisory board will act as a bridge between citizens and the city, facilitating dialogue and collaboration. Current levels of involvement and representation will be assessed, comparing them with the proposed recommendations to highlight potential improvements in citizen engagement.

Develop a framework that can support affinity groups, prioritizing the provision of useful information about city developments and initiatives to these groups. Specifically, efforts will be made to keep affinity groups well-informed about projects directly impacting their interests, such as the Green way project, ensuring active engagement and participation.

The overarching objective of the Greenville Involved playbook is to understand approaches that can enhance Civic Engagement throughout the city.

By achieving the objectives outlined above, the city aims to have a more informed and engaged population, fostering active participation in community matters. This will be achieved by providing accessible information, creating opportunities for dialogue, and establishing mechanisms for citizen representation, ultimately cultivating a community that is actively involved in shaping its future.

Research methodology

The research for this project involved a comprehensive examination of various public engagement strategies to inform the proposed goals and objectives for enhancing community involvement in Greenville, NC. The exploration encompassed diverse approaches, including the utilization of online platforms for projects and surveys, engagement hubs for transparent communication, and advisory committees for specific initiatives. The study also delved into the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) Spectrum, a global framework guiding the levels of public involvement. By synthesizing insights from different contexts, the research aimed to identify effective strategies applicable to Greenville's specific challenges, contributing to the development of a robust plan for fostering community engagement.

Develop a new public engagement "playbook program"

Explore multiple new strategies for engagement

Create a citizen's advisory committee

Greenville Involved proposes a series of recommended programs for implementation by the city **with the goal of fostering increased participation in active citizen and staff engagement.**

Recommendations

Introduce IAP2 Public Engagement Matrix

Implement new Public Engagement Hub

Create a new Citizen Advisory Board

IAP2 Public Engagement Matrix

To address the identified challenges in public engagement in Greenville, NC, a comprehensive approach is proposed by introducing a IAP2 Public Engagement matrix to improve community involvement. These objectives were identified by the City of Greenville Neighborhood and Business Services Office and the ECU Community and Regional Planning team.

Public Engagement Hub

A public engagement hub is a strategic digital platform employed by local government to facilitate effective communication and collaboration with the community. This online hub serves as a central point for disseminating information about city projects, initiatives, and developments, while also providing residents with opportunities to actively participate in decision-making processes.

Citizen Advisory Board

The proposed advisory board, incorporating a general body membership and an elected executive board, emerges as a pivotal component in fostering community engagement and informed dialogue within the City of Greenville. Designed to accommodate diverse stakeholders, this board serves a dual purpose – providing a platform for discussions on various city topics and functioning as an educational resource for citizens seeking information about city projects, services, and procedures.

1. IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is a global organization that consists of members committed to promoting and enhancing the practice of public participation. It focuses on facilitating engagement between individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that impact the public interest worldwide. IAP2 achieves its mission through organizing events, publications, communication technologies, and advocating for public participation globally. The organization also conducts research to support educational and advocacy goals and provides technical assistance to improve public participation processes.

The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation is a standardized engagement platform used globally. This framework is designed to guide the selection of the level of public participation in any engagement process.

It outlines different levels of involvement, each with its own goals and promises to the public. .

The city of Greenville seeks to reimagine the approach to the IAP2 spectrum by reversing the flow of the chart. The reversed IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation holds substantial benefits for the City of Greenville by redefining the dynamics of engagement and decision-making. The emphasis on "Empower" at the outset allows organizations to take a proactive lead in communication and final decisions, ensuring a more aligned and goal-oriented approach with the city's overarching objectives. This not only streamlines the decision-making process but also reinforces a sense of ownership among entities, fostering a more invested and committed collaboration.

Research Findings

The City of Bloomington, MN, has integrated IAP2 Spectrum into its public engagement practices. The framework serves as a valuable tool for guiding the city in determining the appropriate level of public participation in various projects. In Bloomington, this spectrum is actively communicated to the public through the Let's Talk Bloomington site, where it is prominently displayed on the right side of each project page. The chart outlines five levels of public participation, allowing residents to understand and anticipate the extent of their involvement in specific projects. The integration of the IAP2 Spectrum highlights the city's commitment to ensuring that residents are informed about their role in shaping the community's future.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) integrates the IAP2 Spectrum into its Statewide Public Involvement Plan to enhance transparency and engagement in the transportation decision-making process. By aligning with the IAP2 principles, NCDOT aims to involve individuals affected by decisions at various levels, ensuring that public participation is not only accessible but also meaningful. NCDOT emphasizes early engagement to make participation more accessible, fostering relationships with key community members, sustaining a continuous dialogue, and gathering valuable public input while meeting federal and state requirements. By adhering to the principles outlined by IAP2, NCDOT ensures clarity, understanding, and proactive resolution of potential problems or concerns, reinforcing the importance of public participation in shaping transportation decisions.

Empower	Collaborate	Involve	Consult	Inform
Organizations take the lead in initiating communication with the city and decision-making, empowering them to make the final decisions.	Organizations are encouraged to collaborate with the city, actively participating in the decision-making process. This involves working together on various aspects, including the development of alternatives and preferred solutions	Organizations are encouraged to be directly engaged with the city by meeting face-to-face for a limited time. This engagement ensures that the concerns and aspirations of the organizations are well understood and considered.	Organizations are advised to be available for consultation and feedback. This means actively seeking input and feedback from the city to make informed decisions.	Finally, organizations are encouraged to distribute information that is of interest or concern to the city. This step involves providing balanced and objective information to keep the city informed.

Reimagined IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION →

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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IAP2 International Federation

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

The implementation of the reversed IAP2 Spectrum in Greenville, NC, brings several strengths to the forefront. First, the emphasis on empowerment at the beginning of the process is expected to foster a proactive and engaged community, instilling a sense of ownership and commitment among organizations. Second, the collaborative nature of the reversed chart encourages diverse stakeholders to collaborate, leveraging various perspectives to develop comprehensive and well-rounded solutions. Third, the integration of the spectrum into communication platforms offers the opportunity to enhance transparency, providing residents and organizations with a clear understanding of the decision-making process. Lastly, the flexibility of the reversed chart allows for a more tailored approach to decision-making, ensuring that the level of public participation aligns with the unique needs of each project. These strengths collectively contribute to the potential success of the reversed IAP2 Spectrum, promoting community engagement, collaborative decision-making, and transparency in Greenville's public participation processes.

Weaknesses

The implementation of the reversed IAP2 Spectrum in Greenville, NC, poses challenges centered around confusion regarding its integration, incorporating it into existing workflows, and the intensive effort required to roll it out across various city departments. The potential for confusion arises from the novel approach, requiring clear communication and guidance to ensure a smooth adoption process. Integrating the reversed spectrum into existing workflows demands strategic planning to minimize disruptions and ensure a seamless transition. The process is further intensified with the need to implement it comprehensively across all city departments, necessitating extensive coordination and collaboration to embed the reversed IAP2 Spectrum effectively.

Opportunities

The implementation of the reversed IAP2 Spectrum in Greenville, NC, holds significant opportunities for community empowerment, innovation in public participation, and improved decision quality. Successful implementation has the potential to cultivate a more empowered and engaged community, fostering a positive relationship between the city and its residents and organizations. With the reversed approach to the IAP2 spectrum, Greenville has the opportunity to position itself as a leader in innovative public participation methods, attracting positive attention and potentially influencing other municipalities. The collaborative and inclusive nature of the reversed spectrum further offers the potential for higher-quality decisions that better reflect the diverse needs and perspectives of the community, ultimately contributing to more effective and inclusive governance.

Threats

The introduction of the reversed IAP2 Spectrum in Greenville, NC, faces potential challenges, including public skepticism, time constraints, and the risk of miscommunication. Initial skepticism from the public regarding the effectiveness of the reversed approach poses a challenge that necessitates robust communication strategies to build trust and understanding. Addressing these challenges with effective communication, strategic planning, and transparency will be essential for the successful integration of the reversed public participation framework in Greenville.

Uptown Parking Public Input Meeting - June 2, 2022, City of Greenville Public Works

Community Tree Day - Fall 2021, City of Greenville Public Works

2. Public Engagement Hub

A public engagement hub is a strategic digital platform employed by local government to facilitate effective communication and collaboration with the community. This online hub serves as a central point for disseminating information about city projects, initiatives, and developments, while also providing residents with opportunities to actively participate in decision-making processes. City employees utilize the hub to share updates, seek public feedback through surveys and discussions, and encourage community involvement in various planning and development efforts. The hub plays a crucial role in fostering transparency, inclusivity, and responsiveness, ultimately enhancing the relationship between the city government and its residents. Additionally, city employees may leverage the hub to gauge public sentiment, address concerns, and ensure that community perspectives are considered in shaping policies and projects.

A community engagement hub **serves as a centralized platform or entity within a city that facilitates and promotes public involvement in decision-making processes.**

Its primary purpose is to **connect residents, community groups, and stakeholders with the government to ensure that their voices are heard and considered in matters that impact the community.**

Research Findings

Raleigh, North Carolina

The research findings reveal diverse and effective public engagement strategies employed by various North Carolina municipalities. In addressing the pressing challenge of affordable housing, the City of Raleigh harnessed the power of Public Input to facilitate an inclusive and effective community engagement process. The city, with its rapidly growing population and the need for an $80 million affordable housing bond, faced the obstacle of in-person restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, Raleigh created the "Engage Raleigh" online community engagement portal in 2018, leveraging PublicInput.com's features to overcome the hurdles posed by the pandemic.

Recognizing the need for meaningful input from the community, Raleigh established a 24-person advisory committee comprising local leaders, community members, and stakeholder representatives. The committee utilized the PublicInput.com Engagement Hub to engage over 4,800 residents through an array of strategic initiatives. This included the creation of an online affordable housing bond survey, hosting virtual public meetings with recording options, and incorporating local media into the online survey. The platform's integrated translation tools and phone-in input option ensured accessibility and inclusivity, addressing language barriers and offline engagement needs.

Key to the success of the initiative was PublicInput.com's Equity Mapping feature, which allowed project managers to analyze participant data, overlay demographic information, and identify potential gaps in outreach. The PublicInput.com Administrative Dashboard played a crucial role in analyzing responses, offering project managers both quantitative and illustrative views of project activity. The insights garnered from these analyses, such as the strong correlation between support for the initiative and voter intention, provided a solid foundation for decision-makers.

Despite challenges, including the transition to virtual meetings, the Raleigh team achieved a resounding success with the affordable housing bond project. Boasting the highest approval rating in the city's bond history, with nearly 72% of voters supporting the $80 million bond, the outcome showcased the adaptability and effectiveness of the PublicInput.com platform. The city saved time, increased resident reach through online surveys, and provided decision-makers with well-supported options backed by securely stored information. In essence, PublicInput.com enabled Raleigh to pivot swiftly, maintain project momentum, and glean valuable insights that contributed to the project's overwhelming success. (Thomas − 2023)

Apex, North Carolina

Similarly, Apex's Public Input Hub facilitated community engagement in planning and development projects, emphasizing transparency and inclusivity. Holly Springs employed an oWnline platform for projects and surveys, underlining the town's commitment to inclusivity and unbiased decision-making.

Engage Raleigh

The City of Raleigh engagement hub is the online home for outreach and listening efforts to shape the future of our community. Here you can find upcoming events, initiatives, and opportunities to share your input on key topics.

912K	**91K**	**1,289**
RESPONSES	COMMENTS	TOPICS

Featured Projects & Surveys

2024–2025 Affordable Housing and Community Needs Survey

Each year, the City of Raleigh receives funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These funds are used for affordable housing initiatives. Initiatives include creating affordable...

👤 628   💬 519   [Participate]

Raleigh, NC Engagement Hub, engage.raleighnc.gov

Asheville, North Carolina

Asheville utilized the PublicInput.com platform as a central hub for the Stormwater Utility Program, demonstrating a commitment to transparency and community involvement in decision-making.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Chapel Hill, a fellow transitory community utilized a dedicated online platform for a Transportation and Land Use Initiative, ensuring residents have access to project information and promoting inclusivity in the decision-making process.

Cary, North Carolina

Cary's transportation and facilities community engagement hub has garnered over 13,000 participants, highlighting the effectiveness of digital platforms in garnering public input. Overall, the research findings underscore the importance of diverse engagement tools and platforms in fostering community involvement and shaping the future of municipalities.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

The proposed public engagement hub exhibits several key strengths that enhance its effectiveness in connecting with the community. Notably, its commitment to accessibility ensures that residents, regardless of technological proficiency, can engage meaningfully. The platform's user-centric design,

inclusive features, and options for virtual participation contribute to its interactive nature, fostering dynamic engagement. Real-time updates and subscription services keep residents promptly informed about ongoing projects, promoting a well-informed community. The platform's innovative features, including discussion forums and educational resources, create a space for community interaction and learning. Moreover, the incorporation of a dedicated section on hot topics and frequently asked questions adds transparency and directly addresses current community concerns, promoting a more transparent and responsive communication channel.

Weaknesses

Despite its strengths, the public engagement hub faces certain weaknesses that warrant attention. One notable challenge is the digital divide, where some residents may encounter difficulties accessing the platform due to a lack of internet access or technological resources. Additionally, the platform's interactive features might pose a learning curve for certain demographic groups, potentially hindering engagement. The platform's success is contingent on regular maintenance to ensure up-to-date information, and any lapses in this area could result in outdated content, diminishing its effectiveness over time. Recognizing and addressing these weaknesses is crucial to optimizing the platform's impact and inclusivity within the community.
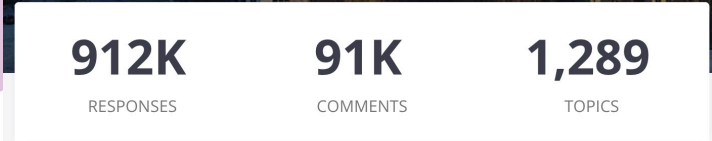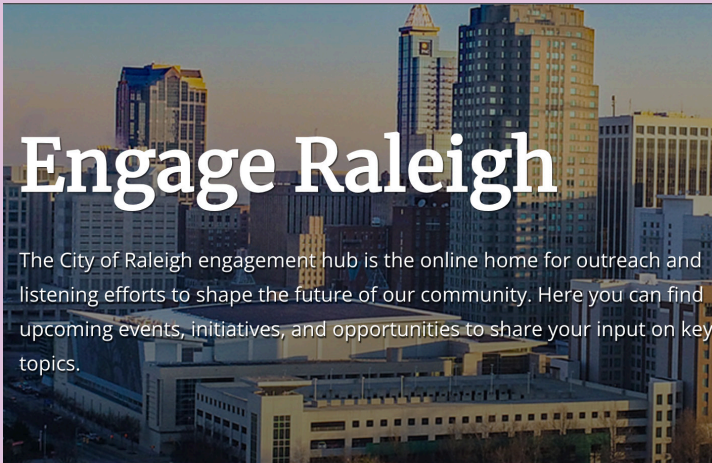
Opportunities

The public engagement hub presents significant opportunities for enhancing community involvement and strengthening the relationship between the local government and residents. The integration of virtual

participation options, such as online surveys and virtual meetings, aligns with the evolving preferences and schedules of residents, providing a convenient avenue for active participation. Social media integration offers the potential to expand the reach of the platform, tapping into familiar channels and broadening community engagement. Timely and regular updates, coupled with subscription services, create an opportunity to establish a well-informed and engaged community. The platform's interactive features, including discussion forums and feedback mechanisms, open avenues for residents to actively contribute, fostering a sense of community and collaboration.

Threats

Despite its potential, the public engagement hub faces certain threats that could impact its effectiveness. The digital divide poses a significant threat, as residents with limited access to the internet or technological resources may be excluded from the platform, potentially exacerbating existing disparities in community engagement. Ensuring multilingual support is crucial to addressing linguistic diversity, but failure to do so may alienate certain demographic groups. The platform's success hinges on sustained community interest, and any perception of the hub as burdensome or complex may lead to reduced engagement. Additionally, external factors such as changes in technology or communication preferences may pose threats to the platform's relevance over time. Vigilance in addressing these threats and implementing continuous improvements will be essential to the sustained success of the public engagement hub.
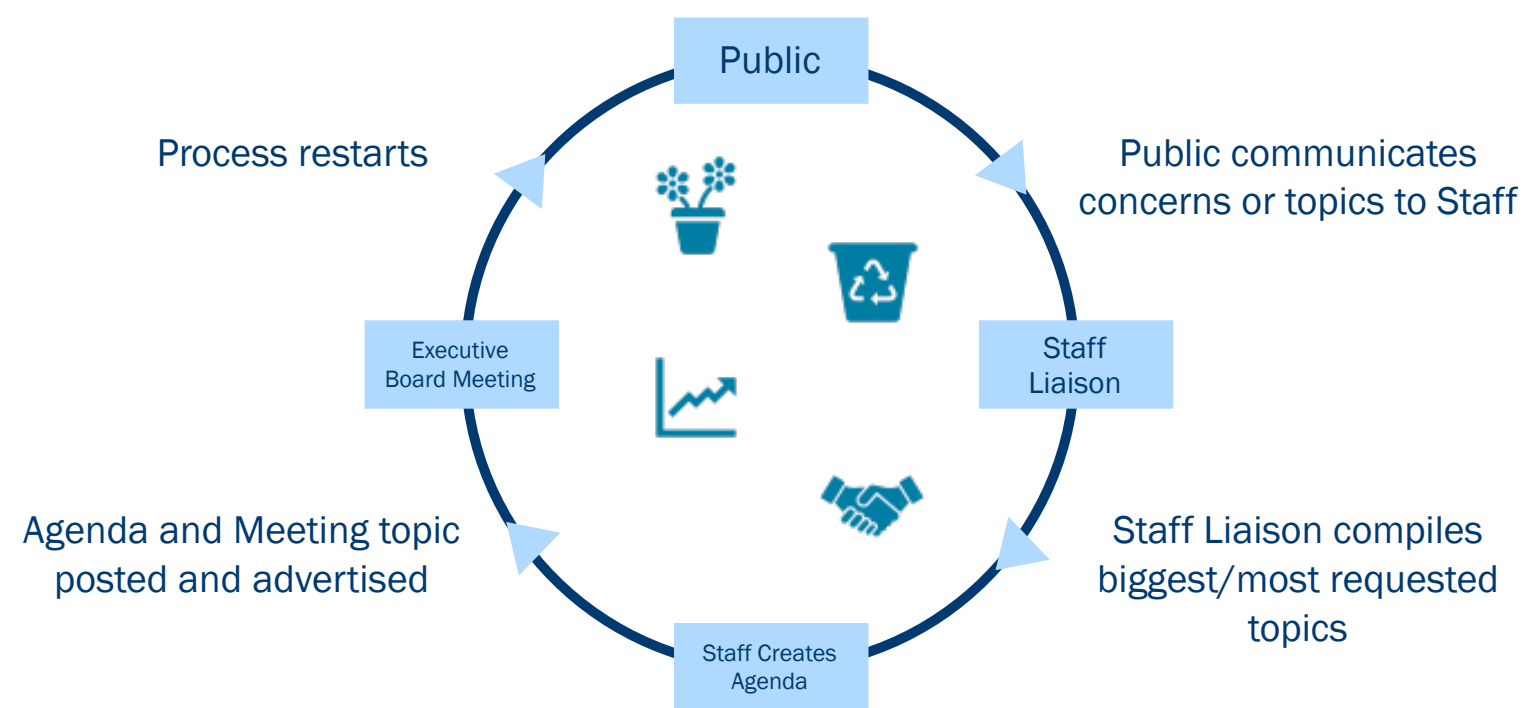
3. Citizen Advisory Board

The proposed advisory board, incorporating a general body membership and an elected executive board, emerges as a pivotal component in fostering community engagement and informed dialogue within the City of Greenville. Designed to accommodate diverse stakeholders, this board serves a dual purpose – providing a platform for discussions on various city topics and functioning as an educational resource for citizens seeking information about city projects, services, and procedures.

The advisory board will have monthly executive board meetings, focusing on specific city challenges such as community appearance, trash pickup, economic development, university relations, and other pertinent that are of concern to the citizens of Greenville. These meetings will be open to the public, including general body members.

The goal is to ultimately create a central platform for departments to rotate, present information, and engage with the community directly. The anticipated bi-annual general body meetings will serve as opportunities for the executive board to report on major discussions and elect new executive board members.

With a deliberate emphasis on disseminating information, both through executive and general body membership, the advisory board aims to enhance awareness and engagement throughout the neighborhoods of Greenville. By creating an inclusive space for open discussions and active participation, this advisory board is destined to strengthen the connection between the city government and its residents, contributing to a more informed and engaged community.

Citizen Advisory Board
How it works

- Public
- Public communicates concerns or topics to Staff
- Staff Liaison
- Staff Liaison compiles biggest/most requested topics
- Staff Creates Agenda
- Agenda and Meeting topic posted and advertised
- Executive Board Meeting
- Process restarts

Research Findings

The research reveals a diverse landscape of citizen advisory boards within the state, showcasing interesting and distinctive approaches adopted by peer cities Wilmington, Fayetteville, Jacksonville, and Asheville. Each advisory board is uniquely tailored to address specific community needs. Notably, Wilmington's Community Relations Advisory Committee (C-RAC) was established in 2016 with a focus on combating prejudice and discrimination, while also serving as an advisory body to inform authorities and organizations. In Fayetteville, the Fayetteville Next Advisory Commission uniquely targets residents aged 19 to 39, aiming to enhance their quality of life through targeted event programming and community outreach initiatives. Asheville's Neighborhood Advisory Committee concentrates on advising the City Council on zoning and planning matters, fostering neighborhood identity and resilience. Meanwhile, in Jacksonville, the Neighborhood Improvement Services Advisory Committee actively contributes input on the City's improvement programs and monitors progress against defined performance measures. These varied structures collectively highlight the multifaceted nature of citizen advisory boards across the state, showcasing their adaptability to the distinctive needs and goals of communities.

City Council Meeting - June 9, 2022, City of Greenville Public Works

City Council Meeting - June 9, 2022, City of Greenville Public Works

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

The proposed Citizen Advisory Board in Greenville exhibits several key strengths, positioning it as a pivotal component in fostering community engagement and informed dialogue. Its dual structure, comprising a general body membership and an elected executive board, ensures a diverse representation of stakeholders, facilitating robust discussions on various city topics. Serving a dual purpose as an educational resource, the board disseminates crucial information about city projects, services, and procedures, empowering citizens to make informed decisions. Monthly executive board meetings focusing on specific city challenges showcase a commitment to systematic problem-solving, while bi-annual general body meetings provide opportunities for reporting major discussions and electing new executive board members. Openness to the public in both types of meetings enhances transparency, fostering an inclusive civic environment.

Weaknesses

However, potential weaknesses exist, notably in the resource intensity required for the Advisory Board's effectiveness. Balancing the time commitment from board members and securing adequate financial support for initiatives could pose challenges. Additionally, there is a risk of a digital divide if the board heavily relies on digital platforms, potentially excluding residents who face barriers to digital access. Ensuring inclusivity across various demographic groups will be essential to mitigate this weakness.

Opportunities

The Advisory Board presents opportunities to enhance civic awareness in Greenville. The deliberate emphasis on disseminating information offers the chance to actively engage residents in discussions and share information about city initiatives, contributing to a more informed citizenry. Moreover, the platform created for departments to engage with the community provides an opportunity for collaborative problem-solving and more effective, community-driven solutions.

Threats

Despite its strengths and opportunities, the Advisory Board faces threats that could impact its effectiveness. Public apathy or a lack of interest may pose a threat, necessitating ongoing efforts to maintain community interest and active participation. Resistance to change, either within the city government or the community, could impede the successful implementation of the Advisory Board. Overcoming resistance and fostering a culture of openness and collaboration will be crucial to navigating these potential threats and ensuring the board's long-term success.

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Implementation Recommendations

Recommendations 1-3

1.
IAP2 Public Engagement Matrix

2.
Public Engagement Hub

3.
Citizen Advisory Board
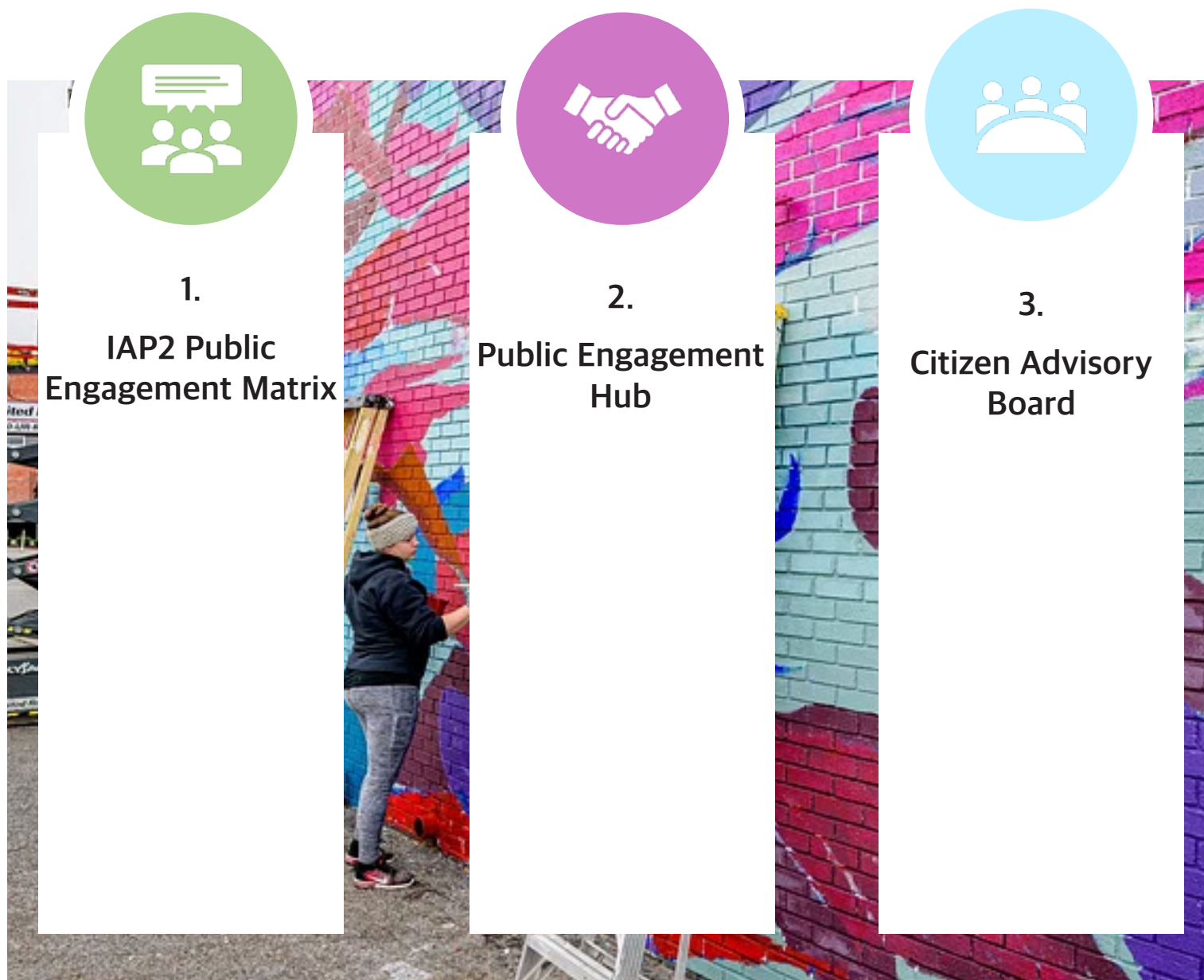
Volunteers assist with painting a new mural by Scott Eagle on Dickinson Avenue - November 6, 2022, City of Greenville Public Works

1.1 Introduction and Awareness Building:

- 1.1a:. Launch an initiative to introduce the reversed IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation to the residents, organizations, and stakeholders in Greenville.
- 1.1b:. Communicate the benefits and objectives of the reversed approach, emphasizing empowerment, collaboration, and informed decision-making.

1.2 Stakeholder Engagement:

- 1.2a: Identify key stakeholders, including government agencies, non-profit organizations,
- 1.2b: community groups, and institutions, to actively involve them in the implementation process.
- 1.2c:. Conduct workshops, webinars, or town hall meetings to facilitate discussions on the importance of reversed public participation and its potential impact on decision-making.

1.3 Training and Capacity Building:

- 1.3a Provide training sessions for city officials, organizations, and community leaders to familiarize them with the principles and practices of the reversed IAP2 Spectrum.
- 1.3b: Emphasize skills related to empowerment, collaborative decision-making, face-to-face engagement, effective consultation, and transparent information dissemination.

1.4 Development of Communication Platforms:

- 1.4a: Establish an online platform or integrate the reversed IAP2 Spectrum into the existing city engagement platforms to enhance accessibility.
- 1.4b: Ensure that the spectrum is visible and easily understandable on project pages, fostering transparency and clarity for residents and organizations.

1.5 Pilot Projects:

- 1.5a: Select a few pilot projects that represent diverse sectors within the city to apply the reversed IAP2 Spectrum.
- 1.5b: Gather feedback from organizations, residents, and stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the reversed approach and identify areas for improvement.

1.6 Continuous Evaluation and Improvement:

- 1.6a: Implement a continuous feedback loop to evaluate the success of the reversed IAP2 Spectrum in each project.
- 1.6b: Use feedback to make necessary adjustments, refine engagement strategies, and enhance the overall implementation process.

1.7 Documentation and Reporting:

- 1.7a: Develop a reporting mechanism to document the outcomes, lessons learned, and successes of projects using the reversed IAP2 Spectrum.
- 1.7b: Share regular reports with the public, stakeholders, and city officials to maintain transparency and accountability.

1.8. Institutionalize the Reversed Approach:

- 1.8a: Integrate the reversed IAP2 Spectrum into the city's official public participation guidelines and policies.
- 1.8b: Ensure that the principles of empowerment, collaboration, involvement, consultation, and information are consistently applied in future city projects.

2.1 User-Centric Design and Accessibility:

- 2.1a: Intuitive Interface: Develop an intuitive and user-friendly interface for the public engagement hub, ensuring easy navigation for residents with varying levels of technological proficiency.
- 2.1b: Accessibility Features: Incorporate accessibility features, such as translation tools and options for different formats (audio, visual), to cater to a diverse audience.

2.2 Interactive Engagement Tools:

- 2.1a: Virtual Participation Options: Implement virtual engagement tools, including online surveys and virtual public meetings, to accommodate residents' schedules and preferences.
- 2.1b: Social Media Integration: Explore integration with social media platforms to expand reach and engagement, allowing residents to participate through familiar channels.

2.3 Timely and Regular Updates:

- 2.3a: Real-Time Information: Provide real-time updates on ongoing projects and initiatives, ensuring residents stay informed about the latest developments.
- 2.3b: Subscription Services: Offer subscription services for residents to receive customized notifications and updates based on their interests.

2.4 Hot Topic Section and FAQs:

- 2.4a: Hot Topic Highlights: Include a dedicated section addressing current hot topics, enabling residents to access information quickly on issues of high community interest.
- 2.4b: Establish and regularly update an FAQ section to address common questions and concerns, promoting transparency and clarity.

2.5 Community Interaction Features:

- 2.5a: Discussion Forums: Integrate discussion forums or chat features within the hub to encourage community interaction, allowing residents to share insights, ask questions, and discuss local matters.
- 2.5b: Feedback Mechanisms: Implement user-friendly feedback mechanisms to gather opinions and suggestions from residents, fostering a sense of community engagement.

2.6 Educational Resources:

- 2.6a: Information Hub: Develop the public engagement hub as a centralized information hub, providing educational resources about city developments, policies, and civic processes.
- 2.6b: Tutorials and Guides: Offer tutorials and guides within the hub to help residents understand how to effectively use the platform for engagement.

2.7 Responsive Design for Mobile Access:

- 2.7a: Mobile Compatibility: Ensure the public engagement hub is designed responsively to accommodate mobile users, allowing residents to participate and access information on the go.

2.8 Promotion of Inclusivity:

- 2.8a: Multilingual Support: Provide multilingual support within the hub to cater to the linguistic diversity of the community, enhancing inclusivity.
- 2.8b: Community Outreach: Actively promote the public engagement hub through various channels to ensure broad awareness and participation across demographic groups.

3.1 Outreach and Recruitment Strategy:

- 3.1a: Develop a comprehensive outreach strategy to ensure diverse representation within the Advisory Board. Engage with community organizations, local businesses, and neighborhood associations to encourage participation from various demographics.
- 3.1b: Implement an accessible application process for residents interested in joining the Advisory Board. Leverage multiple channels, including online platforms and community events, to promote the opportunity and facilitate applications.

3.2 Advisory Board Structure:

- 3.2a: Establish a general body membership and elect an executive board for the advisory board.
- 3.2b: Task the board with facilitating discussions on various city topics and serving as an educational resource for citizens seeking information about city projects, services, and procedures.

3.3 Training and Orientation Programs:

- 3.3a: Design a thorough training program for both general body members and the elected executive board to familiarize them with the city's operations, protocols, and current challenges.
- 3.3b: Conduct periodic orientation sessions to keep members informed about their roles, responsibilities, and the overall purpose of the Advisory Board. This will ensure a well-informed and effective board.

3.4 Structured Meeting Agendas:

- 3.4a: Develop structured agendas for both monthly executive board meetings and bi-annual general body meetings. Clearly outline discussion topics, presentations, and opportunities for community engagement to maximize the effectiveness of each meeting.
- 3.4b: Schedule monthly meetings for Executive Board members and bi-annual meetings for general body members.
- 3.4c: Require that elections take place during one of the scheduled general body meetings.
- 3.4d: Encourage departments to present relevant information and updates during executive board meetings, fostering transparency and keeping the community well-informed about city initiatives.

3.5 Utilize Technology for Engagement:

- 3.5a: Leverage digital platforms to enhance engagement, allowing residents to participate in meetings remotely or access meeting recordings. This accommodates various schedules and ensures broader community involvement.
- 3.5b: Establish an online portal or community forum for ongoing discussions between meetings, providing a continuous avenue for community input and feedback. This may include using recommendation #1, the public engagement hub.

3.6 Community-Based Committees:

- 3.6a: Establish specialized committees within the Advisory Board to focus on specific city challenges, such as community appearance, trash pickup, budgetary concerns, and other concerns or issues identified by the committee. These committees can delve deeper into issues, gather community input, and advocate to their local government officials.
- 3.6b: Rotate committee membership periodically to encourage broader participation and ensure a dynamic exchange of ideas.

3.7 Promotion of Executive and General Body Meetings:

- 3.7a: Implement a robust communication strategy to promote monthly executive, and bi-annual general body meetings. Utilize social media, community newsletters, and local media outlets to inform residents about the meetings and their importance.
- 3.7b: Consider organizing informational sessions or workshops prior to general body meetings to educate residents about the topics to be discussed, encouraging active and informed participation.

3.8 Feedback Mechanisms:

- 3.8a Establish clear mechanisms for collecting feedback from the community after each meeting. This could include surveys, online forms, or designated feedback sessions during meetings.

- 3.8b: Actively incorporate community input into the decision-making process, demonstrating a commitment to responsiveness and ensuring that resident perspectives shape the Advisory Board's recommendations.

3.9 Evaluation and Adaptation:

- 3.9a: Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the Advisory Board in achieving its goals. Solicit feedback from both board members and the community to identify areas for improvement.
- 3.9b: Be open to adapting the structure and operations of the Advisory Board based on lessons learned, changing community needs, and evolving city priorities.

WW1 Memorial Bridge - Town Commons Park, City of Greenville Public Works

Conclusion

In conclusion, the examination of public engagement in Greenville, NC, reveals a complex landscape marked by challenges in representation, communication, and inclusivity. The Neighborhood Advisory Board (NAB) faces persistent hurdles in addressing the diverse concerns of the community, encountering issues such as inadequate representation from all districts, a lack of focused discussion topics, and limited virtual streaming options. The neighborhood advisory board has demonstrated that it has outlived its original purpose. Additionally, challenges such as the Horizons 2026 plan, despite its comprehensive nature, lack a dedicated public engagement strategic plan, further contributing to the difficulties faced by initiatives like NAB.

Recognizing these challenges, the "Greenville Involved" playbook outlines strategic objectives aimed at revitalizing public engagement in the city. The proposed Public Engagement Hub, with its user-centric design and interactive tools, seeks to enhance transparency and inclusivity, addressing weaknesses while leveraging opportunities presented by virtual participation and social media integration. Simultaneously, the establishment of a Citizen Advisory Board aims to bridge the gap between citizens and the city, promoting informed dialogue and community collaboration.

Furthermore, the innovative approach of reversing the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum signifies a commitment to empowerment from the outset, promising a more aligned and goal-oriented decision-making process. The strengths of this approach lie in its ability to foster an engaged community, encourage collaboration, and enhance transparency, while addressing weaknesses through careful integration and communication.

However, the successful implementation of these strategies is not without its challenges. The digital divide, potential resistance to change, and the need for continuous adaptation pose threats to the effectiveness of these initiatives. It is imperative for Greenville to actively address these threats through outreach, training, and ongoing evaluation to ensure the sustained success of the proposed public engagement framework. In embracing these recommendations and addressing the identified challenges, the City of Greenville should aspire to create a more informed, engaged, and inclusive community. By fostering open dialogue, leveraging technology, and redefining the dynamics of public participation, Greenville should also work to empower its residents, strengthen the relationship between the city government and the community, and ultimately shape a future where collective voices contribute to the city's development.
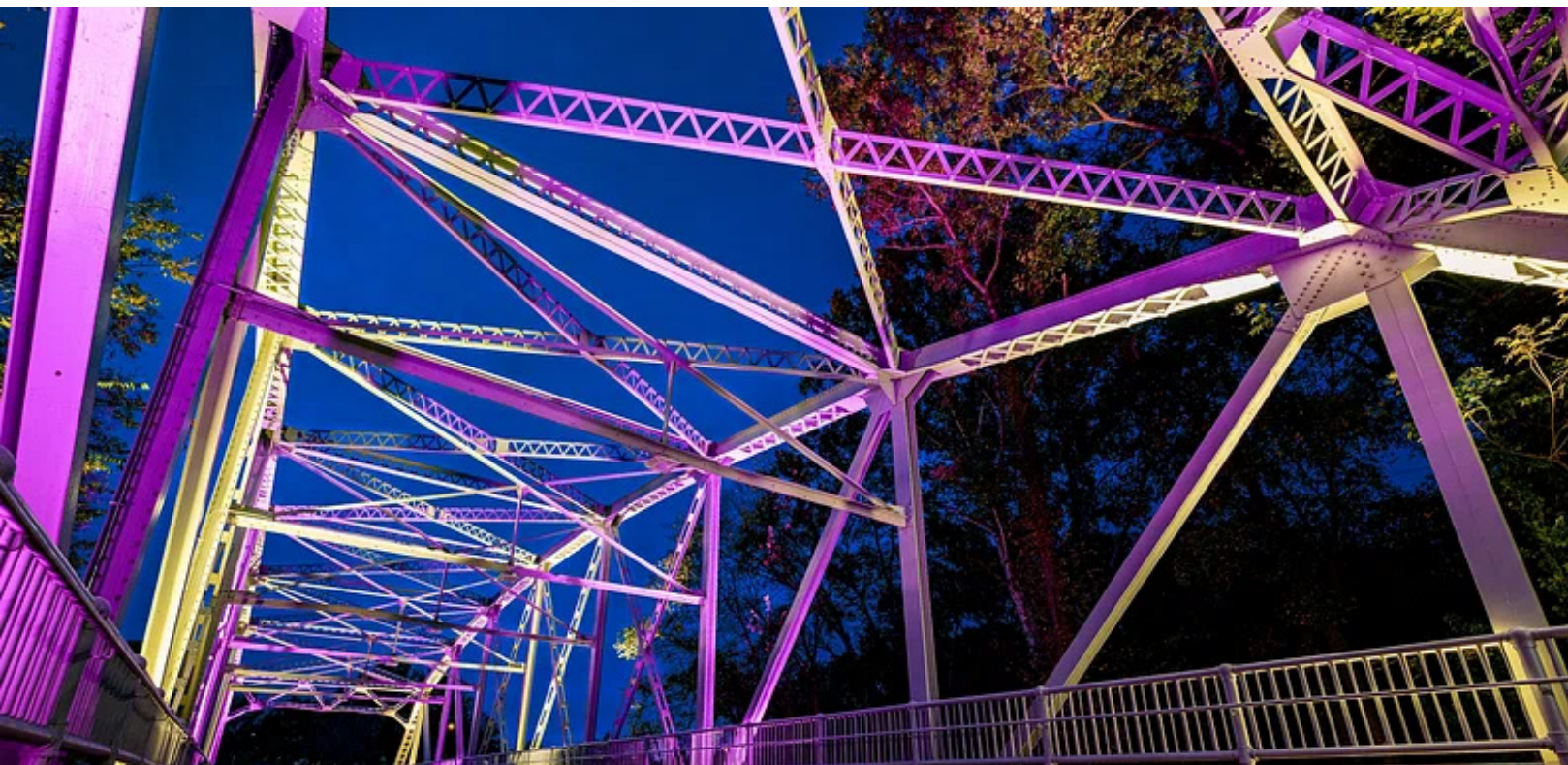
Acknowledgments

The successful development of recommendations and strategies within this comprehensive public engagement initiative for the City of Greenville, NC, has been made possible through the collaborative efforts and contributions of various individuals and organizations. Gratitude is extended to the City of Greenville officials and staff for their crucial cooperation, insightful contributions, and steadfast commitment to advancing community engagement. Their dedication to fostering a more informed and engaged citizenry has laid a robust foundation for the proposed strategies.

Special acknowledgment is also due to the members of the Glen Arthur Neighborhood Association, who generously hosted our team and provided invaluable observations. Their experiences and challenges have underscored the significance of effective leadership and community engagement, contributing significantly to the insights gained during this initiative.

This project represents a collaborative effort, and the Community and Regional Planning team at East Carolina University expresses gratitude to the City of Greenville officials and staff, as well as the members of the Glen Arthur Neighborhood Association. With collective appreciation and optimism, we anticipate the implementation of these recommendations, fostering a more connected, informed, and engaged community in the City of Greenville.

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