



Boards & Commissions Report

Economic Prosperity Commission

October 15, 2025



[Resolution 20241212-133](#) directed the City Manager, in coordination with the City Clerk's Office, to establish a sunset review process for governance bodies, enabling regular and staggered evaluations of their scope and duties. An initial framework update was presented to the Audit and Finance Committee on February 19, 2025, after which the Committee instructed staff to finalize a consistent and transparent review model. A proposed framework was formally introduced on July 16, 2025, and the Committee approved a pilot implementation, requesting preliminary findings by October 15, 2025.

This report summarizes the pilot's results, including an overview of the body under review, legal considerations, self-evaluations by members and staff liaisons, community feedback, and an initial staff recommendation.



Executive Summary

Objective

To conduct an evaluation of the scope and duties of the Economic Prosperity Commission using a predetermined multi-step framework.

What We Found

The Economic Prosperity Commission advises Council on matters related to construction and job creation. There are currently two vacancies on the Commission. They have held seven meetings in 2025 with two meetings canceled due to lack of quorum. They have additional meetings scheduled for November and December. The Commission is not bound by any legal obligations that require its continuation.

As detailed in a self-evaluation completed by the Commissioners, the Commission approved two recommendations this year. These were identified as closely aligned to the Commission's core mission. The Commission also noted that it received numerous staff briefings and updates throughout the calendar year. The Commission reports having high commissioner and community engagement. They also note that public participation is moderate but that they host meetings with stakeholders in the community and invite leaders and organizations to provide data-focused presentations.

City Staff reported that the Commission's actions and recommendations throughout the year mostly complied with City Council directives and bylaws. Staff also notes that over the past five years, they have approved fewer than ten recommendations which may be attributed to the Commission's broad scope, which has made it difficult for commissioners to identify and prioritize specific issues for action. Additionally, the Commission has struggled to maintain quorum. Staff also noted considerable overlap between the scope of the Commission and City Council's Economic Opportunity Committee (EOC). They find the Commission duplicates work already being undertaken by the EOC, City staff, and external organizations. Staff believe that given current budget constraints and the level of City resources required, it may be appropriate to reassess whether the Commission's current structure remains an efficient and effective use of City resources.

The Commission held a public hearing on August 20, 2025, to solicit feedback from the public and community stakeholders regarding the usefulness and relevance of the Economic Prosperity Commission's stated purposes and duties and its success in fulfilling those mandates. No members of the public registered to speak.

What We Recommend

While the Economic Prosperity Commission routinely meets, they do have a history of several canceled meetings each year that implies a difficulty in maintaining quorum. They typically maintain membership but have experienced vacancies for extended periods of time. The Commission mostly acts in accordance with their Council directives and bylaws, but it is noted there appears to be duplicated efforts made by the Economic Opportunity Committee and City staff. We recommend narrowing the scope of the Commission which may include a potential merger of duties.



Economic Prosperity Commission Mandate

City Code § 2-1-141 - The Council creates the Economic Prosperity Commission to advise the Council on matters related to construction and job creation. The Commission should include representatives from trade and business associations and chambers of commerce.

Membership Roster

Member Name	Appointed by	Term Expires
Raquel Valdez Sanchez	José Velásquez	02/28/2027
Rodrigo Cantu	Ryan Alter	02/28/2027
Aaron Gonzales	Zohaib Qadri	02/28/2027
Michael Nahas	José Vela	02/28/2029
Ofelia Zapata	Vanessa Fuentes	02/28/2029
Shakeel Rashed	Krista Laine	02/28/2029
Jacob Randall	Kirk Watson	02/28/2029
Zain Pleuthner	Mike Siegel	02/28/2029
Aditi Joshi	Marc Duchon	02/28/2029
Currently Vacant	Natasha Harper-Madison	02/28/2027
Currently Vacant	Paige Ellis	02/28/2027

2025 Meeting Dates

January 29, 2025
February 19, 2025
March 19, 2025 - Canceled due to lack of quorum
April 16, 2025 - Canceled due to lack of quorum
May 21, 2025
June 18, 2025
July 16, 2025
August 20, 2025
September 17, 2025
October 15, 2025 - Scheduled
November 19, 2025 - Scheduled
December 17, 2025 - Scheduled

Legal and Regulatory Consideration

Legal Review

The Economic Prosperity Commission does not have any legal mandates or statutory obligations that must be addressed prior to its continuation, modification, or sunseting. Other than potential amendments to City code § 2-1-141 should changes be made, there are no laws that necessitate the continuation of the board or commission.

Modifying or sunseting the Economic Prosperity Commission would not violate any local, federal, or state law.

Self-evaluation from Commission

The Economic Prosperity Commission was asked to evaluate how the Commission's yearly actions aligned with its directives; reference Appendix A for questions and responses.

Commission's Self-evaluation

"The Commission approved two recommendations..."

"A challenge of the current bylaws is that the phrase 'job creation and construction' is very broad."

Compliance:

The Commission's actions throughout the year complied with City Council directives and bylaws.

Recommendations:

The Commission approved two recommendations:

- Recommendation 202504160-003: Language Access Programs for Entrepreneurs
- Recommendation 20250219-005: Chapter 380 Programs

Recommendations closely aligned to the body's mission:

Both recommendations are closely aligned with the Economic Prosperity Commission's core mission.

Context for recommendations:

The recommendation for language access programs for small immigrant owned businesses was presented at the Economic Opportunity Committee at the request of Chair Aaron Gonzales and Council Member Zohaib Qadri. The recommendation consisted of policy language and detailed research supporting its necessity and the expected economic impact it could have. The other recommendation supported job retention and compliance of businesses to support economic growth and living wage jobs.

Redundancy:

The Commission reports that its work does not overlap with another body.

Need to update bylaws:

The Commission reports that it needs to update its bylaws.

Context for need to update bylaws:

The Commission would like to more closely align its bylaws with those of the Economic Opportunity Committee. A challenge of the current bylaws is that the phrase "job creation and construction" is very broad. Defining it more narrowly to align with the Economic Development Department offices, such as the Economic Opportunity Committee, would be ideal.

Commission's Self-evaluation (continued)

"We do invite thought leaders and organizations to provide data-focused presentations at our meetings..."

"... we would like to do an even better job by having stakeholders attend meetings and request the commissioners' present for their needs at meetings."

Commission member engagement:

10 on a scale of 1-10

Community engagement:

5 on a scale of 1-10

Context for ratings:

The Commission hosts meetings with stakeholders in the community to bridge the gaps between City programming and services for residents, staff needs and support, and Council members' overall direction for their districts. We do invite thought leaders and organizations to provide data-focused presentations at our meetings to provide us with research and proven models of things the City and the organizations are doing to be responsive to economic prosperity and mobility for job creation and retention. While we believe we are doing a good job as a commission for engagement, we would like to do an even better job by having stakeholders attend meetings and request the commissioners' presence for their needs at meetings.

Gaps:

The Commission does not perceive any gaps in important policies that are not currently covered by a board or commission.

Evaluation from Commission's Liaison

The Economic Prosperity Commission's staff liaison was asked to evaluate how the Commission's yearly actions aligned with its directives; reference Appendix B for questions and responses.

Staff Liaison's Evaluation

Submitted by Austin City Clerk's Office

"...over the past five years, it has approved fewer than 10 recommendations."

"When a quorum is achieved, it is often by the bare minimum of six members."

Compliance:	The Commission's actions and recommendations throughout the year mostly complied with City Council directives and bylaws. The Economic Prosperity Commission's (EPC) formal actions have been in alignment with its bylaws. However, over the past five years, it has approved fewer than 10 recommendations. The commission's broad scope, focused on "construction and job creation, has made it difficult for commissioners to identify and prioritize specific issues for action. Additionally, the Commission has struggled to maintain quorum; two meetings this year were canceled due to lack of quorum, which delayed officer elections and the approval of budget recommendations. When a quorum is achieved, it is often by the bare minimum of six members. Finally, public engagement has been minimal. To staff's recollection, over the past year no members of the public have attended nor signed up to speak at EPC meetings. This includes the August 2025 public hearing meant to solicit community feedback on the EPC's usefulness and relevance.
Redundancy:	Economic Opportunity Committee
City resources:	City resources are not being utilized efficiently to support the Economic Prosperity Commission.
Context for City resources:	There is considerable overlap between the scope of the Economic Prosperity Commission (EPC) and City Council's Economic Opportunity Committee (EOC). The EPC duplicates work already being undertaken by the EOC, City staff, and external organizations—a point that commissioners themselves have acknowledged recently in public meetings. As a volunteer body that meets monthly, the Commission is not ideally positioned to respond to emerging issues with the same timeliness as City staff. In some

Staff Liaison's Evaluation (continued)

Submitted by Austin City Clerk's Office

Context for City resources (continued):

cases, commissioners have acknowledged that staff are several steps ahead of the Commission in researching and addressing key topics. As is the case with all boards & commissions, supporting the EPC requires a substantial investment of City resources, including A/V services, liaison support, staff briefings, and commissioner training. These efforts collectively amount to dozens—if not hundreds—of staff hours annually for this Commission alone. Additional resources are also required for meeting space, document and audio storage, webpage upkeep, printing of documents, and commissioner email accounts. While the EPC has engaged in meaningful dialogue, it has produced fewer than 10 formal recommendations over the past five years. Given current budget constraints and the level of City resources required, it may be appropriate to reassess whether the Commission's current structure remains an efficient and effective use of City resources. This suggestion is made with appreciation for the commissioners' time and dedication, and with an emphasis on aligning resources with City priorities.

"...supporting the EPC requires a substantial investment of City resources, including A/V services, liaison support, staff briefings, and commissioner training."

"The EPC duplicates work already being undertaken by the EOC, City staff, and external organizations - a point that commissioners themselves have acknowledged recently in public meetings."

Public and Stakeholder Input

The Economic Prosperity Commission was asked to hold a public hearing to gather feedback on the relevance of its stated duties and how effectively it fulfills them.

Public Input

As required by the Texas Open Meetings Act, the Commission allows any member of the public to address items on the agenda.

The Commission held a public hearing on August 20, 2025, to solicit feedback from the public and community stakeholders regarding the usefulness and relevance of the Economic Prosperity Commission stated purposes and duties and its success in fulfilling those purposes and duties.

No members of the public took up the invitation.

Appendix A: Data - Self-evaluation from Commission

1. Name of Board or Commission *

☒ Economic Prosperity Commission

2. Have the board or commission's actions throughout the year complied with City Council directives and bylaws? This should address all elements of the board's mission statement as provided in the relevant sections of the City Code. *

☒ Yes

☐ No

3. How many recommendations did your board or commission approve? *

2

4. Please list the recommendation numbers. *

Recommendation 202504160-003: Language Access Programs for Entrepreneurs; Recommendation 20250219-005: Chapter 380 Programs

5. Which recommendations are *closely aligned* to the organization's core mission and why? *

For example, 20250729-001: Organizing and financially supporting an annual block party highlighting black businesses, artists, and musicians in Austin will enhance the quality of life of the City's African American community.

Both our recommendations are closely aligned with the core mission and why. One of these, our language access for small immigrant owned businesses, was presented at the Economic Opportunity Committee at the request of Chair and CM Qadri. This recommendation consisted of policy language and detailed research supporting the need for this recommendation and the expected economic impact this could have. The other recommendation supported job retention and compliance of businesses to support economic growth and living wage jobs.

6. Which recommendations are *adjacent* to the organization's core mission and why?

For example, 20250729-004: Setting aside funds to purchase books by black authors to donate to the library will benefit all Austin Public Library card holders including African Americans.

n/a

7. Please share any further context that could support or explain your recommendations.

n/a

8. Is there another body that overlaps with the role and work of the board or commission you serve? *

☐ Yes

☒ No

9. Do the bylaws need to be updated? *

☒ Yes

☐ No

10. If yes, what would be the amendment (including section) and why? *

We would like to more closely align with the bylaws of the Economic Opportunity Committee. One of the challenges of our current bylaws is that it is a very wide area of "job creation and construction". Defining this more narrowly to align with the economic development department offices, such as the economic opportunity committee, would be ideal.

11. On a scale of 1-10, how engaged are the board or commission members? *

Not at all ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ Extremely

12. On a scale of 1-10, how engaged is the community? *

Not at all ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Extremely

13. Please provide any relevant details or examples that influenced these ratings.

The commission hosts meetings with stakeholders in the community to bridge the gaps between city programming and services for residents, staff needs and support, and councilmembers' overall direction for their districts. We do invite thought leaders and organizations to provide data-focused presentations at our meetings to provide us with research and proven models of things the city and the organizations are doing to be responsive to economic prosperity and mobility for job creation and retention. While we believe we are doing a good job as a commission for engagement, we would like to do an even better job by having stakeholders attend meetings and request the commissioner's presence for their needs at meetings.

14. Do you see any gaps in important policies that are not currently covered by a board or commission? *

☐ Yes

☒ No

Appendix B: Data - Commission Liaison's Evaluation

1. Which board or commission are you completing this survey for? *

☒ Economic Prosperity Commission

2. Do you feel the actions taken, including recommendations, throughout the year align with City Council directives and bylaws? *

☐ Yes

☒ Mostly

☐ No

3. If the answer to Question 1 is Mostly or No, please explain. *

The Economic Prosperity Commission's (EPC) formal actions have been in alignment with its bylaws. However, over the past five years, it has approved fewer than 10 recommendations. The commission's broad scope, focused on "construction and job creation", has made it difficult for commissioners to identify and prioritize specific issues for action. Additionally, the commission has struggled to maintain quorum; two meetings this year were canceled due to lack of quorum, which delayed officer elections and the approval of budget recommendations. When a quorum is achieved, it is often by the bare minimum of six members. Finally, public engagement has been minimal. To staff's recollection, over the past year no members of the public have attended nor signed up to speak at EPC meetings. This includes the August 2025 public hearing meant to solicit community feedback on the EPC's usefulness and relevance.

4. Is there another body that overlaps with the role and work of the board or commission you serve? *

☒ Yes

☐ No

5. If the answer is Yes, which body? *

☒ Economic Opportunity Committee

6. Are City resources being used efficiently to support this body? *

☐ Yes

☒ No

7. If the answer is No, please explain. *

There is considerable overlap between the scope of the Economic Prosperity Commission (EPC) and the Economic Opportunity Committee (EOC). The EPC duplicates work already being undertaken by the EOC, City staff, and external organizations—a point that commissioners themselves have acknowledged recently in public meetings. As a volunteer body that meets monthly, the commission is not ideally positioned to respond to emerging issues with the same timeliness as City staff. In some cases, commissioners have acknowledged that staff are several steps ahead of the commission in researching and addressing key topics. As is the case with all boards & commissions, supporting the EPC requires a substantial investment of City resources, including A/V services, liaison support, staff briefings, and commissioner training. These efforts collectively amount to dozens—if not hundreds—of staff hours annually for this commission alone. Additional resources are also required for meeting space, document and audio storage, webpage upkeep, printing of documents, and commissioner email accounts. While the EPC has engaged in meaningful dialogue, it has produced fewer than 10 formal recommendations over the past five years. Given current budget constraints and the level of City resources required, it may be appropriate to reassess whether the commission's current structure remains an efficient and effective use of City resources. This suggestion is made with appreciation for the commissioners' time and dedication, and with an emphasis on aligning resources with City priorities.

8. Are there any new or emerging needs that the board or commission should address to align with current city goals? *

☐ Yes

☒ No



Reporting Team

City Manager's Office

Jessica Ferrari, Assistant to the City Manager
phone: (512) 974-2200
email: jessica.ferrari@austintexas.gov

City Clerk's Office

Erika Brady, City Clerk
Stephanie Hall, Assistant City Clerk
phone: (512) 974-2210
email: city.clerk@austintexas.gov
website: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/city-clerk>

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