



Boards & Commissions Report

Technology 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 Technology Commission using a predetermined multi-step framework.

What We Found

In its capacity to review and make recommendations to the City Council on technology and telecommunication issues, including equity, access, performance, affordability, and allocation of resources, the Commission met routinely in 2025. They made seven formal recommendations that they identified as closely aligned to the Commission's core mission.

The Commission held public hearings on August 13 and September 10, 2025, to solicit feedback from the public and community stakeholders regarding the usefulness and relevance of the Technology Commission's stated purposes and duties and its success in fulfilling those purposes and duties. They had a total of eight members of the public register to provide feedback in person. Several speakers were former commissioners sharing historical perspectives on the Commission. Additionally, there were leaders from technology nonprofits and advocacy groups who provided expert testimony, reinforcing alignment with the 2023 Digital Needs Assessment. The Chair noted this "participation underscores the Commission's unique role in connecting City policy, community priorities, and technology equity."

The Technology Commission does not have any legal mandates or statutory obligations that would prevent modifications or changes in the purpose and function of the body.

What We Recommend

The Technology Commission routinely meets, maintains membership, and acts in accordance with their Council directives and bylaws. We recommend the Commission continue as directed.



Technology Commission Mandate

§ 2-1-107 - The Commission shall advise the City Council regarding issues that include: (1) community technology; (2) telecommunications services; (3) new sources of funding for access television projects; (4) new sources of funding for community technology projects; (5) allocation of annual financial support; (6) digital equity issues; (7) broadband development access; (8) digital skills; (9) internet affordability and accessibility; (10) the evaluation of the performance of access television contractors and other community technology contractors, including development of criteria to be used for evaluations; and (11) information and communications technology facilities and services that are operated by the City for public use, including the City web site, Internet services and open government technologies.

(D) The Commission shall conduct public hearings regarding issues that include: (1) the performance of access television contractors and other community technology contractors; (2) the identification of community cable, telecommunications, internet, broadband access, device needs, other technology needs, and resources; and (3) artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies.

(E) The Commission shall promote access to telecommunications services, community technologies, and the internet by methods including: (1) promoting public awareness, use, and viewership of access television programming and other community media; (2) identifying community technology needs and problems in the City and defining innovative programming approaches to those needs and problems; (3) enabling and enhancing public awareness of telecommunications policy and community technology issues; and (4) collecting community input via open sessions, as needed to address topics relevant to this Commission.

(F) The Commission shall serve as a coordinating forum for issues relating to the provision of every different type of telecommunications services and community technologies, by receiving reports and recommendations from other City boards and commissions and from City departments, and forwarding these to the City Council.

(G) The Commission does not possess any sovereign authority regarding any cable television or cable related telecommunications issue, and the Commission serves in an advisory capacity only.

Technology Commission Mandate (continued)

(H) The Commission shall support the City's Grant for Technology Opportunities Program (GTOPs) in the following ways: (1) advise City staff on the selection and approval of volunteer grant review panelists to evaluate and score GTOPs applications; (2) appoint Commission members to serve as non-voting (ex-officio) members of grant review panels as needed to provide guidance and leadership to review panelists and to support the process of GTOPs protests; (3) appoint Commission members to serve as voting grant review panelists upon request of City staff; and (4) advise staff on the final allocation of GTOPs awards.

Membership Roster

Member Name	Appointed by	Term Expires
Brian AM Williams	Natasha Harper-Madison	02/28/2027
Thomas Rice	Ryan Alter	02/28/2027
Ibiye Anga	Zohaib Qadri	02/28/2027
Carina Moncivais	José Velásquez	02/28/2027
Nicholas Eastwood	Paige Ellis	02/28/2027
Keith Pena-Villa	Kirk Watson	02/28/2029
Milena Pribic	Marc Duchon	02/28/2029
Steven Apodaca	Vanessa Fuentes	02/28/2029
Benjamin L. Combee	Mike Siegel	02/28/2029
Suzanne Heritage	José Vela	02/28/2029
Rachel Frock	Krista Laine	02/28/2029

2025 Meeting Dates

January 8, 2025
February 12, 2025
March 5, 2025
April 9, 2025 - Canceled due to lack of quorum
April 30, 2025 - Special Called
May 14, 2025
June 11, 2025
July 9, 2025
August 13, 2025
September 10, 2025
October 8, 2025
November 12, 2025 - Scheduled

Legal and Regulatory Consideration

Legal Review

The Technology 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 §2-1-107 should changes be made, there are no laws that necessitate the continuation of the board or commission.

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

Self-evaluation from Commission

The Technology 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

"All recommendations... focus on improving city infrastructure, funding capacity, access, equity, and emerging technologies"

"...they only failed to meet quorum once during the reporting period, and a Special Called meeting was scheduled two weeks later."

Compliance:	The Commission's actions throughout the year complied with City Council directives and bylaws.
Recommendations:	The Commission approved seven recommendations between July 1, 2024 and August 10, 2025: Recommendation 20240710-006 Recommendation 20250305-006 Recommendation 20250305-007 Recommendation 20250305-008 Recommendation 20250503-009 Recommendation 20250503-010 1 pending recommendation number
Recommendations closely aligned to the body's mission:	All recommendations are closely aligned to the Commission's core mission and all are covered in content outlined in our bylaws.
Context for recommendations:	All recommendations are covered within the bylaws and completed in collaboration with our community partners and aligned to 2023 Digital Needs Assessment. They focus on improving city infrastructure, funding capacity, access, equity, and emerging technologies.
Redundancy:	The Commission reports that its work does not overlap with another body.
Need to update bylaws:	The Commission reports that it does not need to update bylaws.
Commission member engagement:	9 on a scale of 1-10
Community engagement:	8 on a scale of 1-10
Context for ratings:	The Commission member engagement rating is based on the fact that all seats are filled and that they only failed to meet quorum once during the reporting period, and a Special Called meeting was scheduled two weeks later. Members' interests and perspectives are diverse and members are engaged during meetings.

Self-evaluation from Commission

Commission's Self-evaluation (continued)

"The number of individual speakers are currently low but anticipate an increase as policy issues related to emerging technologies evolve."

**Context for ratings
(continued):**

The community engagement score is due to the community looking to the Commission for leadership on AI-specific bills that passed in Texas. Five community organizations participated in the August Community Impact hearing with less than a week's notice. The number of individual speakers are currently low but anticipate an increase as policy issues related to emerging technologies evolve. Partners are actively involved through the Grants for Technology Opportunities Programs (GTOPs) and the Digital Empowerment Community of Austin (DECA).

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 Technology Commission's 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
Economic Development

Compliance:	The Commission's actions and recommendations throughout the year complied with City Council directives and bylaws.
Redundancy:	The liaison report that no entity's role and work overlaps with that of the Technology Commission.
City resources:	City resources are being used efficiently to support the Technology Commission.

Public and Stakeholder Input

The Technology Commission was asked to hold a public hearing to gather feedback on the relevance of its stated duties and how effectively it fulfills them. Appendix C contains copies of presentations provided by members of the public who offered feedback.

Public Input

Through its meeting agendas, the Technology Commission consistently invites members of the public to address the Commission at the beginning of each of its meetings. As many as 10 speakers are allowed up to three minutes to address concerns not posted on the agenda, and must register to speak no later than noon the day before the meeting. Additionally, as required by the Texas Open Meetings Act, the Commission allows any member of the public to address items on the agenda. At the majority of meetings, the public did not take up the invitation, but there were a couple of notable exceptions.

At its August and September community impact hearings, former commissioners shared historical perspective, and leaders from technology non-profits and advocacy groups provided testimony that reinforced alignment with the 2023 Digital Needs Assessment.

From the September 10, 2025 Meeting:

In addition to its regular call for public speakers, this meeting's agenda included an item to "Hold a public hearing to solicit feedback from the public and community stakeholders regarding the usefulness and relevance of the Technology Commission's stated purposes and duties and its success in fulfilling those purposes and duties." Three speakers address the Commission to discuss their perceived necessity of the body to the City:

- Malcolm Yeatts - Former Technology Commission Appointee
- Sumit DasGupta - Former Technology Commission Appointee
- Kevin Welch - CEO of EFF-Austin

From the August 13, 2025 Meeting Minutes:

A public hearing was held to hear feedback from the public and community stakeholders regarding the usefulness and relevance of the Technology Commission. Speakers included:

- Gabriela Kane Guardia - CEO of Latinitas Inc
- Nehemiah Pitts III - Previous Chair of the Technology Commission
- Michael Ward Jr and Michael Brown - CEO and Program Director of Universal Tech Movement
- Liani Lye - CEO of Open Austin
- Jasmin Vargas - CEO of Austin Free-Net

Appendix A: Data - Self-evaluation from Commission

1. Name of Board or Commission *

☒ Technology 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? *

7 - between period of 7/1/24 - 8/10/25

4. Please list the recommendation numbers. *

Recommendation 20240710-006, Recommendation 20250305-006, Recommendation 20250305-007, Recommendation 20250503-010, [1 pending recommendation number], Recommendation 20250503-009, Recommendation 20250305-008, ,

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.

All are closely aligned to the commission's core mission. All are covered in content outlined in our bylaws. Recommendation 20240710-006: Improved communications for Commissions Article 2: (11) information and communications technology facilities and services that are operated by the City for public use, including the City website, internet services and open government technology. Recommendation 20250305-006: Maintaining Funding for GTOPs The commission shall support the City's Grant for Technology Opportunities Program (GTOPs) in the following ways: (1) advise city staff on the selection and approval of volunteer grant review panelists to evaluate and score GTOPs applications; (2) appoint commission members to serve as non-voting (ex-officio) members of grant review panels as needed to provide guidance and leadership to review panelists and to support the process of GTOPs protests; (3) appoint commission members to serve as voting grant review panelists upon request of city staff; and (4) advise staff on the final allocation of GTOPs awards. Recommendation 20250305-007: Funding for Affordable Device Distribution Repair Program (2) identifying community technology needs and problems in the City and defining innovative programming approaches to those needs and problems; Recommendation 20250305-008: Expanding Public Internet Access Recommendation 20250503-009: Increased Funding for Digital Skills Training Recommendation 20250503-010: Continued Funding for AI Upskilling for City of Austin Employees "The purpose of the board is to advise the city council regarding issues that include: (1) community technology; (2) telecommunications services; (3) new sources of funding for access television projects; (4) new sources of funding for community technology projects; (5) allocation of annual financial support; (6) digital equity issues; (7) broadband development and access; (8) digital skills; (9) internet affordability and accessibility"

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.

All items are covered within our bylaws and completed in collaboration with our community partners, aligned to 2023 Digital Needs Assessment. They were focused on improving city infrastructure, funding capacity, access, equity, and emerging technologies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

9

All seats are filled

Only failed to meet quorum once this calendar year; and we scheduled a special called meeting two weeks later.

All commission members have unique interests and perspectives and are actively engaged during the meetings

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

8

AI specific bills have passed in TX and community is looking to us to provide additional leadership

Five community organizations participated in August community impact hearing with less than one week's notice

Community Individual speakers are currently low but we anticipate an increase as policy issues related to emerging technologies continue to evolve.

Community partners are actively involved through collaboration with GTOPs and DECA

13. 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? *

☒ Technology Commission

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

☒ Yes

☐ Mostly

☐ No

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

☐ Yes

☒ No

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

☒ Yes

☐ No

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

☐ Yes

☒ No

Appendix C: Public Feedback Presentations

Technology Commission Public Hearing - August 13, 2025

Speaker: Nehemiah Pitts III

Founder & Principal - Shining Light Consulting

Fmr. Chairman (May 2019 - April 2024)

Fmr. District 1 Commissioner (April 2016 - April 2024)

Response Overview

The Technology Commission—formerly the Community Technology & Telecommunications Commission (CTTC)—was renamed to clarify its scope, but its mission to serve the public through robust community engagement must remain unchanged. The Commission's future is uncertain, yet with strong leadership, clear vision, and the support of City staff, Council, Commissioners, and the City Clerk's office, it can thrive and help deliver on the **FY 2025–26 City of Austin budget priorities** in homelessness prevention, housing, public safety, public health, cultural assets, infrastructure, and equity.

Key Technology Commission Achievements (2016–2024)

Major Policy & Funding Impacts

- **Doubled GTOPs funding** to \$400K; equitable awards.
- **Budget recommendations** for:
 - Accessibility-focused **City website update and refresh** with multilingual support.
 - Funding for **local public broadcasting** at Austin Public.
 - Assorted **Community Technology programs** from the 2016 Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan and new initiatives under the current living plan.
- **Travis County & City of Austin 2023 Broadband–Digital Equity Needs Assessment:** Advisory workshops, co-designed engagement strategies, and partnerships with 19 non-profits to host community circles—resulting in increased trust, expanded resources, and ACP enrollment support for hundreds of residents.
- **Activated the regional Digital Inclusion ecosystem** to IIJA funding opportunities, including BEAD.

- Provided **critical insights on the lived experiences of marginalized populations** to the BDO and ISPs to address coverage gaps and disparities.

Strategic Program & Engagement Leadership

- **Organized innovative events and led stakeholder convenings**, including the inaugural **Digital Inclusion Stakeholder Summit** and **town hall listening sessions**.
- Advanced **open data, remote participation, and workforce policies**.

National & Industry Recognition

- **National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA)**: *Digital Inclusion Trailblazer* (2016–2022), *Visionary Trailblazer Award* (2023–2024)
 - **National Association of Telecommunications Officers & Advisors (NATOA)**: *2023 Digital Equity Project of the Year Award* – Community Broadband Tech & Digital Equity Initiative
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Current Concerns

1. **Declining direct community engagement** with marginalized and geographically isolated residents.
 2. **Gaps in critical service areas**:
 - Emergency management communications & access.
 - Workforce pipelines aligned to tech sector demand.
 - Digital literacy & AI readiness in education.
 - Telehealth integration in digital equity strategies.
 - Low civic participation via online tools.
 3. **Strategic drift**—overlap with other boards and missed opportunities for policy leadership.
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Recommendations

- **Deepen Engagement:** Bi-annual or quarterly listening sessions, outcome tracking.
- **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Liaisons with health, workforce, and education boards; ISP and employer partnerships.
- **Policy Leadership:** Annual tech equity agenda; rapid policy response.
- **Emergency Readiness:** Assess and improve digital readiness for crises – promote expanded **Pop-Up Activations** for the isolated.
- **Preserve GTOPs:** Maintain oversight for equity-focused funding.
- **Digital Inclusion Strategic Plan Refresh:** Center interdepartmental cooperation to ensure wrap-around services reach historically marginalized communities, aligning with budget priorities in homelessness, housing, public safety, public health, parks, cultural assets, and infrastructure.

Closing Thought:

The Commission's structure—whether it operates as a standalone body or in collaboration with others—must **empower** Austin to effectively hear, understand, and address the technology needs of all residents, particularly those who have historically been underserved. Its mission is to ensure that Austin's innovations and investments benefit everyone. By aligning with the City's core budget priorities, the Commission can help transform technology policy into concrete benefits that enhance the lives of residents throughout the city.



Shining Light Consulting is a BIPOC-owned public affairs and strategic consulting firm specializing in digital opportunity, government relations, and regional capacity-building. We empower anchor institutions, nonprofits, businesses, and government agencies through strategic partnerships, policy advocacy, and stakeholder engagement. With expertise in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), digital inclusion, intersectionality, and infrastructure policy, we help organizations bridge the digital divide and deliver high-impact, community-centered solutions. Our services include public affairs support, coalition-building, community engagement, program development, management, and strategy.



CoA Technology Commission

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Value Proposition & Recommendations

Sumit DasGupta, PhD.

Member, City of Austin Technology Commission, 2015 - 2025



Agenda

Topics:

- Key Commission Activities
- A Small Intersection
- Recommendations

SD / 09-10-2025



Key Commission Activities

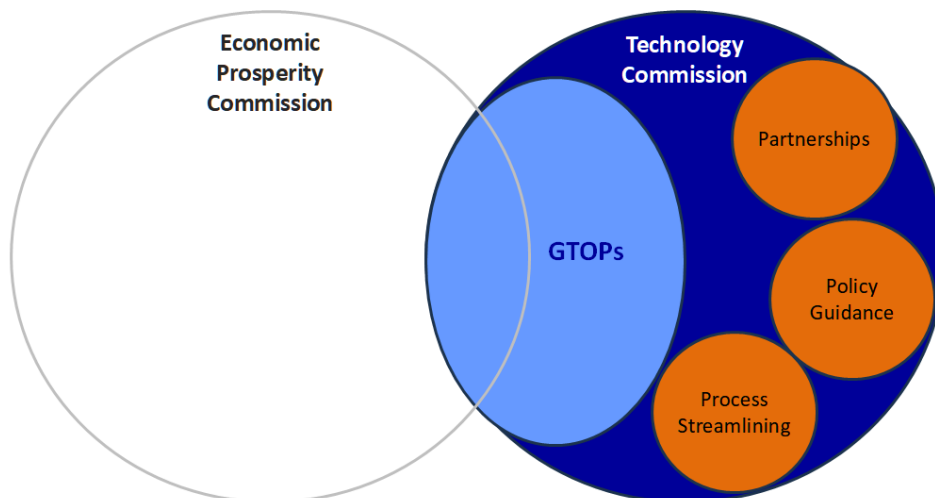
Key Focus Areas:

- **Closing the Digital Divide to enhance digital literacy, in particular, in underserved groups and neighborhoods**
 - Advising on city programs & investments
 - GTOPs
 - Rental of internet hubs from Austin Public Libraries
 - Partnerships with community organizations, e.g., Latinitas, AUTMHQ, and Open Austin
 - Advised and counseled AISD to enhance teacher and student training to support online instruction during and after COVID
- **Policy guidance on emerging technologies**
 - Focus areas include transparency and security standards in storage of personal data, surveillance practices, and guidelines in ethical use of AI in city processes
- **Recommendations and follow-through for streamlining city processes**
 - Proposed, evaluated and served as first commission to implement hybrid meeting format
 - Creation of City Council voting history page to improve transparency

SD / 09-10-2025



A Small Intersection



SD / 09-10-2025



Recommendations

Recommendations:

- Provide continued support for the Technology Commission as primary driver to ensure digital equity across all groups and communities
- Maintain independence from other commissions to ensure mission is not diluted but focused on its primary mission

SD / 09-10-2025



Reporting Team

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