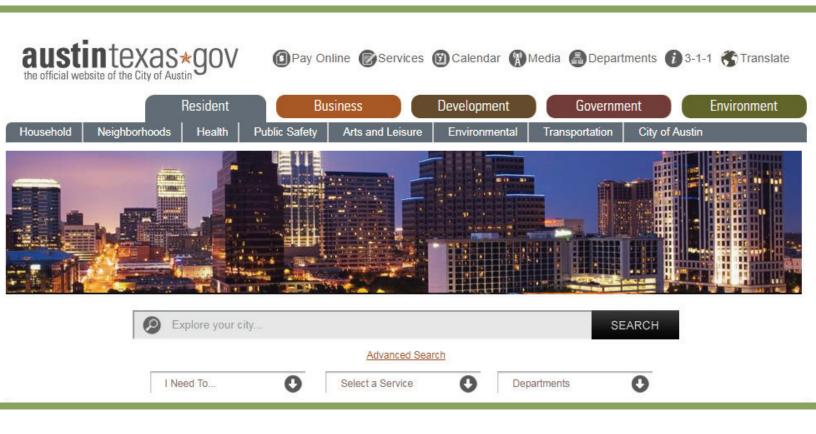Audit Report

Online Access to City Services

October 2017

The City of Austin offers residents many online services, such as making payments or downloading information. However, barriers prevent some City departments from offering services such as online registrations and applications, and there is no citywide strategy for offering services online. Compared to other cities, Austin residents can perform the same basic online transactions, although finding the services on the City's website may require additional steps to complete. This, coupled with the website not meeting accessibility guidelines, means that services are more difficult for people of all abilities to find and use.

Contents

Cover: AustinTexas.gov, accessed 8/23/2017.

Objective

The objective of this audit was to determine if the City's online services are meeting residents' basic needs.

Background

Some departments use vendors to provide or manage their websites.

The City's website, Austintexas.gov, brings together the city's online presence, and is put together by many participants. Individual departments are responsible for managing the online content related to their department. In some cases, departments use vendors to provide or manage the department's online content. The Communications and Technology Management department is responsible for the operation of the City's website, including some department pages. The Corporate Public Information Office is responsible for website branding and the City's content management system.

Departments offer various online services for residents through the City's website. Examples include requesting service or information, making payments, completing applications or registrations, and providing feedback.

A 2015 report by Deloitte grouped government transactions into five categories, as described in Exhibit 1, based on their complexity.[1]

Exhibit 1: Types of Government Transactions

Information exchange between government and citizens	Payments	Applications and registrations	Complaints and resolution	Digital services such as eHealth
A range of information flows between government and citizens. This could be mail notices of government activities such as construction works, or websites with information about local parks or administrative reasons for citizens such as updating contact information.	Citizens pay governments and governments pay citizens for a range of reasons including tax, levies, fines and licence fees; and reimbursement of health or education expenses, tax returns or social security.	A large number of citizen transactions result from people applying for things such as Medicare cards, passports, unemployment benefits, driver licences and vehicle registration. A wider definition of these transactions might include customs and border security checks, where citizens provide information and receive passage rights.	Citizens interact with government about many of the above items but the interaction is more two way, such as when citizens are complaining or clarifying government policy or procedures, or need to clarify a complicated situation.	Citizens receive a range of services from government and its agencies such as education, health, law and order, protection from natural disasters etc. Digital transformation has a role to play here as well, but they are supported by more bespoke technologies.

Increasing complexity

Customer transactions

SOURCE: Deloitte, Digital Government Transformation, 2015.

[1] Deloitte, Digital Government Transformation, 2015

These transactions can be completed in person, over the phone, through the mail, or online. Deloitte found that generally, online transactions are less expensive for governments and residents.[2] Other benefits include increased efficiency, greater convenience, and saved time.

In order to help residents complete transactions online and find services and items of interest, the City has added various search functions to the website. Exhibit 2 shows the top 10 searches on the City's website for a recent 30-day period.

While career and employment information constituted the largest single item searched for during this period, popular searches touched on several different departments and services.

Exhibit 2: Top 10 Searches On The City of Austin's Website

Searches	Subject Searched	Webpage for the Search on the Subject
718	Jobs	www.austincityjobs.org
237	Permits	www.austintexas.gov/department/permits
222	Dogs	www.austintexas.gov/department/animal-services
218	Austin	www.austintexas.gov/resident/about-austin
165	Parking	www.austintexas.gov/parking
122	Adopt	www.austintexas.gov/department/adopt-pet
112	GIS	www.austintexas.gov/department/gis-and-maps
83	Volunteer	www.austintexas.gov/volunteer
76	Rebates	www.austintexas.gov/residents/incentives-and-rebates
64	Police Report	www.austintexas.gov/department/apd-reports

SOURCE: City of Austin, http://data.austintexas.gov/Government/Top-10-Searches-chart/q37s-pqpu, for 30-days ending August 15, 2017, as provided by the Corporate Public Information Office.

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[2] A 2012 report on digital efficiency in the United Kingdom, defined government transactional services as "services involving an exchange of money, goods, services, permissions, licenses, or information between the government and a service user, resulting in a change to a government system."

What We Found

Summary

The City of Austin offers residents some online services, such as making payments or downloading information. However, barriers prevent many City departments from offering services such as online registrations and applications, and there is no citywide strategy for offering services online. Compared to other cities, Austin residents can perform the same basic online transactions, although finding the services on the City's website may require additional steps to complete. This, coupled with the website not meeting accessibility guidelines, means that services are more difficult for people of all abilities to find and use.

Finding 1

The City offers residents online transactions ranging from information downloads to online payments. However, barriers prevent some departments from offering services such as online registrations and applications, and there is no citywide strategy for offering services online.

Online Transaction Services Offered by the City

City departments offer residents many opportunities to complete transactions online from their office, home, or mobile device. Our review of the City's websites and a survey of departments found that 25 departments offer at least one transaction type service online.

Online services save both the City and its residents' money and time. For example, online payments save residents the costs of mailing a payment to the City or time waiting to speak with a representative on the phone. Nine departments offer online payments. Examples of online payments offered by these departments include the following:

- Austin Energy – Utility Payments
- Austin Police – Alarm Permit Payments
- Library – Library Fine Payments
- Municipal Court – Traffic Ticket Payments
- Austin Water – Utility Payments
- Austin Fire – Payment for Fire Marshal Services
- Austin Code – Hotel Occupancy Tax Payments (through the Controller's Office)
- Parks & Recreation – Campsite and Venue Reservation Payments (through a third party vendor)
- Development Services – Online payments to registered users for permits and inspection fees (after creating an Escrow account, which users must complete offline)

Eight departmental contacts responding to our survey indicated that they would like to offer transactional services online, but reported barriers to these efforts. Reported barriers included the lack of a strategy, security concerns, restrictive policies, or insufficient resources.

Six departments want to offer payment services as well. They are:

- Animal Services – Donations to shelter using credit cards
- Austin Code – Registration payments for short term rentals, licenses, and registrations
- Emergency Medical Services – Payments for services billed
- Austin Center for Events – Payments for special event application and maps
- Parks and Recreation – Payments for golf memberships, and gift cards
- Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs – Payments for returned checks and other delinquent accounts

Exhibit 3 shows the number of departments that offer selected transactional services and the number of departments that want to offer those services.

Exhibit 3: Number of Departments Offering Transactional Online Services vs. Number of Departments That Want to Offer Transactional Services

Government Transaction Categories	Number of Service Offered Online	Number of Additional Services that Departments Want to Offer Online
Request Service / Information	14	1
Payments	9	6
Applications / Registrations	19	7
Feedback / Complaints	8	2
Digital Services	0	0

SOURCE: OCA analysis of survey responses, July 2017.

Selection of Services to Offer Online

City departments use a variety of methods to select the services they offer online. For example, the majority of departments that responded to our survey use either business needs or customer feedback to determine which services to offer online, as shown in Exhibit 4.[3] However, eight departmental contacts were unsure of how they select services offered online.

Exhibit 4: How Departments Chose Services to Offer Online

15	14	7	6	8
Business Needs	Customer Feedback	Policies	Website Metrics	No Strategy or Unsure

4	4	4	2	Number of Responses
Program Goals	Funding Availability	Technology Availability	Internal Strategy	Method Used

SOURCE: OCA analysis of survey responses, July 2017.

[3] Departmental contacts responding to the survey were allowed to offer multiple reasons for choosing services to offer online.

Limitations to Offering More Services Online

Departments responding to our survey cited limitations that keep them from offering more services online. Specific reasons given included:

- Restrictive policies;

- No set strategy;

- Lack of resources, including funding and information technology resources; and

- Security concerns.

Not identifying all services offered online means residents are not fully benefiting from reduced travel and wait times, and the City is not taking advantage of possible productivity and efficiency benefits.

Lack of Strategy, Coordination, and Recurring Funding

There is no citywide strategy or plan for offering City services online. Departments select the services and information they offer online through several different methods, as shown in Exhibit 3. There is no central authority in the City to coordinate these efforts.

According to the Chief Communications Director, the City does not have a program for redesigning and updating the City's website on an ongoing basis. For example, there is no central position or group to coordinate the City's website and department web pages. Instead, several projects have brought teams together for website redesigns and then disbanded. There is also no recurring funding for this function.

According to a management research report, digital strategy drives digital maturity. [4] In a survey for that report, 15% of respondents from companies in the early stages of digital maturity said that their organizations had a clear and coherent digital strategy. Among more digitally mature companies, more than 80% reported having a digital strategy. The study also found maturing organizations are nearly twice as likely to have a single individual or group leading the effort, as opposed to those organizations that are less digitally mature.

The lack of a strategic plan for the City's web presence and a dedicated individual or group with responsibility for ensuring the City has a website that residents find useful, may lead to residents having difficulty locating and accessing key online services.

The City does not have a program for redesigning and updating the City's website on an ongoing basis.

[4] Massachusetts Institute of Technology: Sloan Management Review; Strategy, Not Technology, Drives Digital Transformation; Summer 2015.

Finding 2

Austin residents can perform the same basic online transactions as residents in other cities, although finding the services on the City's website may require additional steps to complete.

The City offers the same basic online transaction services as nine other cities that we used for comparison. However, due to certain design decisions, the City's online services were more difficult for us to find and use than those offered by other cities.

Our testing included attempts to find and use the same set of eleven basic transactional services across a variety of municipal websites, including peer cities in Texas and other cities that have been recognized for best practices in web design.

For ease of use and navigability, we tested websites to determine how easy it was to find the listed services. We found that some of these services are not easily found by searching the City's website. The results are color-coded in Exhibit 5.

Exhibit 5: Ease of Finding Basic Services Offered by Austin and Various Cities

Color Code	Description
Green	We were able to find the service without any problems.
Pink	We had to go through minimal additional navigation (e.g., multiple links), or be creative about how we searched for the service.
Red	We had to go through extensive additional navigation (e.g., multiple links), or links provided were "broken" and did not lead to the service.
White	A city does not offer that service, or we were unable to find that service on their website.

City	Register for a Parks and Recreation activity	Pay a Utility Bill	Pay a Municipal Court Payment	Pay a Parking Ticket	Submit a Public Information Request	Submit a Police Report	Pay a Library Fine	File a complaint with 311	Apply for a Building Permit	Apply for a City Job	Adopt a Pet (or relevant info)
Austin	Red	Green	Pink	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Pink	Green
Houston	Red	Green	Pink	Green	Green	Red	Pink	Green	Pink	Green	Green
Fort Worth	Green	Green	Green	Green	Pink	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
San Antonio	Pink	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Pink	White	Pink	Green
El Paso	Red	Green	Pink	Green	Green	Pink	Red	Red	White	Green	Red
Dallas	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	White	Green	Green	White	Pink	Green
Chattanooga	White	Green	Green	Green	Green	White	Green	Green	White	Green	White
Louisville	Red	Green	White	Green	Green	Pink	Green	Pink	Green	Green	Green
New York	White	Green	Green	Green	Pink	White	Pink	Pink	Red	Green	White
Denver	Green	White	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Pink	Green	Green	Green

SOURCE: OCA analysis of City websites, June 2017. Results are based on audit team judgement.

We also found that for many basic services that are offered online, Austin residents or staff must take additional steps before the transaction is completed. We reviewed the websites of selected City departments to identify the steps necessary to take advantage of basic services offered. A summary of our review is shown in Exhibit 6.
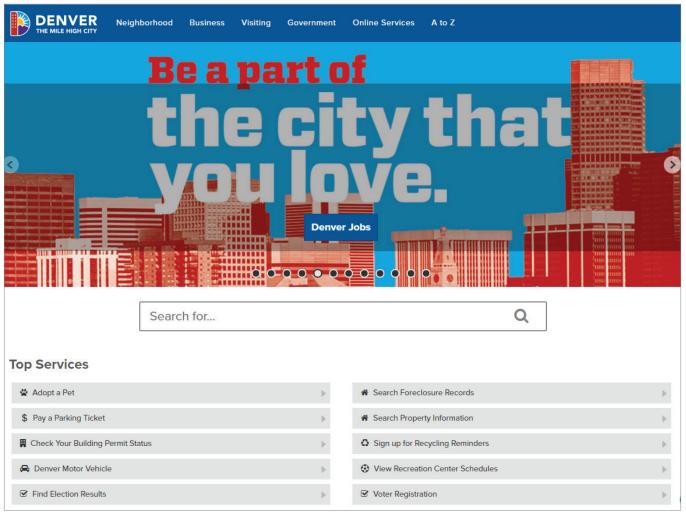
Exhibit 6: Summary of Steps to Complete Basic Services

Department	Services Offered by Department	Auditor Evaluation of Services
3-1-1	Online Service Requests, Check Service Request Status	3-1-1 offers service requests online, or by calling in. Requests and complaints are routed to appropriate department/office.
Animal Services	Adopt-a-Pet	Forms can be downloaded but must be mailed or carried in. Pet ownership and rabies awareness class reservations can be made by sending emails.
Austin Center for Events	Online permit applications	There is an online intake form but fees must be paid to each department and there is no online option.
Austin Code	Code Violation Inspections, Short Term Rental Registration	Complaints can be filed through 3-1-1. Forms can be downloaded, but must be submitted in person along with payments.
Austin Energy	Utility Payments, Connection Requests, Customer Assistance Programs	Utility payments can be made online through COAUtilities.com. Customer Assistance Program applications forms can be downloaded but must be mailed or faxed in.
Austin Fire	Inspection Services, Inspection Reports	Payments for services can be made online. Inspection report requests can be downloaded and mailed or carried in.
Austin Police	Crime Reports, Alarm Permits, National Night Out, Bike Registrations	Residents may purchase alarm permits online. Crime reports may be filed online or in person. All other forms can be downloaded but must be mailed or submitted in person.
Austin Public Library	Virtual Library, Account Fine Payments, Library Card Applications	Fines and Renewals/Holds can be made online. Card applications can only be downloaded and submitted in person.
Austin Resource Recovery	Collection schedules and "what do I do with x?" page	Utility payments can be made online through COAUtilities.com. Residents are able to look up information but must call 3-1-1 for transactions.
Austin Water	Utility Payments, Connection Requests	Payments can be made online through COAUtilities.com, but connection requests must be made in person.
Development Services	Austin Build + Connect	Residents can search for development cases and permits. Registered users can make payments after setting up an escrow account in person.
Economic Development	Expansion and Relocation Assistance, Class Registrations	Forms and applications can be downloaded but must mailed or carried in.
Human Resources	e-Career, Application Submittal	All can be completed online.
Law Department	Public Information Requests, Open Records Requests	Public Information and records requests are done online.
Municipal Court	Fine Search and Payment, Deferred Disposition Requests	Fines may be paid online, but Deferred Disposition Requests can only be downloaded and submitted in person.
Neighborhood Housing	Housing Applications and Repair Program applications	Forms can be downloaded, but must be mailed, faxed, or carried in.
Parks and Recreation	Activity registration, Camp and campsite reservations, golf reservations	Summer youth camp reservations can be made online with email follow-up. Campsite and venue reservations can be made and paid for online, but golf reservations cannot be paid for online.
Small and Minority Business Resources	Vendor Certification, Contract Compliance	Forms can be downloaded but must be mailed or carried in.

SOURCE: OCA analysis of department webpages, June 2017.

Municipal websites that performed better in our tests included more links to popular services that were easy to find on their home page. Easily navigated sites tended to place popular services front and center on departmental sites, as opposed to leading with background information about the department. For example, Exhibit 7 shows the prominent and easy to navigate design of the City and County of Denver's home page, and the prominent Top Services links.[5] In comparison, the City's home page has more objects to navigate through, and users first need to identify a series of drop-downs before a list of services can be seen.

Exhibit 7: The City and County of Denver's Site Features Top Services on the Main Page

SOURCE: City and County of Denver, https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en.html, accessed 9/18/2017.

If residents cannot easily locate, access, or complete basic services online, they may need to visit departments in person. This increases time and travel costs for residents, and increases resource costs for the City. The Center for Digital Government reported that a city in Missouri saved $38 million in annual costs by shifting transactions online.[6] Similarly, Utah reportedly saved $46 million over five years by processing more drivers' licenses online.

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[5] The City and County of Denver, CO won the Center for Digital Government's 2016 "Best of the Web" award.
[6] Government Technology Magazine, What Do the Best Government Websites of 2015 Have in Common?, Sept. 2, 2015.

In some cases, residents who cannot easily find a service online may not ever use that service. For example, a resident who does not know that a traffic fine can be paid online through Municipal Court may end up paying the fine in person because neither the home page, nor the transportation or police department web pages have links to "pay a parking ticket" or "pay a traffic fine." Also, a resident who does not already know about the City's home buying assistance programs may not find it on the City's website, and thus not know about the available resources.

Finding 3

The AustinTexas.gov website does not meet accessibility guidelines that would help users of all abilities find and use online City services.

Adaptive technology refers to a system that helps users with disabilities access technology – for example, a screen reader allows a blind user to recognize web content.

The City's website states that it is "committed to providing ADA compliant web services as they become available and affordable."[7] However, our tests revealed several challenges with the overall website design and the content presented on department web pages.

As noted earlier, some departments contract with vendors to develop or manage their sites. This includes departments such as Austin Energy, the Austin Fire Department, and the Parks and Recreation Department.

Federal law requires electronic and technology information to be accessible for persons with disabilities.[8] The World Wide Web Consortium, an international community committed to making technology accessible for all, developed requirements and success criteria for building accessible web pages or applications. Their Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (Guidelines) promote four principles for accessibility. To meet those four principles, a website or application should be:

I. Perceivable – A user can recognize the key information and components presented on a web page – links, multimedia, lists, etc. – either by sight or through adaptive technology,

II. Operable – Components of a website allow users to easily navigate content,

III. Understandable - The information and navigation of a website must be easy for all users to understand, and

IV. Robust - A website must be usable with current and future adaptive technology.

We tested the City's home page and department web pages against the Guidelines. Our tests included registering for a Parks and Recreation activity, paying a utility bill, submitting a 3-1-1 request, and more. The City's website came up short in meeting the requirements of a Perceivable, Opreable, Understandable, and Robust website. Overall, not adhering to the Guidelines results in a website that is not accessible to users with disabilities.

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[7] The City of Austin Human Resources Department's Policies and Procedures for People with Disabilities web page, http://www.austintexas.gov/page/policies-and-procedures-people-disabilities, accessed 8/14/2017.

[8] Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments to the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

Perceivable

The City's website does not have sufficient contrast between text and background in several areas. This includes the main content lists on each department's page and the footer on each page that contains links such as Translate, Pay Online, Contact Us, and FAQ. Poor contrast makes simple site navigation difficult for all users, especially those with low or limited vision, as shown in Exhibit 8.

Many of the Guidelines center on how users with limited or no vision would interact with a website while using adaptive technology, such as a screen reader. For instance, images containing cues or instructions viewable by sighted users may be unreadable by a screen reader.

Several of the City's web pages use images to display text content. For example, an image with superimposed text that states, "Search for Programs," links users to the Parks and Recreation Department's registration website. However, the information shared with sighted users through the image is not readable by screen readers. Making the information available to all users requires including descriptive text in the website code that a screen reader can identify.

Exhibit 8: AustinTexas.gov is Not Perceivable By All Users

Image that does not have descriptive text that is readable by a screen reader.

Parks and Recreation Department,
http://austintexas.gov/department/parks-and-recreation/programs

Main content list with poor contrast between background and text.

Development Services Department,
http://austintexas.gov/department/development-services

Operable

All of the tested web pages provided enough time to read content and they were not designed in a way that would cause seizures. However, four web pages did not meet all of the Guidelines for an operable web page.

Users could not fully navigate the Parks and Recreation Department's activity registration page from a keyboard. The City's home page, Austin Energy's utility bill pay page, and the Neighborhood Housing and Community Development's homebuyer assistance page did not provide clear links for navigation to other important content. For example, Austin Energy's utility bill pay page has two links labeled "Learn more." When a

screen reader reads a list of links on a page, a link that says, "learn more" does not let the user know what information the link will direct them to.

Understandable

Four of the City's web pages we tested contained text above a middle school reading level. According to the Guidelines, for text to be accessible to all reading levels, it should not exceed a middle school reading level.

Several of the City's web pages also lacked clear labels and instructions to help users navigate content. For example, the City's home page has three lists at the center of the page to direct users to important content as shown in Exhibit 9. These lists are labeled "I need to…," "Select a Service," and "Departments," but these labels are not readable by a screen reader. As a result, users that rely on a screen reader cannot identify the purpose of each list.

Exhibit 9: AustinTexas.gov Contains Features That are Not Understandable

List labels are not read by a screen reader

| I Need To... | ⬇ | Select a Service | ⬇ | Departments | ⬇ |

SOURCE: City of Austin, http://austintexas.gov/.

Robust

A robust website maximizes compatibility with current and future adaptive technologies. Although the City is meeting some of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, the challenges adaptive technology users have in navigating the City's website demonstrate the City's lack of focus on designing the website and presenting content in a way that all users can perceive and understand.

Additional Observation

A prior audit recommendation regarding governance of the City's Open Government Initiative has not been implemented.

The Office of the City Auditor's *AustinGO: Website Governance & Management Audit* (August 2013) called for the City Manager's Office to "ensure that a complete web governance structure was developed, documented, implemented, and monitored to address gaps" identified during the audit. The audit found that the City's website did not ensure that all City web content was managed in accordance with best practices, which may have impacted the quality of the information provided to residents.

We found that the City has begun implementation of the recommendation, but further work is needed. According to the Communications and Technology Management Department:

- An Open Government Operating Board has been established and adopted a charter. However, the Board has not kept minutes to record what was discussed, what decisions were made, who was

assigned responsibility for actions taken, or what milestones have been established.

- Website management policies have not been finalized or distributed to departments.

- The City Manager has not promulgated a directive to City departments that noncompliant websites would be brought into compliance or replaced.

- Finally, the City Manager has not developed and promulgated an Administrative Bulletin to set in place standing controls for websites implemented for City business.

Recommendations and Management Response

1

To ensure there is a coordinated effort to offer City services online, the Chief Information Officer should work with the City Manager to develop and implement a strategic plan for offering online services.

Management Response: Agree

Proposed Implementation Plan: The Chief Information Officer will work with the City Manager and Chief Communications Officer to create a new leadership position and corresponding team to develop a strategic plan for offering online services across departments and initiatives. Currently as part of the website redesign process, and in coordination with both the Innovation Office and the Open Government Operating Board, the Joint Team (CPIO, CTM, Innovation) is taking each department through a systematic review and prioritization of both available and potential online services. This is part of a service-oriented and mobile-first focus for the next iteration of AustinTexas.gov that is modeled after the "Digital Services Playbook" released by the United States Digital Service in 2014 (https://playbook.cio.gov/). This work started as a series of pilot projects with the Development Services Department, ATC/EMS, and Austin Resource Recovery.

Proposed Implementation Date: A formal strategic plan for offering online services will begin implementation in April 2018 and continue through FY2018.

2

To better coordinate the City's resources and improve consistency, the City Manager should work with the Chief Information Officer, the Chief Communications Director, and other key stakeholders to assign responsibility for the City's website content and design to a single individual or group.

Management Response: Agree

Proposed Implementation Plan: The City Manager has assigned the Communications and Public Information Office as the lead on content and design, as part of a team that includes CTM and the Innovation Office. A core component of the Web redesign project is implementation of a new content management system (CMS) that will be complemented by more formal training, guidance and built-in controls for content, language and design. As part of the documentation process, the Joint Team will prepare detailed guides for content administrators on best practices.

With online services now funded on a year-to-year basis, this will allow the team to staff up with the appropriate skills and competencies to carry this forward on a continuous basis rather than the cyclical "triage" process that the previous funding and staffing levels required.

The Chief Information Officer will work with the Chief Communications Officer to create a new leadership position and corresponding team to oversee hiring, recommend strategic direction, and design a new organizational structure to support this work in collaboration with staff across departments. These recommendations will be incorporated into the City's strategic plan for offering online services.

Proposed Implementation Date: An early release of the new system and supporting documentation is scheduled for early 2018. Full staffing and implementation should be expected by the end of 2018.

3

To take advantage of reduced costs of service, the Chief Information Officer (or other designated officer if the second recommendation has been implemented) should work with departments to ensure that the City offers as many city services online as practical by developing an inventory of services that should be offered online. In addition, the City should ensure popular online services are quick and easy for residents to find using the website's search functions.

Management Response: Agree

Proposed Implementation Plan: Three project teams will work concurrently toward aspects of this recommendation: a "Paperless Initiative" team will start with a "paper census," or inventory of services across the city that should be brought online and/or need significant improvements related to usability or accessibility. An "Intake & Prioritization" team will refine the City's process for prioritizing technology investments based on resident value, sustainability, equity, and total cost of ownership, so that CTM and other departments will be able to take immediate action on the inventory items that ranked at the highest priority. Finally, the "Tech Stack" team will develop the next iteration of the City's website with improved search functionality to ensure that online services are quick and easy for residents to find.

Proposed Implementation Date: The "Tech Stack" team will launch a new platform for online services in January 2018, with significant improvements added through FY2019. The "Paperless Initiative" and "Intake & Prioritization" teams will begin work by the end of January 2018. The teams will present a prioritized inventory of services that should be provided online by the end of September 2018.

4

The Chief Information Officer (or other designated officer if the second recommendation has been implemented) should work with the Chief Communications Director and the ADA Program Manager to develop and implement a detailed plan to ensure that the city's online services are accessible for people of all abilities. This includes webpages that are created for the City by third party consultants and contractors.

Management Response: Agree

Proposed Implementation Plan: Both ADA and language accessibility are part of the current Web redesign process and the digital services initiative. Our goal is to have both stronger guidance for content administrators and more reliable built-in controls for accessibility as the new site is built. This will be a rolling process as we consult with departments. Basic accessibility requirements (alt tags, image descriptions) are included when training content administrators, and accessibility is currently monitored through SiteCheck; however there are limitations when sites are established outside of our servers or services are provided through a third party. We will initiate a discussion to involve the Purchasing Office, FASD and CTM Purchasing to determine the appropriate procurement controls and contractual methods to ensure ADA compliance/accessibility is a requirement for third-party services.

Proposed Implementation Date: Will be a rolling implementation through FY2018 with substantial completion by the end of FY2019. Compliance by third-party providers may take longer, based on current contract terms and availability of suitable alternatives.

Management Response

City of Austin

MEMORANDUM

To: Corrie Stokes, City Auditor, Office of the City Auditor

From: Stephen Elkins, Chief Information Officer, Communications and Technology Management

Date: 10/25/2017

Subject: Action Plan – Audit of Online Access to City Services

In accordance with the Audit of Online Access to City Service Audit, attached is the action plan that responds to the four recommendations submitted by the Auditor's Office. It contains management's response to each recommendation, proposed strategy for implementation, the status of strategies in progress and proposed implementation dates.

Staff is in agreement with all of the recommendations contained within the Auditor's report and has submitted summary responses. The City Manager, Chief Information Officer, Chief Communications Director and other key stakeholders will work together to:

- Develop and implement a strategic plan for offering online services
- Assign responsibility for content and design to a single entity or group
- Develop and implement an online service inventory and easy to use search capability
- Ensure all online services are accessible and meet Americans with Disabilities (ADA) standards.

We look forward to improving our online service capabilities and reporting our progress to City management and Council. Should you have any questions or require any follow up to anything contained in this response, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Matthew Esquibel

Matthew Esquibel, Corporate IT Manager
On behalf of: Stephen Elkins
Chief Information Officer
Communications and Technology Management

The City of Austin is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
Reasonable modifications and equal access to communications will be provided upon request.

Scope

The audit scope included services available through the City's online resources and planned upgrades for City and departmental websites and apps. We focused on basic interactions with the public, such as making payments, receiving money, applications, and submitting information.

Methodology

To accomplish our audit objectives, we performed the following steps:

- interviewed the City's Chief Information Officer and Corporate Public Information Officer;

- surveyed website contacts in 34 City departments and offices;

- reviewed 18 department and office websites or web pages to determine what services are offered online or through mobile apps;

- tested departmental web pages for accessibility, and compared Austin to other peer cities;

- researched e-government and digital government transformation; and

- determined the implementation status of a previous audit recommendation related to governance of the City's Open Government Initiative.

Audit Standards

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The Office of the City Auditor was created by the Austin City Charter as an independent office reporting to City Council to help establish accountability and improve City services. We conduct performance audits to review aspects of a City service or program and provide recommendations for improvement.

Alternate formats available upon request