



This list of policy goals is a joint effort by two local nonpartisan nonprofits: Austin Tech Alliance, which promotes civic engagement in Austin's tech sector, and Open Austin, which facilitates open government, open data, and civic app development. These priorities are also in keeping with the city's Open Government Partnership Action Plan, which includes adopting broader open government efforts and furthering transparency in public meetings by sharing data.

1. Make City Council meeting agendas and vote data more accessible

What: City Council agendas and minutes should be easily navigable and searchable with persistent ID codes for items that come under consideration in multiple meetings and public meeting information for each phase of decision making. Council members' votes should be released in an open data format.

Why: With improved navigation and ease of accessing vote histories, residents will better be able to follow an issue or specific policy debate as it progresses through the policy making process.

2. Support researchers' access to raw data from city surveys

What: Survey data, such as the City of Austin Community Survey, should be made publicly accessible in appropriate formats, including raw data, data maps, questionnaires, and details about survey methodology. Survey data should include demographic questions but not capture any personally identifiable information, preserving the anonymity of individual respondents. For instance, when the city uses an online platform for public deliberation about the city budget, anonymized feedback captured by the tool should be downloadable as open data for analysis by the public.

Why: Transparent survey methods and data can help to determine whether the survey reached a representative sample of respondents. Researchers might also use them to determine whether the results can be merged together with other datasets to support a larger study, such as a study comparing community services in multiple cities.

3. Publish data used to produce the greenhouse gas emissions inventories under the Austin Community Climate Plan

What: The City should release the data underlying the Community Climate Plan Progress Updates and the City's calculated progress on its goal of net-zero community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This could include site-specific estimates of energy consumption or resulting emissions, or estimates of the emissions reductions from implementing efficiency programs at particular sites.

Why: Disclosure would give residents enough information to evaluate the city's estimates of the amount of emissions avoided by various categories of efficiency programs. It would also help evaluate the city's projections of future emissions and identify emissions policy priorities for the future.

4. Publish lobbyist activity reports and registration data

What: The lobbyist registration dataset on the city data portal at data.austintexas.gov was recently modified to delete most records prior to 2017 and omit the names of the clients that hired the lobbyists. The city should restore access to those records. Also, recent lobbyist activity reports are now available online only in PDF format. The city should extract the contents of those reports and post them on the data portal.

Why: Disclosure of lobbying datasets allows public access to information showing who is influencing decision makers, providing residents with a more complete picture of the public policy process.

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