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Home > City Falling Behind on Tech Needs According to Innovation Panel

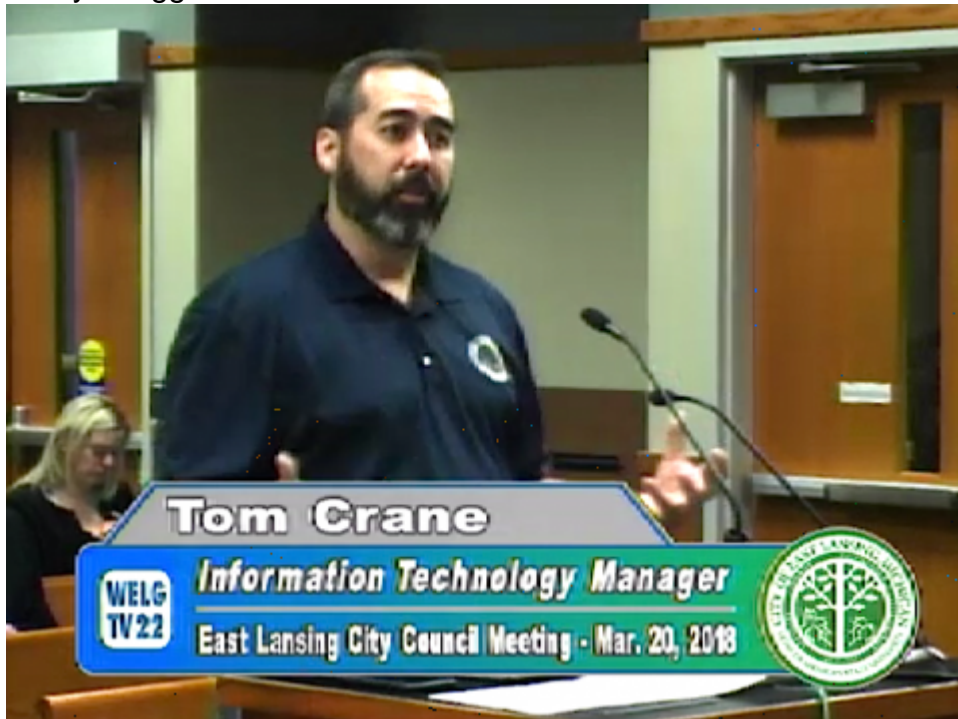
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## City Falling Behind on Tech Needs According to Innovation Panel <sup>[1]</sup>

Tuesday, March 27, 2018, 7:02 am

**By:**

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The Citizens Innovation and Technology Panel <sup>[2]</sup>, convened to bring knowledgeable volunteers from the community together to figure out how the City of East Lansing could provide improved services to the community, presented its final report to the City Council last week. Among the recommendations were for the City to bring East Lansing up to speed on information technology (IT) staffing levels, to adopt an Open Data policy, and to stop accumulating technological debt.

Doug Couto served as Chair of the panel and members included Dennis Bond, Lauren Douglass, Thasin Sardar, and Bruce Edwards. (Jonathan Irvin and Margy Barile also served on the Panel but resigned before it completed its work.) The final report was presented to Council by the City's IT department head Thomas Crane, who worked with the panel. Crane thanked the volunteer members of the panel for their sixteen-month service.

One of the areas highlighted in the report was the low number of employees in the City of East Lansing's IT department in comparison to the number of end users. The panel compared East Lansing to winners of the 2016 Center for Digital Government's Digital Cities Award winners in the small cities category and found that East Lansing ranked far behind those cities in the ratio of IT staff to population.

East Lansing also falls behind when compared to cities not on the Digital Cities list, both in Michigan and across the United States, according to the report. Until the deficiency is addressed, the City of East Lansing will not only struggle to compete against other potential digital cities but will increasingly struggle to implement and sustain the goals and objectives underlying the City of East Lansing's strategic priorities.

Charting cities that have significant college populations, an analysis [3] showed East Lansing is worst in this category. Ann Arbor is highest.

The panel's report also recommends that East Lansing adopt an Open Data policy that makes all data held by the City readily available to any community member, furthering the principles of a transparent city government.

The group also suggested that East Lansing pay attention to the fact that it is accumulating technical debt by choosing an easy solution now instead of using a better approach that would take longer.

Their recommendations for streamlining East Lansing's technology infrastructure included consolidating servers, using cloud-hosted services, consolidating e-commerce solutions into a single digital storefront, and a reduction of the number of services being offered in an unsustainable way to enable sustainable, prioritized offerings in a more focused and deliberate manner.

The panel's report concluded that there was real benefit to be gained from a commission focused on innovation and citizen engagement and suggested that the City explore the idea of an Innovation and Community Engagement Panel tied to economic development and collaboration with regional partners.

The recommendation to discontinue the panel did not arise because of lack of need, but rather a recognition of the need to reduce the burden on the limited number of technical staff that were available to support the panel activities.

### **Related materials:**

Appendix called Possible Ideas for Consideration by City of East Lansing [4]

Final Report of the Citizen Innovation and Technology Panel [5]

Recommendations to City Council from Tom Crane on Digital Cities Strategies [6]

IT Ratio Analysis by City (provided to City Council by the Panel) [3]

**Related Categories:**

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[2] <https://www.cityofeastlansing.com/1765/Citizen-Innovation-and-Technology-Panel>

[3] [http://eastlansing.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=2&clip\\_id=954&meta\\_id=59938](http://eastlansing.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=954&meta_id=59938)

[4] [http://eastlansing.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=2&clip\\_id=954&meta\\_id=59939](http://eastlansing.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=954&meta_id=59939)

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[7] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/citycouncil>

[8] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/finance>