

Technology, Innovation & Digital Government

Using Technology to Better Serve Our Residents

By Benjamin Hunt - Updated 9/28/2026

"Technology is not the mission of government. Better service is. Technology is simply one of the most powerful tools we have to deliver that service."

Chapter Overview

Technology touches every part of city government.

- When a resident submits a permit application
- When a police officer responds to a call
- When firefighters receive emergency information
- When Public Works tracks repairs
- When Finance prepares the budget
- When residents visit the City's website
- Technology influences the quality, speed, and efficiency of those services

The goal is not to have the newest technology, it is to use that technology wisely to make government easier to access, more transparent, more responsive, and more accountable. Technology should simplify government, not complicate it.

Mission

To build a modern, secure, transparent, and data driven digital government that improves customer service, empowers employees, supports informed decision making, and provides residents with convenient access to City services.

The Twenty-Year Technology Challenge

Technology changes faster than almost any other aspect of municipal government and resident expectations change as well.

People expect to:

- Apply online
- Pay online
- Receive updates online
- Track progress online
- Access information at any time

Government should meet those expectations while protecting sensitive information and ensure equal access for those who prefer in-person service. Modern technology is no longer optional, it is essential.

My Technology Philosophy

Technology should make government easier to use, not harder.

Every investment should answer four questions:

- Does it improve customer service?
- Does it make employees more effective?
- Does it increase transparency?
- Does it protect taxpayer resources?

If the answer is yes, it deserves consideration.

Strategic Priorities

1. Create a Resident-Centered Digital Experience

Residents should not have to wonder:

- Who do I call?
- Where do I start?
- What happens next?

My administration will support exploring a digital experience that is simple, intuitive, and easy to navigate. Residents should be able to:

- Submit applications
- Track requests
- Schedule inspections
- Pay fees
- Report concerns
- Access city information

Government should be as easy to use as modern banking or online shopping.

2. Build One Connected Government

Departments should not operate in separate technology systems that require residents to repeat the same information multiple times like we currently experience with the City, POA, and ACC. My administration will encourage systems that securely share appropriate information across departments and legal entities wherever possible while reducing duplication and improving coordination.

One Resident - One Application - One coordinated experience

3. Improve Transparency

Residents deserve to know how their city is performing.

My administration will support public dashboards displaying information such as:

- Road projects
- Permit turnaround times
- Budget performance
- Capital projects
- Infrastructure improvements
- Performance measures
- Strategic plan progress

Transparency builds confidence and our residents have been waiting for these types of changes for quite a long time.

4. Use Data to Make Better Decisions

Good decisions begin with good information, and technology should provide leadership with reliable data regarding:

- Infrastructure
- Development
- Budget performance
- Public safety
- Service requests
- Growth trends
- Workforce planning

Data should support decisions, not to replace judgment.

5. Protect Information

Technology must also protect the public. My administration will support strong cybersecurity practices, including:

- Multi-factor authentication
- Employee cybersecurity training
- Data backups
- Disaster recovery planning
- Secure cloud services where appropriate
- Regular security assessments

- Incident response planning

Public trust depends upon protecting sensitive information.

6. Encourage Innovation

Innovation should become part of Bella Vista's culture.

Employees should be encouraged to identify opportunities where technology can:

- Eliminate paperwork.
- Reduce delays.
- Improve communication.
- Increase efficiency.
- Improve customer service.

Small improvements across many departments create significant long-term benefits.

Digital Customer Service

Technology should enhance, not replace personal service.

Residents should continue to have the option of speaking with a person when needed.

Our goal is to provide multiple convenient ways to access City Hall, including:

- Online
- In person
- By phone
- By email

Every resident should be able to choose the method that works best for them.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Location-based information is essential to modern local government.

My administration will support continued investment in GIS to improve:

- Infrastructure planning
- Emergency response
- Utility mapping
- Development review
- Asset management
- Public information
- Capital planning

GIS helps city leaders make smarter decisions with greater confidence.

Super Intelligence and Emerging Technology

Emerging technologies, including super intelligence, have the potential to improve municipal operations when used responsibly. My first and favorite use of SI would be to explore adding a permanent grant writing position that is human powered and assisted by super intelligence. Currently, our state and federal grant applications are generated by each department head within our city government. Adding this permanent position would pay for itself with the approval of one awarded grant, ensure our city is not leaving money on the table while ensuring department heads are not distracted with time consuming research and applications.

Potential applications include:

- State and federal grant research and application assistance
- Drafting routine correspondence
- Summarizing public records
- Assisting with data analysis
- Improving customer service through informational chat tools
- Supporting document management
- Identifying trends in service requests

Any use of SI should include appropriate human oversight, transparency, cybersecurity protection, and compliance with applicable laws and public records requirements. Technology should assist employees, not replace their judgment or accountability.

Legal Authority

Technology initiatives must comply with Arkansas law governing public records, privacy, cybersecurity, procurement, and municipal administration.

Municipal Administration

- A.C.A. § 14-54-101 – Provides municipalities with general authority to acquire property, enter contracts, and procure technology necessary to carry out municipal functions.

Municipal Purchasing

- A.C.A. § 14-58-303 – Establishes purchasing and competitive bidding requirements applicable to technology acquisitions above applicable thresholds.

Public Records

- Arkansas Freedom of Information Act (A.C.A. § 25-19-101 through § 25-19-111) – Requires transparency in public records while recognizing exemptions for certain protected information.

Cybersecurity

Technology systems will be managed in accordance with applicable state and federal cybersecurity guidance and accepted information security practices.

National Best Practices

My administration will encourage technology practices consistent with nationally recognized guidance, including:

- National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) – Cybersecurity Framework and risk management.
- Center for Digital Government – Digital service delivery and innovation.
- International City/County Management Association (ICMA) – Technology governance and digital transformation.
- Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) – Financial technology, digital transparency, and performance reporting.

First 100 Days

- Conduct a citywide technology assessment
- Review cybersecurity policies and disaster recovery plans
- Evaluate opportunities to simplify online services
- Inventory existing software systems and identify opportunities for integration
- Begin development of a Digital Government Roadmap
- Launch planning for a public performance dashboard
- Review GIS capabilities and future needs
- Establish a cross-department Technology & Innovation Committee

Measuring Success

Residents should experience:

- Easier access to City services
- Faster processing of applications and requests
- Better communication from City Hall
- Greater transparency through online dashboards
- Additional reportable funding
- More reliable digital services
- Strong protection of personal information
- A government that is easier to understand and easier to work with

Employees should experience:

- Better tools

- Less repetitive paperwork
- Faster access to information
- Improved collaboration across departments
- More time solving problems instead of managing processes

Closing Thoughts

Technology should never become the focus of government.

People should. The true measure of a successful technology program is not the number of computers purchased or software systems installed, It is whether residents find City Hall easier to work with, whether employees can better serve the public, whether leaders make better decisions and whether taxpayer dollars are used more effectively.

My commitment is to use technology not because it is new, but because it helps us build a more responsive, transparent, efficient, and accountable government because the best technology is the technology that residents hardly notice. They simply notice that their city works better.