

7. CREATE A “HEALTHY AUSTIN” PROGRAM

Making healthy choices should be affordable and easier than making unhealthy ones. A “Healthy Austin” program will reduce chronic and diet-related diseases and risk factors by coordinating access to community and health services, local and healthy food, physical activity, and tobacco-free living. It will also support a “healthy community code” that promotes active living, access to healthy food, and prevention of chronic and diet-related diseases in all aspects of community life.

This program will look beyond nutrition to help develop a strong local food system in which food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of Austin and Central Texas.

The chronic diseases associated with the risk factors of tobacco use, poor nutrition and lack of physical activity (including some cancers, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma) are the underlying causes of most deaths in Travis County. Though these diseases affect everyone in the region, they take a heavier toll on poorer and minority communities. These preventable diseases increase healthcare costs, lower worker productivity, contribute to family stress, and diminish quality of life. In order for the city to be healthy, environmental and lifestyle factors that contribute to serious diseases need to be addressed.

WORK PROGRAM

SHORT TERM (1-3 YEARS)

1. Create a Healthy Austin Program plan to develop and document program priorities, findings, recommendations and outcomes related to:
 - a. Increasing healthy behaviors;
 - b. Educating the public and providing better access to information on healthy lifestyles and community health resources;
 - c. Expanding access to health care services in underserved populations;
 - d. Promoting healthy foods and discouraging unhealthy ones; and
 - e. Improving coordination between the Health and Human Services Department, other City of Austin and Travis County departments, nonprofits and the community.
2. Create a healthy community code, including revisions to Austin's land development ordinances that make it easier to produce and access healthy, sustainable food and to lead a more active lifestyle.
 - Support and expand farm-direct programs (such as farm-to-work and farm-to-school) that link local farmers and food vendors to consumers.
 - Expand the market for local food producers by connecting them to hunger-relief organizations, community institutions, restaurants and retail food markets.

3. Increase the number of tobacco-free environments including outdoor areas, worksites, schools and multi-unit housing to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke.
4. Encourage use of public land for community gardens.
5. Encourage successful formation and patronage of healthy-food retail establishments, such as farmers markets, community supported agriculture, corner and neighborhood stores and supermarkets, throughout the city—with emphasis placed on underserved areas.

ONGOING AND LONG TERM (3+ YEARS)

6. Implement joint use agreements for public facilities to be used by residents for recreation and physical activity.
7. Expand urban farms and community gardens.
8. Promote community connectivity through complete streets design for new developments and integrate into redesign plans for existing developments.
9. Increase the safety and amenities of parks, trails, playgrounds, bike paths, and recreation centers.

LEAD	PARTNERS	RELATED VISION COMPONENT(S)	RELATED POLICIES
Health and Human Services Department	Planning and Development Review Department; Parks and Recreation Department; Neighborhood Housing and Community Development; Office of Sustainability, Transportation Department; Health, Sustainable Food, and Social Service Organizations; School Districts	Livable Values and Respects its People Mobile and Interconnected	

POTENTIAL GOALS	METRICS	BASELINE (2012)
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Improve public health	Rates of disease / obesity/tobacco use by ethnicity and income	
Improve opportunities for active lifestyles	Miles of walking / biking trails	
Nutrition and food access	Units within ¼ mile of a supermarket/grocery store	
Local food system	Number of farmers markets, farm stands, and mobile healthy food carts Number and acreage of community gardens, plots, and local farms	
Access to healthcare	Percent of residents with access to some kind of health care coverage Percent of residents not able to see a doctor in the past year due to cost	

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ACTION PROGRAMS:

- **Invest in a compact and connected Austin.** Investing in accessible walking and biking networks and open space will provide residents increased opportunities for outdoor exercise as part of their daily routines.
- **Revise Austin's development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city.** The revised code will include standards and guidelines to make walking and biking safer and more attractive for residents. Through improved land use, transportation, and urban design, Austin's places can contribute to healthy lifestyles by encouraging walkable communities, parks and open space, and recreation.
- **Use green infrastructure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city:** [Notes for later: access to nature, access to walking and biking trails, preserving/creating farmland and community gardens]

RELATED CITY INITIATIVES:

- Healthy Austin Code
- African American Quality of Life Study
- Hispanic Quality of Life Initiative