

Austin-Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board Planning Outline

MANDATE: Evaluate and monitor residents' access to an affordable, diversified local-food supply and recommend measures to improve food security and nutrition.

Board Goals:

Recommend policies that facilitate:

- 1) equitable access to healthy food that will end hunger in Austin and Travis County;
- 2) the high availability and consumption of local, fresh, and quality sustainably-produced food;
- 3) culture of good food as a fundamental right [local governments help create conducive environments];
- 4) robust and just local economy through the strengthening all five sectors of the food system;
- 5) local capacity to help implement food systems-related recommendations and plans; and
- 6) preservation of agricultural land and family farming in Austin and Travis County.

Food Access and Wellness Area

1. equitable access to healthy food;

- Identify and map food deserts and provide incentives and support for grocery stores of different scales, farmers markets, food carts and other mobile vendors to locate and thrive in underserved communities. [Rid area of food deserts]
- Remove zoning and other barriers (ex permits) to the development of small grocery stores and other alternative retail outlets (including farmers markets, mobile veggie carts, etc.) in residential areas [Increase # of alternative retail outlets across city/county]
- Review best practices, current efforts and policies that support getting nutritious and local fresh food to all residents – emphasizing those with difficulty accessing it.

Working Group: Increase participation in, and impact of, federal food and nutrition programs such as SNAP, WIC, CACFP, Summer Food Program, etc.

2. consumption of local, fresh, and quality sustainably-produced food;

- Review best practices, current efforts and policies that support getting nutritious and local fresh food to all residents – emphasizing those with difficulty accessing it.
- Remove zoning and policy barriers and create incentives to improve and rebuild local food production, processing, and distribution systems appropriate to location and scale.
- Create local fresh food initiatives in institutions (e.g. schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, nursing homes, city and county departments/venues) and through encouraging food service purchasing policies that prioritize locally-sourced, nutritious, and sustainable foods.

3. culture of good food as a right;

- Continue to develop and strengthen partnerships with universities and local schools to integrate educational programs with conservation, agriculture and sustainability policies and projects.

- Coordinate with the sustainability office, other city and county staff, and local/regional environmental groups to ensure that the issues involved with supporting a sustainable local food system are incorporated in any relevant plans, initiatives, or activities
- Improve food and nutrition literacy by connecting and supporting stakeholders and potential partners in establishing effective ongoing nutrition and food preparation educational efforts
- Support social marketing efforts around local (central Texas) food culture using best practices

Food Production and Business

4. robust and just local food system;

- A thorough economic assessment of the city and county food system (including relevant regional data for all five sectors) in order to inform policy makers, administrators, and the public at-large about the status of the region's food system and food security and to influence strategic planning.
- Assess potential resource recovery for farmers and residents inherent in the wastage/surplus of food in Austin/Travis County.
- Support and establish diversified and specialized distribution and processing businesses and mechanisms for sustainable foods produced locally.
- Measures that will improve existing local food production and add new – or scale/change existing – programs, incentives, projects, regulations, or services to support local and regional farms, including tailored small business support and encouraging the consumption of local food in public education campaigns; and
- Foster local capacity to help implement food systems-related recommendations and plans.

5. the preservation of agricultural land and family farming in Austin and Travis County.

- Assess the availability of land suitable for sustainable agriculture in Austin and Travis County, and compile best practices for leasing/managing public and/or private lands to make related recommendations for preservation.
- Define “Local or Regional Food System” range for Austin/Travis County.
- Minimize barriers to agricultural water access and create a comprehensive water conservation strategy for food producers in Austin and Travis County that serves as a catalyst for a multi-county initiative.