



# SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY BOARD

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Planning Commissioners  
301 West Second Street  
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Commissioners,

At our February 27<sup>th</sup> meeting the Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board (SFPB) voted unanimously to recommend changes to the Task Force-endorsed draft Imagine Austin document so that the comprehensive plan will attain the goal of serving as a vital tool for creating a more livable, connected and sustainable city where "... the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all." Food and agriculture benchmarks in cities with similar goals and careful review of the current plan show that Austin must prioritize the creation of a just and community-based regional food system by further increasing the visibility of food and farming in key sections of the plan and ensuring that specific criteria and indicators are added to the filters included for allocating staff and resources. Austin can only genuinely move toward our professed vision of sustainability, social equity and economic opportunity if a strong local food system forms a primary piece of the city's foundation.

The attached document contains the specific recommendations with page numbers corresponding to the Imagine Austin (IA) Draft made available online in February 2012. To summarize, the SFPB believes the plan will be stronger if the PC and city staff make the following changes::

- Complete Community Matrix - under **Values and Respects People**, specify food in 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet
  - Employment, **Food**, & Housing Options
- Policies – in Chapter Four, clarify/expand policies under **Land Use/Urban Design, Neighborhood, Economy, and City Facilities and Services**
- Priority Programs – In Chapter Five the SFPB recommends the following changes:
  - specify **sustainable food production** in **Green Infrastructure** description
  - incorporate additional food-system related steps, metrics, and language under **Workforce Development, Green Infrastructure and Healthy Austin** programs
  - omit the ranking of programs due to a flawed prioritization process.

The SFPB will work with the IA Subcommittee of the Planning Commission as stated during last night's public hearing.

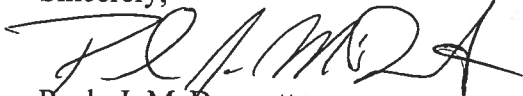
For perspective and benchmarking purposes, please review the 100-page [food background report](#) on Portland's food system, that city made available to its residents in the fall of 2009 prior to their public input process for their comprehensive "Portland Plan." For models of cities leading the integration of sustainable and local food policy into city and regional planning, find excerpts from a [best practices report](#) (prepared for our board's IA working group).

Policymakers working at all levels of government have begun to recognize the critical role that food systems planning, and related policy and initiatives, play in achieving livable, vibrant and socially

equitable communities. Their efforts weave together the underlying principles of city and regional planning, connecting environmental sustainability, local economic development, social equity, and access.

The board appreciates the mammoth task that Imagine Austin planners have undertaken and the inherent difficulty in ensuring that such a plan represent the perspectives and expertise of diverse stakeholders. Austin's comprehensive plan aims for a laudable vision by 2030, which can be reached only by planning for, and putting resources toward a strong, accessible and just food system. The members of the SFPB will continue to assist city policymakers, staff, the Planning Commission and stakeholders in bringing Austin to the forefront of city-led food system planning efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. J. McDermott', written over a horizontal line.

Paula J. McDermott

Chairperson

Austin/Travis County

Sustainable Food Policy Board

cc: Austin City Council Members  
Marc Ott, City Manager  
Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager  
Greg Guernsey, Director, Planning and Development Review Department  
Garner Stoll, Assistant Director, Comprehensive Planning  
Philip Huang, Executive Liaison  
Lucia Athens, Chief Sustainability Officer  
Jake Stewart, Sustainable Urban Agriculture Coordinator  
Sherri Fleming, Executive Manager, Travis County HHS & Veteran Services  
Travis County Commissioners