

Honorable Lee Leffingwell, Mayor
and City of Austin City Council
301 West Second Street
Austin, Texas 78701

October 20, 2014

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

The Codes and Ordinances Working Group of the Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board (SFPB) is working together with community and board members to develop recommendations that help the CodeNEXT team and Consultants address all stages of Austin's food system. Our goal is to improve upon the existing code in a way that meets the needs of communities, farmers, and regulators in the interest of a healthy, safe, and sustainable food system for all of Austin.

Food is integral to municipal infrastructure and intimately associated with public health and well-being, economic growth, and community development. Austin is experiencing rapid growth and this trend is expected to continue for the next few decades. We must develop strategies to improve the sustainability of our city's current food system and ensure equitable food access for all residents while providing for this changing demand. Our strategies must be flexible enough to address current needs and anticipate the integration of new technology and innovation in the future.

As an all-volunteer group, the Codes and Ordinances Working Group will work with the CodeNEXT Advisory board, Consultants and the SFPB to develop recommendations to include in the new land development code that support the implementation of Imagine Austin. We feel that it is too early in the process for specific recommendations, but we recognize that the existing code does not give the City adequate tools to support a sustainable food system and does not align with Imagine Austin goals, and therefore, we do not support Approach #1 (The Brisk Sweep). Furthermore, with regards to Approaches #2 (The Deep Clean) and #3 (The Complete Makeover), we would like to emphasize the importance of integrating the production of and access to healthy sustainable food in both suburban and urban areas.

Specifically, this group will focus on the following aspects of food (each aspect has been tied to Imagine Austin goals as stated below):

1. Production - the growth and production of the basic food groups that come into the city including meat, poultry, fish, and produce.

Imagine Austin says:

E P18. Develop a sustainable local food system by encouraging all sectors of the local food economy, including production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste recovery.

S A9 Make healthy and local foods accessible, particularly in underserved areas by removing barriers and providing incentives for the establishment of sustainable community gardens, urban farms, neighborhood grocery stores, farmers markets, and farm stands and mobile vegetable sales carts.

S A10 Facilitate a strong and sustainable local food system by linking farmers, distributors, and markets and create programs and partnerships to ensure profitable local food enterprises throughout all five food sectors—production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste recovery.

2. Processing and Distribution - diverse ways to sell food and transport food and ingredients from the origin to point of sale.

Imagine Austin says:

CE P13. Incent, develop, and expand the market for local and sustainable food, which includes such activities as farming, ranching, and food processing.

CE A13 Expand existing and facilitate the establishment of new distribution avenues for local farm products.

S A13 Remove regulatory barriers and provide incentives to improve and rebuild local food production, processing and distribution systems appropriate to the local context.

LUT P29

Develop accessible community gathering places such as plazas, parks, farmers' markets, sidewalks and streets in all parts of Austin, especially within activity centers and along activity corridors including Downtown, future TODs, in denser, mixed use communities, and other redevelopment areas, that encourage interaction and provide places for people of all ages to visit and relax.

3. Access and Consumption - diverse and equitable access to healthy food, and education to make healthy choices.

Imagine Austin says:

S P6. Promote the availability of and educate the community about healthy food choices, including "slow food" (local food traditions, small-scale food processing, and organic agriculture) and nutritional education programs.

S P7. Provide broad access to fresh foods, local farmers markets, co-ops, grocery stores, community gardens, and healthy restaurants in neighborhoods.

CE A14 Identify and map food deserts and provide incentives for full service grocery stores and farmers markets to locate in these underserved areas.

S A11 Develop partnerships with public and private stakeholders to promote awareness and educate residents about healthy food choices, sources, and preparation, including keeping up-to-date and accessible data on community garden plot availability, cooking classes, and city and county property for neighborhood gardens and family farms, and the sale of sustainably produced and culturally appropriate food at farmers markets, farm stands, mobile vegetable carts, and at neighborhood grocery stores.

S A12 Reduce obesity and other diet-related diseases by establishing local fresh food initiatives in institutions such as schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, nursing homes, city and county departments and facilities and by implementing and encouraging purchasing policies that support local and sustainable foods.

S A50 Develop educational and public information programs focusing on promoting nutrition, healthy food, and local food sources.

S A51 Work with local school districts to use locally-grown produce and increase the quality and nutritional value of food served to school aged young people.

4. Preserving Land for Growing Food - valuable farmland and agricultural space preserved for sustainable food production at the backyard, community garden, and commercial level.

Imagine Austin says:

LUT P23. Integrate citywide and regional green infrastructure to include such elements as preserves and parks, trails, stream corridors, green streets, greenways, agricultural lands, and the trail system into the urban environment and the transportation network.

CE P1. Permanently preserve areas of the greatest environmental and agricultural value

CE P3. Expand the city's green infrastructure network to include such elements as preserves and parks, trails, stream corridors, green streets, greenways, and agricultural lands.

CE P5. Expand regional programs and planning for the purchase of conservation easements and open space for aquifer protection, stream and water quality protection, and wildlife habitat conservation, as well as sustainable agriculture.

LUT A36. Incentivize appropriately-scaled and located green infrastructure and public spaces, such as parks, plazas, greenways, trails, urban agriculture and/or open space in new development and redevelopment projects.

CE A11. Develop regulations and incentives to protect prime farmland such as transferable development rights, farmland trusts, farmland mitigation, and conservation easements.

CE A12. Support local farmers by creating incentives and removing regulatory barriers, offering tailored small business support, and creating public information campaigns to promote local food.

CFS A38. Develop incentives and coordinate regulations to promote innovative water and grey water re-use options for building and site design, landscape maintenance, and agricultural irrigation.

5. Waste Management - efficient and environmentally friendly management of food waste from households, businesses and institutions, including strategies for composting and waste-to-energy.

Imagine Austin says:

E P18. Develop a sustainable local food system by encouraging all sectors of the local food economy, including production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste recovery.

S A10 Facilitate a strong and sustainable local food system by linking farmers, distributors, and markets and create programs and partnerships to ensure profitable local food enterprises throughout all five food sectors—production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste recovery.

All members of the community are welcome to attend future working groups and we encourage as much participation as possible to ensure the new code represents the widest range of interests and knowledge. We request you send the following letter to CodeNEXT Advisory Board and pertinent consultants. Our working group will continue working on these five aspects and will be putting together a report that can serve as a resource for the development of our future Land Development Code.

Sincerely,



Ronda Rutledge

Chairperson - Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board

cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
Sue Edwards, Assistant City Manager
George Adams, Assistant Director, Planning and Development Review
Joe Pantalione, Deputy Director, Watershed Protection Department
Jean Drew, Environmental Policy Program Manager, Watershed Protection Department
George Zapalac, Development Services Manager, Planning and Development Review
CodeNEXT Advisory Group (CAG)/ CodeNEXT Consultants