



AUSTIN-TRAVIS COUNTY SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation Number:

Creation of Regional Community-Based Food System Study

**WHEREAS**, Travis County and the City of Austin, through a range of policies, plans, and initiatives, recognize that the region's long-term health depends on a community-based food system; and

**WHEREAS**, the Travis County Land, Water, and Transportation Plan (2014) establishes a Growth Guidance Policy for Land that prioritizes conservation of prime farmland (L-3) and includes a Farmland Preservation Initiative to research opportunities for the preservation of prime farmland; and

**WHEREAS**, Imagine Austin (2012) establishes Conservation and Environment Policies and Actions to permanently preserve areas of agricultural value (CEP P1), to expand the city's green infrastructure network to include agricultural lands (CE P3), to expand regional programs and planning for the purchase of conservation easements and open space for sustainable agriculture (CE P5), and to develop regulations and incentives to protect prime farmland, such as transferable development rights, farmland trusts, farmland mitigation, and conservation easements (CE A11); and

**WHEREAS**, Imagine Austin also establishes Land Use and Public Transportation and Health and Human Services Policies to create healthy and family-friendly communities that include neighborhood gardens and family farms (LUT P5), and to provide broad access to community gardens (S P7); and

**WHEREAS**, the Economic Impact of Austin's Food Sector report (2013) advises the City to identify infrastructure, facilities, and programs to support local food manufacturing and processing; and

**WHEREAS**, the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG), as the regional advocate, planner, and coordinator as established under state Local Government Code, has expressed interest in a regional food system study and seeks to strengthen economic opportunity and competitiveness by developing a more robust cluster of food businesses throughout the region; and

**WHEREAS**, the region faces significant challenges to a vibrant community-based food system, including losing 82 farms representing 4% of county farmland (10,000 acres) from 2007 to 2012<sup>1</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, an estimated 1% of the food consumed in Austin is produced within Travis County<sup>2</sup>, and the long distances food travels creates significant environmental impacts<sup>3</sup>; and

**Comment [GR1]:** Insert Travis Co. logo.

**Comment [GR2]:** Insert # after Board approval.

**WHEREAS**, 25.4% of children in Travis County are food insecure, which is significantly higher than the national average (21.4%)<sup>4</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, 5 of 11 zip codes in East Austin lack access to a full-service grocery store<sup>5</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, the County and City lack the baseline information essential to measure progress and inform further decision-making regarding a regional, community-based food system.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Austin-Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends that Travis County and the City of Austin support a study of a regional, community-based food system to provide baseline information essential to measure progress and inform further decision-making. A model study answers, at a minimum, the following questions:

- How does an equitable, vibrant, and resilient community-based food system contribute to the multiple sustainability, environmental, economic, public health, and community goals identified in Travis County's Land, Water, and Transportation Plan and in Imagine Austin?
- What are current strengths, weaknesses, and trends in the major food system components (production, processing and distribution, retail and access, consumption, and food waste and recovery)? What are the barriers to strengthening these components in Austin and Travis County?
- How would foodshed features such as community gardens and food markets mitigate food insecurity and alleviate affordability pressures in Austin and Travis County?
- How can Austin and Travis County develop infrastructure and support education programs that increase capacity for growers, businesses, residents, and regional partners to build and participate in a community-based food system?

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Austin-Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends that the County and City designate CAPCOG as funds and project manager of the study to take advantage of CAPCOG's regional relationships and expertise; support efforts to obtain grant funding for the study; contribute funds, if needed, to provide a budget of \$150,000; and support a competitive Request for Proposal to contract a food systems studies specialist to engage the community, plan the study, collect and analyze data, and publish a report.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2012 Census of Agriculture, Travis County, Texas.

<sup>2</sup> City of Austin, Office of Sustainability. State of the Food System Report. April 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Natural Resources Defense Council, 2007. Health Facts/Food Miles.

<sup>4</sup> Feeding America. Map the Meal Gap 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Sustainable Food Center. Central Texas Foodshed Assessment. 2011.