



Recommendation for Action

File #: 19-1588, **Agenda Item #:** 4.

5/9/2019

Posting Language

Authorize execution of an interlocal agreement with Travis County in support of commissioning a study addressing food accessibility to include a retail recruitment/expansion strategy to address food accessibility, in an amount not to exceed \$100,000.

Lead Department

Economic Development.

Fiscal Note

Funding in the amount of \$100,000 is available in the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Operating Budget from Austin Public Health at \$50,000 and the Economic Development Department at \$50,000. An additional \$50,000 of funding shall be provided to the City from Travis County through this interlocal agreement.

For More Information:

David Colligan, Economic Development Department, 512-974-6381.

Additional Backup Information:

The City of Austin's Economic Development Department ("EDD") and Travis County's Economic Development & Strategic Investments ("Travis County EDSI") will evaluate the food retail landscape of geographic areas within Travis County. The City and County seek to hire a consultant team to craft a retail recruitment/expansion strategy that will provide policy recommendations for resources to attract and/or expand healthy food retail and grocery store formats into areas of Travis County lacking accessibility to such establishments. The interlocal agreement will support commissioning a study addressing retail accessibility for food and other consumer goods.

The study will address a number of policy objectives such as crafting a retail recruitment/expansion strategy that will look to fill gaps in the areas with little to no retail options in a manner that increases the availability of commonly needed food, products and services, which includes nutritious food and commodities affordable to households with limited purchasing power. The study will look at ways to attract and/or expand food production industries important to the overall food sector in Austin-Travis County to provide job opportunities that pay a living wage for Austin. And the study will make recommendations on the appropriateness of potentially leveraging underutilized City assets, such as City-owned sites, as locations for the development of retail formats (including, specifically, grocery stores) and other business types that provide healthy food and other consumer goods to fill gaps in the market.

The City and County strive to bring economic opportunity, both to portions of the community that have been historically underserved with quality jobs and goods as well as to individuals who are under- or unemployed, all with an eye towards sustainability and health equity. Addressing the prevalence of food insecurity for residents requires a holistic strategy that responds to its primary root causes: poor access to nutritious food options and limited household purchasing power affecting the ability of households to afford nutritious food. Expanding job and retail opportunities in the regional food economy has been identified as a key strategy over the last five

years.

This requested action aligns with Strategic Plan 2023 and future actions associated with this work will contribute to the following metrics for Economic Opportunity and Affordability and Health and Environment outcome areas to include: Percentage unemployment rate; Number of small businesses supported by City of Austin programs; Percentage of residents experiencing food insecurity; Number and percentage of residents living in healthy-food priority areas; Number of City-supported fresh food access points in healthy food priority areas.

Similarly, Travis County Commissioners Court has identified the following County-wide goals that are furthered directly by this study to include: Promote the well-being of our residents through social, economic, and health and safety initiatives; Preserve and protect our environment and natural resources through responsible land stewardship; Empower the public through civic engagement and collaboration.

The City and the County will each be responsible for the Consultant's fee, in the following amounts: \$100,000 will be provided by the City, shared between Austin Public Health and the Economic Development Department. Travis County will contribute an amount not to exceed \$50,000 for a total combined Consultant fee of \$150,000.