



ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20240807-002

Date: August 7th, 2024

Subject: Austin/ Travis County Food Plan

Motion by: Mariana Krueger

Second by: David Sullivan

WHEREAS, in 2021, the Austin City Council passed resolution NO. 20210610-039, which directed the City Manager to begin a food planning process that would center and uplift the voices of those most impacted by our current food system; after three years, the work of thousands of community members, alongside that of City and County departments, and tens of local nonprofits, has culminated in the Austin/ Travis County Food Plan, the first-ever visionary policy document of its kind here in Central Texas, and one of just a dozen of its kind nationwide;

WHEREAS, as part of this planning process, the Office of Sustainability has identified that 16.8 acres of farmland are lost in Travis County every day, only 0.06% of the food consumed in Travis County is locally produced, and 14.4% of people in Travis County experience food insecurity, yet 1.24 million pounds of food are wasted every day in Austin;

AND WHEREAS, in 2021, the Austin Climate Equity Plan established several goals related to sustainable food production, including protecting 500,000 acres of farmland from development in the Central Texas five-county region, and incorporating all City-owned land in a management plan that results in neutral or negative emissions;

AND WHEREAS, the Austin Climate Equity Plan specifically pledged that the City of Austin would reach net-zero community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, with a strong emphasis on cutting emissions by 2030, and the Office of Sustainability has concluded that 21% of all greenhouse gas emissions created by our community are food-related;

AND WHEREAS, Winter Storm Uri underscored the fragility of our food system in the wake of climate change, and the need to incorporate local food hubs, bolstered by urban agriculture efforts such as community gardens and food forests, as part of a climate resilience strategy;

AND WHEREAS, in 2013, the Austin City Council recognized the importance of urban agriculture in supporting the City's Climate and Zero Waste initiatives by adopting the Urban Farms Ordinance;

AND WHEREAS, while the Austin City Council has repeatedly acknowledged the interconnectedness of our food system to our broader climate and equity goals, many initiatives have gone unfunded or under-funded, including Nourish Austin (a proposal from multiple city departments in 2021 to develop publicly-owned food hubs), and our Community Gardens Division (Table 1).

AND WHEREAS, the Austin/ Travis County Food Plan outlines 9 goals (related to land, ownership; livelihoods; preparedness; institutions, access; food recovery; pro-climate, pro-health food; and empowerment) and a roadmap for accomplishing them over the next five years;

THEREFORE, the Environmental Commission recommends that the Austin City Council fully adopts the Austin/ Travis County Food Plan, and ensures its complete funding over the next 4 budget cycles, with a significant amount of resources allocated in the immediate budget cycle; we also recommend that the Austin City Council explores incentives for developers to include community gardens, food forests, or other urban agricultural spaces in their residential or multifamily developments; we also recommend that there be a focus on the benchmarks and request a presentation to the Environmental Commission annually on updates regarding the Austin/Travis County Food Plan.

Vote: 8-0

For: Perry Bedford, Richard Brimer, Jennifer Bristol, Hanna Cofer, Mariana Krueger, Colin Nickells, Melinda Schiera, David Sullivan

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Peter Einhorn and Haris Qureshi

Attest:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Perry Bedford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "B".

Perry Bedford, Environmental Commission Chair

City	Number of CGs	Annual Budget	Nonprofit or City Run	Staff
New York City	550+	\$2 million+	City	43
Vancouver	177		Both	4
Seattle	90	\$903K	City	6
Edmonton	80	\$65K	Both	1
Madison	68	\$97K	Nonprofit	3
Austin	67	\$4.5K	Both	1
Portland	57	\$550K	City	5FT 4PT
Chicago	20	\$5K	City	1FT 1PT
Philadelphia	18		City	1FT 4PT
Victoria	14	\$25K	City	1
Atlanta	7		Both	2

Table 1. (2018) Courtesy of Edwin Marty, City of Austin Food Policy Manager, re: Community Gardens Division in City of Austin vs. staff support in comparable cities