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TEMPLATE FOR BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board

Recommendation Number: (YYYYMMDD-XXX) (XXX is the agenda item number): Defining and Supporting Regenerative Agriculture

NOTE: The "WHEREAS"s should give the background and the "NOW, THEREFORE," should state what the board is requesting Council to do.

WHEREAS, the 2020 Travis County Climate Action Plan prioritizes a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 40% below 2005 levels by 2030; and

WHEREAS, the goals and strategies in the Austin/Travis County Food Plan, passed through a Resolution of Support by the Travis County Commissioner's Court in October 2024, prioritize regenerative agriculture implementation, with reference to regenerative agriculture and food systems occurring 44 times throughout the document; and

WHEREAS, the Austin/Travis County Food Plan includes strategic, measurable, and time-bound goals and strategies to strengthen food security, promote environmental sustainability, and address climate change; and

WHEREAS, Regenerative Agriculture is defined in the food plan as an approach to farming that works to restore soil and ecosystem health, address inequity, and improve land, water, and climate for the future; and

WHEREAS, the Austin/Travis County Food Plan also states that a more specific definition of Regenerative food production may need to be developed to implement strategies under Goal 1, which pertain to agricultural land use; and

WHEREAS, a more specific definition is contained within the Resilient Farm Planning framework, which utilizes Conservation Practice Standards codified by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and aligns with national standard parameters for climate smart, conservation focused, regenerative practices; and

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WHEREAS, the Resilient Farm Planning process utilizes COMET-farm modeling technology to quantify greenhouse gas sequestration potential from practice implementation, creating an avenue for measuring implementation predictions vs. results; and

WHEREAS, the Resilient Farm Planning process has seen wide adoption and proof of concept in California for over a decade, with 137 Resilient Farm Plans (called Carbon Farm Plans in California) encompassing 71,440 acres; and

WHEREAS, The Marin Carbon Project provides an example of County Government collaborating with Resource Conservation Districts, the equivalent of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Texas, to implement regenerative agricultural practices; and

WHEREAS, the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board offers funding for Regenerative Agriculture through its Texas Climate-Smart Initiative; and

WHEREAS, Travis County has previously allocated funds for cheaper and longer leases on county owned agricultural lands if producers adopt regenerative practices, establishing a precedent of county support for Regenerative Agriculture; and

WHEREAS, the Resilient Farm Planning process can be also be applied to outdoor spaces such as parks, flood plain, and greenbelts, as well as on residential lots; and

WHEREAS, the Travis County Transportation and Natural Resources Office has been tasked with creating a Community Climate Action Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Travis County Agricultural Extension Office provides educational services to the public on how to steward their residential environments;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board encourages Travis County to adopt the Resilient Farm Planning Framework and its subsequent NRCS Conservation Practice Standards as the specific definition of Regenerative Agriculture in the County, and to codify this definition in the upcoming Travis County Community Climate Action Plan; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board encourages Travis County to train Agricultural Extension Agents in the writing of Resilient Farm Plans, so that they may adapt the framework into educational materials for the general public; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board recommends that Travis County allocates funds for the writing and implementation of the Resilient Farm Planning framework on all publicly owned parkland, as well as any underutilized outdoor spaces, potentially utilizing climate bond funds for this purpose.

Date of Approval: _____

Commented [1]: I haven't been totally up to speed on the climate bond- does this seem like a reasonable ask?

Commented [2R1]: Matt, the County isn't planning to pursue climate bond funding at this time, so my recommendation would be to leave out the specifics of where the funding would come from.

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Record of the vote: (Unanimous on a 7-0 vote, 4-3 vote with names of those voting no listed)

Attest: _____

(Staff or board member can sign)

