



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Austin Travis County Food Policy Board

Recommendation Number: (YYYYMMDD-XXX) (XXX is the agenda item number): Support for Access to Farmland for New Farmers

WHEREAS, the Travis County Commissioners Court passed a Resolution of Support for the Austin-Travis County Food Plan on October 29, 2024, whose goals and strategies prioritize addressing local food security and environmental sustainability; and

WHEREAS, Goal 2 of the Food Plan is to “(i)increase access to and stewardship of land for regenerative food production by increasing the number of Austin/Travis County farms that are owned by economically disadvantaged farmers and rancher” and includes Strategy 2.3 to “(c)reate a local farm incubator program to support farmers who practice regenerative food production through the first 3-5 years of business with a focus on reducing barriers for underrepresented farm owner and workers, including offering beginning farmer training and financing support”; and

WHEREAS, access to land is the number one barrier to farming for new farmers according to a 2022 survey of new farmers conducted by the National Young Farmers Coalition; and

WHEREAS, 16.8 acres of viable farmland are lost every day in Travis County (City of Austin, Office of Sustainability, State of the Food System Report, 2022); and

WHEREAS, the average age of a farmer in Texas in 2022 is 60 years old, compared to 59 years old in 2017; and

WHEREAS, farmers and farmland are the foundation of a resilient and sustainable food system, a key element for emergency preparedness; and

WHEREAS, the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board’s Recommendation Number: 20240318-8 urged the Travis County to allocate funds and create a full-time equivalent (FTE) position to support the implementation of the Food Plan; and

WHEREAS, Goal 2 of the Austin Climate Equity Plan is to by 2030, protect 500,000 acres of farmland from development in the five-county region through legal protections or regenerative agriculture programs by 2030; and

WHEREAS, three Central Texas farm incubator programs launched in 2025. The Central Texas Farm Incubator Collaborative (Farmshare Austin, Green Gate Farms, and Hope Full Farm) offers land and mentorship for advanced beginning farmers with access to up to 0.5 acres of land and will serve at least 15 farmers in the first three years. Austin Community College Elgin Farm Incubator Program (FIP) provides beginning farmers enrolled in ACC access to .15 and .25 acres plots. The Refugee Collective is piloting a Farm Business Incubator and has one acre available.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board encourages the Travis County Commissioners Court to support local efforts to increase the number of and enhance the success rate for new farmers practicing regenerative, climate smart agriculture; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board encourages the Travis County Commissioners Court to allocate funds and explore all available means in order to establish a dedicated interdepartmental management mechanism, such as a dedicated county department or full-time equivalent staff (FTE), to oversee and coordinate county agriculture efforts and coordinate interdepartmental collaboration.

Date of Approval: _____

Record of the vote:

Attest: _____

(Staff or board member can sign)