



COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Commission on Aging

Recommendation Number: 20260311-013: Food Insecurity and Meals for Older Adults

WHEREAS, nationwide, approximately one in four older adults (≥ 65 years of age) is considered malnourished or at risk of malnutrition¹; and

WHEREAS, according to the 2025 report from Feeding America, 15.9% of Travis County residents are food insecure² and of Austin residents aged 50 and older, 38% live alone, 26% are functionally disabled, and 58% fall below 60% of Austin MFI^{3 4 5}; and

WHEREAS, 25% of Austin's population (251,519 people) are 50 years or older⁶ with residents 65+ being the fastest-growing age group and by 2035, adults 65+ will outnumber children under 18 nationally⁷; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin adopted the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, which states that Austin should strive to be a community where all residents have access to healthy food and where public policies support health, equity, and well-being across the lifespan⁸; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin and Travis County adopted the Austin/Travis County Food Plan, which identifies food access and food insecurity as critical public health and equity issues and calls for coordinated strategies to ensure residents—particularly vulnerable populations—have reliable access to nutritious food⁹; and

WHEREAS, the Austin/Travis County Food Plan recognizes that older adults and residents with disabilities face structural barriers to accessing healthy food and recommends expanding partnerships

¹ [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Prevention and Treatment of Malnutrition in Older Adults Living in Long-Term Care or the Community July 15, 2024](#)

² [Hunger & Poverty in Travis County, Texas | Map the Meal Gap](#)

³ 2025 Quality of Life Study, Austin Disabled Older Adults At-A-Glance, page 20

⁴ 2025 Quality of Life Study, Austin Disabled Older Adults At-A-Glance, page 34

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ [Austin Demographics](#)

⁷ [The Graying of America: More Older Adults Than Kids by 2035](#)

⁸ [Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan June 15, 2012](#)

⁹ [Austin/Travis County Food Plan](#)

and programs that deliver food directly to residents who cannot easily access grocery stores or food distribution sites¹⁰; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin’s Strategic Direction 2023 identifies access to healthy food and reduction of disparities in health outcomes as key components of the City’s goals related to health, equity, and community well-being¹¹; and

WHEREAS, approximately 113,850 Austin residents are age 65 and over¹² and approximately 486,450 Austin residents earn low-moderate income¹³; and

WHEREAS, food insecure older adults have significantly higher rates of chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart failure, asthma, and depression^{14 15}; and

WHEREAS, malnutrition worsens these conditions and leads to longer hospital stays, more complications, higher readmission rates, and increased mortality^{16 17}; and

WHEREAS, food insecurity also contributes to lower physical and cognitive functioning, reduced independence, more falls, and increased long term care needs^{18 19}; and

WHEREAS, meals are one of the most effective, evidence based interventions²⁰ and meal programs can help slow declines in physical functioning and prevent costly health deterioration^{21 22}; and

WHEREAS, people who are unable to prepare their own meals or are enduring economic hardships, home delivered meals are an upstream solution, helping them to stay in their homes, living with dignity and independence, and

WHEREAS, meal programs serving older adults—including home-delivered meals, congregate meal sites, and grocery delivery services—serve as a critical part of Austin’s community safety net by addressing

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ [City of Austin Strategic Direction 2023](#)

¹² [Austin Demographics](#)

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ [Food Insecurity: A Key Social Determinant of Health for Older Adults - PMC, National Library of Medicine December 2018](#)

¹⁵ [Food insecurity is associated with multiple chronic conditions and physical health status among older US adults - ScienceDirect, Preventive Medicine Reports, December 2020](#)

¹⁶ [The Connection Between Malnutrition and Chronic Disease Management September 4, 2025](#)

¹⁷ [Malnutrition Underrecognized to the Detriment of Hospitalized Patients January 14, 2024](#)

¹⁸ [Food insecurity, food assistance, and physical and cognitive functioning among older Americans - PMC, National Library of Medicine December 31, 2025](#)

¹⁹ [Food Insecurity, Race and Ethnicity, and Cognitive Function Among United States Older Adults - ScienceDirect, Journal of Nutrition January 2024](#)

²⁰ [Improving Health Through Nutrition Interventions - Center for Health Care Strategies March 2025](#)

²¹ [Good nutrition across the lifespan is foundational for healthy aging and sustainable development - PMC National Library of Medicine, January 2023](#)

²² [Findings From New Study Reinforce That Home-Delivered Meals Provide Critical Health and Social Benefits to Older Adults and Caregivers September 30, 2025](#)

both nutritional needs and the social isolation that can accompany aging, disability, and limited mobility; and

WHEREAS, 40% of new Meals on Wheels Central Texas (MOWCTX) Neighbors enrolled in FY 2025 were economically food insecure²³ and 70% of new MOWCTX Neighbors were malnourished or at risk when enrolled in the meal program in FY 2025²⁴; and

WHEREAS, a recent Quality-of-Life study of older adults in Austin found that older adults with disabilities experienced the highest level of food insecurity among the nine demographic groups analyzed, with an 186% higher risk of food insecurity compared with older adults without disabilities²⁵; and

WHEREAS, the same Quality-of-Life study found that older adults with incomes below 60% of Median Family Income (MFI) experience 21% higher health insecurity than older adults generally²⁶; and

WHEREAS, the Quality-of-Life study also found that older adults living in Council District 3 experience significantly higher food insecurity than those in other districts²⁷; and

WHEREAS, the Quality-of-Life study further found that 43% of older adults living alone utilize meal programs, and that for some individuals these programs may provide their only daily human interaction²⁸.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends that the Austin City Council directs the City Manager to prioritize partnerships and funding strategies that support meal programs with broad inclusion practices designed to reach older adults with disabilities who face disproportionately high food insecurity and social isolation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends Council directs the City Manager to ensure that older adults with incomes below 60% of Median Family Income are able to access reliable nutrition by strengthening and sustaining meal programs and grocery delivery services serving low-income seniors.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends Council directs the City Manager to initiate a focused study or task force to examine and address food insecurity among older adults in Council District 3, including identifying service gaps and recommending targeted investments in food resources.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission on Aging recommends Council directs the City Manager to support the continued operation and expansion of older adult meal programs (including home delivered meals and congregate meals), recognizing their dual role in meeting both nutrition needs and social connection needs, particularly for older adults living alone.

²³ Meals on Wheels End of Year Report, FY 2025

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ 2025 Quality of Life Study, Austin Disabled Older Adults At-A-Glance, page 1

²⁶ 2025 Quality of Life Study, Older Adults Below 60% MFI At-A-Glance, page 1

²⁷ 2025 Quality of Life Study, Older Adults Districts At-A-Glance, page 1

²⁸ 2025 Quality of Life Study, Older Adults Living Alone At-A-Glance, page 1

Date of Approval: March 11, 2026

Motioned By: Commissioner Zeng

Seconded By: Vice Chair Ferguson

Vote: 8-0

For: Vice Chair Ferguson, Commissioners Anderson, Kareithi, Lane, Fred Lugo, Tran, Yee, Zeng

Against: None

Abstain: Commissioner Scott

Recuse: Chair Bondi, Commissioner Van de Putte

Off the dais: Commissioners Nudelman, Tyree

Absent: Commissioners Adams, Gloria Lugo

Attest: *Ryan Sperling*

(Ryan Sperling, Staff Liaison)