



RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board

Recommendation Number 20260413-011: Supporting Food Plan Implementation through Urban Agriculture Coordination and Festival Beach Restoration

**WHEREAS**, the Festival Beach Food Forest is a volunteer-led permaculture food forest developed in partnership with the Austin Parks and Recreation Department beginning in 2014, sponsored by 501(c)3 nonprofit organization Fruitful Commons; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2021 the Austin City Council approved expansion of the Festival Beach Food Forest to approximately three acres to support community food production, ecological restoration, and climate resilience on public parkland; and

**WHEREAS**, a wastewater pipeline relocation associated with the Texas Department of Transportation Interstate 35 Capital Express Project has impacted the approved Phase 2 expansion area of the Festival Beach Food Forest, resulting in the removal of 92 trees and shrubs and the loss of approximately \$550,000 in public and community investment, including \$375,000 in volunteer labor; and

**WHEREAS**, despite quarterly coordination meetings over 18 months, community stewards were notified of the wastewater pipeline relocation only two weeks before construction was scheduled to begin, highlighting gaps in communication and coordination between City departments, infrastructure projects, and community partners stewarding food-producing landscapes on public land; and

**WHEREAS**, the Festival Beach Food Forest and adjacent Festival Beach Community Garden are also expected to be impacted by a proposed Austin Energy transmission line relocation associated with the Interstate 35 Capital Express Project, for which Austin Energy has agreed to provide \$2,414,240 in parkland mitigation funding for permanent use of parkland, pending approval by the Austin City Council on April 23, 2026; and

**WHEREAS**, the combined impacts of the wastewater pipeline relocation and the proposed Austin Energy transmission line relocation represent cumulative disruptions to the Festival Beach Food Forest and adjacent community food production spaces, compounding the loss of established plantings, volunteer investment, and community use of public land; and

**WHEREAS**, community-scale food production projects such as the Festival Beach Food Forest advance key goals of the Austin/Travis County Food Plan, including expanding access to land for community-based food production (Goal 1), increasing equitable access to nutritious and culturally relevant food (Goal 6), and strengthening community leadership, participation, and decision-making in the food system (Goal 9); and

**WHEREAS**, the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board has consistently advanced this priority, adopting Recommendations [20240318-007](#) in 2024 and [20250210-003](#) in 2025, both of which urge the City to establish an interdepartmental coordination mechanism, including a dedicated staff role, to support urban agriculture and implementation of the Food Plan across departments; and

**WHEREAS**, the Austin Climate and Resilience Office previously proposed a [budget enhancement](#) to create an **Urban Agriculture Program Manager** position to coordinate Food Plan implementation and urban agriculture activities across departments; and

**WHEREAS**, the [City of Austin FY 2025-26 Proposed Budget — Tax Rate Election Scenarios](#) includes a line item in the Office of Climate and Resilience for “**Food Plan – Urban Farm Support**” with approximately **\$137,113 in ongoing funding** and **\$150,000 in one-time program resources** to support an Urban Agriculture Program Manager position and related Food Plan implementation activities, demonstrating prior City commitment contingent upon the passage of the tax rate election; and

**WHEREAS**, this funding was not implemented in the final budget due to the failure of the 2025 tax rate election (Proposition Q), leaving a gap in dedicated staff capacity to coordinate City departments and community partners for urban agriculture projects; and

**WHEREAS**, the disruption to the Festival Beach Food Forest demonstrates the need for dedicated staff capacity to coordinate communication between infrastructure planning, park management, and community-led food production sites across the City.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board recommends that the Austin City Council direct the City Manager to ensure that Austin Water, Austin Energy, and Austin Parks & Recreation work with Festival Beach Food Forest and Fruitful Commons to ensure full restoration and redevelopment of the Festival Beach Food Forest impacted area, including reimbursement for documented damages and restoration of impacted plantings and infrastructure, recognizing the significant volunteer and community contributions to the site; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board recommends the City include funding in an upcoming City budget to establish a dedicated **Urban Agriculture Coordinator or Program Manager position** to support implementation of the Austin/Travis County Food Plan and coordination of urban agriculture activities across City departments; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this position be funded at a level comparable to the previously proposed enhancement, including approximately **\$137,000 in annual personnel funding for one full-time equivalent position**, along with appropriate program resources to support cross-departmental coordination and community engagement; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this role prioritize cross-departmental coordination, including Austin Parks and Recreation, Austin Water, Austin Energy, and the Austin Climate and Resilience Office, and maintain communication with community partners involved in urban agriculture and local food production, in order to strengthen Food Plan implementation and minimize potential disruptions.

**Date of Approval: April 13, 2026**

**Record of the vote: 10-0**

Vote in Favor: Andrea Abel, Lisa Barden, Marissa Bell, Joi Chevalier, Nitza Cuevas, Kacey Hanson, Seanna Marceaux, Melody McClary, Erin McDonald, Natalie Poulos

Vote Against: None

Abstaining: None

Absent: Beth Corbett, Andy Smith

**Attest:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Rohlich". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

City of Austin, Office of Climate Action and Resilience, ATCFPB Staff Liaison