



SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY BOARD

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April 23, 2012

Mayor Lee Leffingwell,
Austin City Council
301 West Second Street
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

The Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board (SFPB) has actively participated in the Imagine Austin (IA) planning process, beginning with the board's early input through the Meeting-in-a-Box exercise in March 2009. Although the ideal of creating a strong regional food system through the plan to ensure sustainable access to quality food was present in Imagine Austin's initial vision, the means for stakeholders to contribute to goals, policies, programs and metrics in these areas were not. Consequently, the SFPB sent representation to IA stakeholder meetings and created a working group that carefully reviewed the plan, researched best practices throughout the country, condensed that information and gave detailed feedback and recommendations to policy makers, city staff, the Citizens Advisory Task Force and the Planning Commission in order to improve each draft. Given where our city currently stands on this relatively new journey of incorporating food and agriculture-related policies and programs into government-led planning processes, we are pleased with the presence of these issues in the Planning Commission-endorsed draft you will be reviewing this week.

Clearly, when all of us living in Austin are able to eat well, we will have a much healthier population. Likewise, when we put resources toward strengthening all five sectors of our community food system (production, distribution, processing, consumption, and waste recovery), we will also create economic, environmental, and social benefits that support a truly sustainable city. Attached you will find the board's recommendations to the Planning Commission, which were complemented by participation in their public hearing process and work with commissioners and city planning staff.

In all our meetings with planners, the dedicated volunteers involved, and other stakeholders, our recommendations were respectfully considered, and in many cases accepted or adapted. We appreciate the mammoth task the IA team had before them and were happy to assist in providing some expertise in this critical area. A strong, accessible and just food system is essential to the kind of Austin outlined in the IA vision statement. The members of the SFPB are happy to assist city policymakers, staff, the Planning Commission and stakeholders in bringing Austin to the forefront of city-led food system planning and implementation efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paula J. McDermott".

Paula J. McDermott
Chairperson
Austin/Travis County
Sustainable Food Policy Board

cc: Austin City Council Members
Marc Ott, City Manager
Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager
Greg Guernsey, Director, Planning and Development Review Department
Garner Stoll, Assistant Director, Comprehensive Planning
Philip Huang, Executive Liaison
Lucia Athens, Chief Sustainability Officer
Jake Stewart, Sustainable Urban Agriculture Coordinator
Sherri Fleming, Executive Manager, Travis County HHS & Veteran Services
Travis County Commissioners