

Imagine Austin Working Group Report May, 2012

The Imagine Austin Working Group established by unanimous vote at the Sustainable Food Policy Board Meeting held March 28, 2011

Its purpose was: to review the Imagine Austin process and current plans, to invite participation and ensure representation in each of the 7 work groups.

Participants were expected to voice the importance of sustainable local agriculture and of access to healthy food for Austin residents across all income and geographical areas as it specifically relates to each comprehensive plan working group. The targeted outcome was high priority food related objectives on the final working plan for each group.

The original timeline ran from April 2010 to August 2011, however, work continued until April 2012. Reports were provided to SFPB bi-monthly and the final comprehensive plan was adopted by the City Council in June of 2012.

Background

On March 22, 2009 the Sustainable Food Policy Board convened a *Meeting in a Box* in order to participate in the original stakeholder input. Individuals also participated in the online survey. However, when the resulting framework was shared, any mention of sustainable food, agriculture, community gardens, and the local food economy were disappointingly missing. The entire category of 'good food for all' was missing. Planners pointed out that food was implicitly included under public health issues ("nutrition"). The SFPB felt that food and the underlying food economy should be made more explicit in the comprehensive plan. The IA Work Group provided best practices from other cities, examples of sustainable food being included in amended plans, and made a proposal to the city planners that all aspects of sustainable food be included in the plan. On Nov 22, 2010, these materials were shared with the city planners. The suggestions were carefully vetted and processed through the system. Any changes that could be included in the existing framework (ie they were aligned with original stakeholder intent but were only implied) were included. For instance, in economic development, under training for new job skills, the IA Work Group suggested including sustainable farming in that topic. We attempted to make many implicit inclusions more explicit. Any new policy suggestions which could not be found in the original framework intentions were not included. The Work Group's suggestion to change the name of the "Society" building block to "Health, Food Systems, and Quality of Life" was also not accepted.

of Austin. Our attempts to recruit diverse stakeholders illustrated the difficulty in collecting representative views from stakeholders in a city with the diversity of Austin. We are satisfied with the final product and have indicated such to the City Council (appendix _). We are especially grateful to Heather Nieto-Frambach, a UT student in regional planning, who did a great deal of research and support work to help us all look beyond our city limited in considering solutions (appendices _ - _).

Imagine Austin Work Group Members:

- Michele Murphy-Smith
- Paula McDermott
- Katherine Nicely
- Heather Nieto-Frambach
- Shirene Garcia
- Jake Stewart