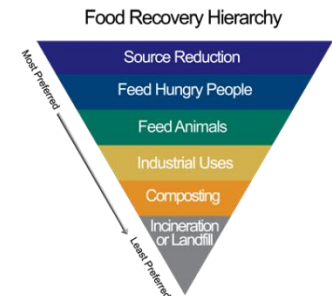


September 24, 2012

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

In support of the **City of Austin's Zero Waste goals** as well as our board's priority to address food security, the Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board (SFPB) recommends that the City of Austin adopt a policy that directs City facilities and City-sponsored events to implement **food recovery efforts**, applying the USDA/EPA Food Recovery Hierarchy.



This means:

- 1) reducing/preventing waste through food ordering and handling procedures
- 2) directing appropriate leftovers to people and animals, and
- 3) directing the rest to industrial uses and compost.

This will put the City's own actions in alignment with our Zero Waste goals, as well as save the City money through smarter ordering and serving, address hunger issues in Austin, support local farmers, support production of biofuel, and help build soil fertility.

Food waste is gaining national and international attention as we come to grips with the fact that 40% of our food in America is wasted along the way from the farm to shipping to stores and restaurants and home dinner tables.

When food products end up in the landfill they produce methane which is at least 20 times more potent of a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, and up to 70 times more potent over 100 years. Even landfills with landfill gas capture, and most do not, only recover a small fraction of the emissions generated.

([http://www.epa.gov/lmop/documents/pdfs/conf/9th/anderson\\_abs.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/lmop/documents/pdfs/conf/9th/anderson_abs.pdf)). If we are to address the climate impacts of landfills we must pursue the European model of phasing out the landfilling of organics.

The City of Los Angeles adopted a policy in 2010 aimed more narrowly at directing surplus food to human service agencies. In the coming years the City of Austin will be asking restaurants and residents to compost their waste. Prior to the food composting aspects of the Universal Recycling Ordinance being required we urge the City to support the development of mechanisms that facilitate the higher priority forms of diversion in the Food Recovery Hierarchy. This means giving priority to the prevention and donation of food before and in addition to the composting of food waste. The Director or Austin Resource Recovery is in support of this approach, but it will mean a lot to have council direction for the City's own operations to start leading the way.

There are active food donation programs all over the Country and our local Health and Human Service leadership have been briefed about these. They are also now familiar with the legal protection provided by the Good Samaritan Act to food donors, as long as proper food safety handling procedures have been followed.

**We recommend adoption of the Food Recovery Hierarchy, and pursue the following actions in support of those priorities:**

1. DEVELOP Policy Procedures and Guidelines for Food Recovery that reflect the priorities of the Food Recovery Hierarchy. [For reference see <http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserves/materials/organics/food/fd-gener.htm> and Attachment A of LA's Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) report. [http://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2009/09-2326\\_RPT\\_CLA\\_12-06-10.pdf](http://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2009/09-2326_RPT_CLA_12-06-10.pdf)]
2. REQUIRE City facilities and proprietary departments and REQUEST elected offices to inform all contractors and subcontractors of the City's Policy to handle food products at the highest level of the Food Recovery Hierarchy as possible, donating surplus food to food banks or other food assistance organizations, to farmers or getting it to a composting facility.
3. REQUEST the City Attorney to develop standard language regarding the Policy for inclusion in all City contracts, and instruct all City departments to include the Food Recovery Policy language in all new contracts and provide a Food Recovery Tracking Log to all contractors. [For reference see Attachment C of the CLA report. Note: this should include the PARD facilities event management requirements]
4. INSTRUCT the Directors of all City departments and request elected offices and proprietary departments to complete the Food Recovery Tracking Log to document the type and amount of food that is recovered via donation or compost per event to be assessed by the [City SPOC] by [9 months after passage].
5. DIRECT City Staff to:
  - a. Establish a Single Point of Contact within Austin Resource Recovery to manage the training, implementation and reporting of Food Recovery efforts.
  - b. Organize a meeting to inform all City departments and offices of Elected Officials of the Policy and address any potential concerns.
  - c. Direct 3-1-1 and 2-1-1 to provide resource lists and training to their staff to help City staff and residents navigate the options available to help them participate in Food Recovery.
  - d. Request all City departments, proprietary departments, elected offices and users of City properties to complete the Food Recovery Tracking Log.
  - e. Provide a status report to Council by [6 months after passage], with the amount of food that is recovered in different forms by City departments, elected officials, contractors and subcontractors throughout the reporting period.
  - f. Have the SPOC work with City departments to develop a report with recommendations to improve the implementation of the Policy [6 months after passage].
6. Instruct the IT department to work with Sustainable Food Policy Board's Food Surplus & Salvage Working Group to develop an Austin Food Recovery website like [www.helpfeedLA.org](http://www.helpfeedLA.org), with further information about farmers, oil recovery and composting options. It should also have an online, and downloadable, version of the Food Recovery Tracking Log that populates a database managed by Austin Resource Recovery.
7. Direct the Public Information Offices of the City, ARR, HHS and PARD to get familiar with Food Recovery goals, options, and how to support Austinites in participating.

Members of the SFPB Food Surplus & Salvage Working Group of have compiled an extensive resource document detailing environmental impacts, the human need, examples of food recovery programs operating around the United States as well as a relatively comprehensive list of local agencies and individuals that are working on one aspect or another of food recovery. See:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/139duVhV2bsK9c6x6PpiXBSzko77thc3uWxszsRwKoU/edit>

This information has been shared with Austin Resource Recovery Staff, the Office of Sustainability, and Health and Human Services, and can be made available to staff working to implement such a new policy.

Members of the Working Group are eager to assist in determining next steps, aiding in implementation and making sure this effort effectively lays the groundwork for a City-wide movement toward preventing waste, removing organics from the landfill, feeding hungry people and supporting our growing composting industry.

We hope to be able to announce the City's new policy by National Food Day, October 24, 2012. A roundtable is being planned for that morning with leaders from the various stakeholder groups that will be a part of bringing these goals into reality.

Sincerely,

Brandi Clark Burton

Chair, Food Surplus & Salvage Working Group of the SFPB