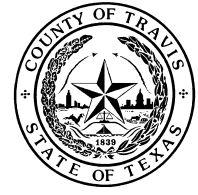




SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY BOARD



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October 23, 2012

Mayor Lee Leffingwell
Austin City Council
301 West Second St.
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

In support of the City of Austin's Zero Waste goals¹ and in keeping with the Sustainable Food Policy Board's (SFPB) charges to advise policymakers on strategies to improve food security and to strengthen the local food system², the Austin/Travis County SFPB recommends that the City of Austin and Travis County provide guidance and leadership in implementing food recovery efforts locally. In accordance with the USDA/EPA Food Recovery Hierarchy³ such efforts would:



- 1) reduce and prevent waste through effective food ordering and handling procedures
- 2) direct appropriate food surplus to people and animals, and
- 3) direct remaining leftovers to industrial uses and compost.

Food waste has garnered national and international attention as data becomes available illuminating the breadth of this problem. In the U.S., 40% of food is reported to be wasted along its journey from production to consumption and the high percentage of water lost in the process raises additional concerns.⁴ When food products end up in the landfill they produce methane which is at least 70 times more potent of a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, and over 20 times more potent over 100 years.⁵ Even landfills with landfill gas capture, which most do not have, only recover a small fraction of the emissions generated.⁶ Hence, our city's plan to phase 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.⁷ In the coming years the City of Austin will be asking restaurants and residents to compost their waste. Prior to enacting the required food composting elements of the Universal Recycling Ordinance in Austin, the City can 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.

Austin Resource Recovery is well positioned to adopt polices so that the City implements the Food Recovery Hierarchy in its own facilities and at City-sponsored events. Additionally, the Department can coordinate with the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department to educate stakeholders (producers, intermediaries, and receivers) about safe and legal ways that they can recover food. For example, the Good

¹ <http://www.austintexas.gov/environment/zero-waste>
² <http://stevieray.ci.austin.tx.us/sfpb>
³ <http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserves/materials/organics/food/fd-gener.htm>
⁴ <http://www.nrdc.org/food/files/wasted-food-IP.pdf>
⁵ http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/wg1/en/tssts-2-5.html
⁶ http://www.epa.gov/lmop/documents/pdfs/conf/9th/anderson_abs.pdf
⁷ http://cd14.lacity.org/stellent/groups/electedofficials/@cd14_contributor/documents/contributor_web_content/lacityp_013265.pdf

Samaritan Act protects food donors, as long as proper food safety handling procedures have been followed.⁸ In coordination with stakeholders and other government entities, such efforts to recover food surplus will further align the City's actions with its Zero Waste goals, and potentially: save money through smarter ordering and serving, redirect surplus food to people in Austin, support local farmers by reducing costly feed expenditures for livestock, contribute to the production of biofuel, and help build soil fertility.

Members of the SFPB Food Surplus and Salvage Working Group 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.⁹

This information has been shared with Austin Resource Recovery Staff, the Office of Sustainability, and Health and Human Services, and will be made available to staff working to implement any related policies. Additionally, a summary overview of resources and best practices is attached to this letter.

Thus, the Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends that Council take actions to ensure that City of Austin staff facilitate a stakeholder process to develop strategies, actions, logistics and, if appropriate, policies that would lead to the implementation of the USDA/EPA Food Recovery Hierarchy both internally and throughout Austin and Travis County.

Sincerely,



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

Enclosures: Food Recovery Resources – Statistics, Policies, Practices, Programs and more

cc: Marc Ott, City Manager
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Jessica King, Division Manager, Austin Resource Recovery
Lucia Athens, Chief Sustainability Officer
Jake Stewart, Sustainable Urban Agriculture Coordinator
Sherri Fleming, Executive Manager, Travis County HHS & Veteran Services
Travis County Commissioners

⁸ <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-104publ210/pdf/PLAW-104publ210.pdf>

⁹ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/139duVhV2bsK9c6x6PpiXBSzko77thc3uWxszsrRwKoU/edit>

Food Recovery Resources – Statistics, Policies, Practices, Programs and more

Members of the **Food Surplus and Salvage Working Group** of the Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board have spent the last year researching the local and national food recovery landscape. <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/consERVE/materials/organics/food/index.htm>

The Working Group's **initial plan** was this:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Lg6W7fT2g3z_QunCEDu3p6kWhWdriiACOATxWCle4yU/edit

Since then they have produced this document with statistics, policies, practices, local and national programs and more called **Food Recovery Efforts, Lay of the Land, recommendations and Next Steps**: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/139duVhV2bsK9c6x6PpiXBSzko77thc3uWxszsRwKoU/edit>

In their August 2012 issue paper, **Wasted: How America Is Losing Up to 40 Percent of Its Food from Farm to Fork to Landfill**, the Natural Resources Defense Council urges government and business action to reduce losses in our food system, save money, feed people and reduce emissions. <http://www.nrdc.org/food/files/wasted-food-IP.pdf>. 2-page version - Food Facts on Food Waste http://www.nrdc.org/living/eatingwell/files/foodwaste_2pgr.pdf

Author Jonathan Bloom published the book **American Wasteland: How America Throws Away Nearly Half of its Food and What We Can Do About It** in 2010 and maintains www.wastedfood.com blog.

Model **programs** from other Cities: [City Harvest](#) (NY), [DC Central Kitchen](#), [Food For Free](#) (Cambridge), [Food Donation Connection](#), [Food Recovery Network](#), [Food Finders](#), [Rock & Wrap it Up!](#)

The Food Network Big Waste program has been distilled to 5 clips that showcase the waste around retail, poultry and eggs, meat and fish, produce, and "freegan" food salvage. <http://www.foodnetwork.com/the-big-waste/video/index.html>

The EPA has a clear handout called "Putting Surplus to Good Use": <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/consERVE/materials/organics/pubs/food-guide.pdf>

The EPA has issued a Food Recovery Challenge that is tracked through WasteWise <http://www.epa.gov/foodrecoverychallenge/>.

EPA is hosting a free Sustainable Food Management Webinar Series over the next year: <http://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/ECOCOMM.NSF/climate+change/sustainablefoodwebinars>

One archived EPA Webinar is: Preventing Food Waste with Source Reduction: Lessons Learned and Best Management Practices <http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/ECOCOMM.NSF/Climate+Change/sustainablefood-webinar-061412>

Aug 14, 2012 - National Restaurant Association, industry partners seek to reduce food waste. http://www.restaurant.org/nra_news_blog/2012/08/nra-industry-partners-seek-to-reduce-food-waste.cfm

On October 9, 2012 the [National Restaurant Association](#) (NRA) and the [US Composting Council](#) (USCC) announced their partnership to raise awareness about food waste diversion, and plan to develop Best Practices for Restaurateurs. <http://www.restaurant.org/pressroom/pressrelease/?ID=2328>

Legal Protection is provided to food donors via the Texas Good Faith Donor Act in 1981 and the 1996 Federal Emerson Good Samaritan Act. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-104publ210/pdf/PLAW-104publ210.pdf> Awareness of either act and its protection of food donors is extremely low.

Food Donations should comply with the Texas Food Establishment Rules [http://info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=25&pt=1&ch=229&rl=164](http://info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=25&pt=1&ch=229&rl=164)