

Food Recovery Resolution – December 13, 2012

Whereas, the Natural Resources Defense Council published a report in September 2012 stating that 40% of all edible food, or \$90 billion worth, is wasted in America and that *uneaten* food annually accounts for 34 million tons of landfill waste 25% of all fresh water used in the US, 4% of total US oil consumption, and costs \$750 million/year to dispose of; and

Whereas the Environmental Protection Agency has published the Food Recovery Hierarchy giving preference to first reduce and prevent waste through effective food ordering and handling procedures, then direct appropriate food surplus to people and animals, and direct remaining leftovers to industrial uses and compost; and

Whereas there are safe and legal ways to expand food donations thanks to the Texas Good Faith Donor Act of 1981 and the federal Emerson Good Samaritan Food Act of 1996 which protect food donors, as long as proper food safety handling procedures have been followed; and,

Whereas the EPA has issued a national Food Recovery Challenge, tracked through WasteWise, and the University of Texas Food Services Department is already participating; and

Whereas the Austin Green Business Leaders program has been established to celebrate and encourage responsible business behavior and there are approximately 6400 food establishment businesses registered with the Austin/Travis County Health Department; and

Whereas, the City of Austin has adopted a Zero Waste Master Plan and food scraps comprise roughly 14% of the waste stream going to our landfills, contributing to the national tally of nearly 35 billion pounds of food sent to American landfills annually and according to the EPA, food waste is now the single largest component sent to American landfills; and

Whereas, sending food to landfills generates methane, a greenhouse gas that is 20 times more potent than CO₂; and

Whereas the City of Austin Office of Sustainability's Action Agenda has targets around Zero Waste and Green Infrastructure; and

Whereas the City of Austin's Climate Protection program requires "all departments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from operations and facilities;" and

Whereas, the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan outlines in its Key Issues and Trends that we need to "Create a Healthy Austin Program which includes developing a strong local food system in which food production, processing, distribution, and consumption are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social, and nutritional health of Austin and Central Texas;" and

Whereas the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan calls for "expanding waste diversion rates and services, including increasing the types of materials that can be added to curbside collection,"

"increasing composting at homes and businesses", and "improving recycling of materials and food scraps in public spaces, in trash receptacles on city streets, and at public events;" and

Whereas the Capital Area Food Bank of Texas has increased food rescue from local retailers from 1 million to 7.5 million pounds and is in the midst of a facilities expansion that will allow for an increase in food rescue; and

Whereas Austin also has a growing number of new grassroots food recovery initiatives like Food Recovery Network, Keep Austin Fed, Compost Coalition, and East Side Compost Pedallers, in addition to the long-standing Angel House/Baptist Chapel and Food Not Bombs; and

Whereas the City can support the development of mechanisms that facilitate the higher priority forms of diversion in the Environmental Protection Agency's Food Recovery Hierarchy; and

Whereas 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; and

Whereas the Sustainable Food Policy Board and the Zero Waste Advisory Commission have both submitted letters to Council requesting the Council to direct appropriate staff within the City of Austin to support a community stakeholder process to explore ways that Austin can become a leader in food recovery;

Now Therefore, Be It Resolved the Austin City Council declares 2013 the Year of Food Waste Prevention and Recovery in Austin, Texas.

Be it further resolved that the City Manager is directed to request all relevant City Departments to participate in a stakeholder process to establish a strong coalition around food waste prevention and recovery goals and metrics. This will include awareness, education and actions appropriate to help Austin become a national leader in food recovery.

Be it further resolved that the City Manager should involve the Food Surplus & Salvage Working Group of the Sustainable Food Policy Board to identify community stakeholders to include in the process such as the Austin Zero Waste Alliance; and

Be it Further Resolved that the City Manager will provide periodic updates to the Sustainable Food Policy Board and the Austin City Council regarding this stakeholder process.