

Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board

WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation: The City of Austin fund a position with a partner community organization to facilitate and improve enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

WHEREAS, 18 percent of Travis County residents and 25.5 percent of Travis County children live in a food insecure household, which is directly tied to poverty, and results in increased health care costs, lower educational success, and decreased workforce readiness; and

WHEREAS, many food insecure residents have limited access to highly nutritious foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, and are thus at greater risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer; and

WHEREAS, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, has proven to be a federal nutrition program that effectively lifts many persons out of poverty; and

WHEREAS, with only 57 percent of eligible persons in Travis County enrolled in SNAP, \$169,304,251 in economic activity is lost to Travis County annually; and

WHEREAS, direct outreach and application assistance to SNAP-eligible persons has proven to significantly increase SNAP enrollment, thereby decreasing food insecurity for these persons; and

WHEREAS, the Sustainable Food Policy Board in April 2012 recommended to the Austin City Council to implement an outreach and assistance effort to increase participation in the SNAP program as well as expand SNAP benefits at local farmers markets, thereby greatly benefitting our local economy; and

WHEREAS, in February 2013, the Sustainable Food Policy Board recommended to the Public Health and Human Services Committee of the Austin City Council to invest funding in SNAP outreach and expansion of benefits at farmers markets; and

WHEREAS, students at the LBJ School of Public Affairs reported in May 2013 that the Sustainable Food Center's Double Dollars Incentive Program had successfully generated increased purchases of fresh produce by SNAP recipients while benefitting local farmers; and

WHEREAS, in May 2013, the Sustainable Food Policy Board recommended, in relation to the Economic Impact of Austin's Food Sector Report, that the city minimize zoning barriers, permitting processes/fees, and incentivize adoption of EBT technology for redeeming nutrition assistance benefits to make farmers markets and farmstands sustainable, accessible and affordable venues for getting high quality, culturally appropriate food to all residents (including SNAP- and WIC-eligible) throughout the city.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends that the City of Austin fund a position with a partner community organization with demonstrated expertise and an established track record of facilitating SNAP outreach and enrollment to increase SNAP enrollment in Travis County;

AND, FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends that the City of Austin and Travis County partner with, and provide resources to community organizations to facilitate the establishment of effective technology and outreach for redeeming SNAP/WIC/FMNP and providing additional incentives at all area farmers markets and farm stands.