



AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation Number: (20141013-4C4):

Creation of Foodshed Preservation & Foodshed Development Policies, and related FY 2015-2016
Budget Items

WHEREAS, half the nation's food supply is grown in metro or metro adjacent counties, and 89% of all direct farm sales occur in this same area; and

WHEREAS, Texas is losing rural lands faster than any other state in the country and Travis county has lost 10,000 acres of farmland and 82 farms from 2007 to 2012; and

WHEREAS, 70% of all private farm and ranch lands - 400 million acres - will change ownership in the next 20 years; and

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan explicitly states the need to develop regulations and incentives to protect prime farmland; and

WHEREAS, Travis County voters in 2011 passed Bond Proposition 2, which earmarked \$8.3 million to preserve open space and agricultural lands through the purchase of conservation easements; and

WHEREAS, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides millions of dollars in funding annually to assist with the purchase of conservation easements in Texas in order to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits; and

WHEREAS, the method and incentives to preserve farmland as contained in the Travis County Conservation Easement Program provides an example of how Central Texas can take immediate and effective action; and

WHEREAS, The price of land per acre in Travis County has increased from \$1,801 in 2002 to \$3,837 in 2012, thereby decreasing the number of farms, acreage, and food that can be grown in Austin's urban area; and

WHEREAS, the market value of Travis county's agricultural products was an approximate \$41.7 million in 2012; and

WHEREAS, young, new, and beginning growers state that land access is the #2 biggest impediment to entering the agricultural field.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends that the Austin City Council explore all available means to protect our existing foodshed in the City of Austin, the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) and Travis County by employing multiple strategies to ensure foodshed preservation that may include (but are not limited to): utilizing and/or amending the CoA zoning code to support this purpose, purchasing development rights to agriculturally productive land, utilizing a reduced tax rate for agriculturally productive land, and leveraging federal funds to support all of the above and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends that the Austin City Council promote foodshed development by exploring means to create access to agricultural land and resources for aspiring farmers, in particular those from communities of color and/or those who are economically disadvantaged, by employing multiple strategies that may include (but are not limited to): leasing public land for agricultural purposes, working with private landowners to incentivize agricultural leases to new farmers, focusing agricultural economic development programs on support for new farmers/ranchers, and leveraging federal funds to support all of the above.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends that City staff conduct a stakeholder based process to develop Foodshed Preservation and Foodshed Development Policy recommendations as well as related budget requests for allocation in the FY 2015-2016 city budget. During the stakeholder process the city will supply public outreach, best practices research, data collection and other necessary resources to ensure a successful, collaborative effort.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends that staff from City Departments and offices, including, but not limited to: the Office of Sustainability, Real Estate, PDRD, Watershed Protection, Public Works, Austin Energy, Austin Resource Recovery, Economic Development, PARD, and HHSD work in coordination with the Imagine Austin Green Infrastructure, Healthy Austin Priority Teams and with the SFPB Farmland Preservation and Access Working Group to develop and implement the Foodshed Preservation & Foodshed Development Policies described above. Relevant stakeholders will include, but will not be limited to: landowners, land trusts, affordable housing advocates, urban planners, Agrilife Extension, and those involved with Travis County's conservation easement program.

Date of Approval: 10/13/2014

Record of the vote: (Unanimous on a 12-0 vote)

Attest: 
(Staff or board member can sign)