Annual Internal Review
This report covers the time period of 1/1/2014 to 12/31/2014

Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board (SFPB)

The SFPB mission statement (per the City Code)**:**
The Board shall serve as an advisory body to the City Council and Travis County Commissioner's Court concerning the need to improve the availability of safe, nutritious, locally and sustainably-grown food at reasonable prices for all residents, particularly those in need, by coordinating the relevant activities of city government, as well as non-profit organizations, and food and farming businesses.

1)
Describe the board's actions supporting their mission during the previous calendar year. Address all elements of the board's mission statement as provided in the City Code.
(Reference all reports, recommendations, letters or resolutions presented to the City Council on mission-specific issues. If some of the elements of the mission statement were not acted on by the board in the past year, the report should explain why no action was taken.)

The Sustainable Food Policy Board (SFPB) followed-up on a participatory process completed at the end of 2013 to clearly define a work plan for 2014 that articulated four primary goals. These included recommending policies that: increase farmland preservation and access; improve the food system via the CodeNEXT (land use code revision) process; expand traditional and nontraditional food retail venues; and promote enrollment and access to nutrition programs. The following summarizes outcomes of this work plan, as well as a continuation of the previous year's activities in improving community outreach and engagement and exploring meat processing and distribution needs. The board's working groups were adapted to work toward the four prioritized goals, thereby acting on the SPPB mandate to evaluate and monitor residents' access to an affordable, diversified local-food supply and recommend measures to improve food security and nutrition.

The new Food Policy Manager city staff position was filled and Edwin Marty officially became the board's City of Austin liaison mid-year, transferring facilitation and administration of board business from Health and Human Services to the Office of Sustainability. Notably, the Sustainable Food Policy Board held board meetings in the evening and changed the location of those meetings to East Austin so that more community members could easily attend and participate.

The 13-member city/county volunteer board continued to concentrate on strengthening economic vitality, social equity and natural resource protection in our local food system by engaging community stakeholders and expertise through working groups. This informed board recommendations to policy makers summarized below. Major accomplishments include: ensuring a

streamlined process for producers impacted by the updated urban farm ordinance and better access to farm stands and markets through funding of EBT technology and training; supporting budget allocations for awareness of, and enrollment in, nutrition assistance programs like SNAP and increasing the economic impact of those dollars through incentives (whereby SNAP benefits buy more when redeemed at farmers markets); initiating a process to recommend preservation of, and access to, land resources for food production in conjunction with new federal programs; and working on innovative policy strategies to address critical access to food resources, as well as affordability, and weighing in on related budget decisions and the future of the food policy board as the City of Austin transitioned to a 10-1 district elected council and at-large mayor.

Working Group HIghlights

Food Security Working Group:
The Food Security working group in 2014 addressed issues related to nutrition programs access and food insecurity. The working group made budget recommendations to the Austin City Council and the Travis County Commissioners Court related to SNAP outreach and enrollment and double dollar benefits at farmers markets. These recommendations were adopted by both entities, resulting in critical funding for food insecure populations. The working group also continued to be integral in the food security portion of the Austin-Travis County Community Health Improvement Plan. Members of the food security working group included Sustainable Food Center, Capital Area Food Bank, the Texas Hunger Initiative, and the City of Austin.

Farmland Preservation and Access Working Group:
The Farmland Preservation and Access working group (WG) had its inaugural meeting on April 29, 2014 with a standing room only turnout at City Hall of about 20 individuals. The WG met regularly throughout the year and divided into land preservation and land access sub-groups that held separate regular meetings to capitalize on the expertise and interests of stakeholders specific to each area, acknowledging overlap would occur. Meetings averaged about 10-15 members representing a diverse array of public, private and community based organizations ranging from private land-owners to City and County staff, and including land preservation, food, farming and community advocates. The groups created a repository of related research, maps, and information (as well as meeting notes and agendas) on the WG's publicly accessible google drive site. The WG heard reports from Travis County staff on the recent bond initiative, successfully implementing a conservation easement program with landowners and from City staff related to Imagine Austin objectives, CodeNEXT and an inventory of public land cataloged as appropriate for food production. Many strategies and resources were explored resulting in a set of recommendations to the SFPB in October (unanimously approved) that would recognize the need for a more formal staff-supported stakeholder process to adequately make informed policy and budget recommendations for the FY2015-2016 budget process. Additionally, the WG's recommendation to Travis County to strongly support additional and well-planned farmland preservation and staff and resource allocations through its Land, Water, and Transportation Plan was unanimously approved by the full board in October. The year ended with renewed commitment to this working group objectives and the

decision to formally split into two separate working groups.

Codes and Ordinances Working Group:
The working group (WG) that had facilitated a complicated and timely revision of the City's Urban Farm Ordinance in 2013 was renamed the Codes and Ordinances WG in 2014 to better align with the code-focused Planning Commission and threw itself into the City's CodeNEXT process to assess and revise the form and function of the City's land use development code. The WG attracted representation from stakeholders across the city committed to ensuring that the outcome of the land use revision integrate clear and robust support for a sustainable regional food system. After familiarizing itself with the CodeNEXT process and recognizing the paucity of food system-related content, the WG began compiling research, best practices and relevant land use related documentation that would address food system barriers and long term goals. The WG made an initial recommendation, unanimously approved by the food policy board on October 13, 2014 to send onto the City Council. The recommendatin addressed the initial decision point in the CodeNEXT process, specifically rejecting a proposed revision approach (#1) that would not significantly change the existing code, deemed inadequate to support sustainable food system goals and align with Imagine Austin, while supporting either of the other approaches (#2 or #3) only if they would be implemented in a way that would provide for the full integration of the production of, and access to, healthy and sustainable foods in suburban and urban areas. Additionally, the WG met to develop strategies and detailed input for each step of the Code NEXT process, including providing input to the CodeNEXT team.

Retail Capacity Building Working Group:
The Retail Capacity working group met three times in 2014, twice in July and once in August. The outcome of the meetings resulted in a policy recommendation for the Healthy Foods Retail Initiative. The main direction of the initiative is a response to work done by The Food Trust (nationally recognized organization based in Philadelphia), the Health and Human Services-led Community Health Assessment/Community Health Improvement Plan (CHA/CHIP) and Imagine Austin. In addition, ongoing efforts associated with the GO! Austin / VAMOS! Austin (GAVA) initiative, the Alliance for African American Health in Central Texas, and Manantial de Salud are building community capacity to improve healthy food access in retail stores by applying Food Trust training in neighborhood based approaches. And, Austin Interfaith Network has identified healthy food incentives for local businesses in South Austin as a funding priority for the City of Austin's FY 2014-15 budget. The board passed the working group's recommendation onto City Council in August, but it did not result in a budget allocation for FY 2014-2015.

Community Engagement Working Group:
This working group began in 2012 with the intent to: plan at least two effective, well-attended community-based meetings during the calendar year; and to establish a user-friendly and effective process for engaging the community in ongoing work group activities related to the mandate of the SFPB. While past members of the group met with new leadership to transfer ideas and information, new working group membership was not established, nor community-based meetings planned related to the entire board. That said, each of the individual working groups made community engagement a priority and were able to take advantage of a directory of community-based groups

and individuals to invite to participate. Additionally, individual working group chairs made templates of the invitations they sent out available to the whole group. The Austin Food Notes informational listserv protocol was clarified and the listserv (with about 300 addresses) utilized effectively to announce working group and board meetings, and a new Food Systems portal was launched on the City website with board input - created by the COA staff who work on urban agriculture and food systems.

Distribution and Processing of Local Meats Working Group:
This working group (WG) originally formed in 2012 to identify policy obstacles to increasing the production and sale of local meat. Local meat producers, chefs and other stakeholders were interviewed, and meetings held where participants identified confusing regulations as a leading concern, especially in Travis County. While the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) regulates meat production at the state level, various groups within the organization control different steps of the process. And, counties and cities, which control retail sales, interpret these laws inconsistently. One of the leading complaints was the inability to receive clear direction from public health officials. During the 2013 state legislative session, participants from the Local Meats working group partnered with Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance to testify before the state's Public Health Committee about the effect confusing regulations have on producers, successfully advocating for the passage of the DSHS Better Communications Act.

In 2014 the Distribution and Processing of Local Meats WG focused on the lack of butchers and processing facilities in Central Texas, particularly in light of the City's updated Urban Farm Ordinance, which curtailed on-farm butchering at Austin urban farms, effectively reducing resources for Austinites who raise chickens in their backyard. Because of this issue (and because four-footed animals are regulated differently than chickens), the working group organized a Poultry Processing Summit in Elgin, wherein 24 area farmers gathered in February 2014 to discuss obstacles and opportunities. Recommendations from that summit included support for: a consumer education campaign about the importance of buying local; a regional food study to identify what kind of processing facilities are needed; increasing resources for the fledgling local meat industry; identifying favorable public policy and organizing recurring Local Meat summits. At the end of the year, this WG decided it would present research and priorities to the Retail Capacity Building working group, combining efforts in developing recommendations to the full food policy board to send forward to the newly formed Austin City Council and the Travis County Commissioners Court.

Board Recommendations and Letters - 2014

Available on the SFPB's web page: http://www.austintexas.gov/page/sfpb-resources

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach and Enrollment; Improving Farmers Market and Farm Stand Access for Low-Income Residents (12May 2014: 20140512-7D)
Recommendation to fund a position (in experienced partner org) to increase enrollment in SNAP, and to further jointly fund an outreach campaign with Travis County to increase awareness and enrollment in SNAP, and to partner with and allocate ongoing funds to community organizations to facilitate technology and outreach for redemption of SNAP/WIC/FMNP (Farmers' Market Nutrition

Program) and to provide additional monetary incentives at farmers markets and farm stands. http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Health/SustainableFood/Recommendation__20140512-7D.pdf *Food Security WG members advocated with individual councilmembers leading up to budget deliberations.**

** This recommendation was also sent to Travis County and SFPB board members met with County Commissioners to advocate for County allocating funds for outreach campaign.*

Letter of Support for Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department (ATCHHSD) Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Program (27May 2014)
Letter highlights the importance of work done by City staff funded by the CDC's Community Transformation Grant, eliminated in federal FY2014 budget, and requests City funding to continue the critical initiatives of the ATCHHSD Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Program.
http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Sustainability/SNAP_letter_of_support.pdf

Letter of Support for the City of Austin Health and Human Services Department's application for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Partnerships to Improve Community Health (PICH) Grant (14July 2014)
Support for HHSD's capacity to implement evidence-based, best practices strategies (as required for the PICH) and to continue to collaborate with the SFPB on critical food and health related issues. Describes related SFPB/HHSD accomplishments.
http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/edims/document.cfm?id=215515

Healthy Food Retail Initiative (11August 2014-20140811-6C6)
Recommendation that the City of Austin fund the creation and implementation of Phase 1 of a multi-year City of Austin Healthy Food Retail Initiative including a part-time coordinator and materials and supplies for increasing fresh fruit and vegetable retail in ten corner stores.
http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Sustainability/HRFI_SFP_Board_Recommendation_2014.pdf

CodeNEXT Land Use Revision (13October 2014-20141013-4CB)
For CodeNEXT process, the SFPB emphasizes the importance of integrating the production of and access to healthy sustainable food in both suburban and urban areas when moving toward Approaches #2 (The Deep Clean) and #3 (The Complete Makeover), voting unanimously not to support Approach 1 (The Brisk Sweep) due to the current codes inadequate tools to support a sustainable food system and related goals outlined in Imagine Austin.
http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Sustainability/CodeNext_SFP_Board_Recommendation_2014.pdf

Creation of Foodshed Preservation & Foodshed Development Policies, and Related FY 2015-2016 Budget Items (13October 2014-20141013-4C4)
Recommends that the City promote foodshed development by exploring means to create access to agricultural land and resources for aspiring farmers by outlining multiple strategies including incentivizing leases on private and public land, focusing economic development programs on support for new farmers/ranchers, and leveraging federal funds. It further recommends strategies

for the City to explore all available means to protect the existing foodshed (including amending the zoning code, purchasing development rights to ag. land, and leveraging federal funds). It also recommends that city staff conduct a stakeholder process to develop foodshed preservation and development policies and related budget requests for FY2015-16.
http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=195711

Support for Travis County Land, Water, and Transportation Plan - LWTP (13October 2014)
Recommendation to Travis County Commissioners Court to ensure the LWTP includes strong support for conserving and appropriately assessing land for food production and further recommends that the plan include funding for adequate staff and resources.
http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Sustainability/County_LWTP_Recs.pdf

Board name and size change (10Nov 2014 - 20141110-4.A.1)
Recommendation that with the new structure of the Austin City Council, the city change the board's name to "City of Austin/Travis County Food Policy Commission" and further recommends that the board membership be comprised of ten council appointees, one mayoral appointee, and six Travis County Commissioner Court appointees for a total of 17 members.
http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Sustainability/SFPB_Recommendation_for_size_and_name_change_Nov_10_2014.pdf

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Board-Related Council Resolutions and Ordinances - 2014

SNAP-Related Budget Allocations (8September 2014)
$112,241 allocated by City with the following breakdown: approximately $52,241 for an enrollment position in a community organization, $10,000 (split of $20,000 with County) for SNAP outreach campaign, and $50,000 for incentives and technology for SNAP/WIC/FMNP at various farm stands and retail locations.
http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=216772 (see Item 1.10)

Budget Allocation for ATCHHSD Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Program (8Sept 2014)
The City allocated $410,000 to retain staff in Chronic Disease Program (1 million requested) and replace funding to offset loss of Community Transformation Grant..
http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=216772 (see item 1.47)

County Funding for SNAP Outreach and Enrollment Campaign (Fall 2014)
Travis County allocated $10,000 toward SNAP outreach and Enrollment Campaign.

2)

Determine if the board's actions throughout the year comply with the mission statement.

The Sustainable Food Policy Board's actions this year comply with the mission statement.

3)

List the board's goals and objectives for the new calendar year.

2015 Board Goals**:**

The purpose of the SFPB is to address health disparities, increase local sustainable food production, and end food injustices through research and advocacy. We strive to ensure the community has a voice in policy decisions that support a healing, thriving, and sustainable local food system in Austin/ Travis County.

2015 Board Objectives

The Sustainable Food Policy Board will recommend policies that:

1. Ensure community engagement and participation in food systems-related discussions that address food access at different scales.
2. Increase farmland preservation for sustainable food production - especially for potential farmers with limited resources and from diverse communities.
3. Increase farmland access for sustainable food production - especially for potential farmers with limited resources and from diverse communities.
4. Improve food access via improved transportation, affordability, and distribution addressed at different scales through participation in Code NEXT process.

The working groups (WG) created to help the board meet its goals and objectives for 2015 are as follows (including working group chairperson):

1. Food Security & Codes and Ordinances - Kathy Green, Brandon Reed
2. Farmland Preservation - Mindy Cooper
3. Farmland Access - Ronda Rutledge
4. Retail Capacity - Dominique Bowman

Note: Some existing working group efforts may be folded into 2015 working groups (e.g. local meat processing and distribution [2013-14 WG] into 2015 Retail Capacity).