

## AUSTIN-TRAVIS COUNTY SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation Number: 2016\_\_\_\_\_

### **Improved Support and Funding for Community Garden Program**

WHEREAS, Imagine Austin establishes Land Use and Public Transportation and Health and Human Services Policies to create healthy and family-friendly communities that include neighborhood gardens and family farms (LUT P5), and to provide broad access to community gardens (S P7); and

WHEREAS, community gardens enhance food security for the city by providing access to fresh, healthy, and culturally appropriate foods, support the local economy and provide educational opportunities for urban residents; and

WHEREAS, the 2009 City Council Resolution No. 20091119-065 states that “The Austin City Council supports sustainable urban agriculture and community gardening in Austin” and specifically directed the City Manager to:

- 1) Streamline the process to establish a qualified community garden and responsible urban farm.
- 2) Name a single point of contact within the City of Austin to support community members in establishing and sustaining urban farms and qualified community gardens.

WHEREAS, Fiscal Memo for Item #65 from City Budget Officer Ed Van Eenoo as back-up to City Council Resolution 20091119-065 estimated that evaluation of new community garden requests would require 34 hours of staff time from an Administrative Senior, Planner II, Program Coordinator, and a Landscape Architect and 40 hours of staff time for an Engineer Associate C ; and

WHEREAS, a City of Austin cross-departmental staff team in April 2010 originally recommended 1.0 FTE City of Austin staff to serve as the related single point of contact to establish and oversee sustainable community gardens and urban farms, but the current Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens program within Parks and Recreation Department only has 0.5 FTE dedicated to technical assistance for community gardens and no program budget; and

WHEREAS, community gardens continue to face significant challenges in permitting due to not having 1.0 FTE dedicated staff, including administrative delays due to lack of single point of contact at other departments responsible for assisting community gardens, prohibitive permit fees, and license agreement approval process that has resulted in only three community gardens of the 14 on City land obtaining required license agreements.

WHEREAS, Austin has seen increasing demand for community gardens and most community gardens have extensive wait lists, such as the two-year wait list to join Deep Eddy Community Garden ; and

WHEREAS, affluent communities are more able to develop community gardens due to better access to professional landscape architect and engineering services needed to create site plans for permitting and

licensing, and better ability to pay for materials and for permitting fees, which is an equity issue for gardeners in low-income, low-food access communities; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin-Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends the following:

- 1) Increase staffing for Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens program by 0.5 FTE to restore staffing to level recommended by 2009 Council and 2010 City cross-departmental team; and
- 2) Incorporate community garden support into relevant City staff job descriptions as originally indicated by Fiscal Memo for Item #65 from City Budget Officer Ed Van Eenoo as back-up to City Council Resolution 20091119-065; and
- 3) Further streamline community garden process to minimize delays, permitting burdens, and financial burdens to community members; and
- 4) Waive City of Austin Site Development Exemption Fees and Travis County Recordation Fees which are significant barriers to permitting gardens; and
- 5) Fund SUACG program in order to pay necessary permitting and license agreement fees for gardens on City land and increase capacity for technical assistance to underserved communities; and
- 6) Train City and County programming staff to utilize existing and future program gardens and City and County facilities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Austin-Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends additional budgeted yearly funding to ensure the Community Garden Coordinator position has 1.0 FTE at the coordinator level as originally intended, with additional support of 0.5 FTE, as well as yearly funds of \$10,000 to pay necessary fees for initial permitting and City-required infrastructure costs for two new community gardens.

References:

- 1) Imagine Austin Healthy Austin Priority, Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. June 2012.
- 2) Fiscal Memo for Item #65 from City Budget Officer Ed Van Eenoo as back-up to City Council Resolution 20091119-065
- 3) Support for Sustainable Urban Agriculture Program Coordinator Position Letter to Mayor and Council. Sustainable Food Policy Board. April 26, 2010.