



## BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

### Austin/Travis County Food Policy Board

**WHEREAS**, In Travis County the food insecurity rate is 16%. Twenty-two percent of children in Travis County, or 57,780 young people, experienced food insecurity in 2015<sup>1</sup>, and

**WHEREAS**, Austin has been recognized as the most economically segregated large metro in the nation<sup>2</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, 13% of Travis County residents live in poverty. The poverty rate for both Hispanics (26%) and Blacks (23%) in Travis County is more than twice the poverty rate for Whites (9%)<sup>3</sup>, and

**WHEREAS**, the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board was created 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; and

**WHEREAS**, the region faces significant challenges to a vibrant community-based food system, including losing 82 farms representing 4% of county farmland (10,000 acres) from 2007 to 2012<sup>4</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, in order to reverse the trend of losing farmland, policies are needed that support the return of land not currently in agricultural production back to agricultural use; and

**WHEREAS**, Imagine Austin (2012) establishes Conservation and Environment Policies and Actions to permanently preserve areas of agricultural value (CEP P1), to expand the city's green infrastructure network to include agricultural lands (CE P3), to expand regional programs and planning for the purchase of conservation easements and open space for sustainable agriculture (CE P5), and to develop regulations and incentives to protect prime farmland, such

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<sup>1</sup> Feeding America's [Map The Meal Gap](#)

<sup>2</sup> Florida, Richard and Charlotta Mellander. (2015) [Segregated City: The Geography of Economic Segregation in America's Metros](#). Martin Prosperity Institute.

<sup>3</sup> [Table S1701, 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#)

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2012 Census of Agriculture, Travis County, Texas.

as transferable development rights, farmland trusts, farmland mitigation, and conservation easements (CE A11);

**WHEREAS**, Imagine Austin (2012) strives to create “complete communities” in which all residents have access to a variety of essential services and resources within their community. The plan advances a holistic view of Austin’s food landscape and cites food access as one of a variety of vital amenities and services to which all residents should have access.

**WHEREAS**, in District 2, the City of Austin owns approximately 8.32-acres of undeveloped land on 4805 Winnebago Lane that is zoned Light Industrial. This site is one of the last remaining tracts of former pasture-land for dairy farms in South Austin. In 2001, the City conducted a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment and no contaminants were found.

**WHEREAS**, according to the Office of Sustainability’s Food Environment Analysis, in District 2, 44.5% of residents live at or below 185% of the poverty level, 16% do not have a vehicle, and 53% of food retail outlets scored below the Healthy Food Availability Index; and

**WHEREAS**, In response to a Austin City Council Resolution 20160303-020, the Office of Sustainability guided a community effort to develop the [Austin Healthy Food Access Initiative](#). This community report recommends that the City complete a Food Environment Analysis, expanding healthy food retail initiatives, increasing local food production, piloting a nutritious food incentive program, carrying out a coordinated awareness campaign, and creating safe routes to market; and

**WHEREAS**, According to Ready by 21, engaging in community, school and/or extracurricular activities is a key component to securing healthy outcomes for youth. After school programming offers a structured environment for students to participate in healthy enrichment activities, and decreases the likelihood that students will participate in risky behaviors. Students who regularly participate in afterschool programming perform better academically, attend school more regularly, and graduate from high school at higher rates than their peers who do not attend<sup>5</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, an example of a youth development non-profit organization is Urban Roots. Since it began in 2008, 288 youth leaders have graduated from Urban Roots paid internships, receiving \$450,708 in youth stipends. 4,920 grade school students from across Austin have participated in interactive, educational farm tours. 288,601 pounds of fresh vegetables grown and harvested on the farm - Almost half - 117,784 pounds of produce – has been donated to twelve local hunger relief partners, getting fresh produce directly where it’s needed most; and

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<sup>5</sup> <http://readyby21dashboardatx.org/socially-and-civically-engaged/involved-in-extracurricular-activities.php>

**WHEREAS**, the Southeast Combined Neighborhood Plan Contact Team (SCNPCT) voted unanimously to support Urban Roots and their initiative to utilize the Winnebago site to provide paid opportunities for young people and increase access to healthy, affordable produce. They specifically stated that this “initiative is compatible with our Combined Neighborhood Plan”. (See letter of support attached) ; and

**WHEREAS**, the Kensington Park Homeowners Association, which is adjacent to the Winnebago property, also “enthusiastic and wholehearted support --- in the effort by Urban Roots to utilize the Winnebago Lane tract adjacent to our neighborhood for use in their urban farming and teaching efforts, where urban kids are taught about farming and related skills that might be of use later in life”. (See letter of support attached); and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board recommends that the City of Austin to create an RFP process for a non-profit organization to secure a long-term lease for the nine acre tract at 4805 Winnebago Lane to be utilized for urban agriculture in exchange for in-kind goods and services that would provide produce and increase access to healthy, affordable food and create paid life and job skills training for young people in the community.