



Annual Internal Review

This report covers the time period of 7/1/2018 to 6/30/2019

Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board

The Board/Commission mission statement (per the City Code) is: to serve as an advisory body to the City Council and Travis County Commissioners 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 and county government, as well as nonprofit organizations, and food and farming businesses.

The Board shall:

- a) monitor the availability, price and quality of food throughout the Austin and Travis County areas;
- b) collect data on the food security (i.e., access to an affordable, diversified local food supply) and the nutritional status of city residents;
- c) inform city and county policy makers, administrators, and the public at large about the status of the region's food system and food security;
- d) monitor and analyze the administration of city and county food and nutrition programs;
- e) explore new means for the city and county to improve the local food economy, the availability, sustainability, accessibility, and quality of food and our environment, and assist city and county departments in the coordination of their efforts;
- f) review availability and recommend measures to promote the preservation of agricultural land in the City of Austin and Travis County; and
- g) recommend to the city and county adoption of measures that will improve existing local food production and add new programs, incentives, projects, regulations, or services.

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 relevant sections of the City Code.

Over the course of the 2018-2019 year, the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board (ATCFPB) conducted a participatory strategic planning process completed in October 2018 to review priorities and create strategic goals tied to the board's working groups and better act on the ATCFPB mandate to evaluate and monitor residents' access to an affordable, diversified local-food supply and recommend measures to improve food security and nutrition. The result of this meeting was adapted working groups, redefined to better achieve the goals and metrics define by each group.

The 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.

The board made the following recommendation to the Austin City Council:

- AUSTIN-TRAVIS COUNTY FOOD POLICY BOARD RECOMMENDATION, Recommendation Number: 20190513-5iv2a: Consideration of Agricultural Production on County/City Land

Presentations to the board:

- Austin Public Health, City Manager's Proposed Budget, August 2018
- Texas Rural Cooperative Center, Cooperative overview, August 2018
- Austin Resource Recovery, Update on Organics Diversion Requirements and Enforcement, September 2018
- Travis County Budget Office, Travis County Budget Cycle, February 2019
- City of Austin Office of Sustainability, Program Updates, April 2019
- Austin Parks and Recreation Department, Community Gardening Permitting Update, April 2019
- Urban Roots, Winnebago Lease update, May 2019
- Austin Public Health, CHA/CHIP, May 2019

The board additionally had four working groups that met throughout the year. They were I) Support for Farms and Farmers, II) Food and Climate , III) Building Opportunities for Food Entrepreneurs, and IV) Healthy Food Access for All. Highlights of the working groups include:

**I. Support Farms and Farmers Working Group
Co-Chairs: Thomas Schroeder and Adrienne Haschke**

The Support Farms and Farmers Working Group was created from the Farmland Preservation and Access working group that existed prior to 2018-2019. During the

October 2018 ATCFPB Strategic Planning Meeting, the core set of principles were established to be:

- **Farmland Preservation and Creation.** Find and identify available agriculturally suitable parcels of land in the city and county. Work with appropriate authorities to make access to land possible and connect community appropriate practices with available lands.
- **Policies to Encourage New Farmers.** Identify needs of new and beginning farmers in the city and county and advocate for policies and activities that can support and encourage this group.
- **Train New Farmers.** Work with existing organizations to assist in the recruitment, education, and placement of new farmers.
- **Reduce Cost Associated with Permitting.** Explore registration, application, and certification fees associated with on and off farm operations; identify any redundant, excessive, or restrictive permitting costs.

The working group met 5 times during the review time period. At the initial meeting for the group in December 2018 it was determined that Farmland Preservation and Creation would be a central focus of the group. We met and worked with city and county staff to identify county and city owned available parcels of land where agriculture production could be suitable. That work is still on going, we have two working group members assembling detailed mapping information of USDA prime farmland parcels either city or county owned. Discerning which entity has jurisdiction of these parcels and determining what has been identified, as “best use” for these parcels has been an arduous task that is progressing forward. In our spring meetings we completed a recommendation for supporting urban agriculture and presented it to the full board. In May 2019 the Food Policy Board approved the working group’s recommendation for Consideration of Agriculture Production on County/City Land (see Recommendation Number: 20190513-5iv2a above)

II. Food and Climate

Co-Chairs: Karen Magid and Alexandra Van den Berg

The Food and Climate working group is continuing to work towards the addition of the food system to the Austin Community Climate plan to account for greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the food system, and provide policies and other recommendations that support the local food system, the climate, improve food access, and reduce food insecurity.

Since the initial addendum was approved by both the ATCFPB and the Joint Sustainability Committee during the 2017-2018 year, the working group presented the addendum to the Health and Human Services Council Committee in August 2018. Based on the feedback received, the working group has prioritized community engagement in 2019 to: (1) inform community members of the work, (2) educate on the links between the food system, climate change, and health, and (3) strengthen the recommendations in

the initial addendum. With the City undertaking the 5-year revision of the Austin Community Climate Plan (ACCP) in 2019-2020, the goal for the working group has shifted from getting the addendum approved to having the recommendations included in the revised plan under the new consumption category of greenhouse gas emissions.

To date in 2019, board members and members of the working group gave three community presentations:

- (1) Building Bridges Community Dialogue, March 1, 2019
- (2) Global Shapers, March 26, 2019
- (3) Restore Rundberg, May 23, 2019

III. Building Opportunities for Food Entrepreneurs **Co-Chairs: Sharon Mays and Jess Gaffney**

The Building Opportunities for Food Entrepreneurs Working Group was created during the 2018 ATCFPB strategic planning session, transitioning the prior Codes and Ordinances Working Group to broader topics for food entrepreneurs based on the status of CodeNEXT at that time.

Over the last year, the City of Austin Office of Sustainability and the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board, specifically the Building Opportunities for Food Entrepreneurs Working Group have been interested in creating a clear regulatory environment for local food pantries that enables them to safely offer high-demand products. If more pantries are permitted, there will be opportunities for greater collaboration between providers in our emergency food system and social service providers in Austin Public Health as well as more organics diversion in alignment with Austin Resource Recovery and the Universal Recycling Ordinance.

As a result of this project the Working Group and the Office of Sustainability will deliver:

1. Recommendations for a permitting system that extends public health protections to Austin's emergency food network
2. A strategy for permitting that will prevent lapse in service at Food Pantries
3. Better permitting awareness with Food Pantries
4. You should not need to be an expert/specialist to run a food pantry

IV. Healthy Food Access & Food Security Working Group **Chair: Kathy Green (October 2018 - January 2019)** **Co-Chairs: Andrea Abel and Alexandra Van den Berg (February 2019 - present)**

FY19 Priorities:

Priorities for FY19 were developed through a group survey process then honed down to three top priorities through a group polling process. Priorities identified were:

1. Expand the distribution of fresh produce using already established hubs in city and county neighborhood centers
2. Improve SNAP enrollment
3. Request that the City of Austin utilize city owned land for affordable housing; prioritize areas surrounding healthy food access outlets

FY20 Working Group Focus:

The majority of the June, July and August working group meetings will be dedicated to visioning and identifying one priority area on which the working group will focus for the next 6 months to a year. Annelies Lottman with the Texas Rural Cooperative Center is facilitating and leading the discussion for the working group.

Working Group Presentations:

- February 2019 – Amy Price, United Way, presented on a pilot 2-1-1 project to connect people with transportation to get to medical appointments and the possible future pilot extending this to emergency food access; JC Dwyer, Feeding Texas, presented on state and federal legislative issues dealing with food insecurity, particularly SNAP.
- March 2019 – Lydia Oxley, Imperfect Produce, presented on the company’s model to reduce food waste, provide lower cost local produce, and increase income for farmers.
- April 2019 – Sari Albornoz, SFC, presented on Community Garden Support process through the City of Austin Service Design Lab and presented resolution on City Community Garden Support.
- April 2019 – Judith McGeary, Executive Director, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, presented on state legislative action pertaining to increasing food access and food security.
- May 2019 – Legislative Recap, presented by multiple presenters; Maren Lujan, presented on the current status of the CHA/CHIP and potential for coordination with the working group.

Recommendations to ATCFPB:

April 2019 Recommendation on Community Gardens:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board (ATCFPB) recommends that the City of Austin take the following steps to more efficiently, effectively, and equitably support community gardens in Austin:

- Designate a staff member from each relevant City of Austin department (Parks and Recreation, Office of Sustainability, Public Works, Office of Real Estate Services, Austin Water, Watershed Protection, and Development Services) to contribute to the City of Austin Community Garden Permit Review process via quarterly work sessions and include this responsibility in their job descriptions.

- Designate staff in Public Works, Parks and Recreation, or Watershed to provide engineering and landscape design services for new community gardens and incorporate this responsibility into their job descriptions.
- Allocate funding for 1.0 FTE Conservation Program Specialist or Coordinator to support community garden permitting, outreach, and operations, thereby creating the capacity for the Community Gardens program to execute recommendations from the City of Austin Service Design Lab.
- Allocate \$5,000 annually to the Community Gardens Program for engineering, permitting, and water access costs for gardens on City land managed by a City department.

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

The board's actions complied with their mission statement in that it focused on all aspects of the food system, and how to improve it for all Austin and Travis County residents.

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

During the board's 2018 strategic planning session, the overall goals set were: (1) for each working group to determine metrics, and (2) to advocate for vacant board positions to be filled with diverse perspectives and identified gaps in knowledge.

Each working group of the board defined their own goals for the year:

- Support for Farms and Farmers: (a) farmland preservation and creation, (b) policies to encourage new farmers, (c) train new farmers, and (d) reduce cost associated with permitting
- Food and Climate: (a) addition of food system to Austin Community Climate Plan, (b) food system resiliency, (c) mitigating the food system's impact on climate change, and (d) connecting food and climate recommendations to on-going efforts and shared priorities with other boards and commissions such as the Good Food Purchasing Program and with the Joint Sustainability Committee
- Healthy Food Security and Access: (a) funding the support out of school time child food programs, (b) school food, and (c) Fresh for Less initiatives
- Building Opportunities for Food Entrepreneurs: (a) creating a clear regulatory environment for local food pantries that enables them to safely offer high-demand products.