

RESOLUTION NO. 20160303-020

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food deserts as urban neighborhoods and urban towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has significant areas designated as food deserts based on the USDA's parameters, particularly in southeast, northeast, and central east Austin; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) site limited access to healthy affordable foods as a factor that contributes to childhood obesity, particularly in "rural, minority, and lower-income neighborhoods;" and

WHEREAS, the CDC states that children who are obese have a higher likelihood of adult obesity, which is a significant risk factor for health conditions including heart disease, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and cancer; and

WHEREAS, a report titled *Creating Healthy Food and Eating Environments: Policy and Environmental Approaches (Report)*, published in the *Annual Review of Public Health Journal*, found that "food and eating environments likely contribute to the increasing epidemic of obesity and chronic diseases;" and

WHEREAS, the Report stated that "environmental and policy interventions may be among the most effective strategies for creating population-wide improvements in eating," and noted that "significant steps are needed to make healthful food choices

available, identifiable, and affordable to people of all races and income levels and in all types of geographic locations (e.g., urban, suburban, rural);” and

WHEREAS, in 2011, only 57 percent of eligible federal Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients enrolled in the program, resulting in a loss of \$169,304,251 in federal SNAP benefits that could have benefitted the local economy and lifted families out of food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, during the Fiscal Year 2014-15 budget cycle, the City of Austin increased funding for SNAP outreach and enrollment by \$112,241 and 1.0 FTE, and in the Fiscal Year 2015-16 budget process, the City of Austin invested \$400,000 in improving food access through a healthy food corner store initiative and expanded funding for two additional farm stands at local schools; and

WHEREAS, residents in Austin food deserts have expressed a need for a full service grocery store for access to affordable food, medications, and home products during flexible hours, which could potentially be made available through a partnership with the City of Austin that could include incentives or use of city- owned land; and

WHEREAS, some cities that have incentivized grocery stores as a stand- alone effort have encountered challenges, and recent research implies that education efforts to change behavior can be a critical component required for success when improving access to food; and

WHEREAS, food access issues are complex, and will require multiple tools to address effectively; and

WHEREAS, nonprofit and coop models for grocery stores, expanded access to community gardens, and wholesale produce markets all show potential for having a positive impact on access to healthy foods; and

WHEREAS, improving access to healthy and affordable food is a critical public health issue, and the Austin City Council is invested in continuing to improve access to food in food deserts and across the City; and

WHEREAS, the City Council allocated funding for an Equity Office during the Fiscal Year 2015-16 budget process, and the City Manager is currently working toward hiring staff and creating a vision for the Equity Office; and

WHEREAS, food access is one of the most critical equity issues facing many Austinites, and the community would benefit from the City of Austin Equity Office incorporating food access into their overall mission plan; and

WHEREAS, City of Austin Departments including Economic Development, Health and Human Services, and the Sustainability Office have all worked on efforts to improve access to food, and Austin is fortunate to have area organizations and partners with expertise that would be valuable to include in a collaborative effort to develop recommendations and a long term plan for addressing food access issues; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive review of local practices and methods used in other cities would help ensure that local resources are used effectively and efficiently in future efforts; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to convene a collaborative working group including representation from the Sustainable Food Policy Board, the Sustainable Food Center, area partners, community stakeholders, and staff from the Economic Development Department, the Health and Human Services Department, and the Sustainability Office to develop recommendations regarding improving access to food which shall include consideration of, but not be limited to full service grocery stores, wholesale produce markets, increasing fresh food choices at existing stores, impacts of incorporating educational components into efforts to expand food access, nonprofit and coop models for grocery stores, and expansion of community gardens.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is further directed to develop a status update of current SNAP enrollment efforts including regional data within the City of Austin and recommendations for how to effectively continue efforts to enroll qualified families in SNAP.

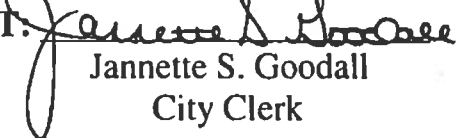
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is further directed to present preliminary findings at a Council work session no later than June 14, 2016, and present a final report including a fiscal note for any recommendations regarding food access and SNAP enrollment that Council may want to consider during the Fiscal Year 2016-17 budget season no later than August 2, 2016.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is further directed to incorporate food access issues as a component of the overall mission of the City of Austin Equity Office.

ADOPTED: March 3, 2016

ATTEST: 
Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk

