



SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY BOARD

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May 27, 2014

The Honorable Lee Leffingwell, Mayor
Members, Austin City Council
301 W. Second Street
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Mayor Leffingwell and Council Members:

The Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board (SFPB) appreciates its relationship with the City of Austin to support the goal of equitable access to nutritious, local food for all Austin residents. A healthy population is a prosperous one that can effectively contribute to the city's economic future.

The SFPB works closely with staff at the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department (ATCHHSD) Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Program to coordinate efforts funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Community Transformation Grant (CTG). This grant has been integral in increasing healthy food options across Travis County through evidence-based interventions.

As you may be aware, the last two years of funding for the CTG was eliminated in the federal FY14 budget. Therefore, initiatives will not continue in FY15 and FY16 without assistance locally. Approximately \$450,000 a year is needed to fund staff salaries and benefits, and see many important programs to completion.

The SFPB asks that in the City of Austin FY15 budget the Austin City Council consider funding to continue the very critical initiatives of the ATCHHSD Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Program. Without this support in place, significant progress in addressing diet-related chronic diseases will be impeded, affecting many community organizations, and ultimately their clients.

Some of the activities supported by the CTG include:

- Assisting locally owned restaurants to become certified through the St David's Health Care Healthy Dining Program;
- Collaborating with The Food Trust and the local *Go Austin Vamos Austin* initiative on training residents to work with small neighborhood convenience stores to increase healthy food options;
- Partnering with the Sustainable Food Center to increase the number of local schools adopting Farm to School programs and building school gardens, increasing the number of community gardens and residents trained to care for a community-, school- or home-based food garden, training residents in high-need areas how to prepare foods grown in gardens, and increasing the number of SNAP users who purchased fresh food at the SFC Farmers Markets through the Double Dollar Incentive Program;
- Providing seed funding to HOPE Farmers Market to acquire the hardware, technology, and supplies needed to begin accepting Lone Star Cards at their weekly market;
- Working with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department to fund projects of local organizations to support agricultural and food innovations in Austin, resulting in new community gardens, improvements to existing gardens and urban farms, and two new tools/training resources available to community gardeners and urban farmers;
- Working with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department to develop their Geographic Information Systems database. This data set contains data on water mains as well as City-owned land from all Departments, allowing faster response to citizens and community groups about water and land availability for community gardening and urban



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agriculture. PARD staff also worked with City Public Works, Austin Water Utility, and Watershed Protection to support and develop standards for City endorsement of community garden projects on city-owned land;

- Working with the *Go Austin Vamos Austin* initiative in Dove Springs and neighborhood advocates in Springdale to assist local residents to improve the availability of healthy food in neighborhood corner stores, develop community gardens, and provide neighborhood newsletters to distribute key health messages regarding exercise, weight loss and The Soda Challenge, which encourages residents and their children to pledge to reduce soda consumption during the school week.
- Working with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department to pass their Healthy Vending Policy in August 2013. The policy has been implemented at 25 different Parks and Recreation facilities that serve the public and/or serve as after-school or summer-care childcare centers. The policy mandates that at least 50% of the products sold in vending machines in PARD facilities must meet the nutritional requirements outlined in the healthy vending policy.
- Providing funding and technical assistance to the Abundant Life Christian Fellowship to implement the *First Place 4 Health* program in five predominantly black churches in Manor. Participating churches commit to developing or enhancing current health policies to support parishioners participating in the program, such as featuring healthy items at church functions and discouraging soda consumption.
- Launching a digital media campaign to promote the *Healthy Places, Healthy People* website and used four different messages promoting healthy eating choices. The campaign ran through the month of September 2013 and generated a total of 8,147,452 impressions.
- Creating a SNAP Farmer's Market promotional flier in English and Spanish to promote farmers market locations where can spend their SNAP dollars and the Double Dollar Incentive Program is available. This flier was distributed through SFC, HOPE Farmers Market, the HHSD Neighborhood Centers, the Capital Area Food Bank, and the Mexican Consulate.

Thank you for your attention to this important request. The SFPB stands ready to continue our work with the City of Austin and Travis County to ensure healthy food access for all residents.

Sincerely,

Hildreth England, RD LD
Vice Chair
Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board

cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
H. G. (Bert) Lumberras, Assistant City Manager
Carlos, Rivera, Director, HHSD, Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services
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Travis County Commissioners