



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Austin Travis County Food Policy Board

Recommendation Number: 20210405 4.a.i.i Funding for Food and Equity

WHEREAS, Austin, Travis County and the five county Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) lack a comprehensive, cohesive, equitable food system plan;

WHEREAS, the food Central Texans consume, no matter their dietary restrictions or preferences, job title, race, or income, depends on a complex network of largely private sector businesses who grow, distribute, process and, ultimately, sell food via retail outlets;;

WHEREAS, Total sales for food retail sector in the Capital Area was nearly \$7.6 billion in 2015, however, only 1% of food consumed Travis County is produced locally;

WHEREAS, the population of Austin MSA grew by 32.4% from 2009 to 2019 compared to 16.9% in Texas and 6.9% in the US;[i]

WHEREAS, the median home value in Travis County grew by 19.4% between 2012 and 2017;[ii]

WHEREAS, the food insecure population grew by 26.3% in Austin's 5 county MSA from 12.4% pre-COVID to 15.7% during COVID, and the child food insecurity population grew by 37% from 16.9% pre-COVID to 23.2% during COVID;[iii]

WHEREAS, More than 1 in 6 Central Texas residents were food insecure in 2017, and 12.9% of Travis County residents experienced food insecurity in 2018, and the 2020 projection is 18%;

WHEREAS, Before COVID-19, 2018 data show more than 1 in 8 Travis County residents and 1 in 6 Travis County children were food insecure;

Whereas there has been a 38% increase in child food insecurity during COVID to 1 in 4 Travis County children;

WHEREAS 41% of food insecure people in Travis County do not qualify for Federal Assistance (SNAP, WIC, School Meal Programs);

WHEREAS, The City of Austin (CoA) with regional food system stakeholders participated in a two-day facilitated workshop in 2019 that explored Food Systems Inequities in the U.S. and Central Texas: Root Causes and Historical Analysis and concluded that those negatively impacted must be involved in all decision making processes in order to authentically center equity;

WHEREAS, Communities of color, low-income, and rural populations are most negatively impacted by the existing food system due to systemic racism, wealth, and structural inequity, and face the greatest barriers to accessing healthy, affordable foods and now water, as well as economic opportunity;

WHEREAS, the Austin/Travis County Food System Plan would take a comprehensive approach and involve the many major local planning functions such as land use, economic development, transportation, environmental sustainability and resilience, watershed protection, parks and recreation, public safety, health and human services, and agricultural preservation;

WHEREAS, A Food System Action Plan that meets the needs of all residents of Austin/Travis County requires meaningful input and participation from a diverse range of stakeholders;

WHEREAS, The timing of an equity-centered Austin/Travis County Food System Action Plan/Playbook supported by the CoA and Travis County will impact and integrate with planning processes and policy priorities already underway such as the Austin Climate Equity Plan and Austin City Council 'Resilient ATX' Resolution No. 20210325-111;

WHEREAS, A comprehensive Austin/Travis County Food System Plan is needed/overdue that centers on equity and aligns with the City and Travis County economic, social, and environmental priorities;

WHEREAS, The CoA with public, private, entrepreneurial, and community partnerships has invested in critical food system-related initiatives that provide a foundation for a regional food plan including: the Good Food Purchasing Program, a comprehensive Food Environment Analysis, a state and local food system-related public policy scan, mapping and protocols for urban agriculture on public lands, updated permitting processes for food production, markets and emergency relief, and investment in food access initiatives with multiplier effects for the local economy (e.g., SNAP enrollment, mobile markets, new local production, employment, and distribution models);

WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic and Winter Storm Uri revealed numerous gaps for addressing food and water in the CoA emergency planning process;

WHEREAS, Food Sector participants and resources, already diminished and disproportionately affected by COVID-19 economic, labor, supply chain, and revenue effects, were asked to strategically and tactically lead food efforts and provide meals to feed the City of Austin, with no plan or crisis resources, and at great risk to their enterprises;

WHEREAS, City Council sent a letter to the City Manager requesting the city and county be more responsive to food and water needs during winter storm Uri;

WHEREAS, Food Sector owners contacted City offices and EOC requesting the city and county be more responsive and proactive in earlier planning for food and water needs during winter storm Uri;

WHEREAS, The City of Austin can take the lead in creating a Food System Plan while communicating with neighboring counties doing parallel work with their cities to create regional momentum and change;

WHEREAS, Opportunities for federal, state and county funding may be contingent on a demonstrated commitment at the local level via match funds;

WHEREAS, An equitable food system plan is needed to ensure efficient and equitable distribution of anticipated resources that will be received under the American Rescue Plan (ARP);

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board recommends that the City of Austin and Travis County support and fund an Austin/Travis County Food System Plan that includes sustainable operational structures, policies, playbooks, food sector resilience planning, programs and financing. The Plan should be developed through an equitable, inclusive process that includes the convening of community partners led by a Community Advisory Board, made up of community and business members impacted by food system inequities that will result in measurable equitable food-related outcomes.

These investments will result in a community-supported Food System Action Plan with specific proposed recommendations, policies, and processes by public, private, entrepreneurial, and institutional entities that address the legacy of historical injustices related to food production, processing, distribution, access, self-sufficiency, ownership, and waste.

MOREOVER BE IT RESOLVED:

That in order for a food system plan to achieve concrete equitable structures and racially equitable outcomes, a one-time investment of \$400,000 for FY2022 must include:

Food & Equity Plan Coordination/Administrative Support (\$125,000)

Provide overall coordination and support to guide the process. Work includes coordinating all participants, organizing meetings, communication, grant writing for future funding, coordination with city/county departments, and development of a report outlining the food system plan. This also includes all costs for meeting spaces, outreach mechanisms and other meeting/event costs. This support can be led by a local, community-based organization with ties to the local food system.

Community Advisory Board (\$100,000)

The Community Advisory Board will reflect the Austin/Travis County Community. To ensure full participation in decision-making processes, particularly from those who have been most negatively impacted, board members with lived experience will be paid a stipend to cover the costs of participating.

Community Engagement (\$100,000)

Recruit and engage food system community ambassadors, similar to the program used for the Austin Climate Equity Plan. Ambassadors will be compensated for providing their own input for the plan development based on lived experience as well as sharing information with other community and business members and bringing community and business members into the conversation.

Equity Toolkit (\$10,000)

Development of an equity tool specific to the food system to use to evaluate all food system decision-making. The tool and the process to create it will stem from the Equity Tool used by the City of Austin's Equity Office, developed through a community-led process, to examine equity within city departments. The tool will take into account specific issues pertaining to the food system and will be able to be used to evaluate non-profits and other community-based organizations who play an integral role in the Austin/Travis County food system. The process includes initial development of the tool, managing the pilot phase, incorporating changes to the tool based on the pilot, and launch of the final tool.

Equity Kit Pilot (\$65,000)

Establish an application process to select 12 non-profits and community-based organizations to pilot the equity tool kit. Provide compensation to the 12 organizations to pilot the equity tool kit. Piloting the tool kit will include receiving technical assistance from the City of Austin to implement the tool kit and provide feedback.

[i] <https://www.austinchamber.com/economic-development/austin-profile/population/overview>

[ii] https://www.traviscountytx.gov/images/health_human_services/Docs/final-report-2013-2017-resident-movement.pdf

[iii] Feeding America Map the Meal Gap + COVID Projections (released October 2020).

Date of Approval: April 5th, 2021

Record of the vote: Approved 7-1; with Ryan Rosshirt off the dais and abstaining
Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edwin Martinez", with a stylized flourish at the end.

City of Austin, Office of Sustainability, Food Policy Manager/ ATCFPB Staff Liaison