



2024 SUMMARY AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY





A **food plan** provides an opportunity for local government to co-create a vision and actionable goals for the local food system alongside community members, farmers and farmworkers, food retail and service workers, students, small business owners, and other partners.

The Food System

The food system is the interconnected network of everything that happens with food—where and how it is grown, distributed, sold, consumed, wasted, or recovered. Globally, the food system is shaped by its stakeholders, practices, and the laws that regulate both. This food plan envisions the food system as five interconnected areas with food justice at the center:¹

- **Food Production:** Where our food comes from, including everything from farming to ranching to backyard gardening.
- **Food Processing & Distribution:** What happens to food from where it is grown to when it reaches your plate, including how food is moved and processed.
- **Food Markets & Retail:** Where food is sold, purchased, or provided cost-free.
- **Food Consumption & Access:** How we eat our food, who struggles to get enough food, and what impact our consumption has on our health.
- **Post-consumption & Food Waste:** What happens to the parts of food we don't eat and the impact of food waste on the environment.
- **Food Justice:** Seeking to ensure that the benefits and risks of where, what, and how food is grown, produced, transported, distributed, accessed, and eaten are shared fairly. It represents a transformation of the current food system, including but not limited to eliminating disparities and inequities.



This plan considers our local food system to include the 5-county Austin Metropolitan Statistical Area of Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties. However, the vision, objectives, goals, and strategies outlined in this plan are focused geographically on the City of Austin and Travis County.



Community Centered Process

At every stage, the food planning process aimed to center equity and the lived expertise of those most impacted by the current food system. Community members from all over Austin and Travis County dedicated time and energy to providing input and ensuring the final plan would be rooted in community wisdom and solutions.

Overall, we conducted more than 80 engagement activities with Austin and Travis County residents in three phases from January 2023 - May 2024:

- **PHASE 1:** Developing a Vision
- **PHASE 2:** Developing Goals and Strategies
- **PHASE 3:** Public Review and Ground Truthing

1,399

Participants were involved in the Community Advisory Committee, Community Food Ambassadors, Issue Area Group workshops, and other formal food plan meetings.

Of participants who shared demographic details: 46% identified as directly impacted, 19% lived in Travis County areas outside the City of Austin, and 13% participated in a language other than English.

2,226

Additional participants are estimated to have been involved in tabling events and presentations.

3,625

Total people are estimated to have participated in food plan engagement.



Food Plan Vision & Goals

Vision

We envision a just, accessible, and culturally diverse food system, built by undoing inequities, that supports and sustains inclusive thriving communities, healthy ecosystems, and solutions to climate change where everyone can reach their full potential now and for generations to come.



Goals

The community has developed and prioritized nine goals for achieving a just, accessible, and culturally diverse food system in Austin/Travis County.



Goal 1
Land



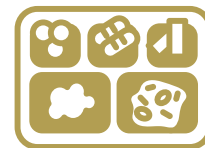
Goal 2
Ownership



Goal 3
Livelihoods



Goal 4
Preparedness



Goal 5
Institutions



Goal 6
Access



Goal 7
Food
Recovery



Goal 8
Pro-Climate,
Pro-Health
Food



Goal 9
Empower

Goal 1. Land



Expand community food production, preserve agricultural lands, and increase the amount of farmland dedicated to regenerative food production long-term in Austin/Travis County.

Key Fact

Between 2007 and 2012, approximately 5.4 acres of farmland were lost in Travis County every day. Then, from 2012 to 2017, about 16.8 acres of farmland were lost every day. Recently, between 2017 and 2022, around 13 acres of farmland were lost.²



What We Heard “”

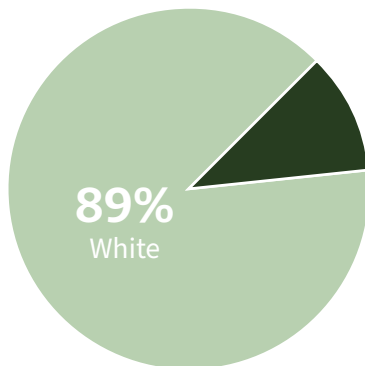
Preserve farmland close to Austin. Then, I would help support farmers by creating cooperative markets that would sell our produce, meats, and value-added products.

Goal 2. Ownership

Increase access to and stewardship of land for regenerative food production by increasing the number of Austin/Travis County farms that are owned by economically disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

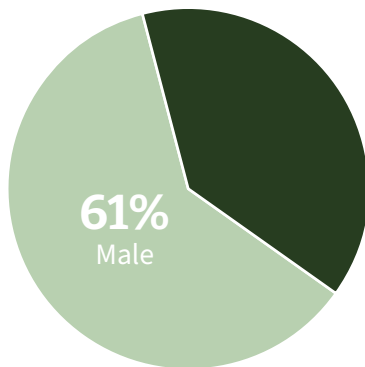
Key Fact

Travis County farm ownership does not reflect the demographics of the general population.³



11%

Of our farmers are of another race/ethnicity



39%

Of our farmers are female



What We Heard “”

[Our food system needs more] Native American indigenous crops grown locally in community farms for people to help grow and harvest themselves.

Goal 3. Livelihoods

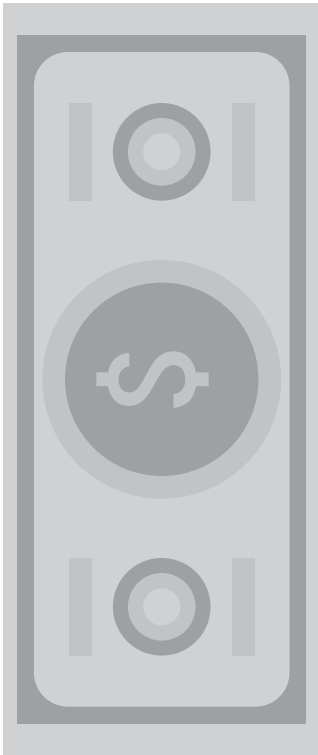


Improve farm worker and food worker livelihoods by ensuring a safety net, defining career pathways, expanding training opportunities, and strengthening opportunities for advancement for workers across the local food system.

Key Fact

The average wage for Travis County food service workers is \$15.45/hour. The City/County employee living wage is \$20.80 per hour. Almost half of food workers surveyed reported currently or having previously experienced hunger.⁴

\$20.80



City/County Employee Living Wage

\$15.45



Average Travis County Food Worker Wage



What We Heard “”

Ensure food service employees are paid a living wage.

Goal 4. Preparedness



Establish and fund a resilient, inclusive, and accessible emergency food provision system that ensures all community members, regardless of cultural background or medical needs, have access to safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food during disasters and emergencies.

Key Fact

Most major food distribution centers are located outside of Austin on the IH-35 corridor—the reliability of this highway during extreme weather events represents a crucial point of vulnerability.⁵



What We Heard “ ”

Emergency food shouldn't cause even more medical issues.

Working with grocery stores on backup generation should be a priority.

Goal 5. Institutions



Create more resilient and sustainable local supply chains by adopting values-aligned distribution and purchasing frameworks and increasing the percentage of institutional menus sourced locally.

Key Facts

Only about 0.06% of food consumed in Travis County is produced locally.⁶



What We Heard “ ”

More robust production and supply starts with easier distribution—subsidized markets and storage that small producers can grow into.

Goal 6. Access



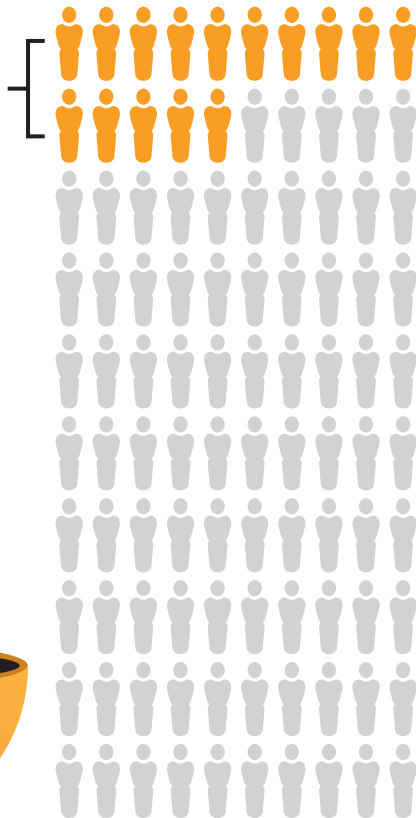
Expand access to nutritious and culturally relevant food in food distribution programs and food retail locations for residents of Austin/Travis County experiencing food insecurity or facing barriers to food access (proximity, mobility, income, and availability) with priority investment in areas experiencing high rates of food insecurity.

Key Facts

In 2022, 15% (187,990) of Travis County residents were food insecure, meaning they lack reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious food. This rate is higher than the national average of 13%.⁷

15%

of Travis County residents were food insecure in 2022



What We Heard “ ”

As a member of Austin's Asian American community, I would want to see a more equitable food system. This can manifest itself in the form of more culturally appropriate food and food distribution.

Goal 7. Food Recovery



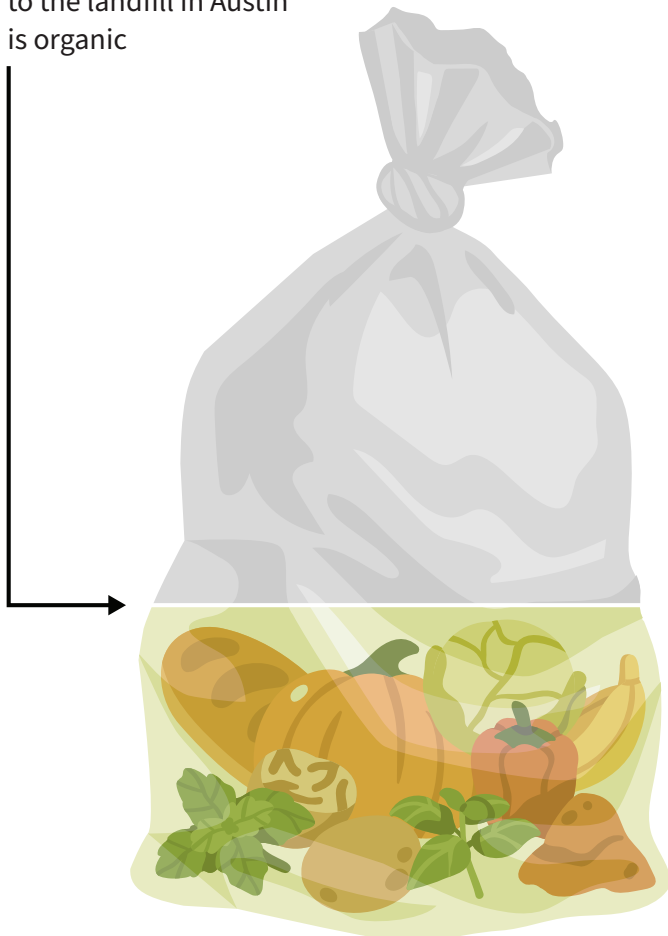
Increase the diversion of surplus food and non-edible food waste from the landfill to support a circular food economy, improve soil health, and reduce climate impact.

Key Facts

Nationally, organics make up about 31% of material going to landfill. In Austin, approximately 37% of material headed to the landfill is organic.⁸

37%

of material headed
to the landfill in Austin
is organic



What We Heard “”

I garden and often have more perishable veggies than I need. Would love to have an organized way to connect those veggies with someone who could use them.

Goal 8. Pro-climate, Pro-health Foods



Raise awareness of the benefits of foods that nourish our bodies and reduce the overall environmental impact of our food system while addressing barriers to access.

Key Facts

A 2023 study from the University of Oxford found that plant-based diets resulted in 75% fewer greenhouse gas emissions, 54% less water use, and 66% less biodiversity loss. In addition, plant-based diets have also been shown to support health, including a lower risk of developing coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and increased longevity.⁹

Plant-based Diet



-75%

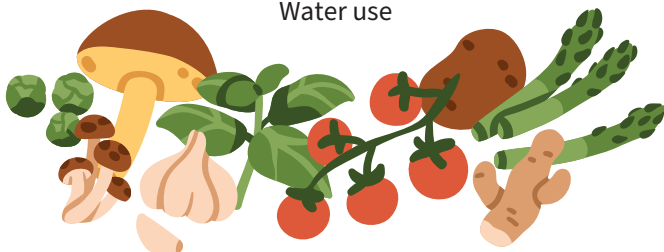
Greenhouse emissions

-66%

Biodiversity loss

-54%

Water use



What We Heard “ ”

I would encourage plant-based eating and climate-friendly diets that heal our bodies, cost less, and are good for the earth.

Goal 9. Empower

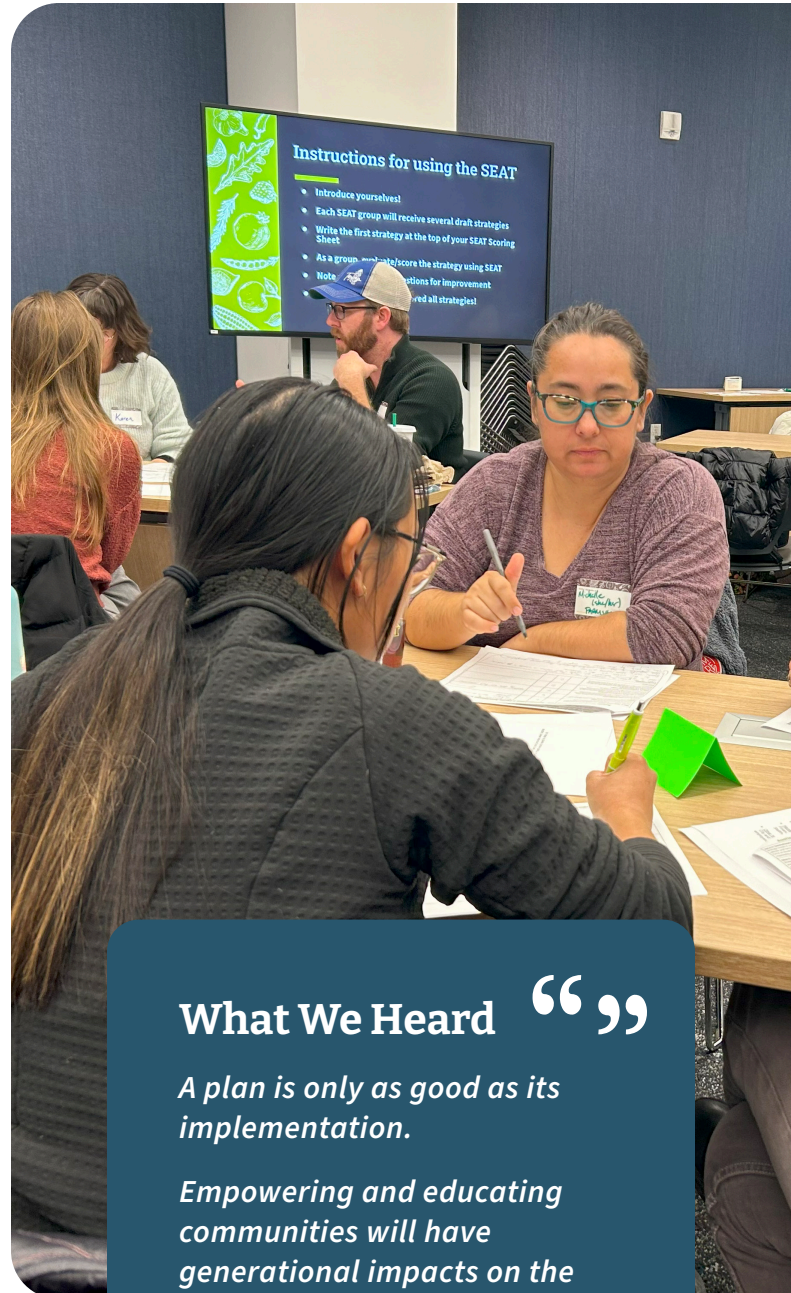


Develop community education, empowerment, and infrastructure to support effective implementation of the food plan as measured by increased funding, data collection, partnerships, and community participation in a local food system network.

Key Facts

In her 2023 report, *An Implementation Guide for the Austin/Travis County Food Plan*, researcher Stephanie Chupp offers five recommendations for successful implementation.¹⁰

1. Cultivate strong cross-sectoral, intergovernmental, and interdepartmental coordination.
2. Stimulate collective action toward a shared vision and goals.
3. Conduct place-based research and data gathering to inform strategies and measure progress.
4. Prioritize the most underserved communities.
5. Build resilience into implementation by fostering leadership building and change agency.



What We Heard “”

A plan is only as good as its implementation.

Empowering and educating communities will have generational impacts on the lives of many people.

I'm so excited to be in Austin at the beginning of a revolution of its food system.



Endnotes

- 1 Approved by the Community Advisory Committee, the guiding body providing oversight for the development of the plan.
- 2 Census of Agriculture (2022)
- 3 Census of Agriculture (2022)
- 4 Lightcast 2024.2 – QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed
- 5 Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment
- 6 Austin State of the Food System Report
- 7 Feeding America Map the Meal Gap Reports (2024)
- 8 Austin Resource Recovery (2016)
- 9 Summary Report of the EAT Lancet Commission (2019)
- 10 Stephanie Chupp (2023), “An Implementation Guide for the Austin/Travis County Food Plan”

Acknowledgments

The Austin/Travis County Food Plan would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of so many committed community members and partners. Our community showed up for this process and the plan’s supporters are more than we can name. We extend gratitude to each person who participated in the food planning process from January 2023 to October 2024.

AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY



— SUMMARY —