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AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY

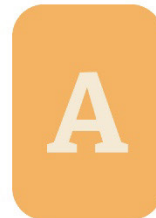
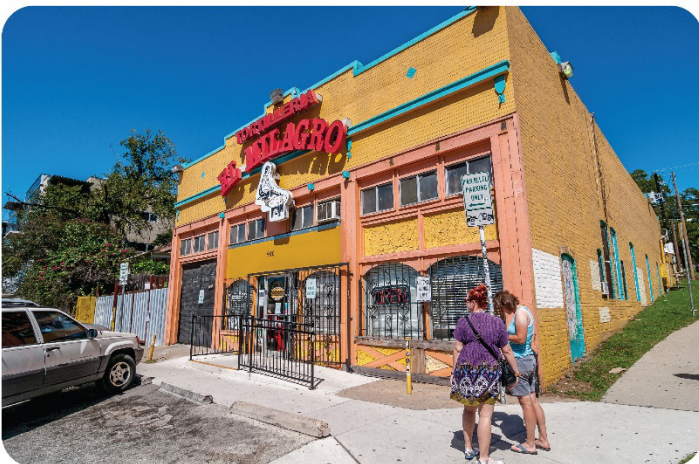
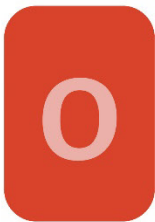


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Preface



Introductory Letter

Food connects us all. Every seed planted, garden tended, acre harvested, and plate served sparks a ripple effect, impacting the system that nourishes our community. From farmers and grocery store workers to families, chefs, and health providers, we're all part of this story. While the City of Austin and Travis County continue to grow, this food plan exists to move us toward ensuring everyone has access to the nutritious food that they need to thrive. We are working for a future where food is a fundamental human right.

The instability of the food system was widely felt in February 2021 when Winter Storm Uri arrived in Austin/Travis County during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. We experienced a multitude of emergencies, including food shortages, and while everyone was impacted, it was felt most acutely by marginalized communities already facing barriers to food access. In response, the City of Austin passed a resolution to develop a food plan to create a more healthy, just, and sustainable food system. As part of the resolution, a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was created to oversee the planning process. Our intention is to build a bigger, more inclusive table where everyone is invited to help forge a food system that works for all.

With the help of community organizations, Community Food Ambassadors, City and County staff, Community Health Workers, social workers, and skilled consultants, we talked with people at over seventy public gatherings, using methods like World Cafe Conversations, to engage people from many communities. Public listening sessions were held in community centers, libraries, food pantries, affordable housing centers, schools, health clinics, and farmers' markets. In-person and virtual meetings were held in English and Spanish, with interpretation offered in Vietnamese, Burmese, Arabic, Mandarin, and American Sign Language. Community members, some representing a variety of organizations or businesses and some representing themselves as individuals, also joined Issue Area Groups (IAGs) to inform the development of goals and strategies for this plan. The listening sessions and IAGs helped us learn about the challenges and barriers people face in our current food system. In a year and a half, community participants collectively logged over 2,500 hours building the food plan. While these gatherings gave way to insights, there were resonating echoes of an existing and growing food movement in Austin/Travis County and people are eager to participate.

The food plan is just the beginning– there's still work to be done. The plan can serve as a springboard for everyone in Austin and Travis County to jump in. We invite you to explore it, find your spark, and bring your unique perspective into this work. We believe there is a place for everyone to contribute to building a better food future, and we hope you will discuss the plan with your family, friends, and community. We envision a tomorrow brimming with hope, where more than just our basic needs are met and access to land, community, and nutritious, culturally-rooted food, is the norm.

Finally, we send our most heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed their time, expertise, lived experience, and passion to this plan. It's a testament to the collective power we hold in shaping a brighter future for Austin/Travis County.

-The Austin/Travis County Food Plan Community Advisory Committee

Acknowledgments

This plan would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of so many committed community members and partners. The Austin/Travis County community showed up for this process and its supporters are more than we can name. We extend gratitude all who participated in the food planning process and supported the food plan from January 2023 to October 2024, especially participants in the following groups:

- Community Advisory Committee
- Community Food Ambassadors
- Issue Area Group facilitators and participants
- Organizations that hosted food plan meetings or events
- City and County Executive Leadership Team
- Travis County Staff Task Force members
- Austin/Travis County Food Policy Board
- City/County/Consultant Project Team
- Equity and Community Circle Consultants
- Translators and Interpreters
- Participants in Story Gathering
- Other Food Plan Supporters

Food plan participants are listed by name in Appendix 2.

The Land and Water Acknowledgement below was drafted and approved by the Community Advisory Committee.

Land and Water Acknowledgment

As we delve into Austin/Travis County's food plan, it is essential to acknowledge the Indigenous peoples who have stewarded this land and water for generations. We recognize that Austin/Travis County occupies ancestral lands of the Tickanwa•tic¹ (Tonkawa)², the N'dee/N'nee/Ndé (Apache)³, the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo or Tigua⁴, the Lépai Ndé⁵ (Lipan Apache Tribe⁶), the Coahuiltecan⁷, the Nuh-muh-nuh⁸ (Comanche⁹), the Texas Band of Yaqui¹⁰ Indians, and other Indigenous peoples who have historically inhabited this region.

Their deep connection to the land, its resources, and sustainable practices provide a profound foundation for our understanding of food systems and environmental stewardship. As we strive to develop sustainable food initiatives in Austin/Travis County, we honor the enduring wisdom of these Indigenous communities and commit to learning from their traditional knowledge.

¹ Phonetic respelling: /Titch-kun-wha-titch/. (Source: [Tonkawa Tribe](#), 2024)

² Phonetic respelling: /Taang-kaa-wuh/

³ Phonetic respelling: /EN-dee/ N'dee/N'nee/Ndé are three variations of the word for “people” rather than “Apache.” Apache literally translates to “enemy,” and was the word used by colonizers to describe the N'dee/N'nee/Ndé people. (Source: [LatinA Republic](#), 2024,)

⁴ Phonetic respelling: /Ti.wa/

⁵ Pronunciation unknown

⁶ Phonetic respelling: /LEE.pən ə.PATCH.ee/ (Source: Division of Planetary Sciences, “[San Antonio Indigenous People's Pronunciation Guide](#),” 2024)

⁷ Phonetic respelling: /koh.ah.WEEL.teh.kan/ (Source: Division of Planetary Sciences, “[San Antonio Indigenous People's Pronunciation Guide](#),” 2024)

⁸ Phonetic respelling: /nuh-muh-nuh/

⁹ Phonetic respelling: /kə.MAN.chee/. (Source: Division of Planetary Sciences, “[San Antonio Indigenous People's Pronunciation Guide](#),” 2024)

¹⁰ Phonetic respelling: /ya.key/

May this acknowledgment serve as a reminder of our shared responsibility to honor and uplift Indigenous peoples and their ongoing resilience, as we work together towards a future of sustainable nourishment and harmony with the land.

It is crucial not only to honor the ancestral wisdom of Indigenous communities but also to confront the injustices and systemic genocide, slavery, and continuing inequity that have marginalized Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color and their communities, impacting their access to food, water sovereignty, and cultural preservation. Members of the Community Advisory Committee pledge to actively engage in restoring and honoring the rights, voices, and contributions of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color to shape a more just and sustainable food system. Members of the CAC believe that includes acknowledging and actively pursuing consultation with communities historically displaced, currently being displaced, and/or at risk of future displacement to co-develop strategies with City and County officials to enable sites to be legally stewarded by members of these communities. This food plan must be followed by concrete actions to address financial and physical barriers, the depletion of farmland, and the loss of historical knowledge—all of which hinder equitable access to nourishing, culturally relevant food.

Plan Authorization

In June 2021, Austin City Council passed Resolution No. 20210610-039 directing the City Manager to develop a five-year Food Vision and Action Plan (the food plan) for Austin/Travis County. The City of Austin Office of Sustainability was tasked with overseeing the achievement of this goal. In December 2022, the Travis County Commissioners Court voted to affirm Travis County’s participation in the process to ensure that the plan is inclusive of all Travis County residents, including the unique needs of those who live outside City of Austin boundaries. Thank you to the Austin City Council and Travis County Commissioners Court for your leadership in recognizing the need and taking action to create the conditions for this planning effort to occur.

The Austin/Travis County Food Plan was adopted by the Community Advisory Committee in May 2024, with further revisions approved in June and September 2024. Austin City Council then unanimously adopted the plan on October 10, 2024. On October 29, 2024, the Travis County Commissioners Court approved a Resolution of support for the plan.

Introduction



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:¹¹



- **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 five-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.

Why Do Food Systems Matter?

For Austin/Travis County to be a thriving, healthy, and just community, it must have an equitable, sustainable, and resilient local food system. Growing, selling, eating, and recovering food locally sustains employment and creates new jobs, strengthens the economy, improves public health, and reduces transportation impacts. Yet, more than an economic resource or a basic necessity, food is also medicine, joy, culture, memory, and place. Varying across cultures

¹¹ Approved by the Community Advisory Committee, the guiding body providing oversight for the development of the plan.

and countries, food has been at the center of traditional and spiritual gatherings, holidays, and mourning practices for centuries. The food we eat reflects who we are and where we come from. When people talk about what makes Austin and Travis County unique, many of the things most celebrated are related to food—barbeque, breakfast tacos, food trucks, and other special food offerings. Food connects us not only to places but to each other.

Why Food Planning?

The future of Austin and Travis County’s food system and its impact on each of us is guided by the actions we take today. Planning helps us prioritize and coordinate the activities we take as a community to strengthen our local food system. A **food system plan** defines a vision and outlines interconnected, forward-thinking activities designed to strengthen a community’s food system.

The food planning process 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. While the City of Austin and Travis County will “own” some plan strategies and support initial organizing on others, this plan is intended to be a community plan, owned, and implemented by Austin and Travis County community members and other key food system stakeholders. Importantly, many goals and strategies in this plan build on existing actions and initiatives already underway and supported by nonprofit and community-based organizations, grassroots and mutual aid efforts, the private sector, philanthropic entities, academic institutions, and others.

The food system is not only impacted by individual actors and organizations, but nearly every aspect of the food system is shaped by some form of regulation, each adopted and enforced at different levels of government. **Food system policy** is the study of the laws and regulations that govern the food we grow, forage, raise, process, distribute, buy, sell, cook, eat, recover, and throw away. Food policy is controlled by a legislative patchwork across various governmental agencies, leading to gaps in communication. The United States Department of Agriculture maintains the colossal role of regulating our food, but since the early 2000s, municipal governments have increasingly gained agency within the food system by hiring dedicated food policy staff. Food policy work spans sustainability, economic development, public health, equity, and other areas, leaving staff with the need to create more coordinated practices. Comprehensive food system plans are a step in this direction.

With both the positive and negative impacts of prior policy to the food system in mind, the City of Austin Office of Sustainability published the [State of the Food System Report](#) in 2022 to provide a starting point for understanding Austin’s current food system through relevant data points, historical context, and recent policy decisions. The report served as a baseline assessment of our current local food system—generally considered the first step in a food system planning process. It is referenced throughout this food plan, especially in the Background & Community Impact preface to each plan goal.

What this Plan is and Isn't

The purpose of the Austin/Travis County Food Plan is to lay out a strategic approach, co-created with the community, required to transform our food system.

What this document IS NOT

- A specific roadmap. This document outlines the priorities that the community recommends should be addressed over the plan's five-year time frame, but it does not outline every step to achieve the goals. Collaborative partnerships and/or work groups made up of community members representing all sectors of the food system will be needed to implement the plan strategies. The critical first steps for each strategy are listed in this plan. As the plan advances, the approach will focus on available resources and current conditions to make progress on implementing plan strategies.
- Something that can be delivered by one organization alone. It is essential that this plan is implemented in partnership by stakeholders across the food system, as meaningful system-wide change can't be achieved by any one organization working in isolation.
- Simply a municipal plan – it is the community's plan. That means that although there will be strategies that the City and County lead and support, this plan also seeks to engage community-based organizations, school districts and higher education entities, small and large businesses, faith communities, grassroots initiatives, and individual community members in plan implementation.
- A document that will be filed on a shelf and never used.

What this document IS

- The community's vision and core values for our local food system.
- A set of priorities for the next five years developed by city- and county-wide partners from a variety of backgrounds across the food system.
- A “plan of plans”—a plan that honors where local agencies and actors have previously identified promising strategies to advance our food system, which are critical to achieving our food plan vision.
- An active, living document that will serve to ignite and mobilize a local food movement centered around the implementation of the food plan.

Plan Framework & Approach

The “be it resolved” section of Austin City Council Resolution No. 20210610-039, which directs the City of Austin to complete a food system plan begins with this statement: *The City of Austin is committed to rectifying the racial*

disparities that plague our community's food system and strengthening our community food system infrastructure so we can endure future disasters and protect the health of every household in our community.

Similarly, the December 2022 agenda request for the Travis County Commissioner's Court centers food justice in its justification for Travis County's engagement in the food planning process: *A clearly defined Food Plan can provide shared vision, goals, actions, and metrics, for achieving a more just and sustainable food system.*

With these directives in mind, the planning team aimed to incorporate the Healthy Food Policy Project's four working principles¹² into all aspects of the food planning process:

- **Address Power Imbalance:** Work to remove or overcome historical and ongoing barriers to inclusion and the impact of systemic and structural racism;
- **Build Trust:** Establish long-term relationships with community and base-building organizations and/or residents;
- **Take an Anti-Racism Stance:** Intentionally address institutional and structural racism, white supremacy, and discrimination and exclusion; and
- **Use an Asset-Based Approach:** Remove a deficit-based approach and apply an asset-based framework to food access policy work, identifying and building upon residents' strengths and providing a framework for community ownership.

The following are practices utilized in the Austin/Travis County food planning process to address the above four principles.

Addressing Power Imbalances

The project team supporting the food plan development was made up of City of Austin Office of Sustainability staff, Travis County staff, and the consultant team led by Woollard Nichols Torres Consulting.¹³ The project team regularly talked with a City/County Executive Leadership Team and a Travis County Task Force. Participation in these groups allowed City and County staff and executives to provide feedback during the planning process.

Recognizing the historical power imbalance between government and communities in planning efforts, the project team strived to prioritize community ownership of both the plan and the planning process. With guidance from the Austin/Travis County Food Policy Board, a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was created as the oversight body of the food planning process. The committee was composed of a blend of community members and other food system stakeholders. The CAC decided on and approved key milestones of the planning process, including a CAC charter with equity guiding principles/framework, the CAC leadership structure, the food plan Issue Area Group structure, and the

¹² Healthy Food Policy Project (2024): Food Access Policy Change Through Authentic Resident Engagement.

¹³ See the Acknowledgments section for a full list of plan participants.

food plan structure/table of contents. The CAC approved the final plan before it was presented to Austin City Council and Travis County Commissioners Court and shared with the public.

Key planning activities were implemented by groups of community stakeholders, including CAC members, Community Food Ambassadors, and Issue Area Group participants. To address the historical power imbalance between government and community, the project budget allowed for any Community Advisory Committee member, Community Food Ambassador, and/or Issue Area Group participant to receive compensation for the time they dedicated to working on the food plan, in addition to receiving transportation, language interpretation, technology and childcare support, if needed.

Building Trust

Building trust between the City and County and community members was a major principle of all public engagement activities conducted during the planning process. During each phase of the public engagement, the project team engaged in a community building approach; engagement activities were designed with a focus on building relationships and centering people with direct lived expertise in the food system. The public engagement project team prioritized both engaging communities and populations in Austin/Travis County who have been most negatively impacted by the food system and assisting with connections to food resources whenever possible.

To engage as many people as possible in a variety of languages and settings, the team took a mixed approach of both hosting specific food plan events and attending other community events. When the project team organized food plan events, food was always served and accommodations were available (e.g., childcare, language interpretation, transportation support). Incentives for participation were provided to participants and/or organizations supporting public engagement when deemed necessary. When participating in partner events, the team focused on creating awareness around the food plan while listening to the challenges and hopes people had around food in their lives. The



Community Food Ambassadors

The Community Food Ambassador (CFA) program, heavily inspired by the Community Climate Ambassador Program, Promotoras, and Community Health Worker programs, provided pivotal support to the food plan by engaging with the community at large. The goal was to not only boost plan outreach but to also develop leadership skills among the selected individuals. In early 2023, after receiving over 150 applications, 8 passionate and thoughtful individuals were selected to be part of the ambassador cohort. All of them were true champions within their communities and wanted the opportunity to participate in a large-scale project. Many had backgrounds in community engagement and strong ties to local advocacy groups and nonprofits. CFAs collectively clocked over 550 hours, attended dozens of workshops and seminars, supported over 27 outreach events, and helped engage over 1,100 neighbors in food planning work.

simple act of listening proved meaningful to participants and project team members and resulted in thousands of opinions and comments which were used to craft the plan itself.

Of special note: the Community Food Ambassador (CFA) team provided critical support for the food plan’s approach to building trust with communities. Eight CFAs served as liaisons from the planning process to their community networks, supporting the food plan public engagement events, tabling at additional community events, and collecting feedback from individuals and families. The CFAs acted as invaluable assets to the food plan, supporting the creation of lasting relationships with our community beyond the development of the food plan document.

Taking an Anti-Racism Stance

The State of the Food System Report defines *food justice* as “seeking to ensure that the benefits and risks of where, what, and how food is grown, produced, transported, distributed, accessed, eaten, and recovered are shared fairly, and representing the transformation of the current food system, including but not limited to eliminating disparities and inequities.” The Community Advisory Committee affirmed that adopting an anti-racist approach for the planning process was a key value and a clear demonstration of dedication to prioritizing food justice.

Early in the process, the City and County identified a priority to ground planning participants in a shared understanding of the impact of racism and colonization on the food system and to help to center the core values and concepts of equity. A series of day-long Equity Grounding Workshops facilitated by Dr. Tane Ward and Associates were held in early 2023. All members of the food planning team, including the project team, CAC, CFAs, Issue Area Group participants, Executive Leadership Team, and other interested community members, were encouraged to participate.

In addition, Full Humanity Consulting facilitated a series of community circles to build relationships and trust in ongoing work and center lived expertise throughout the planning process.



Equity Workshops

Tane Ward & Associates was selected by the City of Austin to design, plan, and facilitate five workshops that helped to center the core values and concepts of equity, while developing Austin’s first-ever Food Plan. The workshops helped the project team develop a shared understanding of oppressive policies and practices that have shaped Austin’s current food system while also celebrating culture and healing and creating a vision for the world we want to live in and a look towards the future.

Image: The White Shaman Mural (an Indigenous pictorial narrative along the Lower Pecos River, near Del Rio, Texas) was referenced as inspiration for the food plan during the equity workshops.

Using an Asset-Based Approach

The food plan project team used an asset-focused approach to the plan's development by fostering an atmosphere of co-creation and iteration throughout the planning process. The Community Advisory Committee developed the Vision, Values, and Objectives for the food plan. Issue Area Group participants were crucial plan collaborators – they committed to attending four 3-hour workshops, reviewing public engagement feedback and other existing resources, and helping to draft and refine plan goals and strategies. A team of 12 facilitators conducted 20 total issue area group workshops in collaboration with 168 community stakeholders.

The passion and engagement of community stakeholders proved to be one of the plan's biggest assets. They participated in the Community Advisory Committee, Issue Area Groups, and/or as Community Food Ambassadors for more than 3,000 hours contributed to the planning process!

Other key measures of success in the plan public engagement include:

- Engaged 1,399 participants involved in formal food plan meetings and an estimated additional 2,226 participants in tabling events and presentations for a total estimated engagement of 3,625 participants
- Received 4,332 comments through various methods
- Conducted 87 engagement activities



Community Circles

Full Humanity Circle Keepers began efforts in the Spring of 2023 to build relationships and create space for people of the global majority to contribute to the Austin/Travis County food plan by offering Community Circles. Circles have been used by Indigenous peoples to connect in community for collective care and problem-solving and deepen conversations through storytelling to uplift experiences and develop a shared vision for a just and sustainable food plan. The food plan's Community Circles aimed to gather people, both involved in the project team as well the general public, in deeper conversations about food, equity, and their own personal history. The Circles also hosted movie screenings, sharing of stories, games, presentations, and cooking classes, highlighting Native American traditions thanks to the Central Texas Cherokee Township. Between April 2022 and March 2024, 6 community circles were conducted with over 100 community members with connections to more than 20 community partner organizations participating.

A Plan of Plans

Although this is the first food system plan in Austin/Travis County, food-related issues have emerged in many previous local planning processes. However, some previously identified solutions have not been implemented. In order to build on existing momentum and resource allocation, this plan identifies and incorporates existing strategies from other local and regional planning processes into the plan goals and strategies. Considering this plan to be a “Plan of Plans” provides a valuable framework for implementation as it could allow many departments and entities to work under shared goals and help align related food initiatives across different departments and institutions. The following documents were used as reference during the food planning process:¹⁴

- Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment (2023)
- Our Parks Our Future (2020 - 2030)
- Austin Public Health Strategic Plan (2020-2025)
- Strategic Housing Blueprint (2017)
- Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan (2012)
- Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (2019)
- Watershed Protection Strategic Plan (2016)
- Land, Water & Transportation Plan (2014)
- Community Health Improvement Plan CHA/CHIP (2018)
- Austin Independent School District Sustainability Plan (2016)
- Austin Resource Recovery Comprehensive Plan (2023)
- Water Forward Plan (2018)
- Travis County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2020 – 2025)
- Travis County Consolidated Plan, and Action Plan PY29-23
- Austin Climate Equity Plan (2021)
- Reimagining Public Safety (2021)
- Travis County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, Basic Plan (2021)
- Travis County Community Impact Report (2022)
- Travis County Climate Action Plan (2020)
- Travis County Strategic Plan 2023- 2028 (DRAFT)
- 2020 Food Policy Board Recommendations
- Austin Good Food Purchasing Program Overview (2016 – 2023).

In addition, this plan aims to connect to other regional, national, and international food plans. The City of Austin has signed on to the following global food initiatives:

- [The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#)
- [The Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration](#)

¹⁴ See Appendix 8 for a full list of how strategies identified in the above plans align with goals and strategies identified in the Food Plan.

Food Plan Oversight



The Austin/Travis County Food Plan Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was selected in collaboration between the Austin/Travis County Food Policy Board and the project team as the oversight body of the food planning process and comprised a blend of community members and other food system stakeholders. Participation on the CAC was an open application process, and selection of twenty-seven CAC Members prioritized diverse participation across food system areas with an emphasis on lived experience of the direct and often negative impacts of the food system. The CAC held regular meetings over the course of the planning process, starting in January 2023. One of the first tasks that the Community Advisory Committee accomplished was to develop a charter for their work to outline the CAC's goals, structure, planning, and decision-making process, and the way the CAC will work on planning and implementation.

CAC Mission Statement

The CAC's mission statement articulates how the Community Advisory Committee agreed to work together during the planning process.

The CAC commits to create a regional food plan that brings together individuals, organizations, and local government; reflects diverse values, perspectives, and needs; and fosters a healthy, equitable, economically thriving, and environmentally regenerative food system. The CAC will work in a way that strengthens the community's ability to achieve that plan.



CAC Consensus-Based Decision Making

After the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was formed, the group engaged in a process to determine how to make decisions. The CAC decided on a consensus-based approach and developed a set of agreements to define supportive ways of participating. To move the plan to completion, the CAC then defined the scope of key decisions and milestones. City of Austin staff also made trainings and technical assistance on consensus-based decision making available to CAC members. A CAC member experienced with consensus-based decision making offered informal support to those taking on leadership roles, which helped those with less experience in the process to adapt. At each meeting, the group refined the process. Sharing background material related to each decision as early as possible was helpful. When necessary, decisions were postponed to clarify aspects of the proposal or to address concerns. Those not present at the meeting were given the opportunity to participate asynchronously via a technology platform called Loomio, to achieve the required level of participation. By building agreement early in the process, proposals were reviewed quickly. The use of consensus enabled those in the CAC to address differences of opinion in a highly productive way. Through support, training, and compromise, the CAC found a way to build power in a more horizontal way.

Image: Members of the CAC and Project Team

Values

The CAC also undertook an effort to develop the Sustainability & Equity Assessment Tool (SEAT) to ensure that equity and sustainability would be built into every strategy of the food plan (see Appendix 3 for the full SEAT). All strategies in the final food plan will have been evaluated based on these 12 values developed by the CAC.

Sustainability & Equity Assessment Tool (SEAT) Values¹⁵

- **Value 1: Equity & Justice:** Strategy ensures that essential goods and services, including food and green spaces, are affordable, culturally relevant, and accessible to all.
- **Value 2: Climate and Environmental Impact:** Strategy acts to address climate change and protect the environment through sustainable practices that prioritize renewable energy, minimize pollution and waste, support regenerative food production, conserve, and restore natural resources.
- **Value 3: Health:** Strategy promotes physical and mental well-being, with a focus on preventative care and ensures that all people have enough affordable, nutritious food.
- **Value 4: Labor/Economy:** Strategy ensures economic justice so that low-income communities and communities of color are prioritized in the benefits of the strategy and are protected from any potential negative consequences.
- **Value 5: Culture :** Strategy emphasizes the importance of cultural diversity.
- **Value 6: Resilience/Disaster Response:** Strategy prioritizes growing a strong, resilient food network and supply chain capable of responding to climate & other emergencies. Strategy elevates marginalized communities by developing and strengthening the skills, abilities, and resources that a community needs to survive, adapt, and thrive.
- **Value 7: Land Access:** Strategy increases farmland accessibility and affordability, reduces the loss of farmland, increases soil conservation and land conservation, and/or invests in affordable and accessible properties to promote local food businesses.
- **Value 8: Generational Impact:** Strategy invests in creating a fair and healing food system aiming to address past harms and bring positive change for future generations. Focus on those hurt most by the current food system, including those impacted by generations of food trauma and food insecurity.
- **Value 9: Community Engagement & Policy:** Strategy invests in empowering communities to come together to feel a shared sense of responsibility and power in reshaping the local food system.

¹⁵ These values were used to evaluate draft strategies at the Food Plan SEAT Workshops.

- **Value 10: Innovation & Education:** Strategy focuses on using technology, research, and science, while gaining community support. It also involves educating and providing resources for those involved in and impacted by the food system.
- **Value 11: Zero Waste & Resource Efficiency:** Strategy prevents waste and promotes a circular economy (a way of using things so nothing is wasted) across all parts of the food system and focuses on optimizing the use of resources and promoting conservation to ensure their highest and best use.
- **Value 12: Implementation & Impact:** Strategy is practical and doable, with a clear path to Identifying resources or people who can help get funding or advocate for the strategy. It is clear what needs to be done in the short-term (three to five years) as well as long-term objectives for the future.



Living Our Values in Food Plan Meetings

The City of Austin Office of Sustainability and Travis County staff involved in the Issue Area Groups (IAG) knew before the first meeting that food is the best way to bring people together. The team resolved to serve great meals at every IAG meeting, but quickly realized that we were missing the mark. IAG members were sharing ideas about dietary accommodations for both people and the climate, but the food we were serving didn't align with those ideas. The team agreed that we would move to a plant-based default ordering system with a focus on supporting locally-owned businesses, whenever possible. Plant-based default menus include entirely plant-based foods, with the option for individuals to request animal products. We used an online ordering platform that allowed us to search restaurants by vegetarian and vegan options, and additionally by ownership status, such as veteran-, Black-, and/or woman-owned businesses. Following ample praise by IAG members, the Office of Sustainability adopted a department-wide practice to order plant-based default menus for all Office meetings or events where food would be served. By supporting local businesses and demonstrating that plant-based menus can be diverse and delicious, we hope to encourage others to make pro-climate and pro-health choices.

Food Plan Vision & Objectives



Parts of the Food Plan

This plan consists of four primary components, all of which are connected: vision, objectives, goals, and strategies. As indicated in the table below, each part of the food plan is designed to support the vision.

As stewards of the planning process, the CAC also took the initiative to draft a vision statement and overarching objectives for the plan.

Vision

The vision describes the shared aim of the food plan, an agreed-upon future the community is moving toward.

PARTS OF THE FOOD PLAN



Food Plan 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.

Objectives

The food plan has seven objectives, or the desired end results to achieve the vision:

- Sustain and restore living ecosystems, including air, soil, water, and biodiversity.
- Invest in an equitable local food economy and workforce, including strengthening local food production, agriculture, processing & distribution, and food recovery.
- Improve emergency food distribution preparedness and response.
- Strengthen food supply chains to support community health and nutrition, the well-being of workers, the environment, and animal welfare.
- Support health and eradicate food insecurity through equitable access to nutritious and culturally relevant food.
- Act as a climate solution, considering the food system from field to fork and beyond.
- Build collective community power and coordination to strengthen the local food justice movement towards the fundamental human right to food.

Goals

The community has developed and prioritized nine goals aligned with food plan objectives for achieving a just, accessible, and culturally diverse food system in Austin/Travis County. The goals are intentionally broad in scope, as they are meant to be inclusive and encompass a wide range of related strategies. The goals and strategies that comprise this plan were developed and shaped by 168 committed community members who participated in thematic Issue Area Groups over several months. Issue Area Groups completed a series of four workshops in order to build an understanding of the food system, envision goals, prioritize strategies, and refine goals and strategies. Issue Area Groups and the planning team relied on feedback from community engagement efforts and previous work done by the City, County, and community. The plan was also shaped by a thorough review of existing City, County, and community plans, initiatives, and work, harnessing the learnings from previous local planning processes and other national and international municipal food plans.

Good to know:

- The goals are aligned with food plan objectives.
- Some objectives have more than one associated goal.

Goal Alignment with Objectives

Objective	Aligned Goals
Sustain and restore living ecosystems including air, soil, water, and biodiversity.	Goal 1: Expand community food production, preserve agricultural lands, and increase the amount of farmland dedicated to regenerative food production long-term in Austin/Travis County.



Utilizing Liberatory Design Practices in Plan Meetings & Workshops

A Liberatory Design framework was utilized to attempt to bring people together who collectively hold the pieces needed to engage the food system from many angles at once in order to recognize the bigger picture and make decisions that benefit the whole food system, not just one part of it. The food plan intentionally utilized the following Liberatory Design mindsets in our approach to designing public engagement opportunities, Community Advisory Committee meetings, issue area group workshops, and other food plan events: build relational trust; practice self-awareness; recognize oppression; embrace complexity; focus on human values; seek liberatory collaboration; work with fear and discomfort; attend to healing; work to transform power; exercise creative courage; take action to learn; and share, don't sell.

Objective**Aligned Goals**

Invest in an equitable local food economy and workforce, including strengthening local food production, agriculture, processing and distribution, and food recovery.

Goal 2: 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.



Goal 3: 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.



Improve emergency food distribution preparedness and response.

Goal 4: 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 relevant food during disasters and emergencies.



Strengthen food supply chains to support community health and nutrition and the well-being of workers, the environment, and animal welfare.

Goal 5: 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.



Support health and eradicate food insecurity through equitable access to nutritious and culturally relevant food.

Goal 6: 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.



Act as a climate solution, considering the food system from field to fork and beyond.

Goal 7: 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.



Objective	Aligned Goals
	<div>Goal 8: 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.</div> <div></div>
Build collective community power and coordination to strengthen the local food justice movement towards the fundamental human right to food.	<div>Goal 9: 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.</div> <div></div>

Strategies

Strategies are specific actions that will be taken to attain each goal. Community members participating in the Issue Area Groups from October 2023 to March 2024, along with input from the project team and other City and County staff, developed and prioritized 61 strategies to achieve the food plan goals. All strategies were reviewed and refined using the Sustainability and Equity Assessment Tool developed by the Community Advisory Committee. Note that most of the plan strategies focus on system-level solutions rather than individual-level solutions because those were the actions that community members identified as being critical to transform the local food system.

Food Plan Goals & Strategies



Each plan goal is listed in the section below, followed by these additional components:

- Background & Community Impact
- Key Definitions
- Available Data Indicators
- Potential New Data Indicators to be Developed
- Strategies Related to the Goal

A number of data sources inform the Background & Community Impact preface to each Goal, including the 2022 State of the Food System Report and the 2023 Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment, as well as additional data from the City of Austin Office of Sustainability, Austin Resource Recovery, the Central Texas Food Bank, the LBJ School of Public Affairs and the Dell Medical School, both at the University of Texas at Austin.

Key definitions listed under each goal are those that are directly relevant to the goal; all definitions are included in the plan Glossary in Appendix 1.

The available data indicators rely on existing data compiled and updated in the Central Texas Food System Dashboard hosted by the Central Texas Food Bank, as well as other key publicly available data sources such as the Travis County Snapshot from the American Community Survey and the Travis County Poverty Brief. In addition, potential new data indicators are offered for some of the goals. These are data that do not yet exist but may be useful to develop strategies for collecting as a part of plan implementation. These data indicators are included to inform the development of targets to measure the success of each goal during the plan implementation phase.

Only the strategy itself is listed in the plan narrative.

Appendix 5 includes additional implementation details for each strategy, including the following:

- Food System Areas Impacted
- Convening Entity



Statement on Water

Austin, Travis County, and all of Central Texas has long struggled with its relationship with water. The flow of water across the landscape over millennia shaped the ground we walk on, and the water that didn't fall from the sky shaped the kinds of food humans have eaten, long before colonization, and to this very day. The availability of water has defined our local food system. The City's Water Forward Plan references the likelihood for severe droughts every ten years over the next century. How should we think about not just agriculture in Central Texas, but all of the inputs that impact our food system? Water conservation strategies are currently underway, but additional work needs to be done in the following areas:

- Focus on water conservation for agriculture, backyard, school, and community gardens referencing guidelines such as those found in the City of Austin's Grow Green Program
- Explore use of greywater in residential landscapes
- Explore 'reclaimed' water for agriculture and connect to the City of Austin's Purple Pipe Program where appropriate
- School and community gardens need more infrastructure support (i.e., cisterns with filtration and regular maintenance)

- Critical First Steps/Key Considerations
- Estimated Timeline
- Necessary Resources
- Peer Community Examples

A Note on Strategies Related to Populations Who are Underserved or Historically Disadvantaged

This plan recognizes historical systemic inequities that have been built into and continued for generations within Austin and Travis County. Many specific populations, communities, and geographic areas have experienced disproportionate challenges related to the food system, which will be considered during implementation to determine where and how to take the most urgent action to repair and revolutionize the food system. Populations facing disproportionate challenges and disparate outcomes in Austin and Travis County include:

- Black, Indigenous, Hispanic/Latine, Asian, Pacific Islanders, and other People of Color who have faced longstanding racial and ethnic discrimination
- Immigrant and refugee communities, including people who are undocumented
- People who are unhoused, experience housing insecurity, or who are at risk of displacement
- People who have low income and face financial insecurity
- People with limited English proficiency or who speak a language other than English
- Persons residing in the Eastern Crescent of Austin/Travis County, broadly defined as the geographic area where communities of color historically resided and who have been



Anti-Displacement Statement

Across much of our community engagement, we have heard that housing accessibility and displacement are some of the main constraints leading to food deserts, disparity of nutrition outcomes, and loss of farmland. As we move towards the implementation of the goals and strategies of the plan, it is imperative to consider anti-displacement approaches to prevent unintended consequences that may further gentrification and the housing crisis.

The implementation of different aspects of the food plan will involve support and participation from governmental and nongovernmental entities, public and private sector partners, and independent residents. The backbone organization and/or support structure put in place to oversee the implementation of the plan will strive to include an anti-displacement lens while considering the potential impact of projects on the current residents of Austin/Travis County, and in alignment with the City of Austin's Nothing About Us Without Us! Racial Equity and Anti-Displacement Tool.

historically underserved and structurally oppressed by policies and services, and especially related to access to affordable and appropriate food retail

- People living in rural parts of Austin and Travis County
- People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and trans, queer and questioning, intersex, asexual or agender, two-spirit and other identities not encompassed in the acronym (LGBTQIA2S+)
- Veterans and members of the armed forces
- Older adults
- Youth and young adults, including college and university students (including community college)
- Persons with disabilities, limited mobility, and/or chronic illness
- Persons with mental health and/or substance use challenges
- Persons who have been impacted by the criminal-legal system
- Persons who are pregnant and/or caregivers to infants

Community Spotlight



Photo credit: Liz Stumpf

“

I grew up in a Cuban family, and food is very much the center of everything. It's the center of happy events, sad events, mundane events... Food has always been super important to me. I wasn't very good at being in a classroom, and I was always finding ways to be outside. My high school had a small garden that was run by my environmental science teacher. It was very much a side project of the class, but we would do some small harvests. And then, we would set up in front of the school on Fridays, and people would come and pick up food... And I just remember feeling very much like this thing that was very important to me could also be part of my non-family life—that it could be just part of my life—and just feeling really excited about it. I also just find a lot of joy [in] giving people things that are beautiful and things that they can enjoy.

Lis Stumpf

Worker-Owner, Hot Spell Farm

”

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.



Background & Community Impact

Travis County is rapidly losing agricultural land. According to the 2022 Agricultural Census, Travis County is home to 870 privately owned and operated farms on approximately 198,238 acres. This represents a 21% decrease in the number of farms and an 11% decrease in the acreage since 2017. This continues the previous five-year trend of loss in Travis County acreage in agricultural production, with nearly 5% lost between 2012 to 2017, or approximately 16.8 acres of farmland every day.¹⁶ Austin is also home to 53 community gardens, 218 school gardens, three food forests, and countless home gardens.¹⁷ The City of Austin maintains authority over approving and managing certain urban agriculture activities at the local level, including community gardens and urban farms within the city limits.

The Austin metropolitan statistical area (MSA) is home to 8,498 farms¹⁸. Of these:

- 9 are urban farms
- 21 are Certified Organic
- 13 claim regenerative practices
- 0 are Fair-Labor Certified



While the Austin area has a robust and growing demand for local food, only about 0.06% of food consumed in Travis County is produced locally. The vast majority of food consumed in Austin is produced in other areas and transported,

¹⁶ Census of Agriculture (2022).

¹⁷ City of Austin (2022), State of the Food System Report.

¹⁸ Ibid.

resulting in a higher carbon footprint and food that is less fresh. This also means our food supply is subject to disruptions in the supply chain beyond Austin.¹⁹

Key Definitions

Community food production: Any place food is being grown or produced that is open to the general public, including community gardens, school gardens, and food forests.

Farm: Any place that produces and sells at least \$1,000 of agricultural products during a given year and is owned or run by a farm operator.

Food forest: A community-led edible forest garden that is free and open to the public.

Local: Within this plan, local often refers geographically to Austin/Travis County (i.e., local government, local service providers). However, when in reference to locally sourced food or local supply chains, we generally use local to refer to Texas grown or produced foods and activities that take place within the state. We recognize that specific boundaries and definitions of local may vary based on context.

Regenerative food production: Generally defined as an approach to farming that works to restore soil and ecosystem health, address inequity, and improve land, water, and climate for the future. While specific practices will vary from place to place, regenerative food production builds on a set of core principles, including soil health, animal welfare, pollinator conservation, biodiversity, and social fairness. While regenerative food production has gained significant attention as a new approach, it actually has its roots in the traditional practices of Indigenous, Black, and Hispanic/Latine farmers, marginalized communities that have often seen their foundational contributions erased and have suffered displacement and discrimination in our agricultural history (note that a more specific definition of regenerative food production may need to be developed to implement strategies under Goal 1).

Reclaimed Water: Reclaimed water is recycled from wastewater generated by homes and businesses and treated for non-potable uses. Though reclaimed water is not used in the drinking water supply, it meets many of the criteria for drinking water. This water is clear and has no noticeable odor. It is harmless to humans through normal contact. It meets all state and federal laws for non-potable use. In Austin, purple pipes carry reclaimed water that is recycled from wastewater generated by homes and businesses and treated for non-potable uses.

Urban farm: A site in a city at least one acre in size used to sustainably produce agricultural products to be sold for profit. Many urban farms may also provide agricultural education activities.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Available Data Indicators

- Agricultural acreage per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Organic farm count per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Community garden count (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Crop by acre per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Farm count by livestock per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Livestock by type per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Food Sales by Category (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Agricultural sales by type per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Farm count and size per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Farmers Market location count (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)

Potential New Data Indicators to be Developed

- Count/acreage of farms practicing regenerative food production
- Count/size of all community food production

Strategies Related to Goal 1

- Strategy 1.1.** Preserve land for food production in Central Texas through the use conservation easements, fee-simple purchases, and land-banking, in which local governments, community-based organizations, and other entities purchase farmland to lease or sell to farmers (in the case of a sale, a conservation easement ensuring that the land would remain in agricultural use should be established prior to the sale).
- Strategy 1.2.** Pursue capital funding sources, such as City of Austin or Travis County general obligation bonds, to fund the conservation of land for agricultural use through conservation easements or fee-simple purchase.
- Strategy 1.3.** Integrate, incentivize, and maintain regenerative food production and pollinator habitat in new and existing commercial and residential properties as appropriate and in consultation with impacted communities.
- Strategy 1.4.** Provide financial assistance, enact conducive land use policy/regulations, and develop staffing support and/or technical assistance for maintenance and education at community food production facilities, farms, and ranches, including establishing and maintaining rainwater harvesting and composting infrastructure.

- Strategy 1.5.** Develop an Austin/Travis County Urban Farm Comprehensive Plan with the aim to remove barriers for urban communities to access locally grown food and support emerging and innovative urban agriculture techniques.
- Strategy 1.6.** Establish opportunities for community-led regenerative food production on areas of publicly owned land that are well-suited to agriculture, including parkland, public right-of-way, and floodplain buyout land, where appropriate.
- Strategy 1.7.** Study the feasibility of using reclaimed water to provide sustainable water resources for regenerative food production in Austin/Travis County.
- Strategy 1.8.** Incorporate conservation strategies that protect soils, watersheds, and pollinator habitat into public land and infrastructure management, and expand public education and branding, incentives, and certifications to encourage community-wide adoption.
- Strategy 1.9.** Create an effective coalition of universities, local producers, and community-based organizations to research and pilot innovative regenerative agricultural practices in local conditions for effectiveness, yield, cost, water use, and soil health, potentially using public land and facilities.
- Strategy 1.10.** Explore the creation and/or expansion of tax breaks or other incentives for farmers who adopt regenerative agricultural practices and water conservation strategies and pay livable wages.
- Strategy 1.11.** Create a seed banking initiative that prioritizes the cultivation, preservation, and dissemination of native and adapted species that are ecologically, culturally, and culinarily significant, to include ongoing access to land for historically underserved people and communities.
- Strategy 1.12.** Fully fund City and County park plans that include strategies to support community agriculture (such as the Vision Plan at John Treviño Jr. Metropolitan Park) and include support for staff to implement community agriculture programs in these locations and distribute food grown to surrounding communities.

Community Spotlight



Photo credit: Matt Conant

“

We need more folks farming, so we can have more really delicious, inspiring food. Also, we need more diverse farm owners and operators that can grow ingredients that are super exciting to more folks, so that people can really enjoy—really enjoy—food. Then, we need more time in society, so people have the time to cook and prepare food in a way that is exciting and fun for them.

Finegan Ferreboeuf

*Steelbow Farm and Food Plan
Community Advisory Committee
Member*

”

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.

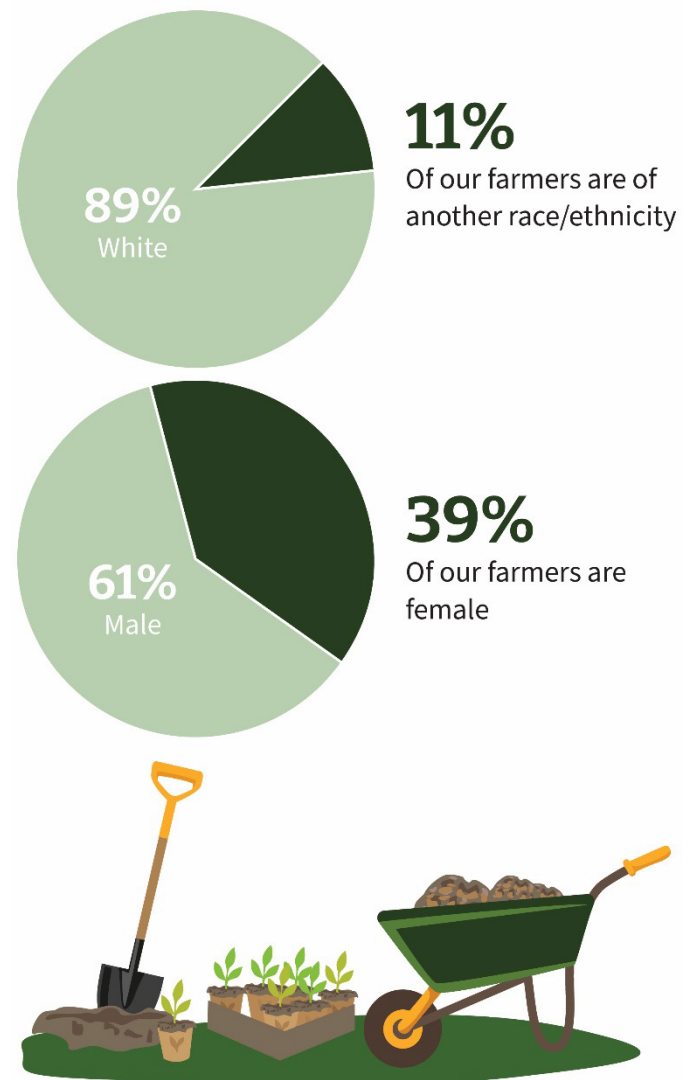


Background & Community Impact

According to the 2022 Agricultural Census, of the more than 2,000 food producers in Travis County, 89% are white and 61% are male, speaking to the systemic privilege and access that white people and men have had in accessing and stewarding land.²⁰ Barriers that many potential farmers from marginalized groups face include a lack of information on available opportunities and routine loan discrimination.

The majority of area farm operations report sales of less than \$1,000 per year. However, this does not necessarily mean that these operations are all small working farms. A farm is broadly defined by the Census as “any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year.”²¹

The number of farms reporting less than \$1,000 in sales has increased in recent Census counts, up to more than one in five farms. The reasons for farms reporting less than \$1,000 in sales are potentially many: small farms facing losses from extreme weather conditions (e.g., drought, flooding, hail, strong winds), ranchers who do not sell cattle in a given year, farmers growing crops to feed their households, and beginning farmers just learning the ropes. Another reason could be that there are tax breaks (agricultural exemptions) for land designated as farmland.²²



²⁰ Census of Agriculture (2022).

²¹ Ibid.

²² [Central Texas Food System Dashboard](#) (2024).

Key Definitions

Economically disadvantaged: Individuals or groups that experience financial hardships and lack the economic resources and opportunities necessary for a standard quality of life. This term encompasses various aspects, including low income, limited access to education and healthcare, inadequate housing, and insufficient employment opportunities. People who are economically disadvantaged often face systemic barriers that prevent them from achieving economic stability and mobility.

Available Data Indicators

- Farm operator demographics per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Farm labor per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Employment in food by County and sector (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Farm income per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)

Potential New Data Indicators

- Count/acreage of farms practicing regenerative food production by demographic category

Strategies Related to Goal 2

- Strategy 2.1.** Provide farm owners and workers with technical and financial assistance to be able to supply locally and regeneratively grown food products to institutions and others that have adopted values-based food purchasing guidelines.
- Strategy 2.2.** Build capacity for existing farmer co-ops and/or create a new local farmer co-op that supports agricultural workers in accessing and stewarding land and creating local food retail and distribution markets.
- Strategy 2.3.** Create a local farm incubator program to support farmers who practice regenerative food production through the first 3-5 years of business with a focus on reducing barriers for underrepresented farm owners and workers, including offering beginning farmer training and financing support.
- Strategy 2.4.** Consult with communities historically displaced, currently being displaced, and/or at risk of future displacement to co-develop strategies with City and County officials to allow sites to be legally stewarded by members of these communities.

Community Spotlight



Photo credit: Andrew Verdugo

“

[I started working as a dishwasher] ... And then I was working through the ranks—the prep cook-line cook saga—and I eventually got offered a role at a farm where they were growing experimental foods for heritage products and water sustainability. I ended up learning how to be a water sustainability manager, as well as learning how to become a beekeeper. I became a lumberjack to clear out acres of wood for them and learn about different kinds of lumber. And then I helped maintain their heritage veggies and learn how to practice different water sustainability practices.

Throughout the years, I just got offered different opportunities for more learning, which accompanied a harder work schedule, but it was worth it in the end. Because rather than trying to just figure it out and be stagnant ... I decided to look at other role models in the city and see how they're making an impact in their community and taking the same kind of values and upholding them myself.

Andrew Verdugo

Catering Director, Bird Bird Biscuit

”

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.

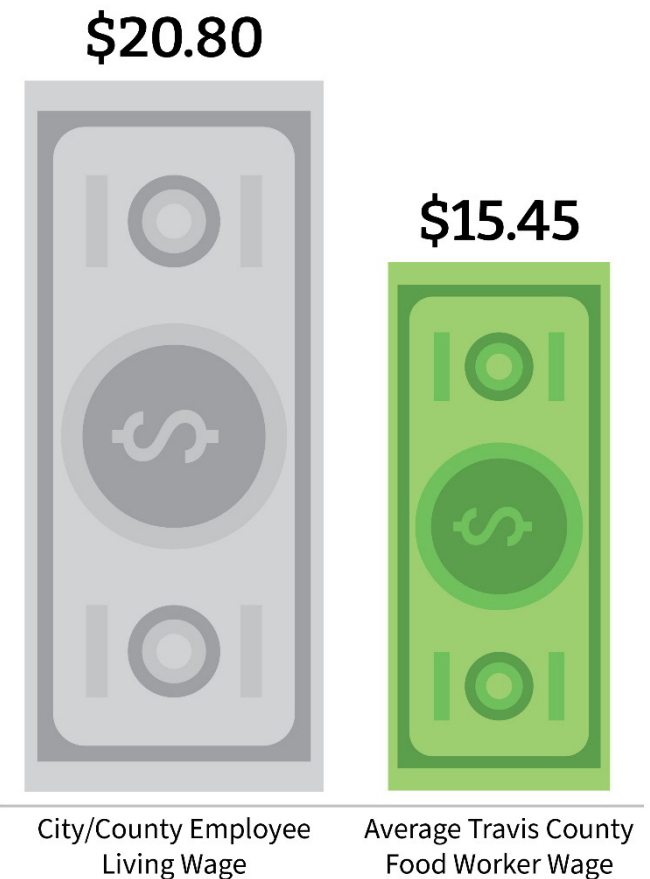


Background & Community Impact

The Food Sector alone employs over 65,000 people across Travis County.²³ The thousands of individuals across Central Texas that work in the food system provide critical labor that is the foundation of the local food and music economy. While retailers and restaurants are experiencing disruptions from labor vacancies, those employed in the food industry face long hours, strenuous conditions, and often low wages (and an average wage of just \$15.45/hour for service workers). These workers, surrounded by food, often struggle with hunger or food insecurity themselves. Locally, almost half of those surveyed reported currently or having previously experienced hunger.²⁴

While Texas is a “right-to-work” state, Austin hosts many organizations supporting food labor, including Good Work Austin, Restaurant Workers United, Austin Democratic Socialists of America, Texas Service Industry, Unite Here Local, and the Texas Service Industry Coalition. In Austin, two Starbucks locations (24th & Nueces and 45th & Lamar) have voted to unionize through Starbucks Workers United. Three Austin locations of the pizza chain Via 313 also filed and worked towards unionization in 2022 through Restaurant Workers United.²⁵

In a worker survey conducted for the City of Austin [Food Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment](#), the majority of respondents lost power in their homes during at least one of the recent extreme weather events—threatening their



²³ City of Austin (2022), State of the Food System Report.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ City of Austin (2023), Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment.

ability to travel to work and creating a vulnerability within food retail in times of crisis. Only around half reported receiving compensation for missed shifts during these emergencies.²⁶

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many servers lost income. At the same time, food retail, delivery, and processing (and production) workers were classified as “essential” and continued operations. In Central Texas, the majority of those surveyed reported catching the virus, many through exposure at work. Some reported having to work even when feeling sick.²⁷

Concerns regarding food worker wages and livelihoods were one of the most commonly cited concerns received in the food plan public engagement. The strategies below represent a compromise between honoring the very real needs of the local food system workforce while respecting the limits of local government to mandate wages for private employers, and honoring the critical role that small and local food businesses play in our local food system.

Key Definitions

Farm workers: Workers employed on farms.

Food worker: Food workers employed in food markets and retail (grocery stores/farmers’ markets/convenience stores); food establishments (restaurants/food trucks/bars); food processing/ distribution (Packing facilities/ industrial kitchens/commercial and commissary kitchens/meat/poultry processing facilities, etc.); and food delivery (UberEATS/Door Dash/Instacart). Does not include farm workers (farm workers are defined separately).

Livable Wage: The minimum income necessary for a worker to meet their basic needs, including adequate shelter, food, and other necessities, or the level of income needed to prevent a worker from falling into poverty.

Available Data Indicators

- Grocery and restaurant sales (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Employment in food by County and sector (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Employment per census tract 2021(Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Business Patterns (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Food Sales by Category (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Value added sales and operators by County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Annual cost of medical care (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Various Health metrics by location (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Retail workforce per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Potential New Data Indicators

- Increase in food worker/farm worker satisfaction with employer-provided compensation (from food worker survey)
- Increase in food worker/farm worker satisfaction with employer-provided benefits (from food worker survey)
- Increase in food worker/farm workers' ability to meet their basic needs (from food worker survey)

Strategies Related to Goal 3

- Strategy 3.1.** Define the criteria for a livable wage in the food service industry to enhance the participation of restaurants and other food businesses in incentive programs using frameworks such as One Fair Wage, MIT Living Wage Calculator, or United Way's ALICE.
- Strategy 3.2.** Conduct a regular survey to assess needs, work environment, and career outlook to inform programs and policies affecting food and farm workers.
- Strategy 3.3.** Create a commission or working group of the Austin/Travis County Food Policy Board focused on food and farm worker rights and livelihoods that will champion issues related to benefits and unfair labor practices.
- Strategy 3.4.** Support livable wages for food workers through incentives such as rebates, tax incentives, and wage supplements for food system employers who pay a livable wage.
- Strategy 3.5.** Establish additional support for Austin/Travis County's workforce and small business development organizations to strengthen employment and career advancement opportunities and support worker organizing across the food system.
- Strategy 3.6.** Recognize and support businesses in the food industry that pay livable wages, support worker ownership, promote fair labor practices, and offer career pathways to their employees.
- Strategy 3.7.** Increase ownership opportunities for food workers and farm workers through education and access to capital to start cooperatives and other businesses.

Community Spotlight



“

And then after Katrina hit, I watched all of the situations where people couldn't get access to food because the stores were all closed. And there was all this panic [around] you know, how I'm going hungry because I can't buy food. And my thought was: Wait, there's a big problem with the sustainability of our food system, if an entire city of people is now without food because the grocery stores are closed. I started taking a look across the board, especially at city dwellers and the relationship they have with food. And I thought: Austin's one natural disaster away from ending up like that, too. In fact, every big city is.

Paige Oliviero

Principal Designer/Founder, Urban Patchwork

”

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 relevant food during disasters and emergencies.



Background & Community Impact

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic began, causing massive disruption to daily life, public health, and the food system in Central Texas. In February 2021, Winter Storm Uri wreaked havoc in Texas, plunging millions into freezing darkness with widespread power outages. Austin's food and water supply was affected, and food banks struggled to meet increased demand. Through both COVID-19 and Winter Storm Uri, government and community organizations banded together to help feed the people in our community most impacted, such as food workers, people experiencing homelessness, low-income communities, and communities of color.

- During COVID-19, the Office of Sustainability worked with local restaurants Easy Tiger, Henbit/Emmer and Rye, and Good Work Austin to produce over one million caregiver meals for families while supporting employment for restaurant staff.
- During COVID-19, Austin ISD Food Service provided meals to all youth under 19 and their caregivers through a series of distribution sites. Recognizing the great need, they ramped up services to include curbside meal distribution with seven-day packs of healthy foods, and free farm produce boxes. Coordination between local Austin residents, the Central Texas Food Bank, and the Austin Ed Fund made this possible.
- The City of Austin awarded \$23 million in Business Relief Grants to 1,052 businesses. 41% of the awardees were food businesses.
- To increase food access during COVID-19, the City of Austin allocated \$9.6 million with Travis County contributing an additional \$1.7 million.
- Following the winter storm, over \$383,000 was raised among local organizations to help impacted farmers. More than 55 farmers were awarded funding.
- From April 2020-September 2021, the Eating Apart Together initiative provided over 1 million meals to people experiencing homelessness.

Many new grassroots and mutual aid projects have been initiated or have grown substantially over the past several years in response to the food-related challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and during severe weather events including Austin Mutual Aid, Rural Mutual Aid, the Community Resilience Trust, Street Forum ATX, Little Petal Alliance, ATX Free Fridge Project, Primrose Community Care, Red Beans Austin, Recycled Love Austin, ATX Community Advancement Brigade, Free Lunch, and Black Trans Leadership Austin.

In January 2023, with Austin City Council's direction, City staff and consultants launched the Food Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment, a first-ever assessment of the hazards threatening our local food system. The goals of the Food Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment report were to: (1) Review a baseline briefing on the regional supply chain as articulated through stakeholder input; (2) Identify stakeholder-generated barriers to a robust local food economy and threats to resilient supply chains; (3) Identify stakeholder-generated opportunities to address these barriers and threats; and (4) Offer supplemental recommendations on next steps to incorporate this work in the Austin/Travis County food plan. The sections below summarize findings from the report.

National and global shortages of food items and supply

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were limited interruptions in food retail and purchasing. Since 2020, crises like the lingering effects of the pandemic, Russia's war on Ukraine, climate change-fueled disasters, and the closure of the nation's top infant formula producer have contributed to food shortages for items like baby formula, wheat and bread, and food packaging supplies like paper and cardboard.

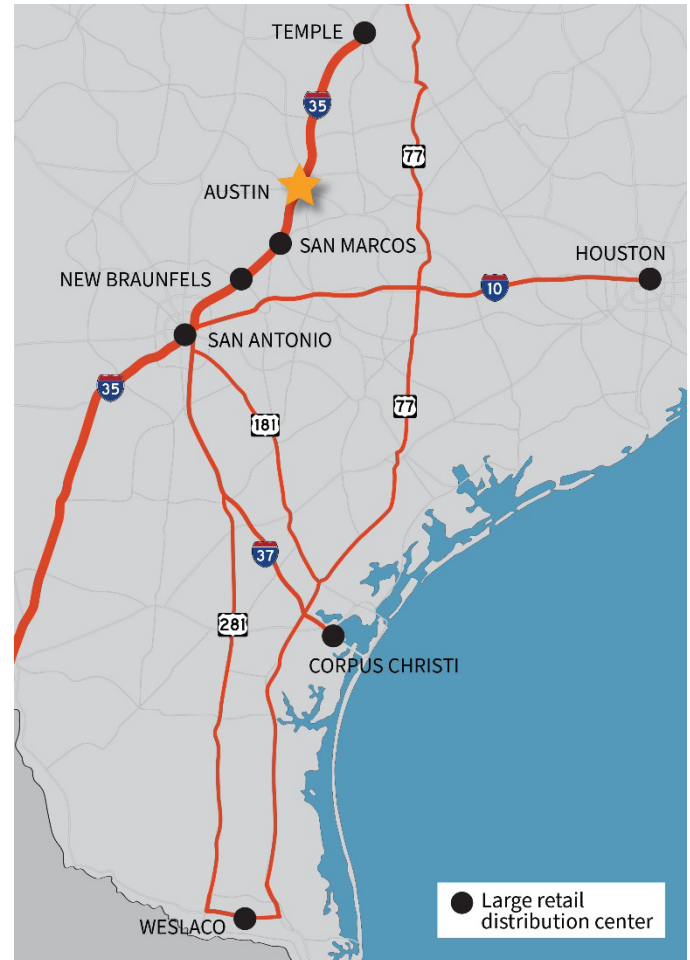
Extreme weather and climate change

Austin can expect an increase in annual and seasonal extreme temperatures, more frequent droughts and precipitation, and likely increases in humidity and heat indexes. All supply chain players must now grapple with the "new normal" of Texas weather:

- Statewide disasters that impact IH-35 have been the most disastrous.
- Previous models of emergency preparedness largely focused on hurricanes, not ice or snow.
- Large retailers are moving away from just-in-time inventory for shelf-stable items like water and toilet paper—sometimes "preloading" stores months or years in advance.

Infrastructure reliability

In the past decade, Austin has experienced three major power outages in 2011, 2021, and 2023—disrupting food production, processing, distribution, sales, and consumption. Winter storm Uri in 2021 caused losses exceeding \$600



million for Central Texas farmers and ranchers. Small retailers are struggling to prepare for emergencies in the same way as larger actors due to financial constraints. Larger retailers can more easily increase their transportation fleet, invest in backup power, and offer labor incentives. Industry giants like Walmart, which established a corporate Emergency Operation Center in the early 2000s, generally have the resources to invest in structural improvements to withstand disasters.

The Austin/Travis County Winter Storm Uri After-Action Report observed that “the private sector is an integral part of the supply chain and provides crucial food support to communities during the response and recovery period. The role of private companies, such as grocery stores and restaurants, likely could have been better coordinated before the storm.” The report recommends “codifying relationships with private companies regarding their roles in planning and operations during disasters and catastrophic events, including supply chain management.”

Dependence on IH-35

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 as seen in the map on the previous page.²⁸

Key Definitions

Culturally relevant food: Food items that reflect the preferences and cultural contexts of the community.

Medically necessary food: Foods that are specially formulated and processed to help patients manage their disease or condition's dietary needs, food allergies and sensitivities, and medical conditions, such as nutrition drinks and ready-to-feed formula for infants.

Available Data Indicators

- Breakdown of food types distributed by Central Texas Food Bank (CTFB) per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Charitable location count by census tract (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)

Potential New Data Indicators

- Percentage of Culturally Relevant Food in emergency storage
- Percentage of Culturally Relevant Food in emergency storage that is distributed to people requesting food that meets their cultural needs
- Percentage of Medically Necessary Food in emergency storage
- Percentage of Medically Necessary Food in emergency storage that is distributed to people requesting food that meets their medical needs

²⁸ Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment.

Strategies Related to Goal 4

- Strategy 4.1.** Conduct a landscape analysis of existing food disaster preparedness efforts undertaken by local governments, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and businesses, in order to better align and mobilize food-related emergency response functions across jurisdictions, sectors, and organizations to optimize allocation of resources and minimize waste.
- Strategy 4.2.** Partner with cultural and religious institutions and other community-based organizations to conduct surveys and community consultations to identify the diverse cultural and medical dietary needs within the City of Austin and Travis County, and develop a diverse food inventory that includes culturally specific items and medically necessary foods (e.g., halal, kosher, diabetic, gluten-free, low-sodium, allergen-free options).
- Strategy 4.3.** Develop and fund a coordinated emergency food access response plan that ensures that City and County community centers and resilience networks have access to water, culturally and medically appropriate food, proper storage, and inventory management practices.
- Strategy 4.4.** Launch a public awareness campaign on the importance of preparation for meeting dietary needs during emergencies, including information on culturally and medically appropriate food preparation and storage, and provide training for emergency food provision staff and volunteers.
- Strategy 4.5.** Work with community partners to implement a real-time inventory management system to track food availability, expiration dates, and replenishment needs to ensure a steady supply during emergencies and minimize food waste.
- Strategy 4.6.** Create a diverse and reliable food supply by establishing partnerships with a wide range of food suppliers and develop contingency plans for food supply chain disruptions, including alternative sourcing strategies.
- Strategy 4.7.** Create mechanisms to improve emergency response and preparedness for major power outages that impact the food supply at all stages in the food system.

Community Spotlight



“

Our district participates in the Good Food Purchasing Program because we believe it is our responsibility to nourish not only our students but also our community. Providing healthy, sustainably sourced meals is essential for our students' well-being and our collective future. By shifting our food purchases to support local farmers, promote environmental sustainability, encourage humane treatment of animals, advocate for fair labor practices, and prioritize nutrition, we are investing in a better future for everyone.

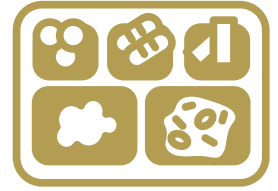
Marissa Bell

Lake Travis ISD Dietitian & Marketing Coordinator and Austin/Travis County Food Policy Board Member

”

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.



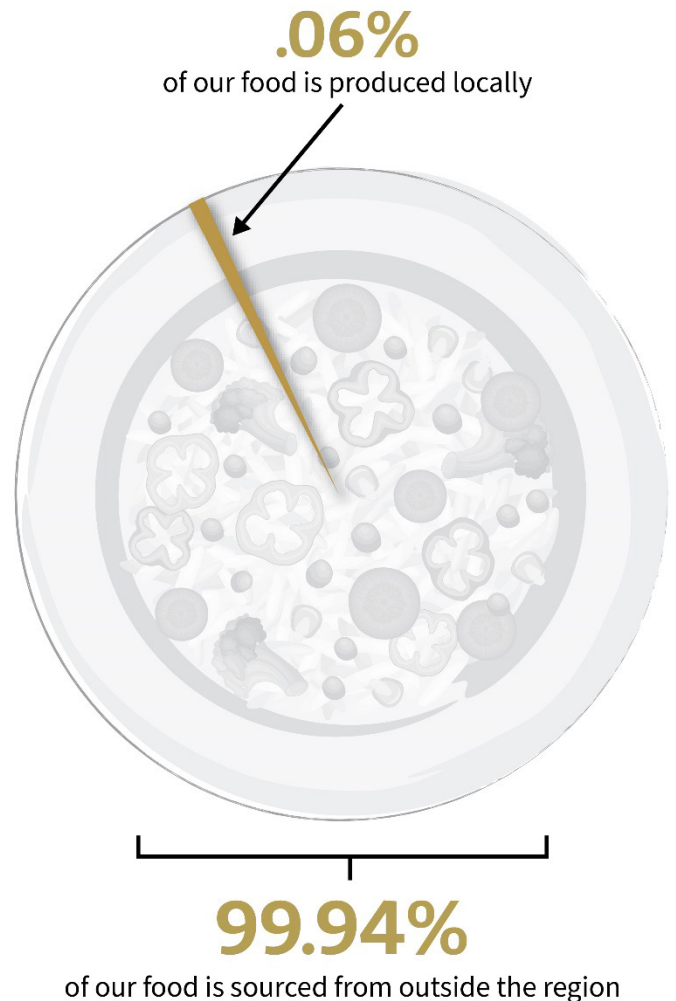
Background & Community Impact

While the Austin area has a robust and growing demand for local food, only about 0.06% of food consumed in Travis County is produced locally. Nearly all food is distributed to food stores by truck—making roads, bridges, and tunnels crucial points of vulnerability within food distribution, particularly in areas with limited transportation routes, such as Austin.²⁹ As of 2020, Travis County has 114 food manufacturing facilities³⁰ and more than 133,000 workers employed in food processing and distribution broken down as follows:

- Food Service: 85,887
- Manufacturing: 29,161
- Transportation: 17,810
- Agriculture: 33³¹

Local food processors must obtain a permit from the City of Austin and/or Travis County and follow all state and federal regulations that govern food safety, manufacturing, and labeling. Food establishments are also subject to planning and zoning requirements and food safety inspections.

The largest distribution centers that serve Austin are located outside of Austin near Temple and San Antonio—reducing the amount of food stored locally in the case of disasters. H-E-B, Central Texas' top retailer, maintains all six



²⁹ City of Austin (2022), State of the Food System Report.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *2021 County Business Patterns* as cited in the Central Texas Food System Dashboard.

of its food distribution warehouses within the state, with its main distribution center in Temple.

Walmart, the #2 retailer for food purchases regionally, maintains 19 distribution centers in Texas; two centers in New Braunfels and Temple primarily service Central Texas. Because nearly all food is distributed to food stores by truck, roads, bridges, and tunnels are crucial points of vulnerability within food distribution, particularly in areas with limited transportation routes, such as Austin.³²

Staff with the City of Austin Office of Sustainability have convened a cohort of institutions and other values-based procurement stakeholders since 2016, and, in 2017, entered into a contract with the Center for Good Food Purchasing to support area institutions to participate in the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP). GFPP provides technical assistance and analytics support for participants to increase the reach, impact, and effectiveness of values-based purchasing in the Central Texas region. Over the past three years, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation funded an Austin-based “proof point,” increasing the overall investment of funding in values-based procurement in the region. GFPP has been or is currently being implemented by four Austin-area institutions: Austin Independent School District, Lake Travis Independent School District, UT Austin, and the Austin Convention Center.

Key Definitions

Food hub: A business or organization that connects farmers to larger markets by handling the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of their products.

Institutional food purchaser: Any institution that purchases food at a large scale, including but not limited to schools and school districts, hospitals, employers with onsite cafeterias, correctional facilities, senior care facilities, and government agencies.

Values-based purchasing: Values-based purchasing refers to practices and policies that require purchases to prioritize the values beyond the price of the products and vendors when determining what to purchase and from whom. The GFPP has developed a framework based on six values: Local Economies, Environmental Sustainability, Valued Workforce, Animal Welfare, Nutrition, and Equity/Accountability/Transparency. These values serve as guideposts for identifying the cost and value of food beyond just the monetary value and include the social and environmental impact of food throughout the supply chain. This plan uses the phrase “Values-Based Purchasing” to refer to practices and policies aligned with one or more of the stated values of GFPP, but which may or may not adhere to the requirements or framework of the program specifically.

Available Data Indicators

- Direct to consumer sales (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Retail workforce per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)

³² City of Austin (2023). Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment.

- Farmers Market location count (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Farmers Market locations (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Household expenditure on food per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Food expenditure amounts per county (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)

Potential New Data Indicators

- Count of institutions adopting values-based purchasing
- Count of institutions sourcing from local agricultural sources
- Money spent on local, sustainable, fair, high animal welfare, and/or nutritious foods at participating institutions

Strategies Related to Goal #5

- Strategy 5.1.** Develop new and support existing central aggregation, processing, and distribution facilities (Food Hubs) as needed to supply regional purchasers with local agricultural goods, including community-based and institutional-led food hubs to ensure stability and resilience for the food system in Austin/Travis County.
- Strategy 5.2.** Facilitate the appointment of a lead organization to coordinate a regional cross-sector coalition of organizations committed to values-based purchasing, and to develop best practices and peer learning opportunities about values-based procurement.
- Strategy 5.3.** Explore adopting a values-based food purchasing framework (intended to focus on internal City and County purchasing) that integrates practices from the Good Food Purchasing Program and others, including encouraging values-aligned food purchases and purchasing plant-based meals at all City and County facilities, meetings, events, and conferences.
- Strategy 5.4.** Create a mechanism and source for funding incentives for local institutions to purchase food that is sourced from values-aligned suppliers.

Community Spotlight



Photo credit: Ivory Rines

“

Five years ago, when I became a pregnant single mama, I struggled financially to nourish myself and my growing baby in the ways I knew would best support our health and wellbeing. Thankfully, I learned about the Double Up Food Bucks program that made shopping for healthy organic food at the farmers market more accessible. I have since learned about and have become deeply grateful for the incredible Fresh for Less program, which delivers local organic produce from Farmshare Austin (as well as local eggs and a variety of pantry staples) to families throughout the city at affordable prices. Wheatsville Co-op has also joined in on the sustainable food access program by offering 50% off fruits and veggies for families using their SNAP card. These programs are incredible, and I am deeply thankful for them. But even with these programs, I still struggle to afford healthy food each month. However, I consider us quite fortunate, because I know there will always be food on our table, even if it's a struggle.

Ivory Rines

Single Mama and Community Member

”

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 of experiencing high rates of food insecurity.



Background & Community Impact

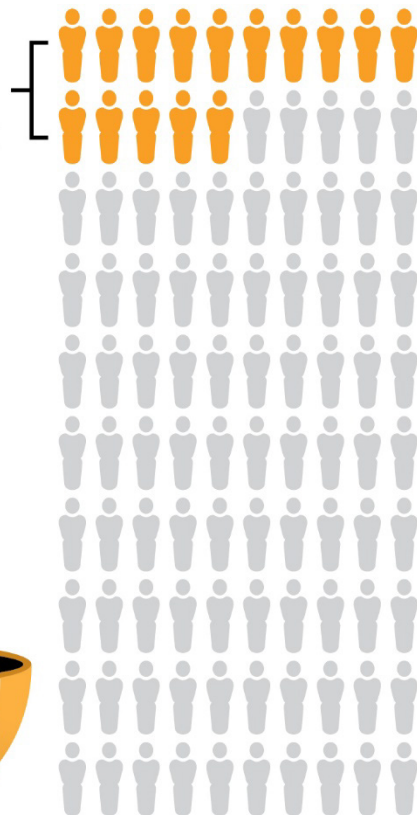
Food Access

The [Central Texas Food System Dashboard](#) reports changes in local food retail locations, sales, and employment, among other metrics. Based on 2020 through 2024 data, Travis County is home to more than 2,500 restaurants, more than 400 food retail outlets, 22 farmers markets, and five community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs.³³ These food access points are concentrated in the Austin urban core and are less prevalent in low-income and low-food access areas, which are primarily in eastern Travis County.³⁴

In 2022, 15% of Travis County residents were food insecure, meaning they lack reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious food.³⁵ Food retail outlets are unevenly distributed geographically in Travis County. As of 2022, 18 out of 47 zip codes in Travis County lack a grocery store.³⁶ It is also worth noting that small and local food retail businesses play a key role in filling in gaps where national retail chains do not see enough economic value to site larger business operations.

15%

of Travis County residents were food insecure in 2022



³³ [Central Texas Food System Dashboard](#) (2024).

³⁴ A Low-Income, Low Food Access Area, formerly referred to as a “food desert” is defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as a census tract in which at least 500 people or 33% of the population live more than 0.5 miles (for urban census tracts) or 10 miles (for rural census tracts) from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store, and where households are more likely to lack vehicle access.

³⁵ Feeding America Map the Meal Gap Reports (2024).

³⁶ Ibid.

Black residents in Travis County are more likely to live in areas that face the highest barriers to food access, with 27% of Black residents facing the highest food access barriers compared to 21% of Hispanic/Latine residents and 10% of white non-Hispanic/Latine residents.³⁷ Other groups that experience disproportionate levels of food insecurity include children, seniors, and college/university students.

SNAP Enrollment

While there are 687 establishments that accept SNAP (as of 2022),³⁸ 47% of Travis County residents were income eligible for SNAP but not enrolled as of 2021.³⁹ Eastern and northwest Travis County have a more limited number of SNAP-authorized retail outlets compared to the concentrations of households receiving SNAP benefits in those areas. However, access to online retailers that accept SNAP benefits has increased equitable access to home delivery and curbside pickup options.⁴⁰

Rising Food Costs

Consumers in Central Texas, across the U.S. and around the world have experienced volatile and rising food prices since the COVID-19 pandemic began. According to the USDA, food-at-home prices increased 3.5% in 2020, 3.9% in 2021, 11.4 % in 2022 (faster than any year since 1979), and 5.8% in 2023.⁴¹ Factors related to the increase of food prices include the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which especially impacted prices for meats and poultry in 2020; a Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak that affected egg and poultry prices, along with the conflict in Ukraine, which compounded other economy-wide inflationary pressures such as high energy costs in 2022. Food price growth slowed in 2023 as economy-wide inflationary pressures, supply chain issues, and wholesale food prices eased from 2022.⁴² At the time of the publication of the food plan, average food prices are still well above pre-pandemic levels. As of March 2024, the Producer Price Index for All Foods stood 29% above its February 2020 reading.⁴³

Key Definitions

Culturally relevant food: Food items that reflect the preferences and cultural contexts of the community.

Food as Medicine and Food Pharmacy programs: Food and nutrition programs that are tied to health care provision and designed to prevent or treat diet-related illnesses.

Food insecurity: When a person lacks reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious food.

³⁷ [Feeding America](#) Map the Meal Gap Estimates (2022). Available. Note: estimates for Asian, Native American and Hawaiian/Pacific Island populations not available.

³⁸ USDA Food and Nutrition Service as cited in the Central Texas Food System Dashboard.

³⁹ City of Austin (2022), State of the Food System Report.

⁴⁰ [Central Texas Food System Dashboard](#) (2024).

⁴¹ [USDA Food Price Outlook](#) (2024).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ National Restaurant Association (March 2024). [Food Costs](#).

Fresh for Less Mobile Markets & Home Delivery: Current Austin Public Health-funded program that offers locally grown produce and other healthy grocery items at reduced prices via mobile markets, farm pickup, or home delivery in areas experiencing high food insecurity.

Nutrition security: Consistent and equitable access to healthy, safe, and affordable foods that promote optimal health and well-being.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): A federally funded program administered at the state level that provides a monthly cash voucher to qualifying households and individuals that can be spent only on food. SNAP was previously referred to as “food stamps.”

WIC: The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk.

Available Data Indicators

- Charitable location count by census tract (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Demographic rates of food insecurity per county (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Food insecurity rate per census tract (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- School meals reimbursed per county (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- County SNAP participant count by demographics (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- SNAP participant total count per county (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Food insecurity rate per census tract (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- WIC participant count (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Persons who live in low-income census tracts with low access to food stores (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Food Insecurity by Demographic per Census Tract (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Number of calls to 211 per type (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Food pantry locations per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Breakdown of food types distributed by CTFB per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- SNAP participation by year per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- SNAP benefits per household over time per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- SNAP recipients by ethnicity per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- WIC eligibility and participation per year (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- WIC eligibility and coverage per year (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- WIC Coverage by Demographics (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Double-Up Food Bucks Locations (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)

- Free and Reduced School Meals per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)

Potential New Data Indicators

- Count of public transport access points in low-food access areas
- Percentage of Culturally Relevant Food distributed by food access organizations

Strategies Related to Goal #6

- Strategy 6.1.** Actively establish culturally relevant, affordable, community-backed or -driven retail options in areas experiencing food insecurity or facing barriers to food access, including replication and expansion of existing food retail initiatives in the City and County.
- Strategy 6.2.** Help families meet their infant feeding goals by increasing and improving medically appropriate infant feeding education and support strategies (including both human milk and formula) through collaborative government, school, and community-based support organization efforts.
- Strategy 6.3.** Implement Food as Medicine and Food Pharmacy programs through hospitals, clinics, and food access organizations in partnership with food distribution centers and retail grocery stores.
- Strategy 6.4.** Support and expand community-based programs that provide effective, culturally relevant, and appropriate nutrition and food preparation education and services.
- Strategy 6.5.** Expand benefits and access to nutritious foods through programs that amplify and supplement the purchasing power of individuals and households facing food and nutrition insecurity and explore the feasibility of creating a locally funded nutrition incentive program with less restrictive eligibility criteria than SNAP/WIC.
- Strategy 6.6.** Increase utilization of publicly administered programs that improve food access, such as SNAP, WIC, the national school breakfast/lunch program, and summer food service program.
- Strategy 6.7.** Make access to food assistance programs more equitable by reducing barriers due to language, technology access, and disability status.
- Strategy 6.8.** Support technology literacy education and technology access programs to increase the ability to meet individual and family needs through online food shopping, including how to use benefits for online shopping.
- Strategy 6.9.** Identify promising practices across sectors for mitigating transportation barriers and support programs that increase community access to efficient and convenient transportation to markets and grocery stores, especially for those living in areas lacking healthy food retail and with high food insecurity rates, and for those who have barriers to reliable transportation (e.g., people living with disabilities, older adults, etc.).

- Strategy 6.10.** Support, fund, and expand programs that provide food delivery services, prioritizing delivery to households facing food and nutrition insecurity and/or barriers to food access and with a focus on distribution of food that is locally sourced and culturally relevant.
- Strategy 6.11.** Bolster the workforce to support strategies related to food access, food and nutrition programs, and food-related benefit programs through additional education, funding, and connection to networks of support for Community Health Workers (CHWs) and other service coordinators and navigators.

Community Spotlight



Photo credit: Wanda Hernandez

“

[When I was working at a fast-food restaurant] I was seeing food being thrown away... Even if there was nothing wrong with it and it was still in the bag, it had to be thrown away. And we were hungry, of course. And we would watch this food that was perfectly intact be thrown away. And it was so heartbreaking for me to experience that and to think about that, right? To think about my coworkers trying to feed their families...

Wanda Hernandez

Food Access Coordinator, Sustainable Food Center

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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.



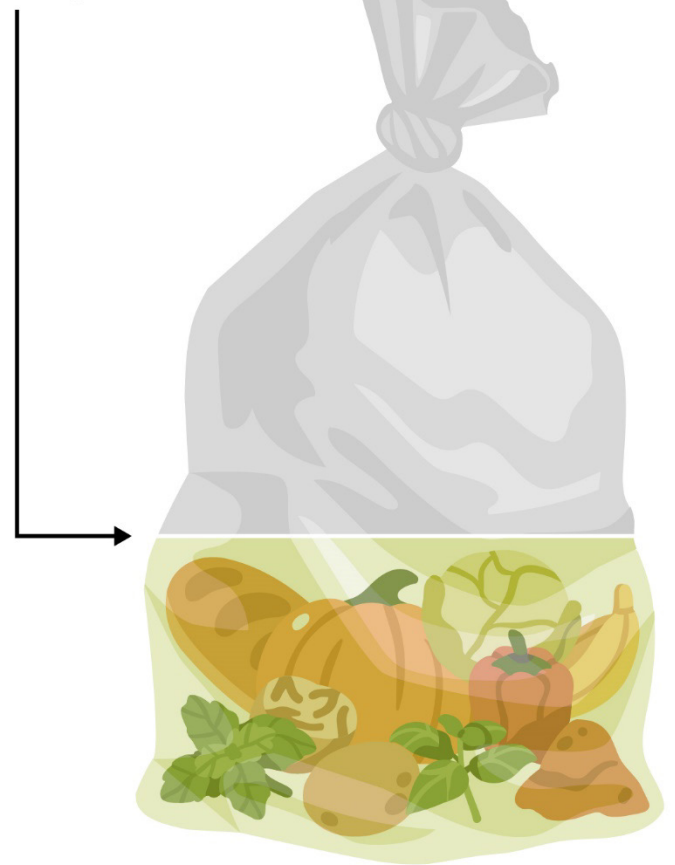
Background & Community Impact

Organic material is material that will decompose naturally, such as yard trimmings, food scraps, food-soiled paper, and untreated wood. Organic material makes up the largest fraction of the waste stream at the national and local level. Nationally, organics make up about 31% of material going to landfill.⁴⁴ In Austin, approximately 37% of material going to landfill is organic.⁴⁵ When buried in a landfill, organic material does not break down as it would in nature or in a compost pile. Instead, it decomposes anaerobically (i.e., without oxygen) and becomes the main source of human-caused methane in the atmosphere.

Food can be diverted from the landfills to several outlets, depending on its condition. Austin Resource Recovery (ARR) is the primary local agency responsible for managing food waste for curbside customers and encouraging reductions in food waste. The City of Austin requires food-permitted businesses to provide their employees convenient access to diversion options that keep organic material out of the landfill. Organic material can include unused food, food scraps, and food-soiled paper. Donating food to people, feeding animals, and composting can meet the City of Austin's requirements. In addition to compliance, these methods help support the Austin community and help businesses promote their brand and sustainable values.

37%

of material headed to the landfill in Austin is organic



⁴⁴ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2020) [Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: 2018 Tables and Figures](#).

⁴⁵ Austin Resource Recovery. (2016) [Austin's 2015 Community Diversion Study](#).

ARR promotes the use of the Food Recovery Hierarchy developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to make the most out of surplus food. The Food Recovery Hierarchy, from most to least preferred, includes the following activities:

- Source reduction: Reduce the volume of surplus food generated.
- Feed hungry people: Donate extra food to food banks, community kitchens, and shelters.
- Feed animals: Divert food scraps to animal food.
- Industrial uses: Provide waste oils for rendering.
- Composting: Create a nutrient-rich soil amendment.
- Landfill/Incineration: Last resort for disposal.

Food is wasted because of cosmetic imperfections, damaged packaging, incorrect descriptions, irregular size or weight, or it is labeled as past its expiration date. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has confirmed that expiration dates are often not accurate, but there is a need for more clarification for both retailers and consumers. These health regulations often prevent food waste reduction.⁴⁶

While a sizable amount of food is rescued through food donations each year, an estimated 1.24 million pounds of food is wasted every day in the greater Austin area (as of 2018).⁴⁷ In 2022, the Central Texas Food Bank and Keep Austin Fed collectively rescued 8.2 million pounds of food that would have otherwise been wasted in Travis County through food donations. Sixty-five percent (5.3 million pounds) of the food rescued came from donations from retail food providers. Despite these sizable donations, a significant amount of edible food still ends up in our landfills. According to an estimate made with the National Resource Defense Council's (NRDC) Food Matters Baseline Calculator Tool, Austin could be rescuing an additional 4,500 tons or more of edible food per year.

In addition, food donations have decreased after the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2020, in response to changing consumer patterns and inflation, retailers have started purchasing less and are looking for alternative uses or re-uses for products to reduce waste. Although less food waste has positive environmental benefits, the decrease in donations has created a challenge for food banks and mutual aid organizations that rely on surplus food to feed those in need.⁴⁸

ARR currently provides education and support to private entities and residents in reducing food waste. ARR's 2023 Zero Waste Comprehensive Plan includes a goal to divert food waste from the landfill. In addition, the plan identifies the need to fully implement the multifamily composting policy which is anticipated to go into effect in October 2024.

⁴⁶ City of Austin (2023), Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment.

⁴⁷ City of Austin (2022), State of the Food System Report.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Key Definitions

Circular economy: A system where materials never become waste and nature is regenerated. In a circular economy, products and materials are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling, and composting. The circular economy tackles climate change and other global challenges, like biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution, by decoupling economic activity from the consumption of finite resources.⁴⁹

Composting: A controlled decomposition of organic materials which results in a product that can improve soil health by increasing organic matter, water holding capacity, and nutrient availability.

Food recovery: The various ways to prevent edible, surplus food from being wasted, which provide a variety of social, economic, and environmental benefits.

Food waste: Food loss that occurs at any stage of the production and supply chain, which can be caused by spoilage at the production level, over-ordering at the retail level, or over-purchasing at the individual level.

Organic matter: Soil organic matter comes from the organic material from plants (e.g. leaves and woody materials), animals (e.g. decaying components), and microorganisms. The presence of organic matter in the soil is essential as a source of nutrients for crops and other garden plants. It also helps store water in the soil and promotes activity of soil microorganisms and earthworms. Increasing organic matter in the soil also regulates the soil pH, temperature, aeration, and reduces emissions of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

Surplus food: Food that is safe and nutritious, but is discarded by producers, suppliers, distributors, or retailers for a variety of reasons. These food items can be legally donated to nonprofits.

Available Data Indicators

- Pounds of food rescued (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Food rescued by years per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Food rescued by source (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Pounds of food rescued by type (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)

Potential New Data Indicators

- Organic matter entering landfills
- Food reported emissions coming from landfills

⁴⁹ Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2024): [What is a circular economy?](#)

Strategies Related to Goal 7

- Strategy 7.1.** Convene food rescue and community stakeholders to develop a shared food rescue protocol and recognition program to achieve reduced inefficiencies utilizing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Wasted Food Scale, addressing any gaps with appropriate supports and prioritizing investments to serve areas of the City/County experiencing food insecurity or facing barriers to food access.
- Strategy 7.2.** Convene local compost providers and food producers to develop best practices and recommendations for improving the quality of locally produced compost to support local regenerative food production.
- Strategy 7.3.** Create a resource to promote the safe use of edible food scraps for animal consumption by engaging and connecting food scrap producers with appropriate livestock producers, backyard chicken farmers, and pet food entrepreneurs.
- Strategy 7.4.** Support amendment of the Universal Recycling Ordinance (URO) to establish tiered service and diversion requirements for all businesses that generate organic waste and increase URO compliance and enforcement resources in alignment with Austin Resource Recovery's Comprehensive Plan (Chapter 12).
- Strategy 7.5.** Expand institutional and business support to share sector-specific best practices on food waste diversion through training, technical assistance, and financial incentives.
- Strategy 7.6.** Develop ongoing educational opportunities, including a public campaign, to encourage food waste prevention and diversion, for example through menu planning to reduce waste, understanding best-by dates, composting, mindful eating, etc., and provide incentives such as access to free compost.
- Strategy 7.7.** Explore the creation of community compost drop sites for Travis County residents and expand promotion of current composting availability⁵⁰ so that every resident in Austin/Travis County has convenient access to composting services.

⁵⁰ Note: The Austin City Council approved the amendment to the Universal Recycling Ordinance (URO) on Thursday, September 21, 2023; the City of Austin will require commercial composting collection at all multifamily properties starting October 1, 2024.

Community Spotlight



Photo credit: Eddie Martinez

“

[As a vegan] I've never been this healthy in my entire life. I feel great. I'm super energetic. I'm extremely positive. It not only affects my body and my health, but my mental state. I'm just constantly in a bright, positive mood. And also, the environmental part of it. I'm a big environmentalist, and food factory farming is one of the biggest contributors to the CO₂ in the atmosphere. I want to contribute to more than just my circle but to the world. I guess it is kind of corny, but it is true... Because we all have to take action and be part of a bigger thing than just us...

As an artist, I want a long artist's career. Longevity. Art is not simple. Painting murals is manual labor, carrying paint buckets, this and that, this and this, which is one of the reasons why I try to be as healthy as I can. The vegan diet is—yes, I want to be healthy and this and that, and this and this—but it's also for my artist's career. I want longevity. I want to be an artist until I'm 100 years old. I want to be able to paint and carry things. So, food for me is medicine, because I want this longevity in my artist's career.

Eddie Martinez

*Artist and Austin/Travis County
Community Member*

”

Goal 8. Pro-climate, Pro-health

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.



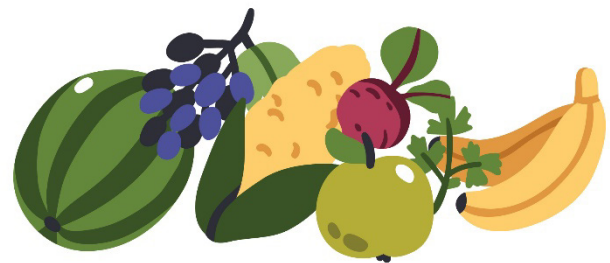
Background & Community Impact

The 2019 EAT Lancet Commission report puts it bluntly: Food is the single strongest lever to optimize human health and environmental sustainability on Earth. A large body of work has emerged on the environmental impacts of various diets, with most studies concluding that a diet rich in plant-based foods and with fewer animal source foods confers both improved health and environmental benefits. Overall, the literature indicates that such diets are “win-win” in that they are good for both people and planet.⁵¹

Globally, food systems make up a third of planet-heating greenhouse gases, with the environmental toll of the meat and dairy industries being particularly high. Livestock accounts for about a third of methane emissions, which have 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide in the short term.⁵² A 2023 study from the University of Oxford found that, compared to diets heavy in meat, vegan diets resulted in 75 percent fewer greenhouse gas emissions, 54 percent less water use, and 66 less biodiversity loss.⁵³

The Commission analyzed the potential impacts of dietary change on diet-related disease mortality using three approaches. All three approaches concluded that dietary changes from current diets toward healthy diets are likely to result in major health benefits. This includes preventing approximately 11 million deaths per year, which represent between 19% to 24% of total deaths among adults.

Plant-based Diet



-75%

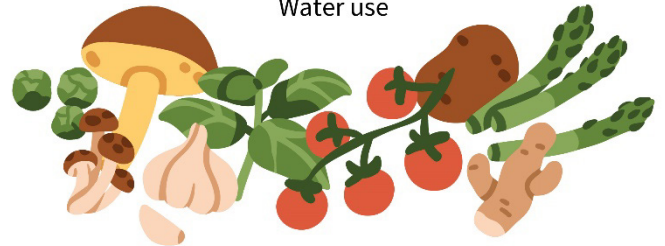
Greenhouse emissions

-66%

Biodiversity loss

-54%

Water use



⁵¹ [Summary Report](#) of the EAT Lancet Commission (2019).

⁵² New York Times (July 21, 2023), “[Save the Planet, Put Down that Hamburger.](#)”

⁵³ United Nations Environmental Program (August 20, 2021) “[Methane emissions are driving climate change. Here’s how to reduce them.](#)”

The EAT Lancet Commission provides further guidance on a planetary health plate: it should consist by volume of approximately half a plate of vegetables and fruits; the other half, displayed by contribution to calories, should consist of primarily whole grains, plant protein sources, unsaturated plant oils, and modest amounts of animal sources of protein.

Key Definitions

Plant-based foods: Foods consisting of ingredients derived from plants that include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts, seeds, or legumes.

Pro-climate, pro-health foods: The inclusion of pro-climate, pro-health diets is based on extensive research and evidence that changes in the way communities consume food can have a significant and lasting impact on the health of both people and the planet. While what is defined as healthy can vary based on individuals' needs, bodies, culture, home, circumstances, and more, there are universal guidelines about proportions of what types of food constitute a diet that generally meets the needs of each person and can reduce the climate impact of the food system over time. Research suggests that, allowing for variations according to those individual criteria, a diet consisting primarily of plant-based foods and modest amounts of animal proteins can serve as a broad standard for positive global impact.

Pro-climate, pro-health food system: A pro-climate, pro-health food system is community-driven, prioritizes regenerative food production, supports dietary and health agency, prefers plant-based over animal-based foods, includes accessible and affordable sources for choosing whole foods over heavily processed foods, and minimizes food waste. Community-driven means located in, initiated, led, and evaluated by low-income communities and communities of color, with explicit mechanisms for soliciting community input, developing within-community leaders, and sharing outcomes within and outside the community. (Austin Climate Equity Plan).

Available Data Indicators

- Direct to consumer sales (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Agricultural sales by type per County (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)
- Food Sales by Category (Central Texas Food System Dashboard)

Potential New Data Indicators

- Percentage of plant-based products/meals available in retail outlets
- Percentage of plant-based products/meals purchased

Strategies Related to Goal 8

- Strategy 8.1.** Conduct public information and education campaigns aimed at consumers, businesses, and institutions to promote pro-climate, pro-health foods, incorporating cultural diversity across multiple languages.
- Strategy 8.2.** Identify opportunities for public and private partnerships and sponsorship opportunities that will provide coordinated education, incentive development, and promotion of the benefits of whole food plant-based menus to encourage local institutions to increase whole food plant-based meals.
- Strategy 8.3.** Expand programs that increase the availability, affordability, and awareness of pro-health, pro-climate foods in food retail and food service businesses, emphasizing whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes, especially from local sources and farmers using regenerative practices.
- Strategy 8.4.** Identify public funding opportunities to promote innovative, community-designed solutions to promote and support building an accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate pro-climate, pro-health food system with an emphasis on cross-sector collaborative projects.

Community Spotlight



Photo credit: Miriam Dorantes

“

I actually have a tattoo of an orange... it's a whole story. Basically, my grandmother passed away when I was six... She had such a huge impact on me, because she would [always] give me one dollar. And she planted some seeds in our backyard, and that grew three huge orange trees. And that was a snack [for us as kids]. And that was something she left behind.

And so, growing up, I lived by giving up to others; you can see someone who's hungry and give them food. And then I did that when I was a teacher, my students knew me as a teacher who would have oranges, because I would buy oranges every day. I would always have oranges. They're expensive, because a bag of oranges is like eight dollars... And we were on a teacher's salary... It wasn't the easiest, but I didn't care—because I always knew someone would always come to my classroom, and they did. They'd say, "Hey, miss, like, I'm hungry, do you have an orange?" All the kids would come. Like, they always knew. And I love that I was able to do that.

Miriam Dorantes

*Workers Defense Project and Food Plan
Community Food Ambassador*

”

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.



Background & Community Impact

The State of the Food System Report provides a historical timeline of Austin's food system with the following introduction:

Long before the arrival of Europeans or the establishment of Mexico or the United States, Indigenous peoples hunted, gathered, farmed, and maintained diverse and sustainable food systems across what is now called Texas. While tribes in East Texas, such as the Caddo Confederacy, built permanent dwellings and cultivated farmland for crops like corn, beans, pumpkins, and squash, the Apaches were nomadic, following the buffalo for food and sustenance across Central Texas. Many of their farming practices protected local ecosystems, preserved biodiversity, and minimized food waste while honoring the land, water, plants, and animals that sustained them.

It goes on to recount challenges that came with colonization of the area:

Since colonization, the foundation of our current food system in Austin has been shaped by white supremacist and oppressive policies and programs, which undermine the health and sovereignty of its original inhabitants while erasing their culture, traditions, values, and language. Understanding this history is critical to recognizing its lasting impact on our current food system. While there is much to be addressed, City staff are committed to actively working towards food justice. Despite past and ongoing challenges, Austin is home to a vibrant food community with a thriving food retail scene, neighborhoods with unique food offerings, a growing urban agriculture community, and tireless food access and food justice movements.

Initially, Indigenous peoples were the first to facilitate community food aid, followed by churches and other faith-based organizations throughout much of the 20th century.

A multitude of community-based and government entities Austin/Travis County have played planning and coordinating roles in local food-related efforts over the past few decades. In August 2005, when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast and thousands of refugees ended up at the Austin Convention Center, the Community Action Network (now known as the Community Advancement Network) and Travis County partnered to build on existing convenings of local



providers to form the Basic Needs Coalition. This group of community organizations was committed to providing food, rent and utility assistance. The Basic Needs Coalition later evolved into a funded program with fewer partners and a more narrow scope, Best Single Source Plus Collaborative, a coalition of twelve partners, with administration provided by Caritas of Austin, now primarily focused on preventing and ending homelessness in Austin/Travis County.

The region also receives FEMA funding for non-emergency food, shelter and rental assistance allocated through the local Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) Board. Nonprofit entities, including the Central Texas Food Bank and the Sustainable Food Center, have also periodically convened community-wide conversations related to the food system.

The Austin/Travis County Food Policy Board (formerly the Sustainable Food Policy Board) was founded in 2009 as an advisory body to the Austin City Council and Travis County Commissioners Court. The Food Policy Board is unique from other food policy boards across the country because it is directly tied to both City and County government. The Food Policy Board's stated purpose is to address health disparities, increase local sustainable food production, end food injustices, and ensure the community has a voice in policy decisions that support a healthy and equitable food system. It is an advisory body only. It may make recommendations but does not implement them.

In 2014, the City of Austin created and filled its first Food Policy Manager position within the Office of Sustainability. The Food Team within the Office of Sustainability, made up of three full-time employees and one temporary employee at the time of writing, currently coordinates many food-related functions across the City of Austin. Currently, multiple City staff across several departments work on various food system issues: sustainable food production, food access and food security, food and climate, food sector economic development, community agriculture, food waste reduction and recovery, and more. At Travis County, multiple departments also work on food system-related issues including Transportation and Natural Resources, Health and Human Services, Texas A&M Agri-life Extension Service, and the Planning and Budget Office. Travis County does not currently have a single point of contact for food-related issues.

The partnership between the City of Austin and Travis County on the first Austin/Travis County Food Plan represents a major and formative collaboration and could be a promising model for other local cross-jurisdiction planning efforts. Feedback throughout the planning process confirmed that plan implementation is a critical community concern and should be prioritized as one of the nine goals in this plan.

Available Data Indicators

- Organizations and individuals engaged in the food planning process

Potential New Data Indicators

- Participation (organizational and individual in the implementation phase of the food plan)
- Money invested in local food system network

Strategies Related to Goal #9

- Strategy 9.1.** Launch an inclusive, community-based food collaborative or network that brings together businesses, community-based organizations, educational institutions, government, funders, and other stakeholders to support the implementation of the Austin/Travis County Food Plan, prioritizing community involvement on a regular basis.
- Strategy 9.2.** Support the development of a collaborative to integrate strategies from the Austin/Travis County Food Plan into relevant regional work, including Bastrop, Williamson, Hays, and Caldwell Counties.
- Strategy 9.3.** Develop a research agenda to evaluate progress on the goals and strategies of the Food Plan, including collecting data annually, and releasing progress reports at least every three years, and utilizing community-based participatory engagement practices to document and share the information with the community.
- Strategy 9.4.** Establish a regional Good Food Fund through partnership between the public sector, mission-driven foundations, and other potential donors/funders to drive investment in priorities identified in the Austin/Travis County Food Plan.
- Strategy 9.5.** Develop process for City and Travis County departments to include food system impacts in planning, contracting, and procurement efforts along with accompanying evaluation measures to determine the program effectiveness.

Community Spotlight



Photo credit: Guillermo Rosas

“

You know a tortilla on a plate or a tortilla off the plate is also a vehicle for change. When you take into account the social environment, things like prejudice and discrimination—when you have a product—it’s inevitable that [when you talk about it] and you trace back its roots, it can break down stereotypes. When people ask, “Where do these tortillas come from? Where does this corn come from?” it opens up a window of vulnerability to have an honest conversation. Regardless of who the person is and who you are, now you have a common road to talk about something that connects you to them. That’s been really important to me.

Miriam Alvarez and Julian Maltby
Co-owners of Sin Nombre

”

Plan Implementation & Next Steps



Effective implementation of Austin/Travis County’s first food plan is such a critical focus for the Community Advisory Committee that the CAC included it as a core value for the process:

Sustainability and the Long-Term Success of the Plan: *The food planning process is created with the goal of the plan being implemented and lasting. We will work in a way that creates the best opportunity for the plan to be successful and achieve the mission as laid out on the plan.*

As the plan moves into implementation, we would do well to keep the CAC’s focus on sustainability and long-term success at the forefront. Indeed, the CAC has been preparing for implementation throughout the planning process by convening an implementation action team and considering recommendations from a study of other food plan implementation processes.⁵⁴ This section provides an overview of anticipated action steps, including implementation planning, potential funding sources, and plan measurement and reporting.

Implementation Planning

As noted previously, Appendix 5 includes additional implementation details for each strategy. While not exhaustive, Appendix 5 represents the collective knowledge, experience, and practice-informed planning of food plan participants and the project team, and offers a helpful starting point for implementation considerations, including the following:

- **Food System Areas Impacted:** This describes which areas of the food system will be affected by the strategy.
- **Convening Entity:** The type of entity or entities anticipated to lead implementation of the strategy (local government, other government, nonprofit or community-based organization, philanthropy, for-profit, cross-sector network, K-12 school districts, university or academic institution, or other)
- **Critical First Steps/Key Considerations:** This describes recommended first activities to begin the implementation of each strategy. These may include policy, funding, baseline resources, and staffing. This section also includes other key considerations related to the strategy that were suggested by participants during the planning process.
- **Estimated Timeline:** This describes the potential timeline for implementation, representing the participants’ and project team’s best thinking at the time of publication of the food plan. It includes three relative categories—short-, medium-, or long-term—in order to set feasible targets for implementation for each strategy.
- **Necessary Resources:** This describes the anticipated level of resources necessary for implementation of this strategy, representing the participants’ and project team’s best thinking at the time of publication of the food plan. It includes three relative categories: \$ (relatively low resource investment needed); \$\$ (moderate resource investment needed); and \$\$\$ (relatively large resource investment needed).
- **Peer Community Examples:** Examples from other communities where a similar strategy has been implemented, if available.

⁵⁴ Stephanie Chupp (2023), “An Implementation Guide for the Austin/Travis County Food Plan.”

Strategy Sequencing

This plan takes a comprehensive approach to addressing the issues that diverse community participants identified in the planning process, and we are hopeful that just as many stakeholders—including businesses, community-based organizations, educational institutions, government, funders, and others—will engage in food plan implementation.

Per the original Austin City Council Resolution’s direction, the food plan outlines goals and strategies for a five-year time frame, but it does not outline every step to achieve the goals, as the strategies vary greatly in complexity and timescale. Many Food Plan strategies will likely require collaborative partnerships and/or work groups made up of community members representing all sectors of the food system. Critical first steps or other key considerations are listed for each strategy, but an approach focused on available resources and current conditions that allows for adaptation as strategies are implemented will be necessary in the implementation phase. Determining the order and sequencing of strategy implementation will rely on community and stakeholder engagement and co-creation, as well as consideration of additional factors that may potentially impact plan implementation, including state, federal, and global factors that can influence local conditions, economic outlook, revenue, and resources.

Implementation Network

A key strategy under Goal 9 (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) is to launch an inclusive, community-based food collaborative organization, or network that brings together businesses, community-based organizations, educational institutions, philanthropic foundations, government and quasi-government agencies, funders, and other stakeholders to support the implementation of the food plan.

Knowing that the collaborative or network will not be in place immediately following plan completion, it is anticipated the City, County, and Austin/Travis County Food Policy Board will provide interim support in shepherding the plan into the initial implementation phase. A variety of City and County departments are likely to assume key roles in implementation partnerships and/or work groups, either as a convener or as a participant, around the strategies with highest alignment with their respective roles, strategic goals, and existing plans. Other community organizations and stakeholders in the food plan process may also step forward to lead specific strategies that best fit their strengths, interests, and capacities, while some strategies will require engagement from new stakeholders not yet at the table. A collaborative network serving as a proverbial home base can help to coordinate all potential strategy leaders and supporters. The City and County may provide interim support for the infrastructure needed for collaboration and plan implementation and may also support related efforts, such as stakeholder engagement and data partnerships.

Funding

The strategy implementation tables in Appendix 5 include an estimate of the relative amount of resources necessary to implement (e.g., relatively low resource investment needed; moderate resource investment needed; relatively large resource investment needed). Further scoping around budget estimates will be needed for the strategies that implementation partners identify for initial sequencing.

Potential revenue sources could include City and County general and bond funds, funding from other local taxing authorities, state and federal funding, special revenue funds, other public finance tools, philanthropy/corporate support, and grants for nonprofit organizations or community-based organizations. The hope is that organizations affiliated with plan implementation will develop their own funding priorities in order to guide plan implementation.

Measurement & Reporting

The preface to each goal lists available data indicators for each plan goal. Those indicators rely on existing data compiled and updated in the Central Texas Food System Dashboard hosted by the Central Texas Food Bank, as well as other key publicly available data sources such as the Travis County Snapshot from the American Community Survey and the Travis County Poverty Brief. In addition, potential new data indicators are offered for some of the goals. These data sets do not yet exist but may be useful to develop strategies for collecting as a part of plan implementation. Data indicators are included to inform the development of targets to measure the success of each goal during the plan implementation phase.

In collaboration with City departments and other organizations, the City of Austin Office of Sustainability will create the following reporting mechanisms to keep stakeholders updated on progress:

- A regularly updated Dashboard summarizing the implementation status of the Food Plan’s strategies
- Progress reports from Implementation Teams

The Office of Sustainability will post these reports publicly and deliver updates to Austin City Council, the Austin/Travis County Food Policy Board, Joint Sustainability Committee, and other boards and commissions as appropriate.

Afterword



At the conclusion of Issue Area Group workshops and during Phase 3 public meetings, participants were asked to identify which goal or strategy that they felt most energized to continue to work on or prioritize. The responses below highlight a central tension between what individuals can do to support plan implementation and what we must do at an organizational, institutional, or collective level to make systemic change across the food system:

[I'm most concerned about] food recovery because it feels like something I can do. I can think about my food waste, about planning my meals better, how can I compost. It's something I have more control over.

I am training to be a doula right now, so I am most excited for the strategies that focused on birthing people and their babies. My focus would probably be supporting my clients with food and getting birth centers/hospitals to focus more on the yummy food people could be eating.

[I'm most concerned about] empowering community members and amplifying people already doing great things and helping them connect with others to share resources. There's no reason to start something new if it's already working and helping those people access more resources to get more community members involved.

Community building with food access leaders. We need to have fun!

As the responses above demonstrate, both individual and collective responses are needed to actualize the solutions proposed in this plan. Individuals can and do influence the food system through their food purchasing choices, as food producers and food workers, and through what they decide to do with the food that they do not eat. And yet, we know that the local food system transformation we seek will take collective organizing, advocacy, and system changes, which is why most of the strategies included in the plan are focused on system-level solutions. Everyone has a role to play—from large corporations to small businesses, from the federal government to local school districts, from philanthropic entities to nonprofit organizations to grassroots community efforts and faith communities.

A powerful guiding theme emerged in this planning process: that this planning effort was as much a movement as it was the creation of a document. If you have engaged in the development of this plan, thank you for your commitment to developing a vision, objectives, goals, and strategies to move Austin/Travis County towards a more equitable, just, resilient, and sustainable food system. If you have not been engaged in the plan so far, please know that you are welcome, and a collection of unique voices and perspectives is critical to building the power that we know is needed to truly transform our community's food system. Come join us— there is still plenty of room at the table.

Appendices



Appendix 1: Glossary

- **Central Texas:** For the purposes of this report, “Central Texas” refers to the 5-county Metropolitan Statistical Area of Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties.
- **Circular economy:** A model of production and consumption which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing materials and products for as long as possible.
- **Community or communities:** Community is often meant to refer to a group of individuals that are tied together by a shared sense of belonging or mutuality. We recognize that there is not an exclusive and single community in Austin/Travis County but rather many communities.
- **Community-based organization (CBO):** A nonprofit corporation or association that is representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and that provides social, educational, health, or human services.
- **Community food production:** Any place food is being grown or produced that is open to the general public, including community gardens, school gardens, and food forests.
- **Community garden:** A site for growing produce for non-commercial use operated and maintained by volunteers and divided into individual or shared plots and common areas.
- **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA):** A system that connects the producer and consumers within the food system by allowing the consumer to subscribe to the harvest of a certain farm or group of farms.
- **Composting:** A controlled decomposition of organic matter which results in a product that can improve soil by increasing organic matter, water holding capacity, and nutrient availability.
- **Culturally relevant food:** Food items that reflect the preferences and cultural contexts of the community.
- **Economically disadvantaged:** individuals or groups that experience financial hardships and lack the economic resources and opportunities necessary for a standard quality of life. This term encompasses various aspects, including low income, limited access to education and healthcare, inadequate housing, and insufficient employment opportunities. People who are economically disadvantaged often face systemic barriers that prevent them from achieving economic stability and mobility.
- **Farm:** Any place that produces and sells at least \$1,000 of agricultural products during a given year and is owned or run by a farm operator.
- **Farm workers:** Workers employed on farms.
- **Food business or food establishment:** An operation that stores, prepares, packages, serves, vends, or otherwise provides food for human consumption. This does not include establishments that offer only prepackaged foods, produce stands, or food processing plants.
- **Food distribution:** The process of transporting, storing, and selling food to entities other than individual consumers, such as grocery stores.
- **Food forest:** A community-led edible forest garden that is free and open to the public.

- **Food hub:** A business or organization that connects farmers to larger markets by handling the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of their products.
- **Food insecurity:** When a person lacks reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious food.
- **Food justice:** Seeks 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.
- **Food manufacturing:** The processing or packing of any food product for wholesale distribution or retail sale.
- **Food plan or food system plan:** A set of interconnected, forward-thinking activities that strengthen a community's food system through the creation and implementation of plans and policies.
- **Food processing:** The activities that make raw agricultural products edible, the combination of ingredients into food products, and activities involved in the commercial production of “highly processed” foods.
- **Food recovery:** The various ways that prevent surplus food from being sent to the landfill, which provides a variety of social, economic, and environmental benefits.
- **Food retail:** A food establishment or section of an establishment where food and food products are offered to a consumer and intended for off-premise consumption.
- **Food system:** An interconnected network that includes everything that happens with food—where and how it is grown, distributed, sold, consumed, wasted, or recovered.
- **Food system policy:** The set of laws and regulations that inform how, why, and when food is produced, transported, distributed, and consumed.
- **Food waste:** Food loss that occurs at any stage of the production and supply chain, which can be caused by spoilage at the production level, over-ordering at the retail level, or over-purchasing at the individual level.
- **Food worker:** Food workers employed in Food markets and retail (grocery stores/farmers' markets/convenience stores); Food establishments (restaurants/food trucks/bars); Food processing/ distribution (Packing facilities/ industrial kitchens/commercial and commissary kitchens/meat/poultry processing facilities, etc.); and Food delivery (UberEATS/Door Dash/Instacart). Does not include farm workers (farm workers are defined separately).
- **Fresh for Less Mobile Markets & Home Delivery:** Current Austin Public Health-funded program that offers locally grown produce and other healthy grocery items at reduced prices via mobile markets, farm pickup or home delivery in areas experiencing high food insecurity.
- **Institutional food purchaser:** Any institution that purchases food at a large scale, including but not limited to schools and school districts, hospitals, employers with onsite cafeterias, correctional facilities, senior care facilities, and government agencies.
- **Livable Wage:** The minimum income necessary for a worker to meet their basic needs, including adequate shelter, food, and other necessities, or the level of income needed to prevent a worker from falling into poverty.
- **Local:** Within this plan, local often refers geographically to Austin/Travis County (i.e., local government, local service providers). However, when in reference to locally sourced food or local supply chains, we generally use

local to refer to Texas grown or produced foods and activities that take place within the state. We recognize that specific boundaries and definitions of local may vary based on context.

- **Medically necessary food:** Foods that are specially formulated and processed to help patients manage their disease or condition's dietary needs, food allergies and sensitivities, and medical conditions, such as nutrition drinks and ready-to-feed formula for infants.
- **Nutrition security:** Consistent and equitable access to healthy, safe, and affordable foods that promote optimal health and well-being.
- **Plant-based foods:** Foods consisting of ingredients derived from plants that include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts, seeds, or legumes.
- **Pro-climate, pro-health foods:** The inclusion of pro-climate, pro-health diets is based on extensive research and evidence that changes in the way communities consume food can have a significant and lasting impact on the health of both people and the planet. While what is defined as healthy can vary based on individuals' needs, bodies, culture, home, circumstances, and more, there are universal guidelines about proportions of what types of food constitute a diet that generally meets the needs of each person and can reduce the climate impact of the food system over time. Research suggests that, allowing for variations according to those individual criteria, a diet consisting primarily of plant-based foods (around 50% fruits and vegetables, an additional 30% whole grains, around 20% plant-sourced proteins, and minimal animal-sourced proteins and dairy), can serve as a broad standard for positive global impact. (Source: Eat Lancet Commission)
- **Pro-climate, pro-health food system:** The inclusion of pro-climate, pro-health diets is based on extensive research and evidence that changes in the way communities consume food can have a significant and lasting impact on the health of both people and the planet. While what is defined as healthy can vary based on individuals' needs, bodies, culture, home, circumstances, and more, there are universal guidelines about proportions of what types of food constitute a diet that generally meets the needs of each person and can reduce the climate impact of the food system over time. Research suggests that, allowing for variations according to those individual criteria, a diet consisting primarily of plant-based foods and modest amounts of animal proteins can serve as a broad standard for positive global impact.
- **Racial equity:** A process and an outcome where race is no longer the most reliable indicator for quality-of-life outcomes.
- **Reclaimed Water:** Reclaimed water is recycled from wastewater generated by homes and businesses and treated for non-potable uses. Though reclaimed water is not used in the drinking water supply, it meets many of the criteria for drinking water. This water is clear and has no noticeable odor. It is harmless to humans through normal contact. It meets all state and federal laws for non-potable use. In Austin, purple pipes carry reclaimed water that is recycled from wastewater generated by homes and businesses and treated for non-potable uses.
- **Regenerative food production:** Generally defined as an approach to farming that works to restore soil and ecosystem health, address inequity, and improve land, water, and climate for the future. While specific practices will vary from place to place, regenerative food production builds on a set of core principles including soil

health, animal welfare, biodiversity, and social fairness. While regenerative food production has gained significant attention as a new approach, it actually has its roots in the traditional practices of Indigenous, Black, and Hispanic/Latine farmers, marginalized communities have often seen their foundational contributions erased and have suffered displacement and discrimination in our agricultural history (note that a more specific definition of regenerative food production may need to be developed to implement strategies in this food plan).

- **Resilience:** The ability to prepare for, withstand, and recover from a crisis or disruption. A resilient food system can withstand and recover from disruptions in a way that ensures a sufficient supply of accessible food for all.
- **The right to food:** Generally understood as the right to feed oneself in dignity. The right to adequate food is a long-standing international human right to which many countries are committed.
- **School food garden:** A site for growing produce located on the grounds of an educational facility that engages students in learning about food and gardening.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):** A federally funded program administered at the state level that provides a monthly cash voucher to qualifying households and individuals that can be spent only on food. SNAP was previously referred to as “food stamps.”
- **Surplus food:** Food that is safe and nutritious, but is discarded by producers, suppliers, distributors, or retailers for a variety of reasons. These food items can be legally donated to nonprofits.
- **Urban areas:** Cities, suburbs and towns that are more densely populated than rural areas.
- **Urban farm:** A site in a city at least one acre in size used to sustainably produce agricultural products to be sold for profit. Many urban farms may also provide agricultural education activities.
- **Values-based purchasing:** Values-based purchasing refers to practices and policies that require purchases to prioritize the values of the products and vendors when determining what to purchase and from whom. The Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) has developed a framework based on five values: Local Economies, Environmental Sustainability, Valued Workforce, Animal Welfare, and Nutrition. Additionally, the values include the themes of Equity and Inclusion. These values serve as guideposts for identifying the cost of food beyond just the monetary value, and include the social and environmental impact of food throughout the supply chain. This plan uses the phrase "Values-Based Purchasing" to refer to practices and policies aligned with one or more of the stated values of GFPP, but which may or may not adhere to the requirements or framework of the program specifically.
- **WIC:** The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk.

Appendix 2: Acknowledgements

This plan would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of so many committed community members and partners. The Austin/Travis County community showed up for this process and its supporters are more than we can name. We extend gratitude to each person who participated in the food planning process and supported the food plan from January 2023 to May 2024. Participants' organizational affiliation(s), when available, are listed in parentheses after their name.

Community Advisory Committee

This 22-person group, which oversaw the food planning process, was comprised of a blend of community members and other food system partners.

Co-Chairs

- Nitza Cuevas (Good Work Austin and ATX Free Fridge)
- Mina Davis (Rural Mutual Aid and Valley of Hope)
- Larry Franklin (Black Lives Veggies)

Committee Members

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Isabel Agbassi | • Elysa Hammond |
| • R. Nathan “RNA” Allen (Little Herds) | • Ali Ishaq |
| • Socorro Carrasco | • Dr. Larry Wallace Jr. (Black Men’s Health Clinic) |
| • Stephanie Cerda | • Yvette Lopez |
| • Joshua Collier | • Karen Magid |
| • Sydney Corbin (Urban Roots) | • Juliet Morgan |
| • Jenifer DeAtley (Sustainable Food Center) | • Thu Nguyen |
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These eight individuals served as liaisons from the planning process to their community networks.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
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| • Miriam Dorantes | • Frances Naranjo |
| • John Gutierrez (Farmshare Austin) | • Maria Solis |
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Food Plan Community Event Hosts

- AISD Showcase @ Palmer Event Center
- Allgo - Decompress Fest
- Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders
- Asian American Community Health Initiative
Community Health Fair
- Asian American Resource Center
- Austin Public Health
- Back to School @ Pillow Elementary
- Bee Cave Farmers Market
- Casa Marianella
- CelebrASIA hosted by the Asian American
Resource Center
- Chaparral Crossing Farmers Market
- Del Valle Resource Fair
- District 2 and 3 Budget Town Hall meetings
- District 8 Community Fair
- Dove Springs Back to School Bash at Dove
Springs Rec Center
- Earth Day ATX hosted by Huston Tillotson
University
- East Communities YMCA
- Edible Book Festival
- El Buen Samaritano
- Festival Beach Food Forest
- Field Guide Festival
- Fiesta De Salud hosted by Austin Public Health
- Freedom Fest sponsored by the Austin Area
Urban League
- Fresh for Less Community Advisory Committee
- Harvest Moon Festival hosted by the Asian
American Cultural Center
- Hill Country Community Ministries
- Hope Fest 2023 hosted by Austin Voices for
Education and Youth
- IDEA Back To School Bash
- Kids Fest hosted by Child Inc

- Leadership Austin
- Leander Legacy: Honoring Aptzāi Pil' Symposium
- Meals on Wheels Central Texas
- Mission Accomplished
- Multicultural Refugee Coalition
- One Voice Central Texas
- People's Community Clinic
- Ruiz Branch Library
- Si se puede! March and Day of Action sponsored by Austin Independent School District
- South Asian Heritage Festival hosted by Austin Public Library
- Spicewood Springs Library
- St. Johns Community Garden
- STEAM Fest hosted by Austin Voices for Education and Youth
- Success by 6
- Sustainable Food Center
- Texas Farmers Market at Mueller
- Tianguis at Earth Commons
- Travis County Community Center - Jonestown
- Travis County Community Center - Pflugerville
- Travis County Juneteenth Celebration
- Travis County Parks Foundation
- Travis County Summer Youth Employment Program
- United Way Food Security Working Group - Williamson County
- UT - LBJ School of Public Affairs
- UT Food Policy Council
- UT School of Social Work
- Virginia L Brown Rec Center
- Vivent Health Food Pantry
- Waterloo Green Days
- Wildflower Unitarian Universalist Church

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- Travis County Public Information Office: Yoojin Cho, Meagan Stokes, and Scott Elbrecht
- Chivas Watson, Working Group 512

Classrooms Participating in the Name the Food Plan Contest

- Langford Elementary Students taught by Lisette Kunz
- Linder Elementary Students taught by Mrs. Loida Acevedo
- Overton Elementary Students taught by Daniela Willett
- Pecan Springs Elementary Students taught by Madison Neal
- Rodriguez Elementary Students taught by Hector Tovar-Lopez
- Zavala Elementary Students taught by Gloria Chavez

Participants in Story Gathering

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- Miriam Alvarez
- Lafayette Archie
- Izzy Carpintero
- Miriam Dorantes
- Finegan Ferreboeuf
- Erin Gomez
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- Diane Holloway
- Julian Maltby
- Ann Marie Wakely
- Lisa Marquez
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- Eddie Martinez
- Melanie McAfee
- Paige Oliviero
- Katherine Ospina
- Ivory Rines
- Juan Rosa
- Kellie Stewart
- Lis Stumpf
- Maria Tello
- Andrew Verdugo
- Arielle Warren
- Chivas Watson

Appendix 3: Sustainability & Equity Assessment Tool (SEAT)

What is the SEAT?

If we create strategies for those most negatively impacted by the current food system, it will work for everyone. If we don't include everyone in the community in our strategies, we will never reach the scale that is necessary to solve this problem. The purpose of the SEAT is to **ensure that equity and sustainability are built into every strategy** of the Austin/Travis County Food Plan. Strategies will be evaluated based on **twelve values** that were developed by the Austin/Travis County Food Plan Community Advisory Committee.

The 12 values

1. Equity & Justice
2. Climate & Environmental Impact - Food as a Climate Solution
3. Health - Food as Medicine
4. Labor/Economy - Food as a tool to create a thriving economy
5. Culture
6. Resilience/Disaster Response
7. Land Access
8. Generational Impact
9. Community Engagement & Policy
10. Innovation & Education
11. Zero Waste & Resource Efficiency
12. Implementation & Impact

How to use the SEAT

1. Consider a strategy and run it through each value to ask what impact this might have as it relates to each value. Could it potentially cause: harm (-1)?, is it neutral, or does not apply to the value (0), or would it likely benefit that value (+1)?
2. Consider the four guiding questions for strategy development (adapted from Cultural Strategy Space)
 - a. **Social:** How we interact with each other, care for each other, and who holds power.
 - b. **Economic:** how resources are distributed, developed, and exchanged. Where do resources for this strategy come from? Where do resources go? Who benefits monetarily?
 - c. **History:** What has led to the current structure and how are we perpetuating “good things” and disrupting “bad things”. Who has historically received the benefits and who has suffered as a result? What has

happened in the past that had positive impacts? On who? What happened in the past that had negative impacts? On who?

- d. **Imagination:** Does this excite you and challenge what we have thought of as possible? Who would be excited to work on this and who might be opposed to this?

Instructions:

Using the table on the following page, list your strategy and consider **social**, **economic**, **historical**, and **imaginative** dynamics, consider your strategy on each value, providing a score of -1, 0, +1.

Write Strategy and Strategy # below:

Values	Impact			Notes
	Harm (-1)	Neutral (0)	Benefit (+1)	What could be done to strengthen this strategy along this value?
Value 1: Equity & Justice Strategy ensures that essential goods and services, including food and green spaces, are affordable, culturally relevant, and accessible to all.				
Value 2: Climate and Environmental Impact Strategy acts to address climate change and protect the environment through sustainable practices that prioritize renewable energy, minimize pollution and waste, support regenerative agriculture, conserve, and restore natural resources.				
Value 3: Health Strategy promotes physical and mental well-being, with a focus on preventative care and ensures that all people have enough affordable, nutritious food.				
Value 4: Labor/Economy Strategy ensures economic justice so that low-income communities and communities of color are prioritized in the benefits of the strategy and are protected from any potential negative consequences.				

Values	Impact			Notes
	Harm (-1)	Neutral (0)	Benefit (+1)	What could be done to strengthen this strategy along this value?
Value 5: Culture Strategy emphasizes the importance of cultural diversity.				
Value 6: Resilience/Disaster Response Strategy prioritizes growing a strong, resilient food network and supply chain capable of responding to climate & other emergencies. Strategy elevates marginalized communities by developing and strengthening the skills, abilities, and resources that a community needs to survive, adapt, and thrive.				
Value 7: Land Access Strategy increases farmland accessibility and affordability, reduces the loss of farmland, increases soil conservation and land conservation, and/or invests in affordable and accessible properties to promote local food businesses.				
Value 8: Generational Impact Strategy invests in creating a fair and healing food system aiming to address past harms and bring positive change for future generations. Focus on those hurt most by the current food system, including those impacted by generations of food trauma and food insecurity.				
Value 9: Community Engagement & Policy Strategy invests in empowering communities to come together to feel a shared sense of responsibility and power in reshaping the local food system.				
Value 10: Innovation & Education Strategy focuses on using technology, research, and science, while gaining community support. It also involves educating and providing resources for those involved in and impacted by the food system.				
Value 11: Zero Waste & Resource Efficiency Strategy prevents waste and promotes a circular economy (a way of using things so nothing is wasted) across all parts of the food system and focuses on optimizing the use of resources and promoting conservation to ensure their highest and best use.				

Values	Impact			Notes
	Harm (-1)	Neutral (0)	Benefit (+1)	What could be done to strengthen this strategy along this value?
Value 12: Implementation & Impact Strategy Is practical and doable, with a clear path to identifying resources or people who can help get funding or advocate for the strategy. It is clear what is needed to be done in the short-term (3-5 years) as well as long-term objectives for the future.				
Total score:				
Overall comments:				



Appendix 4: Strategy Implementation Details

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.



Strategy 1.1. Preserve land for food production in Central Texas through the use conservation easements, fee-simple purchases, and land-banking, in which local governments, community-based organizations, and other entities purchase farmland to lease or sell to farmers (in the case of a sale, a conservation easement ensuring that the land would remain in agricultural use should be established prior to the sale).

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	Local Government, Nonprofit or community-based organization, and/or Philanthropy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation Fund's Working Farms Fund (Atlanta, Chicago, Raleigh) The Hill Country Land, Water, Sky, and Natural Infrastructure Plan 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$\$\$ large investment

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

Strategy should align with strategy 2.4.

Note: Travis County can't land bank, but the City of Austin can.

Options for implementation: (1) Create a local-government sponsored fund for purchasing and leasing farmland or (2) Partner with a nonprofit (WFF) to support a revolving loan fund, such as the Conservation Fund's Working Farms Fund.

Additional potential activities: evaluate the creation of donor-advised funds structured for outcomes-based finance and philanthropy; local government staff create a matrix for determining what kind of property should be conserved; local government staff develop a process for monetizing the value of preserving farmland (environmental, climate, social, economic).

Strategy 1.2. Pursue capital funding sources, such as City of Austin or Travis County general obligation bonds, to fund the conservation of land for agricultural use through conservation easements or fee-simple purchase.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skagit County's The Farmland Legacy Program 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$\$ large investment

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

Note: Travis County can participate in conservation easements but may not legally participate in fee-simple purchases.

Develop team to propose including this in a 2025/2026 COA Bond and future TC bonds.

Strategy 1.3. Integrate, incentivize, and maintain regenerative food production and pollinator habitat in new and existing commercial and residential properties as appropriate and in consultation with impacted communities.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Santa Clara, CA 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$\$\$ large investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Assess regulatory barriers to including farmland and community gardens in new developments and create policies to reduce or remove those barriers and support setting aside land and maintaining it in food production, especially land that cannot otherwise be built upon.				
Additional potential activities: require any new development is required to have a certain amount of green space for regenerative agriculture; assess considerations for people displaced by these developments being created; consider that the people who will be farming these lands get first access to homes in these housing developments; develop incentive program to support developers interested in creating affordable housing with an agricultural component.				

Strategy 1.4. Provide financial assistance, enact conducive land use policy/regulations, and develop staffing support and/or technical assistance for maintenance and education at community food production facilities, farms, and ranches, including establishing and maintaining rainwater harvesting and composting infrastructure.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FoodCorps (national nonprofit) School Garden Support Organization Network 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Coordinate a stakeholder process to develop policy recommendations. Consider COA & AISD joint funding of Parent Support Specialists at schools and COA & AISD joint funding and staffing of joint use parks/schoolyards as funding existing models.				
Additional potential activities: work with STEM curriculum providers and local K-12 and higher education schools to provide hands-on learning opportunities related to regenerative agriculture; create and fund a program to hire, train, and support paid positions with a livable wage that support school food gardens, community gardens, and other community-led agriculture, prioritizing hiring BIPOC and other historically marginalized community members.				

Strategy 1.5. Develop an Austin/Travis County Urban Farm Comprehensive Plan with the aim to remove barriers for urban communities to access locally grown food and support emerging and innovative urban agriculture techniques.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philadelphia's urban agriculture plan 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Consider USDA funding for plan development (USDA Urban Ag Planning Grant?). Look at existing Urban Farm plan models; register existing farms and food growing spaces; study interest in farming, owning a farm, or working on a farm; analyze the data to build a case use study; consider the possibility of funding an urban agriculture program and/or position to support the plan. Ensure opportunities and incentives for home growers and backyard farmers in addition to larger operations.				

Strategy 1.6. Establish opportunities for community-led regenerative food production on areas of publicly owned land that are well-suited to agriculture, including parkland, public right-of-way, and floodplain buyout land, where appropriate.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GrowBoston 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Confirm definition of regenerative food production (consider Certified Regenerative Agriculture) and codify Carbon Farm Plan as a template.				

Strategy 1.7. Study the feasibility of using reclaimed water to provide sustainable water resources for regenerative food production in Austin/Travis County.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Israel's water reuse technology and policy 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Conduct a feasibility study to overlay where purple pipe infrastructure is and where land zoned for agriculture is and land that may be used for agriculture is. Estimate what it would cost to develop the overlapping areas. Assess options for increasing treatment so reclaimed water is safe for all kinds of community agriculture.				
Additional potential activity: Investigate food safety laws and <u>City/County policies</u> and resources required to encourage using rainwater for commercial/industrial use at food and beverage companies, restaurants, and farms.				

Strategy 1.8. Incorporate conservation strategies that protect soils, watersheds, and pollinator habitat into public land and infrastructure management, and expand public education and branding, incentives, and certifications to encourage community-wide adoption.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pollinator Protection in Minnesota 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
City/County adopt cross-departmental policies and develop plans to incorporate these practices into new and existing parks, buildings, etc. Consider partnerships with organizations connected to these issues.				
Examples of practices to encourage could include reducing mowing, habitat creation, using native plants, minimizing pesticide use, using dark sky-friendly lighting, and utilizing organic practices for landscape management.				
Explore targets for beehive density.				

Strategy 1.9. Create an effective coalition of universities, local producers, and community-based organizations to research and pilot innovative regenerative agricultural practices in local conditions for effectiveness, yield, cost, water use, and soil health, potentially using public land and facilities.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	University or Academic institution or Private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Rodale Institute Southeast Organic Center 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Identify potential partners, coordinate with existing implementers and local producers.				
Develop and publish a research agenda for what kind of research is needed to support future food production in Central Texas.				
Identify funding for and implement a landscape analysis of Agroecological research in Texas.				

Strategy 1.10. Explore the creation and/or expansion of tax breaks or other incentives for farmers who adopt regenerative agricultural practices and water conservation strategies and pay livable wages.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regenerative Agriculture Tax Credit 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Conduct community engagement and education for underrepresented farmers to access tax incentives.				
Note that this strategy will rely on the creation of a livable wage in the food service industry in Travis County (strategy 3.1).				

Strategy 1.11. Create a seed banking initiative that prioritizes the cultivation, preservation, and dissemination of native and adapted species that are ecologically, culturally, and culinarily significant, to include ongoing access to land for historically underserved people and communities.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous Seed Keepers Network 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Create a Working Group to explore best location and structure to support the initiative. Identify needed resources and possible barriers. Develop an inventory of public land that could be used, such as city parkland where there is existing infrastructure to support seed processing and packaging (John Treviño Park). https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-18-million-investing-america-agenda-enhance				

Strategy 1.12. Fully fund City and County park plans that include strategies to support community agriculture (such as the Vision Plan at John Treviño Jr. Metropolitan Park) and include support for staff to implement community agriculture programs in these locations and distribute food grown to surrounding communities.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burlington, VT (Intervale) 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Develop a working group to establish what is needed and who could manage the community agriculture on public land. Develop a strategy for growing food that could be donated.				

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.



Strategy 2.1. Provide farm owners and workers with technical and financial assistance to be able to supply locally and regeneratively grown food products to institutions and others that have adopted values-based food purchasing guidelines.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California School Food Program • Good Food Purchasing Initiative of Metro Chicago 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Develop a working group to identify barriers for small to mid-scale farms supplying local public institutions, such as logistical challenges, price, available and affordable land.				

Strategy 2.2. Build capacity for existing farmer co-ops and/or create a new local farmer co-op that supports agricultural workers in accessing and stewarding land and creating local food retail and distribution markets.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Texas Farmers Coop 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Define preferred markets to target (households, restaurants, institutions, farm to school, food bank, farmers markets); develop a business plan; explore co-op owned farm garden on city/county land.				

Strategy 2.3. Create a local farm incubator program to support farmers who practice regenerative agriculture through the first 3-5 years of business with a focus on reducing barriers for underrepresented farm owners and workers, including offering beginning farmer training and financing support.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burlington, VT (Intervale) 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Obtain Travis County and City of Austin match for federal funding; RFP for developing and running incubator program; identify public land that could be used as a ‘hub’ for an incubator farm. Related to Strategies 1.4 and 1.8.				
Gather data about specific underrepresented groups to better understand the gaps and shortfalls and what specific programs are needed to address them.				
Explore opportunities to utilize publicly owned land in this program, e.g., John Trevino Park.				

Strategy 2.4. Consult with communities historically displaced, currently being displaced, and/or at risk of future displacement to co-develop strategies with City and County officials to allow sites to be legally stewarded by members of these communities.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
Production	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sogorea Te’ Land Trust, Oakland CA 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Research strategies to directly transfer ownership of culturally, agriculturally, and historically relevant pieces of land, where desired by the affected communities. Research and connect with other movements/models.				
Engage in asset mapping to identify land parcels and community leaders/organizations that serve historically oppressed communities utilizing a Community-Based Participatory research approach.				
Include a focus on educational gardens using wild and medicinal plants.				
Consider institutional support to navigate access to appropriate, culturally, and historically relevant land to use.				

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



Strategy 3.1. Define the criteria for a livable wage in the food service industry to enhance the participation of restaurants and other food businesses in incentive programs using frameworks such as One Fair Wage, MIT Living Wage Calculator, or United Way's ALICE.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization or a coalition of such entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicago's One Fair Wage ordinance 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Convene city and community partners. Present to city and county boards and commissions to get feedback. Consider and address impact on local small businesses. Frameworks to consider: One Fair Wage, MIT Living Wage Calculator, or United Way's ALICE.				

Strategy 3.2. Conduct a regular survey to assess needs, work environment, and career outlook to inform programs and policies affecting food and farm workers.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicago's Tipped Worker Report 2023 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Conduct focus groups to design survey questions within 1 year. Conduct and report on food and farm worker survey within 2 years. Determine the entity who will host the survey deployment and its results. Determine key information collected and how it will be used and shared back to the community plan to share the idea/potential of this strategy. Engage food business and restaurant owners, as well as food workers through culturally appropriate mechanisms. Ensure the information that is gathered is shared with the participants. Aggregate data to ensure adequate privacy and anonymity for respondents in the survey.				

Strategy 3.3. Create a commission or working group of the Austin/Travis County Food Policy Board focused on food and farm worker rights and livelihoods that will champion issues related to benefits and unfair labor practices.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government or Other Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Austin Human Rights Commission 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
<p>Discuss potential new commission or working group with Office of the City Clerk.</p> <p>Research best practices.</p> <p>To consider under the scope of the commission or working group: insurance and other benefits, childcare, addressing Occupational Safety and Health Administration violations, unfair labor practices , worker safety concerns, particularly in relationship to heat and overheating, wage theft, and wrongful termination.</p> <p>Partner with financial and legal organizations to provide guidance.</p>				

Strategy 3.4. Support livable wages for food workers through incentives such as rebates, tax incentives, and wage supplements for food system employers who pay a livable wage.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government	Unknown	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$\$ large investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
<p>Consider using living wage ladders and additional pooled services.</p> <p>Develop employer reporting requirements, benchmarks to verify entitled wages are paid in full.</p>				

Strategy 3.5. Establish additional support for Austin/Travis County's workforce and small business development organizations to strengthen employment and career advancement opportunities and support worker organizing across the food system.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government, Other Government	Unknown	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
<p>Convene cohort of stakeholders to build pathways using food plan as reference point.</p> <p>Focus on low-overhead, low-investment strategies (e.g., coordinating/facilitating network, aligning existing programs, piloting, or seeding new programs).</p> <p>Consider other advancement/job sustainability needs: benefits, insurance, safety net, wages paid in full.</p>				

Strategy 3.6. Recognize and support businesses in the food industry that pay livable wages, support worker ownership, promote fair labor practices, and offer career pathways to their employees.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Work Austin 	LONG TERM more than 3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
<p>Note that this strategy will rely on the creation of a livable wage in the food service industry in Travis County (strategy 3.1).</p> <p>Develop a media campaign and inventory of such establishments.</p> <p>Need distinct funding for agricultural incentive wage supplements; small business incentive program for living wage ladder in food service sector.</p>				

Strategy 3.7. Increase ownership opportunities for food workers and farm workers through education and access to capital to start cooperatives and other businesses.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Production• Processing & Distribution• Markets & Retail• Consumption & Access• Post-Consumption & Waste	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	Unknown	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$\$ large investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Convene existing local co-ops to identify the needs and determine whether any existing entity would be interested in supporting this activity.				
Identify the staff necessary to provide support to existing coops and expand program.				

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 relevant food during disasters and emergencies.



Strategy 4.1. Conduct a landscape analysis of existing food disaster preparedness efforts undertaken by local governments, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and businesses, in order to better align and mobilize food-related emergency response functions across jurisdictions, sectors, and organizations to optimize allocation of resources and minimize waste.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local example available Houston Resilience Hub Research 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

Review results of current HSEM survey. Integrate the City's Mass Care Branch with Travis County OEM. Review the Food and Water Access Appendix to ensure alignment with County, ISDs, private sector, and CBO's plans.

[Food System Resilience: A Planning Guide for Local Governments](#)

Strategy 4.2. Partner with cultural and religious institutions and other community-based organizations to conduct surveys and community consultations to identify the diverse cultural and medical dietary needs within the City of Austin and Travis County, and develop a diverse food inventory that includes culturally specific items and medically necessary foods (e.g., halal, kosher, diabetic, gluten-free, low-sodium, allergen-free options).

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seattle & King County's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) grant 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

Informs other strategies within the goal so should be undertaken early.

Survey should recognize that needs may vary by household.

Leverage existing organizations that are active in this space and make sure to coordinate with these efforts

Strategy 4.3. Develop and fund a coordinated emergency food access response plan that ensures that City and County community centers and resilience networks have access to water, culturally and medically appropriate food, proper storage, and inventory management practices.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texas Food System Security and Resiliency Planning Council 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
<p>Define types of “appropriate locations” for distribution to be funded, expanded, and/or improved (which will identify key partners for collaboration).</p> <p>Establish a working group of CBOs and private companies to meet regularly and review plans and coordination of resources, 2023 Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER) report.</p>				

Strategy 4.4. Launch a public awareness campaign on the importance of preparation for meeting dietary needs during emergencies, including information on culturally and medically appropriate food preparation and storage, and provide training for emergency food provision staff and volunteers.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denver, CO - Culturally Responsive Food Initiative of Food Bank of the Rockies 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
<p>Should focus on both internally for City/County staff as well as externally with community partners.</p> <p>Add a training section to the Food and Water Access Appendix that helps communities and organizations prepare for disasters - see FEMA’s training: Organizations Preparing for Emergency Needs (OPEN).</p> <p>Ensure that culturally affirming and responsive practices to ensure respectful and appropriate food selection, preparation, safe handling, and distribution with consideration for reducing food waste are utilized.</p>				

Strategy 4.5. Work with community partners to implement a real-time inventory management system to track food availability, expiration dates, and replenishment needs to ensure a steady supply during emergencies and minimize food waste.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jersey City - Food Rescue Mapping (in collaboration with NRDC) 	LONG TERM more than 3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Establish a working group of CBOs and private companies to meet regularly and review plans and coordinate resources.				

Strategy 4.6. Create a diverse and reliable food supply by establishing partnerships with a wide range of food suppliers and develop contingency plans for food supply chain disruptions, including alternative sourcing strategies.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	Unknown	LONG TERM more than 3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Consider which contracts should be in place to allow for quick and efficient procurement in times of emergency and disaster. Include local farms, culturally specific food suppliers, and medically tailored meal preparers. <u>Public Food Utility</u>				

Strategy 4.7. Create mechanisms to improve emergency response and preparedness for major power outages that impact the food supply at all stages in the food system.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production Processing & Distribution Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government	Unknown	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Coordinate with Austin Energy.				

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.



Strategy 5.1. Develop new and support existing central aggregation, processing, and distribution facilities (Food Hubs) as needed to supply regional purchasers with local agricultural goods, including community-based and institutional-led food hubs to ensure stability and resilience for the food system in Austin/Travis County.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access Post-Consumption & Waste 	Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mount Vernon, WA - Puget Sound Food Hub Burlington, VT - Intervale Center 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
<p>Conduct updated assessment of existing infrastructure and capabilities ensuring multi-sector engagement and meaningful involvement of community voices in the assessment through community-based participatory research.</p> <p>Identify gaps in food hub capacity as well as opportunities for investment including a balanced focus on both rural and urban areas to enhance how the regional food system benefits Austin/Travis County</p> <p>Identify potential federal, state, and local funding sources to support enhancement of existing infrastructure and development of new infrastructure</p>				

Strategy 5.2. Facilitate the appointment of a lead organization to coordinate a regional cross-sector coalition of organizations committed to values-based purchasing, and to develop best practices and peer learning opportunities about values-based procurement.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local example available Chicago, IL - Chicago Food Policy Council Buffalo, NY - Good Food Buffalo Coalition 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
<p>Build coalition (recruitment, structure, facilitator, funding); conduct education about values-based procurement among potential participants.</p> <p>Consider hosting civic trainings to build leadership capacity within the local community.</p> <p>FTE needed to develop, manage, and execute program.</p>				

Strategy 5.3. Explore adopting a values-based food purchasing framework (intended to focus on internal City and County purchasing) that integrates practices from the Good Food Purchasing Program and others, including encouraging values-aligned food purchases and purchasing plant-based meals at all City and County facilities, meetings, events, and conferences.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicago, IL • Boston, MA • New York, NY • Santa Clara County, CA • Denver, CO • Washington D.C. 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Identify local government purchasing agents who should be engaged.				
Develop a proposal for how this can happen using internal city and county feedback.				
Share proposal with relevant city and county boards and commissions.				

Strategy 5.4. Create a mechanism and source for funding of incentives for local institutions to purchase food that is sourced from values-aligned suppliers.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government, Cross-sector network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Food Purchasing Incentive programs 	LONG TERM more than 3 years	\$\$\$ large investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Develop a budget proposal with boards and commissions involved.				
Launch a small fund to kickstart larger funds.				
Choose entity/board to manage expenses.				

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.



Strategy 6.1. Actively establish culturally relevant, affordable, community-backed or -driven retail options in areas experiencing food insecurity or facing barriers to food access, including replication and expansion of existing food retail initiatives in the City and County.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicago, IL (in exploratory phase) Erie, KS (city-owned grocery) Baldwin, FL (town-owned grocery) Minneapolis, MN (community-owned coop) Oakland, CA (now closed - lessons learned) 	LONG TERM more than 3 years	\$\$\$ large investment

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

Short term: expand existing models such as the community-owned food retail initiative and Fresh for Less Mobile Markets & Home Delivery.

Clarify priorities and associated infrastructure, especially related to things like accepting and/or supplementing public benefits, or alignment with specific service desires and gaps. Long Term: Brick & Mortar or mobile community-owned retail; focus on specific underserved populations such as developing a partnership to feed food insecure college students via rescued food from farmers markets in partnership with a culinary training program.

Assess options for long-term funding; assess public and private sites for low-cost locations.

Will need long-term funding (e.g., community owned retail initiative is estimated at \$10 million+) over next decade for both start up and sustaining these initiatives, including incentives, bonds, and general fund.

Strategy 6.2. Help families meet their infant feeding goals by increasing and improving medically appropriate infant feeding education and support strategies (including both human milk and formula) through collaborative government, school, and community-based support organization efforts.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Local Government	Unknown	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$ low investment (mostly staff and information)
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
<p>APH to identify current COA investment and Travis County HHS to identify County investment to set current investment (funds or service resources) baseline.</p> <p>Define the benchmarks for short-term and longer-term increases & improvements (e.g. increases in funding, utilization of services, etc.).</p> <p>Potential activities: Include information on breast/chest feeding and formula feeding and advocacy for paid parental leave policies; engage International Board Certified Lactation Consultants.</p>				

Strategy 6.3. Implement Food as Medicine and Food Pharmacy programs through hospitals, clinics, and food access organizations in partnership with food distribution centers and retail grocery stores.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Houston Food Bank, Food Rx Program Atlanta, GA - Open Hand Oakland, CA - Project Open Hand 	LONG TERM more than 3 years	\$\$ moderate investment (specific resources will need to be defined by lead entity and based on intentions to scale)
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
<p>Lead entity will need to identify feasible scale and necessary resources (needs to be identified to determine appropriate next steps and resources).</p> <p>Will need to ensure consistent, sustainable access to produce and other perishable foods.</p> <p>Potential activities include developing a voucher program for expanded ability to access the food that fits individual nutritional and medical needs; providing nutrition education on what to do with the food.</p>				

Strategy 6.4. Support and expand community-based programs that provide effective, culturally relevant, and appropriate nutrition and food preparation education and services.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denver Food Vision (H.4) Existing Local Programs 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
<p>Conduct a landscape analysis to identify organizations already doing this work to continue to support them and identify potential gaps.</p> <p>Identify other philanthropic sources of funding aligned with nutrition and food preparation education and services.</p> <p>Establish additional food access facilities and distribution points to address the immediate needs across Austin and Travis County, including those areas that are disproportionately impacted</p> <p>Support ongoing assessments to identify the potential for additional food access distribution points in other parts of Travis County.</p> <p>Support efforts to enhance culinary training and workforce development programs serving residents in high-need areas.</p>				

Strategy 6.5. Expand benefits and access to nutritious foods through programs that amplify and supplement the purchasing power of individuals and households facing food and nutrition insecurity and explore the feasibility of creating a locally funded nutrition incentive program with less restrictive eligibility criteria than SNAP/WIC.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Orleans, LA–Market Match Cincinnati, OH–Grocery Vouchers Lincoln County, NC–Restaurant Voucher Program LA County, CA–Grocery Voucher Program 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$ \$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
<p>Advocacy for eligibility rule changes in federal nutrition programs at state level (e.g., summer EBT).</p> <p>Funding for small to midsize retailers to upgrade Point of Sale (POS) systems and for farmers markets to become SNAP eligible.</p> <p>Expand current activities (e.g., Double Up Food Bucks) with additional resources to improve depth/breadth of services.</p> <p>Regarding locally funded nutrition incentive program option, engage stakeholders and explore interest, program design, potential funding.</p>				

Strategy 6.6. Increase utilization of publicly administered programs that improve food access, such as SNAP, WIC, the national school breakfast/lunch program, and summer food service program.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NCOA Promising Practices for Senior SNAP enrollment (national) LA County, CA–CalFresh Report Denver, CO–Closing the SNAP Gap Houston, TX–Closing the SNAP Gap 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$ low investment

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

Define specific measures of success (e.g., persons receiving benefits navigation assistance, persons applying for SNAP, or persons utilizing SNAP).

Advocacy/lobbying at state level for enrollment rule changes and state utilizing maximum allowable federal funding.

Identify all community partners providing navigation/enrollment assistance; identify gaps (underserved areas/populations); increase resources/supports to address those gaps.

Strategy 6.7. Make access to food assistance programs more equitable by reducing barriers due to language, technology access, and disability status.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oakland, CA–Equal Access Office San Francisco, CA–Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs 	LONG TERM more than 3 years	\$\$ moderate investment

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

Develop guiding principles and best practice guidance for funders and providers (and possible technical assistance/technical supports) around how to mitigate barriers for more equitable access.

Potential activities could include multilingual services; geographic access strategies that reach people who are unhoused; reducing documentation requirements or eligibility verification processes that might have a chilling effect for people who do not have legal status; etc.

Strategy 6.8. Support technology literacy education and technology access programs to increase the ability to meet individual and family needs through online food shopping, including how to use benefits for online shopping.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Nonprofit or community-based organization	Unknown	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$ low investment

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

Establish partnerships/sponsorships needed for new program design and/or to build on existing programming.
 Develop, acquire, or expand curricula tailored to each identified group.
 Identify specific gaps by identified group to tailor programs to unique needs (e.g., education vs. access vs. equipment).
 Potentially prioritize programs that serve older adults, people with disabilities, people with limited English proficiency, and others who face additional barriers to accessing online retail services.

Strategy 6.9. Identify promising practices across sectors for mitigating transportation barriers and support programs that increase community access to efficient and convenient transportation to markets and grocery stores, especially for those living in areas lacking healthy food retail and with high food insecurity rates, and for those who have barriers to reliable transportation (e.g., people living with disabilities, older adults, etc.).

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local examples available Oklahoma City, OK– EMBARK Shuttles with Market Stops 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

Convene food access and transportation/mobility organizations to conduct or update assessment of existing needs/gaps.
 Convened organizations explore potential and creative solutions to the identified challenges (could in scope, resources, timeframe, etc.).
 Consider and plan to avoid adverse impact to existing or developing food retail options in these areas.

Strategy 6.10. Support, fund, and expand programs that provide food delivery services, prioritizing delivery to households facing food and nutrition insecurity and/or barriers to food access and with a focus on distribution of food that is locally sourced and culturally relevant.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local examples available 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$ low investment (but could be scalable for increased service levels)

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

For any retail programs, ensure that these programs accept food assistance public benefits by providing education and funding for point-of-sale equipment and systems purchase and maintenance.

Identify programs already doing this work and support expansion of those services.

Identify food providers that could incorporate a delivery component; explore needed technical assistance and infrastructure to do so.

Utilize CTFB and/or to-be-developed Food Hub (strategy 5.1) in order to support a delivery infrastructure with local connectivity.

Strategy 6.11. Bolster the workforce to support strategies related to food access, food and nutrition programs, and food-related benefit programs through additional education, funding, and connection to networks of support for Community Health Workers (CHWs) and other service coordinators and navigators.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets & Retail Consumption & Access 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local examples available San Antonio, TX– Ready to Work partnership with SA Food Bank New Braunfels, TX– Job Assistance services 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$ moderate investment

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

Convene Community Health Workers to identify priority activities.

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.



Strategy 7.1. Convene food rescue and community stakeholders to develop a shared food rescue protocol and recognition program to achieve reduced inefficiencies utilizing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Wasted Food Scale, addressing any gaps with appropriate supports and prioritizing investments to serve areas of the City/County experiencing food insecurity or facing barriers to food access.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	Los Angeles, CA–Los Angeles County Food Redistribution Initiative	LONG TERM more than 3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Identify and engage stakeholders to better understand current landscape. Address gaps and needs including storage, transportation, technology.				
Identify funding to address needs.				

Strategy 7.2 Convene local compost providers and food producers to develop best practices and recommendations for improving the quality of locally produced compost to support local regenerative agriculture.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government, Nonprofit or community-based organization, or private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toronto, ON Melbourne, VIC Copenhagen, DN 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Identify and engage stakeholders to better understand the current landscape.				
Conduct quality tests of existing compost and set goals for improvement.				

Strategy 7.3. Create a resource to promote the safe use of edible food scraps for animal consumption by engaging and connecting food scrap producers with appropriate livestock producers, backyard chicken farmers, and pet food entrepreneurs.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government, Nonprofit or community-based organization, or private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portland, OR–Food Waste to Farm Initiative San Francisco, CA–Food Runners and SF Environment Partnership Toronto, ON–Green Bin Program Extension 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Potential activities: create a platform where food scrap producers can connect with animal/livestock owners; provide education and guidance on safe and appropriate use of food scraps; create a pet food entrepreneurship challenge to elevate this effort; incorporate supporting coffee establishments in routing coffee-related waste to local food growers (farmers, community gardeners, etc.) as a resource for creating compost.				

Strategy 7.4. Support amendment of the Universal Recycling Ordinance (URO) to establish tiered service and diversion requirements for all businesses that generate organic waste and increase URO compliance and enforcement resources in alignment with Austin Resource Recovery’s Comprehensive Plan (Chapter 12).

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paris, FR 	LONG TERM more than 3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Research to better understand existing landscape of business activities in Austin/Travis County and the services available (look into other cities’ best practices), stakeholder engagement (stakeholder identification–service providers, private waste haulers, nonprofits, food business managers and employees).				

Strategy 7.5. Expand institutional and business support to share sector-specific best practices on food waste diversion through training, technical assistance, and financial incentives.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local examples available– Austin Resource Recovery Business Outreach Team San Antonio, TX ReWorksSA 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Should precede 7.4 to encourage institutions and businesses to move in the direction of new policy.				
Will need funding for new staff positions to support this initiative.				

Strategy 7.6. Develop ongoing educational opportunities, including a public campaign, to encourage food waste prevention and diversion, for example through menu planning to reduce waste, understanding best-by dates, composting, mindful eating, etc., and provide incentives such as access to free compost.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processing & Distribution Markets & Retail Consumption & Access Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamilton County, OH–Food Waste Stops with Us Oregon Department of Environmental Quality–Don’t Let Good Food Go Bad Alameda County, CA–Stop Food Waste NRDC–Save the Food Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio–Save More than Food Jersey City, NJ–Eco-Ambassador Program 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
See EPA social media toolkit on preventing food waste.				
Potential activities: support schools with waste sorting (teachers, school staff, parents with capacity to help in lunchrooms); education on things that commonly contaminate compost; offer incentives for composting, such as free mulch and compost; educate consumers on food waste and consumption and its impact on our communities on a local, national and global level, support composting at all apartments; grocery stores: icons to help educate, prioritize less wasteful products by product placement, and sell less than perfect produce; waste reduction strategies/campaigns around best-by dates.				

Strategy 7.7. Explore the creation of community compost drop sites for Travis County residents and expand promotion of current composting availability so that every resident in Austin/Travis County has convenient access to composting services.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Post-Consumption & Waste	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">New York City, NY–GrowNYCLos Angeles, CA–LA CompostVarious locations, NY–Community Compost CompanyJersey City, NJ–Honestly Modern	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Assess County capacity to deliver this service.				
Need funding for composting service offering, rebates, marketing campaign.				

Goal 8. Pro-climate, Pro-health

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.



Strategy 8.1. Conduct public information and education campaigns aimed at consumers, businesses, and institutions to promote pro-climate, pro-health foods, incorporating cultural diversity across multiple languages.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Production• Processing & Distribution• Markets & Retail• Consumption & Access• Post-Consumption & Waste	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• San Diego, CA–Climate Friendly Food public education resources• New York City, NY Eat Plants!	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Engage key partners across the community supportive of this effort.				
Identify appropriate framework(s) and existing models (e.g., Cool Food Pledge, Planetary Health Diet).				
Create common messaging language and imagery.				
Identify state and federal funding sources.				
Honor existing cultural practices that utilize pro-climate, pro-health foods.				

Strategy 8.2. Identify opportunities for public and private partnerships and sponsorship opportunities that will provide coordinated education, incentive development, and promotion of the benefits of whole food plant-based menus to encourage local institutions to increase whole food plant-based meals.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government, Other Government, or Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New York City, NY–Plant-based Defaults in Hospitals • Multiple Cities–Planted Society, Plant-based for the Planet • Multiple Cities–Coolfood Pledge • Kansas City–Greener By Default Partnership 	LONG TERM more than 3 years	\$\$ moderate investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Study other municipalities’ approaches (e.g., NYC hospital model for plant-based defaults, Denver’s recent policy adoptions, etc.)				
Foster relationships and collaboration with Federally Qualified Health Care Centers (FQHCs) and care networks.				
Identify opportunities to incentivize businesses to incorporate information and plant-based defaults.				

Strategy 8.3. Expand programs that increase the availability, affordability, and awareness of pro-health, pro-climate foods in food retail and food service businesses, emphasizing whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes, especially from local sources and farmers using regenerative practices.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Examples Available • Multiple Cities/States–SNAP Matching Benefits for produce/at Farmers Markets 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Identify methods to matchmake for businesses and priority farmers.				
Identify existing programs that achieve strategy outcomes and gaps of those programs.				

Strategy 8.4. Identify public funding opportunities to promote innovative, community-designed solutions to promote and support building an accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate pro-climate, pro-health food system with an emphasis on cross-sector collaborative projects.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Production• Processing & Distribution• Markets & Retail• Consumption & Access• Post-Consumption & Waste	Local Government	Unknown	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Catalyze cross-sector collaborative conversations to identify partners, roles, and potential opportunities.				
Set up mechanism for convening and cooperating, and goals for guiding action.				

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.



Strategy 9.1. Launch an inclusive, community-based food collaborative or network that brings together businesses, community-based organizations, educational institutions, government, funders, and other stakeholders to support the implementation of the Austin/Travis County Food Plan, prioritizing community involvement on a regular basis.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government or Nonprofit or community-based organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San Diego, CA San Diego Food System Alliance 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	\$ low investment (depending on how much support can be provided in-kind)

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

Convene initial supporting entities to frame out the collaborative/network; these should be parties that have self-identified as food plan stakeholders who want to support implementation planning. Identify a temporary convener for this group.

Frame out and document working agreements around:

- Purpose and role for the collaborative/network,
- Backbone functions and capacities required (such as: convening, facilitating, project management, stakeholder management, public participation, etc.) to support and maintain the collaborative/network, and
- The participation required and the network model that will best achieve the collaborative/network's purpose and role.

Identify and secure associated resources depending on the model adopted for the collaborative or network (such as staff, funds, physical space, technology, etc.).

Identify an entity or entities that will perform backbone role(s), whether in-kind or as a purchased service.

Transfer leadership and coordination from temporary convener to the backbone entity(ies).

Need to strengthen partnerships (e.g., between institutional partners and farmers; between TA providers and farmers).

Create a budget within 5 years of the adoption of the Food Plan to address implementation of the Strategies in the Food Plan.

Strategy 9.2. Support the development of and collaborate with the Central Texas Food System Council to integrate strategies from the Austin/Travis County Food Plan into relevant regional work.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Central Texas Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Cities USDA Regional Food System Partnership Grant Recipients 	SHORT TERM within 1 year	unknown
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
Building on the successful work of the Central Texas Food Bank's 'Food System Dashboard', Central Texas Food Bank is currently building a Regional Food System Council that will provide regional support in assessing the local food system, strategic partnerships, education, and strategies for policy improvement across 21 counties.				

Strategy 9.3. Develop a research agenda to evaluate progress on the goals and strategies of the Food Plan, including collecting data annually, and releasing progress reports at least every three years, and utilizing community-based participatory engagement practices to document and share the information with the community.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government; Nonprofit or community-based organization; and/or University or Academic institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New York City, NY– Dashboard and Updates on Food Plan 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$ low investment
Critical First Steps/Key Considerations				
This strategy should follow strategy 9.1 so that the established collaborative/network can function as the umbrella infrastructure for this work.				
Engage additional institutional relationships and community organizations needed for data and evaluation tasks.				
Decide/refine data universe, measures, sources, and methods.				

Strategy 9.4. Establish a regional Good Food Fund through partnership between the public sector, mission-driven foundations, and other potential donors/funders to drive investment in priorities identified in the Austin/Travis County Food Plan.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government; Philanthropy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michigan Good Food Fund 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$\$\$ large investment

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

Identify entity to manage investment and act as fiscal agent; engage partners and funders who would contribute to the fund; secure capital to create fund; and draft any associated legal or partnership agreements to sustain, manage, and provide oversight of the fund.

Create guiding principles for fund operations, such as focus areas, intended outcomes, funding parameters, processes and criteria for application, evaluation, and awards, etc.

Potential fund uses: scale and replicate food justice projects; and to support community-based organizations in providing emergency food during non-federally-declared disasters.

Strategy 9.5. Develop process for City and Travis County departments to include food system impacts in planning, contracting, and procurement efforts along with accompanying evaluation measures to determine the program effectiveness.

Food System Areas Impacted	Convening Entity	Peer Community Example	Recommended Timeline	Necessary Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production • Processing & Distribution • Markets & Retail • Consumption & Access • Post-Consumption & Waste 	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Examples Available 	MEDIUM-TERM 1-3 years	\$ low investment

Critical First Steps/Key Considerations

Identify staff resources within both City and County; Will require dedicated staff time, system knowledge, and planning skills.

Conduct a process review on City and County food system work:

- Review practices from peer cities
- Compile existing information and collect additional information as needed from departments
- Identify and document City and County food system related work, such as: contracts and purchased goods and services; direct services and programs; planning; permitting; management of natural systems; etc.
- Document process flows, consideration factors, and decision points for work with food system impacts

Develop tools/guidance and recommended procedures for department use.

Pilot department use (potentially with subset of departments willing to test); evaluate results of pilot; refine as needed.

Appendix 5: Plan Crosswalk to Existing Efforts

All Plans	Food Plan Strategies
Austin Climate Equity Plan	1.1, 1.10, 1.12, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 4.3, 4.7, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 6.1, 6.10, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 9.1, 9.2, 9.4
Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan	1.1, 1.10, 1.12, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 1.9, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.6, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7, 5.1, 5.4, 6.1, 6.10, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.7, 6.9, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 9.1, 9.2, 9.5
Supply Chain Vulnerability Assessment	1.1, 1.10, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.3, 3.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 6.1, 6.5, 7.1, 7.5, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1, 9.2, 9.4, 9.5
2020 Food Policy Bard Recommendations	1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.9, 2.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 4.1, 4.3, 4.7, 5.1, 5.3, 5.4, 6.1, 6.10, 6.2, 6.4, 8.4, 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5
AISD Sustainability Plan	1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.9, 2.1, 2.2, 3.5, 4.4, 4.5, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 6.4, 6.6, 6.8, 7.1, 7.2, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1, 9.2
Good Food Purchasing Program Recommendations	1.10, 1.4, 1.6, 1.9, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.7, 4.6, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 6.5, 7.1, 7.5, 7.6, 8.2, 8.4, 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.5
Our Parks Our Future	1.1, 1.12, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.9, 7.2, 7.4, 7.7
Community Health Improvement Plan CHA/CHIP	1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 4.2, 4.3, 6.1, 6.10, 6.11, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9, 8.4
Strategic Housing Blueprint	1.1, 1.10, 1.2, 1.6, 2.2, 3.1, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 6.1, 6.10, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.9, 8.4
Comprehensive, Countywide Economic Development Strategy	1.1, 1.12, 1.2, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 2.4, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 6.4, 6.7, 6.9, 9.1, 9.2
Austin Strategic Direction 2023	1.8, 4.2, 4.3, 6.1, 6.10, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.7, 6.9, 8.1, 8.3, 8.4, 9.1, 9.2
Reimagining Public Safety	1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 2.1, 2.2, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 6.1, 6.3, 6.4, 6.7, 6.9, 8.4
Austin Strategic Mobility Plan	1.4, 1.6, 4.3, 6.1, 6.10, 6.4, 6.7, 6.9, 8.3, 9.1, 9.2
Travis County Strategic Plan 2023- 2028	1.5, 4.2, 4.3, 6.1, 6.10, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.9
Travis County Consolidated Plan, and Action Plan PY 19-23	1.12, 1.2, 1.5, 1.6, 6.2, 6.4, 6.9, 9.1, 9.2
Austin Resource Recovery Master Plan	3.5, 7.1, 7.2, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7
Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan	4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 6.4, 6.5

All Plans	Food Plan Strategies
Land, Water & Transportation Action Plan	1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.7, 1.8
Travis County Climate Action Plan	1.2, 5.3, 7.2, 7.7
Austin Public Health Strategic Plan 2020-2025	6.5, 6.6
Travis County Family Support Services	6.6, 6.8
Water Forward Plan	1.10, 1.7
Austin Climate Equity Plan, Austin Resource Recovery 2023 Comprehensive Plan	7.3
Travis County Community Impact Report	6.4

Appendix 6: Companion Documents

The documents listed below are referenced in the food plan and offer additional information related to overall food plan process including the Community Advisory Committee and the public engagement process:

- [Food Plan Process Methodology](#)
- [Community Advisory Committee Charter](#)
- [Summary of Visioning Phase 1 Feedback](#)
- [Summary of World Café Conversations \(Phase 2\) Feedback](#)
- [Summary of Phase 3 Public Feedback](#)

AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY

