

Austin Healthy Food Access Initiative: A six-point strategy to improving access to good and affordable food.

On March 3, 2016, City Council passed Resolution 20160303-020, which directed the City Manager to 1) develop recommendations for improving access to fresh, healthy and affordable food, and 2) provide a status update on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment, as well as recommendations to improve those efforts. The Resolution also requested a fiscal note for consideration as part of the Fiscal Year 2016-2017 budget planning process.

Stakeholders representing over 33 organizations met several times over the course of five months, generating over 100 ideas as to what can be done to improve food access locally. Those ideas were then evaluated, prioritized and distilled down to the essential six-point recommendation strategy outlined below. The recommendations work in tandem with one another to deliver a comprehensive approach to addressing our community’s food insecurity rates.

Recommendation One: Complete a Food Environment Analysis				
Partners	Experts	Impact	Match Funding	Dollar Value
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, Various Schools at the University of Texas	Holly Freishtat (Baltimore Food Policy Director); Dr Sandra Evans (UT Public Health)	Create a baseline picture of food insecurity in Austin as a tool for future program evaluation	Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future is providing technical assistance for free	N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates the benchmark analysis necessary for the implementation and future evaluation of all the other five recommendations • Key data points: Food retail and supermarket locations, household income, vehicle availability, and supply of healthy food at food retail locations • Provides in-depth information about where food deserts and assets exist 				
Recommendation Two: Expand Healthy Food Retail Initiatives				
Partners	Experts	Impact	Match Funding	Dollar Value
Various City Agencies, Healthy Corner Stores, Sustainable Food Center	Chris Walker (American Heart Association Campaign Director)	Create financial opportunities to encourage the growth of both new and established food retail business in targeted areas.	Potential for funding through a Texas Grocery Access Investment Fund or similar fund	TBD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases healthy food retail in the communities that need it most • Facilitates economic growth and awareness about economic opportunities • Helps to alleviate the inequity related to healthy food access in low-income communities 				

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Recommendation Three: Increase Local Food Production

Partners	Experts	Impact	Match Funding	Dollar Value
COA Parks and Recreation	Meredith Gray (COA Community Garden Coordinator); Sari Albornoz (SFC Grow Local Program Director)	Increase equitable access to community gardens	Public and private grants. Austin Parks Foundation	TBD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates equitable access to community gardens • Promotes the use of City-owned land for commercial urban agriculture 				

Recommendation Four: Pilot a Nutritious Food Incentive Program

Partners	Experts	Impact	Match Funding	Dollar Value
Sustainable Food Center, Healthy Corner Stores	Andrew Smiley (SFC, Deputy Director); Stephanie Weiss (The Food Trust)	A brick-and-mortar pilot similar to Double Dollars will provide people with more purchasing power when buying healthy food.	USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant	1 : 1 match up to \$500,000 total
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lays the groundwork for a FINI Grant-funded project (pilot required to apply) • Increases the purchasing potential for good, healthy food by low-income communities • Measure the impact of incentives on increasing fruit and vegetable consumption 				

Recommendation Five: Coordinated Awareness Campaign

Partners	Experts	Impact	Match Funding	Dollar Value
Various Community Organizations, Feeding Texas	Kathy Green (Central Texas Food Bank, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy); JC Dwyer (Feeding Texas, Chief Strategy Officer)	Create a coordinated awareness campaign to build awareness about healthy food and resources which is implemented by CHWs	SNAP ED and SNAP Outreach funds	Coordinated Campaign = Potential for 9:1 dollar matching (\$30,000 investment for \$300,000 program) SNAP Pilot programs = 1:1 match (\$200,000 investment for \$400,000 program)

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates awareness about opportunities for nutritional assistance among community members • Helps to increase communication between organizations working on food access to avoid duplication of efforts 				
Recommendation Six: Create Safe Routes to Markets				
Partners	Experts	Impact	Match Funding	Dollar Value
Various City Agencies	Laura Dierenfield (COA Active Transportation); Caitlin D’Alton (CAP Metro, Transportation Planner)	Use the information obtained from the Food Environment Analysis to inform all aspects of urban planning	Mobility Bond	TBD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrates food access into all aspects of city planning • Enables city planners to see how mobility efforts affect the food environment 				