



CAN Dashboard Steering Committee 9/7/2017

Attendees: Awais Azhar (Housing Works), Allison Bentley (United Way for Greater Austin), Bini Coleman (Ready by 21), Greg Cumpton (Ray Marshall Center), Korey Darling (Travis County Health and Human Services), Hunter Ellinger (CAN Community Council), Timothy Long (ECHO), Louise Lynch (Integral Care), Edwin Marty (CoA Office of Sustainability), Adele Noel (Travis County Air Quality), Pilar Westbrook (Del Valle ISD)

Staff in Attendance: Raul Alvarez, Carlos Soto

Welcome and Introductions: Louise Lynch, Chair of the Dashboard Steering Committee, called the meeting to order.

Approval of minutes: The minutes of the 5/04/17 meeting were approved with edits.

Food System Indicators & Local Efforts: Edwin Marty, City of Austin Food Policy Manager, discussed the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board, its role within the Office of Sustainability of the City of Austin, and the different reports and recommendations the Food Policy Board is tasked to make. In 2016 Austin City Council committed to improve food access through a resolution that included provisions to convene a working group that would collaborate with the Office of Equity to develop recommendations to improve food access, reduce the SNAP enrollment gap, and report fiscal impact for budget planning. Throughout their efforts, Marty and his team have identified over 90 metrics that can have an impact on food access. The term “food desert” often comes up in discussions about healthy food access, but at this point it is an over-simplified term that actually results in the further alienation and displacement of the most vulnerable communities by applying isolated solutions to a complex and interconnected problem. Likewise, the term “food security”, while scientifically more precise than “hunger”, remains a clinical type of phrase that dehumanizes a problem that hits the core of our humanity. Alternatives to the Food Insecurity Metric shared by Marty:

- Percent gap between those eligible for SNAP/food assistance and those enrolled
- # of food assistance related calls to 211
- Percent of stores that are ‘healthy’ (based on the FEA), or ratio between healthy stores and non-healthy stores
- Distance to healthy food retail

Local healthy food access initiatives include:

- Food Environment Analysis, aimed at surveying and mapping all food retail locations in Travis County, which also includes assessments on local food pantries and consumer behavior
- Healthy Food Retail Initiatives, which includes increasing the number of Mobile Markets, Farm Stands, and Healthy Corner Stores, are focused on the development of the food supply chain & increasing demand, supply, purchasing, and consumption of fresh produce.
- Nutritious Food Incentive program, which increases the purchasing power of SNAP recipients through incentives for purchasing local produce such as the Double Dollars program.

Review “Our basic needs are met” section: Dashboard Committee Members reviewed the vision statements and indicators. While discussing the Food Security measure, it came up that it is important to be clear on the terms used, and the definition of terms used, on this metric and across the dashboard. Discussing the strengths is important, too, but mentioning the weakness of the metric enhances the reader’s confidence in the content. Regarding replacing the Food Insecurity indicator, it is probably best to wait for the next food system report incorporating the new metrics discussed earlier, in order to have the dashboard

align with that (as we do with the E³ report and indicators). One of the vision statements refers to “access to open space and public amenities”, but none of the indicators seem to inform on that. Carlos Soto, CAN Research Analyst, will research available indicators. The housing indicator could be improved, in that the current Housing Cost Burden metric may include high income households who are spending a high percentage on income. A possible metric could quantify the gap between affordable housing availability and need, however, the way need is measured does not do justice to families, the disabled, and others. A possible drill-down for homelessness might be homeless families with children, from Housing Works data.

Finalize CAN Reliability Guidelines: Discussion of other agenda items caused this item to be postponed until November meeting.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 3:11 p.m.