**Q: How would you describe the different connection strengths between retail use and the five retail types?**

**Interviewer** 16:17

So how would you sort of describe the different connection strengths between, for example, retail use and local versus chain restaurants?

**Participant 108** 16:29

Oh, I'm sorry, you're asking a question to me. How would I describe-?

**Interviewer** 16:39

Yeah, so like, how strong? What do you think about the difference in the strength of the relationship between people purchasing food using retail, and that sort of being from local restaurants versus train restaurants? Is it about even in Flint? Is it more leaning towards one or the other?

**Participant 108** 17:05

Okay, so I prefer to answer this within the context of what I've experienced with families. My role as a pastor, I deal with families. My role as a school founder, I deal with families. So I would say that when we look at- well, let me ask a clarifying question. When we talk about chain restaurants, would that be equivalent to fast food restaurants?

**Interviewer** 17:40

Yeah. That would be it sort of encompasses fast food and fast casual, so it's both McDonald's and Applebee's, if that makes sense.

**Participant 108** 17:50

Okay, so then local restaurants would be what?

**Interviewer** 17:55

Yeah, so things that aren't franchised at such a high level.

**Participant 108** 18:00

I would say that there is a very strong relationship regarding retail and chain restaurants.

**Interviewer** 18:15

And then would it be about the same or lower relationship with local restaurants?

**Participant 108** 18:23

I think it would be a lesser relationship.

**Interviewer** 18:31

And then, for grocery stores, convenience stores and farmers markets, do you think folks in Flint get their food sort of equally across, or one more than the other?

**Participant 108** 18:44

Convenience stores. Definitely in the black community is convenience stores, okay?

**Interviewer** 18:56

Okay, then what do you think about sort of grocery stores and farmers markets?

**Participant 108** 19:02

I would say there's less of a relationship with farmers markets, we have one here and it's downtown. I'm doing my narrative piece, right? And because of transportation issues, you just don't have a significant segment of this population going to the farmers market.

**Participant 108** 19:22

Grocery stores are also much less of a relationship strength than convenience stores. Because there are fewer grocery stores. There are a lot more convenience stores, particularly in black neighborhoods again.

**Q:** **Okay, then thinking about the connection strengths between use of the supplemental sector and the different types of stores,** **how do you think about these strengths? Are supplemental nutrition programs used at certain places more often in Flint?**

**Interviewer** 19:47

And then thinking about sort of where people use supplemental nutrition programs. Do you have a sense of sort of if people use them more at grocery stores, convenience stores, farmers markets? What do you think about the strength of those relationships?

**Participant 108** 20:06

I've heard that they're used at all three but increasingly are at grocery stores, I think there's an increasing number at grocery stores. And that's only because this is the past couple of years or so of the Double Up Food Bucks Programs.

**Participant 108** 20:32

And then also use in the convenience stores would be probably lesser, in my opinion than the grocery stores and even less at the farmers market.

**Q4: Which of these other values are important to the Flint food system that you want to include in your map?**

**Interviewer** 21:38

Which two or three would you like to include in your map? So based on what you think is important, or things that you've had experience with.

**Participant 108** 23:44

When it comes to the key word is systems that are here. And so we talked about food system values, I think, number one for me would be community empowerment.

**Interviewer** 24:06

Is there another or a couple more that you would like to include?

**Participant 108** 24:12

I would say number two. If I had to do this numerically, I'd see community empowerment at number one, number two availability and number three, education.

**Q5a:** **Based on how you see the current food system in Flint, how would you draw connections between these concepts?**

**Interviewer** 25:10

So based on how you see the current food system in Flint, and sort of your experiences with it, how would you sort of start to draw connections between these concepts?

**Participant 108** 25:25

How would I draw connections with these three concepts or the food system?

**Interviewer** 25:33

So yeah, basically, if you see sort of connections between these values, we can definitely talk about that or sort of impact from the diff- how these different sectors how these different kinds of retail impact community empowerment or availability or education.

**Participant 108** 25:51

Okay, so I guess I can start with community empowerment. And so where I would start there is when we talk about a food system in Flint, it is a system where people, particularly on lower socio economic reigns of this community have absolutely no say. And we've seen that and no power really. Embedded within that word community empowerment is power. And so we witnessed that, literally, we witnessed that with the I'm giving you a narrative and context here, okay. We've witnessed that with the water crisis, which led to, I mean, there could have been other factors, but we do know that the water crisis occurred in April of 2014.

**Participant 108** 26:55

Shortly thereafter, Kroger's in the Pearson road corridor, a corridor of our city that's 98% African American closed its doors in August of 2014. Shortly thereafter, Mejiers, which is a little bit over a mile away from that Kroger closed in May of 2015. And so what that meant to me, and those who met to organize around this real serious problem with the exodus of grocery stores, was the lack of power, having no voice as to the availability of food. And so I would say that, and that leads to the next concept available because out of our [inaudible] made out of our community out of this community empowerment as a value.

**Participant 108** 27:58

We established the North Flint food market cooperative food Co Op as a solution to the problem of lack of availability of access to healthy foods. Okay? And so and in a real important, statistically you would appreciate this as a researcher, is that from a state of Flint kids data revealed that over 90%, I think was like 94, 95% of Flint children did not have access to a grocery store within a one mile radius of their homes. Over 90%. So we see the unavailability of grocery stores on unavailability of access to healthy food, unavailability of foods that are nutritious, and are very important to children who have been exposed to lead.

**Participant 108** 29:08

And what bothers me and what has irritated me and what has literally angered me, is the millions of dollars that come into our city in light of situations like this and we see the lack of investment in projects like ours. Since, what? 2014? So availability is a real problem. It is a real problem. And access to healthy and nutritious food is a real issue. And so, this is why I don't call the food- this is why I specifically call the food system in Flint, the food apartheid system. Uh oh, there I go again. Because this community has the resources to help empower a community to increase access and availability, and it has failed our children in doing so. Okay, I'm gonna get off my soapbox, I just had to get that out this morning.

**Participant 108** 30:18

Now, let me tie in that concept with education. And that, for me, is the process of educating residents to take control of their destiny as it relates to access to help the food as a relation to creation of jobs. And there's because there's an economic development arm to this. And so if, for example, you decide to be a member of the food cooperative, we are hoping that you will understand the importance of being educated about a food Co Op. So micro business development is an important skill that we want you to develop, just like I've developed over the years. Knowing what's healthy, how to cook it's all under the umbrella of education.

**Participant 108** 31:18

So you can be empowered, you can get access. But what's extremely important as a lifelong learner, is that you become educated about food. And also as a cooperative owner, about the very basic fundamental ideas and concepts and principles of business. So that when it's time, for example, for us to make a decision regarding the allocation of dividends, that as a member with one vote, you can make an informed decision. So education, I think, is extremely important, because as I've said to the board of directors and our general manager, we're not going to change people's eating habits overnight.

**Participant 108** 32:09

So we have to present this project as one that provides the solution to addressing the issue of lack of access. But we also have to address it from the standpoint of health outcomes, improved health outcomes, how do we get our clientele, our customers, who have a history of diabetes and high blood pressure and poor eating habits and a lack of exercise to take ownership of their health? Understanding that food is extremely important. I know that's a lot, but I hope that addresses the three concepts that I think are very important values. In a relationship, I see you moving stuff around while I'm talking so-

**Interviewer** 32:54

This is great. And as I was saying, like this is sort of, you know, definitely a role that I can play in this conversation is to translate all of your incredible experience and knowledge into this map and then go and double check that I'm sort of capturing your understanding well.

**Interviewer** 34:14

Yeah, we can take a second. And I'll walk through sort of how I've matched what you're talking about, to sort of see if this is, it's an accurate representation, or changes you want to make, if there are more things you want to add, stuff like that. So sort of how I connected things is the role of grocery stores having an impact on nutritious foods and availability. And that, while it has the potential for these really good impacts, because of the retail closures, it's led to, you know, that sort of like, created the situation where, you know, food isn't available, and there's less nutritional food access, which you know, how the connection to health outcomes and stuff like that.

**Interviewer** 36:25

And then one of the key dynamics I want to talk about is maybe this sort of, you know, and in sort of, we call them feedback loops, right. So that availability of foods has a connection to community empowerment, that communities are not, that sort of negatively impacts when things aren't available for folks, that has a negative impact on community empowerment, but then also community empowerment, we have sort of the capacity, the ability to push things, to have more availability to sort of, you know, through sort of the work that you guys are doing, or other things, you know, I don't know, any sort of like organizing efforts can lead to more availability. And so the other thing would be connections with education, so have drawn connections to health outcomes, employment or job skills, and that having an impact on community empowerment, and then a direct impact of education on community empowerment. Is that so far sort of capturing sort of your understanding and sort of the things that you've talked about?

**Participant 108** 37:37

You've done a phenomenal job capturing what I've just shared.

**Interviewer** 37:42

I guess my last question would be sort of around this funding piece, that, you know, funding has the potential to be a great tool for community empowerment, but sort of my understanding, based on what you said, is that it's lacking or it's going the wrong places. Can you speak a little bit more on that? And maybe I can add an additional concept to sort of like, what has impacted the availability of funding?

**Participant 108** 38:09

Do you really want me to address that?

**Interviewer** 38:12

I mean, if you don't want to, you don't have to, but I'm interested.

**Participant 108** 38:18

I'll do my best to try to just keep this really succinct. And again, that's not that unusual for a pastor. But let me just share with you one thing that we experienced. I imagine this occurs in other urban areas throughout our nation, but particularly in Flint, and I've lived in multiple cities over the years. But one reason why I call our food system in Flint food apartheid system is because a system of apartheid is intentional. It's not a it is not a random mistake. And so when dollars do come to the city of Flint, millions of dollars, those dollars are not targeted to areas in our city that need the most investment. And again, I mentioned to you that when the Flint water crisis came upon us the researchers Dr. Mona and the researchers said that access to healthy food nutrition school is extremely important.

**Participant 108** 39:38

And so it is 2021 and we have not expanded access to healthy food in the city of Flint. Now, what's clear is that during the water crisis, what we witnessed were millions and millions of dollars That came into our city. And the people who needed it the most didn't receive it. Now, some would make an argument with me, they would say, Well, we've created a program. And let me be very clear about community empowerment programs. In my mind, food giveaways are honorable. Food giveaways reflect the values of people who are compassionate, but it doesn't empower people. It doesn't truly empower them, okay?

**Participant 108** 40:39

And so, we make the distinction between a food giveaway versus establishing the co-op that we operate and own and control. And so what we've seen as it relates specifically to funding or the lack thereof, are millions and millions of dollars that have made their way into our city under the umbrella of economic development. And those dollars have specifically gone toward brick and mortar downtown, not to say those projects are not important. Not gonna say that those projects but those projects don't have anything to do with feeding poor black kids, okay. And so, that is a sensitive one for me, because my response to our community has been, okay, we're not receiving the funding that comes into our city to expand access to healthy food, we must practice cooperative economics. With cooperative economics, we talk about the values of the community, the cultural values, in the Kwanzaa in the Kwanzaa principle or with the Kwanzaa principle of cooperative economics, we call it all ujamaa.

**Participant 108** 42:05

Ujamaa is extremely important because it places at the apex of an effort people pour in their resources for the collective good of the community, which leads to another Kwanzaa principle we'll call kujichagulia, which is self determination. And so where there's funding that does not exist, or is very minimal, we are making the argument that to potential investors, to people at the grassroots level, we're stronger together, let's pull our resources. And let's make an effort to control our destiny as it relates to food access, and the creation of jobs. So, again, I know that's a long answer. But the funding, or the lack of funding for what I consider to be extremely important to our children in this city has been lacking. They have gone to other areas, they exist, the money exists, but we just haven't seen it in the poorest areas of our city. And I think that's a great tragedy, because in the poorest areas of the city are where the highest concentrations of lead have been found.

**Interviewer** 43:27

I've definitely, you know, we've done maybe 20 of these interviews, and I've definitely heard, you know, it's like, Flint doesn't need another program, like we need actual solutions.

**Participant 108** 43:41

And the solutions can be right there to the power brokers, but for some reason, I mean, it can be right there, people at the grassroots level showing sharing with them. But a well resourced organization will swoop right in and continue to get all the funding. I've seen it year after year here. Is that TMI, what my teenager calls too much information.

**Interviewer** 44:17

And it is like, I don't know, that's part of the, you know, the goal, but also the value of what we hope is going to be the value of this project is speaking to so many people and getting so many sort of like differences of perspective that we're going to, you know, build an understanding that one person can capture of, you know, people in different sort of sectors of the food system and different understanding that we can sort of combine that and build sort of this, like holistic understanding of what's going on and compile all these different ideas of what will work and what people need from the food system. And then hope we turn that into really powerful recommendations and directions for different organizations and groups in the future of like, this is what, you know, all these people have come together to say would be good for Flint.

**Participant 108** 45:11

So can you see where the question concerning funding ties into if I had to prioritize another value that you have here is the quality of life is respected. Because one of the reasons why there's this anger, this underbelly of anger, and frustration, in our city, particularly in the black community, is because we don't see that the quality of life of certain groups of people is respected. And access to healthy food is the issue that's on the table as one to take in consideration and solidify, what we've been arguing and what we have been presenting as the rationale for funding efforts like ours. So it should not have taken a six to seven years- old lady in my church, she's about 83 years old. She's a mother of the church, been around Flint, all of her life seen people come and go.

**Participant 108** 46:42

83 years old, she said to me, after a summer, she came in a line on her wheelchair, and she said good sermon pastor. And at the time, I was preaching about the importance of the concept of self determination as a people and community. And she said, I want you to know, Pastor, don't give up because if you were the black man, they would have had this [inaudible] a long time ago. And she says, I just want you to hang in there and I'll be praying for you. 83 years old. And it's people like that who have encouraged me to keep on fighting the good fight for the betterment of our community, particularly black and brown children in our city who don't have access. We had convenience stores, and a pizza joint. Yeah. Trying not to get emotional. It's been a long journey.

**Interviewer** 47:43

It's emotional. I mean, you know, I got involved in food systems, because I saw how powerful it is like, I mean, besides it's the, the experience you know, of like the beauty of sharing food and sharing culture with, you know, loved ones, and your community is like this thing that it's so affects everything in life. It's just a foundation of access to food and like access to, you know, this whole experience as a human and it's been disheartening as I've learned more and more and gotten more and more involved, that it is so like, there are so many inequalities related to food.

**Participant 108** 48:30

Oh, it's awful. I'll give you just one example. One example. At the height of the water crisis, we were looking at a $5 million project. I had a gap of $1 million dollars. All the power brokers are aware of this, right. And because they're working on all these other projects, at the height of the water crisis. Decisions were made at the state and local level to fund finings and open a theater downtown, at the cost of $30,000,000. And at the same time, while they were financing finding the financing pieces to this project, the governor closed down water ponds in neighborhoods. The water ponds were closed. It's that's history that's the truth. Water ponds were closed. No financing to expand access to healthy food was given to projects like ours. Excuse after excuse, but they opened up state of the art, state of the art 30 plus million dollar theater downtown. That's an example of what I'm talking about.

**Interviewer 2** 50:13

Yeah, I just want to encourage you, I mean, I felt you in that moment. Because God calls us to this, right? You know, Carissa doesn't know this, my team does notice I'm a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ also. And we are called to this, you know, the Matthew 25 passage called me to this so I understand where you're, where your heart is. And so it's more than the emotion it's the spirit, it's the love that God requires of us. And so this work that you're doing, and the fact that we're here, I believe, is a response. I just want to, I just want to give you that in this moment, I believe that this presence of this work, is a response. I know that because of, you know, I know how I know how he moves, right? You know, how he moves. This is a response. So I just want to lift that as an encouragement to you. You know, at this moment, I firmly believe that with every fiber of my being.

**Interviewer 2** 51:24

Thank you preacher.

**Interviewer 2** 51:26

Alright. Carissa did learn something new, she didn't know. I surely didn't expect this interview to go this way. I didn't expect it to go this way. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 51:42

What we're asking about isn't, you know, I feel like so many like scientific experts, you know, it's easy to talk about, oh, this is what drafts do. You know, but like, this is, this is people's lives. Were asking about your lived experience? Like it is.

**Interviewer** 51:57

It is very, you know, it's very real. Absolutely. Yeah, I guess thinking about, you know, this is sort of like usually, you know, we focus on the things that we really wanted to talk about, like what our team is really looking at, so these different sectors and these different food system values that come from the community. But we also want to give you the opportunity to bring in any other concepts or talk about anything else that you think is important for us to know, insolent things that you think are really impactful if there's any, you know, other connections, other concepts that you want to bring in.

**Participant 108** 52:43

I'm really sorry [crying].

**Interviewer 2** 52:48

If you say sorry one more time, pastor. Can I pray with you please? In this moment?

**Participant 108** 52:57

Yes.

**Interviewer 2** 52:58

Father, God, we just so thank you, we are so incredibly grateful, not just because you are the creator of all heaven and earth, Lord God, because you are our creator. You're the creator of every human being that ever existed on this planet, every human being that will ever exist. And we know the Lord that you gave us. Many things you gave us everything pertaining to life, and godliness, Father, so we know that you bringing us to this work around food is fundamental to your concept of love. Father, God is not just about issues. It is about love. It is all about the provision that you made for your people. And so we thank you for this opportunity. We even thank you for the weightiness of it, Lord God, because the way it is of it creates compassion. It creates a desire, it creates a drive to facilitate a change. And so I pray for my brother in Christ right now. I pray for his strength, Lord, that we know that you tell us that you are the source of our strength. You are the one who comes along and who breathes on us, you fill us with your Holy Spirit. You give us words, you hear words of encouragement from around us, that let us know that we're on the right path, and that we are doing those things that you desire. You said that you created us, this man is your workmanship, you've created him for these works. You said that even greater works, greater works, would be done. So we thank you right now for the power. We thank you right now. Fill him yet anew with your spirit. Continue to keep him lifted up. Let him see the benefits all around him. Let him hear the small things that will be that encouragement to let him know, that just keep moving, that we are called to this. So I thank you for the things that he's already done. I thank you for this project and this is my firm belief, Lord, I believe this, that the project is going to create and open some opportunities from exposure to some things that have not occurred before. We land at your feet, Lord God, you tell us that we have cares to cast them, to simply lay them at your feet and to cast them, and you will care for us what you require us to only believe you said only believe in at works through your faith. So I thank you right now for this man of God, continue to bless and keep him Father God, let the doors open up around him. You said that you load us daily with benefits. Let him see them, let him harvest them. Let him take them and move them for the benefit of the people in the city of Flint and beyond is in your precious name Jesus that we pray. Amen.

**Participant 108** 55:36

Amen. Thank you so much.

**Interviewer 2** 55:39

I'm an intercessor. And a warrior.

**Participant 108** 55:43

And a warrior. Yes. I'm a wounded warrior.

**Interviewer 2** 55:49

You're on my prayer list now.

**Participant 108** 55:51

Oh, thank you so much. Thank you.

**Interviewer 2** 55:54

Yes. Absolutely.

**Participant 108** 55:57

I don't have anything else to give regarding other questions.

**Interviewer** 56:08

Thank you so much.

**Participant 108** 56:08

And I've also received today, which I did not expect. The Lord works in mysterious ways.

**Interviewer 2** 56:13

He works!

**Participant 108** 56:14

Yes. So I got a prayer- I feel much better.