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

**Participant 127** 20:27

I would say that, I would assume that more people would be going to chain restaurants in our community, it just seems that that is, those are what we have in the landscape. Maybe not in the city itself, when I think of like, restaurants, sit down, but including fast food. I don't see the same culture for local restaurants that I've seen in other places I've lived.

**Interviewer** 21:01

And then some really, if you have a sense of what these connection strings might be, to sort of grocery stores, convenience stores, farmers market, how much do you think people are going and getting their food from these sources.

**Participant 127** 21:15

I think that there is a very high connection to convenience stores, we don't have any commercial chain grocery stores in the city. I think a lot of people depend on convenience stores for like, especially quick food access. I don't, from the few producers I know that sell at the Flint farmers market, they don't make the same amount of money that they can make south or east or west. So I don't think that that model is used as heavily here, I think it would be the lowest. And then with grocery stores kind of being in the middle.

**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?**

**Participant 127** 22:23

I don't think there's a lot of use at our farmers market. I don't know of any CSA or market stand in this community, maybe one that can take any kind of supplemental payment options. I think because of convenience, that maybe grocery stores would be higher than convenience stores, but I don't really know, my gut would be that convenience stores because they're most shopped that they would be the most used.

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

**Participant 127** 26:19

Oh, I don't know. I feel kind of jaded. Just like, I know that the community keeps saying that they want education. But I'm, personally, the amount of hours I have spent trying to get not maybe necessarily- so I work for the Genesee Conservation District, and we have the High Tunnel Initiative. And we've put up over 100 high tunnels in Genesee County, and offered so much free education. And yet, we still can't provide just very small amounts of food produced in our community to support the retail sector. So I'm a little like bleh with that value. And while I'd like to talk about it, I just don't know if you'd want my point of view.

**Interviewer** 27:06

I think I want your point of view.

**Interviewer 2** 27:11

And I'll jump in there, we absolutely need your point of view.

**Participant 127** 27:16

I will say education, community empowerment and partnerships, because I think that those have big issues that are kind of holding us back.

**Interviewer** 27:34

I will switch back to modeler. And I- maybe I'll save my comment and talk. I don't want to bias any of your conversation.

**Participant 127** 27:48

You can keep your comment. I'm pretty old and opinionated. And I was born old and opinionated.

**Interviewer** 28:09

Yeah, I just, I've noticed throughout these interviews that- we'll eventually also have an option for you to talk about potential leverage points that you see in the food system- and a lot of people talk about, like educational opportunities. And I just sit there with my little academic hat of like, there is tenuous evidence that increasing educational opportunities lead to different behavior changes and stuff like that, that like, just if people have more programs around like gardening, that doesn't mean that people have the time or capacity to suddenly like start growing their own tomatoes. So that's my comment. But obviously, I want to hear your perspective here. Not my perspective.

**Participant 127** 28:50

Well, I think you make a good point. People keep talking about access and community empowerment. And I don't know how much of our conversation has been influenced by institutions. I don't see a lot of people who look like me at the table. I don't see a lot of people who look like me, or my dad's family being invited on the policy level. I mean, I worked for an organization that had three women of color, doing the work, but we weren't allowed to have a seat on the board, or come to meetings like this. And I think that speaks to why maybe we say we need education. But we're just, I don't know, are we not?

**Participant 127** 29:35

Like yeah, we're not taking into consideration the really hard work that goes into gardening. I understand that education and growing your own food is the easiest way to get healthy food to communities. I just don't know how much longer we're going to spend money trying to get our food system to change by using that angle. When maybe it could be better spent by really trying to develop a strong producer community or market gardens or but then again, it goes to if there's no money to be made- I don't know. I'm just grumpy.

**Interviewer 2** 30:31

No your perspective is- keep talking, your perspective is needed in this space. It really is I, I'm hearing you. I think I may have said in the introduction, I'm working in Detroit.

**Participant 127** 30:45

Yes.

**Interviewer 2** 30:46

So that should give you some insight. We definitely need to hear these things that you're speaking about, because there are nuances to this that you can gain from a particular place, but not everybody has that place. So I just want to encourage you. You're not being grumpy, you're being real.

**Participant 127** 31:06

Yeah, I think Renee, we've met before, at one of the food waste conversation,

**Interviewer 2** 31:12

Probably then, because I'm all about that.

**Participant 127** 31:16

You know, my friend Amy.

**Interviewer 2** 31:18

Okay. Oh, yes, absolutely. That's one of my best buddies. Yeah, okay. Okay. But I just want to give you confidence and space because your perspective is very much needed. We need the reality, we need the nuanced conversation because people have different perspectives from where they're coming from. But depending on where you're seated, how close, how far, you know, the level of what you're doing, makes a difference. So Carissa and I are all ears.

**Interviewer** 31:56

Great, well, maybe we can start sort of translating these concepts into the map. Do you have any connections, that you see that you want to talk about? Any of these values you want to focus on first?

**Participant 127** 32:19

I feel like something that's working very well, our partnerships that support the use of the emergency sector. Does that work?

**Interviewer** 32:28

Yeah, absolutely. So partnerships that further the use of the emergency sector.

**Participant 127** 32:38

Or the ability of the emergency sector. I think that without organizations like Edible Flint, or the Conservation District, or even local gardeners through the Master Gardener program, that there wouldn't be such a strong ability to kind of have fresh available like locally grown produce available in the emergency sector.

**Participant 127** 33:30

And I said, like partnerships, because I do like to think that the produce is facilitated between the individual growers and the different entities that are hosting these things, through institutions in the community.

**Interviewer** 33:58

So this is maybe some potential structure, but definitely, if you see it mapped out differently, this is why we sort of went through the process, to make sure you can sort of validate or change connections that are potentially made. So I have partnerships going to both use of the emergency sector and ability of the emergency sector and also maybe supporting gardening or urban agricultural work. And then connections out from there, sort of to the ability of the emergency sector through you know, that supports by providing food for that, and then through the use of it that it enables access to nutritious foods. I also put maybe a direct connection there, but I can totally change that if you don't see that as dynamic. Thoughts of this structure. Are you a fan? Would you change it?

**Participant 127** 34:53

I think that's fine.

**Interviewer** 34:55

Okay. Other connections that you see?

**Participant 127** 35:09

I feel like partnerships do work with the ability, it may be a supplemental sector, like connecting people with resources. Is there any way to connect education with gardening and urban ag?

**Interviewer** 35:40

Yeah. How would you maybe describe this connection?

**Participant 127** 35:45

I think that we have pumped a ton of money and a ton of time into this connection.

**Interviewer** 35:52

Yeah. I guess then the question is, how effective do you think those efforts have been in Flint?

**Participant 127** 36:04

I don't think it's been very effective. I don't think that- well, I know that we haven't seen the longevity of a lot of farms. We haven't seen the longevity of a lot of community gardens, so.

**Interviewer** 36:24

What do you think maybe contributes to that?

**Participant 127** 36:32

I don't know. If I could answer that, I think we'd be in a lot better place. I don't know if we maybe empower the community in the way that we could. I think we're a very top down institution that sets the message for the community. I think that when I've seen more successful community gardening and community and Market Garden programs, they are definitely stuck with what the community wants. And I don't know if we really listened. And some of the first conversations about land use. And again, this is second hand knowledge, because I was not in Flint at the time I was gone. People here said they didn't want to go back to living on rural farms like they had in the south. I don't know if that influenced that. Maybe it's not even community empowerment. Maybe it's disengaging?

**Participant 127** 37:54

I don't see. There are some one is, I think, sidelined for a couple years, due to- you know joyful family. things. But I don't see the power house educators and community representatives I see. Even in Detroit. So if I'm thinking about D Town Farms, or if I'm thinking about Mama Hanifa. And these community leaders who are inspiring and messaging, I don't see that here. And I think that affects how empowered the community feels.

**Participant 127** 38:36

I also don't think that we've focused on some of the policy pieces that other cities have, not just Detroit, but like large cities. So other places, I've lived, Pittsburgh, Boston, to kind of set the policy piece that would maybe empower the community to not just think of strengthening our food system through vegetables, which is very, very hard to do and make a living. But you know, we can't have poultry in this city. With Detroit having commercial composting and Pittsburgh has goats and poultry and sodas Boston. I think that gives the community more options of supplementing their income, than is allowed in Flint. And sorry, if I'm going off on a tangent.

**Interviewer** 39:24

No, no, this is perfect. Maybe want to step back and just validate for a second before continuing this conversation through connections that I've made. A lot of funding efforts by institutions and organizations have created a lot of education opportunities, but it had sort of a fairly weak link to raised gardening and urban agriculture. And then it is fair to say, a potentially negative connection to effective and meaningful community engagement. And then that if that did happen, that would lead to more community empowerment. And this other mechanism that you talked about, of a potential sort of more bottom up sort of grassroots or community leaders leading community engagement, that's also a fairly weak connection as this would be. I also wrote it down as a potential leverage point that would be an opportunity for more meaning from it, but it's not necessarily really happening in front. Either more connections sort of in this area, or changes you'd like to make.

**Participant 127** 40:57

No, I mean, I think if, this if, we had more of the grassroot community leaders and focused, maybe more on community empowerment, we could see a stronger connection between nutritious foods, community empowerment and the use of retail, specifically the use of like farmers markets and not other direct to market direct consumer bonds.

**Interviewer** 41:25

I added the sort of negative impacts of policy issues. Definitely, let me know if there's any changes you want to make. You don't think I'm mapping clearly, and even like wording that you think would be better suited to represent?

**Participant 127** 42:03

I think there is a negative impact between funding after it's by institutions and organizations on the grassroots community leadership.

**Interviewer** 42:17

Do you want to think more about that connection?

**Participant 127** 42:26

I think it's kind of like, double edged in some way. We are such a singularly traditionally funded community by one family. So if you kind of go against that funding, it's hard to then continue your place in this community. I think that, like I said before, kind of there's an exclusionary piece that we don't acknowledge, that kind of keeps maybe what would be the grassroots community from starting a movement like starting, let's say, Edible Flint over or being maybe more reactive to the changes in the community versus like the institutional model? The way that funding works? I think that it kind of discourages grassroots from the bottom up, forward.

**Participant 127** 43:45

Sometimes it feels like we are more interested in getting funding from these established institutions than we are collectively thinking of how we can address the lowest levels of poverty in our community and lift those people up. As a way to improve everyone, [inaudible] everyone's health. I will say that there is a pretty strong positive thing between funding and gardening, urban agriculture. Again, we have put up 100 and something I want to say it's 140 high tunnels through the community through natural resource conservation services. And that's free. Like that is money that growers, maybe half to like, invest upfront, but that is allowing people to do season extension at little or no cost to them.

**Interviewer** 45:28

Thinking about this structure here, so I'm just double checking, sort of some nice changes I made. I'm trying to map sort of these connections and relationships, you're talking about thinking about these power structures that exist in Flint, and their impact on food systems institutions that feed into the current like funding efforts. And sort of that they both contribute to this disconnect between funding and meaningful change. Again, I can definitely, like change the wording there, if you think there'll be a better way to communicate that. And then I'm wondering if we would see a potential connection between this concept and either his funding efforts for meaningful community engagement and that either that drives this concept, or is an outcome of this issue that you're talking about? Or any other connections?

**Participant 127** 46:37

I'm sorry.

**Interviewer 2** 46:45

Sometimes it just helps the talk.

**Participant 127** 46:52

I would just like to see a change that could help us all move forward.

**Interviewer** 47:09

That is, I mean, Renee can probably speak to this better than I can, as someone who's been involved in the project really long. But like, I know, personally, I have a lot of trepidation about joining such a big research project. Because I've only ever done small independent things. I mean, I'm really into applied research, like, yeah, I want to learn stuff. But my main goal is to help systems move towards sustainability. So I was really nervous about doing this project because I was concerned that they wouldn't have the same goals that I do, but it was really reassuring. I'm like, oh, wow, you guys are really focused on. Okay, but what does this mean? Okay, what is the outcome? Okay, how are we translating what we've learned into benefits for the community? And so, I know, a lot of researchers probably say this, but it is, it is a marked difference. I've noticed that we are super, like, focused on okay, and then what, how does that turn into real action?

**Participant 127** 48:10

I think the disconnect between funding and meaningful change kind of negatively affects the use of retail, because there is that disconnect. At least, you know, with our funding, that, like we've spent all this money in high tunnels, we have spent all this money on education, but our farmers don't get the benefit of the retail market.

**Participant 127** 48:42

I had something else to say, too, I think that maybe with partnerships, maybe there is a disconnect, kind of between that and meaningful change as well, just for this example, my boss with the high tunnel initiative and our urban ag grant, wrote in $5,000, for a facilitator to do something like this, when it was already happening, but we weren't made aware of that. And when it comes to bringing farm dollars to the community, we're up there.

**Interviewer** 49:34

I just want to double check are you thinking that this is a connection from the sort of disconnect to partnerships or partnerships, that furthers the disconnect or can it be both that exist?

**Participant 127** 49:46

I think maybe could it be both? I think that there is just you know, something is the right hand isn't talking to the left hand sometimes.

**Interviewer** 50:09

Other connections.

**Participant 127** 50:18

I feel that there is a negative connection between nutritious food and convenience stores. And the negative connection between nutritious foods and chain restaurants. I also think that there is kind of a negative connection between gardening and urban agriculture and our local restaurants. I think we could source a lot more food, if not from our county or city, but from our region.

**Interviewer** 51:21

If it makes sense to you to flip the directions of this. Is that local restaurants have an opportunity to support local production. But it doesn't, so I'll write that down as a leverage point.

**Participant 127** 51:52

And I think that the power structures in Flint have a negative impact on policy issues.

**Interviewer** 52:03

So you say that they further policy issues or that they reduce policy issues?

**Participant 127** 52:12

I think they further policy issues so it would it be the other way? I don't know.

**Interviewer** 52:18

Yeah, it's sometimes it's like, if something you know, especially when something is like in a negative light, oh, this thing is a negative impact because it makes this bad thing better. So it's like worse power structures or significant power structures means that there's also more policy issues. More of a bad thing. I can also ask, like directional questions that will be useful.

**Participant 127** 53:15

Could the effective and meaningful community engagement be negatively impacting our farmers markets and our CSA and our farm stands?

**Interviewer** 53:28

Do you want to speak more to that maybe?

**Participant 127** 53:32

I think that if we were to engage the community more, like more meaningful not just I'm here to check this box about why fruits and vegetables are good for you. But to kind of talk about greater health income outcomes, and look at really the cost of bad food. And how supporting your community farmer or your community members kind of helps lift the community, it elevates the community across the board, then maybe there would be more support of these like farm to consumer institutions and I keep trying to say qualified [inaudible] but that's my job.

**Interviewer** 54:22

Alright, cool. So I'm gonna put that as a positive relationship. This could be happening, but because of other reasons we've talked about, it's not currently [inaudible] simulated, it would be a negative impact on farmers markets.

**Participant 127** 54:37

And I think if we had some of our former grassroots community leaders, it feels like we got a big punch in the gut that may just kind of compounded issues that were already there. We lost someone with the Community Foundation. We lost someone with MSU Extension and then we lost probably our most experienced educator farmer, for like all good reasons, you know, they're not beholden to the community forever. But I think that losing those three strong people kind of has us in a place.

**Interviewer 2** 55:24

That's important.

**Participant 127** 55:28

And I don't know if it means that maybe we don't spend so much time developing, like one person.

**Interviewer** 55:46

All in my own headspace of like, idealistic, what really resilient and like sovereignty food systems look like?

**Participant 127** 55:56

I tend to think that any individual should be able to leave the map. And like it still continues. But that's my corporate background, right, it's like, you know, I should be able to leave and get promoted, and whatever I leave behind should be able to run smoothly because someone is already there.

**Interviewer 2** 56:20

It's more than a corporate mindset, because I come from that place, too. It also comes from a concept of leader fullness community, which is a concept that speaks to why you may have certain people who are more developed than others, you develop more broadly. So that you have a sense of, what is the word I want to say, initiative being defined leadership being defined by initiative that can come from any of everybody, and not just from one or two people, although our current models always try to get us at least one strong lead, who can actually cultivate stuff. You don't necessarily always do the best job of expanding that network before their "next" comes. [Inaudible]

**Participant 127** 57:21

Hmm?

**Interviewer 2** 57:27

I said do you get what I'm saying there?

**Participant 127** 57:30

I totally do. And I think that, you know, I think- so it feels like we're in a scarcity model, where like, everyone is so afraid of losing their tiny, tiny piece of the pie, that we can't develop that like leader full model, because then it's like, well, what we can't focus on the initiative, because what if that means we lose our tiny amount of funding?

**Interviewer 2** 58:08

Okay. Hmm, rich.

**Interviewer** 58:32

Were there any other values that you would intentionally be interested in adding to the maps, education and community empowerment, nutritious foods, partnerships?

**Participant 127** 58:47

I can pull it up.

**Interviewer** 58:49

There's quality of life is respected, affordability, and availability, any of these. And the answer can definitely be no.

**Participant 127** 58:57

I think that affordability and availability are definitely pieces. If we had, I mean, the more fresh fruit we had available in our community may take down some of the cost. I just don't know where I'd put that. I think availability would be linked to education. But also, availability is influenced by financial ability, if that makes sense. While organizations like mine can connect, funding efforts to individuals to increase like the availability of fresh produce. It's sometimes hard if you can't connect to those resources or you don't know they exist.

**Participant 127** 1:00:27

And I think the availability affects the use of retail. So both like how farmers markets are being used, but also influences how you grocery shop. So if I am a more affluent person, and I want strawberries in December, I'm less likely to hit my farmers market because that's not a seasonal produce, or a CSA. I'm going to go to a chain grocery store. I mean, availability. Please tell me if I'm using this concept too broadly, let me check the-

**Interviewer** 1:01:20

Yeah, we're thinking about it as sort of availability of, like, the physical presence of foods that people want, like the kind of quality that kind of food that people want. And so yeah, these connections fully make sense like, you know, different retail, like places that have different availability of different kinds of foods. And that really, guides use of those things.

**Participant 127** 1:01:49

Would it include like grocery stores, if you don't have a car and you're really reliant on like the bus system, you're more likely to use something like a Dollar General, or a Family Dollar or a corner store, than being able to get to a grocery store or I know the buses go downtown. But sometimes, some places aren't as welcoming to people. And I think that sometimes the market, the Flint market, creates that vibe for maybe people who are more reliant on- community members who are more reliant on public transportation.

**Interviewer** 1:02:54

So then some sort of transportation connection to the grocery store. So if you have more resources around transportation, you can go to grocery stores. If not, you might be more reliant on convenience stores. And then it has a pretty big impact on availability. And then added in this connection, sort of what might be a barrier for folks using that farmers market is sort of feeling unwelcome. Maybe we move on to sort of the next piece. There will be lots of opportunities to change things if you want to. I just want to be conscious of your time.

**Participant 127** 1:03:49

Oh, yeah, I'm sorry, I'll talk forever.

**Interviewer** 1:03:51

No, we are down for it. It's just like, if you I always want to make sure if someone already did me a great favor of promising some of their time, I want to maybe stick to that if that's what they need.

**Q7: When you look at the model you created, is there anything you think is missing, or that you want to add to better capture how you think about the food system in Flint?**

**Participant 127** 1:04:37

Land use, or maybe land reuse? I think we have a huge opportunity to improve the amount of food that is produced in our community for our community. Based on the large amount of vacant land we have.

**Interviewer** 1:05:04

Yeah, so this would feed into sort of gardening and urban agriculture. What do you think are maybe the barriers or drivers of this sort of factor, what creates people using like, enables this connection or what sort of holds it back?

**Participant 127** 1:05:26

So I think policy issues and limitations can affect land reuseuse. I think some of our institutions can negatively affect land reuse, or positively affect land reuse, depending on who's asking. I think if we create very strong partnerships, that may also help kind of solve some of these land reuse questions or it create more land reuse opportunities

**Interviewer** 1:06:10

Maybe we can decide if this, you know, he said that sometimes this works and sometimes it doesn't happen, sort of this connection between institutions and library use. Would you like to keep this as sort of a neutral connection that sometimes if one, sometimes other, or sort of think about like if I aggregated it, is it net positive or net negative?

**Participant 127** 1:06:33

I think it's net negative, I think it speaks to other issues of power and race in our community. Our public institution has been, at least in my past experience, definitely less likely to work with people of color, to use land to buy or purchase land for urban agriculture or gardening. Well if you are not from the community, or maybe are, like more of European descent, it's more or less like you're more likely to be able to lease land or purchase land for urban ag use.

**Interviewer** 1:07:14

I think Renee is probably going to follow up in a second interview.

**Participant 127** 1:07:20

Oh, I have stories.

**Interviewer 2** 1:07:24

So what Carissa is alluding to there is we've got two sets of interviews that we're doing this base model, which you saw where we started from, and then I'm going to be facilitating a series of interviews using modeling as well. But the focus is going to be on the implications of race and equity as it relates to access to opportunities to engage in the community aspects of the food system. So yes, I will be hopeful that yes, I'll be able to interview you and talk with you about that.

**Participant 127** 1:08:03

I have so much to say and not just on a community level. But on a state level.

**Interviewer 2** 1:08:10

I look forward to that conversation very much so you'll be hearing from me. So when you get to the end of that questionnaire and ask you can we call you, who else? I'll put your name down, you can put down that you want to do this second set of interviews, that will be beautiful.

**Participant 127** 1:08:26

Please call me.

**Interviewer 2** 1:08:27

I will, I most absolutely will.

**Participant 127** 1:08:37

I mean, I hate to say it, but I see, I just saw you put racial inequities.

**Interviewer** 1:08:44

It's a big concept. And I always struggle with this when people talk about something more than like, I've done these maps with like water systems. So it's really easy to connect, like, oh, well connected this pipe, you know, like, this processor is connected to this one, and then it goes to your house, and then it goes to your garden. But like those are so easy, but when we're talking about big cultural things, I'm like, it feels ridiculous to reduce this down to like, two words and a couple of lines. But let me know how we can change it.

**Participant 127** 1:09:17

No, I think that it's kind of like an unsaid thing. And I bring it up a lot which makes me not very popular. Both on the state level with my job and on the national level with my job.

**Interviewer 2** 1:09:37

There's a connection there between that and the land reuse.

**Interviewer** 1:09:48

Is one direction from one to the other or is there sort of a circle, a feedback loop there?Any other connections or changes that make. Or do you feel good about it?

**Interviewer** 1:16:42

Okay, she just dropped off. Yep. All right. I'm going to start recording

[reconnected]

**Q9: So now considering your map of the current Flint food system, how would you make changes to improve it?**

**Participant 127** 00:37

I think that we would have stronger policies for gardening and urban agriculture. I think we would have more just universal policies put in place by our institutions to avoid some of these racial inequities. And I think we would empower our grassroots community leaders to effectively engage the community to have like, either more participation in garden and urban ag, maybe it's more participation in policy issues. Or maybe it's just more local participation in sourcing produce from the community, like from being grown in the community.

**Q12: We’ve talked a lot about different food system sectors and values, and the impact of COVID-19. Is there anything important about this conversation that I forgot to ask you, or something that you want to add?**

**Participant 127** 07:29

I don't know. I feel like I've said a lot. Probably too much. And I thank you both for listening.