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

**Interviewer** 00:13

So I guess thinking about these relationships, and what it really means going from use of retail to, let's just focus on like, local versus chain restaurants, it really means like, when people are purchasing food in Flint, you know, where are they buying food from? Are they buying it more from local restaurants, chain restaurants? You know, are they spending more money, are they buying more food from convenience stores, or grocery stores, or farmers markets? You know, are those connections sort of weak? Or a medium? Are they strong? What is your perception, maybe of sort of the use of local versus chain restaurants influence?

**Participant 129** 13:17

Well, I mean, a lot of people want to support the local business because of everything going on. But in even in general, I think when when you talk local, and you talk family owned business, or a local business, that's not a chain that's not a, you know, has 10 restaurants or whatever, I think you you get more of a fresher, a fresher feel on food, a better quality and you know, more like a homely family feel environment. More- we can just call it a more fun environment, actually.

**Participant 129** 14:02

Instead of a chain having the strict rules, the strict measurements, you go to a family restaurant or a family diner, and you're going to get, you know, over the top service, most of the time and you're going to get really fresh food. In my sense, its quality of food and the quality of service they give to customers. So, you know, it's yup, it's the dining experiences, the quality of food. And I think that really is a big thing for local restaurants. They try harder and they show it, you know, with the owner being present, the owner being there. Working and waiting on customers and talking to customers and I think it's just the overall better experience at a local restaurant that is a chain.

**Interviewer** 15:03

Yeah, definitely. Yeah, and then thinking about sort of the other side of this. How much, you know, just through your experience maybe living in Flint. Do you think that people get food from grocery stores versus convenience stores versus farmers markets?

**Participant 129** 15:35

Well, being that the farmers markets only open three days a week. During the summer months, the fall, the spring, summer, fall, it's the farmers markets the place to go for the fresh food, no doubt hands down. But I mean, obviously, you can, it's seasonal, and it's only three days a week. So a lot of people do shop, you know, grocery stores. I do. I do Mejiers, Gordon's and the farmers market. Those are like my three spots. And Sam's, I hit Sam's too, for some stuff. So it's like, you know, if you can't find it, you got to find it there. You got to go there, if you can't find it there.

**Participant 129** 16:20

You got to go there. So it's just like, you know, and then the farmers market, they? I don't know if Flint is, yeah, it's seasonal, of course. But it's almost like the farmers market. What do you call it? A food court? More so than a farmers market? Yeah. So it would be nice. I mean, there are a couple people in there that do a lot of produce and their meat but I think more so especially in Flint is more so a food court than it is during the offseason, I mean, sorry. During the summer, you have your outdoor vending and there are vendors that bring fresh food from the, you know, farm, and that's the best of the best, I think.

**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** 17:21

Awesome. And then do you have any thoughts on maybe the size of the connection of where people use supplemental nutrition programs? Or would you like to skip this?

**Participant 129** 17:34

Yeah, I don't really know much about the supplement, so we just skip it. Another thing on the convenience stores, grocery stores use of retail, you know, depending on where you're at, to what the was with accordance to food. So like, I work at GM during the day. And then I go to the deli in the afternoon. So, you know, during the eight to 12 hours at GM, you know, your source of food there is either you bring food, or you hit the vending machine. So that's kind of like a convenience store, I guess, in a sense.

**Participant 129** 18:12

So one thing I've done with the deli is I make food for the vending machines at GM so I do like it but there it's not Hoffman's quality or not is like the big Hoffman sandwiches. It's a good quality sandwich at an affordable price that people can get in a vending machine. You know, it's something that you know, I never see in a vending machine. Something that's fresh, something that you know, it's good that you can even buy fresh salads. We do have salads, fresh pizzas, fresh sandwiches, and that goes over really well. So just another way of getting food when you're stuck in an environment for so long. Or you know, at work or at a you know, wherever you are.

**Interviewer** 19:15

Awesome. Yeah, I know a lot of people that we've talked to say like that, the biggest driver of when they have used convenience stores or news chain restaurants. It's like it's such a time and convenience factor that this is the option I have.

**Participant 129** 19:40

You're right. Even though I myself own a deli, you know, sometimes I don't even feel like making my own food or eating my own food because of that whole convenience factor. I've been doing it for so many hours. Now I don't even want to make myself a sandwich. It totally is the convenience factor of it. But there are some really good chain restaurants that are very, you know, that are really cautious or conscientious of their freshness, and their quality of food. And those are the ones that really stick out to me, you know that, that I'll go to at all like, I just, yeah, I'm very picky on my food.

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

**Participant 129** 22:54

We can do- I might jump all over the place. But when we first opened the deli, we wanted to think of affordability. And we had to think about quality of life because of where we were at in community empowerment because we were opening up a deli in downtown Flint and being Flint, It's not Royal Oak, it's not Bloomfield Hills, or Ann Arbor. It's Flint. So you know, we were trying to model ourselves after Zingerman's in Ann Arbor.

**Participant 129** 23:33

That's really what we would love to have been for Flint, which I think we really have been what in our own sense that we wanted to stick with the really high quality meats but you, you have to think of affordability and the type of consumer that's here in Flint. So I think we did a really good job on getting in the middle of that, and being able to still provide a really high quality item, sandwich salad, wrap, whatever, for an affordable price. And our whole slogan when we opened up was "healthy, wholesome quality foods." So that was because we wanted to provide a healthy option, quality and affordable so it was- and looking at the time when we opened in 2008.

**Participant 129** 24:32

There wasn't really anything that was really healthy at any level, and any really high quality anything. It was a lot of Big John's. And I love Big John's, but you know what I'm saying. Just a lot of fast food and just places that really didn't have any kind of health conscious or healthy choices. So that was one thing that we really, really hit on when we opened up was that we had nutritious actual foods, the affordable quality of life in the area, and the community environment.

**Participant 129** 25:17

One thing I always- I truly believe to this day, opening up a business anywhere, whether it's Flint, Alaska or Hawaii, if you don't invest in your community, your community will not invest in you. That's just one thing I've always believed in, you know, since day one, you know, I'm out there hanging out, going knocking on door to door handing out our menus, talking to the community and the customer and our hopefully future customers, and eventually, through word of mouth, we grew and we got popular and, you know, it's, it's been really good, you know, it's been a really great experience.

**Interviewer** 26:14

We're gonna draw some of these connections that you've talked about. So that sort of the connections, and definitely let me know if this isn't accurate or anything you want to add or change. Sort of that, you know, but local restaurant connections to community empowerment to quality of life is respected, to affordability here. And the one or the one double check is that something I sort of heard you talking about earlier is this, you know, is really just also the experience that someone has, when they come to a local restaurant, that is a way that they're, they are more respected in the food system. That's sort of a more personal community experience.

**Participant 129** 27:16

We have a lot of really, really good returning customers really good, loyal customers that, you know, from day one, they're still coming to us and that we know by name that we know, we know their order, we know what they're, you know, what they're going to get when they walk in the door. So it's, you know, it's really, it's pretty cool. It's, it's, I love being part of a building community. Exactly. I love being part of an evolving community as well. Watching Flint grow, watching Flint go through it, everything that it has gone through, and still know that, you know, we'll be able to make it out.

**Interviewer** 27:58

Yeah. Are there any other sort of connections that you see right now? I can also ask more direct questions if that will be helpful.

**Participant 129** 28:24

So sure, how about nutritious, and affordable maybe? Or nutritious food for the quality of life. I'm trying to think like that, because we do. Because, you know, even though we are in Flint it doesn't mean that, you know, they can't have good, nutritious food at an affordable price. So, you know, that was a whole nother thing, opening up and in Flint was, you know, keeping that in mind as well, that we didn't want to be, you know, we wanted to be able to- you just want everybody to be able to afford us.

**Participant 129** 29:09

Not be Zingerman's in that sense where you're spending 20 bucks on a sandwich, you know, like our most expensive sandwich is like $9.25 but you're getting a huge, like a pound of sandwich, you know, a big sandwich, it's not just a you know. So it's worth every penny-I think it is- and even if, say that pound of sandwich is at my- it's only a 50% margin where it should be at like 40 you know, make it up somewhere else because I want to be able to offer that to people in Flint. So I'll take a hit on some of the costs because I want people to enjoy it. You know?

**Interviewer** 30:02

Would it be fair because this is something like a dynamic, I would like to maybe add to the map that affordability is a goal. But there is a trade off not necessarily with affordability, but like the price of food is that if you're charging a lower price, which is more affordable, it also means that is, is less profit for the business. So it is maybe more risky or harder to maybe, like enter the market or something.

**Participant 129** 30:27

Yep, No, you're right, that's true. Because even though I could charge, if I was a Royal Oak, or even Grand Blanc, I could charge $1 or two more for my sandwiches, and then be able to be at those margins that I need to be a profitable business. Not saying we're not profitable, but you can always make more money, you can always be more profitable, you know.

**Participant 129** 30:54

The business pays for itself, it takes care of itself. But it can always do more, you know. That's how I look at it, you know. In 12, let's see, almost 13 years now, I haven't taken a paycheck, because I wanted to always reinvest it into the deli and I wanted to see the deli succeed for long term, not just not a short term in and out thing I wanted to, you know, create something here and create a name and create a, you know, even a legacy for my kids even.

**Interviewer** 31:30

Yeah, I definitely understand your connection to what you're talking about, very similar to Zingerman's, in some ways. I'm like, oh, I live across the street from that. We're definitely going to have a fancy dinner. I'm in grad school, so we don't really have the-

**Participant 129** 31:58

But yeah, it's such a different clientele in Ann Arbor it's crazy. I mean, it's like college kids, but it's just a whole- wild.

**Interviewer** 32:07

Yeah, I moved from one college town to another and Arbor is bizarre. I have never lived somewhere. This is expensive.

**Participant 129** 32:16

It's crazy. It is.

**Interviewer** 32:18

You're charging what for rent? It's a college town.

**Participant 129** 32:21

Exactly. You would think it's a college town. I mean, it's because yeah- it is absolutely astronomical.

**Interviewer** 32:31

It's like a young professional town and I'm like, wait, but I'm not making that kind of money.

**Participant 129** 32:37

Right. Exactly. It'd be nice to have UM Flint you know, sharing that Ann Arbor feel, or at least with the students anyways, you know. If we can get more enrollment or I don't even know how UM Flint is doing because you know, there's no kids on campus, you guys probably aren't on campus. Or are there-

**Interviewer** 33:01

Yeah, it's like some remote, but they allowed people to live in the dorms this year. So

**Participant 129** 33:07

Oh, wow. Well, that's cool.

**Interviewer** 33:10

I'll say that they just wanted Michigan football to happen.

**Participant 129** 33:13

Right, of course. It's huge for Michigan fans.

**Interviewer** 33:21

Awesome. So we've talked about- maybe we can- we talked a lot about sort of the outcomes of local restaurants, sort of the benefits and impacts on the community. I guess if there's any more we can talk about that. We can also talk about sort of connections to local restaurants, ways that Flint, you know, a different way that like Flint, as a community as a space as sort of politically are or are not supporting local restaurants. So what impacts sort of the ability of local restaurants to succeed in Flint?

**Participant 129** 34:00

People. People working.Well, our whole thing was the whole you know, there were over 10,000 people that commuted to downtown Flint on a daily basis. And that was huge for you know, that was big for us to open up that was like, okay, I think we can do this, you know, we can make this happen with this amount of people, and only so many restaurants downtown that actually do a lunch and a healthy lunch at that. So, you know, I thought we would have hit it off really well with this and we did.

**Participant 129** 34:41

And there were restaurants that were downtown when we opened up that shut down after we opened up and blamed it all on us. And that's not the case. I mean the only really, you know, the more the better. Actually, you know more restaurants are better for people, consumers, customers, and for other businesses together because you want choices you want people to be, you know, happy and more choices are always better. And there's never really- what do you call it?

**Participant 129** 35:21

Oh, well you opened up so you took all my customers, there's never there's never that downtown Flint. Not anymore anyways, there used to be back in the day but there's never there's not anymore. But yes, the consumer base, the customer base is huge, it was huge until COVID it and you know, we've had to reinvent the wheel, it seems like a lot in a lot of different ways. Because it's, nobody works downtown anymore. You couldn't find a parking spot on a Monday or Tuesday afternoon so you got the whole parking lot. It's definitely a challenge. Definitely a challenge.

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

**Interviewer** 36:22

If there's anything else, I can definitely add it to the file, add it to the map at any time that I'll maybe transition to talking about sort of the next thing and we will talk about COVID after this one. But you know, part of the project is not only to sort of build this map of the Flint food system, but also to sort of gather and then explore different leverage points. So you know, different things that could be changed, new things change things, big or small, that will lead to sort of like positive outcomes for food in Flint. I know it's a very broad and open ended question but you know, are things big or small sort of if you ran the world that you would change about the Flint food system that you think would have a sort of positive outcome.

**Participant 129** 37:17

Well, the delivery services now in Flint that had come to Flint that had been trying to get in on the local action for a long time now and I keep turning them down but now it's like I feel like I probably should now because it seems like that is probably one of the only ways to survive is to get in with a delivery service of any some kind even though we didn't we deliver between certain hours of the day we don't deliver all day. So being you know in one of those delivery services, I think would actually in this type in this time now.

**Participant 129** 38:07

Yeah, it would really help out while probably all the businesses downtown have that option. There are some that are around that would be a good option for Flint you know to jump on board. You know, just changing food in general or you know, I don't have a lot to do with people man now I think about it everything that you know we do downtown has to do with people. If we don't have the people we don't have sales we don't have customers. So you know to reach a broader reach to those people you have to be able to get to them and I guess that is like the best way to do it is a delivery service of some kind. Or like those ready to go meals you know there's a lot more companies now that make those ready to go meals. You know, you get and you get them delivered too. So you know it's crazy were a couple years ago and never even thought of doing something like this until now it's almost like you need to do it.

**Interviewer** 39:35

I've read some things about how horrible delivery apps are for local businesses. So I made a serious commitment in my own life to be like I will always call the place and order for pick up. I'm not going to order through something.

**Participant 129** 39:53

See that was my biggest thing. That's why I haven't done it because I'm so afraid of your own delivery service picking our food up, and then it gets to the customer, and it's a disaster. You know, I don't want my customers to, you know, to feel like that or to get an experience like that, you know. So that's why I'm still like, I don't know if I should do that or not, you know, I don't know, it's so hard to choose because of what you just said, you know, you're not the only one that's ever said that. So there's a lot, and I don't know, it's just-

**Interviewer** 40:31

I was saying I usually had to find experience with receiving food, it's mostly that I heard that the margins for the local business are awful, like, [inaudible] charging me more. So I'm like, if I'm going to spend, you know, I want my money to go to the business not to go to the app.

**Participant 129** 40:49

Right. Three years ago, when they were calling me UberEats, Doordash, Grubhub, they were calling me non stop, and they wanted at the time, I think it was only like 20%. But now, when I talk to them, they want, like, 35%. So you think of a $100 order, they're taking $35 right off the top. And for a small business, I'm only a deli of one. So it's like, that's a huge hit on my end. Or I got to raise the prices for you guys. You know, 35%. That just, I just can't think I just can't pay the man either. So, I don't know. It's like, you win and you lose. And you know, you want a happy medium, you know, you just want things to get back to normal.

**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?**

**Interviewer** 42:34

And I'll go ahead and save this file, and stop sharing. The last question I have is also kind of open ended. And now we've talked a lot about the retail sector, and these are the values and the impacts and a bit about COVID-19. Is there anything else important around this sort of conversation of food in Flint that we haven't talked about today, that you want to make sure that we sort of carry forward in this research.

**Participant 129** 46:20

So, man, I would just suggest consumers, customers, people like yourself, you know, support the local businesses support the farmers market, when you can, because it's important for them to, to thrive with us as well, you know, to support the farmers, the the people that, you know, they really don't get much recognition or consideration on that end of it, you know. I think those guys play a huge role in our daily lives really, with the food, anything from milk to our vegetables to our, you know, meat on the table. So I don't know, I think, yeah, food in Flint- It's so it's such a, it is an open ended broad question, isn't it? I'm trying to think, what else? I don't know. I guess I lost my thought there.