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flint, people, food, hoop houses, grocery stores, talk, market, convenience stores, food bank, connections, folks, nutritious foods, relationship, system, carissa, questions, big, farmers market, availability, affordability

**SPEAKERS**

Interviewer, Participant 131, Interviewer 2

[INTRO]

**Interviewer** 18:17

Awesome. So the first thing we're going to do is decide some connection strengths between all of these relationships with question marks. So maybe we can focus first on use of retail to local restaurants versus chain restaurants. So for context, what these relationships mean, is basically, when people buy food in Flint, how much are they buying food from local restaurants versus chain restaurants? What is your sort of perception?

**Participant 131** 18:54

Versus-

**Interviewer** 18:55

Yea?

**Participant 131** 18:56

Versus which restaurants? Local restaurants?

**Interviewer** 18:58

Like chain or fast food restaurants.

**Participant 131** 19:00

Oh chain, okay, got it. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 19:02

Yeah. So what is maybe your perception of how much people are getting their food from local restaurants versus chain restaurants, is it about the same? Do people not really go to restaurants at all? What's sort of your understanding?

**Participant 131** 19:17

Well, I would say that in a town like Flint chain restaurants are definitely the bigger draw. There are certain local restaurants in town that have very strong collections of patrons. They obviously- I honestly, I think they're all going to survive this COVID situation. But to your immediate question, chain restaurants are much stronger than local restaurants, if for no other reason, then there are a whole lot more of them.

**Interviewer** 19:56

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 20:02

And then similarly, what is your understanding of how much people are getting food from grocery stores versus convenience stores versus farmers markets? How would you describe maybe the strength of those connections?

**Participant 131** 20:20

Well, there are a lot of people in Flint, who unfortunately, I think, shop at the local convenience store. So I think in some neighborhoods in Flint, there's a very strong relationship between the convenience stores and where people do most of their shopping. Grocery stores. Now, it's not completely a food desert. But I think that the grocery stores, there is a strong relationship. But I would say that for a lot of people in, in Flint, it's not quite as strong as the convenience way. It depends on the neighborhood you're talking about, really, it really does. And as far as the farmers market goes, there are some very strong patrons of that market. But in terms of volume. So if you're just asking about the people who shop in a farmer's market, that also is a strong relationship. But in terms of volume, it doesn't compete at all with the grocery stores or the convenience stores.

**Interviewer** 21:46

Um, and then if you have any sense of how, like where people are using the various Supplemental Nutrition Programs, if you think that prompts people to use those programs, in grocery stores versus convenience stores versus farmers markets. How much do you think those programs might be used at these different sources?

**Participant 131** 22:14

Is being used or could be used?

**Interviewer** 22:16

Is being used. I'd say, yeah.

**Participant 131** 22:20

Well, it's- it's being used very extensively at the farmers market. I do know that.

**Interviewer** 22:26

Yeah.

**Participant 131** 22:27

That's a strong relationship there. We work very hard to build that up. And that's sustained itself. They have tried to bring particularly the Double Up Food Bucks into grocery stores. I honestly don't know how successful that has been. So I'm- I'm not in a position of saying whether the grocery stores are even following through on that. As far as food stamps, there are enough things that are eligible under food stamps. Unfortunately, the, uh, that I think there's a very strong relationship between particularly the, uh, the food stamps and the convenience stores.

**Interviewer** 23:21

Yeah.

**Participant 131** 23:23

There's, a lot of those people who shop in convenience stores are able to use their Bridge cards, for a lot of things that somebody like me doesn't think should be eligible.

**Interviewer** 23:40

Yeah. Great. So the next thing we're gonna do is go through a couple more definitions. And so those will be the food system values that are in the document I sent you. So these concepts, these different values, and the definitions came through conversations and focus groups with Flint residents. So um, folks were basically asked, you know, what do you want from the food system? What is a food system that serves you well look like? And these are kind of what came out of those conversations. So I'm going to run through-

**Participant 131** 24:22

Let me just ask you. Are they listed in- in order of what people thought was most important or it's just-

**Interviewer** 24:30

No, it's just a random order. Yeah, I don't think relevant people did soar, which ones that they thought were the most important, and I believe nutritious foods and affordability were some of the like to the higher ranked values for folks. Yeah. Cool. So I will run through these definitions. And as I do that, if you wouldn't mind thinking about which two or three, you might want to start with and add to your map. And so making that choice could be based on what you think is particularly important or relevant to the food system, or things that you think you can speak to, from your sort of, like, professional and also just lived experience.

**Participant 131** 25:24

Well, okay, you want to go through the definitions first?

**Interviewer** 25:30

Yeah. Unless, unless you if you've read them, then we don't have to do that.

**Participant 131** 25:35

No, I would appreciate it going back through the my degree. Cool.

**Interviewer** 25:46

Yeah, so the first is education. And so this is that people want opportunities to learn food skills, which they define as sort of, you know, cooking, gardening, nutrition, health, other things like that, and potentially apply them to your development, also have community empowerment. And so this is that considering a couple different factors of community empowerment. So supporting local economic development, fostering a sense of community prioritizing residents, cultural values. Also, quality of life is respected, which is sort of a combination of several things we were hearing. So basically that residents want to be able to move through the food system with their dignity choices, comfort and safety respected in a way that promotes the common good, and quality of life for all. Also have partnerships. So this is a step sort of a bunch of consumer level, considering the different groups and organizations involved in the Flint food system. So this is not the food system should promote creativity and encourage problem solving to produce trust and strong partnerships that provide leadership and support collaboration and communication. Also have nutritious foods so that people want more food options that are high in nutritional content, contain less additives and preservatives and come in appropriate portions to benefit health. We also have affordability so people want food to be priced so that community members can access the type of quality and quantity they require. So just considering not just the price of food, but also you know, resident income, how able are folks to purchase the foods that they want. And finally, we have availability so that the type of quality and amount of food required for community members can neatly feed their families and themselves should be physically present. javonni questions about these definitions?

**Participant 131** 27:38

No, I don't think so right now.

**Interviewer** 27:40

Awesome. And so what two or three, uh, would you like to start with and add to your map?

**Participant 131** 27:52

Well, I think I think the affordability and the availability, that's why I asked whether they were in an order in terms of importance, uh, affordability. The- the kind of thing that we found at the market, when we began to try to bring satellite farmers markets out into the community. Now this is- this is six years old. So let me just tell you what the experience that I had, and if it fits. One of the things that we knew at that time was and there are a couple more grocery stores now than there were even back then food- or Flint was just designated a food desert period. There, there really weren't any grocery stores that were of any value inside the city. And so we made the decision to try to, on a couple days a week, take some of the food from the vendors, some of the produce from the vendors at the farmers market out into the community and have little local markets on the street corner. And we advertise it quite a bit. And they didn't succeed at all, they were a failure. And one of the reasons we found and this was particularly true at one of our sites, we found that the food bank was going to distribute products from the food bank on the next day in basically the same location. Yeah, and so folks, even though the produce we brought was fresh, it was very evenly priced and they could use their WIC cards and everything for it. They did not even come to explore what was there, because they knew that the next day's offerings would be free, I have to believe that that would probably still be the case. In- in, in many sections of the city, one of the things I'll share with you too. And this may be a bias on my part.

**Participant 131** 30:29

But I think Flint has been for a while, and certainly is now what we used to call it Third World city. Meaning that there is a small group of people in town, who still make a very good living. And you might even call upper middle class, but the majority of the people are not in the middle class, they are really struggling in terms of economic resources. So when I talk, when I'm saying a lot of folks are going to convenience stores, or folks will patronize the food bank, instead of even using a WIC or a bridge card, I'm referring to folks who fall from my perspective in that latter category. And there are many, many of them in the city. It's not a racial issue, I don't even think it's a, it's a, a, an age issue. I think there- there are just a lot of people who don't have very much money, or they have gotten into the habit of always going to the convenience store or always going to McDonald's. And so I think that's all related to the idea of affordability. That if it's, if it's inexpensive, we will, we'll use it, whether it's- whether it's a bag of potato chips, or whether it's a bunch of broccoli. And if we knew which of those is healthier for us, but and that's, you know, that's far fetched, but yeah, it does. I noticed you're doing a lot of drawings here. Does it- does what I'm saying make sense?

**Interviewer** 32:25

Yeah, absolutely. Um, is- I did want to sort of backtrack and make sure that the connections I'm making are, are accurately representing what you're saying. So something I added was, was grocery store closures, as you mentioned, that it, it decreased the number of grocery stores. And that had maybe an impact on- on the availability of food. I also added, you know, this income piece that when people have lower income, then they tend to going towards convenience stores and chain restaurants and using the emergency sector. And there's also that food is going to be less affordable for them. And the sort of the circuitous relationship where like, the cheaper foods are also at convenience stores and at chain restaurants. Does that kind of- are there any changes or additions you want to make so far?

**Participant 131** 33:19

No, I think the way you've walked through it, that makes- yeah. My students in school always used to say that I wandered all over the map, you now are drawing a map that I'm wandering all over.

**Interviewer** 33:36

That's great. I think it's um, I really like system stuff. And I've made, uh, one or two of these maps before and I think it's a really cool way to sort of-

**Participant 131** 33:45

No it is I have not, I have not seen this before. So yeah, in the- in the supplemental sector there. I don't know if you, would you connect that to affordability? Uh, in the sense that folks who had- well, they're going to use their Bridge cards at the- at the convenience stores. So maybe that's not that connection. But the, uh, but the food bank. You know, I've changed my- changed my views of the food bank since COVID began. Because I think it has become absolutely essential. For some people. But my prejudice before this happened was that since the food bank is largely distributing product that has expired on its shelf life on a grocery store shelf, it's not healthy. And so that's- that's why we push so hard to get the WIC program. Excuse me the Double Up Bucks program going at the Flint market, because we really wanted to try to encourage folks to come to the market and buy produce that was fresh. And there are a lot of people who took up on that. I don't know what any of this, you would know what the statistics are now of how successful that Double Up Food Bucks program has become. It certainly has made a dent in what I'm talking about. But I think you know, the food, the food bank, it's not Food Bank versus Double Up Food Bucks now, it's that the food bank has stepped in and had to fulfill a spot where, that nobody else could, given the affordability or the price of food and- and the amount of money that people had.

**Interviewer** 36:07

Yeah. Yeah, it's been, um, Renee might be better at speaking to this, I'm always concerned about biasing any conversation, but it's definitely been something we've, we've heard of the value that the emergency section provides to Flint of servicing, like people who need food is really valuable. But also thinking about the long term success of the retail sector in Flint. You know, it is at odds there is- is conflict there.

**Participant 131** 36:47

Well, yeah. And- and the- the service sector, the- the food bank sector, has become much more important in the last year.

**Interviewer** 37:00

Yeah. Yeah. And we will definitely talk about COVID. A bit later. Are there any other connections that you would like to make in this map?

**Participant 131** 37:14

Well, since I'm not used to looking at this kind of a thing, uh-

**Interviewer** 37:22

Yeah, I can definitely also ask like directed questions.

**Participant 131** 37:25

Yeah, if you want to say, Okay, look at this. The relationship between this one and this one? Yeah, might be more helpful that way.

**Interviewer** 37:34

Sure. Um, yeah. So we could also we could talk about maybe nutritious foods or availability of both of those things when we have two connections to right now. So we can talk about maybe other ways that the food system impacts let's maybe focus on nutritious foods first. So what are other connections to nutritious foods? Where are people getting them where people not receiving them? And we can also talk about connections out of nutritious foods? What is the impact on the community of having those foods available?

**Participant 131** 38:13

Well, I can tell you non-nutritious foods, uh, diabetes and obesity are two of the huge outcomes. And I think and I don't know how many doctors you've interviewed, but I would bet that's one of the first things they would tell you.

**Interviewer** 38:39

Yeah. Other connections you would want to make to nutritious foods and maybe so we have connections that farmers markets are a big source of nutritious foods in the community, food source through the emergency sector is is not necessarily nutritious.

**Participant 131** 39:06

No.

**Interviewer** 39:07

Are there other connections you want to make?

**Participant 131** 39:10

Well, uh, the- during the summertime, the folks who have local, little local garden- gardens and give a, giveaway the produce that they have there or spread it around the neighborhood. That's definitely a connection but in terms of quantity, that's a very small part of anything that, excuse me, anything that happens.

**Interviewer** 39:38

Yeah. We can maybe talk- shift to sort of availability for you. So how, um, how the food system successfully makes food that people want available, or it doesn't. The connections I have so far is that, you know, grocery store closures have really affected availability of food in Flint. And then also, the emergency sector has limited availability. I was thinking they're not necessarily like the quantity of food, but the the types of food that people would want. Are there other connections that you see to availability? Maybe, you know, potentially how different kinds of retail, we to- you know, better availability for folks or not?

**Participant 131** 40:39

To avail- Okay, to availability?

**Interviewer** 40:46

Mm-hmm.

**Participant 131** 40:49

Well, you don't have a direct line from convenience stores to availability.

**Interviewer** 40:57

Yeah.

**Participant 131** 40:58

Uh. I mean, that. To me, that's a line that's, unfortunately, very strong. I mean, I think I have more contact with the work that I've done with folks in the north end, than in the south end.

**Interviewer** 41:27

Yeah.

**Participant 131** 41:28

But I think that with that population, for all kinds of reasons, convenience stores, really. You know, one of them is just transportation, so you'll have to- let me ask you, as you've asked people questions, do you have an idea of how many grocery stores- actual grocery stores there are in Flint now?

**Interviewer** 41:58

Yeah, my sense is that like, considering like big box grocery stores, there's maybe like, a couple and there's a couple smaller markets, but my sense is that when people talk about like access to grocery stores in Flint, they're usually referring to going outside of Flint to go to these sort of things.

**Participant 131** 42:19

Yup. The Meijer- the Meijer- the Meijer stores are, do you know Flint at all geographically?

**Interviewer** 42:27

Uh, a little bit, only through a lot of extensive Google Maps for a different project. I've never actually been to Flint, unfortunately.

**Participant 131** 42:36

Oh you've got to come. Listen, I'm gonna tell you you've got to come to the farmers market sometimes. It's one of the coolest farmers markets in the country. And obviously I'm biased, but for a small city that has all the issues that a town like Flint does, that market is a very cool place. It's open Tuesday's, Thursday's and Saturday's. So those are your days but anyway, to go back to what you were saying, yes, Meijer has- they had a big store on the northwest corner of Flint, oh- yes northwest corner of Flint which they closed several years ago. They have a large store just outside the city on the east side and a large store, uh, just outside the city on the south side. There are- there's a store on Davison Road, a grocery store on Davison road and there is one at the south end of the city limits on Fenton Road. The- I'm not even sure if one up in the northwest corner of Flint, I don't even think that stayed open. So there's one on DuPont too. So I- my guess is that there might be three real grocery stores, not box stores but just and not anything on the size of Kroger or VG's or anything. I think there's, there are three inside the city, uh, and- because I honestly haven't kept up with this but I think that's still true and they're at least doing well enough so they're open they haven't closed. But again my feeling is the majority of folks shop at conven- the local convenience store and then if they- they may get in the car and go out to a Meijer outside the city once a week, that- that I honestly don't know.

**Interviewer** 44:46

Yeah, so I sort of made some connections between parts of sort of transportation impacting both the the availability of foods or these combinations between, the relationships between accessibility and availability.

**Participant 131** 45:03

Yeah. Have you talked to anybody who's actually connected with transportation in Flint?

**Interviewer** 45:11

We haven't. Um, that would be-

**Participant 131** 45:13

Well, what you should know is the gentleman who's head of the bus company. It's called the MTA the Metropolitan Transit Authority. He has been incredibly creative in the last few years of not running just regular bus routes, but he got a whole slew of small cars and little vans. And he has rides to market and rides to the doctor and rides to church. And they, he he has worked very, very hard to make it possible for people without their own transportation to be able to get to a grocery store, or something like that.

**Interviewer** 45:28

Yeah.

**Participant 131** 45:28

There's only- there's only so much-

**Interviewer** 45:43

Do you perhaps recall his name?

**Participant 131** 46:10

I'm sorry?

**Interviewer** 46:11

Do you perhaps recall his name?

**Participant 131** 46:13

Yes. His name- his last name is [Name]. His first name is [Name]. [Name]. And he is the director, CEO, whatever of the MTA.

**Interviewer** 46:32

Yeah. I'll send them an email, that would be a good person to talk to about this piece. Yeah, um, so are there any, I'll switch back, are there any other of these values that you would like to include? We talked about, um, nutritious foods, affordability, and availability?

**Participant 131** 46:55

Oh, you know, you know, I mean, there's business of partnerships. There are a lot of people who work, who are working on trying to make this system better.

**Participant 131** 47:19

But it's just, I mean, it's a work in progress. The- if, I'm sure you've interviewed folks connected with Flint Fresh then?

**Interviewer** 47:35

Mm-hmm.

**Participant 131** 47:37

Yeah, okay. Well, then you know that some of that is also educational. The senior citizens homes have worked very hard to try to make the- the healthy, nutritious food available to their residents. They, several of them run buses down to the market in the summer. See, the- the thing that's interesting about the market in terms of fresh food is that in Michigan, you know, it can't be a real year round growers market. It's a summer market. And so even the produce that they sell, which is as good as anything you'll get at the grocery store, but it comes from a secondary source. It doesn't come straight- straight from the grower, certainly during the winter months. And so that whole seasonality issue, yeah. That, uh, yeah, that's, that's an important factor in all of the considerations here.

**Interviewer 2** 48:51

Yeah. And definitely thank you for calling that out, [Name]. Because you, you have that intimate knowledge and your words resonate around, people describe things, but you've basically nailed it down to, it's a summer market. And every other season, we've got to have other sources and it's really important to call out and lift that up. So thank you for that.

**Participant 131** 49:18

Well, okay, I take it then that nobody else has kind of put that on the table.

**Interviewer 2** 49:26

They have but it's explicitly different because you come from an operator's voice. And other people talk about it from an experience of what they buy. And anything they know that- that's the point I was making there. Yeah, it just comes across differently.

**Participant 131** 49:42

Well, and- and that leads me to think, now, Carissa you've put education way up here at the top. A lot of people in Flint don't really understand that seasonal issue. They just assume, you know, you ask kids where things grow, and they don't know if it grows in the ground or on a tree, or, you know, in the box at the grocery store. And, and some of the parents, and this is not disparaging anybody, it's just a truth that they, they don't understand. So for example, if you buy produce at the farmers market right now, yeah, there is one vendor, who is going to have things that- two, that are grown in, uh, hoop houses, and so it's going to be homegrown and it's going to be fresh. But the other two major produce dealers are buying things from one of the terminals or the Eastern Market, just the way the grocery stores have their suppliers. And so it's no worse, but it's no better. It's the same thing. And a lot of people I think, don't make that distinction. That's, that's one of the things that I was referring to, when I mentioned that I thought Flint, in a way was a third world city. Because you have people who are better educated and- and this is not a racial issue. This is, there are people who are better educated, and better informed and have more of an income. And then there are a great many people who do not have those advantages. And there aren't very many people in the middle in a town like Flint. So from- now this is very biased on my part. But I think you have people coming at all the questions that you're asking about, from two really very different perspectives. In terms of the lives that they live.

**Interviewer 2** 52:14

That's very insightful. Thank you.

**Participant 131** 52:18

Yes, ma'am. I, you know, I would imagine, do you find if you're in Detroit, as well as if you- if you're in Detroit, you find the same thing at the Eastern Market, I would imagine.

**Interviewer 2** 52:33

Yeah, we're kind of twin cities, Detroit and Flint, there's a lot of similarities. We're in different stages on different things. So I would love to at some point, we'll have a separate conversation. I won't totally interrupt what Carissa is doing here today. But you're right. There are some similarities. And there are some also distinct differences just by the virtue of the maturity of our Community Food System. I'll leave it at that for now.

**Participant 131** 53:04

Well, and you're absolutely right, because I know a young lady that I first met in- up here in Flint, who got so frustrated with things back when I was involved, first involved in the early part of the century, that she came down to Detroit. She's one of your leaders down there. And yes, you folks are at least 10 years ahead. Yeah, of what's happening up here.

**Interviewer 2** 53:33

Yeah, well, we want to- we want to help, we want to see Flint do some dynamic leaping, how bout that?

**Participant 131** 53:39

Oh, that sounds good. I had somebody in one of these meetings say, well, Flint's just Detroit's little sister.

**Participant 131** 53:47

Absolutely. It is, it's true. That's true, I would echo that. Carissa you better grab ahold of us.

**Participant 131** 54:00

Yeah, you won't be able to finish your diagrams if we start talking.

**Interviewer** 54:06

Great. Um, yeah, the next thing we want to talk about is um, you know, we started with these, these sector's and the values that- that we defined, we also want to open it up and give you a chance to add other things that you think are important. So other- other factors, other concepts, other groups that you think are influential to the Flint food system, or you know, other- other outcomes that you think are important, so not just these values, but other things? Um, do you have any thoughts of what you might want to add to your map?

**Participant 131** 54:41

Well, okay. One of the things and I don't know what the story is behind this, but as- as people were trying, it has to do with hoop houses, and trying to- the word there was seasonal extension, I guess was what everybody was talking about. So that if you had a hoop house, you could begin to grow things, you could keep going things later in the fall and start them earlier in the spring. And you'd get- begin to get away from this business that all the fresh produce was just in the summer months, I have found out just in the last few months, and I haven't had a chance to explore and find out why. But I know because I was a part of it back 10 years ago, there were lots and lots of hoop houses that were built on vacant lots right inside the city of Flint.

**Participant 131** 55:47

Michigan State was very active in that, the people- there were folks who came up from Michigan State, and participated in kind of barn raising ceremonies where these hoop houses were- were built. And I think the- the anticipation was great that whether it was individuals or neighborhood groups, or school groups, or whoever, would really pick up on this, I have found out because I didn't keep any track of it after I left the market. The most of, many of those hoop houses are empty now. They're, they're still standing, but nobody's using them. And so I'm not quite sure where that relates to on the kind of chart you're building here. But there, I guess, if my information is correct, there is the ability, this wouldn't be a large scale thing, but if there, I've heard a number as large as 100, if there are 100 hoop houses inside the city, that are no longer being used by anybody. If those could be kind of re- refreshed and rehabilitated, I would think that, at least in local neighborhoods, during the hoop house growing season, that could at least put good food within the reach of some people that don't have it now. So that's, I don't know if that's an aside, or whether that's useful information. But I think it's, it's something that, excuse me, some of us here in town really need to investigate why that has happened, and what's going on there.

**Participant 131** 57:45

The other- the other thing I would just mention that I don't know how you get away from this, is the fact that free is so important to so many people. And with the- the eastern region Food Bank being so large, and so, I mean it's really a very high powered organization, not just in this town, but in the eastern part of this, the thumb region of the state, uh, getting people to begin to think about even with Bridge cards and Double Up Food Cards and all this kind of thing. Think about eating more healthy food. You know, in the schools, the schools have had such a hard time just doing the things that they're supposed to do in curriculum that eating healthy is is not part of the education system. The Food Bank has a, a disproportionate influence in a community like Flint. And as I've said before, right now given the circumstances of so many people, thank God for it. But moving forward if people begin to get back on their feet, changing habits and changing culture is really difficult and I think that's going to be one of the one of the big challenges as people deal with these kinds of issues going forward. So-

**Interviewer 2** 59:38

Thank you.

**Participant 131** 59:42

You agree with that?

**Interviewer 2** 59:44

Uh, absolutely echo that. I do process and change work for a living so I, what you're saying deeply resonates. And to have it called out in an interview, that's why we tell people please from your perspective, theres stuff you know that other people don't know or perspectives you hold, so yeah, so hearing you talk about the disproportionate influence. So I guess it's a good thing that's needed, but also as people recover from these shocks, right?

**Participant 131** 1:00:13

Yes.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:13

That what I heard you lift up was the habits and culture change is- is going to be where the challenges are. Yes. If I'm giving it back to you properly.

**Participant 131** 1:00:24

No. We are on the same page.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:29

Okay, gotcha.

**Participant 131** 1:00:30

Let me just ask, do you have my email? You do, don't you?

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:34

Yes.

**Participant 131** 1:00:35

We need to stay in touch.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:38

We'll do that. Absolutely. Thank you for giving me permission to do that. I absolutely will.

**Participant 131** 1:00:41

Yes, ma'am. No, no, I would. And yeah, I mean, I'm not an expert by any means. I'm really a layman. But, you know, I got into that business of running the market. Just because somebody knew that I was a retired teacher, I didn't have anything to do. So it wasn't, it wasn't that I came in with the kind of is- is [Name] still the head of the Detroit [inaudible]?

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:41

Yes, he is.

**Participant 131** 1:01:13

Now he's a guy- he's a guy, he's ob-. He's obviously running a much bigger operation than in Flint, but he's somebody who came into that job with some background, and knowing what he was getting into.

**Interviewer 2** 1:01:31

Well, I'll tell you, I'm gonna interrupt you for a second and say that your map says that you have expertise. And and I'm gonna flip it back to Carissa, because she's gonna have to corral me and you, cause we, I got your email, and we will chat.

**Participant 131** 1:01:44

Okay.

**Interviewer 2** 1:01:46

Thank you.

**Interviewer** 1:01:52

And that's also like, one of the goals of our project is also to, to make these connections and to- to enable these sort of cross conversations of people working throughout the food system. So [inaudible] that's happening.

**Participant 131** 1:02:06

Carissa you know, one thing you've got to do when you said this was confidential?

**Interviewer** 1:02:11

Mm-hmm.

**Participant 131** 1:02:11

You've got to not show this diagram to any of my kids. Because they will say, yeah, dad, that's just the way you talk. All over the place.

**Interviewer** 1:02:27

No, it's always all over the place. It's a real food system, it's messy, it's super interconnected.

**Participant 131** 1:02:37

Man. And my former students would say the same thing. they'd walk out of the room at the end of the hour saying, okay, what did we just talk about?

**Interviewer** 1:02:52

Um, yeah. Before we move on to talking about some potential leverage points, is there anything else you would like to other concepts, you like to add things you'd like to change to the map?

**Participant 131** 1:03:05

Well okay, we really haven't talked very much about Flint Fresh. And I think that Flint Fresh is a small institution that has the potential to make a whole lot of these connections that I have been arguing don't really exist or are very weak at this point. Now, they do- from my perspective, the one weak link there still, and that's not because nobody's trying, it's just it hasn't developed yet. The whole idea of that organization was to begin to put local farmers in touch with local consumers. And, you know, build a local food system that way.

**Interviewer** 1:04:02

Yeah.

**Participant 131** 1:04:03

And when it first got started, I, since I knew a lot of farmers through the market, I thought, oh, it's not gonna be a problem getting them. The problem is going to be getting the hospitals and the universities and the school systems and everybody who have contracts with these big food suppliers, to kind of, if not break those contracts, at least moderate them some so that the, you know, the Flint Fresh can provide for them, what just the opposite has been become true. They are now providing so much fresh food, fresh produce, to schools, to lunch programs, to senior centers. I don't know if they've broken into any of the hospitals yet, but they're- the- the demand side in terms of providing this- the produce is there. And the part that still has to be developed because a lot of the produce then is coming from secondary providers, it's not being grown. Again, during this kind of a season, it can't be. But it's not being provided by the local farmers. But I, there are, there are many, many people, from seniors to kids in school systems, who are getting at least some kind of fresh food on a daily and if not that, a weekend basis when- when things go home, a weekend package of food goes home with the kids, uh, Flint Fresh is doing I think, a remarkable job there. And so that's a- that's a- that's a big plus, I think, in the, in the general picture right now.

**Interviewer** 1:06:12

Um, I will save this file real quick. And the next thing we're going to talk about is one of the sort of goals of this project, you know, is not just to build an understanding of what's going on in Flint but also to sort of collect and assess different leverage points, different things that could be changed, or new things that could be introduced, big or small, that would lead to positive improvements in the system. So I know this is sort of a big, and also very open ended question. But considering sort of your understanding of what's going on with food in Flint. If you sort of ran the world, how would you make changes to improve it? What would you consider to be some of these leverage points? And I already wrote down using the established- better use of established hoop houses, um, and then also making education around healthy and nutritious foods, um, part of what you learn in school, are there other things-

**Participant 131** 1:07:14

Well, okay, you're talking to a former teacher, so you know, what kind of answer you're going to get right? No, I think, you know, we have found in the last four years, and I'm going to get political for a minute, we found in the last four years, that a lot of folks in the country don't really have an idea of how their government runs or anything about the history of the government. And that has shown significantly in the ways a lot of people have and still are responding to things, uh, so education. But now in the context of this discussion, yeah, education, beginning, you know, education is not telling somebody something in the classroom and expecting that, it's, it's modeling it and it's providing the opportunity to participate in it, so if you know, if- if schools could have, you know, some of them have tried, COVID kind of interrupted a lot of stuff. But if schools could have their own hoop house, if they could figure out a way to pay for say, at least the vegetable portion of their school lunch coming from a place like Flint Fresh rather than Sodexo or, you know, whoever the big foods, Gordon's, or whoever the big food suppliers are. You know, that's, that's a culture shift. And who knows whether that's going to happen?

**Participant 131** 1:09:00

But you said if, you know, if I could change the world, that's the pie in the sky idea. That's where it's got to start. You know, it's got to start with the kids who are the little kids now, who can make that a priority as they get to be bigger kids and adults. So it's, you know, and that's people every generation say that and that's, that's what we keep working toward, but, you know, in the context of this conversation, that would be the kind of thing that I would love to see. You know, grocery stores if you need at least one or two in the city, but I'm not sure the ones that have tried, really. I don't know why they've failed but there, as I said there are only two or three that are, I know they're making it but I'm not sure how. I think they have outside resources or, or other places where they're, that are subsidizing what's going on in Flint. But that- that's beginning to get to, too, too philosophical and too rambling on my part, so.

**Interviewer** 1:10:23

I appreciate the perspective, my uh. Both of my parents are educators. Something I have a deep respect for.

**Participant 131** 1:10:34

I loved it. I just said I loved it.

**Interviewer** 1:10:41

Um, yeah, my, my father is a botany professor in Indiana, and one of his favorite classes, like class sessions in his in the courses he teaches, he buys a bunch of fruits and vegetables and teaches all the undergrads how exactly they're grown and where they come from. And he's like, there's so many people who've never learned like how brussel sprouts are grown, and it just blows their minds.

**Participant 131** 1:11:05

Yeah, you bring a Brussel sprout stalk in the class, and people will-

**Interviewer** 1:11:14

No way!

**Participant 131** 1:11:14

-say that's a Martian walking in here.

[COVID SECTION]

**Interviewer** 1:11:19

The last thing we're gonna do with modeling is I've added COVID-19 as a concept into the map. So if we could talk a little bit about, you know, your understanding of how COVID-19 has impacted the system.

**Participant 131** 1:11:38

Well the most direct thing I can tell you is that I know that it forced-forced the closure of the Flint market for what, five months, maybe. Not long, not- When did the governor shut things down last year? It was it was not quite this early-

**Interviewer 2** 1:12:00

It was it was about a week ago, a year ago.

**Participant 131** 1:12:03

Okay, well, the the Flint market closed. And they got really, really creative and had drive by pickup and kept the place going for four or five months, with the market being closed. And you know, a lot of the vendors having to file for the PPP project and that kind of thing. But the folks who had access to produce, and some of the other things were putting, you know, they had a- they developed an online shopping box. And you could check off what you wanted to get. Say on- for a Tuesday pickup, you had to have it in by five o'clock on Monday. And then people were driving by. And the-the market took a huge hit on that. But it stayed in business. And honestly, as you go back down there now, Tuesdays and Thursdays are always less well attended in the wintertime. But Saturdays is- Saturdays are busy days now. And so the market has- the market was impacted. And I think it has rebounded very, very well from that. I mean, I don't know specific cases of people who are growers who have had- I know, folks, it's market vendors, who have had huge impact in their own individual families with COVID. I don't know about growers. And as-as a consumer now, as I go shopping, with my wife to Meijier, out in Burton, it's good to see everybody's wearing masks now. That wasn't the case, when it started- first started. There was a lot of resistance. But I think by now people- and so I don't know. I think I'm probably not very helpful in answering this kind of a question other than that specific information about the fact that the Flint market had to be closed.

**Interviewer** 1:14:25

Yeah, um, I would maybe add something you touched on earlier is that, you know, during COVID-19 people will have needed increased, like access to food and stuff like that, and that the emergency sector has been really influential there. So maybe I will.

**Participant 131** 1:14:46

Well, yes, I mean, COVID-COVID-19. Obviously, the food bank has stepped in and responded to that challenge. I mean, I-I don't know any details about how the food bank is operated anymore. I used to know people over there. But I know that they have made a huge difference.

**Interviewer** 1:15:29

Awesome, so I will save this file.

**Participant 131** 1:15:33

Well, you know, I mean, the other obvious thing is that restaurants- and restaurants and bars have taken a huge hit. You know, I don't know how many now are going to survive. But I mean, that's just an obvious one.

**Interviewer** 1:15:56

Anything else you'd like to add or change?

**Participant 131** 1:15:59

Not that I think of?

[COVID SECTION ENDS]

**Interviewer** 1:16:01

Great. And I'll say that, and then stop sharing. So my last question was also another sort of open ended one, you know, we talk a lot about different food system sectors about these values, about the impact of COVID-19, is there anything else important about this conversation around food in Flint that we haven't talked about today that you want to make sure we carry forward in this research?

**Participant 131** 1:16:30

No, I don't think so. I think you're, I- well, I will be interested to know how the researchers in this project read these maps you're creating.

[OUTRO]