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Wed, 10/6 4:54PM • 1:33:32

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

people, flint, farmers market, food, market, farmers, talked, connection, moved, folks, downtown, community, vendors, buy, big, produce, local, businesses, system, conversations

**SPEAKERS**

Interviewer, Participant 132, Interviewer 2

[INTRO]

**Interviewer** 23:37

Awesome. Um, so first thing we're going to do is think about some of these connection strengths of all the connections with question marks. And so, I do want to say like, you know, if there's anything in question that I asked that you're like, "I don't really know about that,"or like, "I don't think I can speak to that." Definitely just let me know and we can skip it. And you know, we've, no one knows actually everything about the food system. So we might talk to producers, and I'm like, "What do you think about the supplemental sector?" And they're like, "how would I know anything about that?" Um, yeah, so I guess we can focus down on sort of these use of retail. I- we can talk about first, like, use of retail to local versus chain restaurants. So for context, what these connection strengths mean, is really like: when people decide to purchase food in Flint, how much are they going to local restaurants versus chain restaurants. Is it about the same? Is one more than the other? Do people not go to restaurants at all? Like what is your experience of Flint, how would you sort of describe these connection strengths?

**Participant 132** 23:49

So I would say, um in-in downtown Flint like surrounding the market, we don't Have any chain restaurants. So every, you know, everything down here that I can think of- everything down here is, is a family business or a locally owned business. Even if- I don't, I'm trying to think of anybody even has like a second-second site or something. But even so they're all local. So and we don't, in our market, have any chain type. Like-like a lot of big farmers markets, like the real really big ones in other cities. They'll have a Starbucks in there. Which is- some people are very bothered by it. From a budget management standpoint, it's a smart move. It doesn't fit with Flint, but like big cities like Seattle, or some of those. It- they can charge them, they can charge Starbucks a lot more than they would charge a local person to be in there. And that helps make it more equitable for the local people to do it. But we don't have- you know, that's not something I don't think- I don't think that's anything we'd ever do here.

**Participant 132** 26:04

But anyway, so I don't know, I think what- it's been different this year, because there's been such a push to buy local and eat local. So I think people are a lot more cognizant of that when they're making choices for takeout food, or picking up curbside. That instead of going to Applebee's, that they're picking it up from a local place. However, you know, some of those bigger places already knew what they were doing with curbside and takeout and stuff. So they're a lot more- it's more convenient for people, and when people are nervous about, during COVID.

**Participant 132** 26:07

I think, you know, there could have been initially more of a shift to drive through McDonald's. Because you know, you know what they're doing. But I think that has changed over the course of the year. And people really started to understand why it's so important to support local businesses. So I think people are definitely, which is really a good outcome, more aware of how many local restaurants there are, that they can eat at and support. So I think that's, I think that's been a definite benefit. There's kind of, again, in Flint, proper, there's really not that- There are some, you know, fast food, places, but there's not really, you know, like sit down restaurants. There's not really very many chains. They're technically outside of Flint. So they're like Flint Township, or one of the, you know, adjoining areas. Kind of, yeah, I mean- there's not, there's just not that many.

**Participant 132** 27:38

So um, and I don't know if this- if I'm jumping ahead or not, but our connection to local restaurants would be at different times of the year and in different times, as we evolve as a farmers market, we try to connect local producers to those local restaurants. And some of them are- especially the downtown folks. They really try whenever they can to get stuff from our local producers, which is nice. They go one step further, some of them. And now it could be a little bit different because everything is different because of COVID. But for example, the Hoff-Hoffman's deli, which is just around the corner here. They have a list of sandwiches and they'll- they-they have like the Flint farmers market sandwich or whatever. The crate company has a farmers market crate. They don't use all goods from the market, you know, to make that. But they try to make the connection.

**Participant 132** 28:43

We do have a couple of like the crate company, and there's a- there's a very high end kind of wine restaurant. And she gets a lot of stuff from here at the market. Oh, and so I think when they can-

**Participant 132** 28:59

Yeah, it's The Cork on Saginaw. Yep. So I think especially our downtown people: when they can they do. And then I think intermittently, in the summertime we have a good relationship with our chefs Collaborative for the Genesee County area. And so they are very aware, and I think they on their own, which would be outside of what I know but I- like my- [inaudible]. I don't- I don't- I don't know. I don't know why it's true, but it just is. But I think they make arrangements for strawberry season, to get strawberries. And they make specialties in the restaurants and stuff. So-so that's um, that's something that I'd like to do more with and continue to try to grow that. And it's, like I said, it's sort of sometimes better than others. With that, so I think there's that connection.

**Participant 132** 29:52

But I also understand from a- from their personal, economical standpoint, you know. While they would love to buy everything fresh from the farmers market. For the amount of volume that they're doing, it's not practical for their bottom line. And we have seen- I have seen people even inside the market try to do that and watched it be very difficult for them economically to stay afloat because there's-they're, they're buying everything from inside the market. So that- that's kind of a- that that makes it hard. But, yeah, so that's kind of how I would, I would see that sort of connection with us.

**Participant 132** 30:41

We have also- And I think that Flint fresh is really bridging the gap to some extent, you know, in some of these situations. Because over the years, we've had initiatives where we've tried to hook up with a local school districts. And our farmers like end of season, what can they- You know, we originally wanted to have a wash and pack. We actually, it was set up to do a wash and pack. But we just didn't have any farmers that were making that leap to want to do the wash and pack. But that's where Flint, fresh food health has stepped in. And they've got that system to get people to do that. I think for us, it was kind of like one more thing, when we're already running this huge market and being a community, you know, Beacon and all these other things. That was a- I was really excited about that. But it just for time or staff or whatever, it didn't work out. But that's been a nice- Flint fresh has been fantastic with I think helping us to to make those connections.

**Interviewer** 31:44

Yeah, I want to just make sure I'm

**Participant 132** 31:45

Sorry, that was a lot. I'll tell you more than what you want to know. Oh, I like to talk.

**Interviewer** 31:53

I want to know all of it.

**Participant 132** 31:54

Okay.

**Interviewer** 31:59

Yeah, I just — because there's two pieces that I heard sort of this this education piece, and also like community engagement. Um, is that fair? So connecting with farmers market and Flint fresh to those two concepts?

**Participant 132** 31:59

Yeah, I think so. I think ours is probably more community. It's probably more us than them in that because we have the audience.

**Interviewer** 32:30

Gotcha, right.

**Participant 132** 32:31

Everybody knows the Flint farmers market. So um, but- I think having them as a partner to connect- And in a lot of it-it's not really our customers, like everyday customers, it's more connecting those entities that are providing food to large amounts of people. And having them realize, like, "Hey, you can actually, at certain times of the year, you know- Yeah, you can buy your other stuff from Gordon's or wherever you're getting it. But you can also get apples from a farmer through this." And so I think that's kind of where that comes in. And then I'm counting on Flint fresh. I don't know if [name] is doing it or not, but I mean, I think he is. But I'm counting on that he's- and I know that he is- opening some, some doors with the education piece for those farmers and producers. Of "here's what you can do," you know, and taking them to the next step.

**Interviewer** 33:27

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 33:30

I'm gonna make this increasingly complex. Yeah, so how some of those partnerships piece connections, sort of like double connections. Like that they support each other: both farmers markets and local producers, local producers and Flint fresh, Flint Fresh and the farmer's market. As sort of this very interconnected system, right. And then outcomes to sort of community engagement and education,

**Participant 132** 34:03

And just in full disclosure too with Flint Fresh like, we're not in contact a lot. Like it's not- like we don't- my partner here is a chef and he is over the Flint foodworks program, which is our commercial kitchens and food and food entrepreneur space. He's on the board of Flint fresh, so he's kind of the person that represents for the market. So um, they're doing an amazing job over there. So we don't we-we- I think we support each other wherever we can. But I don't want to give the impression that we're like talking all the time and figuring stuff out. It just so happens that I think we have a really strong leadership and programming system here, and I think they do too. And so we just bounce off each other whenever we can and it works you know, which is great. Less meetings, more, more products [inaudible]

**Interviewer 2** 34:59

You just mentioned something in passing. You said something about a particular individual with your- this chef who's connected with your kitchens.

**Participant 132** 35:08

Yeah, [name]. He's- we originally started- we managed the market together. And I dealt with the vendors and the retail and then all the programming. And then he dealt with more of the restaurant end of things. In terms of health department, Department of Agriculture, new businesses starting up, and then people actually developing their businesses, if it's a food based business. So we have two commercial kitchens within our market that are rentable. They're 24 hour kitchens, and people can utilize them for everything from product to development to just straight up catering, because they need a bigger kitchen to use. And so he runs that program. And we-we, he also was part of the facilities management for the market. But um, we sort of split off our Management module or I don't know, model, whatever. So it went all-all of it, and he's just foodworks now, but he's just in the next office. So it's, it's all good. It just gives him more time to focus on the food entrepreneur part. So you may want to speak to him about this as well. So he's, he has actually this is a super cool program. Have you talked- I know it's the other school but have you talked to Michigan State? Anyone from there? Oh, yeah.

**Interviewer** 35:08

Yeah.

**Participant 132** 35:20

Okay. So [name]. Is she on your radar?

**Interviewer 2** 36:37

No

**Participant 132** 36:38

Okay, she is with MSU and, um,

**Interviewer 2** 36:44

Is she with the product center?

**Participant 132** 36:46

No, no, she's like, like nutrition and specifically related to kids. And so there's a really cool program called kids cook, that [name], my partner that he got involved with through [name]. It's [spelling name], and she's at Michigan State. I can send you her contact information [inaudible] whenever. But she-she's-she's gotten a bunch of grants to do these nutrition programs for kids. And I'm I don't know exactly if it's Flint kids only or if it's all kids in Genesee County or whatever. But [name] is, is very excited about their- I think they're getting ready to move to do some more fantastic stuff. So that would be another person to talk to

**Interviewer** 37:36

We have a meeting with [name] next week.

**Participant 132** 37:39

Oh, you already do. Okay. Well, you and also- one thing I didn't- I'm going to throw it out there now. But we can come back to it later. But I don't want to forget. Speaking of [name]. So one of the grants that she is affiliated with, we have a couple through Michigan State. And then one through Hurley Children's Center, which is the prescriptions for health program. Which is- was the first one I think in the country that's ever been done. I know they're doing more now. But she, [name] also has- Hurley was the initial agency that we did that with. And then she was doing some type of research with Hurley through her PhD. And then she ended up at Michigan State, but they have, you know, sort of the same type of prescriptions program. But for some reason Michigan State runs it. I'm not exactly sure the funding thing with that, but

**Interviewer** 38:36

Yeah — yeah. And the project. I've snuck my way onto the- this research project that is between MSU and the community foundation. I've just-

**Participant 132** 38:53

Oh, okay.

**Interviewer** 38:54

-sneaked in. I'm the only person I think attached to U of M

**Participant 132** 38:59

Okay.

**Interviewer 2** 39:02

Yeah, and I actually know quite a few other folks at Michigan State. I'm been a partner with the university since 2012, 2013.

**Participant 132** 39:12

Okay. Yeah, they've been real- Well, we've also been- Michigan State, MSU Extension was how- was some of the first groups that did any nutritional programming for our farmers market. Even at our old market site, in our basement, which was horrible. They came in when and they did some really great outreach programs for nutrition education there. So we've kind of stayed with them. And that has sort of morphed into what it is now.

**Interviewer** 39:42

Yeah, I want to maybe connect this back. Also something that you talked about earlier. I wrote down to come back to it- was that the the Flint water crisis really sparked a lot of funding that enabled sort of this this youth engagement.

**Participant 132** 40:02

Yeah. I mean, yeah, the water crisis, of course, was horrible. And it's, people are still feeling the effects of it. But two things. We moved right at the beginning of it from our old site. Which thank goodness we did, because we moved into a facility that is newer, has not the same piping that you have to worry about. All that kind of stuff. So our market was never really in peril. But our old farmers market, had we not moved. We would have- that thing would have been shut down. It was, the infrastructure for plumbing was absolutely horrible there. So we moved right-right, as things were just unfolding with that. So I'm very thankful that we were able to- was, I don't even know, I can't even imagine what-what would have happened if we weren't moving.

**Participant 132** 40:50

So, but then for us- for us, um, we really, really benefited from a lot of that program. Because the market is here, it's right in the middle where everybody recognizes it. So it was really- Double up food bucks changed some of their guidelines to make it more helpful, accessible, economically viable, for people in Flint. We also got, I mentioned the basketball players Association. The prescriptions for health was something that was kind of on our radar already, but because of the water crisis, and they could confirm this, but if I remember correctly- Like when we started out, it was $5. They got a $5 gift certificate when they had a well baby or well child does it. Then it went to 10 when the water crisis started. And then now it's 15. So they've got outside funding, and I believe a lot of that came from the fact that Flint was in a crisis and they recognized like, we really need to try to do this.

**Participant 132** 41:59

We also became a- with through a partnership with MSU Extension, and I'm trying to even think- I feel like probably maybe Genesee County Health Department was involved with it with their nutrition. But the Crim-Crim Festival of Races, the Crim Foundation, they-they received some funding to do nutrition outreach. So with all of those different entities, we did cooking demonstrations every market day. That had for-for quite a- I'd say, I'd say the better part of the year where we were like really in the thick of the water crisis after we opened. And the recipes that people were making and the tips people were giving, they were related back to trying to lessen the effects of lead on our community.

**Participant 132** 42:56

So we were able to provide a resource for that information but also at the same time it also brought people into our market to learn about it. And you know, so it was an interesting opportunity I guess- which is- sounds weird because you know, it's a horrible thing but sometimes good things come out of bad things. I think that this was definitely a situation for that. And we tried to be involved at-at in whatever way we could with that, while also being conscious that our establishment uses water. And especially the beginning, and it's kind of like [inaudible]. Like nobody knew what was it the water? was it the pipes? was it the this, that.

**Participant 132** 43:44

So we had to be very judicious in the beginning with how much we associated or how much we did with it because there was no- We didn't have any problems here. But if a TV camera comes down here and they start talking about it. People only half listening and half watching and they see Flint farmers market and then the tagline underneath it says something about the water crisis. They're not reading that we're doing a fundraiser for the water crisis or we're providing immunizations during the water- whatever, whatever. They just see "Oh, I saw the farmers market, Oh they have bad water at the farmers market don't go there." So we had to really be very careful with the different things that we engaged in.

**Participant 132** 44:28

And I think- you know, It worked out well. But we're just being mindful that: my gosh, if someone sees it and they tell somebody these are- these are- for inside in particular. These are 45 to 50 little mom and pop businesses. And if if for some reason an incorrect statement is made, that the water isn't good here. And that can you know, that can shut someone down and they may not be able to come back from it. So we tried to be stewards where we could but also being careful to make sure that we were able to come out of it, you know, with everybody intact. Which we did. And I think we were able to offer a lot of opportunities, again with our different program partners by them really ramping up what was available for people.

**Interviewer** 45:20

Yeah

**Participant 132** 45:24

I hope I answered the question

**Interviewer** 45:27

You did. Yeah. And I hope I mapped it well. I do- maybe we can talk about some of these, decide some of these connection strengths really quick. I know we've shifted into sort of talking about more external stuff but I just want to make sure we get these. Do you have any thoughts about what might be the different connection strengths between, you know, where people are getting food. So are people getting their food more from grocery stores in Flint and convenience stores, from farmers markets, about the same? What is your sense of these?

**Participant 132** 45:59

I kind of think it's- I don't know I kind of feel like it's a mixture. I think people are always trying to figure out how to make their money go farther. It's been really interesting with double up food bucks in particular as an educational piece. Because when it first started, and we're at not for the water crisis, this would still be the case. It was- and it is the case everywhere except for here. You can only spend double up food bucks on Michigan grown produce. That flipped when when the water crisis hit, and they said all produce. Because so much of it was citrus based, which isn't grown in Michigan. And if there is some it's certainly not all year. So they switched that, and that made a huge difference.

**Participant 132** 46:44

But prior to that it was very interesting. Our customers that were bridge card customers really-really started to educate themselves and learn, which was which was how some of like MSU nutrition programs and stuff- How do you utilize this opportunity that you're being given to basically double what you could spend on produce? But you gotta- you know you-you're-you're not getting, you know, corn in May. Because it's not growing in Michigan. But you can get some asparagus and some rhubarb and-and maybe some sweet peas and some strawberries. So it's been a real learning process. And it's really interesting. And our old market was much smaller, so you can walk down on on the floor and hear a lot of conversations.

**Participant 132** 47:27

But it was a constant back and forth between our farmers and our produce sellers with our customers. Like what can I spend on my double up food bucks card. Well use it on this today, next week, I'll probably have some of this, you know. And so kind of learning that whole system was really interesting. And you- learning to be more resourceful for folks. And people starting to think about like canning, for example. We did a lot of workshops on that. And people starting to think about making jams and jellies and sauces and things like that where they save up their double up food bucks and then they come by a whole flat of strawberries to make jam and stuff. So those were kind of really neat offshoots of it.

**Participant 132** 48:11

So I think- I think for-for people that are-are-are really stressed in terms of finances i think i think it's probably a bit of both you know. Because there's some things and it's just not economical to get here at the farmers market. I mean it might be great stuff but it is just- it is- it is not cheap, you know. And so if you're really, have to be careful, you know. There are certain things that you can buy here and get great deals and I would say produce is one of them. But if you're- you know honestly you're looking for meat. I mean right now we have a fantastic butcher. I mean it is great stuff, but it is not cheap, you know. And so that really makes a difference for people. Because there's a bit of a buffer because here we encourage bridge card customers to shop and get meat, bread, dairy, all of the other poultry and stuff on their bridge card and then double it and get their produce for free. That's kind of how we've tried to teach people and encourage them to do. So even though the meat's a little more expensive, you're still getting your produce for free.

**Participant 132** 49:22

But again, it's all good stuff. But if you're if you're really gonna watch it, it's probably, you know, not the way you're gonna do it. So the rest of our customer base, I think too is- I think everybody's kind of mixed. You know, we when we moved into this we had a general store in the market because we thought: Alright, listen, if we can get like toilet paper, and tissues, and you know paper plates and things that people buy in bulk at Sam's or Walmart or somewhere. If they had an opportunity to get that stuff while they're here, would they do more of their shopping here? And it- they didn't. It didn't- They still, you know. And then again, everybody's looking for the best deal. So I think they're still splitting their time.

**Interviewer** 50:05

Yeah.

**Participant 132** 50:05

But I think they're aware, and especially aware, around produce, or for special events or celebrations. Like they really want to come down here and get the special kind of cheese, or the special kind of meat, or the special kind of bread, you know. Or seasonally with the farmers, the different fruits is, in particular, that type of stuff.

**Interviewer** 50:29

Yeah. So I live in Ann Arbor, and I live right by the Ann Arbor farmers market.

**Interviewer** 50:35

And the thing is that the farmers market is also right by the local Co-Op, so you can like go get awesome local produce and stuff like that, and then like, pop over and get like- yeah, like paper towels

**Participant 132** 50:35

Oh, yeah

**Participant 132** 50:48

Right, like that you need. Yeah, yeah. We don't really- In Flint there- We, downtown here, you know, in this area- Which, one thing that's really interesting about it, um, and, and hopefully someone else has mentioned this, but- So the market is owned by uptown reinvestment Corporation, which is a- which is a- which is a is an investing type of organization. And they have built back just a crazy amount of things in downtown and are looking, you know. I mean, I think they're, eventually they're going to spread out further.

**Participant 132** 51:22

But um, one of the things that that they have really made a priority is housing downtown. So like, 10 years ago, nobody lived downtown. And now we have, like, oh my gosh, for at least four really nice. And they're mixed income housing developments, apartments and condos and stuff. And they're fantastic. And, and it's really working out great. And there's so many more people that are actually living and working downtown. Because everybody else was just working. And at five o'clock, you leave and pshh ghost towns. Nobody's here.

**Participant 132** 51:57

But now there's all- more restaurants. And on the weekend, the farmers market and the cultural center, and people are living down here. So we're trying to figure you know out too- like if someone's living downtown, like if we have this little hardware store inside that has some of those products, will they still do that? But like I said, I still think there's- [laughter]. The other thing you mentioned earlier, which was earlier, which wasn't really to do with this, but it was your example. But it made me think of it, because Flint is like vehicle city. Like everybody drives their car. And so that also is, you know- In other cities, people don't have cars. So if there was a hardware store in the farmers market, they might go ahead and just get their paper products in there. Because otherwise they have to, you know, get on the bus, take the bus and carry it on the bus, and do all that, you know. But here like everybody, if you're barely able, you have a vehicle. Like it's so hard to- and we have a really good public transportation system. And we have tried so many initiatives to get people. We even have this really cool trolley to get people to park somewhere else, you know, to save the parking issues and some like- People just are, it's-it's Flint. Like everybody wants to drive their car.

**Interviewer** 53:09

Yeah

**Participant 132** 53:09

And their own car, and park it like, right in front. And not walk. But we're working on that.

**Interviewer** 53:21

Great. Cool, and-

**Participant 132** 53:23

Sorry I got a bit off on that.

**Interviewer** 53:26

No, this- That's all great information. Um, I just want to make sure I'm respecting your time. Because we have about half an hour left, and get through all the questions. So the last thing we could potentially talk about is if you have any perception of how much people are using supplemental nutrition programs in convenience stores or grocery stores. Or we can just skip that and move on to the next part.

**Participant 132** 53:51

Yeah, so I mean, I'll be really honest, like our- double up food is a huge part of our market, as is bridge card. And when double up food bucks decided to expand in a grocery store, I mean, I was nervous. I mean, I want to be you know, supportive. Because the important thing is, for a lot of people, that don't have a car, if it's in their neighborhood, that's where they need to get it. So that's the most important thing is getting food to people. That's better for them. But also from you know, from the economics part of it, it was a little bit nerve wracking. Like oh my gosh, what if they put double up food bucks like at Meijer now. Oh, my gosh, they- wish they didn't here. But there's a couple of small grocery stores that are located in the more outer parts of Flint.

**Participant 132** 54:37

So I think that, for us was-was- created some-some nervous feelings and especially with our farmers. Because originally like that program in particular was designed to only support Michigan agriculture. So it did two things. It helped people who needed food, get better food that was in season, and fresher and all that stuff. But it also helped the farmers because it was a huge, I mean huge boon to their bottom line. And so that was really nerve wracking when that kind of happened. But then I think you know, with anything you got to like, look at the greater good and step over your, your worry for your own little part of it and look at the bigger picture. So-so I don't really know. I'm- we're on the same system as those grocery stores. I'm not sure. I don't think it affected us when they went to the grocery stores. Like I don't think we lost. I think people just probably used it more. But I don't think they used it less here, I just think they use it more overall.

**Participant 132** 55:42

And we really, at one point had wanted to try to figure out partnership with the convenience stores and the corner stores. Just with some of our vendors. And even if they're resellers. Because even our resellers, they are very particular about what they're reselling. And they try to really get good suppliers. And-and even though they're not farmers, they're very, very thoughtful about what they're- who they're buying from and what they're buying for people.

**Participant 132** 56:10

And so trying to, you know, bridge that gap we-we did make some efforts years ago about that. But I think once again, and I don't know for sure, but that's probably something that's more in the Flint Fresh range of things to try to work with them on.

**Interviewer** 56:30

Yeah

**Participant 132** 56:31

So yeah, I don't. Yeah, it's- like I said, it's been a- it's been an interesting. But I don't think that because there's more local produce available in other places. I don't think it means less. The one thing that I that I will say that does impact it, definitely, is food pantries and free food. That I can speak to firsthand. We tried to do sort of a traveling farmers market, like a mobile market, probably seven or eight years ago. And we picked a couple of sites that were centrally located. And we got a satellite so we can accept bridge card and do double up food bucks and everything at those sites. And they just did not go. And we advertised them. But they everybody thought, well, this is great, this is great. Nobody came to shop. And what we realized was, um, that in that same neighborhood, like the next- either the day after or the day before, there was huge food giveaways. So when people are looking at this amount of dollars, and they're like, Okay, well, I mean, yeah, I'd like to do the farmers market thing. And I'd like to get that stuff, but I can get it for free. If I wait one more day, or if I go one day early.

**Participant 132** 57:45

And so that was kind of our takeaway from that whole thing was that was the issue. Snd also, in having a kind of recap conversation with Fair Food Network about a month ago. Because they were really curious, because they saw a decline in-in, in usage during COVID. And they were asking why. And that-that was across the board. It wasn't just here in Flint. And-and kind of what we talked about, and I think it's probably accurate, was that there were so many food giveaways. That people that would normally have used their double up food bucks were able to to get other food for free. And so I think that that impacted that. So that's the way that- we don't- that's where we see it. Is when-when it's being given away for free, then that's where- that's where it changes our supplemental programs.

**Participant 132** 58:49

I mean, the ultimate goal is for it to get to the people. So I don't know- it just extends the amount of time we can have money to spend when they do come back. So I mean, I don't think it's detrimental, but it does- that is definitely an impact. So people I think will- there's a certain, certain segment that's probably extra stress financially. That will choose to do that rather than use the drop off box.

**Interviewer** 59:14

Yeah, yeah, this is um. This has been something we've heard in a couple of these different conversations with folks. It's that there's this- this-this tension between the necessity of supporting very food insecure folks, and, you know, having a sort of self sufficient retail sector in Flint. There's a conflict that's happening.

**Participant 132** 59:38

Ours is diverse enough- I think our market is. That it's just- there's everybody here. There's all ages, there's all socio economic backgrounds and you know. So-so we have enough of your people that are definitely not financially stressed that are spending money in here all the time. So that's a luxury that we have. Where we're located, and all the other outreach and being a community site, and being a place, you know, where, where people come and rent it- rent the market for weddings and big parties and all that kind of stuff. So I think that's why we probably end up okay on that, you know, situ-situation.

**Interviewer** 1:00:18

Yeah

**Participant 132** 1:00:21

Which is nice, because it kind of allows us to be able to do more, on the other end of things.

**Interviewer** 1:00:29

Awesome. So, the next thing we're going to do is- I've already pulled in several of them, but I would like to go through pretty quickly some of these potential values that you might want to talk about more or add to your map. So I'm going to share. This is also the document that I sent you. Um, so we have seven food system values is what we're calling them. But this is different things that came out from- So both the concepts and the definitions came out of conversations and focus groups with Flint community members. So basically, because you know, what folks want from the food system.

**Participant 132** 1:01:06

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:01:07

Different things that would-would serve them well. So I'm going to run through the definitions fairly quickly. I've already added I believe, nutritious foods, affordability, education, partnerships. Um, so basically, the purpose of this is to sort of introduce the definition, but also think about which ones you might want to talk about more, or if there any-

**Participant 132** 1:01:27

Yeah, there's- Yeah, I'd say- Two and three I haven't gotten to yet, but I've got some good- good stuff.

**Interviewer** 1:01:34

Yeah. So education, which we talked about, we're defining this as sort of, you know, opportunities to learn some skills. We talked about, you know, cooking, gardening, nutrition, canning, stuff like that. Community empowerment. This is sort of a couple different dimensions of community empowerment. So local economic development, fostering a sense of community, prioritizing residents' cultural values. A bunch of different ways people can be empowered. Quality of life is respected. This is that people 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. Those sort of- a lot of things we were hearing that people want.

**Participant 132** 1:02:16

Yeah, I want- I would like to share some more about that.

**Interviewer** 1:02:19

Yeah, let's do it. And partnerships. There's a lot of things here sort of, you know, promoting creativity, problem solving, trust, you know, leadership support, collaboration, communication, all these things. And nutritious foods. So folks want more food options that are high nutritional content. Additive- less additives and preservatives, coming in appropriate portions. This is also something that's already on the map. Affordability. Also, I already added it. So food price, that is sort of accessible to folks. Availability is sort of that people want the type, quality and amount of food required for community members to feed their families, themselves should be present. Yeah, so I guess I can go ahead and add community empowerment and quality of life is respected if you want to talk about those four?

**Participant 132** 1:03:10

Yeah, so I was- yeah, this is- this has to do- I mean, my experience of it, um, more exposure, when we started the double up food bucks program, which is probably- I think, I think we've been at it, I think, at least 10 years. But one thing that was-was important. And this is- this was started by [name]. And I mentioned earlier about them, about the vendors having their own bridge card machines, and it being electronic and no tokens. And I think that was really important for both [name] and I.

**Participant 132** 1:03:41

When-when double up food bucks and Fair Food Network came and approached us. And he might have told you this too, you know, they- their system was a good system in terms of I guess, efficient, but for smaller market. So it wouldn't have been efficient for us. But just the, the system worked, you know, and it was easy for people to understand. But they wanted us to use tokens and and [name] was like, "No." And I was like, "Alright, I'm gonna do whatever he says." And- but it was a hard no, because, you know, that seems backwards from where we were going. We already have individuals- every person that takes bridge card has their own bridge card machine. And there is a- and it's electronic. There's no tokens in it. So they had to really work around us to create a electronic system.

**Participant 132** 1:04:32

One of the reasons that it was really important for [name] and I personally, and this comes from both of our backgrounds, of working with families that have been disadvantaged, is like- you're always at the end of the line for everything. And it feels like your life is standing in line waiting for something. And so, we at the farmers market, we don't- we don't want to be that place. We want to be the place where everybody comes, and everybody can get food. And you don't have to stand in a longer line just because of your personal situation. And so it was really important to us to do the electronic thing. Because it it leveled the playing field- in terms of: there was no "Oh, you know, I gotta wait behind this person, they gotta count out all these tokens and stuff."

**Participant 132** 1:05:18

And you know, it was a situation where you had more of the people that were in line behind the person using bridge card or double up food bucks. So it's like "what-what's that you got? Like what's that card you're using? Like- how come- How-How are you getting those free strawberries? Or what's going on here?" You know, "how do I get one of those?" And it was more- it just basically took away the stigma. And it made everybody kind of a level playing field. So you just go out there, you get your thing. You don't have to feel bad or feel like, you know, someone's like, "Oh, I gotta wait for this person to do this."

**Participant 132** 1:05:48

And it- And I just, I think that was really important. And-and that I think was reflected in the attitude of our customers that we're utilizing that. And I know for a fact that stories were shared, when people signed up for this, of how much they appreciated, I think the dignity of it. In that we really try to make it a positive experience where they look forward to like- Oh, okay, instead of thinking, being a burden, they can think of it like, "Oh, yeah, that's right, I got $62 on my double up food bucks card in strawberry season." So that's cool. Like, let's take the kids down there and get some- let's figure out what we're gonna do with the strawberries, and get some other stuff, and have a hotdog while we're there, or whatever. You know, like it, I think, turned it into a lot more enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

**Participant 132** 1:05:52

And so even though it was some, some hurdles to get over, just in terms of technology, right. At the time, like, Wi Fi issues, like, you know, there was- I-I, if I would have had a fitbit, I would have gotten a ridiculous amount of steps from running downstairs. Because the vendors were, you know, "this machine, my machine isn't working. My machine isn't working. It's not connected the Wi Fi." You know, how do do this? And so, there was a lot of patience required on the part of everyone. But I think in the end, it was so, so important to do that. And I that's one of the things I think [name] would say too. Like, he's really proud of that. And I'm really proud of that. And we're always sort of like the Flint- Flint was always in its own, you know, little category of bridge card or double up food bucks because we did it differently. But I wouldn't change it at all. I mean, I really think that it was- it was really the right way to do it. And- and not that anybody else's is wrong. But for us, it was important. It was important to [name] and I because like I said, it just- it felt like the right thing to do.

**Participant 132** 1:06:40

I just clicked the absolute worst button on accident that I-

**Participant 132** 1:07:08

Oh no, I saw your face tense up

**Interviewer** 1:07:46

Oops. It's a good thing we record these sessions, so I can go back and rebuild things later. Um, oops, my bad. Let's pretend all these connections are still here. And just keep talking. I was trying to shift things so it'd be a little bit more convenient. Okay, wow, my bad. Um, so I will after we stop talking, I will go and recreate some of these things. So for right now, I'm just going to connect, like these couple things, for the context of what we're talking about.

**Participant 132** 1:08:25

And I'm trying to think- The other part was the community empowerment.

**Interviewer** 1:08:30

Yes

**Participant 132** 1:08:30

I think, and I think that kind of goes along with all of that. And just again, like we have now, in this place where we are- We have a great- we have, which was important for why we moved. And one thing we always wanted was like community space. So we have a lot of rooms and spaces that people can, if it's a community thing, we don't charge them usually, but or privately people can, can utilize it. But it's been a great opportunity because now when somebody has a really great program that they want to roll out, or they need to pull a bunch of people together to brainstorm, you know, things that will help this entire picture. We have the space to be able to do it in a nice setting where people feel comfortable coming.

**Participant 132** 1:09:13

And so that's been kind of- that's been a really huge bonus of this space that we moved to. Was being not only like- It should- Farmers Market should be a place where it's the hub of it, but we actually physically have a space where it can be the hub of-of sort of kind of brainstorming, and putting people together and making connections. So we try to do that at all- at all times where we're-we're called upon to do so. We have nonprofit tables all the time. Matter of fact, the Crim I mentioned earlier- like they have a perpetual table- well not during COVID. But otherwise, where they give away um different utensils and recipes. And they utilize it to talk to people about nutrition and all that kind of stuff. But we offer a lot of different nonprofits, the opportunity like once a month to have a table. We have two nonprofit tables every day. And so they can- they can't sell anything, but they can, you know talk to people

**Participant 132** 1:09:14

So connecting that back to partnerships and stuff like that. Great. Are there any other- and all these things were still connected, but-

**Interviewer 2** 1:10:30

I did make a time note, kind of a little time stamp [Interviewer]. So I know where we were when that happened. So when we go back, script we can catch it.

**Interviewer** 1:10:40

I've never done that before. So awful.

**Participant 132** 1:10:43

Was I was talking about technology, right. When that happens it's a blessing and a curse, right?

**Interviewer** 1:10:49

Yeah, I there- man, there really should be like, a failsafe, you know. Where it's like, are you sure you want it?

**Participant 132** 1:10:58

Yeah, I know. You're like, Where's the undo button?

**Interviewer** 1:11:00

Yeah, usually, because- like some things I like, immediately hit Ctrl Z. And I'm like, wait, Ctrl Z totally doesn't do anything.

**Participant 132** 1:11:06

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:11:07

Oops. Okay, cool. I think- I feel like I've gotten most of them. And there's probably some little details that is not quite correct yet. But I will- I will recreate it based on what we already talked to you about. Um, but are there any other connections or changes you would like to make? And-

**Participant 132** 1:11:33

I don't think so. I think- I mean, I think for what you're looking for, I think um- And [name] probably gave you more of the history. I mean, it's been- I mean, he's been in on this since the beginning. We've done you know, the project for public spaces, you know, I don't know 15 years ago. Came to Flint, and we started talking about Flint being a food desert. And, you know, we've- over the years- I mean, I kind of been talking about right now more than I am back then. And I think [name] probably had some good perspective for back then. But I mean, is- The farmers market, and this is- this is due to, I think, to [name]'s leadership in that- in his- his own, just- It was really important. He really- he took the farmers market from just being a place to go and have fun to being a place that is really the center, you know- one of the centerpieces of the food movement in Flint and Genesee County.

**Participant 132** 1:12:28

So that- And um I tagged along. It was really- that I kind of took it further. But um, but yeah, I mean- there's been a lot of different groups. I mean, Edible Flint- over the years, you know. There's- a lot of people had really good intentions. [Name] and I are of the like, "Okay, let's hold hands and jump off the roof." Like we don't,-we're not really like asking- We're not asking a lot of people, "Do you think we should do it?" We're just like, "Okay, let's look at this. If this is gonna help, then, okay, let's do it." And we do. And so, it's allowed us to create these new partnerships, and, and where you see, you know- We've got all these different food assistance programs that are here. And they're really kind of, you know- Honestly, they're sort of second nature here. I mean, I say, like, I'm looking down in the market. But I mean, it's- when people say, 'Well, can we add one more?" It's like, "Sure, it's not a big deal." You know, we're-we're built for it, and we're ready to do it and ready to help however we can.

**Participant 132** 1:13:27

So um I think I'm- you know, that's something that is-is really, really great. And some people you know, in our community, they just think of the farmers market as a place where you can get really great doughnuts and croissants and fancy cheese. And, you know, you can come to our awesome bar on the second floor and hang out, you know, and-and do those kinds of things. I mean, a lot of people don't realize all of this that goes into it with the programs and stuff. But I think it goes back to kind of your first question, like, how is my role, like, where is it? I really do think it's like, it's like, 50/50. It's like 50% providing a great space in our community for people to come and have a great time and enjoy community together. And 50% being that connector to people to get healthier food and eat better and-and help their families. So I guess that's my last note. I don't know-

**Interviewer** 1:14:23

Um, yeah, so the two things, I think that we're going to try to fit into this last last 10 minutes of your time. The first is you know, we're not only interested in, you know, building sort of this system understanding, but also part of our project is to identify and explore different leverage points. So I've already written down something you talked about, of like growing relationships between local producers and local restaurants. Are there anything-anything else, you know, big or small, that you would consider to be- to be leverage points: changes that you can make to the food system to improve it. I know it's kind of a big open ended question.

**Participant 132** 1:15:03

Yeah, well no, but I think it kind of goes back to- and I- I'm not as well versed in, you know, I don't come from a nutrition background. Especially my masters, thank you [inaudible]. But that- um, but observationally I mean, I really- Like I said, I got super excited about that wash and pack thing. Bcause my whole thing was like: Alright, I know, I know. These farmers tell me every year, especially our root crop. Farmers are like: stuff goes to waste in the fields every year. Like it just, they-they-they can't even harvest it. There's- if we have a good year, there's so much that they can't even bring it in.

**Participant 132** 1:15:39

And for them to be able to take- I always use squash as my like example. But for them to be able to bring in pallets full of squash and have a space where they can maybe partner with an organization. Like, I'm gonna say Goodwill Industries, who has a group of individuals that are looking for opportunities for experience. Work things where they maybe come in and they peel all the squash you know. And then you get your chef collaborative or somebody to come in and take it to the next level. Where they're pureeing all the squash and they're seasoning it and they're doing all this stuff. And then you bring back your- maybe goodwill or someone else to come in. And that they package it, and then they freeze it. And then we have a whole freezer full of squash that-that school districts could take.

**Interviewer** 1:16:26

Yeah

**Participant 132** 1:16:27

And then make into your, you know, standard side vegetable. Or make it into soup. Or I don't know what in the world, other creative stuff they can come up with. But people- you know, that kind of stuff. Like I think they're- I still think there's more we can do. I mean i don't know if it's- I don't think it's necessarily we as the farmers market, but I just think as a community- I think we can continue to, you know, grow without being, you know, a pun but grow that part of it.

**Participant 132** 1:16:56

We have been really struggling with farmers in our area, like getting them to come to the farmers market. That's a whole nother conversation. But I'll-I'll put it succinctly: Farmers markets have have grown substantially in the last 10 years. But far- but nobody grew any farmers. So we've got these farmers markets and there's only a certain amount of farmers. And our farmers just aren't- my own experience here. They're getting older, they're retiring. It is hard work. People don't want to work that hard. Their family members are like- you know now they're going to college and they're getting all their degrees and they're going into other fields. And they don't want to take over the family farm. And so here becomes grandma and grandpa are- you know want to enjoy the rest of their life. And they're tired of farming and there's no one to take it over. And so we're losing from like just attrition of farmers.

**Interviewer** 1:17:46

Yeah

**Participant 132** 1:17:46

You know, and so that's a- that's bigger than us. And I think that the-the Michigan Farmers Market Association is aware of that. Because that's kind of what we said, because I was like "is this everybody or is it just us?" She goes, and that was her words- She's like "no, we grew farmers markets and we never grew any farmers." And so that's kind of a thing that I think leverage wise- Like, I don't know, I mean, it's hard. I don't want to be a farmer. I watch what these folks go through. I mean it is so physically- I mean it's hard work. And so I think- I don't know. You know, I don't know what the answer is on that.

**Participant 132** 1:18:23

I know our-our-our representatives like Senator Stabenow, in particular. She is huge on the agriculture- I mean they're always reaching out. And-and [inaduible]'s office too. Like "what can we do? Like what what can we do to help you guys more." And you know, we're all the time saying, like you got to help the farmers, you know. We've got to- I don't know- I don't know if it's an incentive, I don't know. It's just hard work. Everybody thinks is a great idea, that's why we have a lot of like- I noticed like a ton of people, and this is every year, younger people that "Okay I'm going to get into farming it's really great. I'm going to work with my hands and work with earth and all this stuff." And then they come one time, like, "Oh, this is hard." Like I didn't make that much money, and I can't sell it for a whole bunch of money- my lettuce because there's other people that are selling it for less. And no one's gonna buy my $8 head of lettuce. No they're not, you know. So it's that whole education. So people really- I don't know, like if they don't understand what they're getting into. But it just doesn't last. Like the burnout is like boom. I mean, our-our-our grandparents and great grandparents that did this for a living like, holy man. I mean, it is- it is hard work. Really, really. I think that's a leverage point where- thinking on those other connections, we got to get the- we've got to get the low- the food, made- grown, you know, here.

**Interviewer 2** 1:19:45

Yeah, thank you for lifting that up. Just as a quick insertion. Uh the Department of Agriculture is establishing an advisory council for urban ag. So to get more insights from farmers and other folks to see how they can impact urban ag. So I'm aware of that's happening now. They're-

**Participant 132** 1:20:10

Yeah

**Interviewer 2** 1:20:11

They just closed out the application process Friday. And they're looking for, like, 12-12 positions that they're looking to host. So that's a really good-

**Participant 132** 1:20:22

Yeah, I think people are finally- I think it's finally- Everybody's like, well, what, why are we struggling? And, you know, from a customer standpoint, like from the outside looking in, they're like, why don't you more farmers? Everybody's like, how come you don't have any more farmers? And they assume that it's something that the market's doing wrong? And it's like, we- listen, I'm handholding every spring, every spring. And I think I have six new farmers. If I can get them here, you know. They may last once or twice, and it's just, it's just really hard. So I'm glad- I was really glad. And MFMA is a great resource: Michigan Farmers Market Association. [Name] there, she was just like, yeah, it's not you. It's everywhere. It's everybody.

**Interviewer** 1:20:59

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 1:21:01

Can I jump in for just another quick second? I heard two things that you mentioned. You talked a bit about the Food Rescue. So when foods come in, and the opportunity to move them, you know, to other places was one, something I heard you talk about. And then also whether it's being moved to agencies, or to people. And then you also mentioned the diversion of food to the food hub for resale? Yeah, I heard you talk about that next step. Like when it doesn't get all used up at the market?

**Participant 132** 1:21:40

Yep.

**Interviewer 2** 1:21:40

To rescue it and get it out to shelters. I think you said. And then also the other was a pathway to the food hub for it to be resold.

**Participant 132** 1:21:50

Right.

**Interviewer 2** 1:21:50

So you know, I've heard I heard those.

**Participant 132** 1:21:54

Yeah. And we're trying to work more on it. And [name], well, it was- he's the one that's really been kind of working with the food hub on this. So that. And I'd like to see us do more of that, because there is a lot of waste. I mean we do composting. And then like I said, some of our vendors, and they may be like more of our non-produce, people are really good about having a relationship with the different missions. Where they have a person and they'll just text them and say "I got stuff today, Come and get it." You know, we had- we did clothes on Paczki day because of the weather. And the- it's they're actually in Hamtramck. But it didn't help the Flint area necessarily. But in Hamtramck, but they donated all of the Paczkis that they had made, which was like 450, Paczkis, to the local mission.

**Participant 132** 1:22:50

And that was located in Hamtramck for that day. So some of our people are really connected. And they really make that- they really think about that. Like "I don't want this to go to waste and they have the connections." I think, personally I need- I need to do better. And we need, as a market, to do better with making sure that everybody has that connection. But then with the basic just produce. Like the yield is high, and the customers are, you know, normal. But they've had a better- farmers had a better yield than connecting them with the Flint fresh food hub. You know, they can bring in, you know, a whole pallet of squash. And they know that they're gonna sell X amount here, you know. And then the rest of it, it can immediately go there. So it's more firsthand produce, but it's kind of like convenience. They bring it here and then it can go there and it helps up.

**Participant 132** 1:23:38

So it's kind of like a nice circle of they- Because they talked about picking it up at the end of the day, which they also are willing to do. But they also talked about just planning ahead and kind of coordinating that. Like okay, "so you think you're going to need-" You know, I don't know "a bushel of tomatoes, of a certain type for the food hub." Well I've got three of them. I'll bring two to sell and I'll bring a third one. Instead of selling it at my farm stand or whatever, I'll bring with me and Flint Fresh, they'll buy it from me. And then I'm going home with no tomatoes and plenty of money in my pocket.

**Interviewer 2** 1:24:13

Yeah. Thanks for clarifying that. Thank you. That was great.

**Interviewer** 1:24:19

It is 11. So I want to respect your time. If you need-

**Participant 132** 1:24:23

I appreciate that. My son is on um- he's a presenter on a national thing. It's pretty cool. So

**Interviewer** 1:24:31

Yeah, so um, I might follow up with an email to you. If there- We have one question I want to give you an opportunity to add anything about how you've seen the impact of COVID on anything else in this conversation. We also have a quick survey. But i'll send that information in an email to you. And other than that, final reminders, everything we just talked about is confidential. If you have any questions you can definitely follow up with me at email address. Other than that, thank you so much.

[COVID SECTION]

**Interviewer** 1:32:10

No, it's it's awesome.

**Interviewer 2** 1:32:11

That's good. That's good.

**Interviewer** 1:32:15

Uh- absolute last thing. Um, is there anything else you would like to add to this conversation around food in Flint that we-we haven't talked about already?

**Participant 132** 1:32:23

No, not really. I mean, I think I hopefully I mentioned a few things that I think we we can work on as a farmers market and what we need- what we could do more of as a community. But again, it's some of that a lot. Some of that goes outside of me and [inaudible] those. But yeah, I think- I think I've gotten everything in.

[OUTRO]