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

**Interviewer** 00:18

Okay, awesome. Um, yeah, so the first thing we're going to talk about is kind of deciding some of these connection strings of all of these sort of relationships that have question marks right now. So for context, if we focus on the ones that sort of go outward for me, so retail, what these really mean are like, when people purchase food in Flint, how much are they getting their food from local restaurants versus chain restaurants? Are they you know, how much are they going to grocery stores? Or should they go into convenience stores? How much are they going to farmers markets? So what would be maybe your sense of the connection strains of these relationships, where people getting or not getting food influence?

**Participant 134** 04:55

So like, if I were to imagine like the average person what the percent breakdown would be? Interesting. I don't want to pick the wrong numbers, or something that's way off base. And I'm trying to imagine, because yeah, I mean, I haven't done any work looking at the breakdown of someone's weekly plate, I would think that maybe I'll start from the bottom up or something. You know, farmers markets would be something like two or 3%. Just given, you know, it's still part of the alternative food system and not everybody goes there. And when they go there, they might, you know, get lunch and a head of broccoli, and you know, but they're not getting everything there. And they're not going there all the time.

**Participant 134** 06:04

So I think that's probably the smallest. I'd say local restaurants aare the next in line, let us put these down too- I don't know, seven or 8%. Just because there aren't a ton of local restaurants. So let's just say [inaudible] and then I'm just making sure I'm counting up. Okay, so if I assume like 2% of farmers markets, 8% local restaurants. Then there's 90% leftover, and I feel like grocery stores are still probably the place people get most of their food, regardless of whether that's, you know, relatively healthier or unhealthy. So I'd say like, probably 40% from there.

**Participant 134** 07:12

And then maybe I'd put like convenience stores and chain restaurants at like, a quarter each. Or maybe, maybe put both of those are 20%, for grocery stores and 50%. I mean, I think by and large people are still getting there. The majority, even if it's just a slight majority, from grocery stores, you know, like there's not a lot but people are just people just go to Walmart, like they just drive a few miles, or they go to the smaller stores in town. There still are those stores. So.

**Participant 134** 07:47

But yeah, I mean, I feel like there would be quite a bit of variation. Where I mean, like, and I'm not a conventional Flint person. But you know, like, most of my shopping is at the grocery store, the farmers market and local restaurants, like I don't set foot in convenience stores. I just never had, like, my dad used to stop and get some smokes. and we would get some snacks when I was a kid. And I was always like, why are we stopping at a convenience store? We can get everything we need at Meijer or whatever. But yeah, so I mean, I imagine there probably is quite a bit of variation. You know, because we know there are people that mostly shop at convenience stores, but I wouldn't say that'd be like the average person.

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

**Participant 134** 08:59

Yeah. I'm trying to think within- yeah, so should I try to think of it as like, mean, I guess I'm thinking for assigning scores, like, kinda like what areas are over or under represented by use of supplemental? So I feel like it could be missing something, but I don't think there's- you can use supplemental benefits to go to restaurants, can you? Okay, so I can just throw those out. I feel like I don't know. And this is just an assumption based on how much these are marketed, but I feel like there'd be a slightly larger share used in convenience stores, because there's like tons of advertising on front of them and I can see, you know, people being busy and the whole point of convenience stores, you stopped by them, and you get milk and all that. So I would say like, I don't know, maybe it's still just 50% grocery stores, 40% convenience stores, 10% farmers markets, like a little bit more, relatively speaking from the farmers market, because they still, that, you know, they have a lot of that programming too. Maybe make it 10, 30, 60, I feel like there's still a higher proportion at grocery stores, because people are still going there for-

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

**Participant 134** 13:32

Yeah, I think and this could just be in my own brain given the evolution of my work. But the ones that stand out to me as important insofar as they're malleable or a lever for change are like community empowerment, partnerships, and then quality of life in that order. And do you want me to just like, go from there? Did you have questions?

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

**Participant 134** 14:06

Okay, cool. I guess while you're putting those in, I can just kind of annotate the like, why I'm thinking that, broadly is like when I think of I mean, I'm thinking and thinking about stuff and a lot of different directions. But in terms of like when we think of how to fix places. You know, the worst it's like, it's just outright like condescending the way that researchers or practitioners can sometimes just like forest ideas like Oh, you don't know how to cook healthy food. So let me show you. And admittedly I'm not a great cook, my partner is a much better cook and so I eat very healthy because Her cooking. Otherwise I just eat raw vegetables and apples and peanut butter sandwiches and stuff.

**Participant 134** 15:06

But, and yet, like it's really not that hard to eat healthy, like there's these other structural factors that are ultimately, you know, driving unhealthy behaviors that, you know, underemployment, lack of- I mean, yeah, lack of availability, but like, the lack of availability and affordability doesn't just get fixed with, like a retail side solution. So that's why I'm drawn to these other ones, because it's things like Flint Fresh, and the farmers market and edible Flint and community organizations that can kind of just, you know, build local resources. So people beyond the fact that they can- sure maybe they can go to the grocery store, and they can't afford everything super well, they can just get more aware of the food system or creative and what they can afford, you know, like, like you say, because some of those other things just aren't going to change as easily. Or at least I guess, no, I'm thinking of it. And so with community empowerment, for example, with respect to the local economic development piece, and I've looked at some of the Flint Fresh data that Mati is playing with now.

**Participant 134** 16:31

And their deliveries exploded at the start of COVID. But they're still a lot higher than they were before. So like, the word is getting out more. The deliveries are also really heavily concentrated in the college cultural neighborhood, which is, you know, more professionals, you know, social workers, professors, people that work for the foundations. So it's not like an average cross section of the city of Flint. But at the same time, the more it grows, the more the farmers market grows and succeeds. The more there's an opportunity for local wealth creation instead of extraction. And like, ever since I learned about, you know, Walmart's business model, like probably at the end of undergrad years ago, now. It just drives me crazy, because it's the complete antithesis of local economic development, the money just disappears, and it goes into The Waltons pockets, and none of us ever see it again, because they don't pay taxes. And so, encourage, you know, these local endeavors, and yeah, you're supporting other people who then spend that money locally. And honestly, it's also kind of like the, you know, I always appreciated the model, and they're still working on it, but of the North Flint food market, that Reggie Flynn is working on. Because it acknowledges that traditional food retail is not just going to come into our neighborhood. But if we band together and agree, we're going to shop here, we're going to support this place, you can do a lot more than if you're just all kind of going out on your own.

**Participant 134** 18:25

Which I mean, I think that has a natural connection to partnerships. They're being creative about the solution in the food system, by saying, Let's leverage everybody we know from church, everybody know, we know from our partner churches, and, you know, churches that our sisters and cousins and friends go to and like kind of expanding the social networks. I know, they started, like with Foss Avenue folks. And then, you know, grew from there and grew into the neighborhood. And what I understand of like locally developed grocery stores. And I haven't read as much about it in the last five years or so just because my research is in a lot of different directions. But what I understood of it is like Philly has a fairly good model for this for, you know, building this local capacity, getting people to buy into the idea of a co-op or a locally owned grocery store. And it can become a hub. I mean, that's the whole point of what local economies are like, then you're all recirculating the money that you make and grow in your community and spending in your community.

**Interviewer** 19:40

Yeah, I guess, um, I don't want to, like directly too much of it is not something you're interested in talking about. So just talk about that. Let me know. But I would be interested in maybe, you know, we talked about sort of the benefits of like what the nomic developments are like vocal local retail and stuff like that. What do you see as some of the barriers? Or like, what are the processes, what is contributing to that not happening in Flint right now?

**Participant 134** 20:13

I mean, I would think momentum, the whole global economy is centered on big box stores, and, you know, driving down prices and wages haven't kept pace, so people shop at these big box stores, because that's where they can afford. And local stores sometimes have higher- frequently have higher prices. And, and it's like, you need enough people to jump on board all at once to break the cycle. And I'm trying to think of some kind of analogy, you know, it'd be like, you have to get 1000 people to jump on a seesaw all at once, or else, it's not going to move or something. Because if you all just-if five of you get on it at a time, it's not going to budge, but you know, you need sufficient shift in demand in order to do that. Because I mean, technically, it would be crazy to see this kind of example.

**Participant 134** 21:03

But if you could get an entire city to band together and not shop at chain stores, you could just completely reinvent your city. Like it would be hugely. I mean, it would be hugely upsetting to the conventional system, the food system, the economic system more generally. You know, especially if you have some kind of your own wealth creation, I mean, that kind of necessitates that, right. If you're just a service economy based community, you're not selling widgets, then there's no wealth coming into your community. Which, you know, that's that's the state Flint has wound up in because we don't make widgets, cars anymore. And it's largely service based. And so we just follow the trend of our current economy, our current economic system, which is just, you know, wealth accruing to the top. And it's reinforcing. I mean, this is slightly off topic, but like the recovery plan passed this week, I've been listening to different podcasts about it. And everybody's really optimistic about it, because it actually puts money in the hands of humans, and not huge corporations and billionaires.

**Participant 134** 22:23

And so it can actually have a really generative effect, especially like the child tax credit that's coming, like, could bring millions of kids out of poverty, just with this little nudge. And we literally could have just done it at any point in the last 14 years, and we didn't. So those huge levers, you know, can tilt the balance back, but for one city, to fight off an entire economic model that's been popularized, and people have been kind of manipulated into believing it works if you work hard enough. It just doesn't work. People, not everybody is built to be a revolutionary, nor do they have the time or can they risk starvation, you know, just abandoning your current way of procuring food and heating your home and raising your kids. And you can't upset the balance too much. People don't have wiggle room to start playing around with oh, yeah, I'll invest 400 bucks in a co-op.

**Participant 134** 23:26

And that'll open in four years that I'll then shop at, and the prices will be 25% higher. If everybody did it, it would be doable.

**Interviewer 2** 23:40

Critical Mass.

**Participant 134** 23:41

Yeah. And you know, it's funny because people get so bent out of shape about restaurants being closed and defying the governor's orders and calling her all kinds of names, fundamentally understanding local economics. And yet, they're still the same ones that are going to go shop at Walmart and Tractor Supply, or whatever the place is called, like the Cabela's and, you know, it's like, you don't understand that you're literally siphoning most of your money away in these other places, but you want to go eat and buy $3 breakfasts. Like that's not going to fix your local economy.

**Interviewer** 24:25

I just want to take a second and check in with how I've been sort of mapping these concepts to make sure that I'm capturing what you're saying. Are these connections sort of fair, these loops between randomly rewarded, but like that, like domination of big stores and companies and chain restaurants and grocery stores, that it's supported by national policy. And sort of what contributes to this feedback loop is the affordability. So it's such a big section that they're, you know, under costs and stuff whereas local retail doesn't necessarily have that affordability. And sort of the outcome is that it is more difficult for local retail, local economic development to find a place in communities. Are there any others? Would you first of all, is that, is that sort of accurate? Would you make any changes?

**Participant 134** 25:18

Yeah, no, I think and conceptualizing all of these simultaneously, I could be missing something staring at it. But I'm seeing a lot of what we've been talking about for sure.

**Interviewer** 25:36

Any other connections that you would like to add?

**Participant 134** 25:43

Yeah, and so right now, the quality of life side is kind of off on its own. But I would say, I mean, I don't know how this would connect. Honestly, I wasn't even really watching when you were connecting them before. So maybe I'll just keep not looking and let you figure it out. Like in terms of the quality of life, I mean, there's an implicit assumption like, you know, fast food is not a high quality of life. I mean, people in small towns actually have friends in Montrose, which is northwest of Flint. And they were like, geeked, because they're getting a taco bell, or something, you know, and I know, that's the thing in small towns, like, you get a particular kind of fast food restaurant, and it's like, so cool.

**Participant 134** 26:30

But it doesn't mean that it doesn't improve quality of life, you just get a stomach ache after you eat Taco Bell. Well, I do a lot of times. And so there's, I would think there's kind of an implicit, opposite effect of local retail versus extractive big box retail. So that includes, like, grocery stores like Walmart, and fast food restaurants, like McDonald's Taco Bell because they're underpaid, they can't unionize. They, although that could be changing. They, nothing that goes to that store gives back to the economy. A lot of these big box stores don't pay property taxes, which diminishes quality of life, they kill main streets, that's proven like Walmart won't go to communities where they can't kill a main street, basically, to simplify it. And that's been their jam for 20 years or more.

**Participant 134** 27:30

So, yeah, I mean, I think there's so for me, the three things that I mentioned, the community power and quality of life and partnerships, I think, are interconnected insofar as, you know, building partnerships, and community empowerment, address the issue of quality of life in a way that you'll never get from buying, you know, 50 cent avocados from Aldi or whatever, like, sure you do that. But then what's the long term implication of you're shopping at a chain store or restaurant. Which mostly still, you know, they want your money. But they also want to make money and so they toe the line between oh, we're going to have organic products now. But we're still also mostly going to sell crap food. And value added, you know, food products, as opposed to real food. And it's even, I mean, I think the models are even apparent when you think of a lot of local restaurants, because people don't cook real food.

**Participant 134** 28:43

I mean, you hear about, like, a new local restaurant opening, and it's like, oh, cool. And then you go there. And they just have Cisco brand ham, and white bread. And yeah, like, there's nothing distinctive about it relative to any other fast food restaurant. It's you know, living in this world where the standard is poor quality, cheap food instead of real food. And so I think about that statistic. And I don't know what the number is, but the fact is that Americans spend way less on food as a percentage of their income than other countries, which, I mean, if you think about our country, it makes sense. We don't guarantee education or health care or housing or some people like, I don't know, like, if that means people in other countries can feel more flexibility in eating real food, like the food system benefits from having a functional society, whereas ours is a pretty broken society and it's dog eat dog and people are trying to spend as little as possible so that they can just get by.

**Interviewer** 30:04

Yeah, I think that's been some of the conflict that we've noticed from the conflict tension, maybe we've noticed in these conversations is that there's a, you know, a push for like the, like the basic needs of like, how do we get people to be able to afford food? But then it's like, is that addressing the root of the problem? Because even if we made food cheaper than like, you're even further destroying local food economies, like if you need to address them in concert, you can't just make food cheaper. That's not actually going to solve a lot of the problems.

**Participant 134** 30:41

Yeah, and I think there's some parallels between, you know, people say there's like a limit to the amount of stimulus we should put into the economy, because then it would flood the economy with too much money. And yet, yeah, you know, that actually, that same side of the political spectrum, would say that it's great to expand church food giveaways. But it's like, and yeah, church, movie boys are important. But when you're only focused on charity, as opposed to fixing the broken system that you perpetuate, like you say, you, you just wind up with all this free food, like we, my church would give away free food down on Fenton road on the south side. And they had so much food that my brother, who was the organist, would just be like they're practicing. And the pastor would be like, hey, john, do you want to just take 60 pounds of food home with you? Cause it's just they're not buying groceries. So then he's not supporting the local food economy? He could afford it, but he gladly took it, because, you know, he's not rich. So he's like, sure, I'll take a 20 pound sack of potatoes and a bunch of cereal and, you know, right.

**Interviewer 2** 31:55

And also in consciousness, you don't want to see it go to waste, or a lot of factors will cause you to participate when you otherwise are not a targeted participant. Right? You know, yeah.

**Interviewer** 32:21

Other connections, you see other things, we can add more values, if you're interested in that, or we can sort of open it up. And, you know, we started with some sectors, we wanted to talk about and values we want to talk about, we also want to open it up if there are other things that you think are important that you'd like to add to the map?

**Participant 134** 32:52

Maybe, and I don't know, maybe this is already connected somewhere, but well, I mean, there must be some connection between the partnerships and community power to try to think how would I make that if it's indirect, you know, if there's something in between them.

**Interviewer** 33:13

It's technically currently connected to local retail, local retail to local economic development, local economy to community empowerment, but can we also make a direct connection or add more concepts, if there are other ways that it also connects to community empowerment?

**Participant 134** 33:30

Yeah. I mean, because I think community empowerment works better directly when there are functional partnerships, like when people aren't trying to duplicate resources. And so like, for example, Reverend Flynn has North Flint food market, Pastor Sanders has- I'm blanking on the name now, but the other idea for a grocery store. And so pastor Sanders' store was going to be at like Saginaw and Hamilton, which is just, I mean, it's the other side of the northern side of the city. So it's a few miles, but still, like, there's already three grocery stores up on that side of the city. So they were both trying to open one.

**Participant 134** 34:09

Are we really going to be able to support two more on top of the three local stores that are up there? You know, for what they're worth, like, I know Hutchinson's has a decent reputation now, Landmark and Mr. B's are not as great, but Landmarks has gotten better. But yeah, like, you know, it to the extent that they can collaborate and so like, I know, the region of the Chamber of Commerce, I think brought in some people to try to, you know, add context to the community and see what the market could handle and, and they didn't want to ruffle feathers. And so they're like, okay, yeah, like, both of you guys, like come on in and we'll share these results. And so they at least tried to collaborate in terms of resources the chamber was providing. But there was never any like, hey, maybe the Two of your organizations could collaborate on the same project, which, you know, everybody likes their own little fiefdom. So, so yeah, I mean, to the extent that you leverage partnerships authentically and, and bring people together, it's better for everybody, because then you have the strength of more people, especially in the community that's shrinking.

**Participant 134** 35:29

And this is like another side of some of the research I've been doing lately with a couple of other geographers looking at what are the vulnerabilities of shrinking cities, like not doing the shrinking ourselves, but like cities that are losing population? Because the world is going to peak and population probably in our nieces and nephews and kids lifetimes, like, if not our own, and the US could peak in population, especially if we don't change our immigration policies sooner. Which means, you know, Michigan's already stagnating population and everywhere is going to stagnate eventually. And if there are winners, it means there's going to be even more losers. And so more people need to be thinking about things the way we think about things in Flint, and Detroit and Michigan, where it is, it is a zero sum game, if we're talking population and sheer dollars, which is going to make local economic development even more important, because if Walmart only goes to places that are- they can prey on. And, you know, people don't open stores and food deserts because there's a lack of demand. What happens when our entire region is a food desert? Because, you know, there's half once again, half as many people there are now.

**Interviewer 2** 36:53

Yeah, yeah, you're really emphasizing the whole economic development aspect of it. And just the sheer lack of understanding and knowledge of the economic development model, particularly inside a food system, can perpetuate, you know, some particular kind of outcomes. Yeah. I'm really loud and clear.

**Interviewer** 37:33

And if I change this term, because I don't like the word resilience, that's kind of how I heard it of like, in the future, like having local development, having community empowerment and stuff like that means that communities are more able to, like handle changing world and shocks in the future. And again, we don't have to have resilience or because some people are not a fan.

**Participant 134** 37:56

Yeah, yeah. I mean, there's definitely still, like, it has it has it can it can, it can have positive meaning as a word. It's just yeah, it's very loaded. But I agree, it's something like that, you know? Because, yeah, to the extent that you don't need to rely on the outside world. And maybe I'm forgetting the author's now. But for a long time, I remembered the names of these authors because I cited that paper all the time, but it's a paper on defensive localism and food systems. And they cautioned me and I liked their point, which is why I always remembered their paper when I was writing a lot about food that, you know, there's localism, which is there. I think they call it diversity. receptive localism is like the ideal where you still have connections to other areas, but you emphasize local first. Hmm. Which again, oddly is, well, it's the perversion of it is America First, right? Like, forget every other country and we're just going to take care of ourselves, but we're not actually going to take care of ourselves. We're just going to pretend. But so that's like, like America first is defensive, localism, it's suggesting that we can't live in a global society together. Whereas diversity receptive localism is a reflection of that resilience or whatever we call it. Because it's like, we're going to focus on building our economy, encouraging people to buy local, but we're not not going to buy chestnuts from the next town over or whatever, like.

**Interviewer** 39:44

Yeah, that's something I think about a lot is tending food systems to what would be sustainable given consumers current expectations and even like with myself, right, like I try to buy local as much as I can. Like, I still really like bananas. Does that mean that I just need to make that sacrifice and not eat bananas anymore? Maybe, but I like them.

**Interviewer 2** 40:09

Yeah, it's kind of interesting, right? Listening to you, it's kind of like, I guess the picture that you're painting in my brain right now is that we have to really have a real clear picture of the economic model of the food system, and understand that which changes are really gonna flip it, you know, in a way that can be sustained locally, because you've got to have a capacity to sustain it locally, you know, and balance that, like you were saying, with there have there are things you're still going to get that you don't produce locally. But if you have an idea of what you would want to put locally, and that you are willing to sustain it, like you talked about the shift. It's like, I've had conversations with people about food sovereignty. And I say, are you talking about everything?

**Interviewer 2** 41:06

Are you talking about sovereignty on a product on a on a on a crop, for example? Can we be somber, because we grow all of our greens, we grow every leafy green, we eat here, but that doesn't mean you grow everything, you know. So to your point, in finding, at least is what I'm hearing you say, and it's making my brain so happy on a Friday afternoon. If we really do a deeper analysis, and we ask ourselves some really, really deep questions, and understand the economy, and what the people in our community are willing to do, when they have proper information, they can see it. The decisions that they made short and long term, like the long haul, you know, can we get enough people to jump on the seesaw on this end of it? And know that this is the trajectory? Am I hearing and feeling you?

**Participant 134** 42:06

Yeah, absolutely.

**Interviewer 2** 42:08

Okay, I just had to get that out. Just like, I mean, I'm blowing up inside because I've been just like, praying, like for an answer, like, there has to be a way and I know that stuff. I don't know. So this is good. Thank you.

**Participant 134** 42:22

Yeah. And I, this is maybe just partly to those listening to a food system webinar that Robert Wood Johnson Foundation put on a couple days ago, and somebody made the comment, and this is something I'd never thought of the difference between food security and food sovereignty, because like, prisoners are food secure. But they're not sovereign. And honestly, like me because I haven't done working on food sovereignty explicitly. And so I've read about it. But in my mind, I'd never really given enough consideration to that distinction. But I appreciated that. And you can see how it applies to a community. Yeah, community level food sovereignty, you can definitely be on certain products or in certain distribution channels. Like, I mean, I don't know if there are cities that don't allow it. Or that try to target it. But even things like this, but bothered me so much while I was watching the Superbowl commercials. And then there were commercials about local economies and supporting local businesses. And they were always like Doordash or Shipt. And it was like, damn it, like, we were almost there. Like, we almost got it. And then it's like, now give your money to a corporation to deliver those things. And so to the extent that communities can rebuff that, you know, it's like, okay, yeah, we live in the gigging economy world. But, yeah, anything to decentralize and take back control of some aspect of the food system, even if it's just a little bit.

**Interviewer** 44:17

I'm going to save this file really quick.

**Interviewer** 44:38

What are your thoughts? So I'm thinking about like, maybe the implicit rather than explicit, sort of this, this idea of local control over the food system, you know, a lot of what I've read called it like democratic participation, and food system decisions and stuff like that. Do you see it as a connection to community empowerment potentially from community empowerment or sort of a feedback loop between them?

**Participant 134** 45:06

Sorry, between community empowerment and what?

**Interviewer** 45:08

I added this concept of sort of, like local control of the food system.

**Participant 134** 45:13

Right. Yeah, I mean, I definitely think it's reciprocal.

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

**Participant 134** 46:13

Yeah, cuz I mean, that's the whole question that's trying to be answered here, righ? With this whole project? What is the leverage point? So I can't just give the answer because then there's no point to the project.

**Interviewer** 46:26

Right.

**Interviewer 2** 46:27

We have to prove that your answers, right, though.

**Participant 134** 46:32

Yeah. I mean, honestly, that's like, I've always been interested in this project, because I think I'd read a couple papers about this kind of stuff. But so many projects are so narrowly focused on a thing that they don't step back to ask them what would actually be most impactful. And a lot of people don't have the tools to measure that. But yeah, I mean, in some ways, I feel like some of the leverage points are, like political change, and advocacy, like, which have have a long time horizon and wind up in these moments, like, the last couple of weeks, I mean, like, like some of the things that have been passed the last couple of weeks, I really hopeful, like I feel really hopeful about because they're actually targeted at helping human beings.

**Participant 134** 47:31

And they will have knock on effects. Like as people start getting these child tax credits the kids will be eating healthier, they'll be able to focus more in school, like, though, have less behavioral issues, they'll be healthier, they won't have chronic diseases at earlier ages at 20, 30, 40 years. So there's so much of it at that macro level that, like, I want to just shake people and tell them, this is going to have a beneficial impact. But you know, so yeah. So coming all the way back down from that in terms of like, it, kind of discarding the idea that we have any influence on that. We do have somebody marginal. I mean, I guess I just go back to where we started with stuff like Flint Fresh, and the farmers market, and Edible Flint. You know, like I say, no, not everybody's cut out to be a revolutionary, or a farmer, or whatever. But the more popular these local things become, the more people have pride in their community.

**Participant 134** 48:50

And I mean, maybe that's connected to community empowerment, too, is like, when there's more stuff going on, there's more stuff to be happy about and cheer about. And Flint has so many things to get down on itself about. And then when people can point to some new thing that is able to impact a lot of people, whether that's food related or not, that can become a rallying point. And I mean, I think of it selfishly in my head, like the restaurants and bars that I go to downtown that are new, like there's a new hard cider company in Flint and that's not nutritious. I mean, it's apples anyways, and I loved apple juice as a kid. But I like being able to go there and they have an outdoor space so also during COVID like you can get a cider and go hang out under one of those heated outdoor things and so you're like it's literally called the Flint City Hard Cider Company. And I have a friend that runs the Flint Candle Company. And so things with Flint branding Flint Fresh, people can take back some, you know, pride in there is something here that we can do besides shop at Walmart and even McDonald's.

**Interviewer** 50:14

Okay, I had a class in undergrad that was about product design and, and they call it placemaking. Is that a way to add value? That makes it not just because, you know, in the last class this much, but it's like no, but this is something that you know, is of this place and that makes it special.

**Participant 134** 50:37

Yeah, 100%. And actually, oddly, the heart center company partners with the placemaking director for the city of Flint, and they created this outdoor village. So they had this whole branding thing and like, and it's part of city Flint Economic Development Division or whatever. Her job is to create spaces that become places, you know, you add meaning to a space and it becomes a place. It's not just some void. And yeah, I mean, even like signage, at community gardens. And I know some have gone by the wayside now, but like, Piper Greencore wasn't an old group on Piper in like North Central Flint, and Harry Ryan was the dude and had a huge personality. And you know ran this sprawling garden slash orchard on 20 blocks or 20 blocks. And there's a sign and so like, when you got there, you felt like you'd arrived somewhere. So yeah, I mean, definitely like leveraging the growth there with the ability to recreate a place and like, it's happening in Civic Park now, like they have a big garden. Joey Tabernacles. Big on being in that community. And when you drive through there, it feels like a place it just doesn't just feel like a neighborhood with half vacant lots and a church and a dead Park.

**Interviewer 2** 52:12

Where was it?

**Participant 134** 52:16

In civic park?

**Interviewer 2** 52:17

Civic Park. Okay.

**Participant 134** 52:19

Yeah, that's like, more kind of west side.

**Interviewer 2** 52:23

Okay.

**Participant 134** 52:23

You know and the neighborhood's been obliterated, but you know, as bad as any other neighborhood, but they have a really active community presence. And so to the extent that they get into gardening or food production, they have that audience. And I mean, honestly, the same with the Northland food market, they have been working on their branding the whole time. And so people are engaged in the idea and get excited about it, even though it's just a grocery store, right, but, but it's more than just a grocery store, because it would become a community owned, hub, you know, jobs for teenagers and adults, and just a place to go and you see your neighbors and your church, fellow church members and stuff like that.