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**SPEAKERS**

Interviewer, Participant 141

[INTRO]

**Interviewer** 09:22

Awesome. Um, so one thing that we could do to start out with is potentially decide some of the strengths of these connections, uh, of all the ones that have question marks. But I do want to say that, you know, if I ever ask a question, and you're like, I'm not really sure or I don't think I can speak to that, um, definitely let me know. And we could just skip it, you know, like, I- the point of these conversations is that people really talk about their piece of the puzzle, right? So like when I talked to local producers, we don't spend a lot of time or like any time talking about like the supplemental sector or the emergency sector, because like that's not their piece of the puzzle, um, we only talk about if they're like, oh, I know things because of x, y, and z reason. So, uh, definitely let me know if I'm ever like, what do you think about this? And you're like, I don't think I can speak to that, and we can skip it because I don't want to, I don't want to waste your time. Um, so if you would like we could, um, sort of talk about some of these connections of, if you have any thoughts of where or how people are using retail in Flint. Or-or we can skip it, what would be your-what would be your preference?

**Participant 141** 10:31

That we can talk about it.

**Interviewer** 10:33

Okay, cool. Yeah. So, um, for context, maybe we can, uh, if you have any thoughts on sort of the-the local versus chain restaurants? What, how would you describe sort of these connection strengths? Do you think people go more to one than an other? Do you think people don't go to restaurants at all? What, how strong do you think they would be?

**Participant 141** 10:54

Well, it's uh, chain- chain restaurants, I think of all the fast food ones. That's what I think of when I say chain restaurants primarily. And I would say they've been utilized in the last year a lot because of COVID. And still being utilized. And, uh, we just did a fundraiser yesterday for St. Patrick's Day. And we underestimated how many box lunches we should have made. And I really should have thought this through beforehand, because we probably should have made more than we typically made. Because I think people are burned out with the same chain fast food restaurants. And so I think they were looking for something different without trying to see if they could get into a local bar or a restaurant for corned beef and cabbage or something like that.

**Participant 141** 11:38

So your local-local restaurants are probably underutilized for this last year and a half just because of COVID. I think they're available here within the city of Flint, um. But I think it probably has to do with more of, um, probably income, I think fast food are probably lower income and your local restaurants are probably higher income people. And, um, and really, in walking distance within the city of Flint, there's only like, probably two-two of the chain of fast food restaurants. So I guess if, you know, and a lot of your homeless, you know, I'm going to talk about a lot of homeless people because that's what we serve the lowest income bracket, folks. So they're looking for like rallies across the street that has $1 burger advertised on the sign, they're not going to be same ones that walk into a restaurant and pay $8.95 for the burger plate. So-so I guess, you know, more fast food closer to downtown might help that population, but bars, local restaurants for other folks that can afford them. I think we have a variety to pick from within the city limits for sure.

**Participant 141** 13:03

So, you keep drawing those lines, man, I don't know how you can figure that out so quickly. Can we talk, you want me touch on that grocery store and that stuff too?

**Interviewer** 13:12

Yea, that would be great.

**Participant 141** 13:13

Grocery stores, there's nothing nearby at all, in the you know, you got to go out quite a ways. So I feel sorry for the same population I'm talking about because most of the poverty and the low income live within the city of Flint. And yet we have no large grocery stores nearby. Convenience stores, uh, hit or miss, certainly don't have the variety and the kinds of food that folks should be eating. And farmer's market is probably overpriced for the population that we have. And so for homeless and low income people, I think the only great thing is that like the some of the food programs this year, they've doubled up the Double Up Bucks and getting people to be part of those programs at the farmers market. So people could go there and get their produce and doesn't matter what the prices cause you get to double up on your, um, your SNAP program and so on. So I think that's been very beneficial to help some but I'm not sure the word is out and everybody understands that either. I mean, we hear it we try to convey that information, but the typical person that's getting that benefit, I'm not sure they clearly know, get down to the farmers market, and you can buy twice the amount of product for the same what you have. So farmers market is probably a great asset. I'm still not sure it's helping the low income to the extent they should. Convenience stores, they just, uh, they don't have the right kind of food that they should have. They don't have healthy food, let's put it that way. And the bigger grocery stores where you get more for your money and good produce and everything else they're- they're too far out. So I mean to think of a family without transportation, you got five kids, I can't imagine going to get groceries on a bus system and trying to bring, you know, 10-15 bags of groceries home. So,

**Interviewer** 15:10

Yeah.

**Participant 141** 15:11

We used to have a little grocery store- store nearby here back about five years ago. And it was handy, they had a small deli, that you could go get great sandwiches, it was two blocks away, and they had some fresh produce in there, I'd see staff would run over there every now and then. And they went out of business. So I don't know if they just couldn't afford the building they were in or exactly what happened there. But a lot of people, especially in the area, I met in the city of Flint, they really miss that market.

**Interviewer** 15:43

Yeah, and it's, um, [inaudible]. This is awesome. Um, yeah, this is, um, I think it's, we didn't walk in knowing this, but like, all of these points we just hit on I think are gonna end up being, you know, the- really the crux of our research is that, like, there are these contrasts that like, what is convenient and close, are like, not nutritious, and like, the things that are far away that you need more resources to get is like, what is going to be better for you. And that is like, I mean, it's not like a new concept, obviously, but it's like, tailoring that- that dynamic to what's going on in Flint and figuring out solutions to that I think is as far as this is going. Yeah, um, any sort of connected sort of like, you know, these can be income and affordability of different places, the centrality to Flint of sort of like chain restaurants and grocery stores, maybe people if they're not really accessible because, well they are not really close, that there are different outcomes for availability that like the options in convenience stores are pretty low, whereas like grocery stores are a bit higher as you're talking about. And then also nutritious foods, more options in- in grocery stores and convenience stores. Um, let me know if there's any, any changes, any- any other things that- connections I should make there. But we could also potentially if you have any, any thoughts on how people are using sort of supplemental programs like- like WIC or SNAP in, in grocery stores or convenience stores, is it about the same? Is it different?

**Participant 141** 17:39

I think one thing that's absolutely excellent is that I heard that they can use their food assistance, or maybe their food stamps, that they can use them now, in fact in restaurants, so they, yeah, so a restaurant has to sign up. But I think that's great, because that's still better than fast food. So if we're able to use that, go into a restaurant and order an entire meal with a salad and everything else. I mean, they're getting a lot healthier meal than a fast food. So whatever that new program is, I think a part of it is probably trying to get the restaurants on board to accept the participant within that program. And then once you get them to be a participant, how long will the program last? And then how do you get the word out to the right population?

**Interviewer** 18:43

Listen, I'm great. I'm cool. So we're gonna talk to you a couple more definitions and be the last one. So this is what we are sort of calling like food system values. And so these are concepts and definitions that came out of conversations and focus groups with community members. So things that they wanted from the food system or like a food system that serves you well, what would it look like? And though some of these I've already added, because I sort of heard you mentioned them like nutritious foods and affordability, but I'm going to run through these these concepts really quickly. And if you wouldn't mind thinking about which two or three you think are particularly relevant or important to the food system, or that I'd like you in particular have experienced with that we could potentially add to your map. If you want we could talk about all of them, but it's easily easy to start with with a couple of build outwards. As you see. The map becomes very complicated very quickly because the food system is really for the first is education that people want opportunities when food skills, like cooking or gardening or nutrition, potentially apply them to We are development also have you know people want the food system to empower communities you know, through local economic development through fostering a sense of community or prioritizing residents cultural values and also have quality of life is respected. So this is that, you know, a combination of a lot of things we're hearing that basically people want to be able to move through the food system in many different ways, but their dignity choices comfort and safety respected in a way that promotes the common good and quality of life for all. Also our partnerships as a sort of a step above the consumer, but the different groups and organizations involved in the food system that focuses on trade, promote creativity and problem solving creates trust and strong partnerships that provide leadership and support collaboration and communication. And last year, nutritious foods, people want nutritious options that you know, have less out of preservatives and come in appropriate portions, affordability, that food should be priced so people can access it the type quality and quantity they require. So considering not just the price of food, but also president income as a really a measure of their ability to purchase what they want. And then finally, availability so that the type of quality and amount of food required for folks who can really feed their families and themselves should be physically present. Do you have any questions about these definitions?

**Participant 141** 21:20

No.

**Interviewer** 21:22

Um, do you have a sense of which two or three you might want to add on to your map?

**Participant 141** 21:26

Um, affordability, nutritious food, and probably the availability.

**Interviewer** 21:40

Um, oh, how convenient. I've already added them. That's awesome. Um, cool. So we could, um, maybe start with with one of them. And, you know, the process we'll go through is sort of connecting the ways that these different sectors or the different influences, but in general, affect these values. And then potentially, you know, anything that comes out of these values, so like how these lead to other impacts to the community. Um, which one would you like to start with?

**Participant 141** 22:18

We can talk about, um, availability.

**Interviewer** 22:20

Awesome. Yeah, so currently, we have like, two impacts on availability is that like, convenience stores don't have a lot of options available to folks where as grocery stores have higher availability in the sense that they have, they have options for people that like, if you can access those stores, that those things that you want are more likely to be there. Um, are there other ways that you think that any of these sectors or other things in Flint affect the availability of food?

**Participant 141** 22:57

Um, hmm. Well, let me- we have a- we have a gard- we have a gardening program, okay? And we would sell at farmer's market. Now this was before this past year when we had COVID and everything. But one thing that we did do that I thought was really helpful was we had a small little produce truck. And after we were finished with farmers market, we would take our produce that was left and we would go to apartment complexes, primarily low income and senior facilities. And they would know what days we're coming and we'd be in the parking lot and we would sell the remainder of our produce for a very low price because it's going to go to waste anyway because we didn't sell at farmer's market that day. So to me that is a great example of the availability for the convenience of the- of the folks it's nutritious food, it was available to where they're, where they were at because many of them are dealing without transportation and it also- so it dealt with all three that I picked nutritious, available and the affordability and that's the reason why we did that in the parking lots of some of those, you know even if we went to a senior center and there were seniors there that day because if you go to a farmers market far as I'm concerned the one here in Flint there's nothing there that's- there's nothing there that's reasonable. And the worst part is is that people think it's all homegrown and whatever and some of those vendors they just literally go to buy at Meijer's before the season starts. And it's the same food you could go buy at Meijer's produce for half the price. So I think that's misleading. Um, and then I see somewhere in here we're going to get into like the food bank, your definition of a food bank. We have a large food bank that covers 22 counties in- in this community. And when you say that food is available at the food bank, I think that's a misnomer to many, many people because the common person cannot walk in there and just get food. And so when the food bank also is promoting and advertising, um, that their dollar- that $1 can feed. I think that's very misleading too, especially for the folks that- I mean I'm sitting at the other end of this and I got a bill at- at the food bank every single month, you know, as a nonprofit paying the food bank, my bill. So I think it's a lot, it's a really, uh, mis- very misleading both for the person who's hungry that thinks they're going to get food at the food bank, at the true food bank. Now, if you're referring to food banks as pantries then I call those pantries, and when I say food bank, I think of the big food banks where all the foods going into and then they distribute out, okay? But as nonprofits and churches and people who are all running food pantries, we're all purchasing that food from the food bank. So the common- the common donor, the common, whatever, doesn't understand how that whole system works, I don't think okay? So when- when, if you were a homeless person, you look up at a great big billboard, and you see them feeding people, oh that- that food bank really doesn't feed anyone, they don't- to me feed means you sit down at a table and you're ready to eat. It doesn't mean you're going to get some canned goods and you will find your own can opener and get them open, you know? So there's some misleading information there. So I just clarified that when I think food bank, I think of the big food bank that distributes food, and I think of everybody else at a church or nonprofit, those are, I call those all the food pantries.

**Interviewer** 26:38

Yeah.

**Participant 141** 26:39

Just for my own clarification. People know how to you know like I said, we got three soup kitchens in the city of Flint, people seem to know how to find us and we do like 190,000 meals a year. So we're- to me that's feeding people that's true feeding them it's hot, it's ready, you sit down with a tray, and you're getting a complete balanced meal you know, salad, fruit, vegetables, meat, potatoes. Um, so there again, I don't know where that ties- it ties into the three things that I picked again, the affordability, nutritious food and so on. I don't know what else I can, uh, nutritious food is that- that's just a hard one because I think to get it affordable and to get it available, it's either got to be food distributions, or it's got to be at a farmers market. Like I said, I think more people need to know about this Double Up and all that because they could get a lot of good produce even if they have to go to the farmers market you can look at it that if you use bucks, if your card is doubled up, then you can afford to buy it at farmer's market.

**Interviewer** 27:59

Yeah, that was um some of the- we did a pilot of this- this process we- we changed a lot since then, that like this, um, this narrowing down of the emergency sector to just like, you know, one concept is not like accurate, like, there are many different actors and many different dynamics within that sector. So we, hopefully it's gonna like pull- pull pieces out of it to sort of map things more specifically.

**Participant 141** 28:27

Well, and every food bank during this COVID thing, every food bank ran different too. Because I have- I run two agencies: one in Shiawassee county and one in Genesee County. So and we have to do- we have to deal with two different food banks in two different regions. One food bank in Lansing, when they got their COVID dollars, they put it all towards food orders. And so for like nine months, we haven't paid a bill at all out of Lansing Food Bank. But they didn't apply it the same way over here at the Eastern Food Bank. So we're still got bills, and we're still buying our food. Inconsistencies and how that was done during COVID, I guess.

**Interviewer** 29:12

Yeah. And we're gonna talk about COVID specifically, later so I'm marking these all down so I can add them to the map. Because that's definitely what we've- we're definitely going to talk about sort of the impact of COVID on this system. Awesome. Um, are there any other connections that you would want to make? I kind of added this piece of like, access to food as sort of the, you know, not something that you necessarily talked about explicitly. So it definitely means we can change it but sort of like the combination of, you know, the factors of is food available to you, can you afford it, as like things that contribute to access to food but also something that, like, the emergency sector supplements, like, if you don't have these, you know, these aren't available to you, if you can't afford it like, we can come and deal with that, and we can provide access for food. Yeah, any other connections that you see? I can also ask, like um, more directed question. [Inaudible]

**Participant 141** 30:23

No, not right now.

**Interviewer** 30:26

Awesome. Um, yeah, so we definitely also, you know, we kind of started, wanted to start with these values. Oh, I guess we can talk about that. Are there any other of these values that you would like to add to your map? Um, and the answer can definitely be no, we can sort of focus on nutritious foods and affordability and availability-

**Participant 141** 30:47

Well, I mean, I think they're all important. But I also think that like the education piece that's out there, it's just you got to tap into it. And you gotta want to make sure that the people you think need it, they don't think they need it. So I mean, but the resource is there, the community empowerment, I think the others are important. And I think they all take place, I'm just- I'm going back and looking at the consumer in the last three that I picked.

**Interviewer** 31:12

Absolutely. Awesome. Yeah, so we wanted to start off with sort of how we were defining sectors and some of the values that that we've created through our previous research, we also wanted to open it up to give you a chance to add any other concepts that you think are important or significant to the Flint food system, things that you think are impactful, or other outcomes, like other values, other things that you think are important impacts to communities. Any the other things you'd like to add to your map?

**Participant 141** 31:47

Not- not right now. I mean, it might come up as we move- as we move into the other areas.

**Interviewer** 31:53

Awesome, cool. So um, one thing I would like to talk about is, you know, going a little bit diving into sort of your, like experience and expertise, um, within, within this sort of emergency sector. We've talked about some of the benefits of people using the emergency sector, right, is that, you know, they're having this access and availability of nutritious foods, what are if there are other- other outcomes that are beneficial of people using emergency sector, or would you want to sort of talk about what, you know, encourages or limits people using this sector?

**Participant 141** 32:38

Using the emergency sector?

**Interviewer** 32:41

So it's like, you know, we've talked about what comes- what comes out of it. But-

**Participant 141** 32:44

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 32:45

I think these are barriers or [inaudible] people to use it.

**Participant 141** 32:49

Yeah, I think some of the barriers are folks that don't know about it. So you got shut-in's cut off from social media. I mean, a lot of- a lot of the outlets are on social media. So if you're not on that process, I'm not sure you know about every food truck giveaway, every pantry that's open, if something special comes in, I just don't know, I see that the school programs or the school lunches, I think that's very underutilized, um and the reason is that we get all the leftovers that come to our soup kitchens. And I think that's, I think there's been an abundance of food in the community, I just not sure that we've tackled how to get it to the right sectors. Because there's been school lunches for everybody, parents either don't pick them up at their schools or at the sites they're available at people that live close to the health centers where there's been food distributions. You know, ours come and go, if it's a nice day, we have, you know, 300 cars, it's not a nice day, people just don't want to get out or don't want to get on the bus. I mean, I think it's a lot of- but it's the same people that are looking for them, I'm worried about the ones that don't know how to search them out, how to find them, and that therefore they're not getting, they're not utilizing the emergency food services that have been available or are available. So I just don't know if we got the answer yet to how to reach everyone.

**Interviewer** 34:26

Yeah, and that's, I mean, we're also gonna talk about after we sort of, you know, finalize this sort of like initial pass of the food system is, um, you know, goal of this project is not only to build this understanding of what's going on, but also to talk through and like come up with some potential leverage points of like, okay, we know this is- this is an issue, this is a problem. What can we potentially do about it? Or even if just stop at the point of like, this is an issue, we should address it someway or another, right?

**Participant 141** 34:52

I just think that you know, and I know you said we're going to get into COVID, but I think there's been so much food assistance, um, either through schools or through a community or to the food banks. And I know some people keep saying there's still hungry people out there and I keep thinking we're missing the boat somewhere because I can only go from the backside of that, of seeing all the leftover food from distributions from schools and it's coming to our soup kitchens day after day after day, and we have to watch the expiration dates, what it is and everything else, but it has literally cost us more money to dispose of that through refuge than it has any- any benefit to us at this point. So it's sort of like- it's sort of sad, you know? And I know all school districts the same thing I mean, sometimes we get cartons and cartons and hundreds of cartons of little milk, you know, but by the time we get them, we got like two days and they're expired, well it's no problem when you got three soup kitchens and milk is something we don't get that often. So to get milk through the school program that's great because I would say on a regular basis our clientele does not get milk through the soup kitchen.

**Interviewer** 36:15

Yeah. Um, so I guess I'm thinking about the best way to- to model this is that there's potentially like, um [inaudible].

**Participant 141** 36:39

Am I the only one that says there's an abundance of food?

**Interviewer** 36:44

Um, I don't think so. Um,

**Participant 141** 36:46

Well-

**Interviewer** 36:47

I don't think anyone has put it that like succinctly and so I was like- [inaudible] to like thank you for that perspective because I- yeah, I feel like something that we're getting to through like adding, like I feel like the more conversations we have like the more that I'm able to understand like the nuance and ask better questions, um, and that I think it's something that we're getting to is you know, like there are so many programs out there there are so many groups and organizations doing really good work about like food ac-like getting food out to people that like maybe the gap, yeah, like as you talked about, is that like, people don't know how to access these programs or like maybe there's something else that is- is at this point like it is not like that there's not enough food in Flint like that- like that is not necessarily like the biggest reason that you know, there's like still food insecurity or something like that it's not that it's totally not available anywhere. It's more like utilization and I think, yeah, like you have definitely- people have talked about parts of that but I really appreciated how you sort of put that together very well and very succinctly. Awesome, so I'm just sort of because I kind of want to connect I'm thinking about the best way to model this, that like the problem is that there's, um, that there's like sort of these expired food and then like at a certain point like this contributes to- to food waste, and then potentially like too many donations and stuff like that, that that is then, um, expensive. So it sort of like lowers in a way to ability if that makes sense to you to sort of make these- these connections here.

**Interviewer** 38:40

Okay, cool. Um yeah.

**Participant 141** 38:46

You know, it's almost like, you know what, we get a drop off here we do a food giveaway and things that might be leftover might be, um, well, eggplant and most people don't even know what to do with eggplant so it's like why is that even coming? Yea, okay, um-

**Interviewer** 39:01

Yea.

**Participant 141** 39:02

-and some of the things you know it- and then all of a sudden you know, if we were doing it in the winter where you know, it's gonna freeze it's like, just sits in the parking lot there's no place to put it it's not like we have a- and I would say most churches would be the same way. I mean, we could pick it up with a forklift truck and put it in a garage but our garage isn't heated and so I assume it's going to be the same for a church so that's how you end up with a lot of waste and then we have a- we call churches see if they want what's leftover, churches call us: do you want what's leftover? And pretty soon it's just there for the taking. And I just think, wow, you know, I ended up putting out an email and telling staff on your way out the door, stop and pick up you know, whatever sitting out on the pallet, help yourself.

**Participant 141** 39:43

And it just- I don't know, it seems like that through the state somewhere, if you're already on some kind of assistance, and you need the help or you're on Social Security or you're on something, maybe you know, I go right [inaudible], trying to problem solve everything, so I just think there should be a communication- better communication instead of social, social media, I mean, my parents wouldn't have the slightest idea in their 80s, where to go for food, they wouldn't have the slightest idea.

**Participant 141** 40:26

And then the other thing is, most of us, I mean, now I'm thinking of COVID, and I'm thinking most people, like, I'm going to use my parents, they're in their late 80s, they didn't go out, they didn't leave the house for over a year, you know? So they're again, if it wasn't for us kids running to get their groceries, now if they had no children that are willing to do that, how do they even get what they want? So are they going by just eating canned goods, or they going to a convenience store? I mean, we all know you can go to a convenience store and easily get a bag of chips and junk food. We all know that's cheaper than buying the healthy stuff. So I guess that's, I mean, that takes all the different age groups into consideration too.

**Interviewer** 41:15

And then, I guess, if it makes sense to you that like to add sort of a concept, I'm really interested in this, this idea that you just brought up that like, you know, maybe like maybe your like social connections can like sort of address some of these, especially like during COVID, like, access issues that if like, if someone can't go to a store, then you have someone in your- in your community, whether you're related to them, or a neighbor or something, and be like, oh, I can just go do this for you or something?

**Participant 141** 41:43

Well, I did- back in- I live in Shiawassee County, and we get food giveaways three times a week in- out of our office in Shiawassee. And I have a neighbor across the road, she's retired and she looks out after three different families. And one of them is just a connection to her daughter who's got like five kids, doesn't really have the money. And when we have a food giveaway and- and I see potatoes out there and I see a bag of onions and I see a gallon of milk and I see all the- I call our neighbor up and I said just drive through, give all three names to these families and we can help you because really what we need is we need the person that's going to deliver this to the families. Because these moms were all working, they're not going to get out during the day. And so we allowed like in that case, we allowed my neighbor to pick this up with these three different families. Man, I guess that was more of like you just- what you were saying. How do we help all these people? Or how do we, you know, everybody would have to like adopt their neighbors or something?

**Interviewer** 42:43

Yeah. No, this is a bit of a tangent but a couple of friends of mine when COVID first hit started, like a very small like neighborhood based, like, mutual aid, like just social media group of like, like if you need me to- run, like need to run to the grocery store, like done. If you need me to go do this, like I'll do it like, just like let us know if there's something we as neighbors can help out with. And it was very cool. It's like very local, very local little small impacts. But it was awesome.

**Participant 141** 43:18

But I think that's probably what we need to do on a much bigger scale across the entire community.

**Interviewer** 43:24

Yeah. Um, any other sort of connections or- or additions you might want to make here and we can maybe talk Yeah, we've talked a bit about sort of the, the- this ability piece and it's something I'm interested in your perspective on that like you know, that talked about sort of like the cost of food like coming from the food bank, but also less like, like expired or like too much food donated from places and can actually be a bad thing at a certain point, are there other things that like make, like, your lives easier or harder to sort of like operate these- these food giveaways?

**Participant 141** 44:20

Um, I think the abundance of food was probably-

**Interviewer** 44:25

the biggest thing?

**Participant 141** 44:26

I- I mean at the tail end of your food distribution, it actually becomes, um, a problem because you've got to figure out what you're going to do with it next, are you going to throw it out or you're going to leave it there for anyone to pick? And I hate to see waste. I mean, I grew up where you eat everything on your dish, you know, my parents came from the-

**Interviewer** 44:45

[laugh]

**Participant 141** 44:45

-back then. So it's really hard for me to know that our forklift truck has to pick up a pallet at some point because everything in the bottom of it is rotted now and just throw it away. So, and when certain things come from a school or people drop off. Um, that's wonderful but if we're feeding 200 and some people, um, you know, somebody drops you off 80 lunches, it's like, okay, who gets the 80? And then what do you do after those 80 are gone? So it's created a lot of different, um. It's created a lot of different things. And obviously, during COVID, we had to do all of our soup kitchens like out the door. You don't come in and sit down at a table right now. Um, and I was thinking that that was going to be more efficient and effective, and everything else. And it's been quite contrary, because I didn't stop to think of the price of those styrofoam containers. And all of your condiments got to be individually packaged now, and your silverware. And so if anything, it took the cost of doing business and it drove it up versus down, even though you don't have them in your facility, sitting at a table and eating. It's still a hot meal and everything else. So I guess it's just, you know, everybody's had to change how they do business and retool. I don't think we all had time to figure this out, going through this whole COVID thing. So we're doing the best we can. But I definitely think this, um, this whole food system- Good thing you guys are doing research project on this, because hopefully, we have some better planning or some way to solve some of the problems that I guess you guys are- you already know and you're trying to address I would assume.

**Participant 141** 45:06

Yeah. And we're- we are getting sort of like, I mean, there's- so we're, it's a- it's a cool project in the sense of like, it is very, like community engaged research. So it's not like we're just a University coming in, and like, oh, let's study you. But we're, you know, it's like a pretty like one-on-one collaboration with the community foundation of greater Flint. So it's really like community driven of like, we are here with like, like, I know how to make maps, tell me what maps you want to make and how I can answer your question. And so this is like really like, okay, well, we have these things that we would want from the food system, and we want it, we want to figure out a plan of how to achieve those things. So like, let's make a map, let's get people's opinions on what they think would be useful. Um, and then see, like, which ones would be really effective based on- based on the map. So it is hopefully, the direction we're going with this, I hopefully, will be- sort of based on-

**Participant 141** 47:24

I mean, I guess I'm sort of stumped on all of it because there's so many varied- variables through this whole food supply, whatever. Because I mean, I can give you another example that we have something like 16 people right now, um, or 16 families in motel rooms. Then we've got another organization that's taking meals to the hotel, and these are people where they, the city closed down the apartments, condemned them, okay? So Catholic Charities and some other agencies, we've got these people set up in motels. The agency that's doing the food delivery, they said they're lucky and they know day after day, these hot meals are coming everything else. And some of those people have five kids. And they said one day only three people even answered their door or was home at the motel to take the food. Now that- that's very sad, because these will probably be the first people that are complaining they're hungry, you know? So I don't know how we solve everything because I think we could touch on so many different, um- I don't know, stomach. [Laugh]

**Interviewer** 48:31

Yeah, no, it's a- it's like a super complicated system and there are so many things going to that. And yeah, I got I think it's something that has only sort of emerged in the last couple of weeks. And it also might be that we- we spent a lot of time in the beginning talking to like farmers and stuff like that, we're now reaching out more to like people involved in like, emergency organizations and supplemental organizations that it's, it's not like it is, like, always like mutual- mutual chain of mutual support that like, for supplemental programs, for emergency programs to be successful, it not only needs to, like sometimes, like meet the needs of people, but also that people need to, like have a mindset change of like, use this resource, like, we can't bend over backwards to like, you know, physically place a box of food in your hands, sometimes you need to come get it. And so it's like working both of those levers, like, you know, how do we motivate people to use these awesome resources that are out there?

**Participant 141** 49:32

Well, and sometimes, you know, we know they- we know our, our local restaurants, you know, have been shut down and just now started to reopen at limited capacity and so on. And there's times that I've thought about, I wonder if it would have been better to give the money to the local economy, the restaurants, and have them, I mean, if you needed- if you needed a subsidized meal, you just showed up and you got your meal. You know, because everybody knows you go to a restaurant and get food. So if they knew that you could go the restaurant and still get food, and it only cost you 25 cents to carry out a container, I wonder if that would have been the better, better way to spend all of this money that's come through COVID?

**Interviewer** 50:13

Really interesting, I don't know. I'm gonna write down that question. That's a very interesting thing. I don't know, because then it's just like, I don't know, I can also like, I cannot speak from any personal experience in Flint, like, I- I live in Ann Arbor, like, I'm just here to like, facilitate conversations and sort of like gather-

**Participant 141** 50:41

Downtown- downtown Flint is very different than downtown Ann Arbor.

**Interviewer** 50:45

Yes. [Laugh]

**Interviewer** 50:52

Great, well, um, the- yeah, so let's save this map really quick, I can definitely make any additions and changes, um, we sort of- sort of transitioned to talking this a little bit already, but, um, you know, this idea of leverage points, I've already written down, sort of like the, you know, potentially, like building community and social connections as a way to, well to have these sort of networks to rely on. And then also, like, addressing this problem, this- this distribution problem that, like, the amount of food is not the problem, it's like getting it to the right places, or like, getting it out, out to people in like, ways that are efficient, both for the people, you know, facilitating this process and people receiving it, um, are there other, like, leverage points, things that you could be- think that could be changed or added to the Flint system to- to have positive- positive outcomes? I also sometimes phrase this as, if you ran the world, what would you change?

**Participant 141** 52:00

You know, I don't know, off the top of my head. I mean, I know a lot of the monies came in through state agencies, and I suppose they have to, but sometimes they never get down into the trenches, probably where those monies need to be. And I think, you know, if they stay at a state level, they, you know, at like Department of Health and Human Services, then they think they're going to solve the problem. Or, you know, and I'm not sure it doesn't get down to like the nonprofit's I guess, at that level. And I think the nonprofits are always the ones that are right in the trenches. So —

**Participant 141** 52:50

You know, and I got, I got to say, when you said you're doing this, also, for Community Foundation lately, I would say in the last two years, the Community Foundation has been much more open to even- even in the contact that they've had with me as to, you know, sort of, like, whatever my dilemma is, at the time, if it's like these apartments closing, or if it's like a food problem, or if it's like, it's sort of like, just, if you see a fix, fix the problem, and we're gonna fund it, you know, and it's like, wow, if it could have been like that for some time, because I'm a person who wants to put the bandaid on first then figure out what I got to do afterwards, you know, and so I want to fix things right away and help the consumer and then I have to worry about all the barriers after the fact. I'm not one that goes and gets all all kinds of approval and dot the i's and cross the T's, I work the other way around.

**Interviewer** 53:45

Yeah.

**Participant 141** 53:45

And which is unusual for most CEOs you know, they want to make sure everything's in order and this and that, and I rather just, I mean, that's how we ended up we run a warming center too and it was like shelters are full, we got to have a warming center people are not going to freeze to death if I got the heat on in a building where I can take people in. So, and Community Foundation in the last few years has been much more open and receptive to listening to that because I think they realize that those are the people even on their doorsteps, or that's the kind of stories they're hearing in the community. And if you don't have the resources to be able to help that person right then and there, uh, we sort of missed the boat. You know, I got people right now in these Richfield apartments and it's not Community Foundation's helping with it, but these people are- they were evicted. The power shut off in here back it was freezing, so there was ice everywhere. The pipes broke and so the floors in there were all ice, but these folks still would not want to leave their apartments because their belongings were in there. So things as simple as everything has to go by the book. I mean, these people are worried about everything they have was in this apartment, it's being ruined, they know they got to get out for their own health and safety. And it's simple as, you know, I don't even know at the time I just, we got some storage units and the Catholic Catholic Charities went and rented some storage unit and rented some UHaul trucks, and some of these people just got their stuff in these storage units. Now, by the time you call around and get approval on who's gonna pay for this, and who's gonna do this and that, you just have to, you just have to be able to act. And I believe I will be reimbursed, or I will figure out how we're going to cover all of this. But these people's possessions are in storage units, and we got UHaul, we couldn't even find- give you an example, we couldn't find a moving company. And, and there was probably four or five of us calling moving companies or whatever, in this community and even outside of this community. Nobody would touch this, because they were afraid there might be bedbugs or something in these units. That's why we had to go- that's why Catholic Charities had to go to rent- letting these people rent UHauls. So I mean, it's things like that, I mean, that's out of the ordinary, it's sort of an emergency situation, but to be able to respond to that. And, um, so I'm glad they're- I'm glad they're looking at this whole food thing, because I think Community Foundation has really o- broadened their sense that they need to be more proactive like this.

**Interviewer** 56:36

Definitely. So I- I kind of, yeah, I just want to check in of how I've tried to sort of capture this concept that like, you know, something like the closest to and the understanding of problems has an impact on like, how, you know, effective engagement or efforts to address problems maybe. And so that sort of, like, helps the ability of the emergency sector and like sort of that cascades out of, you know, access to food and stuff like that, that state level agencies sort of have less closeness and less understanding, then potentially local organizations. And then also, I titled it, like, bureaucracy or like complex internal procedures as trying to sort of like capture this concept of like, you know, that, like, they're more slow to act on things or like maybe, like, won't, um, help out in situations. Um, I can also use totally different words or something like that.

**Participant 141** 57:33

Right. Right. Right, right. Well, you mean, especially if it's a state agency, because I'm sure they got more bureaucracy, than a nonprofit organization here, so. Yeah. And I mean, there's times that I mean, there's times I get a phone call from United Way, okay? And they'll just say, you know, I'll give them a situation and, you know, we could have five kids and this man, you know, all these circumstances, and they'll just say, Participant 141, just make it happen. You know? I mean. [Laughing]

**Interviewer** 58:11

Yeah, jeez. Yeah, um, one thing I potentially wanted to add, just because you've, you've brought it up a couple times, and I think it's really important is sort of this connection between like food and housing. Um, is that something that you would want to sort of add to the map?

**Participant 141** 58:36

Yes, I would say yes. Yup.

**Interviewer** 58:46

Um, like, should I like-

**Participant 141** 58:52

And that- that's where- see, and that's where I mean, even if there's food giveaways and say the food, I mean, that's where it doesn't really help your homeless person. Because a lot of times food giveaways, it's canned goods, and it's whatever and what're they going to do? Are they going to stick, you know, three cereal boxes in their backpack? And I mean, they're not handing out can openers. Um, so that's why my concept when I was thinking of that idea about restaurants, they should have probably had all the money, and we all just can show up there and everybody can eat for free, you know? I don't know, but it doesn't help that homeless population.

**Participant 141** 59:31

So those are ones that still need to either be in a shelter or go to a soup kitchen or something like that. But housing is a huge issue. I mean, you could add housing right on this food- as you're doing this, I mean, housing would be more complicated and complex than your food system. [Laughing]

**Interviewer** 59:51

Yeah, I, uh- earlier on in my sort of like, academic pathway, I had a hard time committing to a system that I was interested in, I'm like, they're all so cool, like housing and transportation and energy, like so awesome. And then I'm like, wait a second, I can do the food system, and I'm secretly doing every system because it connects to everything in one way or another.

**Participant 141** 1:00:14

Exactly. Yes it does. Yep, yep, yep, yeah. You're right there.

**Interviewer** 1:00:21

[COVID SECTION]

**Interviewer** 1:00:21

So I'm going to save this file. And then the last thing we're really talking about is COVID-19. Map, put it in a new color. So bit more. Um, so one thing that you've said is that COVID-19 has been more people are using chain restaurants, and then there's been sort of a hit to local restaurants. Other thing I heard is that from COVID-19, there's been increases in funding for the emergency sector. Um, but then also, there has been some additional challenges to operating, like, you know, introducing organization and like, by no, like, styrofoam thing and stuff like that. So it's been sort of challenging in that way. Um, are there other ways that other things that you've sort of seen or observed of ways that COVID-19 has impacted the food system?

**Participant 141** 1:01:31

Well, I think some, I think some people just during COVID, they just didn't go out at all. Like, let's just take the senior population. I mean, I know some to this day that still are- they haven't even had their vaccines yet. And they still are not leaving their house. So we're talking, we're talking a year now. One entire year, and they literally got either somebody picking up the groceries, or having them delivered, or whatever it might be. But some folks are very still scared of the whole COVID virus. And so I think it's really impacted the food system, I would say primarily for seniors, primarily for seniors. They want to protect themselves, and they know they were the first ones to be able to get the vaccinations too.

**Participant 141** 1:02:22

I mean, COVID-COVID, sort of impacted everything we've done. I mean, I've had to re-rethink and retool all of our business here at Catholic Charities. Everything from the soup kitchens, to our community closet, to how do people come in and get the you know, we got personal needs, and we kept that open. And so there's a lot of essential services and essential workers that continue to-to work through this whole thing. So I- so it's been- it's been very different even in- Well you take an old timer like me, it's been hard with all these people working from home and all the new zoom calls and all the new connections. Just a whole way of- whole way of doing business. It's-it's been a huge change for an old dog like me. And I think I just kept referencing COVID-COVID through this whole thing. So

**Interviewer** 1:03:20

yeah, yeah, I think we've connected it so far, to access to transportation, I just sort of like local barriers, and differences in how people are using restaurants, to more funding, but also, you know, other challenges of names, rethink how things have operated. There other than has been other impacts of COVID-19 or any things that you would like to change about how it's it's currently mapped out?

**Participant 141** 1:03:56

Ah, no, that's a very complicated map. So I'll trust you that you did your plus and minus the right colors, the right areas.

1:04:07

[COVID SECTION ENDS]

**Interviewer** 1:04:08

Um, I will save this, um, then stop sharing. My last question is, is another sort of open ended one, we've you know, talked a lot about different sectors and these values and COVID-19 but is there anything sort of important about this- this conversation around food that we haven't talked about the day that you want to add and make sure that we carry forward with this research? And the answer can be no, you can also-

**Participant 141** 1:04:37

No, no, I don't think so. I got so many- I got so many other projects already started that- No, I mean, I've already got over the whole food thing. I already know there's an abundance. And I know there's been a lot of waste. And so I'm already over that and moved on to my next project, you know?

[OUTRO]