144

Wed, 10/6 5:05PM • 1:20:28

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

people, food, flint, question, farmers, growers, connections, grocery store, add, programs, talk, buy, farmer, grow, local, system, community, farmers market, nutritious foods, produce

**SPEAKERS**

Participant 144, Interviewer, Interviewer 2

[INTRO]

**Interviewer** 14:46

Um, so my first question here would maybe be like thinking about your- your understanding, your experience of, you know, when people purchase food in Flint, where are they getting that food? Where are they getting most of their food in Flint? So are they getting it, uh, you know, we're thinking about local restaurants versus chain restaurants, the strength might be if they're using them the same and might be like two medium connections, or if people are going to one way more than another one might be strong and the other might be medium or, you know, if no one goes to restaurants at all, they could be both weak. What would be, you know-

**Participant 144** 15:26

Are we talking about now? Or during the pandemic? Or-

**Interviewer** 15:30

Great question. Great question. Um, we are going to talk about the impacts of COVID-19 a little bit later. And I know that's kind of hard to conceptualize, because at this point, it's been a whole year. So like, COVID-19 is the food system at this point. So I guess it would be like think back and your- your perception pre pandemic, what was going on? Yeah, how would you maybe describe these two relationships?

**Participant 144** 16:00

I mean, a lot of people eat out. Or were eating out. So I think that's a pretty strong one.

**Interviewer** 16:09

Yeah. Um, how do you think like, people, sort of, like patronize local versus chain restaurants? Do you think it was about the same?

**Participant 144** 16:21

Yeah, no, I think, I don't know, chain is probably more, but there is a strong, you know, chain restaurant- or non chain restaurants here. I think, you know, a lot of people do eat at chain fast food on a regular basis. So I think it would be slightly stronger than the local restaurants, but local restaurants, or restaurants in general, are where people pre-pandemic were getting, I think the majority of food.

**Interviewer** 16:55

Um, and then shifting over to the other side, so comparing sort of grocery stores versus convenience stores versus farmers markets. What would be your understanding about these connection strengths?

**Participant 144** 17:09

Are we talking about people in the city of Flint, Genesee County-?

**Interviewer** 17:15

Um, I- we're gonna say that city- people in the city of Flint, um-

**Participant 144** 17:19

Okay.

**Interviewer** 17:19

Not a lot of people come to the farmers market from outside of Flint of course, in Flint, where do people get their food?

**Participant 144** 17:29

Well, in the grocery stores, very few of them are actually in Flint. So, hmm this is a harder one, um. It depends. Because a lot of people get, like, if you're just getting a couple of things, you might go to a convenience store, even though you're gonna pay less money, and you're not gonna have as many choices. It's a convenient thing. And that some, some people use our grocery store like that, too. Whereas grocery stores, I think, some people shop weekly at a grocery store. And then shopping between the convenience stores. And the same, I think it's similar thing to the farmers market, people shop, they're obviously more in the summertime, when there is more produce vendors. And, you know, obviously, less than summer or less in the winter. But I would say I mean, a good amount of Flint residents. shop at the farmers market. Yeah. It's more diverse than most farmers markets that I go to.

**Interviewer** 19:11

Um, and then, again, definitely let me know if you're gonna skip this section. We could also talk about sort of, um, the use of the supplemental sector, do you have any thoughts on, uh, how supplemental nutrition programs are used at these- at these different places? At- at grocery stores versus convenience stores versus farmer's markets.

**Participant 144** 19:32

So pre pandemic, I would say, um, I'm sorry, I must pause really quick. I got a call. [On phone with client] The local grocer. Hello, this is the local grocer. 6:30. Yep. Bye. [End phone call] Thank you. Um.

**Participant 144** 20:01

So pre pandemic, uh, we, we saw, I mean, maybe slightly less usage of EBT at the market than at the grocery store. But the Flint market actually used a lot of Double Up Food Bucks, more so than the grocery stores. We see a lot of Project FRESH coupons during the season, when they're available. And then we've had a lot of like, the Pistons had a special like they gave it to all Flint school kids. And people were using those pretty frequently when they were available, and they were, you know, it depends different things have different limitations about what you can buy. But, you know, they're- they're used [inaudible]. I mean, we see a lot of usage.

**Interviewer** 21:06

Awesome, great, um, so the next thing we're gonna do is run through a couple more definitions to sort of build out some concepts we could potentially add to the math. So I'm going to switch back to notation. And from like, Tori, if the textbook is mom gonna say all of them out loud. And so we're gonna be considering seven different what we're calling food system values. So these are different things, different concepts and definitions that came out of conversations and focus groups with residents and community members, basically asked folks, you know, what do you want from the food system, what is the food system that serves you well look like. And these are the concepts that came out of that work. So I'm going to run through the definitions of these seven fairly quickly. And if you want to think about which two or three, you might want to add to your map, either because they're really important or significant improvements in system or that you in particular have experience with, we could definitely talk about more than two or three, it's just usually easier to start with a smaller pool and then build it outwards. If you've already added I think like one of them into max we already mentioned. Awesome. So the first is education. And this is what that people want opportunities to learn food skills like cooking, gardening, nutrition, health, and potentially apply those career development. Also have community empowerment that people want to petition to empower communities like through supporting local economic development, fostering a sense of community and prioritizing residents cultural values, we also have quality of life is respected. So this is that as people move through the food system, they want to have their dignity choices, comfort and safety respected in a way that promotes the common good and quality of life for all as a partnership, so this is sort of a step above the consumer. But considering the different groups and organizations involved in the food system, basically want the food system to rock the activity and encourage problem solving. It's trust and strong partnerships that provide leadership and support collaboration and communication. And the last three are nutritious food so people want more food options that are higher nutritional content contains additives and preservatives and appropriate portions affordability, so food should be priced with community members can access the type of quality and quantity they require. It's really considering not just the the net price of food, but also resident income, your ability to afford the foods that they want. And the last is availability. So the type of quality and amount of food required for community members to conveniently feed families and themselves should be physically present. You have any questions about the seven values?

**Participant 144** 23:51

Um, so education is only that definition?

**Interviewer** 23:57

Yes, so we wanted to sort of preserve the- the words and phrasing from community members. Um, so it's-

**Participant 144** 24:08

-well I was just thinking of beginning farmer education.

**Interviewer** 24:11

Yes. [inaudible]

**Participant 144** 24:14

Okay, I see that in agriculture.

**Interviewer** 24:17

I try to cut down the amount of words I'm saying just because I know it's boring to just listen to me talk.

**Participant 144** 24:22

I just missed it, so, affordability, availability, and education are the three I would like to start with.

**Interviewer** 24:34

Sounds fantastic so I will switch back to Mental Modeler and I will go ahead and add both gardening and urban agriculture, which is sort of the the bucket term we're using for production here and then we have, affordability, availability, and education.

**Interviewer** 25:06

Um, cool, so there's two ways we can sort of start going about this process ,the first is if you have any connections that are immediately jumping to mind we can go ahead and do that or I can ask a little bit more directed of a question to start us off on something.

**Participant 144** 25:24

Um, well I think my, uh, I'd like to start- uh, start with kind of, I don't know it kind of the, uh, like crux of affordability-

**Interviewer** 25:35

Yeah.

**Participant 144** 25:35

-but, um, as a farmer who tries to make a living, growing food and yet is trying to sell it in a place where people have limited incomes is very, very difficult to price things where they should be, and help people access them.

**Interviewer** 26:26

Okay, so some connections I made off of that is that I get- I'm gonna introduce concepts but you're the expert, your map, totally tell me if like, I hate how you phrase that, definitely let me know or like that's not right at all totally. So I've added in is that I've added this concept of food access that when food is more affordable, that means that people are able to access it, that price of food when there's a lower price of food it's more affordable for folks but sort of the impact there is that when there's a low price it means that like farming or agriculture is not financially viable, again, we can phase it totally different. And that has an impact on sort of the amount of gardening or urban agriculture happening in the community. Um, is that a fair-

**Participant 144** 27:12

You know, I don't like gardening. I mean, this is-

**Interviewer** 27:14

Sure, let's just talk about urban agriculture.

**Participant 144** 27:18

Well, even agri- I mean-

**Interviewer** 27:21

Just agriculture? [Inaudible]

**Interviewer** 27:35

Other ways that you would like to connect ability to things to connect agriculture to things?

**Participant 144** 27:44

So then, um, you know, then applying it to the grocery store system. We have- in order to provide locally grown food and buy from other farmers or our farm, we have to package things differently, we have to wash them, we have to, like go through them and and also train the farmer that we're buying from how we need it as a grocery store. All of which is time and extra costs that we take on to prioritize buying locals. And honestly, the same goes for whether it's granola or whatever often, we've had to coach new business owners on how to go through the process with labeling and MDARD and pricing and how to price for wholesale. And there's been just a whole level of technical assistance that other grocery stores who click on, uh, distribute- a distribution lists don't incur.

**Interviewer** 29:19

[Inaudible] these connections sometimes it's a little bit- you have to introduce some, some weird little loops and stuff, but it makes it much better so.

**Interviewer** 29:51

So, added sort of this factor you're talking about the- the time and effort to process locally produced food and also out of this sort of concept of like selling, or like offering local food in retail that like, because if that makes sense to sort of have these benefits for grocery stores, and for local farmers to have local but it, there are costs to it.

**Participant 144** 30:22

Yes, and so like, right now we- in the winter, we are the only farmer business that sells at the farmers market all year round. And we have to compete with resellers and other people buying produce at much less discount and compete in price. Which we can't compete on price, so.

**Interviewer** 30:49

Um, does that makes sense to you to also sort of connect these concepts to the uh-. Um, are there other sort of connections around this concept. So I've sort of added that, you know, hopefully this makes sense to you. That's sort of what I've narrowed down to is this this goal right of- of selling locally produced food in retail, whether that's grocery stores, whether that's farmers market, other places and some barriers is that it's additional time and effort to process locally produced food both for that store, and then to the farmer that they have to put in time and effort to put it in a, you know, a convenient format and stuff like that. There's also competition with resellers. Are there any other sort of barriers or incentives that, you know, to- to sort of like facilitating this process, to bring more local into the town?

**Participant 144** 32:30

Well, I mean, if we were to sell to the restaurant- we do sell to some restaurants, but they primarily buy through the farmers market. But many of the local restaurants don't understand local availability, and growing seasons in Michigan, and what we have available when and the process it takes to harvest and wash so I'll, you know, get a text from a restaurant, can you have bas- two pounds of basil at the farmers market in an hour? I need it for a catering and I'll be like, yeah, I can have it there in two hours. And I will grudgingly do it but it doesn't teach them the realistic, realities of farming or they'll come in January, and they're like, I can't get two pounds of basil? And no, my basil is an inch tall right now. So some of that is- um, and seasonality in general is a huge issue. Because of the resellers at the farmers market, they think that everything is available all the time. Because at the market, we're not really designated of whether we're a grower or a reseller and so we're, you know, producing our own or buying it in. And so a lot of people think a lot of these things are available all the time. So that's a struggle and because there are times we don't have produce because of Michigan, you know, we're, I think looked at as well, we must not be good business people because we don't have Michigan produce than when we're actually growing what we bring to market and sometimes you don't have it.

**Interviewer** 34:21

Yeah.

**Participant 144** 34:31

But I mean even like backing up a little bit, you know, even getting started in farming, access to land, access to capital. You know, there are so many, so few opportunities, particularly when it comes to people of color, trying to access agriculture and land in this community, as well as you know, education and all of that. Sorry, that was just a whole lot but-

**Interviewer** 34:59

No, that was, I, you know, I was actually- I had it in my mental list of like, I would also like to step back and we, you know, add some- go deep on this sort of this agricultural piece of, you know, what contributes to happening or not happening or being successful or not being successful. So access to land and access to capital are, were big drivers there. And then also sort of this education piece, you know, and we need training and stuff like that. Renee popped on, I was about to say, Renee, you might want to, ask if [Name] would be willing to participate another time in the future.

**Interviewer 2** 35:41

Yeah, absolutely. When we finish this, [Name], I'm going to invite you to another conversation if we can work it in. Because as you noticed, on this initial map here, we're really focused on where people are getting their food, I'm going to be doing a second set of interviews, really around the ability for people to participate as actors in the food system. And what are the implications of equity in terms of accessible opportunities, and also race as a factor? So you know, just throw that in the back of your mind and we'll see if you can work that in as a month or so out. All right. Yeah, no, you're right on. So that was not a you went a little bit over. Yeah, that was a lot. But that was exactly what we need to hear from a producer, you have a unique perspective that others don't see the nuances behind. So we need to hear that. So. Thanks, Carissa.

**Participant 144** 36:40

All right. Good.

**Interviewer** 36:46

Um, we have it sort of set up that, that would feed into agriculture. If there's more sort of connections around agriculture, either things that, that drive it, the success of it, the functioning of it, or outcomes, benefits to individuals or the community. You can talk about that, or move on to another piece.

**Participant 144** 37:19

Yeah, I mean, it's- growing food is freaking hard. And getting people to stick it out to the point where it gets easier. Because now it's farming for eight years, we're finally clicking. And my partner and I like, we're like, man, it just got infinitely easier on year eight. But we don't know how many people out there have eight years to figure it out. Both from a money perspective, and we just live very frugally. And that allows us to be able to do it. And we feel like it is a really important thing to grow our own food. So we just, we get stumped on how we actually make money at this.

**Interviewer** 38:34

I can't even, I can't even imagine this is the first year I ever I have like very small, very small gardening experiences. This is the first year I've ever started stuff from seeds. And I was like, if I didn't work from home, I don't know how tough it is like, I even just like having the like brainpower to be like, oh, I need to move them into the sun and I need to water them twice a day. I'm like, if I like I don't know how you do this, and you have more than 20 even like it's so much effort, so I can't even imagine.

**Participant 144** 39:04

I planted 500 transplants yesterday.

**Interviewer** 39:07

Oh my god. I can't even imagine.

**Participant 144** 39:10

Um, but actually that reminds me: we also have a CSA with two other farmers. So we have a cooperative type of CSA. That is a lifesaver. And actually, you know, tripled this year with COVID. So it was an interesting year.

**Interviewer** 39:34

I feel like a lot of folks I know once COVID hit they're like, oh I can have local producers just deliver stuff to my house?

**Interviewer** 40:02

Um, great. We can definitely come back and [inaudible] come to mind, um.

**Participant 144** 40:16

Yeah, I need some refocusing on where to go next.

**Interviewer** 40:18

Yeah, of course, let me do some guided questions. Um, yeah, so something that we could touch on other places we have sort of two connections from grocery stores and convenience stores to availability, we could talk about you know, other ways that different sectors or different places in Flint affect availability so connections to it or also connections out of it, how does more availability or less availability of food that people want affect the community, either of them?

**Participant 144** 40:57

It's- availability is a tough one, because, um, you know, we have times of year where our demand is way more than we can support like greens in the fall, if I could grow, you know, way- is like a bajillion more collards for that season of when everyone's cooking that and freezing them I could sell out but I don't make that much money on collard. So I can't get what even what people in Detroit are selling them for so it's kind of a loss for us but it's also we're one of the few growers who grow greens like that and it brings people in at other times so trying to balance cultural food needs for our community with things that don't take up as much space and we can make you know more turns on in at the farm is a big, it's always a big conversation every spring and trying to you know, meet those specialty demands of things that were asked for like okra and crowder peas and things that we like to grow and meet demands. Or you know, just we like to help our customers find things that they would like they can't find anywhere else because people aren't boring. But it is I mean challenging. Also, neither Franklin or I are from the south, so we've learned a lot from our customers on how to grow different things that we wouldn't normally grow or haven't grown in the past but we, I mean also trying to find things that are fun and motivate us to grow that are different and unusual to bring to market is also kind of what feeds our soul.

**Interviewer** 43:11

Just [inaudible]-

**Participant 144** 43:17

Plus, you know, as a grocer we found a lot of people will eat healthier if their things are cooked, so having our grab and go section made with healthier, healthier items because that's our value system has been you know a lot of our produce gets turned into those things because that's how we can get people to buy them.

**Interviewer** 44:24

Lemme maybe rearrange slightly I- make sure that you can read it, I put stuff where I have space but it's not always where it is the most readable. It's a great map and this is exactly the kind of thing that we're going for I just, it's my job to make it a little bit more visually appealing. Awesome. So I had currently have two connections to, added sort of nutritious foods to it. That you know, produce in general is nutritious, but then also that, um, y'all are offering sort of convenient and nutritious foods. So that sort of like drives, the convenience factor sort of drives demand for that and then that benefit for the folks. Um, um, great. So we could also talk about sort of this education piece right now, its connection is mostly to agriculture, that's important input to agriculture, sort of as these skills. And then we can also talk about affordability, either are great. Are there connections you want to make from education or to education?

**Participant 144** 45:42

Okay, so I, um, one of the challenges and things that I've worked in in the years past is trying to get people who are growers who want to get to the place where they can sell their produce. And it is such a challenging place, because you're trying to make a leap into grow- changing from growing, maybe a garden to growing for sale. And it's a totally different way of thinking about it. Because it's not just growing what you like and what you will eat. It's thinking about, how do I have to grow to have things for market every week? Or how do I build a relationship with a potential restaurant that I can grow what they want? And can I even grow that and how do I not over promise and under deliver? And that all of these or how do I price this stuff? Because if I price it what I think people will pay, maybe I won't make money on it. But- and how do I not undercut the farmer next to me, and we both don't make money because we're both trying to be cheaper? So I- there's just, there's so much to learn. I mean, and then marketing and you know, there's just a huge gap of education to make that leap. And then how do you do that in a way that you can? I mean, keep doing it, I guess?

**Interviewer 2** 47:33

Yeah, that, that rings loud and clear. Having been engaged in the food system in Detroit for a decade, that is very, very real.

**Participant 144** 47:48

Yeah, I've been a technical assistant in a lot of way- and then when you add hoophouses into it, it's a whole additional layer. And I worked for the Hoophouses for Health program, through MSU and tried to help people who have been farming for years learn how to use hoop houses. And that was a huge leap as well.

**Interviewer** 48:25

Yeah. I wonder, again, if I ever ask a question you're like, I don't really know or even I don't really want to speak about that, let me know. But one question I really have is, can I get your perspective on- on sort of this education piece and how it's it's happening or not happening? Do you think some of the gap here is just the lack of availability of programs or like the way pro- like groups or programs are going about it isn't effective or like other thoughts you have to like, why, why it's maybe not working the best?

**Participant 144** 49:07

Um, it's a balance of sometimes when you're starting to grow, you don't have time to participate. So I've seen that, I've seen new growers not be able to put the time into learning because they're trying to do it. And I mean, there have been waves of programs. Edible Flint had a growers, trying to support growers. There's been, we've participated in different things that MSU has put on. I mean, I did some stuff with Hoophouses for Health as part of the conservation partner with the Conservation District. So they're- I mean, there have been things, but it's, you gotta have a cohort of growers who are ready to commit to that. And it's been fleeting, like little, I don't know, I never, it's one of those chicken or the egg sort of things. Are there enough growers who want to do that? Or can commit that? And is then- then is there a program ready to do that? And sometimes there is and sometimes there isn't.

**Interviewer 2** 50:37

Hmm. That was well put.

**Interviewer** 50:53

Any other connections you'd like to make? Two that we haven't- we've talked a bit about, but not in depth, that would be nutritious foods and portability. That doesn't mean that we need to add more to them if you don't want to.

**Participant 144** 51:12

Yeah, I'm stuck on the conundrum of affordability. And, you know, I do think that programs like Double Up Food Bucks, get it. Um, I, I don't know if that's the like, there's no one thing, it's- all of this work is so complex with so many different layers. It is- and that's why I like it. But I think that, it, you can't just point to one thing, because there has to be cultural support, you know, like the, the community has to embrace it, there has to be community participation, participation to form it, that has to be driven by dollars. It has to you know, capitalism's got to work its deal. And like, all of those things make it so complex, sometimes it is too hard to tease out that thing. Or maybe there isn't that thing that if you fix that it'll fix it.

**Participant 144** 52:36

I mean, I guess one of my lessons learned as a white woman who came into this work wanting to make a difference in Flint, learning that something's, the community doesn't want, you can't push even though you see it as an answer. We tried to get a Food Policy Council started for the last 15 years. And the community doesn't want it driven by institutions. And so therefore, we don't have a Food Policy Council and that's okay for Flint right now, because there isn't the momentum or the energy to drive it.

**Interviewer 2** 53:37

That's probably one of the most succinct descriptions I've heard of why that there's no Food Policy Council. Cause we've certainly heard about it.

**Participant 144** 53:47

I'm sure I'm sure.

**Interviewer** 53:48

I do wanna go back and see, you talked about, um, education, nutritious foods, affordability, and availability. Are there any other of these values that you would potentially like to add to your map? And the answer can definitely be no.

**Participant 144** 54:24

Um, I guess I would like to talk about community empowerment right now, just for a minute. Because having worked in like the urban garden movement, there, there is definitely a lot and a whole history and knowledge around like how to grow food here in Flint. And really, it's the, you know, residents that have mentored young people or grown their own food for years that have really driven any of the food system work that has happened here. And a lot of it has been around self sufficiency, like we have this land in Flint, let's utilize it to feed ourselves. And we can choose to grow healthier food than what other people would give us. And I think, you know, that has been the like core and soul of food systems here in Flint, and like all of this other stuff has kind of built up around it. But like, that's where really like the community building, the demand for, you know, access to water for your garden, or soil quality or policy around vacant lots, that has been the driver of that.

**Participant 144** 56:20

And a lot of that has been stalled by our water issues, and the pandemic in general. But there's also other barriers like it- the land bank, and who can purchase land, and in what neighborhoods can it be purchased and a history of white people being able to buy those lots and black people not and that has caused a lot of derision in neighborhoods and- and amongst other people who may want to [inaudible] are not from that neighborhood.

**Interviewer** 57:19

Is it? Is it fair to I mean, I'm sort of connecting it to this. You said it like sort of like self sufficiency. As, uh, you know, the Flint water crisis and racial inequity and how it connects to land is sort of like impact and a [inaudible] I just want to be sure I'm using terms that you agree with that sort of reflect your knowledge of it. Awesome.

**Participant 144** 57:58

I love it. That's how my brain works.

**Interviewer** 58:04

I mean, that's kind of what we're doing, right? We're mapping- [Laughing].

**Interviewer 2** 58:07

We just taking a snapshot of your brain in real time. [Laughing].

**Interviewer** 58:15

Um, yeah, so we sort of started off with some of these sectors that we want to talk about and some of these values that we wanted to talk about. But we also wanted to make sure that we held some space to open it up and see if there's anything else that you would like to add to the map, so other things you think are influential in Flint, or other sort of outcomes, other sort of values that you think aren't reflected in the list that we have that you want to sort of connect to the map or talk about in some way.

**Participant 144** 58:51

Um, I think my one pet peave that's not on here is the quality of food in the emergency sector. And that particularly like through the Flint water crisis, farmers and retailers have had to compete with the free food that has been available to residents, which is, I mean, personally, personally a conflict. It's like you want people to be able to access food, but you want people to be able to access healthy food, but then you're also competing against boxes of free food on every count- corner when you're trying to run a business.

**Interviewer** 59:49

This is something that, um, has come up in several of our- of our conversations about the sort of tension here between, you know, access- the benefit of free food to people who really need it and the attention there is with, um, too much free food means it's very difficult for retail to survive.

**Participant 144** 1:00:26

But it also alters people's view of the value of food. If you're getting it free for the past five years-

**Interviewer** 1:00:36

Yeah.

**Participant 144** 1:00:36

-why then should I have to pay what this person has priced it at?

**Participant 144** 1:00:53

Which is a really complex thing when you as a b- you know, became a farmer, because you wanted your community to be able to access, you know, have more fresh, healthy, locally grown food.

**Interviewer** 1:01:03

Yeah.

**Participant 144** 1:01:05

The conundrum of pricing it where you need to survive and having it priced at a place for, um, people to be able to afford.

**Participant 144** 1:01:17

Yeah, which is not a joke, but I feel like I have to say it.

**Interviewer 2** 1:01:20

Yeah, no, you do. And it's, you know, it goes back to something you said earlier about what people understand. So free food is not free, it's just free to you. But is that free, somebody paid but you know, so, to your point. You know, people don't understand that it's not free. You're just getting it free. Yeah, so you're right, it's complex. It's complicated.

**Participant 144** 1:01:49

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 1:01:52

Here in Detroit, one of the farms I support while Carissa's messing with stuff over there, one of the farms I support has you know, a farmer's- one of those community farm markets, farmers markets operates at the farm and at the same time, they have a space for the free distributed food you know, so they were able in the summer to actually do both. They actually were able to do both at the- at the farmers market and they also had they um, before the market opened last year when COVID was still happening, did the store so they moved to the online store, and they still also had foods that people could pick up in boxes. So they were able to- they were able to navigate both, they were able- they were, they weren't the only ones there were a couple of others but I worked with one particularly and I watched, I saw how they navigated you know to get online but then also in the open market, to open the market and have a space where the free distribution of food as well as still maintaining the integrity of the market. So I think that has a lot to do with relationships and knowing people and there's a host of stuff but I don't want to take you off, I just was kind of waiting while- just figured I would share that with you while-

**Participant 144** 1:03:22

That's interesting, thank you for sharing.

**Interviewer 2** 1:03:24

-Carissa was connecting dots and stuff so yeah, people are, people are loving and creative and they're figuring it out [Name] just like you are.

**Participant 144** 1:03:31

That's great

**Interviewer 2** 1:03:33

But all the same stuff you said still matt- it's still real, you know?

**Interviewer** 1:03:38

Yeah, gotta figure it out.

**Participant 144** 1:03:42

Yeah.

**Interviewer** 1:03:43

I added in those pieces of quality of food, the competition, the free food- sort of the presence of the emergency sector and then also that's run into the expectation of cheap and free food plus people's like valuation of food. Awesome.

**Interviewer** 1:04:07

Great, I think maybe we can definitely make some changes, at a certain point I'm gonna save this file. I'd also like to again, anything comes to mind just let me know and you can add or change anything you want. But one of the goals of this project is not just to build this common understanding but also to sort of ask about leverage points, things that you think could be changed or added to the current food system that would have positive outcomes [inaudible] so we talked about some, you know, some aspects of this that like vacation and like narrowing the gap between gardening and like selling food, you know, have some, some benefits and like sourcing, like local production in retail, that sort of like, or our leverage points in one way or another, are there things that you would consider to be potential leverage points in the Flint food system? Another way I phrase this is if you ran the world, what would you do? I know that's a big, open-ended question.

**Participant 144** 1:05:19

So just got to make sure I'm understanding what you're asking. Are you- Are you asking like, where like, tipping points might be if like, we did this thing, this would help it?

**Interviewer** 1:05:39

Yeah. Um, so yeah. So like, like, like, leverage points can be seen as, like, I guess, like, things that would have sort of cascading or big effects. But there doesn't necessarily need to be small things like, you know, dismantling systemic racism is a huge, and also a lot of work, right? It doesn't necessarily need to be a small effective thing, it can also be a big, really effective thing.

**Participant 144** 1:06:09

I want that one. [Laughing].

**Interviewer 2** 1:06:13

Yeah, that's the, that's the interview, I'm gonna invite you to [Name]. One of the things I heard you say, and tell me if this, if I'm giving it back to you, you said that if these two things matched, if we had a core growers who are ready, and we had a program that was ready, and we put those two things together, you just might, that was one something I had circled, highlighted in blue-

**Participant 144** 1:06:42

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 1:06:43

-when you said that.

**Participant 144** 1:06:45

Yeah, I agree that that is definitely one of them. Because we, we need more producers who are producing more food. Because we don't yet have enough production to kind of put things together to meet the, you know, the potential demand.

**Interviewer 2** 1:07:13

Mm hmm.

**Participant 144** 1:07:15

We, many of us growers are small, which is great and a good- where you start, and I really do see urban gardening and urban agriculture as a way that you get new farmers started because land access is a little easier than hundreds of 1000s of dollars in the suburbs, or wherever. But it is, we don't produce the quantities to get into certain markets.

**Participant 144** 1:07:54

And not saying that every farmer needs to be a big farmer, we need ways that little farmers can work together or aggregate in ways that everyone can kind of access.

**Interviewer** 1:08:19

Okay. Are there any other things that come to mind?

**Participant 144** 1:08:28

Yeah, I was trying to put some words around. This is like a little bit pie in the sky, but if the emergency sector would buy from local farms, and not offer us little amounts, maybe like market rates of things that would be a way to, you know, close that gap between people in need being able to access healthier foods. And in the same way those emergency boxes need to take into consideration who are in the communities that they serve. Because giant giveaways of milk to a population that is lactose intolerant is about the dumbest thing over the last few years.

**Interviewer 2** 1:09:37

That's a good example

**Participant 144** 1:09:38

That one just ground my gears.

**Participant 144** 1:09:46

Um, but also, I mean, I think there have been in the supplemental sector, I think there have been attempts to, um, benefit both the farmers and the, um, and the people who are- need to access food, I mean, Double Up Food Bucks is okay, I'm a lit-, I get a little wound out because Flint, they made it so it didn't have to be local food in Flint, because, you know, we- we have a great need for fresh produce, but I mean, what a way to kick farmers in the gut, the program that's supposed to help you sell more local produce is actually not. Um, that's [inaudible] the whole time. And then, I mean, and I hate to use this example, because I did work for the program, but Hoophouses for Health giving access, zero interest loans to farmers to build infrastructure, and then farmers pay off the loan with produce to headstart families was such a win win idea that it benefited two populations in very important ways. Um, and then adding the Farm to School, uh, component helped farmers get into schools in ways that schools would never have brought farmers in. So having seen how that works, not that there wasn't, you know, some bumps with those, especially those relationships with schools. But it was like this incentive for schools to try local farmers. And some of those relationships went away, and some of them didn't. So like those, looking for those, like, win-win leverage points that help more than one group, which is so much more cost effective. You know, with the resources, we get to do things that help multiple, you know, pieces of the food system.

**Interviewer** 1:12:05

Yeah.

[COVID SECTION]

**Interviewer** 1:12:07

Well, so the last thing we're going to talk about, as promised, I'm going to add COVID-19

**Interviewer** 1:12:14

onto the map.

**Interviewer** 1:12:16

And one of the things mentioned about COVID-19 is that people sort of purchasing CSA boxes, what have been some other impacts of COVID-19 you've seen or experienced or heard of, and influence?

**Participant 144** 1:12:36

Well from- I'll do the grocery store perspective first. Being a small grocery store, some people really saw that as a benefit. And so we had very dedicated customers that would call in, we would pack boxes for them of their groceries and meet them at the door. We completely lost our catering business. So we did pivot to a Friday meal. So we bake or make a dinner for about $30 that has a dessert and a main course for four to six people. I do- I have delivered it. We have a vegan version and and a meat version usually. And those have really saved our asses because it brought in the income we had lost with catering. We did have to shrink our staff. It's pretty much my partner Franklin and I and a part time person running the market, the grocery store, and the farm, which is insane. And I mean it's tight around here. We've made it through thus far. But sometimes I wonder how. We've had some good partnerships emerge. The U of M Flint's food service wouldn't feed their dorms because they didn't have enough people. So they created the voucher program with us and several other partnership businesses for food. So the students come and buy food with vouchers prepaid by the university, and that's gotten us through. There was the like, it was about six weeks that we were paid to make food for nurse-nursing home staff through a world centric program that saved our butts then. Um, so I mean there are things that really helped. The market being closed for three months hurt bad, but the CSA is made up for it. So things have kind of been a- I mean, we went from 40 CSA's to 130. So that was huge.

**Participant 144** 1:15:11

And having our, you know, the partner-partners that we partner with, the other farms, being able to- all of us being able to grow more to be able to meet that demand. I mean, that really helped all of us. And we can lean on each other if something doesn't work. So plus having other farmers to be able to, like talk to, I think it was a little bit of therapy. But that definitely helped get us through. Um, so, but there's less traffic through our store during lunchtime, because people are working from home. But I have more people buying groceries. So I had to make some shifts for the students and for that shift. Um, it's been a weird time. But we're lucky to have- not have to close and to be able to, you know, just having- if we had been shut down at the grocery store, I don't know if we could have come back up. — But people seem- are seeming to value local, a little bit more. We'll see how the summer goes at the market. The market is still down a lot in sales.

**Interviewer** 1:17:11

Anything else want to change? Or add about COVID-19? Or do you feel good about your map? It's an awesome map. It is. I'm kind of happy with my map. The last question is really kind of, kind of also an open ended one. But you know, we talked about a lot of different things about food system and COVID-19. Is there anything else important about this conversation that we haven't talked about today? that you'd like to add? Make sure we carry forward in this research? The answer can definitely be no.

**Participant 144** 1:17:56

Yeah, I don't think I have anything to add, I think I got all my big ones out. So

[COVID SECTION ENDS]

[Outro]