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**SPEAKERS**

Participant 202, Interviewer, Interviewer 2

**Interviewer 2** 00:00

Thank you for that permission. Oh, thank you for your permission to record the interview, the recording is now on. And your participation is voluntary. You can choose not to answer any of the questions, you can actually also choose to withdraw from the research at any time, we'll keep the recording confidential, our research team, we won't use or share your name or any identifying information in any of our research results. However, please be mindful for yourself if there's anyone who might be in the room or nearby and able to hear your comments. So that's for your own protection. And if you have any questions, afterwards, you can email either [Interviewer] or I. And your consent is demonstrated by your continued participation in the interview. Do you have any questions about this before we move ahead? No, I do not. All right, great. Great, great. Great. So let's start out with with learning a little bit about you. So how would you describe your role or your experience with the local food system?

**Participant 202** 01:15

Well, I've been working in the food system for over 24 years at this point, with emergency food services and partners that include faith-based pantries, school programming, like after school meals and Head Start meals, prepared food, and also with emergency programs, like our backpack for schools, for weekend meals for kids, and senior boxes and other relief support services in the emergency food space.

**Interviewer 2** 01:54

Awesome. Awesome, awesome. You said over 20 years, wow, you've been at this for a minute here?

**Participant 202** 02:04

Yes, yeah, I actually I started my career with General Motors at Pontiac world headquarters. So I came back to the community I grew up in; I grew up here in Flint, and started this work in development, and then programs and then you know, continued my role. I just really found my passion for life. So I, myself always add a food bank or network or something in the hunger relief space.

**Interviewer 2** 02:32

Okay, awesome. Well, thank you for that. Thank you for that. Um, so we're going to move into the into the modeling part of this, I would like to, I'm gonna turn this to Teressa, at this point to bring you on board with this part of it.

**Interviewer** 02:54

Yeah, I'm sorry, I'm just getting things

**Participant 202** 02:58

ready to go.

**Interviewer** 03:00

Sometimes my screen shares very odd. Cool. So I'll run through a quick example. Just because you've already gone through this process once and it was a long time ago. So definitely stop me and ask any questions at any point. So this is the program that we're going to be using. And so as we go through this, I'll be modeling what you tell me, but it's very much your map. So I want you to be able to sort of, you know, correct me if I wouldn't phrase it that way, I wouldn't connect it that way or anything like that. So basically, we when we're making connections between concepts, we have a couple of decisions to make. First is the direction. So if I'm thinking about what impacts traffic, I might say, you know, the number of cars impacts how much traffic there is, then I have to decide if it's positive or negative. So if it's going to be blue, or orange, and that basically says if one goes up, does the other one also go up? Or does it go down? Do they move in the same or opposite directions. So if there's more cars, there's more traffic that's moving in the same direction, it's a positive connection with public transportation, that might be a more negative connection. If there's a better public transportation system, then there's gonna be less traffic because there's, you know, more people riding a bus or you know, taking a subway or something where it's not on the road. The last thing I have to decide is the connection strength. So it's basically saying like, how influential or impactful is one thing on another so number of cars might be a strong connection to traffic, whereas public transportation might be more of a medium connection, like it is, you know, it has an influence but, you know, the buses still on the roads in some way or there's, you know, people who love their cars don't even if they had the best public transportation system in the world, they still really liked. Yeah, so it's more like it's not the end all be all. It's To influential, but we're medium, um, you know, and maybe like number of bikes, or people who cycle could be like a weak connection where it has some influence, but you know, it snows in winter, you know, we can't just have everyone bike or they have to carry things, you know, some impact but not a huge influence on the issue. So that's sort of the thing decisions the direction, if it's positive or negative, or if it's a weak medium or strong connection. Any questions about that process?

**Participant 202** 05:31

Nope, I understand that.

**Interviewer 2** 05:33

Awesome. So [Interviewer], I'm gonna go back to I realized that when I flipped my sheet over that I miss giving her the system's definitions. So pardon me, I'll just go back here for a second. So as we're, as we're looking at this, we want to, we're focusing our work at this time on five sectors, different sectors of the food system. So when we talk about that we're looking at production first, in terms of growing, you know, crops and livestock. And that can range anywhere from your backyard to you know, the larger firms, were looking also at processing and packaging. So the folks who are taking that produce, washing packing it or possibly turning it into value added products, like tomatoes, now becoming salsa or ketchup or something sexy. Then our third sector, the folks who are dealing with our wholesale and retail. So they're taking those goods and products that are made, and making them available via resale. And then our folks in our retail sector where we go to get our food, whether it's the grocery stores or the markets or our restaurants, and then the folks who deal with the food that we don't eat, the collecting and processing and management of, of the waste materials themselves. Do you have any questions about the concepts themselves?

**Participant 202** 07:02

Well, I think the only comment I have is, sometimes the waste is also still usable. So when you say waste, it doesn't include the recapture of things from retail or process and packaging that may still be put to use.

**Interviewer 2** 07:21

Yes. The recovery, yes. Yes, we'll make sure we add that thank you for for raising it. So when you look at those particular sectors, where were you say, in your experience across these sectors? Where do you think you have the most expertise?

**Participant 202** 07:41

Really, it's all of them. We deal with all of them every day.

**Interviewer 2** 07:45

Okay. Okay, great. That's wonderful. This is gonna be a beautiful man. All right so we're gonna go back and [Interviewer] is gonna put the basemap up for us.

**Participant 202** 07:59

Now should I-and I'll be offended that the emergency food systems aren't represented at all as part of this conversation.

**Interviewer 2** 08:05

No, not at all so-

**Participant 202** 08:07

on the [inaudible] side of land.

**Interviewer 2** 08:10

Yeah, because in this case, as you know, we're doing two sets of maps, the first set of maps, where do you get your food from primarily, dealt with the snap programs, the emergency food, and then retail, where people go buy it. Here, we're talking about people who are actors in the food system, as well. And in these particular sectors, and clearly as we talk about where your expertise is, you're gonna see your concepts from emergency food on the map, when [Interviewer] brings it up here in a moment.

**Participant 202** 08:46

Sure. So my last question on that would then like coop growers and those type of things be in production or be with wholesale?

**Interviewer 2** 08:54

They would be in-so the growers are going to be in the production side and the co op would be more in on the retail side.

**Participant 202** 09:04

Because we have a lot of third party vendors and others too. So would that be like wholesale?

**Interviewer 2** 09:10

Yep, yep. Okay, we're gonna pull the map up, you're ready to go?

**Participant 202** 09:13

I just want to make sure I have my frame correct.

**Interviewer 2** 09:16

Yes, you do. Yeah. Precisely. Yes. So here's the base map itself. And then, like you said, that you're in the emergency food sector. So we'll put your concept out here, because that's your big frame of reference there. All right. So as we look at at this map, and in your areas of of expertise, how would you draw connections between these different sectors of the food system? How do you see them connected?

**Participant 202** 09:54

Well, the emergency sector works directly with every single one of them, so that would be my first connection to be made. We work with large scale farms across the nation and the region. We work with processors, wholesale retailers, and you know, there's a relationship with each of them. A lot of times we're buying directly to-we're purchasing-it's not just about being donated, so a lot of people lose that notion, thinking differently.

**Interviewer 2** 10:37

Okay.

**Interviewer** 10:42

Would that be sort of like some purchasing from each of these? And then the food recovery aspect, does that also happen from producers from wholesalers or resellers from retailers?

**Participant 202** 10:56

They all can be either donors or they can be, you know, a sales, a purchase.

**Interviewer** 11:05

Yeah. Do you have a sense of how these connections strengths may differ? Like, the emergency sector, does it partner more or purchase food more from retailers and wholesalers from producers more and then also from-?

**Participant 202** 11:22

Probably from producers the most.

**Interviewer** 11:25

Okay. Yeah.

**Participant 202** 11:26

And then wholesalers, probably the same actually. And straight from processors, as well.

**Interviewer 2** 11:40

Oh, so we need-yeah, a connection.

**Participant 202** 11:42

Connection. Yeah, cause a lot of you know-we spent almost $4 million a year, just our food bank alone. Okay. And you do process direct-you do also purchase directly from resellers, I mean, retailers as well as wholesalers? Okay. Okay, gotcha. Yeah.

**Interviewer** 12:05

And then the food recovery: is that more for retailers from producers? Sort of how do those connections...?

**Participant 202** 12:11

The food recoveries' mostly from retailers and from producers.

**Interviewer** 12:16

Gotcha.

**Interviewer 2** 12:21

Could you say a little bit of what that looks like?

**Participant 202** 12:24

We pick up from over 75 retail stores in our service area, three times a week. So again, this is large-scale refrigerated trucks food safety channel work right back to a warehouse that's AIB certified to store and manage large volumes of recovery. So that's why I also say it's the farms because a lot of times if they're, like peppers is a perfect example. In the fall, there's way too many red peppers. And those might become donated loads, but we're taking whole semis, so then we have to have a cooler that holds 12 semis of food. So it's the larger scale of what we'd see on you know, neighborhood to neighborhood, but a lot of these are within our neighborhoods and local farms as well. A lot of our purchasing, though, does come from all across the nation. We buy in the winter time, from Texas, Florida, North Carolina, you know, millions and millions of pounds of fresh produce, so we have it here in Flint. If we didn't, we wouldn't have produce.

**Interviewer 2** 13:36

So when you talk about your purchases here for producers, that's mainly national and regional producers?

**Participant 202** 13:46

It can be all, it's all.

**Interviewer 2** 13:50

Ah, okay.

**Participant 202** 13:51

But in the winter months, there's none available local. So we have to go to the southern states where it's warm, and there's a harvest season or even from California, we'll get oranges. That's one example. So of course, that costs more, but if we have unrestricted revenue from donors, or grants or USDA or other opportunities, we definitely want to have produce year round. Now our potatoes in winter are Michigan grown potatoes that are stored underground for us. So there's still, you know, for 10 to 11 months out of the year, our potatoes are Michigan potatoes.

**Interviewer 2** 14:34

Gotcha. Okay. Okay. All right. So you mentioned-I heard you-another concept you introduced was the funding aspect of it. You talked about donors and grants Iin terms of funding. So draw the connections for us around the funding aspect, if you could?

**Participant 202** 14:55

Funding would be a very large connection to to producers, and to wholesale. So we'll buy a lot of-what we do is we buy what doesn't get donated. So 700 partners have access to it. So here in Michigan, if we're not seeing Campbell's Soup donating semi loads of soup, we'll go out and buy soup, and have it here at the food bank for others to use in their program. And the same to be said for produce. There's a lot of produce that's really only four months out of the year, here in Michigan, without going and getting it from out of state. So we're constantly buying-trying to fund that in any way that we can. So we have a line item in the state budget, which is the Michigan agriculture surplus supply, which gives us money to buy directly from Michigan farms. We have donors that give money that, you know, we can use for you know, unrestricted and then we have grants and donors that give money specifically to buy food. And then we also have USDA of course, we have commodities that will come in that are shared with CAP councils, so like GCCARD here locally will get commodities as well, but then we get a portion of commodities to share with all of the partners.

**Interviewer 2** 16:29

Okay, so when you talk about the partners, is that primarily-where would we represent partners here, so that sharing from the grant funds-what partners specifically?

**Participant 202** 16:41

Here locally, it's 200 partner agencies. There's 200 faith-based pantries, soup kitchens, senior centers, apartment complexes, do things directly out of a truck, we have food trucks that take prepared meals around, we have trucks that take mobile pantries, we have trucks that do free produce distributions. We have trucks that do dairy and eggs and protein items. So those distributions are free of any charge to neighbors. And they are free neighbors that need it. So we actually increase that access to fresh produce by breaking down the barrier of transportation because we take it right to the neighborhood.

**Interviewer 2** 17:39

Okay, so those are distribution partnerships, right? That's basically-that funding-

**Participant 202** 17:44

Or we do it ourselves as a self directed distribution. Like our summer on the run trucks, we make our culinary meals here. And we distribute right off the truck at apartment complexes and basketball courts and parks throughout the summer, getting reimbursed by the federal government and the Michigan Department of Education.

**Interviewer 2** 18:08

Okay, so.

**Participant 202** 18:09

So again, all free, we're taking all-we're trying to break down all the barriers and all the access issues that everybody always talks about by coming up with a new model of delivery, that takes food directly to the neighbor. Got it, okay. With direct home delivery, or with a point of distribution right in the parking lot of the apartment complex or the senior center, or with the neighbor themselves, like at the local park. The biggest examples is the apartment complexes around town with our-we call it "somewhere on the run." So it's the mobile food truck that shows up and then our driver actually distributes the meals. There's no partner there.

**Interviewer 2** 18:58

Okay, and I heard you say there was a connection between the funds and your ability to transport, is that right?

**Participant 202** 19:04

Yes, the funding pays for transportation, it pays for the staff, it pays for the food.

**Interviewer 2** 19:10

Okay, got it.

**Participant 202** 19:13

And the more of it we have, the more we can do. Alright, so it's my job as an administrator every year to just manage the different revenue streams that are coming in and maximize what we're able to do because we're never going to do less, we're just going to do it differently on whatever budget we have for it, if that makes sense.

**Interviewer 2** 19:35

Yeah, it does. It does.

**Participant 202** 19:37

So an example, like produce-when we buy in bulk and we're doing a 14 or 18 pallet semi, we're getting things for nine cents a pound. Whereas even like-Flint fresh or others-because they're not buying at the volume that we're buying at-they pay four times as much, so we're doing things to scale to get the most for our dollar, right. And a lot of times, we're just paying transportation. So we might have a donated load of food in New Jersey, and then we're just paying for that third party truck to bring it to us here in Michigan.

**Interviewer 2** 20:20

Okay, so I heard there's that cost differential based on at scale, that you're able-okay, so pricing at scale. Okay, so I see that.

**Participant 202** 20:35

So you know, any funder is typically blown away by the leveraging ability of a food bank, but it's because of those relationships or because we're just paying transportation, and we're not doing it to get two or three pallets, we're doing it to get, you know, we do three semis a week of potatoes, right, so that's 18 pallets times three, coming in of just even one commodity.

**Interviewer 2** 21:03

So it's higher volume. Yep.

**Participant 202** 21:05

And again, it's given away for free, no charge.

**Interviewer 2** 21:09

And free. Okay, so I don't know where we-how we represent that, per se.

**Participant 202** 21:17

It's very unusual, because even if you're a grocery store, of course, you're buying from Michigan farms, you're buying the grade A apple, and then you're charging your uptick to support your store, and that apple might be you know, $5.50 a bag. Whereas the food bank is getting the B Apple, it's not the grade A Apple, it's the leftover apple, that then we ask the farmer to package for us, and you pay him for that commodity. But now it's $1 a bag and we give it away for free, because we got donations to cover that purchase of that apple.

**Interviewer 2** 21:56

Okay, so I heard two things in there, a couple of things in there also heard the quality of the food mentioned, because you said you're getting Bs instead of As, you know, and you're also able to leverage the funding to affect the access, because now you're getting it for less. You know, it's like nine cents versus x number.

**Participant 202** 22:22

Yeah, pennies... if you were buying it for retail, or buying it for your restaurant, right, like, so if you're a restaurant owner, and you're buying produce, but you're only buying so many tomatoes and such for the couple days, you're gonna pay a lot more for that tomato, than if you're buying a whole semi of tomatoes, even if we take it and mind you, then we have our kitchen, so if we take our culinary team and make that tomato into something that's more shelf stable or refrigerated, that tomato is gonna last a lot longer.

**Interviewer 2** 22:57

I got it. So let me catch a couple of them right quick. So with the funding, you're able to-it's connected to the cost of food, because you're able to purchase it for less. So there's connection directly from your funding and donations to the food cost itself up there. So, the concept that you have at the top connected to the funding, [Interviewer], I was trying to-and then you got the quality on there already, right.

**Participant 202** 23:28

Yeah, and there's not really much of a difference between the grade A and Grade B right? It just looks a little different. It still tastes the same, same nutritional value. So it's very slight, that difference of quality.

**Interviewer 2** 23:46

But that's all still tied to your food access.

**Participant 202** 23:49

And yeah, it's how we can maximize the dollar.

**Interviewer 2** 23:54

Got it. Okay. Got it

**Participant 202** 23:58

More important to us than anything is that you know every neighbor has access to it. It does us no good if we just get it here and have it in the building. We need to make sure that every neighbor and every neighborhood and park and community and school and library has food to give away when they need it.

**Interviewer 2** 24:16

Right. You talk briefly about the different types of delivery the food distribution deliveries I think that's what that's captured there, right [Interviewer] the food distribution deliveries concept around the various different ways in which you get food out to people who as you said to their homes, their apartment-some are direct and some are...

**Participant 202** 24:46

Some are to the partner who then will distribute uncertain days. Or like a pantry. And some to the Mobile Food Pantry where it's in the neighborhood but there's 400 cars lined up, so a drive thru model? Yes. And then some are direct and we directly hand it to the person who's going to eat it.

**Interviewer 2** 25:08

Ah, so as direct pantries and directly to the consumer. Yeah, either one of those is direct. Okay, to the consumer and to the pantry. Okay. Okay. Okay. So those are all access opportunities. Okay, so that way you're addressing the transportation barrier, so that's represented in that corner up at the left there.

**Participant 202** 25:34

Yeah, that's been the bulk of our work for the last five or six years, is breaking down that transportation issue.

**Interviewer 2** 25:39

Transportation barrier. Okay. All right. Then you mentioned your kitchens that you all are in the value added processing? Yes.

**Participant 202** 25:48

Yeah, we do-we do almost 8000 meals a day out of our kitchen on the... And a lot of it is Head Start with GISD, they have after school meals for like Boys and Girls Club. Summer meals, of course, when school's not in session, we're doing meals during the summer. And all of that gets reimbursed through MDE, it's paid for in essence, just like a school lunch would. So does that-does that fit more in the concept of being like, wholesale distribution or retail distribution? I mean, we almost become the distributor, right? We almost become-

**Interviewer 2** 26:29

Exactly, that's what I'm wondering. So the connection is a different kind of connection.

**Participant 202** 26:34

Yeah I don't know what you do with it, but it is different then -t is-we're producing it, we in essence, become the producer. You know, that's-

**Interviewer 2** 26:41

That's what I'm saying, that value added processing and meal-so separating the two first, the value added processing, cuz you're taking something and making it into something else. Right? Is that what I heard you say? Okay, so you're doing that. But then you're also distributing, you know, you're the wholesale distributor to pantries and to people directly. Yeah, I'm wondering if there's another connection between...

**Participant 202** 27:09

It's the fleet of vehicles, it's the refrigeration, it's the food safety, you know, more so than anything, because you know, anybody can put something in their car and drive it somewhere. But when you're talking about meals for kids or seniors, the integrity of that meal has to be safe.

**Interviewer 2** 27:29

Okay. Okay. So vice versa. So I'm looking at the-you know, when we talk about who you're doing the food deliveries to, being able to reflect that those food deliveries-the pantries-so it's not necessarily just to the-where would your pantries fit? They're not necessarily there, are they a form of an extended kind of-?

**Participant 202** 28:03

Well, they're in essence, also a distributor, I would say. But they're also running other things, right. So a lot of them will be the school that's also teaching the kids but then they're distributing the backpack on the weekend. So on Friday, they're sending home meals that it's different than the meals they prepared in their kitchen. Right? So it's a program.

**Interviewer 2** 28:29

Right, right.

**Participant 202** 28:30

And they're more like a pantry, they're receiving all the food to have in the neighborhood, when neighbors need to come up and have that emergency. So it's always there. It's there all the time. And that mobile pantry is that point of time, like once a week or once a month, where a whole semi load is right there in the neighborhood handing it out.

**Interviewer 2** 28:55

Okay, so I'm looking at our-

**Participant 202** 28:57

Our food trucks are daily, right, our food trucks are running around and doing meals daily.

**Interviewer 2** 29:04

Right. Okay. So I'm trying to see that connection and where to put it because it's not the retail side, it's still out of your work as a distributor. And you've got the concept here at the top for food distributions and deliveries. But it doesn't, I mean, trying to capture that you do that to pantries and programs and direct to consumers, a variety of people here, so I just don't know the best way to to represent that.

**Participant 202** 29:40

And it might be represented on the other discussion, right, but I don't...

**Interviewer** 29:45

Yeah because the emphasis of this conversation is really on like a localized food system, I think it's okay as it is. Yeah, because it is more representative with the other set of things.

**Interviewer 2** 30:02

Okay, great. I just wanted to make sure that I wasn't missing something.

**Participant 202** 30:05

And all of the things we talked about we do both locally and nationally., right? So we're picking out from local stores and we're working with I mean, the scale of it is from everywhere, but it's both local and regional.

**Interviewer 2** 30:22

Got it. Now, you mentioned that you do have connection on the-you said-you teased out the food recovery side of waste. Do you have-we got composters on here as well; is there any connection between your emergency work that you do and directly with the composters or not?

**Participant 202** 30:45

You know, we do a pretty good job of getting our food out timely, so we don't have to do a lot of waste. However, if we do have waste, we do share it off to a pig farm, typically is where a lot of our waste goes to feed the animals that then...

**Interviewer 2** 31:00

Ah, so they're okay, so it's animal feed.

**Participant 202** 31:04

Circle of Life, right? So we're gonna feed the animals that are later going to feed us.

**Interviewer 2** 31:09

Okay, animal feed. Gotcha. Excellent. Thank you for that.

**Participant 202** 31:12

That's where we try to get most of our waste handled, of course, some would go to just general waste disposal or trash removal.

**Interviewer 2** 31:21

Okay. Oh so some of it does go to trash.

**Participant 202** 31:26

Yeah, I mean, we try not to have a lot of it. I don't know what the percentages are. Most of it would still be edible, so we take it to a pig farm for the majority.

**Interviewer 2** 31:34

Okay, so you could add trash, or garbage trash or garbage disposal as well. Okay, that's great.

**Participant 202** 31:41

So we get something donated and it's compromised, like it's a third party carrier and the refrigerated unit goes down. You know, we're not gonna hand that food out. We're gonna get rid of it, we're gonna have to get rid of it.

**Interviewer 2** 31:54

Exactly, exactly, so we have a little bit.

**Participant 202** 31:57

Not a ton of it, but it does happen from time to time where we can't use what was sent. Sometimes it's misrepresented, right? So the farm might say, Hey, this is some great tomato. Exactly. Maybe the top layer is but the rest of the panel, it's disgusting and smooshed.

**Interviewer 2** 32:15

Yes, exactly. So I see what you're saying with your waste connection is you rescue it and recover it, you turn it into value added products. So that arrow from food rescue to value added products.

**Participant 202** 32:30

And we do food recovery from retail and we also do food recovery from restaurants. Like one of our examples, Little Caesars Pizza, and then those go around immediately and put to use usually at the shelters. We're rescuing pizza that was hot and ready that didn't go out and it didn't get directly out or it's getting frozen to be used later.

**Interviewer 2** 32:57

That's important because we really didn't get those kinds of connections in the other map, how you're rescuing. So we don't have the we have the waste loop represented here.

**Participant 202** 33:08

So food recovery would also be farms, right? It's what would have went to-not went to market. So it does become the connection to those producers as well. And definitely to the stores and restaurants. Yep, perfect.

**Interviewer 2** 33:24

Okay. Okay. All right, great. Great. Cool.

**Participant 202** 33:30

It's how food banks actually started, right? The community that don't want to see food go to waste, so they made a deposit, right, a bank, keep it in a warehouse to store it in until it was needed, and shared with everybody. So the whole idea is about sharing what might not have been captured because you didn't have a facility. So that's why we now have three warehouses and all these refrigerators and coolers and trucks.

**Interviewer 2** 33:58

Gotcha. Okay. All right, we got that that. I'm just seeing if there's anything-as you're looking at that beautiful map of your brain, any other connections between emergency food and the localized sectors? Because we've got production, I see their value add, and we've got you connected to the wholesalers and the retailers, as well. So it looks like we've gotten-anything else you would want to add to that?

**Participant 202** 34:26

No, I think that covers it.

**Interviewer 2** 34:29

It's beautiful. Yeah, and it's beautiful. I mean, you know, when you introduced food recovery, it opened up a whole another round of connections that you had there that we didn't see before, in terms of how you're connected to these folks as well. So that's great. Okay, well-

**Participant 202** 34:51

I mean, there's other food banks in the nation that you know, they're right beside everybody, right, they're beside the food manufacturers and they're all about recovery because it's right next door. I think because we're here in Michigan, we don't have the food production or canning, right, the actual big ConAgras of the world, in our backyard, we have had to-I don't want to say be more creative; we've had to go farther to get that here. So that's where, again, that fleet and third party carrier, and the stretch of the money becomes more effective for our community, because we're bringing in what's not available here locally to people who may not have had access to it, because they can't afford it at the grocery store, right? I mean the whole basis of emergency food is I don't have enough money to go buy my own food. So if you can't go buy what you need, and what you want from a grocery store, or get it from your local market, then the food banks, they're in the neighborhoods where there's not a fresh produce market or a grocery store with fresh food to give away for free.

**Interviewer 2** 35:59

Mm hmm. Okay. Got it. All right, great. Well, thank you. And as we're talking, if you add in, you can always you're adding concepts as you go, we're gonna-we're listening carefully to you. Any other questions? I'm going to move on to another set of connections. Okay, wonderful. So when you look at this, and you think about yourself, and your expertise in the food system, you know, how would you connect racial equity or racial inequities to this local food system experience?

**Participant 202** 36:39

I think in the emergency food sector, it's, again, back to the accessibility, the access, the breaking down barriers that exist in the for profit or retail side of our food system, right. So I think we've been breaking down a lot of that inequality to access through our mission and through our work. So I think we're, you know, there's always more space for improvement. And, again, I go back to the access-if it's right there, but I still can't get to it, it's still not accessible. And it's not-it's sometimes some of these systems are interrupted by policy, and where the food's gonna go, like the money coming from the government might go to something that doesn't increase that equity. So I see that from time to time where the program ends up with something that still doesn't make it accessible. Like there was one a few years ago that still required people to drive to the farm to pick up fresh produce. I mean, that's-

**Interviewer 2** 37:57

Right, so the policy-

**Participant 202** 38:00

like [inaudible] you're not getting to a farm.

**Interviewer 2** 38:02

Right, so I heard you say policy and practices also have connected to inequitable access.

**Participant 202** 38:10

Sometimes it becomes the-I hate to use the word political, but it's more, where does this money-where has it historically gone? Or where does it need to go to serve some other purpose? It still might not be to the basis of equity, right, where can we put this so it's equitably available and shared to everyone?

**Interviewer 2** 38:39

Okay, so is it equitable funding policy? Is that clear? Okay, gotcha. Okay. Okay, that's good. Thank you for that. And that affects access and funding. Okay. Mm hmm. Other ways that you see...

**Participant 202** 39:02

Well, we really see it in food costs right? So costs at stores differ based on where you're at and what that neighborhood might look like, snd what's available there again to scale, can you drive to it or walk to it often becomes part of that difference too, right? Your markets tend to be bigger where you can have a parking lot, even if you just look at the scale of Chicago versus if you can't park your car, your markets usually smaller and by nature regardless it's more expensive, right? Because you can't have that scale again on a large sccale of produt.

**Interviewer 2** 39:48

Ah gotcha.

**Participant 202** 39:49

So even a corner market in the most affluent neighborhood or a corner market in the the most you know socioeconomically despaired neighborhood, it's still more expensive.

**Interviewer 2** 40:01

Gotcha. So there's a-I hear a connection between that and retailer, the equitable-the connection to retailer-based on the scale of the retailer, is what I'm hearing you say. Was that accurate?

**Participant 202** 40:16

I think so.

**Interviewer 2** 40:17

Okay. Okay, gotcha. So, geographic store. Okay, does that accurately reflect it for you? All right, that's great. Seeing anything else-from a racial-any of the other sectors, because that was retail? Anything racial equity connected to the other sectors from your perspective?

**Participant 202** 40:55

Well you can get into just... and I don't know if anybody's, it's kind of an obscure one... But if you're-let's say, living over here at Howard estates, or in an apartment or a low cost kind of housing situation, you tend to have smaller refrigerators and freezers. So the amount of food that you're able to store or buy in bulk or to have is very, very different than if you're in even a house that might have a freezer in the basement, right? Or, I mean, I go to-even the differences of how much-if you were able to get to a store and buy in bulk, can you even keep it? You could with dry items, but maybe not with your frozen and with your refrigerated, so it cuts down on the amount of fresh product you would have available to you because of where you're living, and what your apartment looks like. And then you know, you get into even, you know, people who are transitionally homeless or maybe living out of their car, we have a lot of backpack kids that don't even have a can opener, right? So we do the flipped cans, so they can open a can. So some of those equalities might not all be stemmed to race, of course, that can be created across a lot of different spaces, but it tends to also be, again, back to the dynamic of the household, or where that person is able to live.

**Interviewer 2** 42:38

Where they live, yes. Okay. All right.

**Participant 202** 42:42

A lot of that becomes again, the access, if it's not right in your neighborhood or in your parking lot, it's still possibly not attainable for you, especially if you're a single parent with three small children, they're not going to get on that bus and take public transportation. Even with all the public transportation in the world, it still doesn't get you groceries to your home with three small kids. Right, okay. So I heard a connection there also between-you were talking about the food storage, and we tied it to transportation, but you also tied it to the scale of retailers that people are going to because of their storage. So a connection between that and the concept right above it, which connects to the store. Yeah, I think that's the one that people miss a lot. Because they think, even if I get out to Walmart in Burton and I buy all this stuff, you still can't necessarily store it in an apartment sized freezer.

**Interviewer 2** 43:43

Got it. Okay. Yeah.

**Participant 202** 43:47

So you're still gonna buy canned and dried and things that might not have as much nutritional value as the fresh milk or, you know, things you can hold in a larger suburban home.

**Interviewer 2** 44:00

Even a connection from that to the-I don't want to say the quality of food, but you just framed it more...

**Participant 202** 44:09

Nutritional value of the food, you know, you maybe have the more preservatives or more salt, more sugar, you know it leads to all the health outcomes that we talked about with socioeconomic disparities and health outcomes because you're not eating the fresh product you're eating food that might be pre diabetic or high blood pressure or all the other concerns that come out of eating a poor diet, which can also happen to somebody with money. I mean...

**Interviewer 2** 44:37

yeah, it can.

**Participant 202** 44:39

But it's oftentimes you know, then it's not a choice.

**Interviewer 2** 44:42

Exactly. Exactly.

**Participant 202** 44:44

So there's an inequity in itself, too, is that you don't have access to the things that you need.

**Interviewer 2** 44:50

Yeah. So a direct connection from racial inequity and then nutritious food as well.

**Participant 202** 44:55

Yup and all those health outcomes that are...

**Interviewer 2** 44:58

Got it, so from racial equity to nutritious food as well. Okay, thank you. Keeping up with that beautiful brain, it's working.

**Participant 202** 45:09

Thank you, you guys are great. Just random thoughts, but it might not be something that came out of somebody else. I don't know.

**Interviewer 2** 45:17

No, these are excellent because you're making these deeper connections as we introduced that concept that wasn't on the map before. So that's very helpful. Okay. So let me ask the question-?

**Interviewer** 45:32

Can I walk through this really quickly? So yeah, connections to funding policies, food access, geographic differences, disparities, housing, how that relates to food storage and preparation that really influences your food access, talked about shelf stability a little bit, nutritious foods and sort of the connections there to health outcomes. Is that a good representation? Anything you want to change with that?

**Participant 202** 45:59

No, that's good. I think it often doesn't get talked about that way. But it's the reality of most of the people that we work with. I mean, it's all great to talk about some of the things that sound so flashy, like people get really excited about a program or something that's, but it's not to the heart of the matter sometimes.

**Interviewer 2** 46:22

Mm hmm.

**Participant 202** 46:25

Let me get off my soapbox.

**Interviewer 2** 46:27

No, your soapbox is fine, because it's lending perspective to understanding the system. I mean, if people don't get on they soapboxes, we don't understand stuff. Thank you for that. Let me let me ask the question in a slightly different way. Are there ways that the food system contributes to racial inequities?

**Participant 202** 46:48

Oh, I'm sure there is. I think there's so many in terms of even employment and jobs with livable wages that are hard to exist in any of these that you just mapped out here, right? I mean, you're not gonna make a livable wage at probably any of these-right retail or, you know, you're gonna... Maybe at a restaurant, you're gonna be having the waitress three bucks an hour and living off your tips. So I think it-sometimes the again, the profit is at the expense of the employee, right, so if you're not gonna have these things in your community that are providing both the food for the food system but also jobs and benefits, it's going to continue to create that divide in income, and household ability to visit all these establishments on their own, right, because now you don't have a car, or you don't have the things that we talked about being able to buy.

**Interviewer 2** 48:26

So you definitely are seeing it in the retail sector.

**Participant 202** 48:30

Yeah, farming is the same, right? I mean, it's the same.

**Interviewer 2** 48:37

So the connection from wages to farming as well.

**Participant 202** 48:40

And retailers, I mean, it's, I mean, some are doing it better than others, right? I mean, your larger scale retail markets pay more and do offer now a lot of times benefits, the wraparound services of even you know, financial counseling or free help with the credit union account or something like that. I mean, that stabilizes households.

**Interviewer 2** 49:10

Ah, okay, so I heard you introduce a new concept. In addition to the livable wages is the other wraparound employment that you typically get as well.

**Participant 202** 49:20

Yeah it's your benefits, your health benefits, economic planning, do you have a 401 K, do you have things for your future built into those jobs?

**Interviewer 2** 49:32

Okay, so we can say livable wages and benefits and maybe captured it in the same concept? Is that okay, or should we separate it?

**Participant 202** 49:42

No that can be together. I think that's okay. That's primarily what keeps so many people at or below or above slightly the poverty line, right. I mean, that's the heart of why we need low income housing, more things available in food, housing, all the things right. So to support a household it comes down to they're not making enough money. Especially now when you're talking about inflation, don't even get me going.

**Interviewer 2** 50:14

Oh, yeah, we won't even add that other element. Right.

**Participant 202** 50:19

But I, you know, I say this a lot, too, because it's great that some of these places are now offering $13, $14, $15 an hour. But they're still not offering benefits. So even if you're making $15 an hour, where you used to make $9.45, you still are probably part time or working two or three part time jobs to piece together, you know, your household income, but you still don't have a health care plan or, you know, a savings account for your future.

**Interviewer 2** 50:49

Yeah. Okay. And that, too, as you said, was affecting health outcomes, too. Okay. Okay. All right. Well, great. Thank you for that. Any other connections between racial inequity, and these elements of the food system that you have on your map? Just as one last glance, well, at last glance, but as a glance.

**Participant 202** 51:17

I think that probably does it.

**Interviewer 2** 51:19

Okay. All right, wonderful. Well, let's talk about some other things that influence and impact the food system. What would you say are some of the other major influences or impacts on the local food system in Flint?

**Participant 202** 51:39

I think a lot of it comes down again, to the economy of profit, I mean, all of these things need to be profitable. And oftentimes, they don't perceive a profit. Because they're not, again, a lot of it goes to scale of how much you can sell, and some of it goes to, you know, again, the products that might be consumed or available. I don't know how to put it, you know, a lot of times, if you're a corner market, you're not going to sell a turkey, right? It sometimes comes down to your higher priced items aren't going to be available in your small markets. Even when you're talking about proteins you're not going to have hamburger or steak or things that oftentimes make the profit of a store, depending on what type of items are more profitable if you're sourcing them locally. You're talking about like, what used to be the local butcher, you know, the local butcher could bring protein to every couple neighborhoods, and still make a profit. But when you're trying to do all of it in one spot, you have to sometimes again, go to the scale of the number, like am I selling enough of that product to make it profitable to have it here?

**Interviewer 2** 53:17

Ah, got it. Yes. Yes. Yes. And that's affecting producers value add as well as the retailers?

**Participant 202** 53:26

I would think so. Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 53:27

That economy a profit. Okay,

**Participant 202** 53:31

Well, I'm-where you have to move it to. So even you know, going back to my big national example of where ConAgra and everybody where these big food producers are plopped, is where it's cheapest to get it driven to everywhere, or wherever, closest to the cow, right, or the, whatever you're processing, right? You're gonna plop it where it is cost effective, you're not going to suddenly decide to go open that in the state of Michigan, when your biggest herds are in Florida, right, or wherever you're at.

**Interviewer 2** 54:02

Okay, so there's also connection between that and the non local producers is what I'm hearing you say.

**Participant 202** 54:09

Right, right. Right, you're gonna go to-because if we don't have, you know, Michigan, again, you have some local, you know, I buy half a cow and put it in my freezer from somebody, but they're not going through 50,000 cows, and having it produced here locally. So we have steak at the market. So you're processing isn't happening here to scale either.

**Interviewer 2** 54:37

Yeah. Gotcha. Okay.

**Participant 202** 54:41

I wish it wasn't about how much money you can make, but that oftentimes becomes the way of our world.

**Interviewer 2** 54:48

Well and you gotta make money to stay in business. I mean, you can't stay in business without making something.

**Participant 202** 54:54

Money, you gotta pay those employees.

**Interviewer 2** 54:58

Yeah, so you must make a profit.

**Participant 202** 55:00

Well it comes back to the reality of: Do you want to pay $20 for that item to help support that?

**Interviewer 2** 55:06

Exactly. Okay. What other shocks or what other things are influencing the food system from your perspective? You being from Flint, what about the water crisis?

**Participant 202** 55:20

Well, I think a lot of it happened even before the water crisis though, too, right? It's that shift from local, local to regional, you know, with your retailers, everything's again, cheaper to do at scale. So, I think back to when I was a kid, and we had hamady everywhere, right. You had a Hamady market. And then it was Kessels, and then it became Kroger. Well, now you only have a couple Kroger's left. Whereas there used to be on every corner, with your Hamady sack. I mean, I grew up in you know, I think of our Hamady, we used to have right at Davidson and Belsey Road. Well, you know, there's been a market in that neighborhood forever.

**Interviewer 2** 56:04

Ah, so I'm hearing you say that it was before the water crisis, but there was the shift to regional because of scale.

**Participant 202** 56:15

Yeah, again, how many outlets do you want to have open as a chain? So I use Hamady as an example just because it seemed kind of local, and Hamady's were everywhere. Then it was Kessels, then Kessels numbers went down a little bit, but then when it became Kroger and it was bought out by a bigger regional market. It had less locations to be more cost effective again. So now you have less Kroger's in the city or around the city, you have them on the edge, like on Ridgefield and Center Road, instead of in every neighborhood or every couple neighborhoods. We used to have B's market, we had B's right there too on Richfield over by Leaf Street, and, you know, butcher block. And I mean, when I was a kid and walked around with my grandma and grandpa on Franklin even, right, and Franklin and Tham street, I could walk up to the butcher block and we could get meats and right down the road, you had a market. It was everywhere. So that was well before the the water crisis. But the water crisis I think was another, again just made everything that was disadvantaged more so. It took everything a step further, but I think it really became-and I don't know if some of its tied also to the shift in the auto economy and auto jobs, right. We used to have so many more jobs here. And so when you talk about even like EC and Buick closing, how many people are still in the neighborhoods that then can be perceived as customers for those outlets? So I go back to my grandpa's house on time Street by Franklin, right, the minute Buick City closed, everything started to go downhill because we didn't have those jobs anymore and the house that he had built and lived in and been there forever you know, also declined in value. And then people weren't able to sell their homes and even get what they owed out of them. You had everything upside down in the housing market.

**Interviewer 2** 58:36

So a lot of connections, right. Yeah.

**Participant 202** 58:39

And I use-even there too, you know, you had Ben Franklin. And I think about all the things that used to be around my grandpa's house. I think it's the perfect example of what's now just gone in every neighborhood, because we used to-I mean, I would walk with my grandma to the butcher block, I would walk with my grandma up to watch a baseball game at the park fair, and then we'd go to Ben Franklin and pick out candy at the candy counter. I mean even at Kmart with subs for goodness sake, they had food at Kmart.

**Interviewer 2** 59:08

So it was hyperlocal?

**Participant 202** 59:10

It was all over the place. You know, whatever food you want-I mean Kmart was kinda like the first fast food. I mean getting a sub to take home and eat was kind of revolutionary, with a blue light special.

**Interviewer 2** 59:25

Right? Oh my gosh. Oh my god [Interviewer] do you know what blue light special is? [laughter] You and I are in that era-we were in the blue light era.

**Participant 202** 59:35

Even how many Kmarts used to be everywhere, but Kmart was also food.

**Interviewer 2** 59:40

It was. And blue light specials, what they would do [Interviewer] is in the store at any given time they had these little blue lights around a little cart and the light would go off and you would know to go over there because there was something that they were selling off special right then in the moment. It was, it was right there. And they should do that, they should bring it back. The light would go off and then we would all go and see what the heck was blue light special, they would announce it over the PA and everything.

**Participant 202** 1:00:10

Might be something you didn't even need, but suddenly you were excited about it.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:13

Exactly, because those blue lights [laughter], that's a good one. Thank you. Yeah, so we talked about we talked about the water crisis.

**Participant 202** 1:00:27

You know I don't want to lose too also with that, you know, think about the schools that were available. Like, especially in Flint. Schools as an after school, as safety nets, as meal program. I think of Whittier, I'm back to my grandpa's house, right. We had Whittier right behind them, and you had elementary schools everywhere, because all these jobs and GM jobs and so every single neighborhood had a place where kids could have lunch.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:53

Absolutely.

**Participant 202** 1:00:55

And now that's gone too, all these built in institutional things are also gone as availability of food.

**Interviewer 2** 1:01:04

Absolutely. Yeah. That's true. That's true. That's true. All of that ties back in.

**Participant 202** 1:01:12

Yeah, so especially the elementary schools, I think they're just, you know, again, the stability within any neighborhood was so hyper different than it is now. And I get that that's not even in suburbia. It's just so different. So you had these, you know, my mom used to cook a pot of goulash and we'd have 10 kids in the house that I didn't even know, but they knew it was the house, you could go get goulash at. And so all of the kids in the neighborhood would come and eat from my mom's pot of goulash. And that does not happen in this day and age because concerns for safety in the neighborhood, I don't know my neighbor, are they gonna kidnap or molest my kid, right? I mean, everybody's fears... so you don't have the institutionalized supports either of like, the elementary school that had the local nurse and the you know, programs after school, like think back to the you know, Brookwood even used to run after school programming and softball leagues, and everybody was in something. And they also provided a meal.

**Interviewer 2** 1:02:22

Yeah. And so you just hit on a couple of things as the institutional support, but also a social support, your mom's house, her kitchen, that social-the social infrastructure as well as the institutional infrastructure, because there's two different things. One is the [inaudible] and the other is the social infrastructure, which is your mama's house, cuz everybody was aunty when I was-when we were growing up-everybody was aunty and Mr. And Mrs. you know.

**Participant 202** 1:02:47

The church ladies, the nice church ladies, right? So you could bring in the thought of, churches were more open than they are now. Yes. They weren't just open when people aren't working, and they're up there running the church. Yeah. Yeah. But churches was another one where you can just walk into anywhere and participate in something and get a meal. And those are gone too.

**Interviewer 2** 1:03:12

Yup you know, you can't walk up like that now anywhere, pretty much. Well, it's very, it's very, very different. Wow, wow. Wow. Well, I hate to add COVID to this map, but when you...?

**Participant 202** 1:03:28

Well COVID really brought the isolation and I think it brought the heightened need for, again... We took eight weeks and delivered meals and we delivered right to the seniors with the emergency command center and the Sheriff's Department. Right, so we didn't say well, seniors are shut in their home so they just can't get food, so I hope they do all right. Right, we immediately said, how can we make sure seniors are taken care of and that they have the food that they need? And we set up a couple month program where the sheriff's department, in conjunction with the food bank, was able to get out there and get food to all the seniors right at their doorstep. Gotcha. That model's not sustainable long term, but how can we now do that similarly with even like a DoorDash or a...?

**Interviewer 2** 1:04:20

Yeah, did you see COVID impact on any of the other sectors like your production, wholesale, retail, all of them?

**Participant 202** 1:04:29

All of them. You may need a whole another you know 10 papers and 2 hours. But think of all the things that got shut down supply chain wise, right. So you have-COVID had, you know, all the jobs, all the money and all the restaurants. Suddenly we had 40% new people coming to our network that never needed help before because they always had a job, right. So you have a national pandemic and or it could be anything, like the floods in Midland, people in Midland didn't think their house was going to be underwater in the city with the dam failure. So any emergency, like a health pandemic, it creates all this disruption-

**Interviewer 2** 1:05:10

supply chain disruption.

**Participant 202** 1:05:11

Yeah, so you have definitely jobs and restaurants in the closures, and then people that don't-you have more people now in need, that you didn't have previous, so everything has to ramp up in distribution.

**Interviewer 2** 1:05:27

Gotcha. So it was really the way you're describing it is, you know, COVID, with the supply chain disruption, and touching all the local sectors that we were talking about, you know, wholesale retail, and that, and then you also pointed back to the way COVID affected, you know, the individuals?

**Participant 202** 1:05:49

Right, and even, you know, it goes to the food recovery. Think of how barer our grocery stores were. That's across the board for all the sectors. There's, as little as it was, but also this concern of even food safety, like people were really concerned about, you know, who touched my food or coughed on it? You know, how do I get my food? Right. And do you have to wipe it off with a Clorox wipe or not? I mean, what do we do with this? And definitely, I think the partnerships, and then there was a lessening of policy during that time, of double check on, which was good, right? So then suddenly, the government opened up and says, don't worry about all these things like touching and signing in and doing the things that used to be required for paper for federal programs and state-run programs, they lifted some of those and just said, we know people need it, so get it out. So some of the policies actually relaxed in an emergency to make sure that people were getting taken care of, and then of course, there was more money that came in from governments with all the Cares Act, stimulus money... Funding soared. I mean, just, even from donors, right, everybody wanted to help people. And so now we got to shift back to what, you know, what normal numbers look like, and how do programs run. We went 18 months without charging any shared maintenance fee or delivery fees, because we had so much money. Now we have to go back to making sure we have some, you know, maintenance fees, or, again, that purchase product, if we're buying a whole semi load, that fee gets charged off to the grant or the program or the whatever, to reduce some of that cost, because we don't just have Feeding America on the Disney sing along that nationally, now we have people donating money from Texas that cares about Flint, which would be similar to the water crisis, right. The water crisis also had this influx of "I care about Flint." Yes, it's hard to go without once you have it because we're a-have been socio-you know, the disadvantagement of the economy has been so prevalent that now you have these spikes of, here's the money, here's some money. And now it's gone again for the community. That's a hard reality...

**Interviewer 2** 1:08:41

So yeah.

**Participant 202** 1:08:43

Right. So that's the bigger, you know, cause even all of our partner agencies that we're receiving things from all over the place, you know, they got used to doing things and having money to do it. And now they gotta go back to doing it out of the goodness of their heart. Mm hmm. Which is still great. But you know, how much better was it when we had a program from somewhere-the government or a donor that supported it with money-it gave everybody a chance to not only expand it, but also to cover their costs in it, especially as nonprofits.

**Interviewer 2** 1:09:24

Mm hmm. That's an excellent point. Excellent. Okay, so we've got the COVID shocks, the impact of COVID and then we talked about...

**Interviewer** 1:09:42

I think it reflects the reality of how complicated the food system is.

**Interviewer 2** 1:09:47

It's got a lot of moving parts. [Interviewer], you were going to ask something?

**Interviewer** 1:09:51

Yeah, I'm just aware that we have about 10 minutes left, so.

**Interviewer 2** 1:09:57

Yeah, I was just closing it out before I went there, got it. So when you look at and this is really great, thank you. So we want to talk about, you know, leverage points and where you might see opportunities where change might improve this system. What would you consider? As you know, leverage points, or places where you might see change to improve the system based upon this beautiful map that you created?

**Participant 202** 1:10:30

Good question. You know, my gut tells me a lot of it always comes down to having access to what we're talking about, and for a lot of people, it comes down again to money, right? Do I have the money to go participate in these systems? Do I have the, you know, ability to do so, the transportation or the money to pay for that car, to get me to the grocery store, let alone go out and eat at a restaurant, right? Sometimes the restaurants are-I didn't, I said this the other day, even on Saturday, I couldn't believe the number of places I was driving around to and you could just tell that people were going out to dinner because it was Valentine's Day, right? So you have these special times we might save up and go out to dinner, when usually you're eating at home. So like, every place is a madhouse because you're out eating dinner. When I was a kid we never went out to dinner. Right? I mean, I thought it was exciting when my cousin had a birthday party at McDonald's, because we got to go eat at McDonald's.

**Interviewer 2** 1:11:43

I'm from the same era, McDonald's was a treat. It was not your meal plan.

**Participant 202** 1:11:48

We used to have the birthday parties, right? I mean, we could go in there and have the Hamburglar.

**Interviewer 2** 1:11:53

Exactly with the little corner with your party so [Interviewer] we were way, you know [laughter]. So when you-what else would you change? What else do you think would help improve or, and change this and thinking about it from so today? As we've been focused around, you know, these localized sectors and things like that, how else might you see some levers for change?

**Participant 202** 1:12:17

Well, and I know a lot of people go to the nutritional value of the food. But I just say availability of food even right? I mean, there's just so many neighborhoods that don't have regular and consistent access to the food system. And maybe that's just antiquated. Maybe it's never gonna happen again, maybe you do have to go regionally to get these things. So as much as I say, I'd love to see it, I don't think we'll ever see it again because it doesn't make sense. So then how do you bridge that new gap of accessibility for people to travel to Burton or Grand Blanc to the Walmart to get food? So those are the things I think people have you ever struggled with in the food system land. I don't know if things are going to return to neighborhoods. I mean, I don't have a grocery store right in my neighborhood but I can drive a couple miles because I have a car and I can go to Meijer right. But I think, again, going back to the supports around the neighborhood, the institutionalized availability of things to me is something that we could move forward again.

**Interviewer 2** 1:13:32

Okay, institutional. Okay,

**Participant 202** 1:13:34

I don't know. I mean, maybe it's not schools, maybe it's community centers. You know, something that becomes the new hub, like, sometimes it could be libraries, right. But that's an antiquated thought, too, because your library is on your phone, I mean, who's going to a library? I mean people who like libraries are going to libraries. But what's the new community hub? It used to be churches, it used to be schools, that everybody has kids. So if it's not the corner market, what can it be? Maybe it's something different that we haven't thought of yet to mash these things together for that both social interaction and the availability of things that neighborhood might need. And is it still food, is it the food system, or is it something else? Something with a little more deeper meaning? Maybe I'm being too philosophical now. But...

**Interviewer 2** 1:14:32

Oh, no, actually, you know, not at all, because you're just talking about something that is diverse in the resources that it provides. It's not a single resource. You know, it's not just other stuff. Okay. Any changes that you would make that are related specifically to racial equity in the food system?

**Participant 202** 1:14:56

I don't think so. At this point, I know I'm going to think about a hundred because that's of course, the space we're always dabbling in here, in emergency services. I mean, we want to make sure that things are equitable and accessible. Right? So, again, how is that? And I think it's the age old debate in food banks, do you just continue feeding people, or do you try to lift them into that next meaningful, fully engaged citizen that everybody might want to be right? Or is that-you know, how do you have people be ready for the jobs that are available? And I see that yeah, the economic supports that need to be there, whether it be to go through college or a trade? I mean, think about the trades that need people right now. Yeah, how are we getting our neighbors through something that leads them to a trade?

**Interviewer 2** 1:15:00

Yeah, so it's kinda like that connection to those livable wages and benefits?

**Participant 202** 1:15:57

Right, I think we just kind of left people once we said, hey, GM jobs aren't there anymore. We just all cried about it. And I know there's a lot of job training programs, but they don't have jobs at the end of them. You can train people all day long over, you know, GST Michigan Works, and I get that they successfully placed people. But again, is it the meaningful employment or livable wage or the sustainable household income that a family needs? So what are those opportunities to now help people connect, whether it be for a trade or a skill? If we have all these electric cars coming out of Detroit, why can't our workforce here be doing something there? I mean, you don't have to-you can work remote now, everybody can work remote. You don't have to go to Detroit to do a job. You can you have to have a laptop, and you have to have the opportunity, so maybe we think of it differently than the physical.

**Interviewer 2** 1:16:52

Got you. Okay. That was a great, great. Any thoughts about leverage points of change at different levels, you know, in the system to get to the goals?

**Participant 202** 1:17:08

I think so much of it becomes tied backwards, like it's what's the grant opportunity, or what's the nugget? Right, let's try to make something fit something that's out there, which to me is super backwards, and then it just perpetuates the same people fighting over the same money? Whereas I think we really need to decide, where do we want to go? What do we want to do to move everybody forward together, not just some people, forward together? Right. So I think it needs to be deeper than what we've been doing. I mean, generationally being here twenty-something years, I've seen the same program get grant funded by somebody 17 times now. And is it really making any difference? I don't know, maybe for for the people who are receiving it, absolutely. But is it making systemic systemic changes that we need to see as a neighborhood or as a town?

**Interviewer** 1:18:08

Mm hmm.

**Participant 202** 1:18:09

Probably not. They're band aids.

**Interviewer 2** 1:18:13

Gotcha. Gotcha. Okay. Any parting thoughts? Anything? We've talked about a lot of stuff. Did we miss anything, [Participant 202]. Is there some one thing we that we didn't ask, where it's just kind of like going [ding] in your brain?

**Participant 202** 1:18:30

Nope. I think that was, it's always good. I find your-I don't know how you guys keep up with people talking, such an interesting, you know you spark thought and then you try to map it in some ways to make it make sense. So I think that a lot of that falls on you two.

**Interviewer 2** 1:18:48

[Interviewer] is very fast with doing that, I haven't gotten it-I'm nowhere near as fast as that. The listening part really good at, because we do that all the time. Yeah. But thank you for that. We really deeply appreciate your your participation and always your deep thoughts. I mean, you really get into it with us. And we really do appreciate that. So just as a reminder, this interview is confidential, we'll be sharing it amongst ourselves as research team to do what we need to do with it. If you have any questions, concerns, or otherwise, something else pops in, you know, reach back to either [Interviewer] or myself, our email contacts. And we also as you know, we always thought the evaluations. So we'll do two things. We can drop it in the chat now. And you can click on that. And the [Interviewer] will send it also to you in an email as if you would, if you would do that for us, as you know it only takes a couple minutes. And don't remember to put your name on it. And we're good for today. And again, as always, Kara thank you so so very much for just your deep commitment to who you are. I loved fact that today I learned that you found your passion and that's what you're going to be do. We can feel it all the time, but I never heard it articulated. But I'm happy to hear that and know that. And, again, always thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

**Participant 202** 1:20:14

You're welcome. Thank you guys. You have a great day.

**Interviewer 2** 1:20:17

All right, you too. You too. All right. Bye bye.