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**SPEAKERS**

Interviewer, Participant 204, Interviewer 2

**Interviewer 2** 00:00

So please. Alright. Alright, so thank you for your permission to record the interview the recordings on now. Your participation is voluntary. You can choose not to answer any of our questions or at any time to draw from the research will keep the recording confidential within our team within our research team. We won't use or share your name, or any identifying information in any of our research results. However, what we will ask is that maybe be mindful, please be mindful of if there's anybody in the room with you or nearby that might hear your comments that you may not want to hear your comments. And if you have any questions, post this conversation, feel free to reach out using the tourist email that we provided to you. And your consent to this interview is demonstrated by your continued participation. Do you have any questions before we move forward? Oh, okay. Thank you. Alrighty. So our first question is, you know, how you would describe your role or experience with local food systems?

**Participant 204** 01:20

Yeah. So I guess mostly as a researcher, like, Yeah, I'm a patron of the farmers market and a participant in gardening and local food systems. And I've been without a [organization] in some form for 10 years, but mostly has now collects data and makes maps about food.

**Interviewer 2** 01:50

Okay, all right. Great. Awesome. Awesome. Um, so we will share the screen, Chris is going to share the screen and show you the definitions that we're using to describe the food system. You're able to see the screen, okay. Okay, awesome. So the sector definitions we're looking at, were looking at five sectors of the local system, the first being production, with crops and livestock. And so obviously can range from very small to, you know, larger farms, we're going to look at processing and packaging. So the food's been grown, but who's actually washing it, packing it, possibly creating even value added products, lovely tomatoes, add it with spices turns into salsa, or ketchup or some other delectable, um, and we're looking at wholesale and resale as well. So those who are gathering those foods that have been produced and packaged and then are selling those to folks other than the producers themselves, we're looking at the retail sector here, as well as influent, your grocery stores, your convenience stores, the farm stands, the farmers market, and maybe inboxes, then a food is sold, restaurants, catering, you know, all those places where food is sold directly to customers. And last but not least, we don't eat everything. So there's some food that may fall out of the system that's collected and managed through hauling and composting. So those are the five sectors that we're we're looking at any questions about those or the definitions even?

**Participant 204** 03:58

Nope.

**Interviewer 2** 04:00

Okay. All right. Great. So based on these sectors that we've identified, you did say a little bit about your expertise. Where do you think, based on your expertise across these different sectors, do you see yourself having the most expertise in the system?

**Participant 204** 04:25

Probably retail and then production would be after that, okay.

**Interviewer 2** 04:32

All right. Great. Retail and production.

**Interviewer 2** 04:36

All right, great.

**Interviewer 2** 04:37

Um, Carissa is going to take a moment here. This is probably going to be short and sweet. The talk a little bit about the method reusing.

**Interviewer** 04:46

Yeah. We've done this multiple times with you. If you're comfortable skipping introductions of FCM; I'm also happy to go through an example.

**Participant 204** 04:55

Yeah, I'm comfortable and then if I get super confused I might just ask for clarification, but I think remember the gist of it

**Interviewer** 05:05

awesome. Yeah, yeah, I guess, uh, the biggest thing I want to make sure to communicate is that it's very much like your model I am, you know, the one making the connections, but definitely, you know, jump in and correct me if you like, oh, no, that's not what I meant. Or like, that's not how I word it. Definitely take ownership and, and change. We're definitely trying to get to your understanding.

**Participant 204** 05:27

Yep, sounds good.

**Interviewer 2** 05:29

Yeah, in this particular set of interviews, [Interviewer] and I are both engaged with you. I'll be asking lots of questions, and she does that beautiful thing that she does and draw in a lovely connection. So. So here we have the base, we have the base map here with the five sectors on it. And as you said, your expertise and retail production? So as you look at this, how would you? How would you draw your connections between the different, you know, sectors? In this local food system? How would I? What are your connections based? How would you draw your connections based upon your expertise in retail in production? Starting there?

**Participant 204** 06:20

I'm not sure I'm following, like...

**Interviewer** 06:25

So basically trying to-how the sectors are connected based on your knowledge of them, essentially.

**Participant 204** 06:33

Oh, okay. So not like, my engagement in them, but like, if I were just trying to connect myself...?

**Interviewer 2** 06:43

Your knowledge as an expert around retail and production, as opposed to acting one of those roles.

**Interviewer** 06:51

It just shifts a bit, like if someone who is a local producer, they're like, you know, 40% of my produce goes to a wholesaler, you know, 10% goes to retail, etc. Right? Yeah.

**Participant 204** 07:13

Sorry, do you have any interference, like every time I talk, it's like, there's a radio going by me?

**Interviewer 2** 07:19

Oh, is it coming from behind me? Yeah, you know? Yeah. It's my laptop.

**Participant 204** 07:28

Oh, okay.

**Interviewer 2** 07:31

Sorry about that. Is it my laptop? Are you hearing it now?

**Interviewer** 07:39

I think it's like your, your laptop picks up the audio of other people talking, so maybe just mute if you're not talking.

**Interviewer 2** 07:45

Okay, if I'm not talking, I can mute it. Or while you're talking, I'm going to switch to my other computer and just do that, because clearly is the laptop. Sorry about that? No. Yeah. So when you think about your expertise, you said you do research and you draw maps, and you have expertise in retail and production in particular. How would you draw connections based upon the experience that you have in the system?

**Participant 204** 08:15

Oh, I mean, I think I'm making it more confusing inside my own head. Like ultimately, though, you're just looking for what I would describe objectively is like the way it works?

**Interviewer 2** 08:28

Okay. So yes, yes. Based on your based on your knowledge and your experience? Yes.

**Participant 204** 08:35

I mean, that's all I can see from it. Producers would be interacting with both value added processors and wholesalers. And I mean, I think generally speaking, and I guess for clarity, so should I be thinking of this the way that typical Flint food system folks operate or just the generic food system?

**Interviewer 2** 09:02

Yeah. Flint; we're interested in the knowledge localized around Flint. So we're really, in this model, bringing it down to the localized sectors.

**Participant 204** 09:14

Okay. So I would say, I would make the connection to the value added maybe a little weaker. Just because my understanding of for example, Flint Fresh's model is to strengthen that because there weren't a lot of connections to like, opportunities for people to do value added stuff like producers tended to go straight to wholesalers or, I mean, I guess I don't know if you still put the line in between but producers straight on to retailers insofar as big companies like Meijer or Walmart now are buying. They're condensing that hierarchy or the vertical-I guess it's vertical integration, right? So sometimes it's going straight on to retailers. And then of course, the value added producers go-I mean, so like the value added producers go straight on to retailers as well, and I think that that is also something that's maybe weaker. But things like Flint Fresh are trying to increase, and that more conventionally, the value added processors would go to wholesalers as well. And then, of course, the wholesalers-that's another one of the more conventional pathways on to retailers.

**Participant 204** 10:48

And then connecting composters. I guess producers -- I don't know as much about the food waste side. I mean, like, I have colleagues that do this stuff, but I am not well connected to them. So I'd imagine that the producers would have some connection, and that I know that retailers do or could or should. Like my partner was-she wasn't like a full on freegan in college-but they definitely went dumpster diving sometimes because she was like doing environmental science for her college, and they were like, let's just go find free food.

**Participant 204** 11:45

And I'm sure there are [inaudible] in the rest too. But I feel like those would be two of the big points of contact, like the the beginning and the end, because maybe in the middle people are able to make more use of the- I don't know, anyways, that's where my brain is. Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 12:11

Great. Great. Let's see what we got here. Anything else? We'll give you a minute to take a look at it. Anything else- the connections, you see, so with the retailers, we are looking at in Flint: both the Farmers Market stores and restaurants. Any connections between the other sectors that might go further into retail directly that you're aware of?

**Participant 204** 12:43

Yeah, cuz I guess when I was making the comment about value added retailers, I was just going straight to the, the hub. I hadn't yet started thinking about the blue ones there. But yeah, I guess the value added folks probably do go more to the markets and stores than restaurants. Whereas the wholesalers would be going to the restaurants more.

**Interviewer 2** 13:16

Okay, so your value added, you said, goes straight-more so to the markets and to the restaurants

**Participant 204** 13:27

Just markets and stores.

**Interviewer 2** 13:28

Oh, markets and stores I'm sorry.

**Participant 204** 13:31

And then producers to markets as well. Just trying to see like, because, like how does it? How does it work? Are the blue ones? Like are they blue because they're considered subordinates of retailers?

**Interviewer** 13:51

Yeah, so something that is a fun dynamic of these conversations is that sometimes things are relevant at generally to retailers and some things are relevant specifically to markets, specifically to stores. So it's just to account for-just to give people that wiggle room of like, I want to talk specifically about you know, the relationship between value added processes and markets or like, in general, they go to retailers.

**Participant 204** 14:18

And did you type in programs when I was kind of when I was talking about stuff like Flint fresh?

**Interviewer** 14:24

Yeah. So if there's like a more specific word you would like there or you know a better descriptor...?

**Participant 204** 14:30

Yeah, I mean, because when I think of the leverage points with which I'm connected or most familiar, Flint fresh pops up frequently because they are trying to rock that conventional dynamic, the conventional, the green parts basically.

**Interviewer 2** 14:55

and Flint fresh as far as how you see it fitting in the sectors. Where would you put that?

**Participant 204** 15:03

I mean, my understanding is it's mostly for the value added the wholesale connection.

**Interviewer 2** 15:11

Okay, so value added and wholesale. Got it. Okay. So yeah,

**Participant 204** 15:15

I mean, they operate to-well as a hub, you know, they're agglomerating for aggregating products and then reselling, either as a direct sale, because they themselves have a market stand to the mobile market.

**Interviewer 2** 15:36

And so as a researcher and a person who's been drawing all kinds of maps and looking at data, are there things from that side of your work that you might see reflected in certain kinds of connections here in the local food system? Other concepts we might add from that lens? Things that would help us understand the system more?

**Participant 204** 16:09

I'm trying to think, like, because, like, yeah, there's always lots more. But I guess, with respect to the way we're thinking of this piece of the system right now, like without blowing it up too much, I'm trying to think what would kind of best fit.

**Interviewer 2** 16:26

Don't worry about blowing it up too much [laughter]

**Participant 204** 16:29

I mean, I'm always a fan of staying, you know, in a nook and interrogating that nook for a while.

**Interviewer** 16:37

I guess just reframing, like really focused on other important aspects or influences on the localized food system. So people in Flint, any area, you know, who are producing?

**Participant 204** 16:56

Yeah, I mean, some of the first things that are some of our bigger structural issues that prevent Flint's food system from moving in directions that other communities might have taken, so like the fact that Flint is a more dispersed and disinvested and fragmented community, first of all, means that our farms have been gobbled up, like there's tons and tons of suburbs, so there's not a lot of base of agricultural land. So there's not-locally, there can't be as much of that interaction between producers and wholesalers and retailers. But also, the purchasing power at the retail side is so spread and not that wealthy, like even a lot of the suburbs aren't, you know, it's not like Detroit suburbs, or Ann Arbor, or Grand Rapids or whatever. And so the type of retail that exists, tends to be changed. There's not boutique stores that are selling tons of local products, like there's a local grocer in town here. But you know, and a couple of health food stores, but the health food stores don't really sell like, local produce, necessarily, it's not a focus anyways. So the -I mean-it's like the that general critique of the food system, right being elitist farmers markets, too. And I feel like the Flint Farmers Market at least, because it has like Double Up Food Bucks, and it's by the bus station and like, the way it's tried to exist, I think is more or less less like elitist than other farmers markets. But when thinking about the totality of the food system, and where it can grow, because Genesee County is still stagnant and declining in population, and it's fragmented, and it's not that wealthy and like all of those factors play into, to me, like slower growth in local food systems, because local food systems are often connected to that upper middle class clientele that will keep going back and buying you know, fancy honey and stuff like that.

**Interviewer 2** 19:21

Yeah. Okay, so let's, let's take a look at trying to get inside of what you talked about-the accessibility to land, you talked about how land the farmland is, there's less of it, you know, available within the in the area because the farmland has been you called gobbled up. So there's other uses for farmland, so there's less farmland available. Um, you talked about the actual purchasing power of the retail operation.

**Interviewer** 19:58

If that's not the right wording that you would like.

**Participant 204** 20:02

yeah, yeah, I mean, this all looks good. Because I wasn't looking at the screen. I was staring off into space. But I was Yeah, I was like, I'm just gonna let that happen while I'm talking and then we'll come back to but yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 20:15

yeah, and that's perfectly fine. Um, you also talked about the type of retail that's available? That is [inaudible]. Mm hmm. Yeah. So that the type of retail is either chain, or it's not the type that typically buys local produce. So I want to make sure that we have reflected that, that the type of retailers are mainly chain retailers, and that they typically are not the ones buying local produce.

**Participant 204** 20:54

Yeah. And or there's like, just not enough of a clientele who want to and can afford to.

**Interviewer 2** 21:00

Okay, not enough clientele. Okay. So, desire and affordability.

**Participant 204** 21:06

Yeah. And like, because there's lots of, obviously, there's a lot of people engaged in gardening in the Flint community and, like, but Well, I mean, I noticed this myself, every person who gardens that's like less produce that you're buying at the market, like in the summer, I don't buy a lot of produce at the market, because I have tons of vegetables growing in my garden, even if I [inaudible] they just keep growing. So you know, in terms of like, the sheer number of people required to sustain alternative food retail formats. You know, like the people that are really interested often grow themselves, or they're getting food from their friends or their churches or whatever, or they're going to the market, but there just isn't-there aren't as many people as a function of the-as a percentage of the population that are engaged in that. So it's hard to sustain typical retail formats.

**Interviewer 2** 22:07

Okay, so there are two things in there. I want to make sure we're, we kind of tease these out is that the fact that producers are also, you know, you've got folks also growing food at home. So in addition to producers, you've got home gardeners, the fact that they're buying food reduces the amount of food that they buy local, because they're growing their own food in their backyard. And then that connection to the economic sustainability of the local food. Is that right? Okay, just want to make sure we're able to capture that. So [Interviewer], can you show us how that how that is reflected?

**Interviewer** 23:02

Yeah. So it's basically a sort of dynamic between the purchasing power of revenues, and how that, you know, middle and upper class folks, you know, have the disposable income and interests to support, you know, local food retailers. While there are some, you know, barriers like the elitism of local food and farmers markets and sort of this dynamic between non local producers and local producers. And how like chain stores versus local stores support or do not support local production. And then that feeds into sort of the sustainability of local food retailers, which supports retailers. Anything,

**Interviewer 2** 23:53

there's also, you mentioned, [Participant 204], the slower growth of the food system as well. So would that be also reflected in the concept here around the sustainability? Well that says sustainability of the retailers? What were you saying that what we're seeing as an overall decline? In terms of the county, you mentioned the county in? Because there's lower wealth, there's also slower growth in the local food system? I want to make sure we, we catch it as well.

**Participant 204** 24:34

Yeah. Because, I mean, in a, in a more catastrophic situation, I always think about how food systems would relocalize because we would have to, but Flint, is a catastrophic situation still nested in a mostly functioning society. I mean, you know, we're a functioning society, even if we have problems like we, you know, we're still able to like move around freely and not be hunted by marauders and stuff. So the impetus for change, in a way isn't there--like people, the on balance, like a community like Flint being turned over to the Walmarts and Kroger's and Meijer of the world, and just becoming beholden to them and the little liquor stores that sell mostly junk food and stuff like that the the extractive end of things is, it's just how it is here, because we're still in a bigger society and system, whereby we're the chumps, I guess, you know, if, in a world where food systems were hyper, relocalized, a lot of these problems would change, because we would have to figure out local supply chains and figure out how to feed ourselves. But because we don't have to, that local side becomes the domain of people with the time and money and energy and interest in in doing that stuff.

**Interviewer 2** 26:13

Yeah, we want to see how to best reflect that. That was very dynamic in terms of that whole nesting. Yeah, nested inside of this broader system, when I-if I play it back, so I want to make sure we can get it in the map. It's nested-Flint is nested inside this bigger system, because you talked about the county, Genesee, and because it's nested inside of that. There's more of a connection to the larger scale stores and the convenience stores. You talked about them as the big box. But then also, you refer to the convenience store as more of like the extractive model.

**Participant 204** 27:02

Yeah because even if the convenience stores aren't chain convenience stores, if we don't have any seven elevens here anymore, they're still extracted insofar as the products that are purchased to fill them are all from big food producers. They're not selling local trinkets and local foods and so forth. So all the money now, like a ton of the money that we're spending at grocery stores on the retail side, is just immediately leaving unity.

**Interviewer 2** 27:31

Yeah, I see you're tying that to the sourcing? Yeah. Because it's sourced also from the same places as the big box. The money is still from an economic standpoint, leaving the community.

**Participant 204** 27:43

Yeah which just keeps making it harder, right? It's the Walmart effect. Like, when Walmart comes in, they start extracting money. All the local shops closed and reversing that as an individual entity, whether you're a small town in Nebraska, or a bigger community in Michigan like Flint, you're just stuck in that bigger system. And

**Interviewer 2** 28:03

Gotcha

**Participant 204** 28:05

Nobody [inaudible] as far as I know.

**Interviewer 2** 28:08

Okay. And so I saw the connection between this concept at the bottom about being embedded in the larger system, you connect with that to the stores and saying that that in and of itself, was a connection that was weakening the system. So between this one at the bottom and bedded up to the stores itself, because they're sourcing, right? Yeah. Okay. Yeah,

**Interviewer** 28:40

So aside... force... the fact that it differences was embedded in the national larger system that also supports non local producers or producers, and also leads to, you know, a lack of sustainability of a local food system and a difficulty to change the system.

**Interviewer 2** 28:58

And the one I think that's missing [Interviewer] was the-I think when he was talking about the convenience stores, they're also sourcing from the same place that the chain stores are, even though they're not chains. So a connection between the one on the bottom and the stores below local stores.

**Participant 204** 29:15

Yeah, I think that that characterizations fair, like as like that, because they function in the same way, they're-the people they're getting their supplies from are national distributors for the most part, like Flint Fresh that's providing, you know, Flint Fresh is not yet providing their products to five convenience stores or whatever.

**Interviewer 2** 29:39

Right. So they're actually using non local producer products as well in the local stores. Okay, that's a nuance that hasn't-I haven't heard that one kind of fully called out like that, in that way. Sourcing.

**Participant 204** 29:56

Yeah, and I've seen papers that refer to like local food stores, because they're talking about stores that are physically located in neighborhoods. But then when you read the paper, it's actually just talking about convenience stores that sell conventional food from national sources. So it's like, they're using local in a weird way.

**Interviewer 2** 30:23

Okay, all right, great. Other things that you may think about from the perspective of your work around, you mentioned, you've done a lot are in the retail sector. Are there other things from your research perspective? Other connections that you might see that are affecting the showing up in the food system itself?

**Interviewer** 30:49

And the answer can also be no [laughter].

**Interviewer 2** 30:51

Well, it could be Yeah.

**Participant 204** 30:55

Yeah, and again, like, how many hours? Like, I like the way this grew, especially... because in my head, as I'm thinking about it, and thinking of, I guess the things I mentioned, I feel like are some of the fundamental issues that maybe don't always get considered, because they're a little bit bigger. You know, we'll be like, Oh, we just need more people to eat healthy, and it's like, okay, well, how do you do that? Or, like, we need more people to shop at the farmers market? It's like, well, how do we afford that? How do you know, like... which I feel like it's reflected in the-you know-it's the purchasing power, which is connected to the investment? Those things impact our ability to grow our local food system? Yeah, that's...

**Interviewer 2** 32:03

Alright, great. And things happen to come up along the way, for sure, just add additional to it. So what we want to do is to introduce another aspect. So in this round of interviews, we wanted to also focus on the connection of the food system and racial equity. So how would you connect racial inequity, as it relates to the local food system here in Flint?

**Participant 204** 32:27

Yeah, I mean, at the top level, I guess, to starting from? Well, from producers. I know that there's a historic and ongoing inequality in [inaudible], as compared to white farmers; they just don't exist in the same number, or economic situation. They're not huge land holders, they don't-you know they're not selling their products to Archer Daniels Midland, and all the huge food producers, so there's an absence from I mean, and but, likewise, down the line, there's a general absence of people of color in the conventional food system, which itself, of course, wouldn't correct the downstream racial equity issues, because if there was perfect racial equity in terms of like, "Who's the man at the top of the food system?", that's not necessarily going to fix the inherent inequalities in the way that we build our cities and the way that retail's distributed unequally in our cities. And that unequal distribution of retail is very much connected to the decisions we make around where stuff gets to be built, where what kind of housing gets to be built, what realtors show homes, to what people in what neighborhoods, like the racial steering that still goes on. So that-I mean, the whole urban system is still very much biased. It's still directly biased in terms of segregation and racial discrimination, even if it's that more insidious kind of underhanded discrimination. But and I-this is where a lot of my research is now. There's legacy impacts of the way that we built our cities 60 years ago. So the decisions that impacted Flint in 1968, people's individual decisions about moving out of the city because of fair housing started obliterating the city before General Motors ever pulled out. So even if General Motors was still fine, and we still had all these union jobs and people were still making cars and stuff, Flint itself still would have wound up hyper segregated and beset with a lot of the same issues. It wouldn't be quite the same, because there would be more people still here, and the economic situation would be a little bit better. But the separation would still be there. And retail follows that retail very much. I mean, if you, if you map retail, you would think that retailers were all explicitly racist, because like, there's just not chain grocery stores in communities of color. And some of that is connected to the economic, like the underlying economic characteristics of the neighborhood, but I feel like even over and above that, it's reflected in any urban system, if you have a predominantly white neighborhood, or a predominantly black neighborhood, and they're otherwise the same, you'll have fewer community-or economic institutions in the black neighborhood. So fewer banks, fewer dentist's office, fewer grocery stores. So it's baked into the bigger urban system. And so the food system being an element of the foods of the urban system reflects that in all those ways.

**Interviewer 2** 36:11

That was a lot. And it's very, I mean, the tying it all together and just kind of want to go back and just check in on a couple of quick things to see if we we've got them. You talked about how the just the number started producers, just the sheer number of the disparity of racial representation in farming in production, you started there. And you also tied it to economic resources, like holding land as one not necessarily being land owners, holders. And then secondly, having access to sale through the wholesalers, I heard is as well in terms of of that presence there in the conventional system, then you talked about unequal distribution, in terms of... I'm trying to remember the tie to that, the unequal distribution.

**Participant 204** 37:27

Impacting through access

**Interviewer 2** 37:29

Impacting through access, okay.

**Participant 204** 37:32

Because yeah, just where people are located in communities.

**Interviewer 2** 37:35

Okay. All right, great. Okay, and then you made the tie to racial steering that affects both housing, and you tie back to also food and then tying it outside of the food system to the legacy. The legacy, the legacy segregation, you talk about the legacy segregation was an element to that.

**Participant 204** 38:15

Because there's contemporary aspects, interacts somewhat differently, because there were already starting from a point of inequality.

**Interviewer 2** 38:25

Yes, Mm hmm. And then you made the connection between that legacy segregation, also impacting retail, because you said that the retail follows the people. So you made that connection between those things as well. And then the next connection concept I heard was that when you have the segregated communities also points to fewer economic institutions based upon the dominant race in that community. That was another connection I heard. So predominantly, black communities, you said have fewer economic resources than predominately white communities. So the racial makeup of the community this this segregation, ties to the economic resources that the community has. I get that. Yep. Okay. All right. Great. Okay. So, do you-what are some of the would you say, and you may have covered this already, and I'm just asking a different way and see if it triggers anything else-brings up anything else for you, is what are some of the racialized barriers to participating in the local sectors of the system itself?

**Interviewer** 40:17

Definitely already talked about some of them like, you know, partnerships or contracts and access to land.

**Participant 204** 40:26

Yeah, I mean, I guess I could, like let me think this through, like, I would say the established opportunities for partnerships could-I mean, honestly, they could be connected to any of the green, or the teal or whatever there-because there's that baked in, disparity. You know like the fact that there aren't a lot of black owned businesses in the community and it's like, "Well, why is that?" and it comes back to the same kind of underlying both legacy and contemporary patterns of discrimination. Like, people don't have the same access to networks, and like financial networks, and collaborations and funders, and so forth, and pound for pound don't have the same resources themselves. Or get access to-like access to our knowledge of different programs that could be leveraged to do such things.

**Interviewer 2** 41:45

Okay, so then the first was the access to the financial and funding resources, and then access to program typed resources. You see those as two different things? Okay. So we make sure we get that. Alright, great. Here's an another way to think about this as a question, are there ways that the food system contributes to racial inequity?

**Participant 204** 42:25

Like the pattern of the arrows would go back toward racial inequity. Well, so the types of foods available among retailers, I guess, yeah, we could-this is to retailers specifically, and not necessarily to any of the [inauible], but those foods are less healthy, which, because of patterns of food access, contribute to poor diets in those neighborhoods. And then it's like the, the implications of living in segregated neighborhoods, right, like they're higher for people of color, because the amenities or lack of amenities in those neighborhoods are, are worse than, like, more dire than other types of segregated neighborhoods. Like nobody ever talks about the issue with living in a segregated white neighborhood. And like, yeah, because living in a predominantly black or predominantly Asian neighborhood or something doesn't have to be bad. Like, if it's not connected to discrimination, like if there's an ethnic enclave or something, you know, people who all moved here from the Dominican Republic or something, and they have their local restaurant and their local grocer and like, they still have their community that can be beneficial. Like, I know, there's some work and I think it was Gil G. of GE, where sometimes Asian people living in segregated neighborhoods in California fare better because they're connected to their social networks, and they have their food systems all right there. And but yeah, it's the way that it winds up being expressed in a lot of cases, especially in a community like Flint, where if you're going around looking for healthy food in a neighborhood that happens to be predominantly black, you're probably not going to find a lot of healthy foods, so then it drives all the issues associated with that. And it also, it's like reinforcing, right, people don't want to move into a neighborhood that doesn't have amenities, and so redeveloping those neighborhoods, like even the process of gentrification, which can be extremely upsetting and detrimental to a community, doesn't really happen in Flint. I mean, like, yeah, there's a few new developments. A lot of the new developments have, like mixed affordable housing in it or they're like apartments. It's not like super fancy condos like you would see in DC or Philadelphia or something because there's no attraction; the people who want to move back into the city either work here and are super dedicated to the cause, or they move here because it's the housing is cheaper, or whatever or you know, or they're renting, and they don't have any other place to rent that's big enough for you know, them and their kids or whatever. So it walks in the pattern of poor more poorly serviced neighborhoods, and I think in fact, like, in some ways, some of the neighborhoods that had become the most segregated black neighborhoods in the 90s are becoming instead, like, they're still predominantly black, but they're increasingly just poorer neighborhoods, like the people who move into them are moving into them, because they got a house for $12,000. And so thinking about a person who buys a house for $12,000, like, they probably don't have the resources to then support a bougie corner store, or a wine shop or whatever. So I mean, I've told people like, I don't think 100 years from now that the northern side of the city of Flint will be regular, or, I mean, I don't want to say that it's not-that there are normal people living there. But as compared to other communities and other cities that have, you know, stuff going on, and schools that are open, and parks that are mowed, and sidewalks that are plowed in the winter, it will struggle for 100 years because the pattern got locked into is that people don't want to move there.

**Interviewer 2** 47:01

Gotcha, let me give a couple of these back, because I want to make sure [Interviewer] can show us where they are. One of the things you talked about was even in a desegregated community, if you maintain your social community and your social network, you fare better. So I'm not really sure how that might be reflected so [Interviewer] can you help with that one? Where's that? And if people don't move into neighborhoods, you know, that don't have those amenities as a second one.

**Participant 204** 47:38

Yeah. Maybe like the social connections and network can buffer the potential negative impact on inequity.

**Interviewer 2** 47:46

Okay, the social network buffers got it, there it is, okay. Okay. And you also pointed out a bit of another loop where people, if you have a community that lacks amenities, then you aren't getting new people moving into that neighborhood. And the neighborhood gets poorer and poorer. So how we demonstrate that loop also.

**Interviewer** 48:13

Yeah, so this is the kind of connections between equitable urban planning and you know, all these like housing disparities and disparities and distribution of food and retail sort of lowers the desirability of neighborhoods with sort of loops back and cable legacy segregation, but also into current racial inequity.

**Interviewer 2** 48:36

Got it thank you. Okay, that's what I was hearing. But we got everything there, [Participant 204]. Yep. Okay. All right. Awesome. Awesome. Um, so let's talk a little bit about anything else. You want to add to that before we move from the connection of racial equity to the system, whether it's participation or barriers or just contributions from the system itself, before we move on?

**Participant 204** 49:19

I don't think so.

**Interviewer 2** 49:22

Okay. All right. So let's talk about what are or have been some of the major influences or impacts on the local food system in Flint?

**Participant 204** 49:50

I mean, I guess most broadly, just the the economic decline, the fact that there are fewer people with less money and who are struggling and therefore struggling in some other sector again, because we're still, in this bigger economy, it's not like when we struggle, we say, "oh, shoot, I guess I should go grow my own food, so that I don't starve to death." It's like, I'm gonna go get a low wage job and then struggle to buy food. And so therefore, the food, the food system, you know, trickles down to the lowest common denominator. Yeah I mean, you know. I don't know that I'd add anything.

**Interviewer 2** 50:45

The economic tie. So the water crisis, how did you-how has that impacted the localized food system?

**Participant 204** 50:58

I don't know. I mean, like I know, in the couple years after there was concern among people who were gardening, and so we did like, Edible Flint did a lot more soil lead testing. Those results didn't really come back much different and generally speaking, the soil lab was still okay. We put out recommendations for how or whether to use water, well for growing, because water for growing doesn't pose a huge impact, like, ultimately, if you're just watering your garden with leaded water, so we put out those kinds of communications. And it didn't seem like there was a big change one way or the other in terms of the number of people participating in that side of things. Of course, they're, you know, people changed the way that they cooked or didn't cook so that could have changed the products people purchased. But I didn't I mean, I don't know that there's been any studies of like, how many people, like what percentage of people were shifting and how they were shifting their cooking practices, because, you know, I know, there's still examples of people who use bottled water for cooking. But, you know, those are case studies. It's not like, you know, 40% of the city is using bottled water to cook.

**Interviewer** 52:32

I guess would it be okay, if I connected like, the main impact to be health disparities then, that they're like some efforts to address it, but maybe that was a primary outcome?

**Participant 204** 52:47

Yeah, I mean, because I don't know. I mean, I guess as compared to outside the city, yeah. It could have widened health disparities. Because a lot of that is up in the air still not back? Well, certainly there was the impact of like the Legionella outbreak, which was the other side of all that, but I guess. It certainly, in the short term had an impact on desirability of homes in the city so people kind of got stuck, especially if they're homeowners, if they didn't want to lose half of the equity in their house, they were staying put. Which, certainly [inaudible] we got it there the desirability of neighborhoods.

**Interviewer** 53:54

We can also talk about... I was just gonna say, we could also talk about COVID-19.

**Interviewer 2** 54:01

That's where I was going and then there's the impact of COVID on the system. What would you say those impacts were?

**Participant 204** 54:12

I would imagine-trying to think I know, I mean, I'd imagine restaurants would have been hit harder than stores. And that's just kind of everywhere. I believe Edible Flint sold a lot more garden kits last year. So I think it increased interest in local food production, so that could potentially have knock on effects on you know, maybe, yeah, maybe that maybe diminishing the impact of the elitism of local food, like, you know, if more people are growing it democratizes that a bit more. Although, again, flipside, it also meant people were door dashing, or grocery pickup; it made it even easier to shop at chain stores and harder to shop at local stores because maybe the local stores couldn't staff as easily or they'd have more concerns about that, and the big stores could just find that reserve labor pool to bring in whoever else and...

**Interviewer 2** 55:43

Yeah, that's certainly was a big wisdom filling that now. That's a big one. Are there-when you think about these main sources of influences, is there a main source or thing? Well, nevermind. I've tried to get that question out [laughter]. What do you think are some of the main sources or influences on racial equity in the food system when you think of the shocks or direct influences?

**Participant 204** 56:28

Like the impact of COVID on racial equity in the food system?

**Interviewer 2** 56:33

Or other main influences whether it was COVID, or the water crisis, or any other kind of main influence that might have a source that might have influenced racial equity in the food system itself. And it might be, and again, I'll take [Interviewer]'s-it might be no, you know, because you've connected a lot of things to racial equity as well. But if there's anything else, that's a main source.

**Participant 204** 57:00

I mean, it's not as connected to the food system. But like, we know, there were huge racial disparities inCOVID in the beginning, which may or may not have translated into different attitudes about how to approach it later. Because, for example, you know, the death disparity from COVID in 2020, was very different from the disparity in the last year, like more white people and more people living way out in the suburbs, as a percentage of the population have been getting from it. But it also, I don't know, in my head, I'm not seeing those connected to the system directly, outside of the impacts that it had on local stores not being open or not getting as many customers and the chain stores just solidifying their power.

**Interviewer 2** 58:04

Gotcha. Okay, then we probably got that pretty well represented there. Okay, wonderful. So when you look at this beautiful map, is there anything you want to add to it at this point, he, you know, we considered concepts is, when we go back to the example of when [Interviewer] talked about, I think you skipped that, you didn't do the automotive example. But if there's nothing else at this point, you can always, you know, add to it, we're going to move on and chat a bit about the changes the possible changes. So we'll take a look at considering leverage points. And so what might change to improve the system. So when you take a look at your map, and your place, you know, of expertise and experience, and you could change this food system, how might you make changes to improve it?

**Participant 204** 59:13

Would it- is it more ideal to focus on, like the food system proper, or on some of the pieces off to the side?

**Interviewer 2** 59:22

That's totally up to you, [Participant]. And when you think about this, and you say, hey, if I'm going to change and improve this, wherever, where are the places you look to leverage change opportunities.

**Participant 204** 59:36

Yeah, cuz I mean, the big picture that I frequently go back to is the urban planning side of things, the way that it connects to the housing, and desirability of neighborhoods, if we took a more centralized approach to planning. What's next for Genesee County collaboratively? And I mean, it would require consolidating municipalities and changing state land use law around how development is done. And I don't think there's yet the appetite for that. I mean, we just finished un-gerrymandering our districts and we haven't even... the side that currently cares about social justice hasn't yet won control the legislature. But like that kind of stuff, for me is is fundamental, like everything else short of being more deliberate about eliminating the effects of segregation and discrimination in our urban landscapes, urban and suburban landscapes. Everything else is just a half measure, you know, we can pour all the money we want into educational programs, and building Co Op grocery stores, and strengthening our local food economy. But the benefits of those are going to accrue to people, either with money or with the social connections to those places, and they're not going to land on the, you know, the average person living in a distressed neighborhood.

**Participant 204** 1:01:07

Until, like, well and, there's that side. And then of course, there's the economic inequality side, like, until we start taxing billionaires, again, what they should be paying, and not letting them build space rockets. And like that stuff. And it's obscene to me like I just because it's so- it would be so simple to do either one or both of those things. And then, then we would, you know- eliminating the defense budget by half, we would have so much money, to do all kinds of things, to rebuild our infrastructure, to put people to work doing so, to make education free, and give people an equal opportunity to get that education. And so for me, those are all the fundamental pieces of addressing it, because then the food system would fix itself. Like people in Denmark don't talk about the food system the way we do. Because their society is not so massively unequal. And I mean, they're racist in other ways. But the society is not as unequal. And so they don't have to think about all these leverage points because the system just works.

**Participant 204** 1:02:25

I mean, that being said, I mean, I, I do think that programs that bring more local control, and create local jobs can be little catalysts. Like, and I didn't mention Asbury, but I feel like Asbury and other programs similar to Flint Fresh, it's smaller, and it's different orientation, but Asbury farms on the east side, they have tons of hoop houses, and they have partnerships to more people that run hoop houses, and a lot of their produce goes to the soup kitchens. And I think, some of that goes to Flint Fresh, I'm forgetting now, but you know, like programs like that get a little bit of support, and then they do start standing on their own two feet. So support for programs that get at those different pieces of the food system, because, you know, Asbury, mostly being a producer, Flint Fresh, mostly being the value-added or wholesale piece, the North Flint food market being a retailer, to me, I see each of them as trying to butt in on those places.

**Participant 204** 1:03:53

So I mean, I guess, more of those kinds of things, could be useful. But they're also all- again, and not that this is a bad thing- but they're all like Flint focused, and Flint has less than a quarter of the county's population now. So when we're talking about capturing spending dollars, like making any of those initiatives work requires appealing to or, you know, existing alongside people that live outside the city. Which I mean, I feel like Flint fresh probably does a decent job of because from what I've seen them their customer roles. Their customers mostly come from middle class neighborhoods. And so insofar as that might help prop up the mobile market side with the mobile markets going to places maybe that are underserved. But then you know, they can still make a good share of money by selling the produce baskets to people with the wherewithal to do that. I think that connects to my rant about reshaping the urban system because it's about creating a system that middle class people and not middle class people can participate in, so that those businesses can stay afloat by you know, you know, sell making lots of money by selling whatever other things they sell, but then also having a model that doesn't neglect people who don't have tons of money. It's just hard to deliver that right now, because the county is so saturated by by richer and poorer.

**Interviewer 2** 1:05:54

Beautiful, beautiful math, beautiful leverage points. Um, you know, with all that we've talked about, is there anything that person I didn't think to ask you, or anything that might just be just sending a little ping off in your brain right now, after chatting with us a bit.

**Participant 204** 1:06:17

Thanks for letting me rant about what we should do to make our society better.

**Interviewer 2** 1:06:22

That was the most beautiful rant I've heard in a long time, so very much for sharing, and I wouldn't even tolerate it. But thank you very much. And as as we have shared, you know, with you the all of this information, we'll be using it, you know, to just inform our understanding and confidential, our team will be looking at it. And if you do have any questions, or anything comes up after this, you've got Chris's email, because she's the keeper of the documents and things for us. And we'll send you a link because we always want to hear your view. So you can use the one on the chat was always emails one as well. So whatever is most convenient for you to spend, you know, a couple of minutes to give us give us some feedback, you know, along the way. And again, I just want to say thank you, every, every conversation with you is just amazing. And we hear and benefit from, you know, your years of work in Flint, and not just work in Flint, but your heart and commitment in Flint. And we look forward to engaging with you as we continue in this last phase of the project. So thanks again for today. And everything else.

**Participant 204** 1:07:43

Thank you.

**Interviewer 2** 1:07:46

All right, we'll see you soon. Yep. All right. Take care

**Participant 204** 1:07:51

to see but