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**SPEAKERS**

Participant 120, Interviewer, Participant 209, Interviewer 2

**Interviewer 2** 00:00

Thank you, this meeting is being recorded. Right? So the interview is now being recorded. And your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose to answer any of the questions or not, or even to withdraw from the research at any time. We'll keep the recording confidential within our research team. We won't use it and share. We won't use or share your name, or any other identifying information in any of the research results that we create. However, you might want to be mindful where you are. There's anyone around you in a room or nearby that could potentially hear your your comments. And if finish, and following up, if you have other questions, you can email Carissa, whose email address you received. And so your consent is actually demonstrated by continuing to participate in the interview. Do you have any questions about this before we move on?

**Participant 209** 01:07

No questions.

**Interviewer 2** 01:08

Wonderful, thank you. Alright, let's start with an easy question first. How would you describe your role or your experience with local food systems? Whether it's fluid or otherwise, local

**Participant 209** 01:24

food systems? Yes. A user and a somewhat of a provider? Does that make sense? Yeah. Yeah, what about both? Well, obviously a subject in the user of the food system, because this is my home where I live. And then a provider because there are different things in my workplace that we do to play a role in the food systems as well.

**Interviewer 2** 01:58

Okay. Okay. All right. Great. Great. Well, let's take a let's take a look and just kind of give you a refresher, if we might, on the mental modeling process. Chris is going to walk you through that, because it's been a little Oh, shoot, I'm sorry. Let me ask this first. Thank you, Carissa. We'll talk about the the sectors first. So there are five sectors that we're that we are looking at in the food system, starting with, you know, production, which is the folks who are growing crops or raising livestock and any scale anywhere from right outside your back door to the larger scale folks that are producers. Then we look at the processes and the packages that people will take that food that's been grown or raised, wash it, pack it, possibly even turn it into a different product like it was a tomato one moment, it's salsa, the next. So those value added processors as well. And then the third category, folks who are the wholesalers or the resellers of food, so they're gathering those products and goods that were developed by the producers and and the processors and they're making those available. Then we have our retail sector for the people where we're actually are selling the food, our grocery stores, convenience stores, the farm stands and markets and the boxes and restaurants and caterers and all those folks who we get our food directly from and then the waste sector. So the either the food that that's not edible food we didn't eat or even in some cases through the gut rescue. So both like your composters and your food rescue folks fall in that category. Any questions about those? sectors?

**Participant 209** 03:49

Nope, seems pretty clear.

**Interviewer 2** 03:51

Pretty clear. Okay. So when you think about that, and just reflecting back on your role in the in the system, where do you see yourself having the most expertise?

**Participant 209** 04:04

Yeah, our organization does a community garden, a small community gardens, so Okay, micro scale of production. We also give out plants during the planting season so that people can do their own community gardens. Ah, okay. So, I mean, we play an active role in that we also make sure that community members can do their own their own home garden. And then at our center, we have a leased space that has a food distribution, a food pantry. Emergency so I'm not sure if that's a retail but it's free food.

**Interviewer 2** 04:42

We'll add a concept for that for your food pantry. Okay.

**Participant 209** 04:46

And then we also work with entrepreneurs to try to increase the cultural prepared foods that are available in Flint, Genesee County.

**Interviewer 2** 04:58

Okay, All right, great. Excellent. Excellent. Thank you for that. And now Corissa will reacquaint you with a little model how it works, give you a little refresher before we dive in.

**Interviewer** 05:14

So I'm just gonna run through an example. And kind of to show how the process it's exactly the same as last time, but it was that was like a year ago. And so I'll just run through it. Basically, we're going to be building out your understanding of the system. So we'll have concepts that are connected to each other. So if I was looking at the issue of traffic, I might say that something that impacts or influences it would be the number of cars on the road. So once I've decided that there's a connection from one to another, I have to decide if it's positive or negative, which doesn't necessarily mean that it's, you know, good or bad. But if one increases, does the other one also increase? Or does it decrease? So for number of cars, if there's more cars, more traffic, less cars, less traffic moving in the same direction, so that'll be a positive connection. Public transportation might be more of a negative connection, because if there was more public transportation, or better public transportation, you know, then more people be riding in buses, or maybe it's a big city that has like a subway, so they're not on the roads at all. So that would result in less traffic. So positives can be a blue arrow, and negatives can be orange arrow. My last choice is the strength of the relationship. And that's really like how impactful or influential is one thing on another. So cars to traffic might be a strong relationship, because, you know, if everyone decided to sell their cars tomorrow, like there would be no traffic on the road. So it's a pretty strong impact, whereas public transportation is maybe more of a medium impact that it can have a lot of influence on traffic, if you had a really great public transportation system. But there's still going to be you know, people who love driving their cars, or they have to move a couch or like, their job is somewhere weird, that doesn't have access to mobile transportation. So you know, it's not the can be really influential, but not the end all be all. A weak connection might be something like site, like the number of cyclists, which can have an impact on how much traffic there is if more people started riding their bikes places, but it's not like the, like a real solution to the issue of traffic is having everyone bike everywhere. So it was more, you know, an influence on it, but not a very strong influence. Any questions about this process?

**Participant 209** 07:37

This is pretty cool.

**Interviewer** 07:42

Okay, cool. Yeah, so we just want to know, like, the future? Yeah, definitely, um, feel free to ask those, we really want to make sure that, you know, as you talk and answer these questions, I'm going to be the one, you know, adding in the concepts, making the connections between them, but we want you to feel very like in control and have ownership over your map. Really trying to make sure that we capture your knowledge correctly. So feel free to jump in and say like, actually, I wouldn't connect it that way. Or like, I don't see like that. Or even you know, you know, you wrote it down and worded the concept like this, I wouldn't word it like that, like have that. And feel free to speak up about those things. Because it's really, it's your map your experience, we want to make sure that we capture it correctly.

**Interviewer 2** 08:29

Well, great. So now we're going to take a look at this. And just for clarity, so when you talked about the entrepreneurs with culturally prepared foods, can you just say a little bit more about that so that we can get that concept reflected on the on the map, make sure we got that one accurate? Would you say a little more about that?

**Participant 209** 08:54

Yeah, let me expand on that and then see how it can best be broken up. Well there's a quite a diverse Latin population here, however, in the food system in retail, what we see is the predominantly or only actually Tejano or Mexican American style food. Even authentic Mexican food can be difficult to find. But even further is like we see no cuisines outside of Mexico really to Tejano food or Mexican American food. So working with our diverse population, we have people that either ran a business or ran a food thing in their own home country or just find that that's a great way for them to have some economic opportunity. So, like, selling food from other areas of Latin America, that are very well known and famous.

**Interviewer 2** 09:43

Okay, so they're actually selling food. So they're kind of they're the retailers, they're selling food. Okay. I just want to make sure we got that in the right place. Okay. All right. Wonderful. So when you think about the roles, you know that that your organization has you talked about, you know, production, the transplants, the trance, the pantry, and then you're entrepreneurs that are doing retail, how would you make connections between what you do and these elements? You know, on this food systems map? Where do you see the connections? So for example, with are pantry, how would you connect that to these other sectors, how would you-do you see connections between them and the producers or with the wholesale?

**Participant 209** 10:38

Well there's a couple of things, right, there's a partner organization that runs a food pantry here. And then we, as well are a separate organization, we give out food too. They do it better. But there's a local organization here on Flint's east side, which is Asbury church, and they have Asbury farms where they do urban gardening. They have a lot of hoop houses, but we buy produce from them that they grow, and we give that out during their harvest season to try to support the urban garden efforts here. The food pantry that's here, they get their food from right, the food bank, and it's like more like to try to eliminate food waste, but that's what they do. And then I think I danced around your question. So please-

**Interviewer 2** 11:34

No, you're doing you're doing fine. It's all about as we talk it out. Just talk about the work that you do. And [Interviewer] has this wonderful ability to get it down as concepts on that map. So really it's just talking about us talking about what you're doing, how you're doing the work that you're doing, and we'll help draw connections. And again, as [Interviewer] said, we'll check in and make sure that we're getting them the way you're the way you're talking about them. So you were saying that the pantry gets food from the food bank? Yeah, did I hear you say that correctly?

**Participant 209** 12:10

That's correct. Exactly. Yep, that's a partner organization that runs that food pantry here. So they have that direct relationship with the food bank, only one organization per address can have a relationship with the food bank.

**Interviewer 2** 12:30

Ah, gotcha. Okay.

**Participant 209** 12:33

Okay, so we buy our produce from the the urban gardening that's happening here in our in front of us, right in our own area.

**Interviewer 2** 12:43

Okay, so you get the produce from them. You get the other food from the food bank.

**Participant 209** 12:48

Yep, the pantry gets there-yep, their pantry gets the food from the food bank, and then we are not the food pantry, so we have to get our food from another spot, if we want to give out food, which we do, but not necessarily our mission.

**Interviewer 2** 13:04

Gotcha. Okay. All right, great. Catch you. Okay. I think we got that right.

**Interviewer 2** 13:22

Okay. Do we get that accurate, that you're distributing food from the farmers? Right?

**Participant 209** 13:30

That's correct. Okay.

**Interviewer 2** 13:33

And you partner with the pantry? Is that what your organization does?

**Participant 209** 13:38

Right. We have a work community center. So we have a building and they lease space in our building to do their organizational efforts.

**Interviewer 2** 13:45

Gotcha. Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. Okay, now we got it. All right. Cool beans. And so you've got connections directly to the producers. What about the any other connections from other folks in the in the system? Do you connect to the folks who make-like, I have to give that example of tomatoes turned into salsas-do you have any connections with those kinds of folks as well or?

**Participant 209** 14:20

None at the moment.

**Interviewer 2** 14:23

Okay. All right. Great. Well, let's talk a bit about your support of entrepreneurs, share a little bit about that and the connections there.

**Participant 209** 14:36

Yeah, there's an issue with access to culturally relevant foods both like what raw, like in the market at a store where you can buy ingredients and then there's also the prepared foods. Both of those are gaps. So we want to-we are actively trying to figure out how to address these gaps. Because we think they're incredibly important to one's overall health, well being and quality of life living in Flint or Genesee County. So what we do is we know of food entrepreneurs or people that are interested in food entrepreneurship from these respective countries. So what we do is, there's another organization here that we partner with that works specifically with food entrepreneurs to try to help them get their business up and running and provide opportunities. And we're that bridge or that connection, in support. So through this partnership, they're able to organize events at the Flint Farmers Market to do, they have been calling it international night, even though almost everybody's Latin [laughter], so it's like a Latin Night where people can set up puposas, arepas, [inaudible food in Cuba, you know, northern South America, Central America, and then even that authentic Mexican food, right, this food that you can't really just- you can't find it anywhere in Genesee County. So it's been really great. And then we-this spring and summer, we plan to do that here for our food entrepreneurs as well. We've used them in events, but we want to make it kind of like a farmers market of what's available. Weekly, you know, not just on the weekend, we have food entrepreneurs selling food.

**Interviewer 2** 16:31

And you said that you're doing that international night event at the farmers market no, is that currently where it is?

**Participant 209** 16:38

Yep, that happens once a month. It's a once in month...

**Interviewer 2** 16:40

Farmers market. Okay. Okay, farmers market.

**Participant 209** 16:48

Even further, there are some corner stores and a liquor store here on our street where we're located on Flint's east side, and we are working on it, it's a great balance of trying to not scare anybody, but at the same time, get some movement. But we are trying to see if we can utilize space in one of these local market corner stores, they have a little kitchen, if we can sell food from that kitchen, we would like to see it. The owner is elderly, to the [store], and this [store], actually everybody who owns a building or business on [street], where we're at is elderly, and they all want to leave and retire and be done with it. And the neighborhood has kind of not seen investment a long time, so it's not really-it'd be an interesting business decision to buy an aged building that needs a lot of repair, where there's not really so much of a neighborhood that used to be there. So we're trying to start what we've been calling just like Flint, Genesee counties, Latinx district to try to address a lot of these gaps by creating that cultural market. And then as we're having those cultural food items available, so we're trying to talk with the owners if we can rent out, either space in their business or their kitchen to sell food from their kitchen. If that's once a week, twice a week, what could that look like, but that's what we're actively trying to do now. So hopefully one of those food entrepreneurs could increase their revenue and say, Hey, maybe I'm interested in buying this building or business. Or this isn't for me and this was all a bad idea and I wasted my time, but it's actually pretty profitable. So I don't think that's true. Okay. Okay.

**Interviewer 2** 18:37

Okay. Okay. And those are the existing folks, and that connection is between the entrepreneurs themselves. So those are the folks you're trying to connect to that opportunity, I think that's what I heard you say?

**Participant 209** 18:52

Yes, yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 18:57

Did I get that right. The connection between the entrepreneurs and those stores that you're trying to potentially purchase and add to your district? Did I hear that correct?

**Participant 209** 19:13

Yeah, I'm not the best business, individual, either. So, you know, we have plans to speak with an attorney on how to do it. But my biggest thing is, I would like to see more money in the pockets of our community members because they need it. The nonprofit would greatly benefit but, you know, it'd be great if we had more for profit businesses, as well for profit businesses owned by people of color and even further, if those addressed some gaps of services. So we, yeah, we are facilitating that role and trying to connect some of those entrepreneurs there.

**Interviewer 2** 19:50

Okay. All right. Great. Any questions about any of that [Interviewer] you've got?

**Interviewer** 19:58

Yeah, I guess just checking in, there's some of this dynamic sort of the putting in this sort of, you know, central of different aspects of supporting entrepreneurs added like plant giveaways. Sorry, the test sirens are going off because it's 1pm on a Tuesday... food pantries and then the sort of dynamics of, you know, what do food entrepreneurs do, you know, increasing number of locally owned stores and restaurants and availability of culturally relevant foods, but also income for community members? And some of the barriers for current retailers? You know, they're aging out, sorry, if the noise is so loud. And also cost of renovating and repairing old buildings?

**Participant 209** 20:49

Yeah, there's a, the other one, I would just say, just due to the location of these neighborhood stores, the neighborhood hasn't seen investment since GM was here, so it's not looking-it would be-just if somebody were to buy that business, it would be a huge business risk., right, you would, it would have to be somebody who's so wealthy that they don't care if it's profitable, or not, where it's an act of kindness where they want to see something that's addressing a gap of service, or the other one is somebody who doesn't really have any other option. And that is their best option. I don't know if that makes sense. The neighborhood is... it's been economic suppressed for quite some time. So number of customers locally that you would have are going to be less and rapidly declining. Mm hmm. So you'd have to be drawing in people from outside the walking distance. And then even further, it's kind of a dangerous neighborhood. So good luck trying to draw those people in from communities where they feel safe.

**Interviewer 2** 22:03

Okay, draw them from outside. And then safety was a factor I heard. You mentioned earlier that you're looking at those those existing stores being converted into more of a cultural market. So I want to make sure that we've got that transition. So as where we got the aging, we got the cost, and I want to make sure we've got that the intent you said was to-the connection from those retailers to converting them to culturally appropriate, culturally relevant foods. So [Interviewer], I think, oh, yeah, there it is. I see the connection from the retail to the store to the cultural part. Got it, okay. Just want to make sure I saw it there. Alright, cool. Got that. Um, okay. So other connections, as you're talking about the food entrepreneurs, you talk about them. And as relative to the stores, any connection between those entrepreneurs and folks that are doing value added products, or, because that's another another concept that's here, any of them doing that work of taking something that was a tomato, turning it into something else? Any of that going on any connections there?

**Participant 209** 23:30

Yeah, I mean, these things don't-haven't came to fruition yet. But we've talked with some community members that, uh, so we kind of, we have like an official kind of food entrepreneur group that we support. So there is an interested couple that want to make tortillas, because even just good tortillas are incredibly difficult to find. We drive outside like the county to get a regular tortilla, which is a shame, but there's somebody out there that wants to-that is interested in making tortillas, and they bought the whole little tortilla machine to just start producing tortillas, right, but I would assume the corn meal it down in to or if they just got masa, I don't know. I don't know enough about their business on what stage they're taking a product and turning into a tortilla. But we'ew hopeful that we can get them in there too, because I would love to see that. I mean that would address another gap in the community and it would benefit both them and the community.

**Interviewer 2** 24:36

Okay. Alrighty. Any other connections there? I know you talked about the producers, all the transplants-oh, yeah, you've got that up there. Plant giveaways-those are transplants. Is that right?

**Participant 209** 24:52

Yeah, transplants for sure. Okay, we do seeds but seeds are for like the herb season.

**Interviewer 2** 24:58

Okay. All right. Great.

**Participant 209** 25:01

Those are culturally relevant plants that you cannot find them at the local whatever I forget what you call the greenhouses, the actual business greenhouse... nurseries.

**Interviewer 2** 25:18

Aha, gotcha. Okay. All right.

**Interviewer 2** 25:27

Any other connections that you've seen as you think about what you do?

**Interviewer** 25:44

Um, do you-would you see-I'm thinking about sort of any secuity-like any circles in here? Do you think that there are some, you know, connections here that like the, do you see it as like a reinforcing, I guess, that, you know, these factors that make it risky to buy a business like contribute also to the lack of investment in neighborhoods or some other concept here?

**Participant 209** 26:12

Right. Yeah, I mean, that's right, when we look at the bigger picture and see that the east side has the highest concentration of the Latin population just under 10%. It can feel like if we're creating Latin centric businesses that it shouldn't be over here, because that's where we are. But I don't know anybody with money. We've had a lot of different conversations with people and they said, you know, why don't-if it's been such a gap of service, why didn't somebody just do it? Like, well, I think there's a lot to that, I don't know, anybody that just has access to money like that. They could just say, Okay, I'm gonna start my business today. And even further it is that because if you were to buy one of these businesses, I mean, you're next to a bladed out business or bladed out home or just in a basement. So yeah, right, we're trying to convince some people to invest in these businesses where, you know, it's a lot to ask when I myself wouldn't be able to invest in that business. It would be an act of charity, knowing that I will lose money, probably forever, unless it just happens to blow up and really be really unique or something. But yeah, we're working on it.

**Interviewer 2** 27:41

Okay. Okay. Okay. Well, as we talk through it, if there's other concepts, we'll add them. Let me ask you a couple of other questions then. So because you've touched on a couple of things already, as it relates to the impact of race and equity or inequity. So what are some of the ways that you see racial equity or inequity impacting, you know, participation in the local food system? [Interviewer] made the one connection or two connections that you mentioned, the access to capital is one of them, and the disinvestment, you know, in neighborhoods as another, and the risk associated with those investments. Are there other other things, ways that you see racial equity or inequity impacting the local food system?

**Participant 209** 28:38

Yeah, everything. I mean, the other thing that I usually speak of, and I think I mentioned it in the previous time we had talked was-right, it does have to do with suppression or disinvestment into neighborhoods-but on [Street] where we're located, and even the other main streets or corridors of the Eastside, especially here on [Street], there used to be a number of businesses that were Latin owned, and Latin centric in their services or products. Such as a market, a bar, a restaurant, a barber shop, where it's all Spanish speaking, doing styles that cater to a very specific audience, but those don't exist. For a number of different reasons, but a lot been...

**Interviewer 2** 29:31

What were some of the reasons you say that they don't?

**Participant 209** 29:34

Yeah, well, Flint's had a number of economic crises or crises that have impacted its economy. And those small businesses, or neighborhood businesses have definitely been one of the most impacted. So we see a lot of those things that used to exist, that no longer exists specifically when it's catered to the culture.

**Interviewer 2** 29:56

Gotcha. Okay. Okay, So, are there, you know, are there racialized barriers to participation in the food system? You know, if there are what might they be? Yeah,

**Participant 209** 30:15

So what we see... there's a number of things. What we would say is like language, culture, and immigration status barriers. Again, having a lot of food talk with our local chamber, well, actually, we did talk with our local chamber for a long time and we were really trying, we were looking for support on how to connect our food entrepreneurs or entrepreneurs to resources. When I say language barrier, I think that was pretty understandable is nobody at the chamber, or people at SBA don't speak Spanish. A lot of the information... SBA does a much better job because it's, you know, statewide, but not that well of a job. But locally, right, it's almost impossible to find information on how to navigate systems, or what to do the take those steps are, who to talk to, in a language other than English. It's problematic. And another one, right, immigration status barrier, people undocumented have full ability to create and own their own business, but that's not known by anybody who wouldn't-that doesn't know anything about the immigration system, and then the last thing was the cultural barrier. And it's got kind of two different dynamics to it. But that biggest one is what we see is that immigrants find themselves in a weird predicament where entrepreneurship might be their best way to gain full employment, or to have a more prosperous life. But if you're from another country, specifically from another country, like who is telling you how to contact the State of Michigan, right, with the Department of Law, or the IRS, or what to do, in oftentimes, a cultural barrier is connected with a language barrier. Okay, so we have a lot of people that are interested in entrepreneurship, but a lot of people wouldn't know the first step to take on how to have an official business. Even trying to talk about the city, right, there's nobody at the city that speak Spanish. Yeah, every point in the system, there's something that's going to make a little bit more difficult.

**Interviewer 2** 32:40

Okay, so I hear you pointing back to the language barrier, quite a bit: language barrier, in terms of the information, language barrier in terms of the people who you can talk to to point you to the things that you need. So the language barrier is definitely popping out.

**Participant 209** 33:01

Right, and institutions or larger organizations that receive federal funding should have interpretation services available to their clients, residents, constituents, whatever. But oftentimes, that's maybe just not known by the day to day staff carrying out the operations. Maybe they do, maybe they don't, you know, we're digging deeper. But right now, at the service level, people are...

**Interviewer 2** 33:33

It's not there. Okay. Yeah. Okay. Let me ask this another way, too. Are there ways that the food system contributes to racial inequity?

**Participant 209** 34:02

So I'm gonna say some things and then you let me know if any of its useful. When I think of inequities, I think of like health and wealth. There's a number of things that are attached to that, but when I think of health, I think of the quality of food in your neighborhood or your community, or the food that you're getting at emergency food services or locations. And that's what I see. You know, we want to do food distribution. We would love to do food-we would like to buy our food from the local corner stores and markets, if it's all grant funded, so we might as well support the ones that are here, and then make sure that's non canned food, you know, food that's not high in things that could be attributed to further health disparities. I think sometimes we see food in emergency situations or even at the local corner stores that are just high in things that will make you unhealthy. And not very many things that they get healthy. Yeah, and I was talking about that a while ago, because there was a survey done here. Maybe eight years ago, at least one I'm familiar with where they went to the corner stores and try to mark all the foods, if healthy food options were available. And it's like, Great did they have low fat milk, different types of milks (and it was all actually dairy), but did they have fresh produce? Do they have pastas, breads? So technically, yeah, all these things exist, but the quality is either piss poor, or that's clearly not what people are going to when they go to the store. I can go here to the corner store and get me an apple or a banana or an orange. And I've gotten bread before, but it was moldy. Or I can go get a loaf of bread, but it's like, yeah, people know that's not what they're selling. I don't know how to phrase that. But right, it's like, because I just don't want to be misleading, right, and saying that that store offers healthy options. Are these corners-these neighborhood stores offer healthy options? Sure, but are they debatable?

**Interviewer 2** 36:35

Gotcha. I think [Interviewer]'s got that with the health quality. There. Okay. You started down a track around wanting to do food distribution, and as you were chatting about inequity...

**Participant 209** 36:56

Yeah, it's this weird and unfortunate experience that a lot of immigrants face when they come here, where they are looking for emergency food or the dependent on emergency food. And Flint has a plethora of emergency food options, which is a shame, but none of them are offering things that they would regularly use in their normal day to day diet. And that's one thing that we would like to see. And like I said, the business that rents or at least a space in our building, you know, we can't tell them what to do or what to provide, but if we said what we would like to see in an emergency food system, it would definitely be right, those good tortillas, because that's my staple grain. Right, the rice beans, and then those basic produce items, peppers, onions, and whatnot, things that they would make sense, what they normally eat, kind of what they already do, but just the variation on some of the things.

**Interviewer 2** 38:07

Gotcha. Okay. Okay. All right. Questions specific about, you talked a little bit about an economic crisis. What other major factors or impacts do you see on the local food system?

**Participant 209** 38:37

Okay, [Interviewer], I can't remember where you were from. Was it the state of Michigan?

**Interviewer** 38:43

I'm from Indiana, so Michigan, but worse,

**Participant 209** 38:46

Indiana, okay, Michigan, but worse. Well, no, I got some friends from Gary. But I was talking with somebody yesterday and I said, you know, I wonder if we're headed for Gary, Indiana. And somebody said we are, we just have big philanthropy here making sure we don't get down to too low. But Angelo's, I don't know if you know Angelo's, but the Flint Coney is the best coney. Okay, Detroit tried it. It was terrible is terrible. Nobody wants to Detroit Coney. The Flint coney is so much better. But I say that jokingly just because there's so much history, I believe around the coneys, both Flint and Detroit Coney. There's a reason why they exist. There's a reason how they came about and it's part of the U.S.'s story around food, immigration, and then even just the industry but Angelo's was right here on the east side and Angelo's closed during the pandemic. But when that closed, because it's right down the road from us, it's again like I wouldn't say nobody's doing anything, but are we not alarmed that these Flint staple businesses are going out of business and still there's no more investment into the east side, right? They were doing a struggling battle right next to him. They'd played it out homes. It's just a blighted out neighborhood. And so yeah, that's definitely going to affect their ability to bring in their same clientele or customers. But yeah, I mean, the economic crisis, the water crisis, COVID. All these things impact businesses. Yeah, the industrialization of our city has really negatively impacted a lot of our neighborhood businesses and neighborhoods. And if you look at the demographics for the city of Flint, yeah, highest percentage of people of color compared to its surrounding cities, almost alarmingly it's like, wow. It's interesting how Fentons almost 98% White. So, I don't know how that happened.

**Interviewer 2** 41:12

So you you touched on a couple of things. So the economic piece you tied to the de industrialization? You touched on the water crisis briefly. So when you when you talk about the water crisis, how do you see that? How did you see that particular one affecting the system?

**Participant 209** 41:33

Oh, that was, yeah, that was a big one. I wasn't trying to go anywhere to get food from anybody. And it was a lot of things that, you know, definitely was-I wouldn't say under educated about but, you know, I wasn't trying to get any food that was probably prepared with water or get a beverage there that wasn't bottled. I don't drink pop. But you know, even what I believed at that time-those pop machines, they called the pop machines that they had at restaurants, it's like, if it's using the city water to mix it with the syrup, it's like, I don't want that, either. So yeah, it was just you know, is the food I'm getting safely prepared with this lead in it, and right now the city had-well, at that time, the city had a really large issue with clean water and if that's going into my preparation of food, then I don't want that either

**Interviewer 2** 42:34

Mhmm, so yeah, the water use and food prep. Okay. Okay. Okay, we talked about the the water crisis economics, and COVID. Any any other types of influences besides those? So we got quite a bit there.

**Participant 209** 43:06

Yeah. Yeah, that COVID one was interesting. It was interesting to see how the more affluent food businesses were able to-I don't want to see change legislation-or get around rules guidelines set up by the city to then make their business available people outside where I didn't see that happening for the neighborhood stores, or restaurants. It looks like there was some significant investment maybe it was the business itself that had all those resources. But it looks like the city quickly found money to support its downtown restaurants and then quickly changed legislation to make sure that they can continue to operate with whatever they needed to do. Because there's some ordinance on the sidewalks, using alleys, all of of it.

**Interviewer 2** 44:07

And you're saying In contrast, for the neighborhoods?

**Participant 209** 44:11

Yeah, for the neighborhoods, I don't think the neighborhood restaurants or food businesses, I'm not sure if they were considered in the COVID-19 response.

**Interviewer 2** 44:24

Okay. Okay. Okay. Got it. Okay.

**Interviewer** 44:42

If ever the map is getting, like too busy and you're like can we look at just this specific thing, I have some tricks up my sleeve like we can narrow down if that'll ever be useful, just because it's getting complicated because the actual system is really complicated. So yeah, it's very good if it looks like this but focusing on something I can do that yeah.

**Participant 209** 45:12

Okay. And some of these things are Latin specific but from Flint another thing, just talking my friend, this business is no longer business but it's in Detroit, Captain J's. Because I just drove by it. Yes, this last weekend, Captain J's was was pretty huge here, but there's still a whole lot of businesses that look like Captain J's, where you can use your bridge card to buy chicken. Just fantastic, and then you just pay the service fee to have them fry it, which again, is very economical, but unfortunately, extremely unhealthy and making unhealthy options extremely accessible. So that was a-that style exists here in Flint, and it's delicious, but not healthy, so I try not to eat it.

**Interviewer 2** 46:14

I hear that tension. Yeah, it's simple but not healthy. Mm hmm.

**Participant 209** 46:20

Yes. Right. It's, I always find that interesting, how assessable unhealthy stuff can be, extremely accessible. But I think-was that-I'm not familiar with food policy at all, did that become outlawed practice or banned practice? Oh, I'm not sure I think that practice still exists but I know it was highlighted that's problematic?

**Interviewer 2** 46:53

I don't know if it's legal or not, I don't know. That's a good question. I'll have to, you'll have to you know make me look that one up.

**Participant 209** 47:01

... legal trouble but I think it's probably problematic.

**Interviewer** 47:05

Yeah I think you're allowed-as long as you're using EBT on uncooked- unprocessed-like uncooked foods, what you do after with it afterwards is like up to you. So yeah, it is...

**Participant 209** 47:19

Definitely makes sense, I don't know if the business itself should be penalized but yeah, I did-the little corner store here on our street-in the summertime, I kept ask them for healthy options and they had salads out there for a week but nobody bought them. I was the only one and I wasn't getting a nasty salad. So they just stopped providing it.

**Interviewer 2** 47:45

Yeah, not getting demand for it. Yeah. So the demand for healthy foods I hear you saying... Awesome. Okay, yeah, yeah, um let's explore anything else you want to add to that beautiful map of your brain and your understanding of the system?

**Participant 209** 48:07

Well um, yeah. Might be... the [inaudible] Foundation is a local health nonprofit so yeah, health conscious nonprofit, and they just started a thing for this a council for the city I think they call it food equity or something. I'm not exactly sure. But I was talking with them and it was kind of a some similar things that I had brought up I believe a year ago which was just talking about the quality-I don't know if I'll use word quality I will say, I'll use the word quality, I don't know if that's the word I want to use-but quality of the neighborhood grocery stores, grocery stores that you will find in the neighborhood. And I just mentioned, you know, not even being able to find like a Spartan brand. You're finding the Spartan of the Spartan brand, the offshoot of the offshoot brand, so it just for me, it was like, I don't want I'm gonna say, trust. There's been a lot of acts that have happened to marginalized communities that I don't trust anybody anymore. But in trying to shop they're not recognizing a lot of the things that I was looking at the brands I was buying I really didn't know what was in the food but the quality fields lesser as well as some of those in even some of the things that you can get with my bridges or with EBT cards seem to be more expensive than if you're to go outside the neighborhood. Which I thought was kind of funny. It's like oh, okay, looks like they kind of got the reverse system here where they can increase the price on these food EBT eligible items, and not be too worried about them selling or not selling.

**Interviewer 2** 49:58

Huh higher prices.

**Participant 209** 50:02

Yeah, higher prices for sure. I went to this corner store to buy a toothbrush and some floss before a dentist appointment. And I think I think I paid $10 for, like the cheapest toothbrush I have ever seen in my life and just terrible floss in the little thing of toothpaste I was like, that's absolutely insane. But I'm trying to support this local market. It's ridiculous. But yeah, it's just a different experience shopping at the neighborhood grocery stores.

**Interviewer 2** 50:41

Gotcha. And any particular thing you attribute that to, as we were talking about some of the other concepts that you have on your map, that you would attribute, you know, the higher higher prices in the neighborhoods?

**Participant 209** 51:04

Right, I would like to be optimistic. Right. And not so much pessimistic and think people would be charging just to make a profit off. People that are less economically well off, right. But I know people frequently make money off of poor people. But so I'm hoping it's not that and I'm hoping it's just due to the struggle of running a grocery store in a neighborhood where your main clientele are going to be people in the neighborhood that either walk or bike to get to where they need to, or utilize public transportation. Getting to the chain grocery stores, like a Meijer or Walmart, are outside the city. Right.

**Interviewer 2** 51:55

Okay. Oh, trying to hold a sneeze here. Okay, great. Um, and, of course, as we move to where are, you know, last couple of questions, if anything else pops in, we'll make sure we, we connect those. So when you look at your map and your experience, you know, in the food system, and we think about with potential, you know, changes. How would you make changes to improve the system?

**Participant 209** 52:36

That's a good question. Yeah, I always think about those larger issues of health and wealth, and vibrancy, vibrancy as the other third item that I throw in there, how vibrant a neighborhood is, how vibrant a community is. And you know, I don't know, I think we live in what's called a capitalistic society. And I think, unfortunately, neighborhoods or communities where people come to live, are often oppressed economically, and continue to be suppressed. And as a result, these neighborhoods struggle to have any wealth. And it can be very incredibly difficult to try to own or operate a business, in a neighborhood that can feel like home when it might be easier business decision decision to do that outside of your home. If you have access to the capital, but right, it'd be much better to start your business in Grand Blanc. It could be maybe, I mean, I don't know. But I would imagine, right, the sustainability is gonna be much higher, the value of your building will continue to if not only increase, right remain the same only increase. If you own a home or a building here on the east side. That's a very interesting idea. I think land values only decrease and have drastically decreased since last 30 years.

**Interviewer 2** 54:26

Okay. Thought about ways to improve it.

**Participant 209** 54:33

Yeah. Yeah, I know. I mean, yes and no. Right. Um, I don't know. But what I would say is I think it's very clear now with what we know as a society or hopefully what we know as a society that health and wealth are extremely important, right and extremely connected. And if we know there are communities where there are pedestrians only where people get around by walking, biking or using public transportation, then if that's their only form of transportation, then it's incredibly important that in these neighborhoods that there is quality food, and that healthy food options can be accessed. So, yeah, that's you know, I think there's a name for this. But if there's some way to support those businesses that exist there, then that wouldn't make a lot of sense. Because I think, I don't know. It seems very difficult to try to do it without any type of support. And maybe somebody might be there to continue to profit off poor people. I do know these corner stores, as I enquired about buying one of them, not for me, but just to know, and asking where the majority of the profits come from it is from cash from check cashing, from cashing people's checks, which is another incredibly interesting process that happens to the community. So it's a lot, you know, don't oppress the neighborhoods, don't oppress communities, maybe let them be vibrant, don't destroy them. Yeah, we're behind 475. And then right here, and right where we're at, there used to be a number of Latin families that lived here. But we're displaced with the construction of 475. Hmm. That's the same for north and it's destroyed the black community too right here.

**Interviewer 2** 56:58

Yeah, same thing. Right. And other cities?

**Participant 209** 57:02

Yeah, I was, so [inaudible] right now is doing 475 and 375 in Detroit, so I don't know if you know, [Name], but I talked with her recently. Yeah, she's talking with with them out, 375, we said we were gonna coordinate and let them know. But I don't know. I know. It's all complex. We have now built communities around what destroyed the community? There's been a lot that has happened that has got us to the state we're in. And I think it's important that you just know that the communities are there and that they need investment, right. I think there's been a lot of concentration of investment into uptowns or downtowns, or to areas where they're still drawing people in from outside the city, outside where people live, to bring in people from outside the city to come live in the city. But in a very specific area, which is all very interesting.

**Interviewer 2** 58:08

Yeah, I hear that, the communities are there where the disinvestment happened, and they still need investment. That's what I'm hearing.

**Participant 209** 58:13

Yes. Right, right. Yep. We're still here. Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 58:18

Mm hmm. Okay. All righty. Is there anything in all that we've talked with you about today, so that we didn't ask you about something that you feel was important that either didn't come up with something you said thus far, or something we may not have asked, as we as we close out?

**Participant 209** 58:43

You know, I look forward to, to the results, I enjoyed looking at the results this last time, it was definitely a lot to take in. Definitely best of luck on disseminating that knowledge, especially to people that, you know, I was fortunate to take part of the process. So I feel like I had a better understanding of what I was looking at. But I mean, what's happening is really trying to write better understand the complexity of the system we find ourselves in. That's an undertaking. That's definitely an undertaking. So thank you. Good luck. And, you know, I ain't got no answers. I'm just very observant to the conditions we find ourselves in today and how we got here.

**Interviewer 2** 59:23

Mm hmm. And that's a big deal. Yeah. And

**Participant 209** 59:27

Yeah, I was also gonna say, zoning issues right now. Almost. Yeah, there's going to be no investment into the East Side. Literally due to how the city is zoned. It's not zoned for large portions of the East that are not zoned for business development, economic development or housing development. Where we're at is literally zoned for greenspace which has only been responded to as urban gardening and I said we have enough blighted out hoop houses. We do not need another one. This isn't getting to what we need. Okay. But, yeah, I mean, even the way that's kind of a historic issue too, but how areas are zoned? Okay. It can also be the death of communities.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:18

Gotcha. Okay. Thank you. That was that was a big one.

**Participant 209** 1:00:27

Yeah, it'd be a lot... negatively impacts.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:32

That's huge. That's huge. [Participant 209], that's huge. Okay, so let me make sure I got that right. But you said not zoned for business, and economics and housing. So what I heard you saying,

**Participant 209** 1:00:45

Yep. So, at least for the city of Flint, there's a different zoning ordinances for where you can put a business, what type of business but even further these, you know, areas where they want to have businesses, areas where they want to have homes. And right now, I've been in this position, this is the start of my fifth year, this vicinity has lost so many homes, it's alarming due to blight and or abandonment, and then they randomly catch on fire and then just get burned down. But rapidly, and there's no (due to our zoning ordinance, right)-efforts to build new housing or to do any economic development or to build businesses here on what used to be a financial corridor, the nonprofit, our community center actually used to be a bank towards someone who visited us earlier today. And right, this neighborhood had so much money, that it needed its own bank, and we are in-I'm in the vault. But yeah, exactly.

**Interviewer 2** 1:01:58

Okay. Awesome. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. So thank you, again, for participating. And certainly, like you said, being in the process, we appreciate it, and helping with the understanding. So the, as we said before the interview is confidential. We'll use the information ourselves in terms of doing the research, but no identification, you have Chris's email. So if there are questions or you know, additional things that like pop in, that you want us to make sure that we capture as a part of, of this interview. Please, by all means, reach out the survey, you'll receive a survey from us, that'll give us some feedback, you know about the process and also give you opportunity even to invite others if there's people that you think we should talk to while we're doing these interviews this month, we would definitely appreciate that. You'll get an email as well with that, so you got the link in the chat. But also Chris will send you an email to be able to take the take the survey, and they appreciate your time and everything that you're doing. And certainly look forward to future conversations with you.

**Participant 209** 1:03:14

Thank you, Renee. What was the organization you were with?

**Interviewer 2** 1:03:18

I am with food plus Detroit. It's one of the the food based organization that I'm with. Right, right. One of the many. Yeah, cuz I have a I have a consultancy, also doers edge. And I'm also starting a compost business. We mark composting solutions. Wow.

**Participant 209** 1:03:39

Yeah, I was in Detroit this last weekend, went to cinema Detroit. And then I seen some type of a look like a food nonprofit that's like, Oh, I wonder if that's the one. I don't know if you have a building with

**Interviewer 2** 1:03:51

me. Oh, no, I don't. Coming soon. Yeah.

**Participant 209** 1:03:55

That was that was a very interesting experience for myself when I was out there, too. Oh, okay. Why did you buy cinema Detroit? Um, if you're familiar with it. Okay. Not too far. From MLK Avenue. They were premiering a film that was made by a flint from ographers.

**Interviewer 2** 1:04:16

Awesome. Okay, well, next time, you're this way, let me know we'd love to.

**Participant 209** 1:04:21

Yeah, because I'm curious about what has happened and what is happening in Detroit and see if there's anything that we can learn from or be aware of.

**Interviewer 2** 1:04:33

Absolutely. Well, I'm right here, you know how to get hold of me. So that's an easy lunch conversation, you know, just conversation. We always do food with food systems work. It's like you must have a conversation. So, all right, well, cool. I will definitely reach out to you as well. Thank you so much again, and we do appreciate you and we look forward to you Stay connected as we as we move forward with this

**Participant 209** 1:05:02

Absolutely thank you very much

**Interviewer 2** 1:05:05

all right Have a great afternoon

**Participant 120** 1:05:09

bye bye I miss Chris Thank you