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Mon, Mar 28, 2022 11:16AM • 54:32

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

people, food, flint, connection, soup kitchen, asbury, donating, big, local food system, cooking, system, waste, traffic, food bank, talked, barriers, produce, questions, north, impacts

**SPEAKERS**

Interviewer, Participant 218, Interviewer 2

**Interviewer** 00:00

Thanks. Alright, then turn it back over to Rene.

**Interviewer 2** 00:05

All right, great. Thank you. One second here. Um, so the first question we would have for you this morning, Caitlin, and thank you.

**Interviewer** 00:21

We need, we need to get the informed consent on camera.

**Interviewer 2** 00:23

Oh, right. That's right. You just did that apologize? Chris, would you go ahead and walk through that? My, my document is, absolutely. For a second, I apologize.

**Interviewer** 00:35

Cool. Um, so it's really just two things that we want to go over and make sure we have your consent on camera to participate. And the first is really like what voluntary participation means, which, essentially, that we want you to feel very free to not answer any questions or any parts of questions or even withdraw from the research at any time. And for any reason. So if there's anything that you're like, I'm not really comfortable addressing that, or, you know, something came up, I have to go, that's totally fine, just let us know. And the second is confidentiality. So because we're in weird digital spaces, just be mindful. If there might be anyone in the room with you are able to hear hear your comments. We don't care if there's anyone there, just be mindful of what you would be comfortable with them hearing potentially. So this is really important for people who might be at work, and have like a boss nearby or something is like what, you know, you might be comfortable sharing with us, but maybe there's other people in your space, what are you also comfortable with them hearing? So those are big things. Your consent is demonstrated by your continued participation in the interview. Any questions about that?

**Participant 218** 01:45

No. Awesome.

**Interviewer 2** 01:48

All right. Wonderful. Well, thank you for that. Um, our first question would be for you this morning, is telling us a little bit about your experience and expertise in a localized food system. I'd like to start there if we did.

**Participant 218** 02:07

So I am the [Job Title] of local food systems over at [Soup Kitchen]. And my job is basically to not only run the day to day operations at the soup kitchen, but also to bring in more local food to individuals, make sure that people are getting access to healthy foods, with like I said, the emphasis on being local, so out of shortening that supply chain, so we're not getting things from, you know, out of state, but rather, if we can get it in stay doing it that way. I collaborate with a lot of different groups in the community like Krim, and some of the schools and we kind of help each other out with like, getting access to certain items or doing like food share. So if the bagel company has way too many bagels, you know, bring them over, we'll use them for sandwiches. And kind of also the emphasis is on not only more local food, but more healthy food. So less doughnuts and candy, more veggies and fresh fruit. So that's kind of what I do in a nutshell.

**Interviewer 2** 03:20

Okay, all right. Great. Great. Well, thank you for that. Thank you, thank you. Um, this this particular set of interviews that we're doing, Caitlin, this is perfect, because we are concentrating on the localized food system, as well as looking at the implications of racial equity and inequities on the food system. So we want to start out with some definitions to talk about the five sectors that we're focusing on. So production, which basically is going to deal with who's growing the crops and the livestock whether it's in your backyard, or is the larger scale, you know, farmers and growers. In second, we coupled the processing and packaging together. So both that are involved in actually the washing and packing of those materials that have grown, including the value added processes, the folks that take this lovely set of tomatoes here and add them with some things and turn it into, you know, salsa or some other delectable as well as dealing with our our wholesalers. You know, the folks who takes those materials, the foods and products that are produced by others and then makes them accessible via resale in in the marketplace, and then all the places we get food where we actually consumers buy food. So, you know our stores, our convenience stores, our markets, our foreign stands, our restaurants, our caterers and even the food boxes and Things of that nature all considered in in that particular group. And then, of course, we not everything is edible and nor do we eat everything. So we also want to consider what happens to the foods that we that we don't eat, and whether it's they go and hauled away to be composted or even some folks that are rescuing, you know, foods and moving us around. So those are the five sectors that we're working with. Do you have any questions or comments about those? Before we go a little further? Look? Let's go. Alright, great. So based upon what you shared as your background, in areas of expertise, where would you say that you have the most expertise or experience in these sectors?

**Participant 218** 06:02

Well, we definitely, like I said, participate in kind of the waste side of things, getting donations of food that otherwise we'd go to waste, whether it's like the bagel company or Danis doughnuts or people that are like farmers who are like we have all of this X amount of squash we need to get rid of. I'm with so much the retail. Okay. Yeah, the wholesale, except we're not selling it, obviously, we're just getting mass quantities of it and giving it to the people for free. Okay, the processing and the packaging, we do a little bit of that, um, the nonprofit I work for actually is doing meal kits right now. So we kind of have a little bit of experience in that regard. Okay. And I don't do any, we currently don't do any gardening at the soup kitchen, but we have people that produce for us as Berry Farms, so

**Interviewer 2** 07:16

hmm. Okay, so you have experience with that? Okay. Okay, so it looks like you've got experience across a base of these. Excellent. Excellent, that's perfect. That's perfect. as we as we get into this, Caitlin, we are using a process called mental modeling or fuzzy cognitive models. And they allow us to create the document a your understanding of the food system, Carissa is going to take a few minutes now and introduce you to that technology. Before we get before we get started. Okay, awesome.

**Interviewer** 08:00

So this is mental modular, it's a free website that anyone can use online. And I'll run through an example of what the mapping is going to look like, before we get into it. So the two big, like parts of what we're doing are going to be the concepts which are the words, the bubbles, and then the connections, which will be lines drawn between them. So when we decide that there's a connection, so if I'm looking at what impacts traffic in a fictional city, I might say that the number of cars influences how much traffic there is. So once we decided on a connection, I have two decisions, really, the first is if it's positive or negative, and that doesn't necessarily mean that it's a good connection or a bad connection. It just means if one goes up, does the other one also go up? Or does it go down. So for cars and traffic, if there are more cars, there's also more traffic, we're going to have a positive connection, and it'll show up as blue on the map. Public transportation might be more of a negative connection, because if there's more public transportation, or a better public transportation system, there's going to be less traffic as people are taking buses or a subway or something like that. So that's positive and negative. And the last decision I have is, how strong is the connection? How influential is one thing on another? So we'll be thinking about weak medium or strong connections. So cars to traffic, I might say that's a really strong connection. If tomorrow everyone decided to stop driving their cars, we wouldn't really have a traffic problem. Now that that's realistic, but it's a strong connection. It's really influential. Public transportation might be more of a medium connection that it you know, influences the content. That's a lot. But, you know, maybe it's not the, it can't do everything, there's always going to be those people who really love driving their cars or they live or they work in somewhere that's it's really inconvenient for a public transportation system. So more of a medium connection. And then a weak connection might be something like the number of cyclists. So you know, can influence traffic a little bit if you decide to bike to work instead of drive. But it's not going to be like a realistic Transportation says like solution for everyone, you know, you can't carry your groceries really conveniently, you can't move a couch or something like so. A connection, but a pretty weak connection. Any questions about that process? Awesome. So just from a high level, we do want you to have a lot of like ownership over this map, I'm going to be the one you know, adding concepts and making connections as we go through this conversation. But I really want to make sure that it is accurate to your understanding, so is your knowledge. So definitely jump in and correct me anything that you're like, I wouldn't connect it like that, or, you know, I wouldn't word it like that I would read that concept differently. Definitely let me know, Renee is going to be walking through stuff. But I'll jump in and check in saying like, Okay, you talked about this thing, and I mapped it this way, is that accurate to your understanding. So it's definitely it's your knowledge to your brain. I'm just the one trying to try to write it down. So jump in and correct me whenever. Awesome.

**Interviewer 2** 11:36

So this image and and the other thing we we tell people and this is your first time doing one of these is that sometimes it's really just talking out loud versus going to be moving and connecting stuff going along. And at times just talking without even deeply focusing on the map. And she said periodically, we'll check in. So the first thing you see is the the five concepts. The the five sectors that we talked about are all here on the map. And you'll see a little expansion on the retail ones where we've got a little further breakout, but then also the element we talked about on racial equity inequity, which we'll bring into the conversation in a bit. But first we'd like to start out with based upon the expertise and experience and work that you're doing right now. It's just talking to us about connections that you see between these different, you know, sectors in the food system, and there's no right place to start this thing goes. It's just it's not linear like 123 It's just as the thoughts are evolving to you. So when you think about your work as the Senior Program Manager at the at the soup kitchen, as well as being affiliated with your nonprofit, how do you see connections between these different sectors from your perspective?

**Participant 218** 12:59

Well, I guess let's start with... You got your retailers. We do, like I said, do work with Big Apple Bagels and Donna's donuts, and we take some of that type of-what would otherwise be food waste, and put it in our lunches. So that's one of them. And then even on the nonprofit side, the Asbury CDC that I work for, they partner with people that work at the local grocer, and have them come in and work with the kids. So we're starting to see more of local business owners and local brochures and things like that coming together. Like the farmers market is the hub for food. So, I don't go there but Asbury Farms goes there and sells their produce. And then we talk about the composting, that also directly relates to the the restaurants because they're the ones providing us what would otherwise be food waste. Asbury Farms gives us food that it's not bad, but it's like on the cusp, or you should use it today, because some stuff tastes better when the produce is more like ripe and on the verge. And then we have donated food-the wholesale-we've worked with Flint Fresh in the past to get fruits and veggies. And then we talked about the producers-that would be the farms, right?

**Interviewer 2** 14:58

Yes. Uh huh.

**Participant 218** 14:59

Yeah. We work with-Asbury Farms is the biggest producer that we work with, they provide us salads every week on Fridays, and they also-their produce is used in the meal kits that they provide to us a couple times a week. So they're the biggest producers for us. But we also in the summer have people come, like Edible Flint will drop off produce, or we've got those government food boxes that they had last year in giant quantities with all the fruits and veggies. We have other farmers who will randomly call us and be like, I have all of the squash or all of the fig plant, so people know they can bring that to us. Let's see-value added processors. What was that one again?

**Interviewer 2** 15:56

So those are folks that would take a produce item-herbs and things of that nature too-and then turn it into something else, tomato turned into salsa or turned into a sauce.

**Participant 218** 16:11

So that's us. That's what we do, basically, yeah, we'll take stuff that was donated to us and make it into something different. So yeah, put it in a stew or whatever.

**Interviewer 2** 16:29

Okay, so you actually are cooking it? But are you also turning it into something else, in addition to cooking it?

**Participant 218** 16:40

I'm not totally sure on that one, I think-yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 16:44

For the stew for example. So you might take vegetables and make it into a meal, or would you take a vegetable and make it into something else like sauce and then you're doing something with the sauce other than the cooking aspect?

**Participant 218** 17:00

Oh no.

**Interviewer 2** 17:01

You're primarily cooking. Okay. So, let me visit a couple things that you've lifted up. You talked about working with some of the retailers so they're donating-like you talked about the Big Apple Bagels and doughnuts- they're donating their food to you, and then you're putting it in your lunches, you're serving lunches. So they're actually donating. So the retailers are donating to you as the soup kitchen. You talked about-you talked a little bit about Asbury, so you're affiliated with Asbury yourself?

**Participant 218** 17:41

Yeah, they are basically the parent corporation to the soup kitchen.

**Interviewer 2** 17:46

The soup kitchen. Okay, that's why I want to make that connection. So the soup kitchen is operated by Asbury. Okay, got it, I want to make that connection. So if we-I'm going to separate out a couple of things. So with the soup kitchen, you're getting from the wholesale side-you're also receiving fruits and vegetables from Flint Fresh, is that donation also?

**Participant 218** 18:12

No, we get that at like a reduced price.

**Interviewer 2** 18:15

Reduced price. Okay, that's reduced price. Okay. So you're buying?

**Participant 218** 18:20

We haven't ordered from them in a while because we noticed that-a lot-when it comes in like that there's not a lot-you get a lot of rotten stuff because they can't go through and necessarily look through everything. So we kind of go with that model less.

**Interviewer 2** 18:38

Okay, so from Flint Fresh from the wholesale side, you are seeing a connection between that and food waste itself. Yeah, you get some food waste there. Okay. Alright. So let me-because I want to roll back through some of the things that you said. You also mentioned that with the soup kitchen getting some of its foods directly-so two types of farming sources I heard: from Asbury, which is your parent organization, and then some from other farmers. So you mentioned that you are getting certain foods from Asbury, but you did also mention they're being the largest-you're getting salads-they're donating salads-fresh produce, and they're donating meal kits to you. So they're donating both to the soup kitchen, and you also mentioned another farm source, which was Edible Flint. That's local produce, also?

**Participant 218** 19:41

Yep.

**Interviewer 2** 19:43

Okay, you mentioned government food boxes. Where did those come from?

**Participant 218** 19:51

We had somebody come through-and I'm not sure what exactly if he was affiliated with one of the places that passes out these boxes, but we had somebody that was considered the rolling volunteer. And they would bring us these mass quantities of these boxes-like 50 sometimes just loaded up in his truck. So I think a lot of it is people that are going to all of these big food giveaways and doing it intentionally wanting to hit all the different local nonprofits. I also think it's the people who are running them, because they just end up-they just have so much of a surplus that they want to make sure it gets used.

**Interviewer 2** 20:39

Okay. Okay. So it could be coming from two different places. Yeah. Okay. Okay. Okay. It coming from the distribution sites, as well as-I love that term, the revolving the rolling volunteer-so whether it's the pantries, the service providers, or a volunteer, they're also donating food to you. Yeah. Okay. So we got that. All right. Wonderful. Thank you for that. The other thing, let's see. Oh, oh, okay. You mentioned Asbury a couple of times. So just want to touch on the fact that you're-as a soup kitchen, you're part of that safety net really. But working with-you mentioned Asbury a couple of times in terms of that they partner with the local grocer to make sure you have the opportunity to work with students. So is that coming from the soup kitchen side of it as well, or is that mainly coming from Asbury.

**Participant 218** 21:53

That's an Asbury thing.

**Interviewer 2** 21:55

Asbury thing, okay. So separate than the soup kitchen. Okay. Alright. Great. I think I got caught up on all the stuff I saw there. So we have-alright, so they're basically dealing with-is that education, youth education with the kids? Is that schools?

**Participant 218** 22:19

They're actually through like SWI [inaudible], so they get paid.

**Interviewer 2** 22:26

Ah, okay.

**Participant 218** 22:28

But they're learning cooking and [inaudible] food and food access.

**Interviewer 2** 22:36

Oh, okay. Yeah, that's a youth program you were talking about, where they get compensation. Okay. Yep. We're familiar with that a little bit. Okay. Alrighty. And with the wholesalers, you said you were dealing with Flint Fresh to get some of the foods, but you made the connection between that and wasted food.

**Participant 218** 22:57

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 22:58

Okay, so we got that connection as well. And food waste. Alright. wholesaler. There we go. Okay. I'm not quite seeing-got it. I see it now. Okay. Other connections from your standpoint? Things from your work and your knowledge of this work?

**Participant 218** 23:23

Well we also partner-twice a week we go and pick up sandwiches so they provide us with some of our food as well. And then you have-

**Interviewer 2** 23:38

I'm sorry, I missed the first part of that because you froze on my side for just a moment. You partner with who to get the sandwiches?

**Participant 218** 23:44

North end soup kitchen.

**Interviewer 2** 23:46

Ah, North End soup kitchen. Okay.

**Participant 218** 23:48

We go there twice a week and pick up sandwiches and then we put an extra snack in there and we distribute them.

**Interviewer 2** 23:57

Okay. Okay.

**Participant 218** 24:01

We buy all of our food from the food bank for the most part, and Gordon as well, we get some stuff.

**Interviewer 2** 24:09

Gordon, okay.

**Interviewer** 24:13

It seems like partnerships are a pretty influential part of your experience and your work with the food system. Are there any barriers or challenges when it comes to these partnerships?

**Participant 218** 24:27

Yeah, like the North end we've had some issues with quality control. And then yeah, and like we had mentioned with Flint Fresh, we were noticing a lot of the-it wasn't worth it in the end because a lot of the stuff would be have to be wasted. Or we'll have people that want to donate mass amounts of stuff that's either ends up being expired, or yeah, that usually would be the issue. But now that we've put our expectations out there in terms of donations and been very vocal about it when people ask. We're seeing less waste so that's a good thing. It's kind of like trying to change the mindset of like, if you wouldn't eat it, don't give it to somebody else or somebody else's family, you know?

**Interviewer 2** 25:25

Yes.

**Participant 218** 25:27

We're reaching kind of a point there where people aren't bringing so much stuff that we have to waste, but yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 25:35

Gotcha. Inside of that, I heard two things, [Participant 218]. I heard on the quality control side that sounded like the fresh produce, and on the expiration, is that more of the process canned type foods?

**Participant 218** 25:53

Yeah and even from the north end, we'll get sandwiches that we know are-they weren't made when it was specified that they were made. And we're like, hmm, that can be suspicious sometimes, too, so.

**Interviewer 2** 26:08

So even the prepared foods. So the quality control is on both fresh and prepared foods. And the expiration is mainly around processed foods, processed and canned foods, right? Yeah.

**Participant 218** 26:23

Yeah, we'll even get stuff from Asbury Farms. Like the salads, one time they got the salads and saw that somebody hadn't even washed the greens, so there was a lot of dirt and stuff, like you can't serve this. So you know, it's kind of on-in all aspects, quality control seems to sometimes be one of those big issues. That's the biggest I would say barrier.

**Interviewer 2** 26:48

Okay, quality control, okay. Whether it's fresh or it's processed, it's quality control, making sure it's at a stage you can use it.

**Participant 218** 26:58

Right.

**Interviewer 2** 26:59

Okay, got it. And expectations, making sure people are clear about how you want to receive things. Okay. Okay. Alright, great. Kind of that criteria for donating. Got it. Got it. Wonderful. Okay. And that's tied to your partnerships as well. Alright, great. Thanks. So, now you said you were sourcing-you're sourcing a lot of your food from the Food Bank, which is part of the emergency system and then also from Gordon's so that's a purchase. That's wholesale purchase, right?

**Participant 218** 27:45

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 27:46

Okay. So, so you're in the emergency system as well as wholesale. Alright. Other connections? You mentioned compost several times, who are the composters?

**Participant 218** 28:07

Well, the-

**Interviewer 2** 28:07

Where's the compost going? Where's the wasted food going?

**Participant 218** 28:12

Sometimes it just gets thrown away. Sometimes we do end up using it to make. Like, last year, we made stuffed peppers with some peppers that would have went bad if we didn't use them right away. But yeah, we don't have any formal compost pile or anything yet, so unfortunately, a lot of it does either get thrown away, or if something's on the verge, we'll either cook with it or put it right outside for people to take. So if it doesn't go that day, we'll throw it out.

**Interviewer 2** 28:50

Okay, so that's really recovery, there. Recovered and then donate it. We call that rescue. So there's two different things-three things are happening if you have food. If it's waste, it's not necessarily going to compost, it could be thrown away, or you're actually-it could have been wasted but you cook it or you actually distribute it so people can get it before it goes bad. Okay, okay, you distribute it. Okay. So there's three different things happening with that. Distribute to people directly, so you don't even turn it into a meal. You just put it out there, take this away. Okay. Distribute to people raw, fresh, uncooked. Okay. I see the three flows there. Alright, alright. Yeah, most in the trash, okay. Other connections that you might see here in your way of working or just even in your knowledge of how things are working in Flint?

**Participant 218** 30:03

Well, we are-I'm not sure how this would fit in, but we are working with local-Oak Street health, we're partnered with them. We're going to try and do a prescription pantry program, so if people come in and they're like, I have high cholesterol or I need a heart healthy diet or I have diabetes, we could give them a specific food bag with recipes in it and things they can eat. So that's one of the things that we're trying to get launched.

**Interviewer 2** 30:34

Okay. Great. And who are you-I'm sorry, what was the type of organization you were doing at when?

**Participant 218** 30:40

Oak Street Health. And also the American Heart Association has given us a grant to get that work started.

**Interviewer 2** 30:51

Okay. Okay. And Oak Street health, what type of organization is it?

**Participant 218** 30:56

They do little bit of this, little bit of that. They're mostly primary care doctors, but it's for low-income and older people.

**Interviewer 2** 31:06

Oh okay, like a clinic or something?

**Participant 218** 31:08

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 31:10

Okay. Okay. Just trying to figure out what Oak Street Health is. Okay. Okay. Alright. Great. Great, great. Great, thank you. That's a great connection there. Other things-other ways as a soup kitchen, or as Asbury, what other connections do you have-do you see there possibly?

**Participant 218** 31:37

You've got a lot of people that come in too, like local churches that will come in and make a breakfast at the soup kitchen, or we had somebody come in and make a spaghetti dinner for Valentine's Day. So we've got people that will come in and bring their own food too. So that's another connection as well. People actually coming in and making food. We have somebody that comes in Tuesdays and Thursdays and uses some of our ingredients, brings some of their own and they'll make all vegan food, so.

**Interviewer 2** 32:18

Oh okay. They make the meals and then you distribute them to the people who come? Oh, so these are just community folks who will come in and cook you at the soup kitchen?

**Participant 218** 32:27

Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 32:28

Oh, that's pretty amazing. Okay. Awesome. And do they come from particular-are they chefs? Are they cooks? Are they just regular people?

**Participant 218** 32:41

Yeah, these are just regular people who like cooking and they're like, Hey, we want to cook. Alright. Especially [inaudible] food.

**Interviewer 2** 32:51

Okay, okay. Something like volunteers. Volunteer cooks. Volunteer cooks. Okay. Wow. Wow. Okay. Excellent. That's the first one. I've heard that one. Good. Ah, let's see, what else do we have here, connection-wise? Top down with the youth programming, we have- right. Anything else kind of standing out for you right now as you look at it?

**Participant 218** 33:37

So I think I hit the big ones, the main ones.

**Interviewer 2** 33:39

Okay. Alright. Great. That's awesome. Awesome. And if we see anything else while we continue, we can always add them. Let's take a look at-we mentioned early on that we were looking at racial equity and inequity as it relates to the food system itself. And we'd like to know, as you look at the local food system, what are some of the ways that racial equity or inequities are impacting participation in these local food sectors?

**Participant 218** 34:13

Well, let's see here. I definitely think that in terms of racial inequity, access to food, obviously, we have a lot of food deserts in Flint. And it's a lot of people of color that live in these areas that are low income, so the only choice they have is to go to the corner store, which usually they don't have fresh fruits, and if they do, it's kind of substandard. We've noticed in the last probably a year, more African American people coming to the soup kitchen. It used-for a long time we had mostly white people coming, but now it seems to be maybe 50/50. And I'm not sure if it's because other places have shut down like other kitchens, other nonprofits, where they would usually go. And it could be too that a lot of people of color have these low income jobs, and they have to work a lot, they might work multiple jobs. So I think too that they come to us instead of other places, because we do do the takeout so they don't have to come in and sit down, they don't have time for that. They got to go to work. We've had drama over people wanting to cut the line, because they're like, I gotta go to work. That's like, oh, so do all these other 10 people do. So I think that's part of it. I think, well, a lot of our kids in the youth program, one of them didn't even know what an eggplant was or what a squash was. It's just-that's another thing, they don't know-a lot of them aren't exposed to gardening and urban farming, and a lot of people don't even know that there is a giant farm operation on the east side of Flint. So that's part of it too. Just not having-not focusing on that type of education in the schools. Now, we've got things like the gardening clubs and Edible Flint, and the AmeriCorps coming in and exposing them to that, which is cool.

**Interviewer 2** 36:40

So just even access to her access to information, as well as education. And the connection between this and your income. Okay. And that's an interesting observation, you said that, that you've seen a shift in terms of the people actually coming. So there's been an increase in, but you talked about that tied to jobs, to income level. Okay. All right. Got that. And then you've just not being exposed. Okay. Any any other ways that you see? Do you see any? What are some of the racialized barriers to even participating in the local food system in Flint, that you that you have some awareness of?

**Participant 218** 37:33

Well, even if you want to go to the farmers market, they've made it more-like they've got the Double Up Food Bucks and stuff now, but going in there it's still super expensive. So that's one of the barriers too. Not only for people of color, but also just young people, who-yeah, they want to eat better, but it's so expensive to go have lunch at the farmers market. It's a lot. So that's part of it. And I think another part of it would be-well, the government food sources too. I know a lot of people on the higher level of things when it comes to applying for the benefits, so a lot of them get cut off from their benefits. A lot of them-I see a lot of the clients complain on Facebook about food stamps-either they just didn't get their food stamps one month, so they're at the mercy of us or [inaudible] or whoever. Or they're not getting as much as they were during the pandemic because they increased them. I mean, yeah, there's a lot of difference. A lot of barriers really, in all aspects.

**Interviewer 2** 38:59

Okay, so a couple of things there in terms of the price of food, making it inaccessible to farmers market. So when you say people are getting cut off. Do you mean from the SNAP program, is that what you're talking about? Getting cut off from SNAP? Okay. Mm hmm. Or reduced access and you tied that-you see that-tied to inequities. Okay. Let me ask that question one other way. Are there ways from your perspective of what you seen, are there ways that the food system actually contributes to racial inequity?

**Participant 218** 39:49

Yeah, I would say so, because I think too, that we don't have enough resources on the north side, where a lot of African American people live. It's like, we need more, and people don't know about these places they can get help, either, which seems to be an issue. And I think also -I think people don't know where they are welcome at, or they feel uncomfortable, and I think that's one of the reasons why we're getting more of an increase too, is because we don't really ask a whole lot of questions. I know some places, you got to go through like a laundry list of what's your income? How many people in the household? What's your zip code? What's your first name? What's your last? Holy cow. We just asked for kind of the bare minimum so we can get like funding. So what's your zip code? How many in household? How many lunches the you need? That's it. So, I think that's one of the reasons why we're becoming more popular is because we don't need a license or any proof or anything, like you can [inaudible], we don't care. Everybody's welcome.

**Interviewer 2** 41:12

Gotcha. Okay, so just that the barrier is the information required to access the resources? Okay. And then you mentioned that there's not enough resource on the north side of Flint where the African Americans are?

**Participant 218** 41:34

Yeah, I would say-

**Interviewer 2** 41:36

Access to resources, okay. Okay. Say more about-so was the welcome or discomfort mainly tied to the information request?

**Participant 218** 41:48

I think that's part of it. But I also think, too, that there are some organizations around here that people-I'll tell them, "oh, well, why don't you call this organization?" Because sometimes they'll be like, "I need help with utilities." I'm like, "Sorry, we don't really do that. But you can call organization X." And they'll be like, "Oh, no, no, no, no, I don't go there. I don't deal with that." And I'll kind of be like, "okay, so what happened?" And they'll say that they just don't like the way they're treated. It's like a power dynamic thing. They feel like their kind of like a low lead, this person's acting like they're above them, and they just feel uncomfortable.

**Interviewer 2** 42:29

Okay. The treatment?

**Participant 218** 42:32

Mm hmm.

**Interviewer 2** 42:35

Okay. Treatment and power dynamics. Okay. Alright. Thank you. Anything else you want to add through that lens? Racial inequity?

**Participant 218** 42:54

I feel like those are the big ones.

**Interviewer 2** 42:57

Okay. Okay, well, let's chat a little bit about major things-some major things that you feel influence or impact the local food system? What are some of those kinds of things?

**Participant 218** 43:11

Well, for a while there, we were all really struggling with getting food, like getting food period. The food bank-usually you've got like six or seven pages of stuff you can pick from-and it was bare bones there for a minute. That's one of the big challenges is, if the food bank can't get something, then nobody can probably get it. So we had a hard time getting things-like getting meat for a while was a giant challenge. So that's one of the big ones, is just generally at the mercy of the Food Bank and these other kind of like, large suppliers. It's like feast or famine. You know, sometimes during the summer, we'll get all this stuff and be like, yay, we've got it, we'll freeze some of it. And then a couple months later, we're like, holy crap, and we need to do a food bank order, but the bills overdue and they haven't paid it yet. That's another thing too, is the rising costs, and they're going to be stopping these emergency programs soon, and we're all kind of like, uh, what are we going to do when they don't do this anymore? So it's kind of like the reliance on the emergency assistance. You know, funding is a big one. We're all constantly worried that our jobs are in jeopardy and that, oh my god, the soup kitchens gonna shut down. It's like-so I think-and that's not a unique problem to us. That's everywhere, you know. And also another thing too, in terms of like places like the North End and [inaudible] and Asbury, we're serving more and more people, but we're not getting any money to pay the staff or to upkeep on our buildings. It's really sexy to donate money for meals, it's not as sexy to donate money for salaries, but those are the people that have to prepare the meals. So those are some big challenges that I've noticed, you kind of have to fund for your own job and [inaudible] for food really?

**Interviewer 2** 45:39

Okay, I got that rising cost of food. The fact that emergency programs will drop off, but you have a higher reliance on emergency programs now. Funding-so jobs are in jeopardy, you actually have to fund for your jobs now, and that the funding sources don't necessarily include funds for staff and equipment.

**Participant 218** 46:05

Right.

**Interviewer 2** 46:05

That's what I heard. Okay. Okay. Okay. Big impacts. What about the water crisis. As a soup kitchen, impacts on water crisis?

**Participant 218** 46:23

Yeah, so we get our water from Asbury, they deliver it once a week, and they're not going to be getting water anymore. The contract is up, because we were getting in kind water from Nestle. So instead of getting this water, they're gonna cut us and some of the other organizations in town a check and we're on our own. So that's another thing where we're all kind of like, what are we going to do about water? Because for us to go to Sam's Club every week or so, there's no way; that would cost a fortune. So that's-yeah, definitely something that is pretty unclear as to what the future is when it comes to water.

**Interviewer 2** 47:14

Okay. And is that-that's water you're cooking with or serving? Or how?

**Participant 218** 47:20

We usually give them a bottle of water to go with the lunches.

**Interviewer 2** 47:24

Okay, that you serve with a meal. Okay.

**Participant 218** 47:26

And a lot of people will use it today to brush their teeth, or whatever. So, it's pretty-it's kind of one of those serious life or death things.

**Interviewer 2** 47:40

Okay. Alight, great. Great. And, of course, none of us were exempt to COVID, what kinds of impacts did COVID have for you all?

**Participant 218** 47:51

So we're still doing the takeout model, which, in some ways is good, in some ways is bad, we've got people who really want to come inside, because it was a social thing and they could break bread together and create these relationships. But at the same time, the COVID made everybody more resilient. Even though we're doing takeout, they're still out there chatting and bonding and just giving each other rides and stuff, which I love. And it's had an effect on us all, but it's definitely had an effect on us in terms of volunteers-not only because we can't have as many volunteers in the building, but also because now we're like, do we want to open back up? And if you do, where are we going to find all the people? How are we going to bring them back in? So it's been a very strange time, to say the least.

**Interviewer 2** 48:52

Mm hmm. Okay. Great. Great, right, great. Anything else you would add? I can take us back to when [Interviewer] did the example with the traffic and things, or sometimes there's something that might pop out that you might add to this at this time?

**Participant 218** 49:24

I don't think so.

**Interviewer 2** 49:26

Okay, alright. Well let's talk a little bit about change. So when we look at this, what we want to do is consider leverage points or changes that might improve the system. For example, in that traffic one when [Interviewer] talked about the difference between having more public transportation might help with traffic versus bikes. In this case, when you look at this, what kinds of changes might you see being made to help improve the food system?

**Participant 218** 50:07

We definitely need to support the people that are doing the work more so they can do the work really. And part of that is-it all seems not to be related, but at the end of the day, it ends up being related. Even like I had mentioned, going to some of the facilities and you walk inside the north end, and there's a giant gas leak that I smell all the time, or going over to crossover, and there's a huge leak, and they got a flood in their building, or our building. At one point, we had waves in our basement. It was like the Great Lakes. It's hard for us to do our work when we don't have the proper facilities to do the work, that everything's crumbling around us, it seems like. I think just that indirect change, if we could-everybody could get help improving their facilities would make it so much better, or paying the people who are doing the work too, because a lot of people want it. "Well, don't you have volunteers?" I mean, you can't get a volunteer to run an entire operation. You got to pay people. And also it comes back to just this whole, we've got to change the way that people view those who do not have proper access to personal care items, food, whatever, you know, that's part of the issue, too. We've got to be mindful of where they're coming from and respectful and welcoming. I think just that simple change too. People know that they're welcome, and that they can come and get food and not have to do a whole giant, like checklist of stuff. I think just those things would make the food system better. Small things, not even super radical changes.

**Interviewer 2** 52:13

Excellent. Thank you. Thank you for that, [Participant 218]. Is there anything in all of this-and by the way, this is a beautiful map of your understanding of the system-is there anything that we didn't think to ask you that you think is really important to know about this work, and about this system in Flint?

**Participant 218** 52:45

No, I think we covered it.

**Interviewer 2** 52:48

Okay. Excellent. Excellent. Excellent. And, and again, we absolutely, thank you, first of all, for the work you're doing, both at the soup kitchen and with Asbury, appreciate you taking time today to let us map your understanding. As we shared in the consent, you know, the information is confidential, we use it as a research team to do what we do. No, no named specific, you know, that identifies you and the results. You did receive your one thing we do ask people to do for us as an evaluation, give us some feedback. And Chris is gonna drop a link in the chat, but she'll also email it to you. So you can, you know, get back with us and let us know, your thoughts. And there's also a question, enter there that invite you if you want to stay engaged in the process, let us know that as well. And we, we do appreciate it. And our goal is we using, you know, the information to give back insights to folks of Flint of what's what's going on in the system and your ideas about, you know, change, you know, in the system so, so again, thanks for for making time to be with us today. We really looked forward to this conversation because we knew that Asbury in a couple of ways was doing a number of things that we hadn't had the opportunity to talk

**Participant 218** 54:12

with you all. Yeah, thank you so much. I can't wait to see the results of everything. Yeah, I'm excited.

**Interviewer 2** 54:21

Right. Cool. They look forward to hear from us again soon. Absolutely. All right. Take care. Enjoy the rest of your day. Caitlin. Thank you. Bye bye.