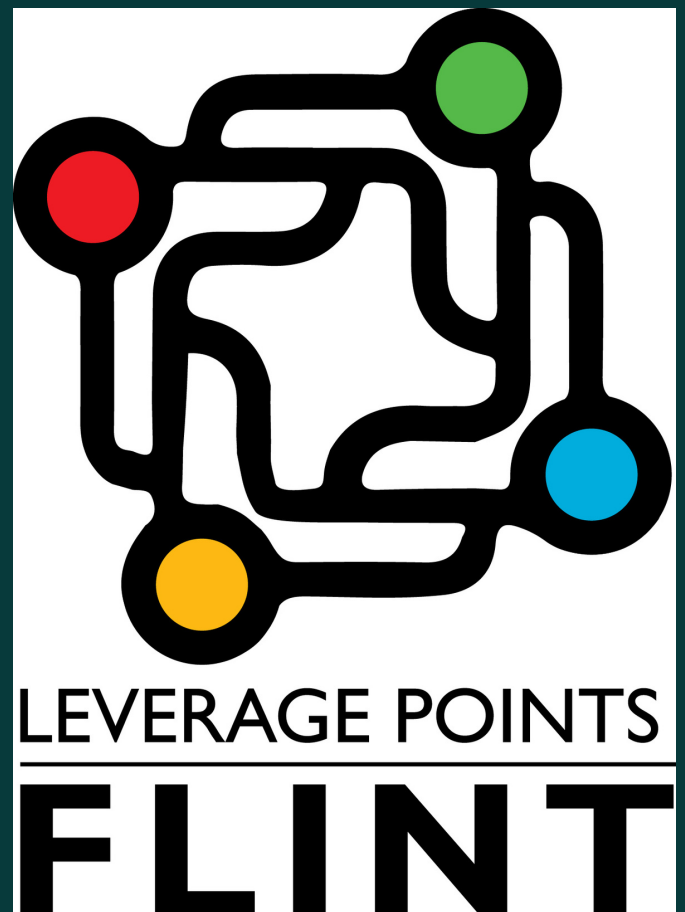




# SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE FLINT FOOD SYSTEM: VISIONS FOR 2042

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# INTRODUCTION

Building on four years of participatory data collection with collaborators in Flint, the research team of the Flint Leverage Points Project (FLPP) hosted a scenario planning workshop in October 2022 at the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan. A scenario planning workshop is a place where community members and researchers work together to co-create scenarios for the future, based on previously community defined values and leverage points. A scenario is a narrative description of actionable pathways towards an equitable, sustainable and just food system in Flint, 20 years from now (2042). To facilitate the workshop, we created a workbook that provides information about what we already know about the Flint food system and a "Recipe for a Scenario" that provides a set of guiding questions for workshop discussion. All of the scenarios build upon a set of key definitions (p. 2), follow the "Recipe for Scenario" structure (p. 3), and also draw from the Flint food values (p. 4) and summary leverage points (p. 5) identified through participatory research. Each scenario uses a different Big Vision, or key finding from the research project as the starting point. The Big Visions are illustrated as an infographic (p. 6; p. 11; p. 16; p. 22) . Scenarios build upon four years of research findings, values, visions, and leverage points defined by community partners to set the stage for describing actionable pathways towards a positive future. This report describes and discusses the four scenarios co-created at the October workshop.

To access the workbook used during the scenarios workshop, visit:

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/flintfood/resources-and-publications/scenarios-for-the-future-of-the-flint-food-system-visions-for-2042>

## Background on the Flint Leverage Points Project (FLPP)

The Flint Leverage Points Project (2018-2023) was a collaboration between community partners and researchers to find ways to change the food system in Flint so that it is more equitable, healthy, and sustainable. The Community Foundation of Greater Flint (CFGF) partnered with Michigan State University (MSU) to conduct this research. We were advised by a Community Consultative Panel (CCP) comprised of representatives from the Flint community who work with food in Flint. We conducted research on the food system in Flint (including production, distribution, preparing, eating and recycling food) to find improvements that can benefit Flint residents. We identified strengths and opportunities within the food system that could be built upon. This project produced an analysis of how community partners and other stakeholders can intervene in the Flint food system to create positive change. This report is part of that work: an overview of four actionable scenarios.

For more on the Flint Leverage Points Project, and project results visit: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/flintfood>



# KEY DEFINITIONS

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## Food System

The food system incorporates all components required to ensure that people have access to healthy, affordable food. This includes food production, processing, distribution, preparation, eating, recycling and managing waste. We aim to consider all the people and products involved at each of these stages in the food system.



## Scenarios

Scenarios are descriptions of a plausible and desirable future system AND the steps that can be used to achieve them. Scenarios are co-created with community partners, community members and other stakeholders. In this report, scenarios draw on evidence-based research from the Flint Leverage Points Project.



## Vision

A vision is a description of a desirable future. The following scenarios are framed around four big vision statements describing a current state and desirable future based on research results.



## Leverage Points

Leverage points are places in a system where a small action can lead to major changes within a system (Meadows 1999). In these scenarios, the leverage points are embedded within the big vision. You can find a list of 20 summary leverage points (page 5). Detailed lists of all the leverage points are provided on our website:

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/flintfood/resources-and-publications/key-lessons-synthesizing-research-results>.



## Values

We think of values as priorities that define a desirable state and drive human action towards it (Tadaki et al. 2017). Synthesis values for the future of the Flint food system as defined by residents are listed on page 4 and on our website at: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/flintfood/resources-and-publications/values-for-the-flint-food-system>.



## Stakeholders

Individuals or groups who can affect or are affected by changes in the system.

# SCENARIO RECIPE

Scenarios are created when we think creatively about how to achieve a positive future. To facilitate the co-creation of scenarios presented here, we used a recipe and ingredients to guide the process. **This page serves as a one-page reference sheet that outlines the process we used in the workshop to co-create scenarios. The following scenario summaries follow this framework.**

## Ingredients and Steps

- 1. Big Vision:** We start with 4 big vision graphics--each focuses on a theme by outlining the current state of the food system, describing a desirable future that represents transformative change, and listing leverage points that can help achieve future goals for the food system (full list available in the 'Pantry' at the end of the report and in the workbook). Each group used a different big vision graphic to organize their scenario.
  - 2. Grounding the Scenario:** Identify what features of the big vision feel most important to focus on today. Identify any additional leverage points applicable to the big vision features from the leverage point lists in the 'Pantry'. Name your scenario.
  - 3. Values:** Choose a couple of values that will be achieved by the scenario.
  - 4. Location:** Define the geographic area where the scenario will take place.
  - 5. Time Frame:** The target date for achieving this scenario will be up to 20 years from now - 2042. This should provide time for significant change, while still focusing on actionable results in the foreseeable future. Change requires a series of actions, so each group will discuss:
    - a. Short-Term Actions:** Identify key actions that will need to occur in the first 10 years of the time frame. These may be actions that will finish before commencing the long-term actions.
    - b. Long-Term Actions:** Identify key actions that will occur in the final 10 years of the timeframe. These actions will finish at the end of the time frame and when the scenario is realized.
  - 6. Resources and Stakeholders:** Identify resources needed to complete the actions and who holds them.
    - a.** First, focus on identifying multiple types of resources. We know money is a central component but also consider what collaborations, spaces, education or training, policies, and programs are needed to achieve the scenario goals.
    - b.** Identify key community partners, organizations, or experts who hold (or could hold) these resources and those who need to contribute to the work of completing the actions in other ways, beyond supplying resources.
    - c.** Also identify community partners or organizations that will be affected by these actions.
  - 7. Summary of Scenario:** Read over scenario components and think about the overall message. Then, write 3-5 sentences that describe the scenario.
- BREAK:** Let our thinking simmer.
- 8. Pros and Cons:** Consider if this scenario privileges a specific outcome at the expense of others within the vision.
  - 9. Broader Impacts/Surprises:** Describe the broader effects of implementing this scenario, including any other positive or negative impacts that could happen outside of the food system.
  - 10. Channels and Walls to Achieving Action:** Identify items that could facilitate (channel efforts) or hinder (wall/block off) this scenario's success.
  - 11. Evaluation:** Provide a list of benchmarks that will indicate progress toward the goal. Consider how progress and milestones will be shared, and next steps in this process.

# FLINT FOOD VALUES

We asked stakeholders in Flint to describe community priorities (values) for the future of the food system. These are the values that were identified as describing a desirable future for the Flint food system (Modified from Belisle-Toler et al. 2021)

Value	Description
Education	There should be opportunities to learn food skills (cooking, gardening, agriculture, nutrition, health, and canning) and apply these to career development if desired.
Community Empowerment	The food system should empower communities to support local economic development that fosters a sense of community and prioritizes residents' cultural values.
Quality of Life is Respected	As residents move through the food system, their dignity, choices, comfort, and safety should be respected to promote the common good and quality of life for all.
Partnerships	The food system should promote creativity and encourage problem-solving to produce trust and strong partnerships that provide leadership and support collaboration and communication.
Nutritious Foods	The food system should offer more food options that are high in nutritional content, contain less additives and preservatives, and come in smaller portions to benefit health.
Affordable Foods	Food should be priced so that community members can access the type, quality, and quantity they require.
Available Foods	The type, quality, and amount of food required for community members to conveniently feed their families and themselves should be physically present and accessible via transportation.

# SUMMARY LIST OF LEVERAGE POINTS

This list summarizes the key categories of leverage points that participants shared with researchers of the FLPP. For a full list of all participant generated leverage points, visit <https://www.canr.msu.edu/flintfood/resources-and-publications/key-lessons-synthesizing-research-results>



## INCOME

Raise income for Flint residents, for example through policy mechanisms like guaranteed basic income, tax credits, or raising pay to livable wages



## GARDENING

Increase resident participation in not-for-profit food production, both at-home gardening or community gardens



## PRODUCTION

Increase for-sale local food production through more local producers, larger production operations, or other methods



## RETAIL QUALITY

Improve current retail options in Flint to increase the availability and affordability of quality, culturally relevant, and nutritious foods



## LAND

Turn vacant/available land into food production, retail, or community spaces, and urban infrastructure into housing or facilities where people can cook, prepare, and store food



## SOURCING

Increase sourcing of locally produced and processed foods by retailers, institutions, the emergency sector, supplemental nutrition programs, etc.



## FUNDING

Change how non-profit & government funds are allocated, through shifting funding from one place to another, expand current funding, or create new funding policies



## GOVERNANCE

Embed community values within government and non-profit strategic planning, policy, and program implementation



## TRANSPORTATION

Lower transportation barriers by ensuring convenient, accessible transportation for all residents, including options for delivery



## CONSUMPTION

Positively shift consumption behavior towards improved diets, food choices, and overall health



## FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS

Improve emergency sector distributions to be more accessible and tailored to local community dietary need and preferences



## RETAIL OPTIONS

Increase the retail options available in Flint to improve availability and accessibility, particularly for nutritious and culturally relevant foods



## PROCESSING

Increase processing of local food and locally-owned value-added processing businesses to grow that sector of the local food economy



## EMPLOYMENT

Raise employment in Flint through resources, job training, and support programs to give people tools to generate their own wealth



## WASTE MANAGEMENT

Formalize a food waste management system and partnerships that increases composting and food rescue



## SCHOOL MEALS

Reform the school meal program to increase dietary options, nutritious foods, local foods, and culturally appropriate foods



## KNOWLEDGE

Offer educational opportunities & reform food system education to better inform people through practices like hands-on learning and culturally tailored programming.



## NETWORKS

Develop social connections and community support networks that can share resources and provide mutual aid



## ENGAGEMENT

Embed community values within partnerships, collaborations, and community engagement



## SUPPORT

Increase the understanding of and support for the local food economy by consumers

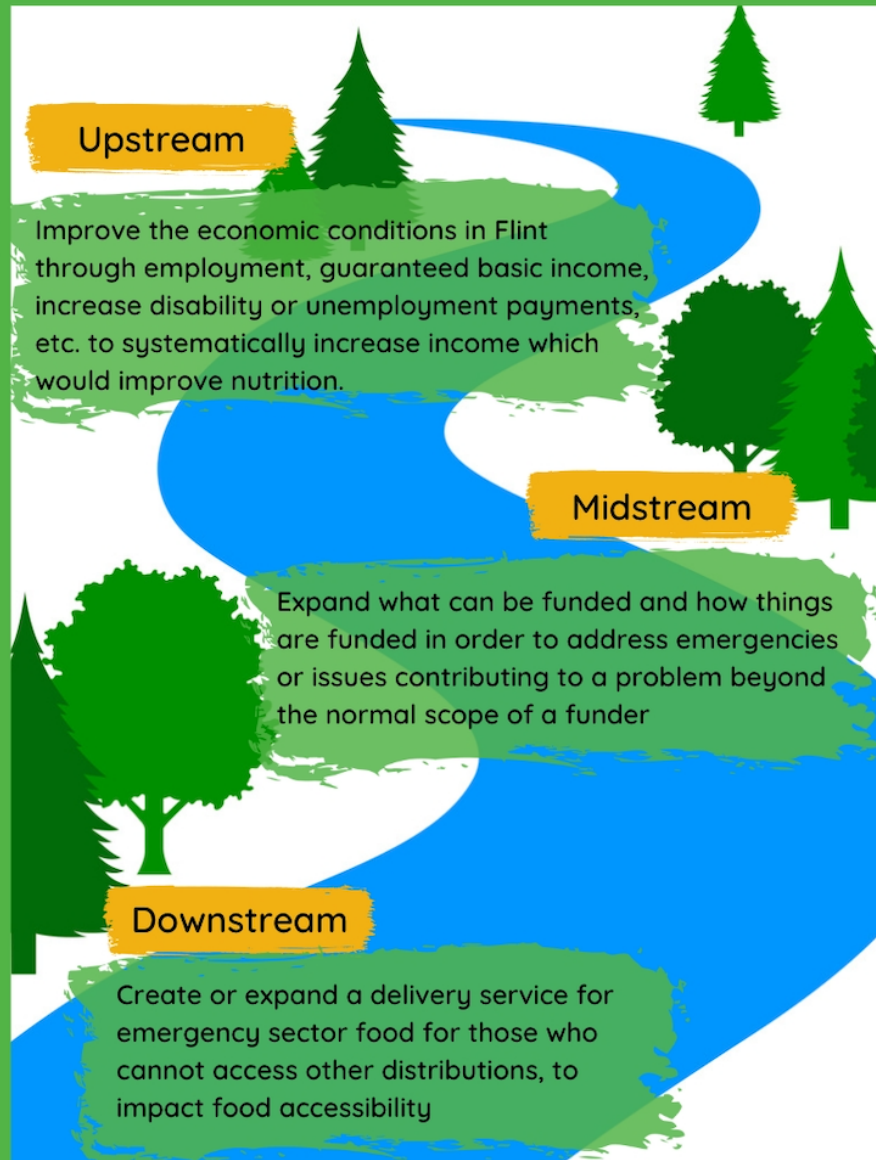


# BIG VISION: EMERGENCY RESPONSE LOOP

## "Emergency Response" Loop

**Desirable Future:** Food system changes reduce the need to access emergency food services like food banks and soup kitchens for greater food independence, and resident food equity.

Example leverage points defined by community members are listed below. Join the conversation--detailed lists of more leverage points can be found at: [www.canr.msu.edu/FlintFood](http://www.canr.msu.edu/FlintFood)



Each scenario uses a different Big Vision as the starting point: a community defined desirable future with example leverage points. Big Visions represent key findings from this research. For a full list of participant generated leverage points associated with this Big Vision visit

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/flintfood/resources-and-publications/key-lessons-synthesizing-research-results>

**Currently:** The food system is focused on supplying emergency food, rather than preventing need, due to current high demand and needs of community.

### **Definitions:**

**Upstream:** Policies, laws, or regulations that improve community conditions, creating system-wide changes

**Midstream:** Barriers that need to be addressed in order for the system to evolve; and/or supports individual social needs

**Downstream:** Addresses individual needs and crisis management

# "NUTRITION, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE"

**Big Vision:** This scenario used the "Emergency Response Loop" vision and associated leverage points as a starting point. Use of quotation marks indicates a direct quote from workshop participants.

## Summary of "Nutrition, Equity and Justice" scenario

In Flint, there is a need to lift people out of poverty and out of the trauma caused by numerous crises (e.g., GM closures, Water Crisis, COVID-19). Lots of programs come and go, but still, they are "only scratching the surface on something that could be bigger". Therefore, there is a need to foster collaboration across the different groups and organizations working in Flint to achieve bigger, systemic results. To address this issue, this scenario proposes the creation of a working group (or several working groups) in the spirit of authentic collaboration. One of the participants describes authentic collaboration in the following way: "if you authentically collaborate, you don't give up ownership of anything. You leverage your ownership with somebody else's ownership to achieve a greater result." Although framed as a working group, this scenario is focused on using it as a starting point to go beyond and foster a movement and the creation of a community gathering point. The group summarizes the scenarios in the following way: "We gather the community in spirit of authentic collaboration to ensure nutrition, equity and justice across the underserved. The efforts must be informed and co-created by persons experiencing food insecurity and food injustice. We are going to invite people to be a part of the solution by building trust and capacity into actionable steps towards shared promising practices."

## Values: Community priorities that guide the scenario

This scenario centers nutrition, equity, and justice as foundational values that underlie all the components of the scenario. Based on this, the group decided that their scenario would encompass all the values that are noted in the report (p. 4) in a transversal way: education, community empowerment, quality of life, partnerships, nutritious foods, affordable foods, available foods.

**LOCATION:** Flint area, Flint Township, Genesee County

## Short-term actions: What steps should be integrated into this scenario in the next 0-10 years to help Flint reach this Big Vision?

Workshop participants frame this by emphasizing the starting point for enacting any action is building trust. In Flint, people are cynical due to the number of programs that come and go, while problems persist. To build trust, it is necessary to practice active listening, follow up, make that extra phone call or visit, and make yourself available. Further, it is also necessary to center the voices of Flint residents in co-creation roles to propose solutions, instead of advisory roles.



# "NUTRITION, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE"

Short-term actions, cont.: What steps should be integrated into this scenario in the next 0-10 years to help Flint reach this Big Vision?

## Actions at the municipal level

- Kicking off authentic collaboration: Form a working group and timeline. This working group needs "consistent learning sessions with actionable or accompanying action" with varying themes (e.g., nutrition education). During weekly learning sessions, participants identify cases of success, discuss how to leverage them, and foster collaboration. Inclusion is essential, so the learning sessions are open to all. The working group will focus on "learning together and we take action together."
- Training: To ensure authentic collaboration, local universities will offer cultural competency training. This will train working group members to exercise empathy to enable meaningful dialogue and partnership. The working group must be an inclusive, safe space for all.
- Coordinating actions at the municipal level: Convene food system stakeholders to connect different people and organizations. Working as a collective it "becomes easier to get large buckets of money instead of these little tiny logic model, grounded" type of grants. A participant explained, "if you can't coordinate things, what's happening in neighborhoods or in even by census track or zip code or whatever, it becomes repetitive and wasteful."
- Expanding and changing grant-based funding: Funders need different modes of evaluation that consider outcomes not easily measurable, like building capacity and changing people's relationship to food. Grants must focus on work "with humans," rather demographics (e.g., teens or elderly). For funding sustainability, long-term grants (e.g., 10-years), instead of the usual 4 years, will help organizations "tired of chasing money [and]...pilot programs."
- Eliminating stigma and building dignity: Access to emergency food services should be a dignified experience, free of 'hoops'. Residents need access to what they want to eat, while receiving education on recipes and ways to prepare new, unfamiliar foods.
- Food as medicine approach: A holistic approach towards health is required to alleviate physical and mental health issues associated with diets. A food as a medicine approach also supports the mental health service needs resulting from several crises impacting residents.
- Employment workshops: Provide training for people to access paid positions.
- Scaling out: Further leverage ongoing successful efforts and use them as inspiration. Provide training to expand, share out and invite other people to join.

## Actions at the federal level

- Gather stakeholders to discuss and implement advocacy to change harmful policies and create new, beneficial policies

# "NUTRITION, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE"

Long-term actions: What steps should be integrated into this scenario in the next 11-20 years to help Flint reach this Big Vision?

This scenario involves allowing room for the emergence of novel actions, initiatives, projects etc. Therefore, the group decides that they would not like to be prescriptive towards long-term actions. Rather, the scenario focuses on the elements that are necessary for long-term actions, regardless of what those actions are. These include:

- Ensuring replenishing of the core team that carries the implementation of this scenario
- Building of institutional memory
- Providing paid positions and/or stipends to those involved that are fair
- Formalizing the work of scenario implementation "into an organization that's sustainable"

## RESOURCES AND STAKEHOLDERS

What resources are needed to complete these actions?

- Money
- Authentic, genuine commitment
- Community capital: human, social, political, natural, built, financial, cultural capital

Who should be involved? Which community partners and organizations are needed to do this work?

- Diverse community members: residents, families, adults, seniors, disabled people, people from marginalized groups
- Community clubs and neighborhood groups
- Food Policy Council
- Faith-based organizations
- Food emergency services (e.g., Food Bank)
- Business sector
- Philanthropic sector
- Schools
- Funders (e.g., Feeding America, GusNIP, American Heart Association, Michigan Health Endowment Fund)
- Universities

### Broader impacts

- Cascading effects on health
- Reducing racism and white privilege by working on equity and justice
- Breaking intergenerational poverty
- The scenario can serve as a model for authentic collaboration
- Increasing employment and education
- Reducing immediate concerns about food access

# "NUTRITION, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE"

## Pros and Cons

### Pros

- Transformative scenario that will bring about deep, systemic change
- Food security and nutritional justice
- Structural sustainability embedded within scenario
- Diverse participation of people and groups
- Opportunity for everyone to participate and have a say
- Time-wise: Scenario is mindful of spending time wisely and ensuring progress

### Cons

- Not everybody is going to be interested and show up
- Some people might want to collaborate only for their own self-interest
- Contrasting perceptions: since the scenario is open to everyone, there might be people involved with very different ideas
- Time-demanding: Scenario requires people's time and commitment

## CHANNELS

- Interconnected networks based on authentic collaboration
- Grounding the work in the big picture
- Moving to reconcile and heal
- Improved healthcare

## WALLS

- Resistance to change, especially from stakeholders who profit from the current conditions of the food system
- Allies can switch and/or change their minds as the scenario evolves
- Intergenerational poverty and insecurities
- Fear of failure
- Fear of success

### **SURPRISES:**

Natural Disasters

## Evaluation

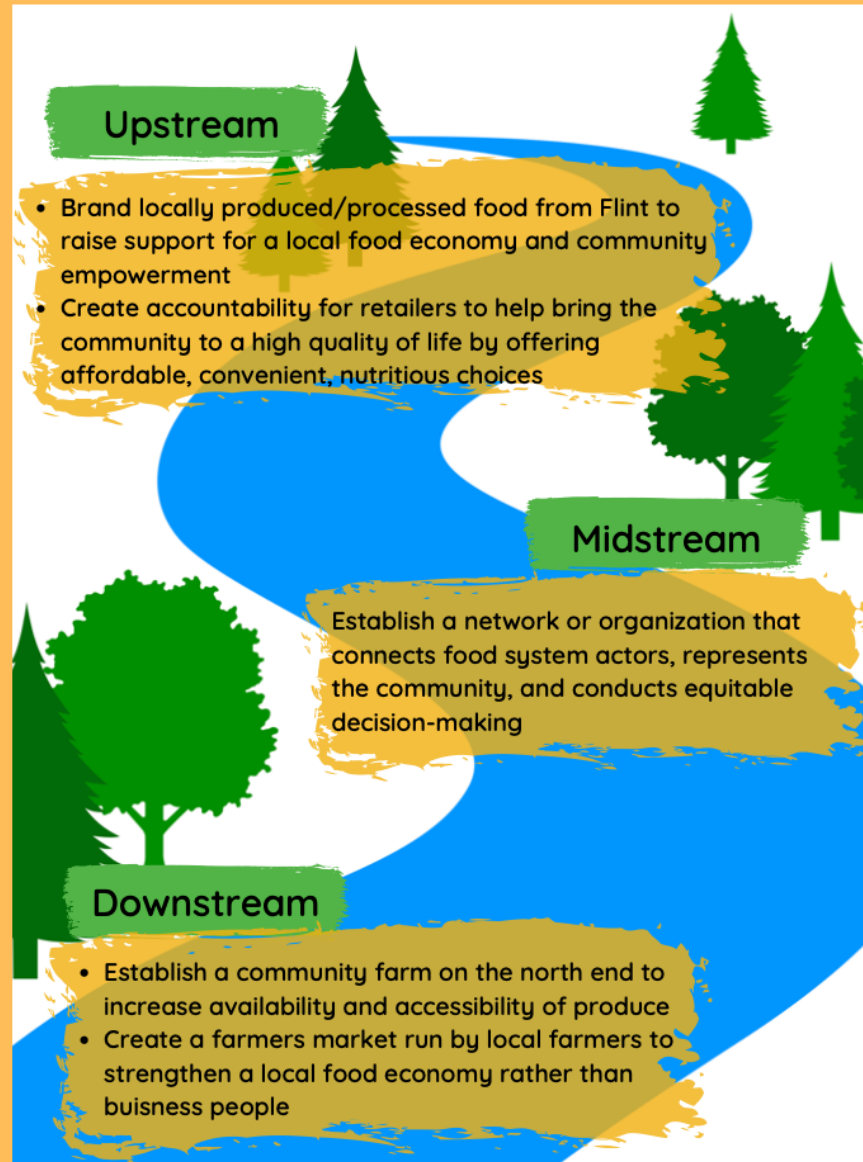
- Characteristics of the evaluation: spatially explicit; formal and informal; emergent; quantitative and qualitative; culturally sensitive; usage of data that comes from experience
- Indicators: number of people using the food bank; quantity of incoming and outgoing food in the food bank

# BIG VISION: RESIDENT FOOD EMPOWERMENT

## Resident Food Empowerment

**Desirable Future:** With increased resident direction, control, and ownership, the food system improves food access to achieve equity, social, and economic justice for residents.

Example leverage points defined by community members are listed below. Join the conversation--detailed lists of more leverage points can be found at: [www.canr.msu.edu/FlintFood](http://www.canr.msu.edu/FlintFood)



**Currently:** Focus on emergency food and meeting immediate needs limits work that will transform the food system and achieve equity and food sovereignty.

### Definitions:

**Upstream:** Policies, laws, or regulations that improve community conditions, creating system-wide changes

**Midstream:** Barriers that need to be addressed in order for the system to evolve; and/or supports individual social needs

**Downstream:** Addresses individual needs and crisis management

Each scenario uses a different Big Vision as the starting point: a community defined desirable future with example leverage points. Big Visions represent key findings from this research. For a full list of participant generated leverage points associated with this Big Vision visit

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/flintfood/resources-and-publications/key-lessons-synthesizing-research-results>

# "EMPOWERING CHOICES"

**big Vision: This scenario was developed using the "Resident Food Empowerment" vision and associated leverage points as a starting point. Use of quotation marks indicates a direct quote from a workshop participant.**

## Summary of "Empowering Choices" scenario

The goal of this scenario is keeping people engaged in eating healthier foods through cooking, gardening, and shopping. We will do this by ensuring a variety of foods and food processing and cooking equipment is available, sharing community knowledge, and ensure overall community value of food that respects quality of life for all involved in the food system. To achieve this we will engage in gathering resident participation, ongoing evaluation of community needs and resources and ensuring choices are appealing to residents. By 2042, when the scenario is achieved, the food available in Flint is reflective of community desires and needs. The choices of food available meet desires/needs so that people are empowered to cook, garden, and make healthy choices. The process of food system change helps people understand the urgency to make change while understanding the reality of daily life, so people can continue these activities far into the future.

### Values: Community priorities that guide the scenario

All the listed values are important to recognize and highlight. Participants decided to emphasize: 1) available foods, 2) quality of life is respected, and 3) sharing knowledge. The value of sharing knowledge replaced education. Participants want to shift from a discourse of "right and wrong" to discourse acknowledging that everyone has something to contribute, and interventions will be more successful if they are community led and fun.

Location:  
City of Flint

### Short-term actions: What steps should be integrated into this scenario in the next 0-10 years to help reach big vision?

The short-term actions are outlined below in no hierarchical order:

- Fostering more opportunities for school gardening: Kids need to be involved and excited about food systems change, and can be important drivers of change at home. To support teachers, this needs to be incorporated into a larger educational structure supported and built into the curriculum
- Supporting the North Flint Food Co-Op: Ensuring the co-op stocks healthy foods that residents within a 2-mile radius of the store want and know how to use. Recognizing and emphasizing that food co-ops runs differently than a big box store like Meijer. Educating residents about the benefits of the food co-op is critical. The co-op is here for the community and can serve in many ways—it's not just a grocery store.

# "EMPOWERING CHOICES"

Short-term actions (cont.): What steps should be integrated into this scenario in the next 0-10 years to help reach big vision?

- Envisioning a 21st century Home Economics Class: Many cooking and eating healthy skills must be taught. These are skills entwined with managing a household budget, understanding what a meal costs, and where foods come from. Managing a food budget and thinking about how that fits in with the remaining household expenditures, knowing how food is made, and how to shop for healthy food on a budget are important skills. Bringing these skills back into junior and high school classrooms is an important step to helping students learn broader life skills
- Community Food Spaces: Cooking and preserving food often takes specialized tools to which many families do not have access. To address this, creating a community space for shared tool and material rental would be helpful. A community freezer space (similar to the model of community garden spaces) will help support families in their efforts to access produce at its peak and save it for later consumption. This can cut down on food waste and encourage families to buy produce at its freshest and lowest price.

## RESOURCES AND STAKEHOLDERS

Resources: What resources are needed to complete these actions?

- Community Members
- Public schools • Media
- Flint Neighborhoods United
- Food processing equipment
- Space to house the community freezer
- Funding for programs • Home visitors
- Networks of Farmers and Chefs
- Farmer liaison/ coordinator position
- Community food system volunteer coordinator
- Hurley Medical Center
- Crim Fitness Foundation

Stakeholders: Who should be involved?  
Which community partners and organizations are needed to do this work?

- Community members and resident support is most important!
- Hurley Medical Center
- Crim Fitness Foundation
- Flint Neighborhoods United
- Schools • Churches • Media
- Edible Flint • Volunteers • Farmers

Surprises:

Another health emergency or recession



# "EMPOWERING CHOICES"

Long-term actions: What should be integrated into this scenario in 11-20 years to help reach the big vision?

- Flint Food Co-op Satellite Locations: Assuming that the North Flint Food Co-op will be a success, it can serve as a model for how to create other neighborhood food co-ops or satellite locations across Flint. Eventually, Flint should be a national leader using the food co-op model to bring fresh and healthy foods to neighborhoods previously labeled food deserts. Scaling up to other cities will support families nationwide, and raise the credibility and success of Flint.
- Food Quality Awards: The newly formed Food Policy Council could help create awards that highlight and support food businesses. It is not always possible to call out stores that are problematic or selling produce that looks bad, but it is possible to elevate those stores that are providing quality products and embodying Flint food system values. Such awards could involve an event and social media/advertising to benefit businesses. This creates accountability for stores and can help boost business.
- Personal Chef Home Visiting Program: Drawing on successful models of home visiting nurses and home visiting in early childhood education, a personal chef home visiting program can help promote cooking and healthy eating. Key benefits include teaching families specific skills and ensuring that the visiting chef is working in a family's space with their existing tools and equipment, and helping families to feel special and empowered to make high quality foods in their own homes.
- Farmer to Consumer Connections: Helping consumers access farmers is an important part of linking consumers to other parts of the food system. Pictures of farmers by their products in stores helps customers see who grew their food. It can also support consumers moving away from the idea that food has to look identical and perfect. A farmer liaison or representative who is particularly skilled at outreach and communication would be good for connecting with the community, and translating the work of farmers to consumers.
  - "Maybe, we'll get to a place in 20 years where people accept like, 'Yeah, carrots look like that. Or maybe, my apple has a mark on it.'...I think that the more that people hear from farmers about what farmers do, why farmers do it, how they do it, and are involved in growing, cooking, and processing food themselves, they'll see that it's not just these perfectly proportioned things that we are accustomed to... And, I love that, like pointing to the farmer's face, and be like, "This person grew this, and you can talk to them about it."
  - "And, that's a big part of what I'm really excited...is being able to bring farmers and non-farmers together. Let's just talk about how you grow food."

# "EMPOWERING CHOICES"

## Pros and Cons

### Pros

- Eating healthy becomes a habit
- Flint residents live healthier lives
- Families are doing exercising, cooking, and learning together
- Flint is known for celebrating food
- People make connections between farmers, stores and consumers
- There is broader food accessibility across neighborhoods

### Cons

- People do not like these solutions, or they won't use them
- Infrastructure and behavior change takes time
- Expensive, on-going costs
- Instability of long-term funding and political leadership

## Channels and Walls

### Channels

- Jobs and employment opportunities contributes to offering families more food choice, but can also help lift people out of poverty.

### Walls

- Low participation levels in activities and in shopping at the food co-op.
- Siloing of work, and preventing people from collaboration.
- Funding
- Ensuring initiatives are connected, there is transparent communication, and individuals are not overburdened.
- Supporting community holistically, and in particular supporting mental health is important to this broader food systems work.

## Evaluation

- Measure the usage freezers and tool rental, and who is using these resources
- Evaluation of school-based programs and the levels of participation
- Have participants tell their story through sharing pictures, artwork, and words that illustrate their success
- More people are willing to share their knowledge and work on community projects—so there is a larger total number of people involved and active in this work
- Programs outlined in the scenario are launched and there is program evaluation with participants and program users
- Data from stores will demonstrate an increase in produce purchases and purchases of local foods

## Broader Impacts

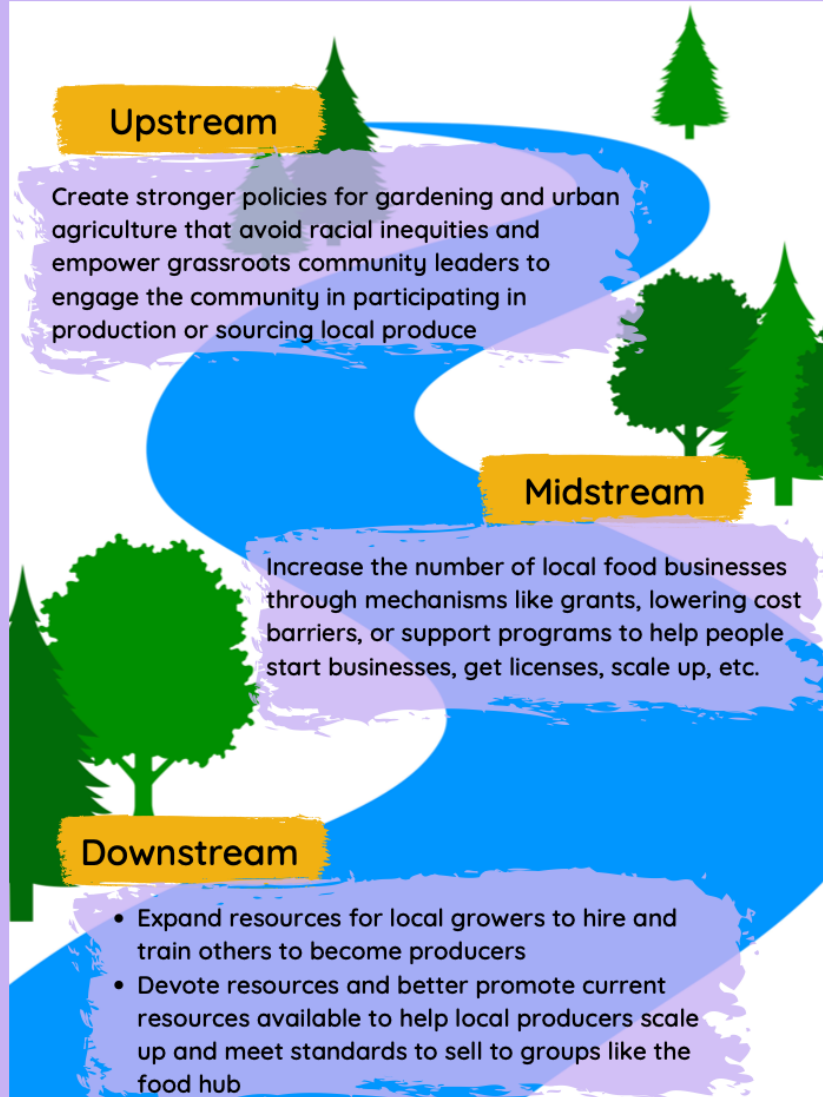
- Flint becomes a more desirable place to move to and people want to stay. This can be a benefit to the community as a whole; however, growth changes community dynamics in unforeseen ways.
- Supporting home ownership supports the food system as a whole. If too many people are renting, then it is less likely people have the equipment needed for food prep
- Ensuring that growth and development do not increase gentrification that recreates racial inequities

# BIG VISION: ECONOMIC INVESTMENT

## Economic Investment

**Desirable Future:** Drawing on the many assets within our community, future economic investment results in Flint-based ownership within the food system. Economic development fosters cultural growth, is culturally appropriate and improves quality of life for all residents.

Example leverage points defined by community members are listed below. Join the conversation--detailed lists of more leverage points can be found at: [www.canr.msu.edu/FlintFood](http://www.canr.msu.edu/FlintFood)



**Currently:** Economic investment heavily focuses on emergency food distribution rather than preventing need. Jobs are low-paying and ownership of the food system lies with people outside of Flint.

### **Definitions:**

**Upstream:** Policies, laws, or regulations that improve community conditions, creating system-wide changes

**Midstream:** Barriers that need to be addressed in order for the system to evolve; and/or supports individual social needs

**Downstream:** Addresses individual needs and crisis management

Each scenario uses a different Big Vision as the starting point: a community defined desirable future with example leverage points. Big Visions represent key findings from this research. For a full list of participant generated leverage points associated with this Big Vision visit

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# "THE PEOPLES MARKET"

**Big Vision: This scenario used the "Economic Investment" vision and associated leverage points as a starting point. Use of quotation marks indicates a direct quote from workshop participants.**

## Summary of "The Peoples Market" scenario

This group envisions a more decentralized economic market in the Flint food system. "There is a need to create a strategy that clearly centers Diversity, Equity and Inclusion goals and accessibility at its core. We need to decentralize power, share it with community stakeholders, and craft a framework of collaboration centered around community values. Through this lens, we'll offer farmer development and food entrepreneurship support through capacity building, TA [technical assistance], and value add production through creative uses of underutilized infrastructure. This will develop accessible economic opportunities that reflect community values rooted in community ownership and self-determination." Many actions were discussed, most substantially the creation of strong neighborhood networks through which to conduct this work.

## Values: Community priorities that guide the scenario

- Community empowerment: Not just external economic investment but strong internal development and investment.
- Education: both formal and informal sharing of knowledge between community members
- Partnerships
- Cultural change through existing institutions
- Connectivity: An emphasis on inclusion and communication with local leadership
- Use of existing assets
- Decentralized power

## Location

This scenario is based in the neighborhoods of Flint, but close by counties may be viable for producing local food. Additionally, this scenario should be "challenging things at this higher level – state and national policy levels – to make sure that those things were happening now have sort of long-term success."

## Short-term Actions: What actions should be integrated into this scenario in the next 0-10 years to help reach the big vision?

- Replicating the scenario planning workshops with other groups in Flint (e.g. growers, faith-based leaders)
- Organizational planning
- Partnership and collaboration development: starting by connecting underutilized commercial kitchens with those interested in value-added production
- Food systems education to communicate value to residents and investors
- Technical education in areas like value-added production and accounting

# "THE PEOPLES MARKET"

Long-term actions: What should be integrated into this scenario in 11-20 years to help reach the big vision?

In discussing long-term actions, this group underlined several leverage points that would need to be utilized toward the ideal scenario. Some are further discussed in terms of what this would look like in Flint. The full list of leverage points is available at FLPP website, and below are the specific leverage points utilized within this scenario, along with notes on how this group wanted to tailor it to their scenario.

- Leverage Point: Create a cooperative grocery store to increase community empowerment; and Establish a food cooperative, increase food access to high quality, affordable food and increase community empowerment.
- Leverage point: Increase the number of, potentially locally owned, grocery stores that offer a quality environment, and high-quality, affordable foods.
  - Either creating new stores or "activating corner stores to sell a diversity of foods, replicating the co-op food".
- Leverage point: Increase the number of local farmers by providing education and support, needed to catch up with the demand for local food.
- Leverage point: Brand locally produced or processed food from Flint to raise support for a local food economy and community empowerment.
  - This could create jobs that are built into the healthy food based in Flint. Foundations can subsidize the cost to help get this food to the general public through purchasing or food pantries. "It's like how General Motors was really good at convincing everyone to buy General Motors cars. It's like, 'Oh that supports our jobs.' It's like, buy Flint food. It supports our local economy."
- Leverage points: Improve the economic conditions in Flint through employment, guaranteed basic income, increase disability or unemployment payments, etc. to systemically increase income which would improve nutrition; Economic investment and job programs in Flint that raise average household income, targeted specifically to low-income families and the un/under-employed
  - "when you don't have hardly any disposable income, you're not thinking about food for enjoyment the same way". Besides just wanting to eat healthy, and having value in local food, they need to be able to financially support these purchases.
- Leverage point: Lower barriers for starting local food businesses, especially for immigrants which would also increase the availability of culturally relevant foods
  - Connect consumers with a farm to grow culturally relevant food.

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# "THE PEOPLES MARKET"

Long-term actions, cont.: What should be integrated into this scenario in 11-20 years to help reach the big vision?

- Leverage point: Create stronger policies for gardening and urban agriculture that avoid racial inequities and empower grassroots community leaders to engage the community in participating in production or sourcing local produce; Double Up Food Bucks should return to only applying to locally produced food to better support the local food economy
  - Growers need money upfront to be able to pay some costs, so a CSA-style methods using double up food bucks would be very helpful. Both the grower and consumer could benefit from this. The existing relationship with the Fair Food Network could be used to consider this idea.

As the conversation continued, the scenario shifted from just neighborhood markets to include a larger, over-arching local food pathway that one participant termed "The Peoples Market", which led to discussions about the following leverage points and actions.

- Leverage point: Create a farmers market run by local farmers to strengthen a local food economy rather than middle and upper class businesspeople; Establish small farmers markets within neighborhoods.
  - A participant shares their experience with the Flint Farmers Market, which at one time was a "beacon of how farmers markets should be" but have since been surpassed by other inspirational markets. The Flint Farmers Market is great, but not all of the residents of Flint can shop there.
- Leverage point: Local restaurants could source more local ingredients to improve nutrition and support the local food economy.
  - Cherry Capital Foods is a distributor out of Traverse City that specializes in Michigan-grown products. They pass by Flint frequently, it's a matter of being organized to connect with them.
- Leverage point: Create zero interest loans for farmers to build infrastructure then pay off loans with produce that goes to families in need.
  - There is interest in investing in farmer support infrastructure though this is not a facet of the overall scenario nor thoroughly discussed.
  - Generally, a long-term action would be continued capacity building for farmers and community members



# "THE PEOPLES MARKET"

Resources: What resources are needed to complete these actions?

- Edible Flint for education
- Faith-based organizations in order to access commercial kitchens and they have access to large amounts of people
- Flint Food Market
- Flint Food Hub for scaled social purchasing and product aggregation. This would lead to high convenience for low cost
- Michigan State University
- Local growers, retailers, and processors (especially growers who are already doing "the work")
- My Community Resource House and Garden
- Capacity Building and Mentorship Organizations
- Partnerships outside of Flint
- Flint Social Club
- Philanthropic funding
- Corner stores

Stakeholders: Who should be involved?  
Which community partners and organizations are needed to do this work?

- Producers
- Processors
- Retailers: stores, restaurants, and markets
- Waste Management and recycling programs
- Government
- Community-based organizations
- My Community Resource House and Garden
- Faith-based organizations
- Community members
- Financial institutions: To serve as financial buy-in
- Financial/Accounting assistance: to serve as a hub for running the books or assist growers in running their own books

## Pros and Cons

- Local food will be more accessible, but there may be a lag time where the accessible local food is still more expensive and the community has a limited food budget.
- Small business owners may have increased stake in the economy but large corporations and people who work for them would lose profitability.
- Through the hybrid change (both transformative and reformative) of the Flint food system, there would be increased access to local foods, but "food outlets that are not serving the community" would have to change or be absorbed into the Peoples Market.
- Change is an uncomfortable process. Though the change may be beneficial, there will be some community members that are resistant to change, especially if they presently hold power and would lose power in the suggested scenario.
- If the food system is community-owned, everyone will benefit. From farmers to consumers.
- Farmers will have more outlets for selling
- More diversity in terms of produce, store, and event options

# "THE PEOPLES MARKET"

## Broader Impacts/Surprises

- Population change
- A surprise could come from the underlying assumption that people in the Flint food system want local food. It is possible they enjoy the processed food from corporate food chains? "What if people just want to go to McDonalds and we did all this work and they're just like 'Meh, local food systems, whatever'"
- Changes to affordability, housing prices, and employment. There was some discussion about the connection to local food and gentrification
- Climate change
  - It would be a surprise if the climate changed so much that local food production was limited or impossible
  - In order to avoid these surprises, the Flint food system should be preparing in the effort to be more self-sustaining. "We can't rely on the current systems that exist to continue to sustain us, because they won't exist in the same way"

## Channels and Walls

### Walls

- Resistance to change could hinder progress
- Communication could be difficult given a lack of established channels of communication
- Lack of cultural fluency
- Organizational rules that lead to firm structure. This has led to gatekeeping in Flint before
- Policy blocks progress at many levels.
- Competition can hinder collaboration
- There is a "need to convince people to buy-in to this vision of the future". Without many proven examples of success in Flint, it can feel like leading people recklessly into this scenario
- Getting people to engage, learn, and change has proven difficult
- There are historical conflicts ("old beef") that get in the way of moving forward
- Conflicts of interest

### Channels

- There are already a lot of organizations doing the work, including great education programs
- There is a passion for improved food systems
- There are many existing assets in Flint

### Evaluation

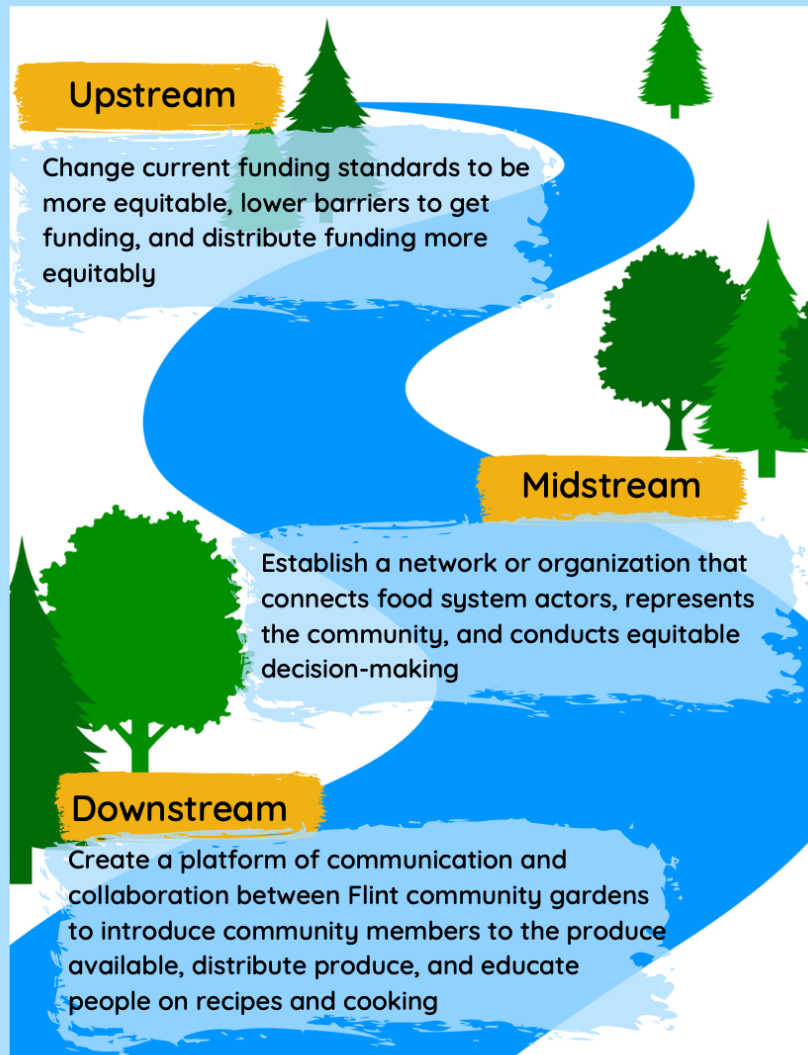
- Number of business owners: Demographics; increased diverse actors
- Food security metrics: Health (nutrition and diet); Distance to food source; Transportation access; Affordability; Food/product diversity; Ease of accessing dietary food
- Investment: Public and private; revenue generated, median household income
- Percent of locally sourced food in businesses and institutions
- Land use for production: percent of available land over time
- Food waste: Net food waste; Amount of food waste composted vs. municipal waste

# BIG VISION: COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE ACTION

## Community Collaborative Action

**Desirable Future:** Community service providers collaborate with resource providers, government, non-profits, residents, faith-based organizations and retail for mutual benefit, achieving authentic community-based collaboration across all sectors.

Example leverage points defined by community members are listed below. Join the conversation--detailed lists of more leverage points can be found at: [www.canr.msu.edu/FlintFood](http://www.canr.msu.edu/FlintFood)



**Currently:** Limited resources and silos put organizations in competition for funding, promoting self-interested collaboration and limiting system-level innovations.

### Definitions:

**Upstream:** Policies, laws, or regulations that improve community conditions, creating system-wide changes

**Midstream:** Barriers that need to be addressed in order for the system to evolve; and/or supports individual social needs

**Downstream:** Addresses individual needs and crisis management

Each scenario uses a different Big Vision as the starting point: a community defined desirable future with example leverage points. Big Visions represent key findings from this research. For a full list of participant generated leverage points associated with this Big Vision visit

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/flintfood/resources-and-publications/key-lessons-synthesizing-research-results>

# "COMMUNITY UNITY"

**Big Vision:** This scenario used the "Community Collaborative Action" vision and associated leverage points as a starting point. Use of quotation marks indicates a direct quote from workshop participants.

## Summary of "Community Unity" Scenario

The "Community Unity" scenario focuses on collaborative actions in the community that encourage all the stakeholders to come and work together. To overcome the existing challenges in the Flint food system, promoting ongoing conversations and collaborations between community members, corporations, government, and non-profit organizations around shared values and shaping a united community is essential. It will lead to a transition toward a "win-win" framework by "branding" community efforts, reducing competition for funds and grants, and creating excitement around the food system to improve "healthy food consumption" and "sense of food security". After this community togetherness, the next step is integrating the food system to be more locally available to the community members—especially the ones who have transportation problems—and encouraging small-scale growers and community gardens to benefit from existing infrastructures and sell their products out of convenience stores, local grocery, or corner stores.

Overall, this scenarios identifies the following problems as key areas to work on:

- Lower level of interest in community engagement activities
- Barrier to effective collaboration among organizations and community partners: competition for funds and grants
- Limited availability of fresh local products in some Flint neighborhoods
- Lack of proper transportation options to access fresh healthy foods from supermarkets out of neighborhoods

## Values: Community priorities that guide the scenario

- Community Empowerment: Generating excitement to keep community members engaged in the food system
- Partnership: Promoting the collaboration of different groups and stakeholders for identifying common grounds and sharing resources
- Education: Food festivals, community events, and food conferences can provide educational opportunities
- Local Nutritious Foods: Expansion of community gardens and their collaboration with local stores. Decentralizing power by increasing options for local food
- Job creation: Promoting a local food system not only improves community health and access to fresh produce, but it also creates jobs for community members through the development of small businesses and community gardens

## Location

This scenario focuses on Flint or Genesee County to define the spatial boundary. However, it can consider neighborhood-level to get the voice of the community more accurately.

# "COMMUNITY UNITY"

**Short-term Actions: What actions should be integrated into this scenario in the next 0-10 years to help reach the big vision?**

- Generating excitement and providing educational opportunities
- Promoting collaborations among different stakeholders
- Using existing infrastructures and resources for supporting the local farmers and community gardens
- Benefiting from new technologies such as the "Flint Eats" app to reduce the needed labor and enhance the networking between community members
- Improving data management and updating the Flint masterplan
- Integrating food giveaways with educational training sessions and community events
- Prioritization of available resources and assigning them to specific neighborhoods
- Identifying core values of all groups—instead of individual-based values—for strengthening the collaborations

**Long-term actions: What should be integrated into this scenario in 11-20 years to help reach the big vision?**

- Infrastructure improvements for local food production
- Water infrastructure improvements for water-based community gardens and urban farms
- Improved storage and processing facilities
- Use of new technologies such as indoor hydroponic gardening for growing year-around products
- Policy refinements to require liquor and convenience stores to carry a certain amount of fresh products such as lime, lemons, or olive
- Promoting collaboration among community gardens, urban farms, small-scale growers, convenience stores, and small grocery stores to shorten the food supply chains
- Scaling up the existing community gardens if it is possible

**Resources: What resources are needed to complete these actions?**

- Public and private funding resources
- Existing infrastructure and vacant spaces in city
- Community members
- Regional collaborators and large corporations

**Stakeholders: Who should be involved? Which community partners and organizations are needed to do this work?**

- United Way groups • Block Clubs • Genesee Conservatory
- Chairs Stewart Mott foundation
- Applewood estate (Ruth Mott Foundation)
- Community-based organizations (e.g., Neighborhood Engagement Hub (NEH), Flint Neighborhood United (NFU))
- Schools • Community Gardens • Food Bank
- Mott Community College Culinary Institute
- All community members specifically including those in the prison system, elderly, and youth

# "COMMUNITY UNITY"

## Pros and Cons

### Pros

- This scenario increases the exposure of community members to fresh and local products. So, community members will be able to taste them or learn how to cook with them. Therefore, it may introduce new healthy meals into their diets.
- Increase in diversity of fresh-local food products in convenience stores, small grocery stores, corner stores, or gas stations
- Enhance the community collaboration
- Stores can prepare the local fresh products in boxes with all needed ingredients for one meal, similar to the "Blue Apron Boxes"

### Cons

- Possible closure of small neighborhood stores
- Seasonal unavailability of local products year around
- Competition for shelf space
- Limited consumer demand for fresh local products may occur if consumers are not familiar with how to use the local ingredients in their cooking or meal preparation
- Risk of small businesses being left out of funding opportunities

## Broader Impacts and Surprises

- Vacant buildings may attract animals, such as groundhogs, turkeys, and rodents. These spaces can be repurposed for establishing new community gardens or indoor gardening
- Michigan is a destination for climate migrants due to its land and water resources. Implementing local neighborhood food hubs could attract and increase food diversity
- Energy crises and inflation can impact food prices and transportation costs, affecting the feasibility of small-scale local neighborhood food hubs
- Natural disasters such as tornados also can affect the production of community gardens

## Channels and Walls

### Channels

- Starting the collaboration with a smaller size (a collaboration of 3 or 4 organizations) can increase the chance of success
- Climate migrants can bring helpful information related to the gardening and food production
- Benefiting from local talents

### Walls

- Changes in Michigan laws can limit progress
- Changes in National-level laws such as changes in WIC or EBT implementation, or changes in school lunch programs may negatively affect the scenario

## Evaluation

- Spatial analysis of food distribution in neighborhoods: amount of general/healthy food, number of food-selling places
- Surveying community members on fruit/vegetable consumption, perceived quality of life, and their willingness to learn about new recipes
- Count number of community gardens, and active participants in community events
- Monitoring changes in food-insecure population, changes in EBT/WIC usage, and public health measurements such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and cholesterol



# CONCLUSIONS

## Conclusion

This report summarizes four scenarios co-created by workshop participants that represent actionable pathways towards a desirable future for the Flint food system. Building upon community identified values and leverage points, and Big Visions that summarize project results, workshop participants designed creative strategies, activities, and programs that could lead to positive change within the next 20 years. The discussions were inspiring and highlighted how different stakeholders working in different aspects of the food system could build connections to bring about an equitable, just, and sustainable food system. Each of the four scenarios are unique, while still grounded on principles of food justice and the values of Flint community members. The aim of this activity and report is to inform actions and projects that can foster transformative change in Flint by 2042. There is no single answer or activity that will achieve all the desired changes to the Flint food system, indeed the four scenarios here illustrate that.

Hosting future workshops to develop additional scenarios and action plans could be a productive way to generate new ideas for actionable change. The workbook we used to facilitate the workshop when these scenarios were generated is available on our website for all to use. Creating actionable steps, and outlining a series of activities and programs that can lead to change is the goal of our scenario workshops. We hope that these four scenarios provide examples of how collective action by stakeholders across Flint can result in transformative change for the food system.

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**For more on the Flint Leverage Points Project visit:**

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/flintfood>



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**We thank you for your participation and ongoing work to improve the food system in Flint, Michigan!**

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*Photo Credit: FLPP Research Participant*

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