

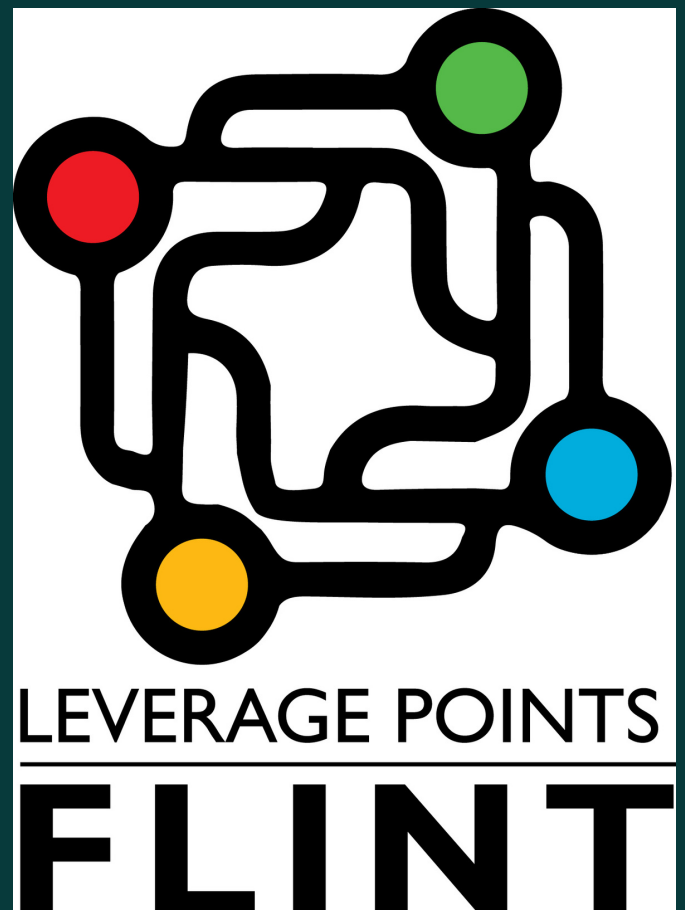


MICHIGAN STATE
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"THE PEOPLE'S MARKET" SCENARIO SUMMARY

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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).

This document summarizes one of the four scenarios that were co-created during the workshop. Each scenario uses a different Big Vision, or key finding from the research project as the starting point. The Big Visions is illustrated as an infographic and is followed by a summary of the co-created scenario. Here, we present the "Nutrition, Equity and Justice" scenario that was developed based on the "Emergency Response Loop" Big Vision.

To access the full report documenting the summary of all four scenarios, each scenario individually, or the workbook we used for workshop facilitation 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>



Photo Credits: FLPP Research Participants

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



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

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

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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

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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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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

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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

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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

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

Contact

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Photo Credit: FLPP Research Participant

How to Cite this Report

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