

Worthington Global Market Focus Group

JBS Conference Room, Worthington, MN

July 18th 2017

M: Let's start by going around the room and saying our names and where we're from. Let's start over here.

R: My name is Cabatas. I'm from El Salvador. I represent the Hispanic community.

R: My name is Enrique. I represent the Hispanic people. I came from Mexico.

R: I'm Shumuka. I come from Burma. I represent Burmese and Korean communities.

R: My name is Rahel Kinde. I'm from Ethiopia. I represent the Ethiopian community.

R: Lisa Toma. I'm from Worthington. I'm the walking steward in the plant. I represent the UFCW, the union here in the facility.

R: Christina. I'm from Mexico. I'm from HR.

R: My name is Tessa. I'm the HR manager.

R: Hi, my name is Elizabeth Briones. I'm the benefits coordinator.

R: My name is (?). I'm a community health worker with Community Wellness Partners.

R: I'm Darlene and I'm a dietician with Community Wellness Partners.

Abraham: I'm Abraham with the Worthington Regional Development. I'm here to just observe the first focus group.

M: Where often do you shop for things specific to your culture? They can be items or food items.

R: Walmart

R: Mexican store in Worthington.

R: Hy-Vee

R: The stuff we need, we get them there. We also go to Asian stores.

M: Why do you purchase the items at that location?

R: The stores that we need, we don't have them here.

R: Most of the things that we need, we get at the Asian store. The things we usually eat.

M: What type of specialty items or food do you shop for?

R: Rice, vegetables, spices, noodles...

M: So mostly food?

R: For my country, I go to (?), the Mexicana store. I stock up on food from my country like tamales, frozen foods they don't have over here. All of the stuff we can't find at Walmart or around in town.

R: Traditional medicine, clothes. Traditional clothes and stuff.

M: On average, how much do you spend on items like this per month?

R: A lot.

R: \$400 - \$500

R: \$500

R: Clothes are expensive.

M: Do these specialty items dictate where you shop? It sounds like they do.

R: Yes (unison)

M: How far from here do you travel for them?

R: 5 – 10 minutes

R: Mine is 45 minutes. We go to Sioux Falls. We don't have an Ethiopian store here. We go to Sioux Falls or the Cities.

M: What is your level of satisfaction with that store or current supplier?

R: Good (unison)

R: I think it's good, but it's expensive.

R: Yeah, they're really expensive.

R: It's good that we can find it, but it's bad because it's a lot of money you have to spend to get that.

R: When you go to the store and you want fresh, you're going to pay for fresh versus if it's in a box or jar, it's going to be cheaper. You'll notice that a lot of families that have kids, you look at what's in their grocery cart, and it is convenience, it's frozen, it's stuff that's in jars that's affordable for them that they can feed their family on versus to try to stay healthy and buy fresh on everything.

M: Is there anything you would like to change about where you currently shop for those items?

R: Prices

R: I think it's better now that we have three or four Asian stores. Before it was way expensive, but it's better now.

M: Are there places for cultural groups to socialize and enjoy cultural music, food, art, religion, or history? If so, where?

R: Church

R: Parties

R: (?) The bar. That's what we've got here in town. The Hispanic people, that's where we sit. I know we have the A & T Tap, but I never stop at that bar. There is a Hispanic singer that comes into (?).

M: We are considering building a Global Market in Worthington. What would it need to offer as far as cultural items for you to shop there? For example, food products, health and beauty products, clothing, accessories, art products, organic products, musical instruments or performances, religious items, or historical items. What would it need to have for you to shop there?

R: Spices from all over the globe, fresh fruits and vegetables from all over.

M: So a lot of food?

R: Does it have to be food only?

M: It can be any of the things I listed.

R: I think all the things that you listed.

R: Mhmm (unison)

R: Everything!

R: But I think people will show up for mostly food. Music and instruments and stuff like that, they might not buy it very often.

R: I think to hear the music play all the different cultures would be great to listen to while you shop.

M: Is there a difference between just playing a recording or watching it live?

R: Live! (unison)

R: Makeup too! Like, in my case, sometimes when someone from Mexico is coming, we have some kinds of things that I order. Here, we don't have them. They're better and they're cheaper. If a family comes, they bring me what I order. To mail it to me, it's cheaper. Most of the things that you listed would be so cool, like to have a market where you can find everything from your country.

R: This would bring people to the community, also. It would be an attraction for people to come.

R: Activities for kids

M: Make it family friendly? So a lot of you, if you have kids, you would bring your kids?

R: Mhmm

R: Maybe someone could cook so you could get a bite to eat there while you're shopping.

M: We did talk about maybe bringing in a community kitchen. That would be good?

R: Yeah

M: Any specific brands that the Global Market should carry to make it more appealing for you?

(Silence)

R: When I used to live in Arizona, they had a big Asian store like Walmart here, and they had like one aisle with Indian stuff, Thai stuff, and Vietnamese stuff. Then they had like a shop-while-you-eat restaurant and a little store where you can buy clothes too.

R: There's also a little area where you can sit outside with umbrellas and music. It's nice. I've been there too.

M: So you want it to be categorized, but you can't think of any specific brands?

R: Yeah

M: Is there a specific location for it to be located that would make it more appealing here in Worthington?

R: Where the mall used to be, where there is large parking space.

R: Over by the car dealerships

R: Somewhere in the city where people can walk so they don't have to pay for a taxi.

R: There's some room over there by the fire station.

R: If you have sidewalks, the ground that people will walk on would be paved and decorated, maybe from different cultures. We want to get exercise too. We don't just want to pull up to a store. We want to park and walk through this as an experience. It would be nice if it was a plot of land that gave enough room to where you can go and eat something and walk the street to see different options.

M: So you guys like the idea of having an outdoor area a lot?

R: Yeah

R: The kitchen thing that you mentioned, can you elaborate on that a little bit? The community kitchen?

M: From my understanding, it would be an open kitchen where there would be an occasional person cooking traditional recipes in front of you, and they would give out little samples.

R: I saw something on TV the other day where they have kids go sign up to learn to cook different cultural foods. It's like a summer program. There's an instructor there too, but it's hands on where they learn to cook. I think it'd be neat to have something, even if an adult wanted to cook a unique dish.

Abraham: That's part of the programming, and I definitely could look at something like that. That was the whole principle behind the Global Market idea, to introduce people, young kids, and different cultures to each other through food. That could be a community education program for a couple weeks.

R: I think that we should have restaurants too. Maybe just little ones. I can have different options available every day.

M: So you're picturing a little food court?

R: Mhmm (unison)

R: The Global Market in Minneapolis, they have a small room for it. You can choose from different Hispanic countries. With something like a global market, we can choose something from Asia, something from Ethiopia, or any part of the countries around the world. They have a place to call their own. We can choose from more cultures.

M: That's a great idea. What do you think the days and hours of operation should be? When are you likely to stop by if you were to shop there?

R: After 5, after 6 pm.

R: We can stop by in the daytime, I guess.

R: It would be nice to have it open until 10pm

M: That's pretty late. When do you feel like it should be open in the morning?

R: I think like around 9, so if we want to go get lunch and bring it here it will be open already.

R: The Mexicana store in town, they don't open until 9 in the morning and close at 9. 9 to 9.

M: If the global market were to be built, how supportive would your community be? How supportive would you be?

R: If people can get everything at one spot, a lot of people would be go there.

R: We have been spending our money in other places. We go to buy stuff in Sioux Falls. The money is going out of the community. If we have everything we need over here, we don't have to go. Right now we go up to Minneapolis or other cities because we are triangular in 3 states: Iowa, South Dakota, and Minnesota. Here in Minnesota, we don't have too many stores close to us. It's much closer to Sioux Falls and Sioux City. We can go out to Mankato. It's nice right there. We need more business around here.

M: So it would help the immediate community, you think?

R: I've talked to a lot of the Hispanic and Asian store owners in Worthington, and it's challenging for them to get that ethnic produce in, so many of them travel to Minneapolis to get that produce and bring it back. So if this was a larger store that was able to carry a larger quantity of produce, and get it at a better cost, that would be a good thing. The store owners struggle to have the money to bring that in.

R: (difficult to hear)

R: I think the city has to make it easier for us to sell our products. If I want to open my tacos place, they ask for too many things. You have to be almost a chef to open something. We cook because we cook. They ask for too many things. It's hard to have a place to sell anything. Even if it's a little business because you know how to do it and you learned by yourself how to do it, say you want to open a t-shirt design store, you have to have a permit. I don't want to take credit from people who study, but if you have that in your blood, you can do it. You want to share. I think the city has to be more available to help people share the things they want to share.

M: What do you think is the best way to make your cultural community aware of the global market? For example, Facebook or social media, email, posters, newspaper, mail brochures.

R: Church (unison)

M: So like, posters?

R: Posters or fliers at church.

R: Facebook too.

R: Send fliers home with kids.

R: The school sends home a lot of fliers, and as a parent you throw them away unless they have something interesting to grab your attention. One time my son came home from school and he said, "Dad, this is for you." There are too many things. We just throw them away...

R: A billboard. Not just here in Worthington, but in other areas to draw people into our community. Around that billboard, have some trees, have some plant life, have different kinds of plants that represent different countries. Put it in a spot where it can grow. I think if business owners downtown find out that there's a spot there they'll bring their business there and help it grow too. I'm excited about it because I think it'll really bring some life into the community.

M: So on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being very important and 1 being not important. How important to Southwest Minnesota would a global market be to Worthington?

R: 10 (unison)

R: We are so blessed with the diversity here. How can we not utilize it and embrace it? We need to. It's right in front of us so it's time to take action.

M: I've heard a lot about that. Do you guys feel like you have one of the more diverse communities here?

R: Yes (unison)

R: I think we make it work. The people that come to visit this community are amazed by that. Some people that I've talked to in Minneapolis, because they have diversity up there but somehow they have a roadblock. They come here and say you all make it work but up here it's like this. But we all intertwine and we all make it work and we see people for people. Our community is unique. So I think we should open it up and share it with people. Let them come in. That how they can learn. They can learn from us

and just be apart of our community. Even spending an afternoon to talk to people that can help enlighten other communities.

M: Ok. And is there anything else that anyone would like to add

R: I think Worthington is a community that is wasted. We have 3 states around. We receive trucks from all around. Trucks that go to Sioux falls. Trucks that go to Iowa. We have a lot of community coming in but they just pass through. They don't stay. If we have something that'll bring people in we can make this town bigger. I know that the old people that live here want to keep the town quiet, but we are wasting because we could bring a lot of money here.

Abraham: Could you elaborate on keeping the town quiet?

R: They [old people] don't want it to go. We don't here about how someone killed someone on some street. We have issues just like any community but we can go walking around at midnight. We feel safe.

R: We feel safe because there no to much business like a night club with people drinking and driving and doing a lot of bad stuff. But people can go at night and walk from there house to any company and not feel afraid. And if something happens they call the police and the police come right away. And they can come and try to keep the community safe too.

R: You can go walk at the lake at 2 in the morning and do exercise. We feel safe. That's why the old community here in town wants to keep it like this. But I just feel like it's a waste

R: We have communities down the road like Brandon that are growing and prospering and there's no reason that Worthington can't. I think what's frustrating is that the leadership that been in charge time and time again, it might have worked at one time but now people are asking what is the vision of Worthington. Even our minorities that come here to make this there home are looking outside because, what is the vision of Worthington? So we feel a little bit frustrated because it almost feels like you get thumbed down. When it comes to opening a business there are so many hoops you have to jump through that makes it impossible to open something up. I grew up here so I had raised that question many years ago. There were companies like Coca-Cola. Certain companies that wanted to come to Worthington and make money but Worthington turned them out. And when I was young I said why wouldn't we want this community to grow? Well there were some different things that got brought up like water supply for how big it can be. They had some other things that were brought up and then this elephant in the room came out and said that the ones running this community didn't want it to grow. There were certain ones that wanted certain control over certain things in the community. But it was always held back. So I believe that. I see that. We live that. Because this community from back to what it was in the 80's, I don't think that we have less people here than we did back then. It's like it's just diminishing. We have everybody here but we actually have to travel out to different communities for entrainment, to buy our goods, things like that. We do have a lot of eating places around here, but the community isn't always so inviting. If your coming to buy a house your going to be looking at that front door. You're going to look at those kind of things. We need some infrastructure we need to help small businesses do the outsides of their building to help them look more inviting. When you travel to another places like Arizona or Minneapolis; what really catches my eye is cobble stone sidewalks and there's really nice things. Different food, different music; so you go and spend your money there because you want to be apart of that. We have a lot to offer here but I feel like we're not blooming. There's a lot of interest, theres a lot of people that are willing to but there are so many roadblocks.

R: We have to go to the Sibly movie theater. They have one and we don't.

Abraham: What town is that?

R: Sibly

R: We have to go to Sioux Falls we have to go to another town to spend our money and not in our town. You can ask people why they live in Sioux falls and they say because there's more to do there. They'll drive 1 hour because there's nothing to do here.

Abraham: How far are you traveling for those things? How often?

R: Every other week

Abraham: And how much do you spend on average? 100? 200 bucks?

R: More than that. We're driving 3 hours.

R: I'm thinking about 300. I don't have kids but I'm thinking for a family it would be like 300 every weekend. Most of the time I know they go every other week but it's like 300 dollars they want to spend over there.

R: We have 5 people in my family. My wife, me, and my 3 kids. We go eat outside in sioux falls and we spend around 75-80 dollars just on food. Besides that we go to see a movie and spend another 70-90 dollars for the movie tickets plus the popcorn and pop. Just on the movie and food we spend around 200 dollars. And then we go buy clothes and shoes and we go out to another place it's like she said it's around 300 dollars.

R: And I'm sure the banks in town, when they get to see the transactions, I'm sure they can see a lot of money leaving the community. Wherever it's being swiped at, the cards. So it's unfortunate. A lot of that could be here.

R: And you can see that in the winter when we don't have the soccer games on Sundays. You can see in the winter that Saturday and Sunday it's empty. It's dead.

R: (voices talking over each other)

Abraham: Miranda I'm sorry but if you're done I just have a couple of things that I want to share with them.

M: That's fine, go ahead.

Abraham: Are you done?

M: Yup this is just final thoughts

Abraham: With regards to those final thoughts, how many of you, and I know that you guys are busy; not just you or yourselves but member of your community, know about opportunities to engage this city, to engage my office, to engage some of the other organizations and sit on boards and begin to make changes to the very things you want to see. How many of you are aware of that? Because what you're saying is the honest to god truth and by the way two independent people seeing the same thing will arrive at the same conclusion. In other words, the conclusion that you are arriving at, or have arrived at, is some of the things that I have seen. And the numbers bare it. Forget about the swiping, the numbers do bare it. In terms of those 6 areas, family entertainment, food, and a number of other things that are siphoning off money from this market. But it's one thing to describe it, and its something totally different to do something about it. And the way you do something about it, is to have members of the minority community in leadership or otherwise become engaged in public office become engaged in volunteer organizations and let people hear you. Speak with the power of a speaker and let them hear what you're trying to say. It's important to do that.

M: Alright. Is that everything? Thank you everybody so much. We got some really good opinions and hopefully we can make this a reality.

Abraham: Tell your friends about it. Tell your networks about it. If you need more information about this you all know where my office is downtown.