**9.1 Optimize for Equity**

**7.2 Provide Effective Community Communications**

**Total points requested for action: 10**

**Municipality: Middletown**

7.4.1 Complete the Sustainable CT Equity Toolkit

1) Who lives and works in your community?

2) How did you connect with each other?

3) What emerged from your dialogue?

4) What was the result of your collaboration?

5) How will you refine, revisit, and improve?

Short narrative:

The Sustainability Team decided that it was incredibly important to apply an equity toolkit to this action because it directly involves the issue of accessibility. We also wanted to apply the toolkit for the reason that “community communications” – specifically the notion of a unified local events calendar and of municipal social media policy – has been receiving much attention lately among city officials, volunteers, and community members. We view the actions taken to complete 7.2 as first steps, as part of a much larger and longer-term effort aimed at developing a stronger sense of community in Middletown and at improving and uniting existing communications platforms.

We primarily used the equity toolkit to facilitate the planning portion of the “Community Communications Public Forum,” which was held at our local library on August 1, 2019. The event planners included a small group of Sustainability Team member volunteers. The organizers wanted to ensure that the event was made known and accessible to all relevant communications stakeholders, which are *all community members* as well as various city officials and staff. We believed that in order to create a strategy plan that accurately reflected the desires of the community with regard to communications platforms, the public forum should be hosted and conducted in a way that was inclusive. Thus, we decided that we would host the forum in the evening, when most workdays are over, and on a date and time that did not conflict with other important community events.

In order to ensure that all municipality members were aware of the event, a city staff person sent out an email invitation to the city-wide listserv. We also reached out to different communications platforms for help advertising the event. We created a Facebook event to advertise the event to younger generations, for example. Finally, we posted dozens of promotional flyers around the city – particularly in the North End and in coffee shops, community centers, or libraries visited by a large number of residents.

Unfortunately, although event turnout was good, there was not much representation from community members who were not already within the “local government network.” We decided to acknowledge this fact early in the discussion and use it as a specific example of whybetter communications channels need to be identified, developed, and/or created. Ironically, this attendance issue ending up serving as a great learning experience for many city officials who should be made aware of communications-related issues in Middletown.

All public forum attendees were (or appeared to be) invigorated by the group discussion and look forward to putting our City of Middletown Community Communications Improvement Strategy to use! The Sustainability Team 7.2 leaders plan to continue conscious consideration of the equity-related aspects of the action moving forward indefinitely. For example, greater efforts will be made to publicize future public forums on the topic (e.g., personal outreach and invitations, marketing the event further in advance, advertising the event on *all* local events calendars).