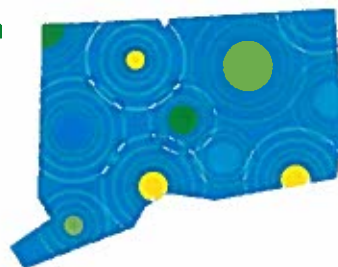


Sustainable CT

Local Actions. Statewide Impact.



Sustainable CT Equity Toolkit

Equity Toolkit

Title(s) of Sustainable CT Action(s): [Engaging the community in installation and use of a rain garden.](#)

Municipality: Town of Greenwich

Action Planning

Complete this portion of the toolkit *before you begin your action.*

Step 1. Set Goals

1. What does your Sustainability Team define as the three most important equitable community outcomes related to the action (include possible community indicators that measure these outcomes)?

- [Involve volunteers of all backgrounds and areas \(Aquarion Water Co., PTA representatives, students, town's departments, neighbors, and Pollinator Pathway program members\).](#)
- Educational experience for all students.
- [Enjoyment of the rain garden for the entire community who uses the school for walking and recreation outside of the school operational hours.](#)

Step 2. Analyze Data

2a. Define diversity within your community: what are the demographics of the target groups for the action or those living, working, or socializing in the area(s) impacted by the action?

☒ Race

☒ Ethnicity

☒ Age

☒ Gender

☒ Physical Disability

☐ Retired/Working

☐ Vehicle/Commuting Needs

☐ Shift Worker

☒ Dependents/Not

☐ Homeowner/Renter

☐ Income Level

☐ Other

2b. Which geographic areas (including neighborhoods) in your municipality may be impacted by the action? Mianus which is a section of Greenwich located along Mianus River (southeastern section above I-95). Racial makeup at North Mianus School is: White (61%), Hispanic (16.8%), Asian (16.6%).

2c. What additional data would be helpful in analyzing the action and its impacts on equity and how can you obtain it?

It would be helpful to analyze the population dynamics which visits the school outside of the school operational hours. This information could be obtained by interviewing the regular visitors. The racial markup of students at school and diversity represented by the group involved in project installation and maintenance. Student statistics can be obtained from the school records. The involved party will be evaluated during the process of rain garden installation and maintenance.

Step 3. Determine the Benefit/Burden(s)

3a. How are your residents and businesses obtaining services related to this action now? What are the root causes or factors of current inequities or barriers related to this action?

The proposed rain garden will alleviate flooding problem in the vicinity of the existing school playground. The planned storm water detention measure will keep the playground operational year around. The access to this recreational area is very important to the local community, especially to the families of low income who may not be able to afford any other recreational and physical development activities for their children.

The proposed rain garden would also serve a couple of other purposes such as storm water renovation and student education. The runoff collected in this depression will derive from the existing walkway, a portion of the parking, a playground area, and a grassed steep slope. The educational component is presumably the most important part of this project. This rain garden will provide an excellent model for all students to observe the storm water circulation process and revile the connections between the soil and vegetative cover working tighter to improve water quality.

Students will design and prepare an informational sign which would describe the function of the rain garden. Once labeled, the area will become an outdoor classroom for soil, plant, and storm water education. It would allow students to better understand the concept of watershed (gathering of storm water runoff from the land), help identify sources of pollution, explore bio-filtration mechanism, understand the importance of native plants supporting pollinators and storm water infiltration/evaporation process.

In addition, students can learn about pollinators (birds, bees, and butterflies) by observing them visiting the area. This small basin, would provide an excellent model for grasping the concept of water budget and provide an understanding of water circulation. Most of these educational elements are included in the fourth grade curriculum.

3b. How will you engage those most impacted? Who is collecting and contributing feedback? Have you created accessible opportunities for these groups to engage? Public engagement should prioritize opportunities to collaborate and co-create.

This project would have the highest value to those students and visitors who may not have an access to gardens full of flowering plants. This garden due to the chosen set of native plants would attract a wide spectrum of pollinators, which are not commonly found in manicured and highly ornamental surroundings in greenwich. The informative sign for the garden will provide educational information about its function. Creation of this signage would be a joint effort of students of all background, teachers, and parents working together. Rain garden watering and weeding will encourage group coordination and collaboration between students, teachers, and their parents. The rain garden will be located along the paved pathway, which is handicap accessible. The participation feedback will be obtained by a review of the calendar used for the periodic site maintenance and watering.

3c. What did those engaged tell you about the potential benefits, burdens, and/or community priorities related to this action? What results and outcomes would they like to see? Did they identify ways to lessen any potential unintended consequences and/or to broaden any potential positive impacts?

The rain garden met huge support from school PTA, school principle, parents and students. The project was initiated by the Aquarian Water Company who contacted one of the Conservation Commission Staff asking for volunteering opportunities. Rain garden was not only a good fit with the company's mission, but also it was needed for the school. Aquarion staff planned to use this project as a team building opportunity which would involve employee of Bridgeport and Greenwich office working together. The project was ambitious and physically challenging, especially for older members of the group.

Action Implementation

Complete this portion of the toolkit *while you are performing your action.*

Step 4. Engage, Advance Opportunity, & Minimize Harm

4a. Given what you have learned, what steps will you take to address any remaining barriers, impacts, or unintended consequences of this action on equity (include immediate and long-term impacts)?

This project turned to be more challenging than expected. Hot summer day and full sun exposure was one of the main constrains for some members of the group. The leading individual decided to assign breaks to those who may need them the most. Stronger and more fit physically individuals provided support and helped others. The work took longer than expected and it was not finished by this group. Two days later a group of additional volunteers planted the area and finished the project. The new volunteers consisted not only of PTA representatives, but also a couple of individuals who were drafted from the playground area. They all worked together well. At the end, the rain garden was watered with help of local students watching the planting

activities from the playground. At the end, the group of engaged individuals was much larger than planned and included a very diverse crowd. It is expected, the involvement would increase in the future in the areas of maintenance and education.

<https://www.greenwichtime.com/local/article/New-school-plantings-will-serve-students-13175519.php>

4b. How will you include and benefit from diverse representation in implementing the action?

Diverse group brings diverse experience. In both groups of participants there were gardeners, property managers, landscapers, and teachers. They all learned from each other. Among planting and excavation skills, spatial planning, management, and social skills were equally important to provide this exceptional experience of working together and getting the job done. Even small hands of students holding the watering hose and helping to bring trays with plants from a car were an important component of the project implementation.



Aquarion Water Company team.

Action Evaluation

Complete this portion of the toolkit *after your action is complete*.

Step 5. Evaluate and Educate

5a. How will you document, evaluate, and report progress to increase equity and access to services as you implement this action?

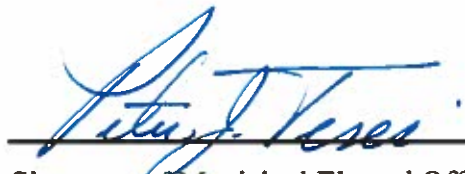
To monitor the use and access to the rain garden a survey will be provided for the school requesting the list of educational programs conducted at the site and any other involvements of this area. Custodian will be asked to monitor the playground and report on improvement to the drainage patterns and storm water collection.

5b. How will you continue to partner and deepen relationships with impacted segments of your community to make sure your action works for all in the long-term?

The Conservation Commission staff will organize a program for the upcoming Earth Day on pollinators and demonstrate how to build a house for native mason bees. After school activities program, which is heavily utilized by students from low income families will be engaged in rain garden maintenance and occasional educational activities.

5c. What challenges did you encounter while completing the "Optimize for Equity" action, and how might you learn from them for future applications?

Learning and exploring are perfect activates for students of all backgrounds. It put them at the same level of interaction and bring them all together and encourage them to freely exchange their opinions and observations. Working on rain garden excavation was a hard work which required support and collaboration of all involved. At the end, work well done brought a strong sense of team accomplishment to all participants.



Signature of Municipal Elected Official



Printed Name



Title



Date