Summary Report

City Manager's Listening Session
Topic: Social Equity
Tuesday, January 29, 2019 | 6:00pm – 8:00pm
Mt. Zion Fellowship Center

On Tuesday, January 29, 2019, the City Manager held a community listening session to discuss *Social Equity* in the City of Oberlin. This was the third of several listening sessions to be held, covering various topics. Approximately 35 individuals attended the January 29th session, including residents, City Councilmembers, City staff, representatives from non-profit organizations, and City board/commission members. Participants were encouraged to network with each other, and with City staff and non-profit organizations from 6:00pm-6:20pm.

The City Manager once again explained that the purpose of the listening sessions are to better understand what is important to the community. To facilitate the discussion, three questions were posed to the group:

- How do you define social equity?
- How does the City do well in the area of social equity?
- How can the City improve in the area of social equity?

Participants were to respond to the questions individually from 6:20pm-6:40pm and then discuss the responses in small groups from 6:40pm-7:00pm. From 7:00pm-8:00pm, a large group discussion ensued, responding to the questions posed above. The following are key points gathered from responses to each question:

How do you define social equity?

Social equity involves equal treatment in access to services and resources within the community, including housing, City services, education, employment, and public health, regardless of race, gender identity, class, educational attainment, income, etc. This also entails the perception of fair treatment within the community and the feeling of having been treated fairly by community members. Social equity also involves creating the feeling of being valued members of the community and creating a sense of safety within the community. This also includes providing people with the tools needed to have like experiences as well as working to remove any barriers that may impede access to these experiences and putting systems in place to protect this access.

How does the City do well in the area of social equity?

The City shows an interest in and actively seeks public opinion on issues affecting the community and residents have access to City Councilmembers, the City Manager and other City staff. The City provides excellent services and resources to the community as a whole, including, but not limited to responsive police and fire departments, inclusive and affordable recreation programming, and the Caring Fund for utility assistance. The City also promotes social equity through its support of community organizations that provide resources to the community, including the Hot Meals program and various programs through Oberlin Community Services. The City also has positive interaction and collaboration with Oberlin College, Oberlin City Schools and various community organizations within the City.

How can the City improve in the area of social equity?

The City can improve access to affordable housing and public transportation, as well as improve its code enforcement efforts within the City. The City can also improve its environmental sustainability efforts by ensuring that they are more inclusive of all facets of the community. The City's communication and education efforts can also be improved upon, including reaching a broader audience and allowing for the empowerment of residents through education so that they know where to go to share ideas or express concerns. The City can also work to improve town gown efforts with Oberlin College.

Other specific suggestions include City Council being more responsive to those who speak at Council meetings, City Council discussing issues at Council meetings rather than behind closed doors, improving the water quality within the City, evaluating the taxation structure, and addressing the zoning of park lands.