

Climate Equity Principles

UpstreamPgh acknowledges the systems of advantage that cause underserved communities to be disproportionately affected by pollution and climate change, resulting in public health problems, disconnection from nature, and degraded natural environments. This is environmental injustice; as climate change escalates, this injustice will be compounded. We recognize that as environmental stewards working in diverse urban neighborhoods, we must uphold certain social justice principles and practices when collaborating with communities to address these inequities.

We strive to accomplish this through five core climate equity principles:

Combating Institutional and Structural Racism

We believe all people deserve equal access to resources and opportunities. Environmental injustice cannot be addressed without combatting the systems of oppression that are perpetuated at each level of society. This means assessing our own privileges, recognizing our city's history of discrimination, segregation, and inequality, calling out racist and unjust practices when we see them, and listening to and advocating for the needs of residents in the communities that we serve.

Promoting Accessibility and Inclusion

We honor the uniqueness in all people. As such, our aim is to create an inclusive and accessible space within our community. We will ensure that our projects and programming are welcoming and engaging to all regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental/physical ability.

Illustrating Environmental Inequality

We understand the problems caused by industrial legacy and spatial inequality. Cities are designed so that pollution, illegal waste disposal, brownfields, poor air quality, and flooding have historically and disproportionately affected Black and low-income communities due to decades of institutional and structural racism. Climate change is highlighting and exacerbating these inequities. We are committed to using our privilege and resources to shine a light on environmental inequality through thoughtful and intentional community engagement.

Organizing Grassroots

We will continue our advocacy for climate equity. Unequal power structures within government and community organizations can perpetuate environmental injustices. Our work will apply best practices of our partners and predecessors to further grassroots organizing efforts. This includes social actions, advocacy for equitable policies, building community partnerships, and creating accountability for ourselves, other organizations, and our local, state and federal governments.

Modeling Ethical Practices

We strive to ethically serve community needs. Our staff includes environmentalists, activists, educators, landscape architects, horticulturalists, urban planners, and social workers. Our diverse backgrounds allow us to maintain honesty, integrity, competence, and justice in carrying out our projects. We are open to continued education, both professionally and in the community, that will enhance our ability to uphold and model best practices for environmental justice work.