



SCHUYLKILL RIVER GREENWAYS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Justice, Fairness, Opportunity, Equity, Community and Safety. These are values we all share and hope for ourselves, our loved ones and our communities. Racial biases, stereotypes and discrimination practices prevent some people from accessing these treasured human rights.

The tragic death of George Floyd has resulted in a global outcry for racial justice and the demand for reform in generational systems which discriminate and create barriers for People of Color. People around the world, including the very communities Schuylkill River Greenways (SRG) serves, are expressing their sorrow, anger and pain.

SRG's mission is to connect residents, visitors and communities to the Schuylkill River and the Schuylkill River Trail by serving as a catalyst for civic engagement and economic development in order to foster stewardship of the watershed and its heritage. Civic engagement is the action taken to identify and address issues of public concern. SRG wants the communities we serve to know we hear their public concern about racial inequality, and we are here to be a part of the solution. We also understand true economic development won't happen until we address the obstacles faced by People of Color and their communities.

Increasing stewardship of the river, trail, and the region's natural resources is our ultimate vision as an organization. Yet it's a challenge for most people to care deeply about stewardship of these local resources when members of their community are suffering from injustice. Although some may perceive these injustices as nonexistent, these concerns are very real. Until we help resolve these inequalities, we will never reach our goal of diverse and massive stewardship.

As a State and National Heritage Area, SRG is a lived-in landscape filled with stories about the region's history, culture and natural environment. By trying to celebrate the national significance of the region, we sometimes overlook the blood, sweat and tears this country was built on. Racial injustice and discrimination is not a pleasant topic but it is a part of our history and present reality. We need to discuss racial inequality so we can move toward a better, more united future.

Our Next Steps

Dialogue is the first step toward changes of diversity, equity and inclusion. Schuylkill River Greenways is taking this step forward. We want the communities we serve to know we're here to listen, learn and understand. The core values written in our strategic plan matter now more than ever.

- **Leadership** – “We strive to be a gracious, thoughtful and strategic leader.” SRG strives to be an organization that is trustworthy and one with courage to be a catalyst for positive change.
- **Collaboration** – “We work with our partners with a collaborative, respectful and inclusive spirit.” SRG understands the community is an important partner of our mission. We will work with others toward the goal of true equity and inclusion.

- **Excellence, Integrity & Accountability** – “We uphold a commitment to excellence and integrity in all aspects of our work and take personal accountability for our actions and results.” We take accountability for lacking in diversity, equity and inclusion practices but commit ourselves to work on this for the future.
- **Diversity** – “We conduct ourselves in a manner that fosters a community that is open and welcoming to diverse people, ideas and perspectives.” We understand that to truly foster such a community then we must have conversations about race and reform our own practices to better serve the region.
- **Active & Healthy Living** – “We promote a safe, healthy and sustainable environment where our residents and guests can flourish personally, physically and socially as active, whole beings.” We cannot expect people to flourish until we address the embedded environments of discrimination and inequality people are currently facing.

One of the goals listed in our strategic plan is for Schuylkill River Greenways to improve as an organization. To achieve this goal, we must evaluate our Board, staff, volunteer organization and our practices. We will work on broadening the diversity in representation of these groups, and incorporating equity into the practices which we use to guide our organization. Schuylkill River Greenways is creating a Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee to do just that. As we build this committee, we welcome feedback from the communities we serve. Our education staff regularly participates in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion trainings and we are committed to delivering high quality environmental education while also removing barriers to outdoor spaces communities face because of racial disparities.

Sincerely,
Schuylkill River Greenways Staff and Board