

Sunday September 22 2024

SWIMMABLE CITIES

Media Release: Organisations in 49 cities and 21 countries unite behind the #RightToSwim as part of growing alliance

As communities around the Planet gather to celebrate World Rivers Day, the Swimmable Cities alliance welcomes a new round of Signatories to its Charter - a set of common principles have been published to empower decision-makers, actors and grassroots activists in the international urban swimming movement.

Swimmable Cities and its community members are taking the opportunity to raise awareness about - Principle 1. The Right to Swim

Safe, healthy and swimmable waterways should be accessible to all people.

While during the Olympics the City of Paris inspiringly demonstrated the potential to clean up urban waterways, many cities and communities do not have the possibility. In fact, they may be years or decades off achieving this.

But with 2030 goals like 30 Flagship cities a capacity building program for 300 Next Gen cities and 3000+ Signatories, Swimmable Cities is primed to support this wave of action.

Our alliance is now made up of organisations across 49 cities and communities, across 21 countries:

AUSTRALIA (Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney), AUSTRIA (Vienna, Zwerndorf), BELGIUM (Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent), BRAZIL (Rio de Janeiro), CANADA (Toronto), CHILE (Patagonia), CHINA (Beijing), DENMARK (Copenhagen), FINLAND (Helsinki, Lohja), FRANCE (Lille, Marseille, Metz, Paris), GERMANY (Berlin, Dresden, Munich), HUNGARY (Budapest), IRELAND (Cork), ITALY (Rome), NETHERLANDS (Amsterdam, Arnhem, Rotterdam), SLOVAKIA (Bratislava), SOUTH AFRICA (Johannesburg), SOUTH KOREA (Seoul), SWITZERLAND (Basel), UK (Brighton, Bromsgrove, Liverpool, London, Newcastle upon Tyne, Norwich, Plymouth, Oxford, Swansea), USA (Annapolis, Baltimore, Cambridge, Chicago, Houston, New York, Portland, Washington DC)

This includes the following Municipalities: City of Rotterdam (Netherlands), City of Yarra (Melbourne, AUS), Alsergrund District (Vienna, AUT) and City of Annapolis (MD, USA)

Swimmable Cities is now working with the City of Paris and other key stakeholders to organise a Summit next northern summer. It will be a 2-day international meeting of experts, actors, activists and decision-makers from cities around the world, working across sectors to share knowledge, discuss challenges, build relationships and exchange innovative solutions.

Round 3 of Expressions of Interest for signing the Charter – See Website (& [HERE](#))

Swimmable Cities, alliance Steering Group

Matt Sykes, Regeneration Projects - Convenor

Ana Mumladze Detering, Pan European Urban Bathing Network & SVDK Vienna

Chris Romer-Lee, Studio Octopi, Thames Baths & Future Lidos

Sibylle van der Walt, Metz Ville d'Eau

Tim Edler, Flussbad Berlin e.V.

Jerome Castex, Libres Nageurs

Resources

Web - www.swimmablecities.org // Insta - [@swimmable_cities](https://www.instagram.com/swimmable_cities) // LinkedIn - [here](#)

MEDIA KIT - [here](#) // Photos - [here](#), Logos - [here](#) // [Tiles of Charter principles](#)

TOOLKIT (inc. Charter, Handbook, FAQ's etc) - [here](#)

Media Contacts

GENERAL: Matt Sykes (Alliance Convenor) - matt@regenprojects.earth , +61448 920 123

LOCATIONS

Europe - Ana Mumladze Detering - ana@svdonaukanal.org

UK - Chris Romer-Lee - chris@octopi.co.uk

North America - Gabriel Einsohn - info@pluspool.org

Asia-Pacific - Matt Sykes - matt@regenprojects.earth

Africa - Romy Stander - romy@waterforthefuture.co.za

Key terms

#SwimmableCities - Hashtag for the international urban swimming movement

Swimmable Cities Charter - A set of common principles designed to empower decision-makers, actors and grassroots activists in the international urban swimming movement.

Swimmable Cities - An alliance of diverse organisations which have signed the Charter.

Swimmable Cities 'Steering Group' - A small governance group which led the development of the Charter, and are supporting implementation of recommendations within the Swimmable Cities Handbook (a document published by Melbourne-based consultancy Regeneration Projects, Actor in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration)

Appendix: Swimmable Cities Charter (official) [July 12 2024]

The urban swimming movement is building momentum. This charter outlines 10 common principles to empower decision-makers, advocates, and community leaders in their work with local natural waterways.

The purpose of an international Swimmable Cities Charter:

- MAKING PEACE WITH NATURE:
The Charter will promote harmony, unity and collaboration amongst a global community of cities and towns dedicated to the health of humanity and 'swimmability' of urban waterways.
- PROMOTING THE RIGHTS TO LIFE:
The Charter will recognise the interdependence of the rights of Nature and human rights, with 'swimmability' positioned as a powerful catalyst for the regeneration of social, cultural, ecological and economic systems in urban communities.
- EMPOWERING PEOPLE IN PRACTICE:
The Charter will empower actors in the growing urban swimming movement, serving as a practical reference for decision-making in planning, design, construction and operation.
- SWIMMING TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:
The Charter will position the urban swimming movement (and its associated culture, activities and infrastructure) in alignment with other global strategies, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, The Paris Agreement and The Biodiversity Plan.
- INVESTING IN A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL:
The Charter will provide a tool and incentive for enabling mainstream engagement and catalysing sustainable investment in urban ecosystem restoration, including through public and private cooperation that fairly shares benefits and prevents privatisation of Nature.
- CONNECTING SOUTH, NORTH, EAST & WEST
The Charter is published with awareness that the urban swimming movement is currently dominated by Global North and Euro-centric worldviews, but its signatories hope to spark new conversations and meaningful action that creates greater diversity and representation.

Acknowledgment of Nature

We acknowledge Mother Earth and her waterways that provide lifeblood for cities and communities around the world. We acknowledge her carers and custodians, especially Indigenous Elders and their wisdom that reminds us of the interdependency of the Planet's wellbeing and our own. We dedicate ourselves to the restoration and regeneration of urban waterways through the power of swimming!

Swimmable Cities Charter:

[FOUNDATIONAL VALUES]

1. THE RIGHT TO SWIM:

Safe, healthy and swimmable waterways should be accessible to all people.

2. ONE HEALTH, MANY SWIMMERS:

Swimmable urban waterways are vital to the liveability of cities and communities, as shared civic places that promote the health of people (physically, mentally, spiritually) and the health of Mother Earth.

3. URBAN SWIMMING CULTURE:

Urban swimming culture is a unique expression of life in cities and communities, reflecting the distinct interplay of sports, recreation and tourism in each given place, as well as natural and cultural heritage.

4. WATER IS SACRED:

Urban swimming should celebrate natural waterways as living, integrated entities that nurture communities, promoting universal accessibility and peaceful coexistence inclusive of religious, cultural and gender diversity.

[ENABLING CONDITIONS]

5. REWRITING THE RULES:

Urban waterway swimming should become part of a new status quo in public access standards, challenging accepted conventions such as industrial uses and stormwater pollution, with governing authorities swiftly amending legal and regulatory frameworks to enable citizens access to its benefits.

6. DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN SWIMMING PLACES:

Urban swimming places and experiences should be planned, designed, made and operated through inclusive, integrated water management approaches; with managers ensuring universal access via community-led programs for learning how to swim in natural waterways and ecological literacy.

7. RECONNECTION & RESILIENCE:

Urban swimming places and experiences should be invested in as an innovative way to enable resilient communities to adapt and thrive in a changing global climate, environment and economy.

[SHARING BENEFITS]

8. NEW ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Urban swimming development models should balance social, cultural, ecological and economic values, creating new jobs, careers and livelihoods in regenerative professions and industries.

9. SHARING WELLBEING BENEFITS, CULTURE & KNOWLEDGE:

Urban swimming should create wellbeing benefits to local citizens, ecosystems and economies; enhanced by the respectful sharing of Indigenous, traditional and Western water culture knowledge.

[NEXT GEN]

10. STEWARDSHIP FOR TODAY, TOMORROW & FUTURE GENERATIONS:

Urban swimmers are stewards responsible for protecting the health of their local waterways, working alongside Mother Earth's closest carers, such as Indigenous peoples, rangers and waterkeepers as well as urbanists, architects, social changemakers, educators and policy-makers.

Definitions:*'Urban Swimming'*

Urban swimming involves a range of recreational and aquatic activities in natural urban waterways, from splashing, paddling and plunging to extended immersion, and swimming with a directional goal in mind.

'Swimmable Cities'

Swimmable Cities are built environments with urban waterways that have achieved and sustain 'bathing water' standards (such as those described in [European regulations](#)), supported by complementary policies, infrastructure, amenities, services and cultural practices.

'Urban waterways'

Urban waterways are natural waterways (fresh or saline) that pass through an urban area or receive stormwater runoff from an urbanised catchment. They play a key role in liveable cities by sustaining plants and animals, providing social and cultural connection, and supporting economic development through tourism and agriculture. (Adapted from [CRC for Water Sensitive Cities](#)) These may include rivers, harbours, creeks, lakes, ponds, beaches, wetlands etc.

Note:*Why 'Mother Earth'?*

Just as The Biodiversity Plan (by the United Nations) recognises the rights of Nature, and uses phrases like 'Mother Earth' according to traditions of Indigenous Peoples, we do too!

Signatories

* denotes 'Founding Signatories' (July 2024) // ^ denotes 'Round 2 Signatories' (Sept 2024)

AUSTRALIA

City of Yarra *

Regeneration Projects *

Yarra Pools *

Regen Melbourne *

Löyly Studio *

Streets Alive Yarra ^

Werribee River Association ^

Port Phillip EcoCentre ^

Sydney Water *

Parramatta River Catchment Group *

Nicole Larkin Design *

Swimmable Brisbane ^

AUSTRIA

Research area of building construction – construction & design, Institute of Architecture & Design, TU Wien *

IG Architektur, Vienna *

Schimmverein Donaukanal, Vienna *

VWMS GmbH – ColiMinder ^

MAK - Museum of Applied Arts ^

Alsergrund (9th district of Vienna) ^

BELGIUM

Outdoor Swimming Belgium vzw *

Pool Is Cool, Brussels *

Waterland vzw *

Zwembarestad, Ghent (& Amsterdam) *

OMGEVING^

BRAZIL

Association of Friends of the City Museum ^

CANADA

Swim Drink Fish, Toronto*

CHILE

La Loyka*

CHINA

College of Architecture & Landscape Architecture, Peking University, Beijing*

DENMARK

Foundation for Environmental Education - Blue Flag programme, Copenhagen *

Pond Cph, Copenhagen*

FINLAND

Bluet Floating Solutions^

Kiara Oy^

FRANCE

Les Ourcq Polaires, Paris*

Nageurs du Prado, Marseille*

Les Libres Nageurs, Marseille*

Metz Ville d'Eau, Metz*

Lille Eau Libre^

Studio Baignade Urbaine ^

GERMANY

Design Campus, Kunstgewerbemuseum, Staatliche

Kunstsammlungen, Dresden*

Flussbad Berlin e.V., Berlin*

Isarlust e.V., Munich*

Münchner Forum ^

Schürmann + Witry ^

HUNGARY

Valyo, Budapest*

IRELAND

Cork Lido CLG*

ITALY

Agenda Tevere^

NETHERLANDS

City of Rotterdam*

World Waternet, Amsterdam *

Foundation Amsterdam City Swim*

Leisurelands, Arnhem*

Swimmable Rivers, Amsterdam*

Drinkable Rivers^

Wavemakers United^

SLOVAKIA

Teritoria^

SOUTH AFRICA

Water for the Future, Johannesburg*

SOUTH KOREA

Lifesaving Society Korea^

SWITZERLAND

S AM Schweizerisches Architekturmuseum, Basel *

UK

The Outdoor Swimming Society*

Lewis Pugh, Plymouth*

Studio Octopi, London*

Thames Baths, London*

Oxford Bathing Places Coalition, Oxford*

The People's Pool, Liverpool*

Future Lidos*

River & Rowing Musuem, Henley-on-Thames*

WorkWild^

Wyld^

Arbonauts^

Sea Lanes Brighton^

Listen to Locals^

London Waterkeeper^

East London Waterworks Park^

Proteus Instruments^

Swim City Basin^

diptribe^

South Downs Leisure^

Cow Tower Dippers^

Newcastle NE1 Ltd^

USA

Waterkeeper Alliance (global), New York*

Urban Rivers, Chicago*

+Pool, New York*

Human Access Project, Portland*

Charles River Conservancy, Cambridge MA*

City of Annapolis^

URBANSWIM^

Port Laredo Coalition^

Potomac Riverkeeper Network^

Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore^

INDIVIDUAL

Dr Naina Gupta

Timeline

October 2023 – [Swimmable Cities Handbook](#) published by Regeneration Projects as an introductory tool for decision-makers, actors and activists. This includes a mix of recommendations to further the movement, including a Summit in Paris in 2025.

Feb 14 – Swimmable Cities alliance 'Steering Group' organically emerged amongst actors in UK, Europe and Australia to start implementing Handbook recommendations. Decision was made to start with a Charter of core principles to empower communities.

March 22 2024 – [World Water Day](#) – Online exchange between leaders in Melbourne and Toronto shows potential for wider inter-city collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

June 5 – [World Environment Day](#) – 20+ Movement actors united online to hear updates from Paris and share its ripple-effects, to Johannesburg and beyond.

June 22-30 – [World Bathing Day](#) – SPLASH with Paris!!! Synchronizing with the much talked about inauguration swim of Anne Hidalgo (Mayor of Paris) in the River Seine, international actors are invited to swim with politicians and journalists - to promote global peace and unity, to provide visibility for their own local urban waterways and to energise the Swimmable Cities movement

July 14 – [swimmablecities.org](#) – A new alliance website goes live, *media embargo lifts*.

July 16 – Official ONLINE Launch event – the Founding Charter signatories announced, supporting a new wave of action for the urban swimming movement.

July 26-Aug 11 – [Paris Summer Olympics](#) – Open water swimmers and triathletes to swim in the River Seine. Key dates: July 30, 31, Aug 5.

September 22 – [World Rivers Day](#) – Round 2 Charter signatories officially announced.

Apr / May 2025 – Swimmable Cities Summit, Paris – plans are now underway to run the inaugural international Summit in Paris (after the Olympics), with the purpose of supporting knowledge-sharing, relationship-building and innovation exchange between leaders in the movement.

WHY WAS THE PARIS OLYMPICS IS SO SIGNIFICANT?

The Games will mark a turning point in the relationship between major cities and their waterways. Two milestones will create a lasting memory for a whole generation!

1. Athletes swimming in the River Seine (for the first time in around 100 years) and,
2. Three natural river baths to be made on the Seine (for the wider public in 2025).

To make this possible, the City of Paris, Mayor Anne Hidalgo and the wider Paris region have mobilized over 1.4 Billion Euros, enormous administrative and technical efforts for over ten years to clean up the River Seine, restore water quality and constantly monitor it by using digital technologies. These efforts are likely to change the perception of rivers, ports, beaches, lakes and wetlands in cities all over the world - Urban waterways are more than stormwater drains or open sewage pipes! When ecologically restored and regenerated, urban waterways provide biodiversity and health (mental, physical & spiritual) for citizens in this time of global warming.