

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!