

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)

SWIMMABLE CITIES

What's the commitment of becoming a Charter signatory?

By expressing your organisation's interest in signing the first ever Swimmable Cities Charter, you're showing a commitment to working in accordance with its principles and embodied values. Your fellow peers, citizens and Nature will be your ultimate accountability.

1. Membership Requirements: What are the criteria for joining the SC alliance? Are there specific projects or improvements that we need to undertake in our city?

Being a voluntary Charter, the key requirements are that your City/organisation agrees to work and make decisions in alignment with the Charter's 10 principles and to become a positive role model for other cities and organisations in the movement. As we describe in our Expression of Interest form, your fellow peers, citizens and Nature will be your ultimate accountability.

2. Obligations and Penalties: What are the responsibilities and standards we need to adhere to during the membership process? Additionally, what penalties might we face if we fail to meet these standards?

Being a Charter signatory involves self-regulation, but no formal regulation currently takes place by our Steering Committee. When we progress further and begin exploring our 'Flagship' Swimmable Cities program (2025 >), there will be more guidelines and processes, but that will come in future stages in our development.

Note: if we did learn that harmful practices were occurring and impacting the health of a Signatory's local urban waterways and urban swimming culture, we may need to revoke their Signatory status.

3. Application Process: What are the steps and required documents for submitting a membership application?

You need to first gain internal alignment within your organisation, which may require endorsements by your Mayor, Councillors and community members in the case of municipalities, or Board Members, Senior Leaders and team members in the case of organisation. You can then fill out the [Expression of Interest](#) form. We'll be reviewing our latest applications shortly, and then preparing for a collective campaign aligned with World Rivers Day 2024, Sept 22.

Express Your Interest - [HERE](#)

What do we mean by the following phrases?

'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.

Why is 'Mother Earth' mentioned in the Charter?

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!

Who are the founding Signatories?

AUSTRALIA

City of Yarra

Sydney Water

Parramatta River Catchment
Group, Sydney

Regen Melbourne

Regeneration Projects,
Melbourne

Löyly Studio, Melbourne

Nicole Larkin Design, Sydney

Yarra Pools, Melbourne

AUSTRIA

Forschungsbereich Hochbau
– Konstruktion und Entwerfen,
Institut für Architektur und
Entwerfen, TU Wien

IG Architektur, Vienna

Schimmverein Donaukanal,
Vienna

BELGIUM

Outdoor Swimming Belgium
vzw

Pool Is Cool, Brussels

Waterland vzw

Zwembarestad, Ghent (&
Amsterdam)

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

FRANCE

Les Ourcq Polaires, Paris

Nageurs du Prado, Marseille

Les Libres Nageurs, Marseille

Metz Ville d'Eau, Metz

GERMANY

Design Campus,
Kunstgewerbemuseum,
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen,
Dresden

Flussbad Berlin e.V., Berlin

Isarlust e.V., Munich

HUNGARY

Valyo, Budapest

IRELAND

Cork Lido CLG

NETHERLANDS

City of Rotterdam

World Waternet, Amsterdam

Foundation Amsterdam City
Swim

Leisurelands, Arnhem

Swimmable Rivers,
Amsterdam

SOUTH AFRICA

Water for the Future,
Johannesburg

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

USA

Waterkeeper Alliance (global),
New York

Urban Rivers, Chicago

+Pool, New York

Human Access Project,
Portland

Charles River Conservancy,
Cambridge MA

How did we get here? An imperfect timeline

Like all movements, there are many simultaneous efforts going on in parallel, with action hubs and convergence points. There can also be shared breakthrough moments like the Paris Olympics which change the game completely!

May 2019 – [Swim City exhibition](#) run by the Swiss Architecture Museum in Basel, is regarded by many as a critical pre-COVID catalyst for the movement.

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](#) – Triathletes and marathon swimmers swim in the River Seine, creating a once in a generation moment for the urban swimming movement.

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 the Paris Olympics was 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.