



# U.N. names Milwaukee a water technology hub

By [John Schmid](#) of the Journal Sentinel

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The United Nations on Tuesday will designate Milwaukee as a U.N. Global Compact City, making it one of 13 such cities worldwide, in a move that will help the region promote its image abroad as an international hub of water technology.

The 5-year-old U.N. program obligates member cities to showcase progress on issues that involve human rights, environmentalism, health or labor standards. Milwaukee's application centers on water quality, with a pledge to tackle a catalog of projects ranging from the development of sensors to monitor water safety to pilot technologies meant to strip radium from underground aquifers.

It's now up to Milwaukee to demonstrate to the world that it can do something exemplary with the management of an increasingly scarce resource like water, said Paul James, director of the U.N. Global Compact Cities Program. James will make the announcement on Tuesday at a meeting of the Milwaukee 7 Water Council, a trade group formed to promote water-technology research and industry in southeastern Wisconsin.

Milwaukee becomes only the second such U.N. city in the United States alongside San Francisco, which champions a Business Council on Climate Change that encourages Bay area companies such as Google Inc. to adhere to low-carbon environmental practices. Milwaukee is also the second U.N. city anywhere with a focus that involves water. The other is Jamshedpur, India, where Tata Steel's giant mills are working on industrial sewage treatment projects.

Milwaukee's 17-page U.N. application includes a long list of projects meant to show the region's determination to expand its water-engineering industries. Even without U.N. aspirations, most of the projects already were in the works, either through the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee or the Water Council.

But the most immediate benefit of U.N. Global Compact membership lies in image and reputation.

"Milwaukee now has the opportunity to be recognized on a global scale," said Jeffrey Joerres, chairman and chief executive of Manpower Inc., an international employment company with headquarters in Milwaukee. "Its image will appear in places and on lists that it never appeared before."

As the next step, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will sign Milwaukee's formal acceptance, James said.

Working in Milwaukee's favor is the global crisis of water scarcity. More than 1 billion people - nearly one-fifth of the world's population - lack access to safe drinking water, according to the most recent

U.N. World Water Development Report. A 2003 U.N. report concluded: "Of all the social and natural resource crises we humans face, the water crisis is the one that lies at the heart of our survival and that of our planet earth."

The Water Council aims to boost the region's economy and refresh its economic image with a focus on a sector that economists expect to grow, as water becomes more scarce and polluted around the world.

It's drafting strategies to brand the region as a hub of water technology, while UWM is building a new freshwater research program and graduate-level School of Freshwater Science.

Projects pledged in Milwaukee's application include:

- Studying aquaculture to breed edible fish on the assumption that seafood offers cheaper animal protein than livestock.
- Doing research to reduce algae in Lake Michigan and use algae as a biofuel.
- Disinfecting storm-water runoff and desalination of winter road salt.
- Seeking new efficiencies in wastewater treatment.
- Removing radium from groundwater, advancing a pilot project that began last year in Waukesha.



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