

General Assembly Site Team Recommendation for 2021 General Assembly

A site visit for GA 2021, was conducted by Chelsea Surfus (Planning Committee Member), Jan Sneegas (Director, General Assembly and Conference Services), and Don Plante (GA Meeting Planner). We received proposals from Des Moines, Iowa, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. **The Site Team recommends the 2021 General Assembly be held in Milwaukee Wisconsin.**

Des Moines did not have enough hotels within walking distance of the convention center so fell out of contention. Pittsburgh is a very attractive site, enough so that it is a top contender for GA 2023 if they are willing to renegotiate rates (Convention Center is 33% more and hotel rates are \$10-\$30 more per night). Milwaukee is in partnership with Pittsburgh and Portland, Oregon to promote each other's cities during geographical rotations. Financial incentives are given for groups who book in more than one of the three cities. Each city offers \$1.00 per room night each year that a group books in one of the cities. For example, if the UUA contracts with Milwaukee for 2021 and for Pittsburgh in 2023, UUA would receive \$1.00 per room night from both Milwaukee and Pittsburgh for both years resulting in a payout of approximately \$12,000 each year or \$24,000.

General Assembly was last in Milwaukee in 1990. Milwaukee's proposal provided the best package, i.e., hotels close to the convention center, and competitive rates. Room rates are critical as our delegates pay their own lodging. Milwaukee's proposal provided the best overall value for hotels and convention center.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Milwaukee is the largest city in Wisconsin and the 5th largest city in the Midwest. It is located 90 minutes north of Chicago, on the western shore of Lake Michigan. There is a 3 mile Milwaukee Riverwalk that takes you through downtown Milwaukee where it is lined with shops and restaurants. It is a city known for its neighborhoods and festivals, including the world's largest music festival, Summerfest. The average high temperature in June is 73 degrees and the average low is 59.

Travel

Milwaukee's General Mitchell International Airport is located eight miles (10 minutes) from downtown Milwaukee. Non-stop air service is provided from 40 cities and from 160 with just one stop. A cab ride costs \$25.00 - \$30.00 from the airport to downtown, while the shuttle cost is \$15.00 (per passenger). The airport is serviced by Lyft and Uber.

Convention Center

Milwaukee's Wisconsin Center is one of the most distinctive convention centers in the country. The halls are lined with \$1.2 million public art display which represents the history, geography and culture of Wisconsin. All space in the Center has complimentary basic wi-fi. The size of the center would require that some of our breakouts or ancillary meeting spaces be in the attached Hilton. The Milwaukee Convention and Visitors Bureau has arranged a \$10.00 per room night rebate with participating hotels to offset convention center rental to between \$69,000 and \$75,000.

Housing

There are abundant rooms available in the convention area (our peak is usually between 1500 and 1700). **The city is guaranteeing room rates for 2021 ranging from \$169** (Springhill Suites) **to \$189** at the Hilton Hotel, directly across the street from the convention center. Rates include Passkey fees (housing booking software) and convention center rebate.

We toured the following hotels:

- Hilton Our largest block (400 rooms).
- Hyatt (350 rooms and possible site for UUMA)
- Doubletree
- Courtyard by Marriott
- Springhill Suites
- Fairfield Inn
- Hampton Inn
- Ambassador

Accessibility

The area is relatively flat. Elevators in the convention center are small as is typical, holding two or three scooters at a time. Lifts and ramping are available for staging in the convention center.

Food

There are 150 restaurants in downtown Milwaukee of which 111 are locally owned and operated, with many within walking distance of the Center.

Racial Issues in Milwaukee

Milwaukee has struggled, and continues to struggle, with racial issues, including two shootings by police of unarmed African-Americans, Dontre Hamilton in 2014, and Sylville K. Smith in 2016 which resulted in rioting. It is a minority-majority city, with most of the white people living in the suburbs and the majority of people of color living in the city, making it a very historically segregated city. It is an economically depressed city. There are many civic organizations which attempt to influence race relations primarily through education, e.g. YWCA, the American Black Holocaust Museum. There is an active Standing Up for Racial Justice chapter and Black Lives Matter organization. The United Church of Christ is holding their General Synod this summer in Milwaukee in part to promote racial justice in the city.

UU Support

The largest congregation is First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee, with 750 members. The minister since 2016 is Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom. The next largest congregation is a suburban congregation, Brookfield West with 450 members. There are six local congregations that make up Black Lives Matter to Wisconsin Unitarian Universalists. There are two large UU congregations in close proximity to Milwaukee, Madison with 1457 members (3rd largest UU congregation after CLF and Tulsa) which is a 90 minute drive and Appleton, a two hour drive from Milwaukee, with 700 members.