



For Immediate Release
28 August 2015

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Joslyn Institute to Host Urban Thinkers Campus in November

The Joslyn Institute for Sustainable Communities has been selected by UN–HABITAT to host the Urban Thinkers Campus November 16–17 in Omaha as part of the World Urban Campaign initiative *The City We Need*. The JISC proposal is one of 30 selected worldwide, and one of only two selected from the United States.

JISC's proposal, *The City We Need: The Role and Opportunities in Urban Sustainability for Small and Mid-Size Cities*, centers on the understanding that more than 70 percent of the world's population lives outside urban areas of more than 500,000 residents. While ample attention has been paid to the expected enormous growth of the world's mega cities and global urbanization, comparatively scant attention has been focused on the enormously relevant small- to medium-sized urban centers during this period of transformative urbanization, as well as on the rural areas that are significant sources for this growth.

These non-urban areas are wellsprings from which we derive myriad resources. From Alaska's vulnerable commercial and subsistence fishing, to loss of farmland in Nebraska, underutilized farmland in Colombia, and loss of both farming and fishing habitats to pollution in China's Pearl River delta, it has become abundantly apparent that urbanization is inextricably linked to the health of rural communities and their natural resources.

With local governments leading the vanguard of climate change policy, small- to medium-sized (up to 3 million in population) cities are uniquely positioned to explore, promote and exemplify policies supporting sustainable urban-rural interconnections, such as regional food systems and integrated planning, while mitigating the effects of a changing climate.

JISC's focus will be on the role and opportunities for sustainable planning and policy for small and mid-size cities—from urban centers of fewer than 100,000 people up to 3,000,000, and focus on the rural-urban synergy and necessity of sound natural resource conservation management in a time of unprecedented growth.

The event in mid-November will be a two-day forum with a number of focus groups exploring various aspects of the overall prospectus. Through web-based conferencing with partners in Alaska, Colombia, Guangzhou, and elsewhere, the proceedings will be linked among urban thinkers and researchers and other participants in synthesizing recommendations and insights for the overall UN–Habitat III initiative.

A number of partners have been enlisted in this endeavor: CitiScope, Design Intelligence, University of Nebraska College of Architecture, UNO College of Public Affairs and Community Service, the City of Omaha, Prairie Fire newspaper, and others. JISC will utilize media throughout Colombia, the United States, and China, to build public awareness and momentum around the program and enhance the opportunities from rural networks via social media.

The conference will open at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, November 16, at The Thompson Center on the University of Nebraska–Omaha campus. Among the distinguished featured speakers will be Eugenie Birch. Birch is the Lawrence C. Nussdorf Professor of Urban Research and Education and the Chair of the Graduate Group in City and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania. She is also the Co-Director of the Penn Institute for Urban Research and Co-Chair of UN-HABITAT's World Urban Campaign.

Among topics on the two-day agenda are urban–rural interdependencies, sustainability metrics, food security, climate change mitigation and resiliency, public policy as planning, innovations in municipal finance for sustainable development, and more.

Registration, final agenda and slate of speakers will be announced in the next few weeks. Further information is available at <http://www.joslyninstitute.org/utc.html> .

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