Steward: Cities Are the Vanguard in Global Innovation

In the quest for solutions to such critical issues as global warming, population growth and migration, gender and income equality, cities are fast becoming the vanguard around the world.

The third biennial Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation recognized the important contributions cities are making to sustainable development. The Joslyn Institute's President and CEO W. Cecil Steward was one of the jurors for the award, the second time he has done so.

Given the highly centralized and/or bureaucratic nature of national governments around the world, Steward said, it is cities necessarily that are being increasingly nimble and innovative in the face of urgent challenges caused by climate change, population growth and migration and demands on resources. The projects are all scaleable, transferable and inclusive.

The consensus among the jurors at Guangzhou is that mayors, he said, are much more understanding of these issues and more ready to take them on.

Selected from more than 300 innovation projects submitted by 171 cities globally, this year's award winners are:

Songpa-gu, South Korea
Songpa Solar Nanum Power Plant
Songpa built publicly owned solar power plants that share the profits both within and outside the community. One-quarter of the profits go to poor and vulnerable groups and helps pay for energy-efficient lighting or appliances. The rest of the profits are reinvested in new or existing plants, and also to bring renewable power to developing countries such as Mongolia and Vietnam.

Qalyubeya, Egypt
(Cities of Khosoos and Khanka)
Integrated Community-based Solid Waste Management Project
As part of Greater Cairo, Qalyubeya has seen rapid urban population growth, which has brought on an increase in informal housing and greater inequality. The municipal government realized that the "Zabaleen" — informal waste pickers — were essential to manage the escalating volumes of garbage produced by the city. A team was set up to work with the Zabaleen to develop a series of efficient and ecologically aware waste-disposal companies. The Zabaleen now use more efficient motorized tricycles, which navigate the narrow streets and bring the trash to a newly constructed transfer station. The municipality, in turn, converts the waste to fuel for sale. The system

Winners of the third biennial Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation

has created employment for the 20,000 previously ostracized and impoverished Zabaleen while helping to improve the environmental condition of the city.

Copenhagen, Denmark
Climate Resilient Neighborhood
The intense impact of heavy rains in 2011 drew the attention of Copenhagen leaders to the need for focused attention on climate risk. The Copenhagen Adaptation Plan builds neighborhood resilience and improves urban life for the pilot neighborhood's 24,000 residents. With substantial citizen input, the resilience project focuses on "green" strategies to prevent flooding, such as rain gardens, tree planting and biodiversity — solutions seen as scale-able to city level and offering prospective learning for other cities.

Boston, Massachusetts, USA
Youth Lead the Change: Youth Participatory Budgeting
Boston's breakthrough effort to engage young people in actual city decision making—allocating $1 million a year in city infrastructure funds—is the first of the Guangzhou Awards to be recognized two times. The first win in 2014 focused on the uniqueness of Boston's effort to stimulate interest among youth in civic affairs and to educate future city leaders. Now an extensive network of partnerships has been created with youth-serving agencies, universities and schools. Other advances include engaging children as young as 12, as well as the homeless and youth involved in gangs or in detention centers. National and international partnerships are being forged with other cities such as Baku, Azerbaijan.

La Paz, Bolivia
The La Paz Zebras: Citizen Culture Project
In La Paz, at-risk youth are candidates for gangs. Now, some of them are paid a minimum wage to become "citizen educators" by dressing up in zebra costumes at traffic intersections. (It's a play on the term "zebra crossing" — striped areas where pedestrians cross the street.) As described by its supporters, the program's aim is also to change both driver and pedestrian behavior and to encourage both groups to obey traffic signs and rules. But the larger payoff is to give young people who might otherwise head

"Technology is only *one* of the domains that need attention. Other domains, such as environmental issues, public policy, economy, and socio-cultural issues, must interact with technology. They are interdependent. It is a mistake for us to emphasize technology over these other domains."
W. Cecil Steward
President & CEO
Joslyn Institute for
Sustainable Communities

"The important thing about a 'smart city' is that is it not about technology but people. The government needs to involve the community and society. The change is not to be done *to* people, but *with* people. Take the people with you."
George R. P. Ferguson
Former Architect and
Former Mayor
Bristol, England

"Cities are like people: we have our fingerprints, and we are different. People have already tried and learnt the good and bad aspects of urban innovation, and I'm sure the best experiences can be replicated."
Alioune Badiane
Former UN–Habitat
Regional Director

into lives of crime a reason to be on the side of the law, and to encourage others to respect rules and order—a potentially life-altering experience. The initiative's simplicity, transferability and social impact has spread to other cities in Latin America.

Manufacturing and Selecting Net Positive Materials
February's Sustainability Leadership Presentation Series program features a visionary approach to manufacturing. The program will be Thursday, February 2, 3:30 to 4:30 pm. Watch parties are planned in Omaha and Lincoln.

What if products improved your quality of life and helped ecosystems thrive? That is the vision of The Living Product Challenge, a new program created to synthesize complex manufacturing data into a unified tool for responsible material creation and selection. Living Products build soil, create habitat, nourish the human spirit and provide inspiration for personal, political and economic change.

Current manufacturing methods are creating immense human and environmental impacts. Our modern industrial economy is built on a network of global supply chains that consume vast natural resources while generating greenhouse gases and toxic emissions.

James Connelly, director of the Lliving Product Challenge in Seattle, will explore how some visionary companies are transforming this paradigm through the Living Product Challenge.

JiSC will host a watch party at NeighborWorks Lincoln, 2530 Q (in meeting room of building north of and adjacent to main house). **Click here** for a link to other watch party locations. All SLPS programs are free and open to the public.

JISC to Host Urban Thinkers Campus 2.0 in September
The World Urban Campaign this week announced the approval of the Joslyn Institute's plan to host an Urban Thinkers Campus 2.0 in September. JISC's Urban Thinkers Campus in November 2015 was seen as a definitive success, with its emphasis on sustainable development in small and mid-size cities.

JISC's planned conference will again focus on small and mid-size cities—specifically those where Big 10 university campuses are located—and how these communities can be active learning communities, collaborating with their resident universities on interdisciplinary knowledge bases, and applications strategies, for comprehensive sustainable development.

JISC's Urban Thinkers Campus is the only U.S. conference approved so far. Partners for this UTC will be the cities and universities of the Big 10, among others.

Updates as to specific dates and location for the conference in Lincoln are forthcoming as planning gets under way.