

# The Role and Need for Sustainability Planning in Small and Mid-size Cities: Exploring challenges, solutions, and the role of leadership and activism

Local governments today must lead the vanguard of sustainability and climate change policy. Small and mid-size cities are uniquely positioned to explore, promote and exemplify policies supporting sustainable urban-rural interconnections and interdependencies, such as regional food systems and integrated planning, while mitigating the effects of climate change. Both nationally and globally, there has been a persistence of an unsustainable model of urbanization, with such negative consequences as growing inequalities, heightened risks from the effects of climate change and related disasters, growing socio-cultural divides and more.

W. Cecil Steward, founder, President and CEO of the Joslyn Institute for Sustainable Communities, will address the roles and opportunities for small and mid-size cities in this era of enormous flux. This program will delve into how Nebraska's towns are uniquely suited to explore, promote and exemplify policies supporting urban-rural synergies and the necessity for sound natural resource conservation management. He will talk about contemporary growth management and resilience issues with regard to:

- Ecosystems Conflicts
- Climate Change
- Water
- Energy
- Food Security and Distribution
- In and Out Migration

Our enormously relevant small to medium-sized cities, as well as the rural areas that are significant sources for this growth, have inherently excellent resources for critical, essential partnerships. Steward will

address the importance of leadership with conservation values and how to foster that. He will also explain the importance of metrics in planning and executing sustainable development, whether the issue is creating a more vibrant city core or addressing food deserts, using Sustainometrics®.

## About the Speaker: W. Cecil Steward

W. Cecil Steward, FAIA, DPACSA, is founder, President and CEO of the Joslyn Institute for Sustainable Communities. A world expert on sustainable development and sustainable design, he is Dean Emeritus and Emeritus Professor of Architecture and Planning at the University of Nebraska College of Architecture in Lincoln. Steward, a past president of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), has served on the boards of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, the AIA and on the charter board of the Architectural Research Centers Consortium. He served on the boards of directors of the Asia/Pacific Center for Architecture, the national Design Futures Council, and the steering committee of the United Nations Center for Human Settlements Best Practices Network and its international Dubai Award for Best Practices in Sustainable Development, among others. Steward is a former member of the Board of Directors of the Downtown Lincoln Association, the Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Commission, and the Lincoln Children's Museum Board of Directors. He started the Nebraska Center for Sustainable Construction, which operates Nebraska EcoStores, a recycled building materials store in Lincoln, Nebraska. He has been a member of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission where he assisted in the writing of the first design guidelines for urban protection of the Nebraska Capitol building. His initiatives in Nebraska's two largest cities established the Green Omaha Coalition and Lincoln Green by Design, aimed at fostering sustainability policies and practices in city government. During the Obama Administration, Steward served on the national Peer Review Committee for design reviews of selected General Services

Administration projects, including buildings within the U.S. Capitol complex, and as a member of the Pennsylvania Avenue Design Charrette Team in Washington, D.C. At the international level he served as a member of the National Committee on U.S./China Relations, and the UNESCO-sponsored design charrette team for the international Memorial to West African Slave Trade, Dakar, Senegal. Since 1984, he has served as a consultant to the Peoples Republic of China in establishing accreditation and licensing for architects. He is involved in several more groups working to promote sustainable development in urban areas throughout the world.