



News from
JOSLYN INSTITUTE
for Sustainable Communities

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Joslyn Institute Initiates Sustainability Work in Several Sectors

Against a backdrop of global disruptions emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic, an increasing economic chasm between rich and poor people and nations, burgeoning incidents and extreme effects of climate change, and a heightening pulse of social unrest, the Joslyn Institute for Sustainable Communities (JISC) is working, through its proprietary sustainability metrics methodology, Sustainometrics®, toward policies and solutions that address these issues with a series of new initiatives.

Utilizing the holistic, cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural approach afforded by Sustainometrics®, JISC has recently launched several new programs: From the environmental and social effects of Arctic cruise ship tourism to the environmental and social justice effects of disasters such as flooding and pandemics, JISC is working with stakeholders and partners to both mitigate the consequences of climate change and work toward a more vibrant, vital, and sustainable future.

“As we study most of the deeply fracturing, disruptive forces occurring locally, regionally, globally today, we can see how profound shortcomings in thinking and planning have in some instances created the problems, or at the very least have contributed to them,” said W. Cecil Steward, founder and President and CEO of the Joslyn Institute. “Short-term thinking, along with a ‘silo’ kind of purview, cause or worsen these disruptions.” Sustainometrics®, he said, obviates these limitations, opening new ways of thinking in terms of vision, range, depth, and breadth, creating a better basis for planning, for long-term thinking and for shared, innovative, sustainable solutions.

Four programs and potential initiatives being launched by JISC this year include: regional food systems, waste avoidance and construction and demolition waste recycling, environmental and social justice with partner Legal Aid of Nebraska, housing insecurity and affordability with Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, and a National Science Foundation-funded deep study of the effects of cruise ships on Arctic cities and regions with partners in Alaska, Norway, Iceland, and Sweden.

The Joslyn Institute is proposing a new regional conservation center to create solutions to a number of local issues: new jobs; food insecurity; new opportunities for small farms; a fresh foods market for consumers, restaurants, institutions, and others; a commercial kitchen; technical expertise for food producers; food preparation, production and distribution facilities; a resource center for conservation-oriented entities; a center for recycling building, decorating, and construction

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materials; a training resource for deconstruction of blighted and abandoned properties; and much more. Finding and putting together a site for this facility and funding for it are in process now.

The floods of 2019 across Nebraska, followed by the widespread economic and social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic this year, have widened and deepened the gap between the poor and the wealthy, between Whites and people of color, Native Americans, and other ethnicities, and between rural and urban residents. These are issues that underpin the quotidian problems experienced by the thousands of clients Legal Aid of Nebraska works with weekly across the state. Earlier this year, the Joslyn Institute introduced Sustainometrics® to groups of Legal Aid employees, and sought their input on urgent problems they and their clients are facing in terms of achieving equal justice, including environmental and social justice. A year-long program to build on this knowledge and find new approaches and solutions to the underlying social and environmental justice issues will launch in coming weeks.

Affordable housing, resiliency planning, housing equity and security, and social and economic justice are among the issues the Joslyn Institute addressed in its recent report for the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA). In planning and funding housing and working with communities, the report underscores the importance for NIFA to take into account the basis of Sustainometrics®—the interrelated, interdependent nature of the Five Domains: Environmental, Socio-Cultural, Economic, Technological, Public Policy. Achieving sustainable communities depends upon visioning, planning, designing, executing and assessing the viability of indicators within each of those domains. JISC recommended 15 indicators related to housing in the context of innovative and vital communities, as well as leadership capacity and quality, cultural and economic context and history, and many other factors. The report is available to read online: http://joslyninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/jisc_nifa_permf_report_final_final.pdf. The study and report go a long way toward mitigating the effects of silo-thinking and short-term thinking with regard to the growing issue of housing affordability, equity, and justice, and toward creating more vibrant, sustainable communities.

Despite the pandemic's sidelining of cruise ships temporarily, there is much pressure globally to open the seas and ports again to this industry which contributes \$53 billion to the U.S. economy alone, to say nothing of the effects globally on economies, jobs, and related businesses. Nevertheless, there is much more to the cruise ship industry than economics, and the Joslyn Institute is working with scholars, experts, stakeholders, and others in Alaska, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden to study the effects of this industry on five cities: Juneau and Nome in Alaska, Akureyri in Iceland, Bergen in Norway, and Visby in Sweden. Underwritten by the National Science Foundation, the study will delve into data regarding air emissions, water discharge, waste, demographics and cultural histories of port cities, energy distribution, taxation, infrastructure support and finance, resiliency planning and mitigation, collaborative relationships, and much more. The data is being gathered and organized around a Sustainometrics® matrix. While this study is confined to Arctic cities, the final report and recommendations will be directed to port cities globally, many of which have banned cruise ships, and many which have ongoing issues and problems with environmental, social and economic effects, despite their boon to tourist economics. The four-year study is intended to recommend policies and best practices that will be scaleable and transferrable.

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