

GLOBAL SPA & WELLNESS SUMMIT

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**Keynote Speech by: Terry Stevens, PhD,
Managing Director, Stevens & Associates, UK**

“Disrupting the Urban Model”

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Disrupting the Urban Model

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MR. JARED WEINER: A radical thinker and advocate of hybrid solutions to future destination place making, Terry Stevens has advised international development agencies, governments and private sector clients on strategic tourism development in over 50 countries.

He is a frequent keynote speaker at global summit meetings and conferences, and has been instrumental in developing the wellness tourism agenda with the Global Spa & Wellness Summit. So will you all join me in welcoming Terry Stevens?

[music playing]

DR. TERRY STEVENS: Something Fine, Morocco. It could have been the Marrakesh Express, but I thought that was nicer, although the Marrakesh Express, Crosby, Stills and Nash actually wrote something which is hugely relevant to what I need you to do today, which is to kind of clear your mind. And they actually used the phrase, "Sweeping away the cobwebs of your mind." So kind of sweep away some cobwebs, and I hope be encouraged to think a little bit differently.

The reason I'm here today is due to Liz Terry, inspirational editor of Spa Business, wrote earlier this year about the need for wellness cities. And so I thought, "That's an interesting topic." And maybe in looking at wellness cities, we ought to be thinking about disrupting the urban model that exists around the world and try to find the place for wellness in urban development.

And so hopefully, in the course of the next ten minutes or so, we're going to be shaking up the city, and looking at wellness and quality of life, hopefully rising to the challenge that Liz set out in her editorial. And of course, we are in a place that's something fine, an extraordinary urban agglomeration.

We're facing a period of unprecedented global urbanization, so I'm just going to give you a few facts about that. I intend to share a few thoughts about the implications of that, and then try to challenge the current dominant logic, which I'll explain or try to explain, before hopefully provoking you to some new thoughts and actions.

So the number of city dwellers is going to double by 2050. Currently, 3.5 billion people in the world live in cities. By 2050 it's going to be 7 billion. That's where they're going to be living, immense challenges to all of us who are interested in wellness and quality of life of those city residents. Cities are a hot topic.

The WTO has just published an extraordinary report called "The Global Report on City Tourism." Download it, a great report out of a group in the Caribbean called Tourism Intelligence International on cities on the rise. So cities are becoming center stage. 96% of that doubling of the numbers who live in cities are going to be in what we, in the West, would refer to as developing countries.

Immense challenges, the emergence of new cities. And don't you just love it when the minute you finish doing a presentation, you open a book or open the internet and find something which completely distorts everything you've tried to do. And that's what happened to me, the night before last. I'd sort of had this all comfortably set out, and then I suddenly read about Stan Gale.

Stan Gale is an American entrepreneur who sells cities in boxes. It's like Lego for grownups. He'll sell you a kit for a city. It costs 20 billion pounds to buy that kit from him, and you get literally a city in a box, how to do it, how to build it, how to design it. There are currently 25 cities in the world being developed by that out of a box kit.

And then I thought I understood what wellness and wellbeing was. It's that mix of sort of happiness and quality of life, and inclusiveness, and social equity, and so on. And then I've discovered a new book called "Flourish." The Wellbeing Institute at Cambridge University has been working on a new concept of measuring wellbeing in cities, based upon the notion of how great a proportion of the population are seen to be flourishing, doing well, doing well mentally, doing well healthily, doing well financially.

They've looked at 25 European countries. Denmark is the most flourishing country at present, according to their research, where 33% of the citizens living in urban areas are defined as flourishing. In the U.K. it's less than 18% of our population, but an interesting concept, which maybe you need to look at. So the work of the Wellbeing Institute in Cambridge on flourishing, a new measure of wellbeing.

So in 2050, 2% of the earth's surface will be occupied by cities. 53% of the world's population will live in those cities. That's now, sorry. 53% live in cities now. 70% will be city dwellers by 2050. What will those cities look like? Are they going to become the outcome of this type of writing in 1880, the great cities of the earth have become loathsome centers of fornication and covetousness. The smoke of their sin rising to the heaven like the furnace of Sodom.

Well one hopes not, but 33% of our citizens currently live in slums. There's a human settlement program, run by the UN, which is looking at the way in which wellness needs to permeate and infiltrate our cities. There is the remarkable Endless Cities Project. Please read what they're doing. They've produced another set of figures about metropolitan health.

And behind all of this is the need for planning, or is there a need for planning? In 1907, Daniel Burnham, in the remarkable plan for Chicago says, "Make no little plans. Hey have no magic to stir men's blood. Make big plans." And he made a big plan for Chicago. 2013, Chicago, 414 murders, Copenhagen, 1.

So what's going on in Copenhagen that might give us some clues about future urban development, and use that as the sort of antidote to what might have been the case, in terms of what's happened in Chicago, the planned city? Copenhagen wins. This is the monocle quality of life survey, Copenhagen third, 2012; first, 2013; first, 2014. Copenhagen wins again and again.

So there's something in the way in which the city is formulated that gives us clues about quality of life, and health, and wellness and so on, we need to take cognizance of it. So can our cities become annunciations of opportunities? But opportunities for who? And this is the dominant logic model at present. It is about giving opportunities for land owners, developers, banks, and architects.

It seems that the citizens are the last people we think of. So how are we going to change that? How are we going to shift it, so we move out of the darkness, into some new way of looking at the way in which we plan our cities? Is it about Stan Gale's box, or is it about going back to the works of people like J.J. Kipps [phonetic], whose remarkable book

on the death of the American city was predicated on the basis of healthy cities for healthy people.

Cities are for people. Please look at the work of J.J. Kipps. Look at the work of the solitary soul called Ian Nairn, who wrote the most remarkable book on city planning in 1957, called "Outrage." We need to get angry again. We need to put citizens at the center of our urban planning because somewhere over the rainbow is a solution for happy cities.

This is a good starter. But maybe it's about this. Look, finding the measure of a city is as much about intangibles that light up a community as the infrastructure that keeps it going. So how are we going to create the perfect fun town? Please Google this map. It's interesting. These are little tools, little ideas about how we create that great town.

And we're now seeing the emergence of the ad hoc. The new urbanists are going back to the work of J.J. Kipps and Ian Nairn. This is now becoming center stage in our thinking. Nothing exciting ever happens, when there's a plan. We've got to allow our cities to be embracing wellness and to do it in an organic, less formulated and formulaic way.

Cities are political programs made visible. Can we put wellness center stage in those cities? Put the citizen at the heart of what we do. Let's look to Copenhagen and see how they do it. Is it about these creative, innovative installations in our cities, or is it something that's much more about serendipity?

So the next 10 to 15 years are a period of unprecedented experimentation. How are we going to tackle that in our urban planning and the creating of cities—maybe it's the curation of cities—that people not only have to live in, but want to live in. And maybe it's about doing creative things differently, allowing the disruptives—like this remarkable man, called Gordon Young—to have their day.

We've got to allow new voices to enter our world. In the case of tourism, Sendlinger [phonetic] says this, "The tourism industry needs hybrid thinkers and hybrid solutions, but this industry is not sufficiently innovative or creative enough to deliver." So start doing things differently. Start allowing different voices, as Sendlinger does, to enter our equation in creating and curating the new cities.

So what would that model citizen look like? One minute, chair. What will that model citizen look like? Well maybe it's gorilla gardeners, gracious grannies, twilight revelers, little rascals, helpful Hell's Angels. Don't ever test the cover of a book by its cover.

So look. We need to create urban areas where people want to live, thrive and have a great quality of life. We need to bend the rules without breaking them. We need to do things differently. And I'm going to point you to this piece of work, "Wellbeing in the Urban Age, by a project called the Urban Age, sponsored by Deutsche Bank, being undertaken by the London School of Economics.

Please go to that and decide where you want to hang your coat. Is it going to be hanging it on the formulas and traditional models of time planning, which sees benefits driving to property owners, and to architects, and to bankers, as opposed to hanging it on some sort of rack which puts the citizen at center stage, as does Copenhagen?

And there, in Copenhagen, has to be the emblem of what we're trying to achieve, the happy war, which is based on cities where there appears to be perfect harmony, a place where wonderful things happen. Thank you very much.

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