

CK Exclusive:

America's Greenest Cities 2012

Which municipalities are making
the greatest sustainability effort?

By Kent E. Portney

In discussions about climate change and our deteriorating environment, it's often said that cities – not international organizations, nations or states – are best positioned to put us on a more sustainable path. Indeed, American cities have already laid the groundwork for the pathway to a national green economy.

Cities are crucial to the challenges we face. Ecological and sustainable cities are places where local leaders, public officials and residents recognize the growing need to protect and improve the quality of the biophysical environment and are willing to act. Cities are increasingly looking for new ways of doing business that place city government squarely in the middle of proactive efforts to promote, guide and manage growth in order to carefully improve energy efficiency, the environment and the long-term quality of life for residents. In many cities, the idea that any development is good development is rapidly being replaced by the idea that development must respect and, when possible, benefit the environment.

The City Policies, Programs and Activities in the Rankings

Smart Growth Activities

1. Eco-industrial park development
2. Targeted or cluster economic development
3. Eco-village (urban infill housing) project or program
4. Brownfield redevelopment (project or pilot project)

Land-Use Planning Programs, Policies and Zoning

5. Zoning used to delineate environmentally sensitive growth areas
6. Comprehensive land-use plan that includes environmental issues
7. Tax incentives for environmentally friendly development (other than energy efficiency counted elsewhere)

Transportation Planning Programs and Policies

8. Operation or sponsorship of public transit (buses and/or trains)
9. Limits on downtown parking spaces
10. Car pool lanes on city streets (high occupancy vehicle or diamond lanes)
11. Alternatively fueled city vehicle (green fleet) program
12. Bicycle ridership program

Pollution Prevention, Reduction and Remediation

13. Household solid waste recycling
14. Industrial recycling
15. Hazardous waste recycling
16. Air pollution reduction program (e.g., reduction in volatile organic compounds)
17. Recycled product purchasing by city government
18. Superfund (non-brownfield) site remediation
19. Asbestos abatement program
20. Lead paint abatement program
21. Pesticide reduction program
22. Urban garden/sustainable food system or agriculture program
23. Heat island mitigation program (other than green roofs)

(continued on next page)

It hasn't been easy for them. Practically every city in the United States faces serious social and economic problems, including loss of population and associated loss of tax revenues, the loss of manufacturing jobs and industries, increasing demands to provide services for diverse groups of people, and meeting new demands for first responses in homeland security. Cities that want to build their own local green economies, even where they promise to save money over the long term, find that in the current economic environment they cannot free up the resources to make even the most modest investments in green infrastructure.

A number of cities fell slightly, but only because other cities moved ahead of them...

Still, many are stepping up. The Our Green Cities ranking for 2012, exclusive to this edition of *Corporate Knights*, shows that compared to 2011, several cities continue to make solid progress toward becoming more sustainable.

The annual ranking, first published in 2010, is based on the number of municipal policies and programs adopted and implemented by cities as they work toward saving energy, protecting and improving their biophysical environments, promoting green economic development, and enhancing their overall quality of life. Unlike other city-sustainability rankings, this ranking focuses on the effort cities are making rather than on their results, which could take years to achieve. In other words, this ranking is aspirational in nature. When cities adopt and implement new policies and programs that are designed to achieve greater sustainability, they are making an effort to take sustainability seriously.

Cities typically do not make huge programmatic changes from one year to the next, and this is especially true when their budgets are strained by declining revenue growth. Yet when we compare this year's rankings to those of last year, some cities stand out as making impressive progress. A number of cities fell slightly, but only because other cities moved ahead of them. In terms of the actual numbers of programs, the vast majority of cities remained the same.

The cities that have exhibited the most change are those that fell in the middle of the 2011 rankings or below. Three Texas cities are featured among the seven that have improved the most. Fort Worth, Dallas and El Paso have all continued to make strides, with Fort Worth now having caught up to its neighbor, Dallas, in terms of the number of programs it has adopted. By implementing five new programs,

↑ IMPROVED
16 spots

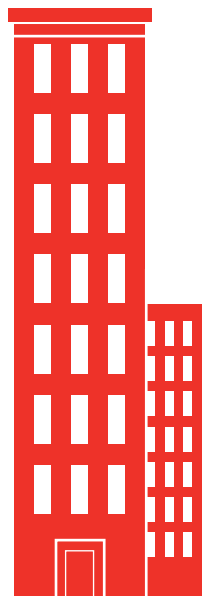
Fort Worth
is now ranked 17th, moving up from its previous position of 33.

↓ DROPPED
2 spots

Oklahoma City's ranking fell to 50 from 48.

↑ IMPROVED
11 spots

Charlotte has made so much progress that it's on the verge of joining some of the most impressive city sustainability efforts in the U.S. Now ranked 5th, up from 16th.



**Energy and Resource Conservation/
Efficiency**

- 24. Green building program
- 25. Green affordable/low income housing program
- 26. Renewable energy use by city government
- 27. Energy conservation/efficiency incentives or rebate program (other than green building program)
- 28. Alternative energy offered to consumers (solar, wind, biogas, etc.)
- 29. Water conservation program

Sustainable Indicators Project

- 30. Sustainable indicators project active in last five years
- 31. Indicators progress report in last five years
- 32. Does indicators project include “action plan” for policies/programs?

Organization/Administration/Management/Coordination/Governance

- 33. Single government agency, office or person responsible for implementing sustainability programs
- 34. Sustainability an explicit part of a citywide comprehensive or general plan
- 35. Involvement of county government or metropolitan council
- 36. Involvement of mayor or chief executive officer
- 37. Involvement of business community (e.g., chamber of commerce, sustainable business organization)
- 38. General public involvement (public hearings, visioning process, neighborhood groups or associations, etc.)

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Three Texas cities are featured among the seven that have improved the most.



Oklahoma City has experienced some organized political “pushback” on its sustainability initiatives...

including the creation of its impressive multi-agency Sustainability Task Force, and developing programs to make city operations more sustainable, Fort Worth is now ranked 17th, moving up from its previous position of 33. With ambitious new efforts on green building, energy efficiency, alternatively fueled city vehicle fleet, a bicycle ridership program, and rainwater harvesting and wastewater reuse, Fort Worth now seems to have caught up to other Texas cities in terms of how seriously it takes sustainability.

Charlotte, N.C., is also on the list of changers. Charlotte has made so much progress that it’s on the verge of joining some of the most impressive city sustainability efforts in the U.S. With new energy efficiency grant and training programs, the issuance of its most recent Environmental Review Manual 2010-2015, and the creation of a new “pedestrian overlay zoning district” to promote pedestrian-friendly building, design and development, Charlotte now has some 32 programs and policies promoting sustainability. With a new initiative to fulfil the next phase of its Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework zoning revisions,

Sustainability Policies and Programs in Cities: The Changers

City	2011 Rank	2012 Rank	Rank Improvement	2011 Number of Programs	2012 Number of Programs	Number of New Programs
Fort Worth, TX	33	17	+16	24	29	+5
Charlotte, NC	16	5	+11	29	32	+3
Dallas, TX	24	17	+7	27	29	+2
Colorado Springs, CO	54	47	+7	15	19	+4
Tulsa, OK	48	43	+5	18	20	+2
Louisville, KY	31	27	+4	25	26	+1
El Paso, TX	36	33	+3	23	25	+2

which is about to get under way and is not reflected in the 2012 rankings, Charlotte is poised to make even greater progress in the years to come.

Oklahoma City's ranking fell to 50 from 48 even though the number of its sustainability-related programs remained the same at 18. Recent events there suggest that the city's number of programs might decline as well. Oklahoma City has experienced some organized political "pushback" on its sustainability initiatives, and the city has elected not to renew its membership in one of the leading international organizations providing technical assistance, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. This may well affect the city's climate mitigation and other efforts in the future.

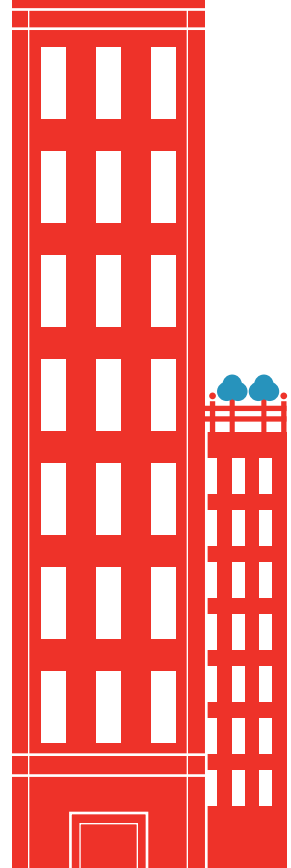
How the rankings were done:

A list of 38 specific policies and programs (shown on the previous pages) was assembled from analysis of what cities around America have been doing to try to become more sustainable. Each of the 54 largest U.S. cities, plus Pittsburgh, Penn., was assessed to see which of these programs it has adopted and implemented. Cities received one point for each adopted/implemented program. The total number of points received determines a city's final ranking. City websites and web-based materials, as well as recently conducted surveys of local officials, were used to confirm that programs were indeed being implemented. Assessment of changes in sustainability programs is especially challenging because cities rarely explicitly eliminate previously adopted programs. Instead, they may opt to de-emphasize, modify or de-fund them without any announcement. For the period between 2011 and 2012 we were unable to identify any sustainability-related program in any city that had been repealed or canceled.

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Sustainability Rankings Top 30 Green Cities in U.S.

Rank	City	Score
1	Portland, OR	35
1	San Francisco, CA	35
1	Seattle, WA	35
4	Denver, CO	33
5	Albuquerque, NM	32
5	Charlotte, NC	32
5	Oakland, CA	32
8	Chicago, IL	31
8	Columbus, OH	31
8	Minneapolis, MN	31
8	Philadelphia, PA	31
8	Phoenix, AZ	31
8	Sacramento, CA	31
14	New York City, NY	30
14	San Diego, CA	30
14	San Jose, CA	30
17	Austin, TX	29
17	Dallas, TX	29
17	Fort Worth, TX	29
17	Nashville-Davidson, NC	29
17	Tucson, AZ	29
17	Washington, D.C.	29
23	Boston, MA	28
23	Los Angeles, CA	28
23	Kansas City, MO	28
26	Indianapolis, IN	27
27	Fresno, CA	26
27	Miami, FL	26
27	Las Vegas, NV	26
27	Louisville Metro, KY	26





What if Cities Could Save the World?

Urban density is the key to our future resilience

By Chris Lowry and Greg Greene

The human race passed a significant milestone in 2011: for the first time in history, more than half of the world's population is now living in cities. Worldwide, about 200,000 people are forsaking the countryside for the city every day. By 2050, roughly 70 per cent of us will be urban.

Well advanced in the United States, the "urban revolution" is sweeping the earth as we shed our rural roots and become, for all intents and purposes, an urban species. "Urbanization is the most massive and sudden shift of humanity in its history," says American writer Stewart Brand. "Environmentalists will be rewarded if they welcome it and get out in front of it."

Problem is, we have been raised in a culture of ambivalence toward the cities we live in. The great rural-urban migration that has taken place in our lifetimes is tinged with love and hate, escape and nostalgia. Traditional environmentalists, especially, regret leaving country roots behind for the alienation and gridlock of city life.

The connection to living systems that has existed throughout our rural history is disappearing from our urban consciousness. Kids think that food comes "in" from the store, and that garbage goes "out" to a dump truck. Traditionally-diverse family farms are sold to become factory farms and monocultures as the younger generations are drawn toward cities.

City folks who are sympathetic to the green movement can't help being affected by the deep distrust that environmental activists have toward cities. Amid strip malls selling toxic toys and genetically modified "frankenfoods," the nostalgia for a simpler time is seductive. It hardly seems to matter that cities stand falsely accused as the cause, rather than the context, of industrial pollution.

As a result of this ambivalence, the public discourse around sustainability focuses on brave new strategies for energy, food, transportation and carbon reduction. Insufficient attention is paid to the urban context – the way a city functions, or fails, as a complex system. There is little popular understanding about how cities work, why most of us find ourselves in them, and how urban design can help us solve these pressing issues.

As we face the specters of rising population, declining resources and the increasing risks coming from climate change, understanding cities is the most important thing we can do to build sustainability.

Why have cities thrived as population centers throughout the 6,000-year history of human civilization? Cities provide efficiencies of scale, and opportunity, which creates wealth, because everything is bundled close together. Innovators, buyers, sellers and financiers can produce and sell goods and services at competitive cost advantages. Cities are generators of culture as a function of this proximity. What urban studies theorist Richard Florida has popularized as the "creative class" has always flocked to cities, where new ideas percolate and cross-fertilize as radically diverse people interact.

In the Age of Cheap Oil, which corresponds roughly to the 20th century, we forgot that all these strengths are based on one obvious feature of cities: density. With cheap and abundant oil we built sprawling suburbs, separating where we work from where we live, shop and share. It seemed like a good idea at the time. But as we face the end of cheap oil and the costly impacts of extreme weather, it's clear that low-density urban sprawl isn't going to cut it.

The suburbanization of cities around the car is not a uniquely North Ameri-


can phenomenon. The newly minted middle classes of the global South are abandoning the traditional, densely-populated inner cores for distant subdivisions on brand new highways that promise the Good Life.

Despite massive urban migration, the average density of many cities continues to shrink as they spread out faster than new people pour in. Not only does this trend betray an ignorance of why cities work and a failure of planning, it is also exactly the wrong way to meet the challenges of an urban future. "If we want to live sustainable lives," suggests futurist Alex Steffen, "we need to make sustainable places. And in the modern world, where metropolises drive the economy and culture, that means making sustainable cities."

**We have
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As population pressures increase and resources such as cheap oil decline, the key to the future resilience of cities is density – both well designed and well managed. The right scale to design for resilience is in a mesh of urban districts that nest within regional watersheds, food sheds, transportation systems and energy sources without fouling those nests.

It is well understood, particularly in Old World cities such as London and Berlin, that density enables sustainable transportation. Well supported by clean technologies that enable collaborative consumption, such as car sharing, we can enjoy prosperity without the need for individual ownership of vehicles and other material assets. Urban infrastructure used by more people becomes cost effective to operate and to upgrade.

The new generation of young entrepreneurs, architects and urban planners in every city understand this. They will build a kind of radical density in cities over the coming century that is perhaps impossible to imagine right now. 

Portland tops on transit, Austin energy goes green

San Francisco, meanwhile, knows how to take out the trash

By Katie Howard



Austin Energy expects renewable energy to be 35 per cent of generation by 2020.

Energy: Austin, Texas

The City of Austin and its public utility, Austin Energy, are making all the right moves when it comes to renewable energy and energy conservation.

Under the utility's GreenChoice program, any of Austin Energy's four million residential customers can purchase renewable energy – a mix of wind, solar, biomass and biogas – at a fixed rate. This typically works out to a monthly premium of \$25 for customers who use roughly 1,000 kilowatt-hours a month. The voluntary program has been the most successful of its kind in the United States for nine years running. In fact, Austin Energy (tied with Portland General Electric) sold more renewable energy than any other voluntary utility-run program last year, according to the

National Renewable Energy Laboratory. Green power also runs 100 per cent of all Austin government and state buildings in the city, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

In conservation, Austin Energy received the Energy Star Sustained Excellence Award in March for helping customers become more energy efficient and lower their bills. This is the eighth consecutive year the utility has earned this recognition. Another notable initiative is the utility's Power Saver rebate program. Customers can get up to \$1,800 in rebates as well as other bonuses and interest-saving opportunities. Solar photovoltaic loans are also available to encourage installation of residential rooftop systems, of which there are more than a thousand spread across the city. And last year marked the 20th anniversary of Austin Energy Green Building, the oldest green building program in the U.S.

Austin Energy has set the goal of having renewable energy represent 35 per cent of its generation by 2020. Last fall it signed a power purchase agreement with Duke Energy to buy all the power generated from the 202-megawatt Los Vientos II wind farm, located 120 miles south of Corpus Christi and expected to be operational by the end of 2012. This past December it activated a 30-megawatt solar power plant, which is to date the largest active solar project of any public power utility in the U.S. As well, it is purchasing power from the Southern Company's 100-megawatt biomass facility when it opens later this year. The utility also has an ambitious smart grid program and has been a pioneer in its willingness to test out new energy-storage technologies.

Transportation: Portland, Oregon

Oregon's most populous city has put in place an array of transit options for its citizens. Commuters can begin by taking the WES Commuter Rail, which operates on weekdays for longer-distance travel. Once downtown they can choose from any of the city's TriMet transit options: a combination of buses, streetcars and light rail. Alternatively, there is always the nearby Zipcar car-sharing lot. To encourage walking and cycling, pedestrian bridges and bike lanes are abundant. One unique feature: a 3,300-foot aerial tram line that connects a satellite property owned by the Oregon Health and Science University, located in the densely populated South



A 3,300-foot aerial tram line connects a university campus to downtown Portland.

Waterfront district (SWF), to its main campus on Marquam Hill. SWF itself is a 38-acre neighborhood close to the city's downtown core that has set the ambitious goal of reducing vehicle miles traveled by 30 per cent by 2030.

Ten years ago Portland launched the first modern streetcar system in the country. The track spans nearly four miles and serves some 12,000 riders daily. The streetcar system is largely located in the SWF district and connects passengers to the MAX light-rail systems that move travelers in and outside of the downtown center. The city currently has plans to expand the streetcar infrastructure with a new loop system that will include 28 new stops and add six new streetcars. It estimates that the \$150-million expansion, when it becomes operational in September, will increase ridership, link more neighborhoods and reduce parking demand, traffic and pollution.

In the downtown core, people can ride whatever public transit is available for free – all day, every day. Commuters can literally just take a seat and travel throughout the metropolis without needing to fumble around for tokens, coins or transit passes. This area covers the main downtown area up to the SWF district and across the bridge to the Rose Quarter and Lloyd District. To encourage more cycling, the city is also taking bids from vendors with an eye to launching a bike-share program in early 2013. Like other cities, Portland has found that bike sharing is a simple way to bring inexpensive and environmentally sustainable transit to citizens and tourists.

Waste: San Francisco, California

Land-filling rates in the U.S. have increased by more than 60 per cent since 1960 and the majority of landfills that remain open are within five to 10 years of closing unless capacity can be expanded. Waste management has never been more important, and on that front, the City of San Francisco has earned top marks for its landfill avoidance efforts.

San Francisco was the first of the major U.S. cities to establish a three-stream sorting system (including food waste) for its municipal solid waste. In 2009, it became mandatory by law for every property owner to recycle and compost. The enabling legislation was



Trash hauler Recology is helping San Francisco reach its 100 per cent diversion goal.



San Francisco aims to eliminate all organics from landfills by end of 2012.

the first of its kind in the country, and was designed to achieve “maximum separation” with a goal of reaching 100 per cent diversion from landfills and incinerators by 2020.

City residents are given three free bins: blue, green and black. Green bins take food waste, soiled paper and plant material; blue bins are used for bottles, cans and most plastics; and black bins are designated for landfill waste. The basic monthly fee for weekly collection based on the standard-size 32-gallon black bin is \$27.55. That fee will double or triple if a resident requests a larger black bin option.

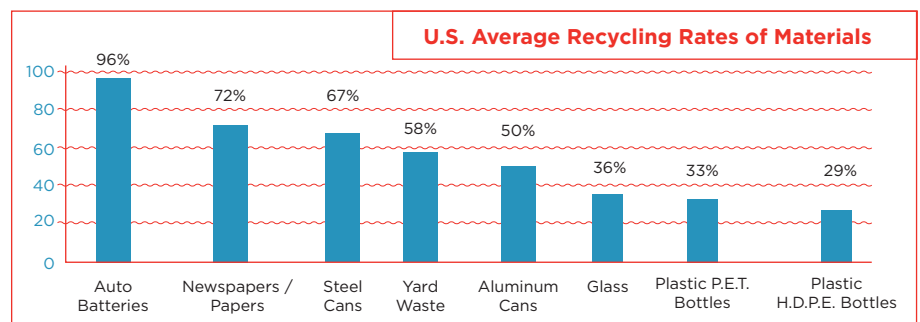
However, residents who consistently reduce their weekly garbage volume

to 20 gallons or less are eligible for a 20-gallon black mini-can at a discounted rate of \$21.21. The underlying concept is that the less recycling you do, the more you pay. Those who make the extra effort can request larger green bins and blue bins from Recology, the city's main trash hauler, at no additional cost.

Businesses, meanwhile, have a big incentive to divert. A few years ago Recology, under direction from the city, began offering a commercial recycling discount. Under this program, businesses that are aggressive with their recycling and composting can reduce their waste bills by up to 75 per cent.

San Francisco set some lofty goals for its diversion effort and has so far exceeded even its own expectations. By 2010 it had achieved a 77 per cent diversion rate, surpassing the original goal of 75 per cent. Record-low volumes of waste are ending up in landfills as a result. The city is also aiming to eliminate all compostable organics from landfills by the end of 2012.

There's no sign of slowing down for San Francisco, which has been well ahead of the curve for more than two decades and is consistently moving beyond the actions of its municipal peers across the country. 🌱



Philly Mayor Michael Nutter puts his city on a greener path



Can the two-term mayor make sustainability stick?

By Adam Aston

Michael Nutter couldn't have picked a worse time to win the keys to city hall. In late 2007, after 14 years as a city councilman, Nutter was elected as Philadelphia's 125th mayor. His victory was built in part on a campaign promise to make his town in Pennsylvania "the greenest city in America."

Yet mere months after he took office, Wall Street imploded, sparking global financial crisis and the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Philadelphia's fiscal outlook plummeted from surplus to billions in deficit, leaving Nutter facing painful choices.

Rather than retreat on his green agenda, however, Nutter looked to sustainability to help right the city's finances. In 2009, he unveiled Greenworks Philadelphia, an ambitious blueprint to help the city run more efficiently, with less pollution, and become healthier all while using less energy and money to do so. "Cities are incubators of innovation," said Nutter in an interview with *Corporate Knights*. "Congress can't figure out energy or climate policy. Breaking new ground is happening at the city level because this is where it has to."

Philadelphia's eco-planners developed the program by auditing a vast array of urban metrics – from the amount residents walked to the availability of fresh, whole food. Then, they cast the data

into the future, assessing how the city might look if "business as usual" continued. Finally, they combed through the numbers to set tough but achievable goals touching on dozen of actions. The final report organized the targets under 15 broad categories.

As an integrated vision for urban sustainability, Greenworks won plaudits for its unusually ambitious timeline. When it comes to energy or climate goals, it's not unusual for governments to set targets a decade or more into the future. But distant goals can erode political will, Nutter notes, so his team agreed to peg the bulk of the plan's targets to 2015.

Three years in, the results are showing up on Philadelphia's city streets, and on its bottom line. Some of the programs are helping the city's day-to-day operating budget. Consider recycling: The city saw rates soar to 18.9 per cent in 2011, more than triple the benchmark rate of 5.4 per cent in 2006.

The city made recycling both easier and more rewarding. Recycling days were shifted to the same day as regular garbage pickup and doubled in frequency. The city also eased the sorting hassle by expanding the types of plastic that could be recycled to numbers 1 through 7. Most U.S. cities accept just a few of those types.

The shift is turning a cost into a revenue source. Each ton of trash diverted to recycling bins not only saves about \$68 in landfill costs, it generates more than \$50 from the sale of bulk recycling material.

Other efforts promise to deliver huge, long-term capital savings. For example, Philadelphia was facing a \$10-billion tab for new sewage facilities to prevent storm water from tainting regional waterways. Instead of a costly infrastructure fix, though, the city is spending \$2 billion over 25 years on a multifaceted solution that restores the urban landscape's ability to absorb rainfall.

Additional trees, parks and urban green space, all of which act as natural sponges, top the city's to-do list. For buildings, the tricks include rain barrels and green roofs to collect and hold rainfall. The city is building out permeable road surfaces that let drops of rain soak slowly into the ground, rather than race down to storm sewers. "We recognized we could save money, not dig up half the town, and improve our parks and green spaces," says Nutter.

The mayor's green team tapped private partners to help multiply public efforts. To help cut citywide energy use, city programs aim to reinsulate homes and recoat black-tar roofs – which become oven-like hotspots in the summer – with cool, reflective white coatings. To spark homeowners' competitive impulse, the city teamed up with Dow Chemical on the "Coolest Block" contest. Residents competed to win energy-saving cool roofs, insulation and other efficiency upgrades donated by Dow to their entire block. Said the mayor: "We can't do this alone."

For Nutter, the city's green programs are delivering growing rewards, too. Philadelphia closed a multi-billion dollar budget gap as Greenworks took root. In its 2011 self-assessment, the city found that 135 of its initial 151 green goals have been completed or are underway. That quick success, Nutter says, has fired ambitions, spurring the addition of dozens more new eco-goals.

Perhaps the greatest measure of success for Nutter is re-election. He won a second term in November, assuring he'll be there to push Greenworks through its 2015 deadline, and beyond. 🍀

"We recognized we could save money, not dig up half the town, and improve our parks and green spaces."

Houston Mayor Annise Parker helps green up Texas image



Breaking Texas stereotypes
By Tyler Hamilton

Cowboy-boot wearing, steak-eating, oil and gas extracting men with big trucks and a deep distrust of gays and lesbians. Oh, and they don't believe in man-made climate change.

There's no shortage of Texas stereotypes. Some may hold a kernel of truth, but a closer inspection of the Lone Star State reveals many progressive inclinations, particularly at the municipal level.

Look no further than our Green Cities ranking for 2012. Of the 55 municipalities ranked, seven of them are in Texas. And in Houston, which is tied for 39th place with three other cities, citizens went so far as to elect the first openly gay mayor of a U.S. city.

But Mayor Annise Parker's sexual orientation is not what has defined her two and a half years in office; nor was it a barrier to her re-election in late 2011. If anything, she's known more for being Houston's green mayor than as its gay mayor.

Under Parker's watch, Houston has implemented a number of green building, vehicle and infrastructure programs that have won the city accolades. The U.S. Conference of Mayors, for example, chose Parker as one of two winners of its 2011 Climate Protection Award.

Houston has the fifth-largest number of LEED-certified buildings in the U.S., according to the Environmental

Protection Agency, which also ranks the city seventh for buildings that are Energy Star-certified. Laura Spanjian, Houston's director of sustainability, said Parker's goal is to be No. 1 in the country for both LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and Energy Star.

On top of this, an energy-incentive program for building owners and managers is helping accelerate building retrofits, and more than 80 of the city's own buildings have benefited from energy-efficiency projects. "We're able to pay off the initial investment with utility savings," explained Spanjian. "Most of the projects have a return on investment of under 10 years, so it's been a real success for us."

Houston, meanwhile, has positioned itself as the largest municipal purchaser of renewable energy in the country. It gets about a third of its supply from wind power, which is supporting one of the largest electric-vehicle programs in the country. Dozens of EV charging stations are being deployed across the city to support the initiative, and Houston has added 40 pure EVs to its own fleet.

To get more people out of cars, a bike-share pilot program was launched in the downtown core. To promote healthier eating, the city saw its first urban garden established downtown and created a farmer's market in front of city hall. Up next is a program for building gardens in underserved communities, allowing families to own plots of land that can be used to grow vegetables for sale or home use.

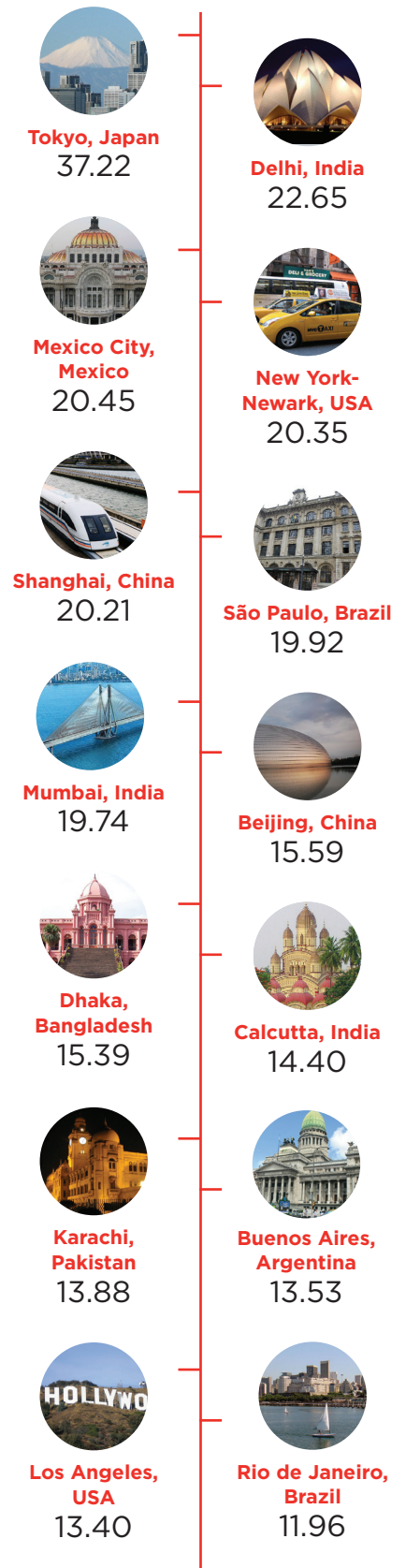
Have Parker's green initiatives faced much resistance? "Houston is considered the oil and gas capital of the world, so sometimes we butt heads against the private sector as we do this stuff," said Spanjian. "We're just trying to do as much as we can with as little time we have."

For her part, Parker believes green cities are just as much about attitude as they are about policy and infrastructure. It's not enough, she recently said at a city event, to just purchase an electric vehicle or retrofit a building. "It's more about re-thinking everything that we do."

The same applies to old stereotypes. 🐎

Top 14 "urban zones" in the world by population

(in millions, 2011)



The Top 10 green mayors of America's largest cities

George Heartwell
Grand Rapids, Michigan



Pushed green plan to accelerate increase in recycling rates, LEED certified buildings, and use of green energy.



Antonio Villaraigosa
Los Angeles, California

Backed ambitious \$13.7 billion transit plan to be rapidly developed over 10 years to ease city congestion.

Raymond Thomas Rybak Jr.
Minneapolis, Minnesota



Has advocated for ban on bottled water and program to encourage use of municipal tap water.

Michael Bloomberg
New York City, New York



Backed green building program focused on 16,000 large properties. Will lead to \$700 million in energy savings annually by 2030.



Michael Nutter
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Wide-ranging "Greenworks" plan sets goal of making city the greenest in America by 2015.



Sam Adams
Portland, Oregon

Established curbside composting, banned single-use plastic bags, and introduced free transit program for students.



Ralph Becker Jr.
Salt Lake City, Utah

Created pilot program for solar parking meters, built more bike lanes and mandated charging stations for EVs.



Rahm Emanuel
Chicago, Illinois

Brokered deal to shut down two area coal-fired plants and devised Chicago Infrastructure Trust to boost energy-efficient retrofits.

John Marks
Tallahassee, Florida

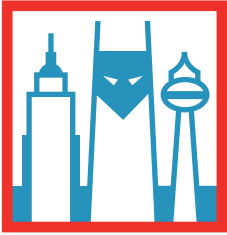


Launched campaign to educate citizens on best practices for preserving the sensitive water systems of Florida.

Annise Parker
Houston, Texas



Winner of 2011 Mayors' Climate Protection Awards for ambitious Green Building Initiative. Big booster of EVs.



Time to Create a League of Cities

Metropolitan cooperation more important than ever

By Dan Hoornweg

In 1845 Alexander Cartwright, a Brooklyn shipping clerk, drew up a formal set of rules and established the Knickerbockers Baseball Club. Before that, the game also known as rounders had players in different cities running in different directions, using different size balls on different size fields. Cities like Philadelphia and Boston all had their own rules, but in the end New York City's rules prevailed and a common game was launched.

Just as baseball needed a common playbook, cities now need a league to foster cooperation and pursue a set of common objectives. Cities count, and the world is increasingly counting on them. The world's 600 largest cities make up more than 60 per cent of the global economy. Even more striking, the 50 largest cities by population are home to more than 500 million people, have an annual GDP of more than \$9.6 trillion (larger than all of China), and generate more than 2.6 billion metric tons of CO₂ per year (more than the 100 smallest countries combined).

In the wake of global calamities, countries have come together to put in place measures to prevent recurrence – so why not cities? Like the League of Nations (post World War I), the United Nations and International Monetary Fund/World Bank (post World War II), and more recently the G20's attempts to address the global financial architecture, how about a League of Cities? As the world rapidly urbanizes, a League of Cities can play a unique and important role in focusing on the politics of cooperation and a common future.

C40, a large-city club addressing climate change, is an excellent start. So, too, are other city-member organizations such as Local Governments for Sustainability, Cities Alliance, and United Cities and Local Governments. In addition, almost every country has its own municipal association. All of these cities and their agencies can ben-

efit from the Global City Indicators Facility at the University of Toronto in Ontario – a growing repository of credible city information.

Arguably, yet another city club could be a distraction for an already overloaded municipal agenda. But an association made up of cities that deals with the future of cities is timely and could be designed to maximize impacts while having modest demands on member cities.

National governments face huge challenges in dealing with “big picture” global issues like currencies, immigration, environmental threats, and access to resources. Countries negotiate and cajole through the exertion of “soft” and “hard” power. Cities are not naïve. This power play will still take place, but a League of Cities could serve as a way to promote the power of cooperation. Cities are quickly realizing that they cannot delegate all of their issues to senior levels of government. The time is ripe for cities to create a league of their own.

The League of Cities could be an amalgam of existing city clubs. It would likely not replace these city-organization or national-international dialogues. And as anyone who's worked with multi-stakeholder associations knows, the devil's in the details. Even the question of “city or urban area?” is complicated. Urban areas, or metropolitans, are a better unit of analysis as economic ties and commuter sheds cross individual city borders. Governance and representation of metro areas is particularly challenging – the League of Cities would help to strengthen metropolitan governance.

The League of Cities could be made up of the world's 100 largest urban areas by population. This would not be a hard and fast list of 100, as boundaries and population can change annually, but a credible list could be prepared now and regularly updated. The initial list of 100 is sufficiently broad to

include areas with varied economic strength and population growth (effectively blending developed and developing country perspectives). If the list were augmented as new cities emerge, the League of Cities would stay relevant over the next few decades as cities welcome an additional 2.5 billion residents.

As a minimum task for the league, an annual conference hosted by a rotating member-city would bring together participating mayors and chief city administrators to discuss the upcoming year's activities. These could include developing common metrics and standards, encouraging equity between and within cities, enhancing globalization – i.e., freer flow of ideas, capital and people – and promoting efforts that reduce common threats, especially environmental and social. Mayors and administrators could be tasked with representing their entire metropolitan area, not just their specific city, as well as smaller cities nationally and internationally.

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Large efficiencies and improved cooperation are possible. National governments and their agencies should welcome this enhanced focus on the needs and opportunities of cities, since all national economies are based on the success of their cities. This Pax Urbana would be a potent projection of cooperative power.

Even after Alexander Cartwright defined the rules of baseball it took more than half a century before today's Major League Baseball was established and the Boston Americans defeated the Pittsburgh Pirates in the first World Series of 1903. Developing a League of Cities would not be nearly so slow an endeavor. Cities no longer have the luxury of time, as the urgency for them to work together globally has never been greater. A league of their own could be an important tool for cities to create a more sustainable future for all global citizens. 