

Curitiba: Being Green Was Not the Plan

The huge city of Curitiba is the seventh largest city in Brazil and it is also known to be the 'green capital' of the country. Aside from that, Curitiba has become the paradigm of modern urbanism not just in Brazil but all throughout the world.



It all started in 1966 when Curitiba began to respond to the rising problems of being a third-world city. The local government at that time wanted to achieve a sustainable urban development with its master plan whose main objective was to integrate urban development, public health and transportation. Originally, being an eco-city wasn't really the plan. It just so happened that the projects for sustainable living had also brought about environmental improvements.

The plan was gradually implemented and one of its very successful achievements was the bus system of the city. The system of transportation was wisely developed investing in bus lanes and high-capacity buses. It is accessible to 90% of the population and 45% of the people get to utilize the public utility buses. This has led to 22% reduction of private vehicle use.

The city realized that the reduction was not sufficient to prevent congestion in the central parts of the city. Hence, there had been road closures for cars and the buses are used as alternative. The closure was actually the idea of Architect Jaime Lener who later became the mayor of the city. His project did not only bring a dynamic economic growth but it significantly reduced carbon emissions from automobiles. As of today, Curitiba has the lowest pollution rate in Brazil.

Another eco-innovation that the city has implemented in 1991 is a program that provides incentives for low-income families who gather and recycle the city's reusable waste. The city's efficient recycling system has provided the families with extra income so they can buy bus tickets, food and other important commodities. This is also one way to persistently eradicate poverty in the city. Since the 'Garbage That's Not Garbage' campaign was implemented, 70% of waste produced by the city is being recycled.



Curitiba has literally taken the name as a 'green city'. In fact, there had already been millions of trees along the highways planted to reduce natural flooding and to serve as air cleaners. The city also established man-made forests and parks in the city center. Something very special about the parks is that parts of them used to be mines. One of them is the Tangua Park which is actually a complex of destructive quarries. Before the inauguration of Tangua Park in 1996, other re-utilized urban spaces were already established such as the Barigui Park and Tingui Park. These parks were established as part of the conservation of the Barigui River. Curitiba has a total of 28 parks with botanical gardens.

Curitiba also implemented the 52 m² green space for each individual living in the city; very far from 1 m² back in the year 1970. The city also removes property tax for landowners who maintain 70%–100% of their land as forests.

Curitiba has truly gone a long way as an eco-city. The world today recognizes Curitiba as the best example of urban planning worldwide. During the Habitat II Summit of city mayors urban planners held in Istanbul, Curitiba City was named as the 'most innovative city' when it comes to industrialization and preservation. Curitiba was also recommended by UNESCO as a model city for the reconstruction of the cities in Afghanistan. In 2007, the city reached the 3rd position in the list of 'Top 15 Green Cities' next to Reykjavik in Iceland and Portland, Oregon in the U.S.A. The city was also given the Global Sustainable Cities Award for their perseverance to consistently maintain careful urban city planning with regards to the policies and programs as well as with the implementation procedures. Those are just few of the acknowledgements that prove how successful Curitiba City came to be.



As parts of the city's future plans, the city would like to continuously educate younger generation about the importance of taking care of environment while also considering sustainability and quality of living. The government understands very well that the young generation must be aware of these environmental issues as early as now for they behold the future of the city. The goal of the city for the future is not to gain more awards but rather to persistently improve the lives of all the people in the city without putting

the environment at unnecessary risks.

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