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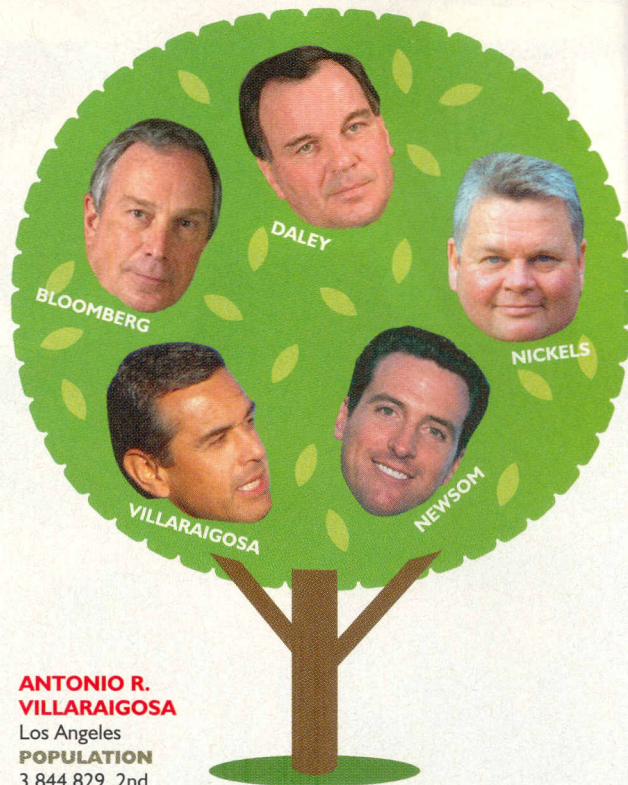
Emerald Cities?

You know we're reaching a cultural tipping point when male big-city mayors start boasting that theirs is, well, the greenest. Unsurprisingly, the metropolis that comes out on top of two recent sustainability rankings is Portland, Oregon, shepherded by Mayor Tom Potter. But that hasn't stopped Mike Bloomberg of the Big Apple, L.A.'s Antonio Villaraigosa, and a host of others from vying for the crown. Whether such claims are macho posturing or plain old civic boosterism, it's good news: Urban areas are responsible for more than three-quarters of the world's climate damage. Still, to help keep these Hizzoners honest, we've compiled a list of their environmental boasts and bona fides. —Liz Galst

MICHAEL BLOOMBERG
New York
POPULATION 8,143,197, the largest city in the nation
ON THE RECORD BOAST "We are going to seize this opportunity to...create the first environmentally sustainable 21st-century city."
TREE COUNT 1,000,000 trees to be planted by 2017 (1/8 of a tree per resident)
EMISSIONS REDUCTION TARGET 30 percent citywide below 2005 levels
BEST NEW INITIATIVE THAT MAY OR MAY NOT COME TO FRUITION Congestion pricing, which would charge drivers a fee for entering certain sections of Manhattan, thereby significantly reducing traffic-related emissions.
FUNKIEST NEW IDEA Mollusks for water filtration

RICHARD M. DALEY
Chicago
POPULATION: 2,842,518, 3rd largest city in the nation
ON THE RECORD BOAST "When I talk about making Chicago the greenest city in the nation, I'm not being idealistic. I'm being very practical."
TREE COUNT About 30,000 trees planted per year since 1989 (1/5 of a tree per resident by 2010)
EMISSIONS REDUCTION TARGET Citywide targets to be announced. Emissions related to city government operations have decreased five percent from the 1998-2001 baseline.
BEST NEW INITIATIVE THAT MAY OR MAY NOT COME TO FRUITION 2030 Challenge: All new buildings will cut emissions by 60 percent by 2010 and be carbon-neutral by 2030.
FUNKIEST NEW IDEA Green-collar job training program for ex-offenders

GREG NICKELS
Seattle
POPULATION 573,911, 23rd largest city in the nation
ON THE RECORD BOAST None—Nickels is a modest guy. But a number of media outlets have called him the nation's greenest mayor. Spokesperson John Healy says Nickels "wants every mayor to try to be the greenest mayor in America."
TREE COUNT 650,000 trees to be planted within 30 years (1 tree per resident by 2037)
EMISSIONS REDUCTION TARGET Seven percent below 1990 levels citywide by 2012
BEST NEW INITIATIVE THAT MAY OR MAY NOT COME TO FRUITION A plan to cut them even further—a whopping 80 percent by 2050.
FUNKIEST NEW IDEA The U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. At Nickels's urging, more than 510 U.S. mayors have signed on to the goals of the Kyoto protocol, promising major emissions reductions.



ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA
Los Angeles
POPULATION 3,844,829, 2nd largest in the nation
ON THE RECORD BOAST "I realize that our city has historically been more synonymous with sprawl and smog, but we're committed to making our city the greenest big city in America."
TREE COUNT 1 million to be planted within 10 years (1/4 of a tree per resident)
EMISSIONS REDUCTION TARGET 35 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 for city government operations
BEST NEW INITIATIVE THAT MAY OR MAY NOT COME TO FRUITION A plan to generate 35 percent of city power supply—L.A. has a municipally-owned utility—with renewable energy by 2020
FUNKIEST NEW IDEA Refusing to renew contracts with operators of coal-fired power plants

GAVIN NEWSOM
San Francisco
POPULATION 739,426, 14th largest city in the nation
ON THE RECORD BOAST "The City of San Francisco is dedicated to being one of the greenest cities on the planet."
TREE COUNT 20,000 trees in the next four years (1/50 of a tree per resident)
EMISSIONS REDUCTION TARGET 20 percent below 1990 levels citywide by 2012
BEST NEW INITIATIVE THAT MAY OR MAY NOT COME TO FRUITION Water turbines that generate renewable energy under the Golden Gate Bridge
FUNKIEST NEW IDEA Citywide ordinance banning non-biodegradable plastic shopping bags

DILEMMA

Q: I love to grill, but I've heard that barbecues can be bad for air quality and health. Which are better for the environment: charcoal grills or gas?

A: Who doesn't love the smoky taste of a burger grilled over charcoal? But gas grills are cleaner burning, "hands down," says Rollin Sachs, an environmental scientist who works on the air quality division for the Public Health Department in Kansas City, Kansas, the self-proclaimed barbecue capital of the world. Gas grills—usually fueled by propane or natural gas—do use a non-renewable resource, petroleum, and emit carbon dioxide, but are more efficient overall. Burning charcoal emits both carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide as well



as particulates, which can worsen heart and lung problems. Not only that, as meat sizzles over charcoal and juice drips onto the coals, the flares create compounds that have been linked to cancer, which billow up and land on your food. Plus using lighter fluid can also produce volatile organic compounds (VOCs). On hot, sunny days, these compounds contribute to smog. To top it off, briquettes are often composed of coal dust, sodium nitrate, starch, limestone, and borax. Bottom line is, if you're looking for the most eco alternative, grill with gas.