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## ■ AQ FEATURE

# How Do We Make Sustainable Cities Sustainable Policies?

by

[Hannah Thonet](#)



Former Bogotá Mayor Enrique Peñalosa rides his bike on the city's plentiful bike paths. Photo: John Vizcaino/Reuters

## Can green policies survive across municipal administrations?

*Read a sidebar on [waste and recycling](#).*

Several of the region's high-profile mayors who championed sustainability during their administrations have recently left—or will soon leave—office. This raises an important question: what will happen to the policies and programs they left behind?

Incoming mayors have their own agendas and policy preferences, and sustainability initiatives—unlike crime or education policy—are not yet sufficiently embedded in the public consciousness or established in municipal bureaucracies to guarantee their survival from one municipal administration to the next. Even mayors who understand the value of sustainability may de-emphasize existing initiatives in an effort to put their stamp on their own sustainability projects.

And yet among municipal governments, the ideas and policies associated with sustainability are slowly maturing from pet project status to status quo, as local leaders recognize they cannot wait for global or national leadership to take action on climate change.

The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, founded in 2005, is an international group of megacities committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Cities in the Americas account for 22 of the 58 affiliated municipalities, including New York, Los Angeles, Bogotá, Rio de Janeiro, and Toronto.<sup>1</sup> As more cities develop and implement policies intended to ensure sustainability, and as they share best practices, green agendas are...

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