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Curitiba

Curitiba is a city in Brazil with more than two million people. Although the city is heavily populated, you will not see many settlements, heavy traffic congestion, or widespread environmental damage. Curitiba recycles nearly two thirds of its garbage, which is one of the highest rates anywhere on the planet! These large changes are because of Curitiba’s governor and architect, Jamie Lerner. His city has very smart and unique recycling and garbage operations. They separate their garbage into two categories, organic and inorganic; which is then picked up from two different trucks. The green team is the recyclers, which includes items like cans, paper, plastics, etc. Those materials go into a plant that was built from recycled materials. The cans, papers, and plastics are sorted then bundled for processing somewhere else. Paper becomes paper again, plastics are remodeled, and old cans are turned into new cans. This whole process is a fraction of the price that would be needed to make them from raw materials. Their recycling system does not cost more than the old garbage system, however it makes the city cleaner and creates many jobs. This system creates jobs for many people who found it hard to find jobs, people such as immigrants or people with disabilities. I think this recycling and garbage operation is genius! The entire process is easy for everyone, saves money, makes the city more green, creates jobs, and is not more expensive than the old system; what else could you ask for!

To solve their issue of flooding, Lerner turned the riverbanks into parks. He planted many trees and the excess water from the rainy season was used to make a lake. Something as simple as that made flooded a thing of the past. Governor Lerner also created a library of books that people threw out and a museum of treasures that were discarded. Who says that one man’s trash isn’t another man’s treasure! Their libraries specialize in the needs of their surrounding neighborhoods. Each library is linked to others in the city through bus roots and network connectivity. He also allowed the developers of skyscrapers to build extra stories on their buildings to ensure more green space was left at the bottom of the skyscraper. This is an amazing idea because you can always build up, but we are very limited with the green space we have on the ground.

Curitiba’s integrated transport system is the key to their success. Their buses have lanes that are dedicated to buses only, which is only part of the reason why they are able to move people quickly and cheaply to and from the city. They also stop the traffic congestion, which is usually caused by commuters traveling to work in their own cars. The buses are also color coordinated, which gets people to their destinations faster. Red is an express bus with few stops. Orange buses bring people from the settlements to the express roots. Green interdistrict buses link suburbs outside the city center with the express roots. Gray buses link some suburbs directly to the city center and make many more stops than the express buses. And the x’s allow passengers to go anywhere for only one fare. I think this is a very smart idea because it saves time and because all the buses have different roots, there will be no bus congestion. Also, whereas a normal bus can carry about one thousand passengers a day, an express bus lane boots that to nearly two thousand, articulated buses increases that number to three thousand, and biarticulated with bus lanes carry up to four thousand passengers per day! Their bus system moves more than one million and half people, more than seventy percent of the population each day. Also, Curitiba’s bus system is five hundred times cheaper than a subway and cut fuel consumption by at least twenty five percent! The vast majority of Curitiba’s commuters take the bus so this was a tremendous idea by Lerner.

Curitibia’s tubular bus stops are another plus to their transport system. The passengers pay their fare in advance which doubles the number of people traveling each hour because bus drivers do not need to deal with money. There are also extra wide doors on buses, which allows people to board quickly. Faster loading and unloading means less idling and less pollution. Their bus system has cut Curitiba residents’ travel time by a third. Lerner is smart and created the bus system so that the companies are paid by the number of kilometers they cover, rather than the number of passengers they carry. This means bus companies will not be fighting over the most popular roots.

With all of this urban planning, it is no surprise that Curitiba has the lowest rate of air pollution in Brazil and a much lower per capita fuel consumption, even though the majority of the city is heavy manufacturing. Curitiba prides itself on trying to help low income families. Around 1990 the “green exchange” was started. The poor bring their sorted garbage to the garbage trucks and get food or bus tickets in return. This is such a smart idea because surplus food does not go to waste and it also encourages people to use the bus system. The “green exchange” helps around thirty thousand families and collects around three hundred tons of garbage every month. Little things like this are what separate Curitiba from other cities.

Lerner wanted to make the city a place for people. He wanted the people inhabiting the streets rather than cars. I believe Lerner is simply a genius. When he built a network of city parks and walkways to stop runoff, not only did he take care of the issue but he also provided people with pleasant views. He also comes up with ideas that makes me wonder how he even thought of that. He came up with the idea to give children paintbrushes so that they could create artwork on the street. His logic was “what truck driver would want to drive over that?” This is simple yet affective and has no cost whatsoever. In one of the videos, Curitiba used to take old buses in the city and turn them into traveling classrooms. For example, one taught sewing, another taught people how to be electricians. From what I have learned about Curitiba, I love how they always use their resources and waste very little. Lerner thinks that every city in the world can be improved in less than three years. This is very inspiring because Curitiba has easy and affective ideas that people anywhere can adapt. So far, Lerner says that eighty-three cities in the world are adopting some of Curitiba’s ideas. He also says that you must educate the children and the children will teach their parents. I also believe that if you start educating young children about going green, they will grow up with that mindset. I am very excited to visit Curitiba and to see some of the things that I read about being put to use. Seeing how a city in Brazil can be transformed is very inspiring and I in the future I hope more cities will do the same.