



Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa likes to talk green at every opportunity, but most of his environmental initiatives fall flat due to lack of follow-through (no one has ever accused him of too long of an attention span), his own political incentives, or both. He pushed a charter amendment to mandate the development of solar power for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, but voters rejected it when it became clear that it was a payoff for the Department's powerful union. He announced the Million Trees campaign for Los Angeles, but new trees have been few and far between. He hired a visionary planning director, Gail Goldberg, but has not offered her strong public support.

And now they are repaving the street outside my house.

Why is that a big environmental issue? Well, it isn't, really, except for one thing: they are repaving it with blacktop. **Really** black blacktop. Blacktop that decreases surface [albedo](#), absorbs solar radiation, and increases urban heat islands. [Just adding some chalk and lightening up the asphalt](#) could reduce surface temperatures and thereby encourage energy conservation. But that's a lot less sexy than solar panels and doesn't have any political payoff, so there's no point in doing it.

Villaraigosa's been Mayor for five years. He likes to talk a lot about environmentalism. And he can't even get the color of the asphalt changed. Aargh.