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### Retirees seek a greener Mexico

BY SANDRA DIBBLE  
FRIDAY, MARCH 25, 2011 AT 7:53 P.M.



- FAIRMONT MAYAKOBA

The Fairmont Mayakoba is a hotel complex with a planned expansion that would include condos. The complex, on the Yucatan Peninsula in eastern Mexico, has native vegetation around it, including mangrove areas.

Factors such as clean beaches, recycling programs and biodiversity are important to U.S. baby boomers who [retire in Mexico's](#) coastal areas, and developers must increasingly address their demands for environmentally sustainable communities, a National City group said in a new report.

“The Greening of U.S. Retirement Destinations in Mexico,” released this month by the [International Community](#) Foundation, urges

### Recommendations

From the “The Greening of U.S. Retirement Destinations in Mexico” report

- Establish a green certification system in Mexico
- Regulate green marketing campaigns to ensure their validity
- Develop incentive programs for energy conservation
- Require development fees to upgrade municipal infrastructure

developers and tourism planners in Mexico to consider environmental issues as they plan for future growth.

Source: International Community Foundation

“A lot of retirees are saying, ‘Look, we have few green options,’” said Richard Kiy, president of the foundation. “Retirees want natural beauty, retirees are looking for view corridors, and many of those big developers are blocking that off.”

The foundation funds projects in [Baja California](#) and other parts of Mexico. More than half of its donors live in Mexico either full time or part time.

The foundation’s findings make up the last of five reports written by Kiy and co-author Anne McEnany, a foundation adviser. The results are based on a 2009 survey that explored a range of trends related to U.S. retirees in Mexico, including health care, community involvement, real estate and demographics.

Participating in the survey were 840 U.S. retirees living in more than a dozen coastal communities across Mexico, including the Rosarito Beach-Ensenada corridor, Mazatlan, [Los Cabos](#), [Punta Mita](#), [Puerto Vallarta](#) and Cancun.

They were over 50 years of age and were either retired full-time in Mexico or living there on a part-time basis.

Though Mexico has well-established inland U.S. retiree communities such as [San Miguel de Allende](#) and Ajijic, the foundation focused on coastal communities, where less research has been done.

This month’s 39-page report found that nearly four out of five retirees “have actively considered their environmental impact on their adopted community in Mexico.”

About one-third recycle, but another half of survey participants said “they would recycle if those services were provided to them.”

Four out of five said an ocean view was the aspect of coastal life that they found most attractive. Their biggest complaint is litter on the streets and the beach, followed closely by sewage runoff, the report said.

Nearly half of respondents “identified declining environmental quality as an important factor in a future decision to leave Mexico.”

The survey’s results echo those of a 2008 poll by [AARP](#), a nonprofit for people 50 and older. AARP’s poll showed that environmental issues are important to those in that age group, and many in that age group purchase organic produce, recycle and use energy-efficient lighting and appliances.

U.S. developers are responding to their demands, the report said, with features such as motion-sensor lighting and solar water heaters.

“In terms of how the world is changing, everybody has to get greener,” said Bruce Greenberg, a Tucson-based real estate economist who specializes in the Mexican market. “If developers are sophisticated enough, they’ll realize that this is something that is being demanded.”

Yet the foundation’s study contends that developers of Mexican resort and retirement communities have largely ignored these trends, often bypassing traditional Mexican building styles that are more resource-efficient in favor of designs “that appeal to part of the market, but loses energy and water-saving benefits.”



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 **[lajollatuna](#)** Yesterday 12:12 PM

Green Mexico, ya' the color of money...crime and corruption and greed need to be addressed first...but a very well written story

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 **[Paddy Mullen](#)** Yesterday 09:30 AM

People are out of their minds if they think Mexico is safe for Americans. It's not safe for Mexicans so why would we be special?

2 people liked this.

Like

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**generica\_tj** 03/26/2011 11:18 AM

Great article Sandra. Just hope these communities can continue to work on becoming real green developments. Also, the Mex govt has to be careful with companies like Semptra Energy setting up their plant in the beaches of Mexico and destroying the local ecosystem.

Like

Reply

**ChrisMay** 03/26/2011 11:15 AM

A (not so) funny story. Driving back from Mexicali a few days ago, I was behind a fairly new car with California plates and, having had the vehicle pass me, I saw what was clearly a few well dressed and very American looking driver. Sometime down the road, the passenger side window rolls down and a large fast food bag gets tossed out the window. Bug-Gulp type cups, hamburger wrappings, napkins and all that went flying around, and into the fields off the highway. I thought to myself: "What pigs."

Later, at one of the toll booths, guess who didn't have money to pay the toll? Yup. So rather than wait in line while they figured what to do, I hailed the gatekeeper and he told me they didn't even have 15 stinking pesos for the toll. So I got out of my car, walked up to them and, before paying the toll for them, I informed him that I saw him throw his trash back several miles and that it was disgusting. Now here is your 15 pesos.

Baja not having a program to deal with the issue of recycling is something that needs to get fixed, no doubt about it. But every day I see people here going through trash and the gutters looking for plastic, aluminum, as well as other recyclables. They do it for the money, of course. But people (including Mexicans) need to change their thinking, it needs to start there. There are places here in TJ to take your stuff.

I've been to some beautiful spots in Mexico. I've also seen the trash heaps. I've seen them State-side too, so Mexico is not alone.

I think that once the government here gets it's act together on a number of more important issues dealing with corruption and public safety, they might get around to addressing the problem of trash. Right now, it's not a huge priority and as long as people stop throwing stuff out of their cars, and continue searching out the recyclables, it might be manageable until that time does come. Coca-Cola here in Mexico has an aggressive recycle program for their plastic and they have a recycle plant at their facility in TJ.

It's not the State government that is littering the place up, it's people. As the retirement communities grow, sanitation becomes more of an issue and addressing it is something they need to do, no question about it.

1 person liked this.

Like

Reply

**tobin1** 03/26/2011 09:23 PM in reply to ChrisMay

Heaven knows what a pristine highway that is.

Wrong to litter but maybe it's a small partial payback after the hundreds of Baja plated vehicles who I seen do a similar thing here in the states

2 people liked this.

Like

Reply



**ChrisMay** Yesterday 10:53 AM in reply to tobin1

Don't slag the highway, it's pretty good. If you have an accident due to a highway condition, the state pays the entire bill from repairing or replacing your vehicle to full medical for you and your passengers, including airlift if needed.

The "payback" mentality is pretty much what I expected to see. Those of "superior intelligence" should be setting an example. But that's asking too much eh?

1 person liked this.

Like Reply



**GRINGONMEX** Today 05:31 AM in reply to ChrisMay

Actually I'm thinking the "superior intelligence" thing was a gift...and if this guy has seen ONE car from Mexico litter I would be suprised.

1 person liked this.

Like Reply



**diverdave** 03/26/2011 07:29 AM

"Their biggest complaint is litter on the streets, followed closely by sewage runoff, the report says"

People want "clean" not "green". This has nothing to do with being "green", Sandra.

On top of the murders and poverty problems, people don't want to see garbage and smell sewer runoff everywhere they go. The whole "biodiversity" thing is a joke. Mexico can't even wipe themselves. Get real!

This "International Community Foundation" is nothing more than a scam to get donors in the United States to give money so they can give it to their friends in Mexico. Check out their website.

10 people liked this.

Like Reply



**billywilliams** 03/26/2011 08:19 AM in reply to diverdave

I would also add that crime is a much bigger concern than being "green."

I would much rather see a discarded candy wrapper alongside the road than another beheaded body.

3 people liked this.

Like Reply



**Felipe\_Calderoff** 03/26/2011 12:37 AM

There is no such thing as a clean beach in Mexico. Using the word "green" in the same sentence as "Mexico" should be grounds for a frontal lobotomy. The entire nation of 110 million tosses its garbage wherever it happens to be standing.

Even a pig won't cr\*p where it eats.

9 people liked this.



**GRINGONMEX** Today 05:40 AM in reply to Felipe\_Calderoff

FULLANO...Not everyone treats Mexico the way you did...In my Fracc. we have installed a sewage treatment facility that treats 100% of our sewage before it enters the ocean,and it's above U.S. standards...Things are changing down here,and just because you may have known something about life down here years ago,it's definately not the same...I would suggest you get off your butt,and check it out,not just take "pot shots" from Poway.And,having raised lots of pigs on our farm, your statement couldn't be further from the truth...

1 person liked this.



**billywilliams** Yesterday 01:02 PM in reply to Felipe\_Calderoff

And Mexico also pollutes the United States, with their belching coal-fired power plants along the border, along with dumping sewage into the ocean, which ends up on San Diego beaches.

3 people liked this.



**Ray Fontes** 03/26/2011 06:20 AM in reply to Felipe\_Calderoff

Have you been to playa del Carmen?



**Felipe\_Calderoff** 03/26/2011 10:10 AM in reply to Ray Fontes

Read this e.coli count report and then ask me again.

<http://www.cofepris.gob.mx/wor...>

4 people liked this.



**GRINGONMEX** Today 05:41 AM in reply to Felipe\_Calderoff

Mission Bay continually scores in the top of the worlds most polluted waters...

1 person liked this.



**Ray Fontes** 03/26/2011 11:33 AM in reply to Felipe\_Calderoff

Do you know what state it is in?



**j91943** 03/26/2011 02:26 PM in reply to Ray Fontes

Play del Carmen ----AKA , Playa del Caca... Muy BM.

Like Reply



**BlancaP** 03/25/2011 10:18 PM

The jury is still out on whether recycling makes economic sense. It's based more on "feel good" concepts than real analysis. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R...>

2 people liked this. Like Reply



**eastcoasttransplant** 03/25/2011 08:40 PM

Yes, it's pretty sad to see the trash along the streets and beaches in the TJ area and south along the coast. I have a lot of beefs with living in California but I will say the recycling here is the best I've ever experienced in my travels. If I move south of the border (an ever-increasing option considering the cost of living here) I'll haul my recyclables when I come up for appointments if there aren't viable options there.

2 people liked this. Like Reply



**GRINGONMEX** Today 05:43 AM in reply to eastcoasttransplant

There are plenty of places down here to recycle your stuff...The only difference is that you get paid in pesos...

1 person liked this. Like Reply



**Felipe\_Calderoff** 03/26/2011 12:35 AM in reply to eastcoasttransplant

It is illegal to bring recyclables across the border into the US. Customs won't let you.

1 person liked this. Like Reply



**Jacobo Arbenz** 03/25/2011 09:49 PM in reply to eastcoasttransplant

Yea, my mom lives in a big apartment building in Los Cabos (San Jose) and they have no recycling service...doesn't make sense to me, discarding something that can be reused.

1 person liked this. Like Reply

