

November 15, 2021

DPL Scholarship Essay: Land Development and Preservation

Growing up in the Northern Marianas, we become accustomed to the beauty that surrounds us. It isn't until you leave home that you begin to truly understand how breathtaking our islands are. The pink and orange sunsets that color Beach Road, the clean blue waters of Taga Beach, and the lush greenery of Rota work in harmony to paint a picture of life in the Mariana Islands. It is this land and ocean that has provided for our people for generations. It is vital that we care for the land and ocean the same way it has cared for our people since the moment our ancestors discovered this island paradise. As we began to modernize and embrace globalization, we have forgotten the gifts our lands have given us. To give back to the land, the ocean, and our people, we must strike a sustainable balance between land preservation and land development.

First, we must care for what is right in front of us before we can fix the damage resulting from years of neglect. Look to the trees, the flowers, the grass, and all their inhabitants. These little ecosystems serve as homes for the indigenous species found nowhere else in the world. We must protect them. As we begin new construction or carry out existing plans, be conscious of Mother Nature. Incorporate trees into the architecture, prioritize grass and flowers over slabs of unnecessary concrete. Build to adapt to nature and not to alter it. Imagine how beautiful buildings could be if pathways are lined with trees and not concrete blocks. Imagine the cool air that flows past you as warm sunshine glistens on your skin. Imagine a world tinged in green instead of gray.

Next, give new life to old, decrepit buildings. Instead of taking more from Mother Nature, reuse what we have already received. Why do we take more when we already have enough? It is selfish, pointless, and harmful for the environment. These buildings that were built before I was born and have stood empty for half my life have proven their ability to stand the test of time and typhoons. Reward their resilience by breathing new life into their barren foundation. In doing so, we can reuse what we have already taken, we can reduce the damage resulting from new construction, and we can recycle the hard work of those before us.

Once we have reused all that we have taken, we should aim for new construction to build up towards the skies. In doing so, we can begin creating a modern skyline that will soon be recognizable all over the world. By building up and creating multiple stories, you can produce more square footage that can be used for offices or homes while taking up less land. Instead of building three homes on three lots of land, why not build a three-story tall building on one plot of land. With those two remaining plots of land, you can designate one for another tall building and the other for a park. When you build up, you are left with so much more land that can be better used for recreational centers such as parks or you can choose to keep it as a wildlife sanctuary to avoid destroying more habitats than need be.

As we continue to modernize, we must avoid the same mistakes that resulted in the concrete jungles of New York and other American cities. We must ensure that every decision made by architects, city planners, and construction companies strikes a sustainable balance between land development and land preservation. By following three ideologies, I believe we will be able to achieve this. First, prioritize Mother Nature instead of concrete. Prioritize the trees, the grass, and the flowers over large slabs of unnecessary concrete. Second, make use of

the land we have already taken. Instead of allowing old buildings to remain empty and useless, redevelop them for new purposes. Finally, build up instead of out. Make the most of the limited amount of land we were given by building multiple storied buildings and use the rest of the land for parks and greenery. Once we have achieved this, only then will we be able to strike a sustainable balance between land development and land preservation.

Looking up at the modern skyline, we become accustomed to the beauty that surrounds us. It isn't until you leave home that you begin to truly understand how beautiful our world is. The pink and orange sunset that colors the sky, the clear blue waters of the beach, and the lush greenery of the forest are just a few of the things that make life in this city so special. It is this land and ocean that has provided for our people for generations. It is vital that we care for the land and ocean the same way it has cared for our people since the moment our ancestors discovered this island paradise. As we begin to modernize and embrace globalization, we have forgotten the gifts our lands have given us. To give back to the land, the ocean, and our people, we must strike a sustainable balance between land preservation and land development.

First, we must own the what is right in front of us before we can fix the damage resulting from years of neglect. I look to the trees, the flowers, the grass, and all their inhabitants. These little creatures serve as a model for the intelligent species found nowhere else in the world. We must protect them. As we begin new construction or carry out existing plans, we consider if Mother Nature incorporates them into the architecture, provides grass and flowers over slabs of concrete, or builds to adapt to nature and not to alter it. Architects have beautiful buildings could be if perhaps we build with trees and not concrete blocks. Imagine the cool air that flows past you as you walk outside. Imagine a world filled in green instead of grey.

Next, give new life to old, forgotten buildings. Instead of letting more than 100,000 square feet of space go unused, why do we take them when we already have enough? It is selfish, wasteful, and harmful for the environment. These buildings that were built before I was born and were used every day have given their ability to stand the test of time and experience. Rather than demolish by building new, let us take better care of what is doing so. We can reuse what we have already taken, we can reduce the damage resulting from new construction, and we can recycle the hard work of those before us.

Once we have proved all that we know about, we should aim for new construction to build up towards the sky. In doing so, we can begin creating a modern skyline that will soon be recognizable all over the world. By building up and creating multiple stories, you can protect more square footage that can be used for offices or homes while taking up less land. Instead of building three stories on three lots of land, why not build a three-story tall building on one lot of land. With these two remaining lots of land, you can designate one for another tall building and the other for a park. When you build up, you are left with so much more land that can be used for recreational centers such as parks or you can choose to keep it as a wildlife sanctuary to avoid developing more habitats that need be.

As we continue to modernize, we must avoid the same mistakes that resulted in the concrete jungles of New York and other American cities. We must ensure that every decision made by politicians, city planners, and construction companies strikes a sustainable balance between land development and land preservation. By following these ideologies, I believe we will be able to achieve the ideal mixture between nature and concrete. Therefore, the trees, the grass, and the flowers that give life to our city are not just scenery, they are an