

Department of Public Lands  
Scholarship Essay

What can the CNMI do to strike a sustainable balance between land preservation and land development?

Land conservancies preserve our land for future generations. It allows for a continued supply of our natural resources to continue to sustain us in the present while we prepare it for those in the future. Development here in the CNMI has been occurring rapidly, and often to the detriment of the local environment. To strike a sustainable balance between land preservation and land development, the CNMI can consider urban planning. Urban planning consists of a technical and political process that focuses on the development and design of land use and the built environment. Encompassed in this process is the use of open land, air, water, and the built environment (Smith, n.d.).

With urban planning in place, the CNMI is able to protect their ecological diversity, heritage sites and natural resources. Development will be arranged so that they do not encroach on these areas. Urban planning will ensure ecological sustainability by prohibiting development that destroys natural habitats. This planning allows for a view of the future. We want to be able to preserve the resources we have so that there is sustainability for the generations to come. An area with poor urban planning faces inadequate infrastructure, is more susceptible to climate change, and negatively impacts the quality of life for its people. With climate change already being such a pressing issue in our islands, we want to look for ways to improve and restore what has already been broken so as to provide a more promising future for our communities.

Urban planning is meant to be put in place to achieve sustainable development. In these plans, the health and well-being of our people is considered as well as the need to protect our

environment. The development that is being planned out for will be plans that respect our natural resources, human basic rights, and a fair economic development. In order for urban planning to be successful, we need to also consider the knowledge that our stakeholders and community members have in regards to the history of our lands and our waters. While we may think of development as a means for a more stable economy, it will not be beneficial without the sustainability. Who better to turn to for such valuable information than the people of the CNMI?

The goal of urban planning is for the developments to be harmonious with the basic needs of the people in the community. Engaging the community in these plans will be beneficial as the community knows what they need. We don't want to promote overpopulation which then leads to a shortage of resources, so we should not just listen to the people but to our lands, too. The ways that the lands flow and how they are already structured is important when considering development on them. We would not want to have developments crumble because we did not listen to our lands. We need to also pay attention to the resources that are already present and keep in mind the ways that we can allow for these resources to continue to flourish. After all, the goal is to sustain what we have while developing more of what we need.