

What makes up a city identity

[Design](#), [Architecture](#)



New York City is not New York without the Empire State Building. Just like Paris is not Paris without the Eiffel Tower, London for the Big Ben, Rome for the Colosseum, China for the Great Wall, Egypt for the Pyramids and so on. But what about the Philippines?

Architectural monuments cultivate the pride of our past and heritage making us unique in the world. Buildings are more than just existing structures; they are the image of a city. But what makes heritage buildings stand out is that they are a representation of an idea, culture and aspiration of certain periods in our history.

There is a huge argument between city development and heritage conservation. Some say old buildings should be replaced with modern buildings and malls, because more money can be made from these developments. However, some would argue that these valuable heritage sites should be preserved. In my opinion, architectural heritage should be preserved as much as possible. It is sad that our generation today can no longer enjoy the beautiful iconic structures that used to dot the skylines of Metro Manila. It is depressing to hear and see what Manila has become. How succession of mayors effectively contributed to the ugliness and urban blight of Manila. Local government officials demolished architectural landmarks, massacred its open spaces and forest parks and allowed the construction of malls and tall buildings sprouting like mushrooms in the city.

One of the favorite excuses in not preserving heritage buildings is the supposed cost of maintaining them, and there is more potential economic growth when we demolish and reconstruct the sites and turn it into business

center or malls. But after studying and visiting some cities and countries, I have observed that the economic possibilities while preserving heritage are limitless. When you travel to Italy, Rome, France, even South Korea and Japan, Heritage can blend well with modernism. The blending of heritage and modernism even breathes new life to identity, economy of tourism and a sense of patronage and patriotism.

There are also claims that we can just build or document them in museums and textbooks to recall people's memories about the history of the past and not to bother and waste time and effort to preserve the old structure. However, pictures and scale models can only show you an image, but it cannot evoke an emotion. You cannot feel it, you cannot relate to the hardship and sacrifice that people who built it or the suffering they felt. It does not permit you a glimpse to the rich history and memory it stood for. If we can preserve historical buildings and heritage, people can make their own discoveries and make their own perspective by observing the places on their own.

Restoration and Adaptive Re-use can cost more than demolishing a structure from the ground up, but the environmental benefits, social advantages, and economic benefits of recycling a valued heritage is more rewarding in the long run. All over the world historic districts are prime properties not only because of their central location but more for the elegant architecture that defines their character.

Embracing culture, heritage and identity will create and showcase uniqueness and memorability. It will make the place standout. The treasures

of the Philippines not only rest with its natural splendors and beauty, but the culture that had once flourished here. Our country is a melting pot of cultures but our cities have yet to fully embrace it. If you ask where the Manila or rather the Philippines stands. It's really our choice if we want to leave these buildings like this... or turn them into these...