Green Building: Singapore As The Greenest City In Asia

Singapore is a small and dense urbanized island nation and yet according to the Green City Index, it is the greenest city in Asia. In the 1980s about 36% of the nation was labelled ‘green’ which includes its flourishing environments, renewable energy and future sustainability. Today, that number stands at 47%.

Singapore lacks natural resources with half of the nation's water supply being imported from Malaysia. Even though fuel is being used as a source of energy, finding an alternative energy source is still a national priority. Most people are unaware of the concept of green buildings. As part of Singapore’s initiative to ensure that the nation remains as eco-friendly as possible, the Singapore Green Building Council (SGBC) was established.

Singapore maintains tight control over the car population, via the implementation of CEO and it has shown to be effective in reducing pollution levels. The introduction of plug-hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) has further pushed the automobile industry towards a greener era. Presently, more than 30% of Singapore’s energy is eaten by buildings. But Singapore is looking to get at least 80% of its buildings 'Green Mark' certified by 2030 and all commercial infrastructures to decrease their energy consumption.

Having said all these, there are still challenges along the way that prevent us from reaching our goals. One of the main reasons why there is difficulty achieving the green mark for 80% of all buildings is the people. Not many Singaporeans are environmentally aware or eco-conscious, so they do not see the necessity of building green buildings and such. Even when the importance of environmental sustainability is brought up, many have the ‘someone else will do it’ mentality and that ‘just one person would not make a difference’.

As Singapore’s economy progresses, its standard of living increases and so does the quality of life. Quality of life is subjective, with different people having different interpretations of things that make them happy. However we can all agree that climate change plays a big role in this. Climate change is the most imminent threat today. Not only does it have adverse effects on the natural environment, it largely impacts our society as well. The natural resources, ecosystems and even the physical infrastructures upon which we depend on will be affected by climate change.

Another reason would be consumerism. It is responsible for manmade climate change. With the increasing rate of growth in production and consumption of essential goods, the amount of waste is inevitably increasing as well. This has led to the deterioration of the environment. According to research from Norway, household consumption contributes between 60-80% of the environmental impact on the planet. As one of the biggest factors attributing to climate change, followed by population and technology, consumption seems to be the one that is least paid attention to.

In today’s world, there’s no avoiding the topic of going green. Global warming can no longer be ignored. Everyone would eventually have to get on board the green movement because at the rate we are going today, the Earth just cannot sustain itself. Our natural resources are depleting

and over time we will run out of the resources we need to survive. Therefore, we have to focus on Green Buildings. Many might think a green building is just a building that uses less energy and more recyclables. However, the actual definition of a green building is one that allows most of the environment around the site to be preserved without disrupting it.

You might think that it would be costly, and that is actually true. To get started with the green movement it might cost more, as energy saving and environmentally friendly materials would definitely be more expensive. But if you look at things in the long run, you'd be saving on energy costs. Going green also means conserving energy, and at the same time saving the planet as well. Some might think that a green building just helps to reduce carbon footprint, but there is so much more to it then that. Some of the many benefits include the conservation of natural resources and reducing waste, pollution and the degradation of the natural environment. We would be helping to protect biodiversity and our ecosystems. A green building could also potentially create new jobs as it would create a market for green products and services. We would have cleaner air and water, and this would give us a better quality of life which would in turn increase the overall productivity and health of the nation. With the countless benefits of a green building, it's essentially an investment for the future of our people and our planet.

It might sound like a feat and it definitely is, but big changes do not happen overnight. We need to take small steps together, as a nation and everyone has to do their part. Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.