GWT Practice Topic #8

Preserving the Past

In Europe it is not uncommon to find buildings in use that are 200-300 years old. There are bridges over rivers that still rest on pilings built by the ancient Romans. In Southern California, however, it is rare to find a building much over 100 years old, so we sometimes have arguments about whether a building is a historic treasure or just a broken down maintenance problem. For example, recently there was a controversy in Los Angeles about the fate of St. Vibiana's, a historic Catholic church in Little Tokyo which was severely damaged in the Northridge earthquake. Church leaders wanted to destroy the damaged building, which was unsafe, and build a more modern structure, while others thought that the old church should be repaired and preserved. Such controversies often arise when old buildings stand on ground that modern planners feel could be better used for other purposes.

In a well-organized essay, answer the following question:

In your opinion, which is more important—preserving historic buildings or encouraging modern development?

Explain your position, using reasons and examples based on your own experiences, observations, or reading.