

Novaliches locals welcome cleanup campaign

We cannot pass through the sidewalks in a wheelchair because the sidewalks in some areas are usually high and uneven, and sometimes blocked by posts

Daily Tribune (Philippines) · 6 Oct 2019 · A7

The recent clean-up campaign ordered by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) has been welcomed by residents of Novaliches, the fifth congressional district of Quezon City.

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In fact, residents in the area hope that the changes would continue after decades of seeming neglect from city hall.

Last 29 July, DILG Secretary Eduardo Año declared a 60-day deadline for local executives to clear streets, sidewalks and public parks of obstructions.

It was a direct result of the order of President Rodrigo Duterte to dismiss or suspend local government officials who fail to reclaim roads, sidewalks and other public spaces being used for private interests.

Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte took an active part in implementing the order.

In a statement issued on 29 September, Belmonte said, "Quezon City is 100 percent done in its clearing operations. For the past weeks, the QC local government, through its Task

Force 60 Days, has been persistent in its efforts to comply with the rules of the DILG in this operation.”

Meanwhile, DILG teams are now validating compliance of local government units nationwide to the President’s order issued during the recent State of the Nation Address. In the Novaliches area, first to be cleared were the sidewalks of Barangay Novaliches Proper, also known as the former Novaliches Poblacion or town proper.

Clearing of sidewalks along

Gen. Luis Street leading to Valenzuela City, Susano Road heading to Camarin and other North Caloocan City areas, Buenamar Avenue, and Quirino Highway from Barangays Sta. Monica to Novaliches Proper took place after the mayor visited Novaliches on the evening of 30 July.

The clean-up campaign was done by a joint team led by QC traffic czar lawyer Ariel Inton, former 2nd District Councilor Rannie Ludovica, Department of Public Order and Safety, Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department, and Novaliches District Center in coordination with barangays Novaliches Proper and Sta. Monica officials.

A week later, the same team began dismantling the commercial stalls of numerous vendors who had occupied for more than 10 years the old Novaliches public plaza, depriving the local residents, especially the elderly, of their only place for leisure and recreational activities.

Also cleared of obstructions were the sidewalks of Ramirez, Austria, Sarmiento, Dumalay and Geronimo streets around the Novaliches Poblacion and the Diocesan Shrine and Parish of Our Lady of Mercy, as well as those in barangays Gulod, Sta. Lucia, San Bartolome, Bagbag, Kaligayahan, San Agustin, Pasong Putik, Greater Lagro, Fairview, North Fairview, Nagkaisang Nayon and Capri.

While the sidewalks have been cleared of vendors, Olivia Peralta Mananquil, a paraplegic who uses a wheelchair, complained that she and other people with disability remain in constant danger of being hit by speeding motor vehicles while passing through Susano Road, Gen. Luis Street or Quirino Highway.

She said they are forced to travel along the street proper because their wheelchairs cannot be accommodated on the sidewalks, which have no adequate ramps.