

## QC lifts halt order on MRT-7 station

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The Quezon City government yesterday lifted its order suspending the aboveground construction of the Metro Rail Transit Line 7 (MRT-7)'s Quezon Memorial Circle station. Mayor Joy Belmonte said she lifted the cease-and-desist order, issued on Feb. 18, after contractors presented a revised design that no longer included a mall at the heritage site. Belmonte said that the new plan is a “win-win” solution as there will be no obstructed view of the pylon, a national landmark that has served as the city’s symbol for decades. “There will be no obstructions at the burial site of President Manuel Luis Quezon. Aside from that, there will be open spaces for residents because there will be no mall,” she said in Filipino in a statement.

Belmonte said the aboveground structure, which will now only be a utility room six or seven meters tall, was reduced to 426 square meters from the planned 11,000-square meter building.

The proposed floor area of the building was five times more than that indicated in the permit and clearance for the project. The design change was approved without consultation with the city government.

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) said the halt order was lifted after the city government, environment and heritage advocates approved the new design of the station, presented by San Miguel Corp. and EEI Corp.

“What this exercise shows is that when the national government, local government and the private sector work together and cooperate, all with the same obsession – all for transparency and development – things will be solved and improved swiftly,” Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade said.

SMC assured the city government and the stake holders that they “will follow the redesigned and final plan.”

The MRT-7 is a P63-billion project being undertaken by SMC that will cut travel time from Manila to Bulacan to about 34 minutes once completed.

The project is scheduled to begin its partial operations running from the North EDSA common station to Fairview by the second quarter of 2021.

The 23-kilometer railway featuring 13 stations that will connect San Jose del Monte with North Avenue in Quezon City is seen fully completed by 2022.

It will be connected with Light Rail Transit Line 1, MRT Line 3, and the Metro Manila Subway via the common station on North Avenue.