

A 'WIN-WIN' SOLUTION FOR HERITAGE AND PROGRESS

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When thinking about Quezon City, one cannot simply visualize this progressive city without the Quezon Memorial Shrine.

The Art Deco monument and shrine, located inside the Quezon Memorial Circle, not only honors the life and works of the late Philippine Commonwealth President Manuel Luis Quezon, it also serves as his final resting place and that of his late wife First Lady Aurora Aragon Quezon.

The history of Quezon City is deeply woven into the history of the country as it even once served as the nation's capital from 1948 to 1976, when Manila was renamed as the capital. At present, Quezon City's remarkable significance remains powerful as it is also prominent. The city is home to various government offices, such as the House of Representatives and several government departments. It is also the seat of many of the country's premier learning institutions such as the University of the Philippines and the Ateneo de Manila University. And with the ever increasing need to develop Metro Manila, Quezon City will always play a vital part in it.

Specifically, in terms of mobility, which is very much needed in a heavy populated area as Quezon City, heritage and history should never be compromised.

In February 2020, Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte issued a temporary cease-and-desist order which stopped the above-ground works of the MRT-7 Quezon City Memorial Circle (QCMC) station, following concerns raised by the city's historians and environmentalists on the possible adverse effects of the construction on the integrity of the Quezon Memorial Circle.

The MRT-7 project, which at present is already over 50 percent complete, aims to connect Quezon City with San Jose del Monte in Bulacan at a reduced travel time from two hours to just 34 minutes. Its developer, San Miguel Corporation (SMC), eyes the project's partial operability by 2021.

While expressing concern, Mayor Belmonte gave her full support for the government's "Build, Build, Build" program, which includes the MRT-7 project. As such, the Quezon City government, the concerned national government agencies, the project's developer and other stakeholders strove to find a "win-win" solution for the issue.

Indeed, this current administration has been marked by its swift and efficient action.

In just a week after its issuance, the Quezon City government has lifted the cease-and-desist order it had earlier issued. This, after consideration of a "win-win" solution forged by the Department of Transportation, the project's proponents and the various stakeholders.

A new design for the MRT-7's QCMC station presented by the SMC and EEI Corporation was approved by the Quezon City government and other stakeholders, including environmentalists, representatives from the National Housing Authority, engineers, and residents.

From the initial design of 11,000-square meters above ground, the new design will place the station at 426-square meters (sqm) above ground, with a height of only six to seven meters. Mayor Belmonte specifically pointed out that the city government and residents are happy with the outcome that not only preserved the Quezon Memorial Shrine and the Quezon Memorial Circle, but also assured of an efficient mass transportation mode.

This was seconded by Transportation Secretary Arthur P. Tugade, who added that a "win-win" solution is proof that with collaboration between the national government, local government and private sector, contentious issues are solved swiftly.

The Transportation chief also praised Mayor Belmonte for her patriotic wisdom and for her understanding of the issues.

He also commended SMC for supporting the position and concerns of the local government.

The promise of a comfortable life for Filipinos not only means the assurance of a safe, modern and convenient public transportation system, but also of preserving the country's rich heritage and history for future generations.

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