

QUEZON CITY: UPWARDS IN THE NORTH

By JOYCE REYES-AGUILA

A myriad of factors work in Quezon City's favor in terms of economic activity and conduciveness to it. The city lies geographically front and center — with key metropolitan and provincial destinations readily accessible from it. Indeed, last year, Quezon City ranked first in the Department of Trade and Industry's "competitive index list" of cities and municipalities — becoming enshrined as a hall of famer for topping the list for four consecutive years. This recognition extends to QC's leadership in infrastructure and government efficiency; it figured third in economic dynamism and fourth in resiliency.



QC Mayor Joy Belmonte-Alimurong: "We are developing new programs to improve the business climate in our city by tapping innovation hubs and growth hubs."

'My goal is to keep QC residents... within our city,' Mayor Joy Belmonte-Alimurong said, as she drives to further promote the city as a preferred business destination.

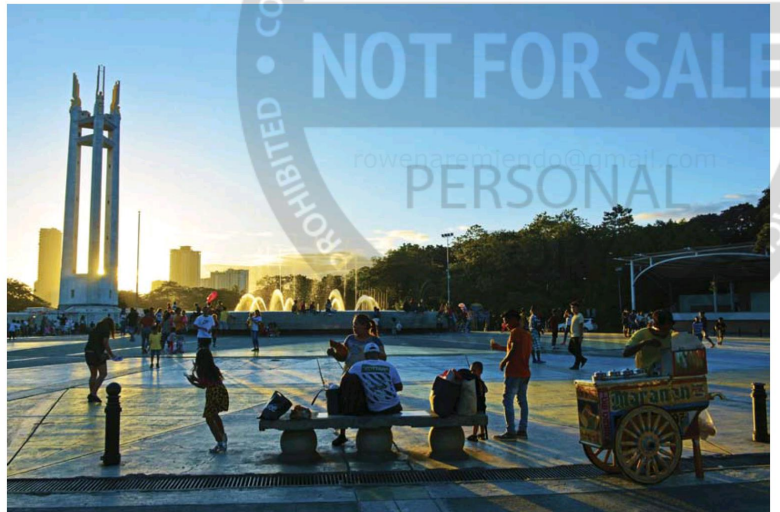
When Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte-Alimurong assumed office in 2019, she pillared her vision for the city upon a P27-billion budget proposal. In her first city address, she said that "part of bringing change to the most populous city" in the country includes the need to improve social services provisions" and recognizing "the necessity of improving... frontline services to make it easier to do business" in it. She added that her government is acting based on its "moral imperative to take steps to institutionalize good governance reforms, improve infrastructure, and make our city more livable."

A drive around the city brings to view the many information technology (IT) parks and economic zones there. These offices, according to the city government's official website, have "the biggest contribution in the growth" of the business process outsourcing/call center industries, IT infrastructure, and education programs. As early as 2005, the local government approved a resolution to declare the city as the "Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Capital of the Philippines," under the leadership of then Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. More than a decade after, 33 ICT parks and buildings can be found in the city, including the Eastwood City Cyberpark, known as the first and biggest IT park in the Philippines. Nearer to the city hall, along Commonwealth Avenue, is the country's version of Silicon Valley, the 20-hectare Science and Technology Park.

Aligned to innovation, quality and specialized medical institutions also call Quezon City home. Some 60 government and private hospitals hold addresses here, including St. Luke's Medical Center, the Philippine Heart Center, the National Kidney and Transplant Institute, the Lung Center, and the Philippine Orthopedic Hospital. The city also houses historical stops, art galleries and museums, places of worship, and a wide selection of entertainment and recreational centers.

REDEFINING SPACES AND BUSINESS

In the same State of the City Address, Belmonte-Alimurong reported that in response to the 60-day directive of President Rodrigo Duterte to "restore order in our streets and sidewalks," even police stations, barangay city halls, and daycare centers were not exempted from clearing operations. To ease traffic



Quezon Memorial Circle: Some 60 government and private hospitals hold addresses in QC, as well as universities, historical stops, art galleries and museums.

their businesses and where they can be located.

The initiatives do not only target to decongest traffic but also to make sidewalks walkable and bikeable for pedestrians — part of what is called the city's Green, Open, Renewable Access (GORA) Lanes. "We have also allocated a substantial amount to enhance the beauty and walkability of East Avenue," she shared. "Tourism experts say (it) has vast potential as it has a canopy of trees and natural shade." Belmonte-Alimurong, who was previously vice mayor of the city for nine years, has already banned single-use plastics and utensils in Quezon City, and is keen on solarizing government buildings, enhance waste management, and improve wastewater management.

Aligned with Belmonte-Alimurong's physical transformation of her city is her drive to further promote it as a preferred business destination. Through Executive Order 39-2019, she established the Ease of Doing Business and Automation Task Force to make city

hall transactions more efficient. "We are also developing new programs to improve the business climate in our city by tapping innovation hubs and growth hubs," she added in her State of the City Address. "We hope to invite more companies and investors to Quezon City." The mayor reported that LBC telecoms is "scheduled to set up shop in Quezon City" and employ 800 of the city's residents.

"My goal is to keep QC residents... within our city," Belmonte-Alimurong said during one of her campaign press conferences prior to being elected mayor. "If you are from Quezon City, then you should be living here in Quezon City."



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