

## QC, private sector partner for faster vaccine rollout

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The Quezon City government has partnered with various private sector groups, including retail giant SM Supermalls, to hasten the vaccination drive against COVID-19.

The city opened on Monday a vaccination site at SM City North EDSA's Skydome to cater to mall employees who fall under the A1 to A3 categories, particularly those who are medical frontliners, senior citizens and adults with comorbidities.

Mayor Joy Belmonte said the partnership allowed the mall operator to put together its own team of doctors and nurses to help inoculate those who are in the priority list of vaccine recipients.

Also vaccinated on-site were qualified senior citizen residents of Barangay Sto. Cristo, where the mall is located, and its nearby barangays.

"The city has had numerous partnerships with the private sector throughout the pandemic, and we're glad to be working with them still as we vaccinate our residents and immunize them against COVID," Belmonte said.

"We have agreed that their own medical team can give the shots to qualified SM employees who reside in QC, provided that it will be supervised by our city health department," she added.

Margie Santos, head of the city's business permits and licensing department, said "there are close to 16,000 SM employees who work and reside in the city and are qualified to get the vaccine."

More vaccination sites are expected to be opened in several other SM malls within the city to cover the target employee population.

The city is also currently in talks with other private sector groups, such as Robinsons Malls, Ayala Malls, Araneta City, Eastwood Mall, and the information technology and business process outsourcing sectors, which are all considered essential establishments even during the implementation of the enhanced community quarantine.

Last week, the city also opened six new vaccination sites to cater to individuals who lack internet access.

These sites are dedicated to barangay-assisted bookings, or those individuals who do not have access to the internet and computer, which prevents them from booking via the online application EZConsult.

"Our target is to open 24 sites to reach herd immunity within six months. With these new sites, we expect to receive more people and the faster the population would be vaccinated," Belmonte said.