

Iloilo City, Philippines



Jerry P. Treñas
Mayor of Iloilo City, Philippines

Jerry P. Treñas started his political career in 1986 when he was appointed as City Councilor. He was elected as City Councilor in 1995; three-term Mayor in 2001-2010; three-term Congressman of the Lone District in 2010- 2019; and City Mayor since 2019. He is now on his second term. He is happily married to Rosalie S. Treñas with whom he has five children.

A lawyer by profession, Mayor Treñas placed 11th in the 1982 Bar Examinations with a general weighted average of 88.325%.

He is a proud officer and member of various local, national and international special and policy-making bodies.

ILOILO CITY CARES (Climate Actions towards RESilience)

The Iloilo City Government continues to take initiatives in combating climate change and sustaining the environmental needs of the metropolis for the benefit of the Ilonggos, the people of this highly urbanized city located in the heart of the Philippines.

Under the WHEELS roadmap for inclusive development of the Treñas administration, the care for environment and mitigating the impacts of climate change are established. WHEELS is an acronym for various programs, projects and services under Welfare, Health, Education, Environmental Management, Livelihood and Sustainability.

Iloilo City has relatively low elevation and is situated along the coast. Highly dense populations are located within the coastal areas and along the Iloilo River, making these communities highly susceptible to flooding and storm surge. Major water shortage problems are recurring as the city experienced water crises due to the impacts of El Niño in 2007, 2009 and 2015. This year, imminent water crisis once again looms. Over extraction of groundwater is also becoming a major concern, as the Metro Iloilo Water District (MIWD) and many households mainly rely on groundwater for potable water.

These are challenges that cannot be overlooked. The leaders are agile enough to place disaster and climate resilient development in the agenda given the vulnerabilities as a coastal city to various natural hazards compounded by climate change.

Thanks to the support of local leaders, national government agencies, private and

business sector, and the academe, scientific information and data provided by the city's Climate and Disaster Risk Assessment and other similar studies have been used to make risk-informed decisions. These have been all aligned to the global and national policies on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR).

Innovative and dynamic strategies to safeguard the welfare of the people and future generations from the impacts of climate change have been put in place. Programs, projects and activities on climate actions have been plugged into the city's development plans with corresponding budget for each one.

On top of the priorities is the Three Tree Park Network Project. Aside from providing additional recreational facilities for the public and opportunities to bring people closer to nature to support efforts to achieve the SDGs, the tree park project primarily aims to help mitigate the effects of climate change and restore biodiversity in the city. There is a need for immediate action as the effects of climate change can now be felt in the city, with the frequent and higher water level of flooding in the metro especially during high tide.

The local government cares enough to continuously provide infrastructure developments and compensates by equally building greens all over the city. The planting activities of various tree species started at the Beach Forest along the coastal village of Boulevard, Molo. The City Government partnered with Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and telecommunications giant, Globe.

The native species of saplings burgeoning in the said areas were carefully selected with the active participation of native tree enthusiasts to create a much greener environment that will preserve ecological balance, enhance biodiversity, and combat the climate crisis.

The 1.6-hectare Beach Forest will be composed of an open cottage, sunset area, sunrise area, nursery, pavilion, and docking area where identified beach trees will be planted and preserved. It will be complemented by indoor exhibits that will feature coastal plants, coastal marine life, and the city's coastal environmental profile.

The three-hectare Iloilo Tree Park in Lanit, Jaro will function as an arboretum or botanical garden that will feature a collection of different species of native trees and shrubs. It is currently undergoing filling works by the Department of Public Works and Highways to elevate the site to make it suitable for planting trees and to prevent flooding.

The United Architects of the Philippines (UAP)-Bahandi Chapter was tapped as partner for a creatively crafted design. What is commendable is the promotion of the welfare of Indigenous People (Aetas) in the area who are included in the plans, making the initiative inclusive. The added attractions include lagoons, art gallery and display center where native products of the Aetas will be offered to visitors.

The 35-hectare Mangrove Eco-park in Hinactacan, La Paz will have a visitor's learning center, gazebo orchidarium, pond, palmetum, boardwalk, arboretum, and bambusetum. It is envisioned to be a learning and promotion center for the protection of mangroves.

The city's open spaces are now being brought to a higher level of function, and the tree parks will fulfill the purpose of promoting community stewardship of green spaces, and to raise ecological awareness through education and outreach. Meanwhile, a plan to connect the city's plazas, esplanade and tree parks via a network of bicycle lanes is being developed. Connecting these important public facilities by green lanes, one can truly call this a Tree Park Network. This will complement the city's bike lane, called the Iloilo City Bike Network – a safe, scenic and eco-friendly bike path, and currently stretching 11 kilometers.

The City Government embarked on a bike lane linkage project to connect three major bike lane networks – Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr. Avenue, the University Loop, and the 12-kilometer bikeable section of Iloilo River Esplanade, plazas and parks across the city. To note, the city government is also embarking on a massive rehabilitation of its district plazas to make them true people's public spaces that are not only beautiful but also safe and promotes healthy urban living.

So far, the beautified Plaza Libertad and Molo Plaza have already been opened to the public while the rehabilitation of Villa, Jaro, La Paz and Mandurriao plazas is ongoing. La Paz Plaza is also home to a "blue koi lagoon" and "green butterfly garden" – City Government's partnership project with Global Business Power Corporation. The City Government also continuously conducts tree planting at the floodway and major roads, and maintains the cleanliness and majesty of the Iloilo River.

The Iloilo River, once touted as the city's biggest septic tank, has now a thriving biodiversity, abundant marine ecosystem, source of livelihood, and a go-to-destination for well-being. Thanks to the tremendous effort through the years of the city's leaders in clearing the waterway and ridding it of illegal settlers, fish pens and debris.

All these efforts are geared towards promoting plant and animal diversity, benefiting both present and future generations of Ilonggos. Iloilo City is a recipient of various awards and recognitions bestowed by national government and private agencies, and international development organizations because of its initiatives to combat climate change. It is grateful to all partners and stakeholders in its quest for sustainability, livability and resiliency.

Indeed, the call for local action is demonstrated tangibly in the city's plans, programs and projects that results in transformational change in people's social behavior and mindset to rise against the effects of climate change. Regarded as one of the model cities in the Philippines, the city is continually engaging with its constituents to come up with meaningful initiatives geared towards inclusive green growth. Being touted as the City of



Love, the local government has only the people's best interests at heart, with a clear vision of having a climate change-ready metropolis.

Truly, this is a government that CARES.ⁱ

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