

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 740



Introduced by Hon. Julienne L. Baronda

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Iloilo City is well-known for its Spanish colonial churches, old houses, mansions, historical buildings, monuments and landmarks that has made it a major tourist destination of the country. The value of these heritage sites are beyond measure considering their significance to Philippine arts, culture, trade and tourism.

It is Iloilo City's advantage that it is the State's policy to promote a tourism industry that is ecologically sustainable, responsible, participative, culturally sensitive, economically viable and equitable for local communities.

Historical edifices in Iloilo City were given due recognition when in May 15, 2013, President Benigno Aquino signed into law Republic Act 1055 declaring the Jaro Cathedral, the Molo Church, the Iloilo City Central Business District, Fort San Pedro, Jaro Plaza Complex, Molo Plaza Complex and Plaza Libertad Complex as a cultural heritage tourism zone. As such, these places are now to be accorded priority development by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and shall be subject to the rules and regulations governing development of tourism zones.

Sadly, the Arevalo Plaza which is equally of major historical significance, deserving of the State's attention and priority for preservation and development, was not included in this law.

The Arevalo Plaza can be found in Arevalo, founded in 1951 and now a district of Iloilo City. Arevalo is well-known as the flower capital of Iloilo. It is worth noting that Arevalo, after being declared the capital of Panay and Negros, served as a Spanish Naval station. It served as jumping off point for Spanish expeditions and as a supply base for Spanish garrisons in the Moluccas. Later it became the target of attacks in 1588 by the English privateer Sir Thomas Cavendish, third circumnavigator of the world.

Here in Arevalo is where you will find the Corona de Reyna Isabella II Monument, built by the women of Arevalo and dedicated to the Spanish Queen Isabella II. The monument signifies the deep friendship between Spain and Iloilo.

Situated right in the middle of Arevalo Plaza is the Parish of the Most Holy Name of Jesus also known as the Sto. Niño de Arevalo Parish Church where the third-oldest image of Sto. Niño in the Philippines is enshrined. The image is believed to have been brought in by Spanish explorer and conquistador Miguel Lopez de Legazpi in 1581. Adjacent to the Villa Arevalo Church is the Arevalo Covenant, another heritage building in Spanish Colonial design.

With all the Historical buildings and landmarks that brings you back to the Spanish-American colonial years, Plaza Arevalo is truly a sight to behold for local and foreign tourists. It is one of Iloilo City's pride and among our country's oldest treasures.

The Arevalo Plaza is tableau of Iloilo's rich and glorious history in trade, culture and arts. The rich history, cultures and traditions has undeniably molded Iloilo City's success as a source of historical knowledge and inspiration.

We must give due recognition to the Arevalo Plaza and push for its inclusion in the city's heritage tourism zone. This would greatly benefit not only the people of the District of Arevalo and Iloilo City but the whole country as well. I strongly urge that the preservation and development of the Arevalo Plaza be ensured not only by the city's local government unity but by the relevant agencies of the State as well, such as the Department of Tourism and the National Commission for Culture and Arts among others. It should be given ample state support to maintain its grandeur and continue to develop as a major tourism and trade destination to both locals and foreigners.

The inclusion of Arevalo Plaza in the list of declared Cultural Heritage Tourism Zone in Republic Act No. 10555 is not only an act of solemn respect to our history and heritage and to heroes and forefathers. It is also our unwavering commitment to shaping a better landscape for the future and for the development of the Filipino people and our country.

For these reasons, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



Rep. Julienne "Jam" L. Baronda
District Representative
Lone District of Iloilo City

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**AN ACT AMENDING
SECTION 1 AND 2 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10555
TO INCLUDE AREVALO PLAZA AND FOR ANY OTHER PURPOSE**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Section 1 of Republic Act No. 10555 is hereby amended as follows:

This Act shall be known as "An Act Declaring the Jaro Cathedral, Molo Church, the Iloilo City Central Business District, Fort San Pedro, Jaro Plaza Complex, Molo Plaza Complex, Plaza Libertad Complex, and Arevalo Plaza, all Located in the City of Iloilo, as Cultural Heritage Tourism Zone”.

The Jaro Cathedral, Molo Church, the Iloilo City Central Business District, Fort San Pedro, Jaro Plaza Complex, Molo Plaza Complex, Plaza Libertad Complex, and Arevalo Plaza, all located in the City of Iloilo, are hereby declared as heritage and tourist spots. As such, they shall be accorded priority development by the Department of Tourism (DOT).

SECTION. 2. Section 2 is hereby amended as follows:

“It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote a tourism industry that is ecologically sustainable, responsible, participative, culturally sensitive, economically viable and equitable for local communities.

Towards this end, the Jaro Cathedral, Molo Church, the Iloilo City Central Business District, Fort San Pedro, Jaro Plaza Complex, Molo Plaza Complex, Plaza Libertad Complex, and Arevalo Plaza, all located in the City of Iloilo, shall be declared as cultural heritage tourism zone, shall be accorded priority development by the DOT and shall be subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of tourism zones.

SECTION. 3. The other pertinent provisions of Republic Act No. 10555, and other laws, rules and regulations which are inconsistent with this amendatory law are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SECTION. 4. This law shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its complete publication in the *Official Gazette* or two newspapers of general circulation, whichever comes earlier.

Approved,