

## **History**

Tacloban City was formerly known as *Kankabatok*, which means *Domain of Kabatok*. Kabatok was a prominent settler who occupied an area of what is presently Downtown Tacloban, by the bay that has also come to be named after him (Cancabato Bay). In 1770, following the first arrival of Augustinian Missionaries, Kankabatok was officially proclaimed a municipality. Its name was changed to *Tarakluban*, which means the place where inhabitants used the *taklub*, a bamboo contraption for catching crab, shrimp, and fish. The name *Tarakluban* has since evolved to its present form, *Tacloban*.

Because of the ideal location of its port, Tacloban developed into a major trading point between the provinces of Leyte and Samar, and was chosen to be the capital of Leyte in 1830. On June 20, 1952, Tacloban became a chartered city through Republic Act No. 760, signed by then President Elpidio Quirino.

On December 18, 2008, the people of Tacloban – under the leadership of Mayor Alfred Romualdez – unanimously ratified Tacloban City's conversion to a Highly Urbanized City (HUC) – the first in Eastern Visayas and 34th in the Philippines. For Tacloban, this meant greater autonomy in chartering its own course and progress.

## **Physical and Geographic Profile**

Tacloban City is located in the northeastern part of Leyte, one of the islands in Eastern Visayas or Region 8. It lays 11 degrees 14'38.19" north latitude and 125 degrees 0'18.24" east longitude. Situated about 580 kilometers southwest of Manila, its land area is 20,172 hectares or 201.72 sq. km. that include the small islands within the territorial bounds of the city.

## **Economic Drivers and Role in Development**

Tacloban is the busiest and most progressive city in Region 8 (Eastern Visayas). During business hours, the City's population of about 240,000 triples due to the influx of residents from nearby Leyte and Samar municipalities who avail of utilities and services in the city. Demand for both transient and permanent housing has steadily increased due to its convenient central location for business, education, health and leisure activities.

Thanks to the still impressive and picturesque San Juanico Bridge, Tacloban is just a drive away from Samar, and remains to be the regional hub for by-land conveyance. But while Tacloban is less than a day's drive to Manila or Davao, air travel is still the preferred method of transportation, which makes the Daniel Z. Romualdez Airport – the largest and busiest in the Region – to be the main Gateway to the entire Eastern Visayas. Manila is just one hour by air; Cebu, 45 minutes.

As the major tourism hub, Tacloban City yielded the highest contribution with 472,300 tourist arrivals in 2015. This figure comprises 44.87% of the regional total tourist influx and surpassed its 2015 target by 16.72%. The City contributed the highest tourist receipts amounting to Php 4.05 billion taking almost half of the regional tourist receipts or sharing 45% to the total regional earnings generated.

Tacloban is home to the three biggest state universities in Region 8, the Leyte Normal University, the Eastern Visayas State University, and the University of the Philippines Visayas Tacloban Campus. Also in Tacloban City are the Remedios T. Romualdez Medical Foundation, the Asian Development Foundation College, and franchised computer technology schools STI, AMA, and ACLC. Tacloban's ever increasing crop of fresh graduates hailing from all over the Region makes for a rich pool of skilled technical and professional workers for a variety of industries.

These new, young workers are best suited for new business ventures because they know their way around the city and can speak the local dialects without sacrificing proficiency in English and Tagalog. Region 8's *Warays* are one of the biggest cultural group of migrant workers in Metro Manila. If provided with excellent jobs and economic opportunities in Tacloban, there would be no more need for them to live and work so far away from home and family.

In addition to being the regional center for education, Tacloban is also the regional healthcare hub – with its six major hospitals (four privately run and two government-run). Tacloban's hospitals house the most advanced healthcare facilities and the best medical practitioners in the Region.

Tacloban remains to be the banking and finance capital of Eastern Visayas. Nowhere else in the Region can you find this much concentration of banks and loan facilities. In 2011, cash

deposits were up to the P42B mark, prompting the Central Bank of the Philippines to put up their impressive regional office in San Jose, Tacloban City.

With the entry of Robinsons and SM, Tacloban has become the premier shopping destination in Eastern Visayas. Robinson's Place Tacloban is the biggest shopping mall in the entire region. After just one year of operation, demand for more retail and recreational space has led to the construction of an Annex Building, which includes Go Hotels. Robinsons is currently developing three more hectares of adjoining property for further expansion which will include a bus terminal.

Distributors of Hyundai, Ford, Mitsubishi, Honda, Toyota, Nissan, and other automobile makers have recently been doing very well in Tacloban. In response to this transport boom, the Department of Public Works and Highways is currently constructing new diversion roads and widening existing national highways.

All of Region 8 converges in Tacloban, which has always been the regional melting pot. Anyone who wishes to live, invest, or even just visit any point in Eastern Visayas has to pass through Tacloban, whether for air travel, banking, school, health, recreation, or shopping.

### **Tacloban City after Typhoon Haiyan**

On November 8, 2013, Typhoon Yolanda (International name: Haiyan) – one of the strongest to ever make landfall, left a trail of devastation across the Philippines' central islands, and triggered the largest humanitarian crisis the Philippines has ever faced since World War II. Yolanda brought Category 5 hurricane winds and storm surges that flattened coastal areas. Tacloban City suffered tremendous casualties with 3,000 dead, infrastructural damage, and economic losses.

But in the long run, this tragedy only served to bolster the indomitable spirit of the Waray people. After a short period of mourning and sifting through the rubble, armed with an inventory of lessons learned from the Yolanda experience, Tacloban City promptly began the difficult recovery process, simultaneously reviewing its development plans for a resilient, sustainable, and vibrant future even in the face of new climate realities. Planning exercises, workshops, and charrettes were conducted with the energetic participation of business stakeholders, grassroots

and barangay representatives, consultants, and the local academe, and were made possible with the generous partnership of development agencies such as the USAID, UN-Habitat, and JICA.

A little over two years since Yolanda, the private sector is experiencing a renewed boom. In addition to Robinsons Place and two Gaisano shopping malls downtown, a new SM Savemore has opened near the City Port. Automobile sales are at an all-time high. Banks, retail outlets, hotels, and restaurants have reopened and new ones are opening. Tourism experienced a resurgence as a P4.05 billion industry in 2015. And progress in Tacloban is beginning to spill over to the rest of the Region as metropolitan and suburban development spread to the municipalities surrounding Tacloban.

### **Moving Forward: the Tacloban North**

The flagship project toward realizing the vision for a resilient and economically vibrant future is the establishment of a new township in an area now referred to as *Tacloban North*. Tacloban North consists of areas in the northern parts of the city with the lowest risk to natural hazards – making it the ideal location for the development of safe, resilient communities. City planners and various international organizations have helped us visualize the possibilities for the area: Prosperous communities will have access to quality education, health care, sanitation, and government services. Green belts will help in the conservation and protection of local biodiversity and water resources. New world-class hotels, convention centers, and commercial/recreational developments will add to existing ones in the central business district, contributing toward Tacloban City's aspiration to become an attractive new MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) destination, to rival other Philippine MICE cities like Cebu, Davao, and Baguio.

The University of the Philippines is now building a large campus in Tacloban North. With the establishment of a strategically located high-capacity port in the adjacent municipality of Babatngon, a reliable water supply system, and competitive investment incentives, Tacloban North can become attractive to light industrial and agro-industrial locators. The big goal is to appeal to high-value industry clusters that will provide desirable jobs and economic opportunities to residents of Tacloban City and nearby provinces.