

# Marcos Mansions in Baguio: Future Tourism Sites?

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**Perhaps every original Baguio City resident marveled at the once-grandiose mansions of the Marcoses here. By all indications, they were posh. What is to become of these mansions? Some local government officials here are considering the idea of turning these into tourism sites.**

**BY ACE ALEGRE**

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BAGUIO CITY – Perhaps every original Baguio City resident marveled at the once-grandiose mansions of the Marcoses here. By all indications, they were posh.

Four mansions owned by the Marcos family are clustered in the vast rolling hills of around five hectares, one for the Marcos couple Ferdinand and Imelda; one for Imee, now Ilocos Norte congresswoman; one for Ferdinand Jr. or Bongbong, now Ilocos Norte's governor and another for Marcos' mother Doña Josefa. They are nestled along a scenic hill overlooking the mining town of Itogon along Outlook Drive here and only a stone's throw away from the Mansion House, the president's official residence.

But little did Baguio residents know of these mansions – they know only that these were sequestered in 1986 by the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) and have been lying there idle, almost ruined. Only security guards "take care" of these mansions, said Beatriz Balugas who since 2000 has been living in

Imee's mansion with the PCGG guard, her son-in-law, across number 44 – the “Ferdinand-Imelda” mansion.

Although these mansions then looked grand amid the pine trees, they are in a state of deterioration 20 years after Marcos was ousted. “*Sayang*” (What a waste), was Balugas’ ready comment on what had happened.

Lawyer Ernest Jay Miguel, director for legal affairs of the PCGG, said they too had misgivings about how government took care of the sequestered assets of the Marcos family here.

One of the mansions, that of Doña Josefa, has reportedly been sold to San Miguel Corporation’s Eduardo Cojuangco, but the other three are gathering moss and are simply rotting.

On the eve of the 34th anniversary of the declaration of martial law, City Councilor Perlita Chan-Rondez wrote the PCGG through Miguel asking for the status of the Marcos mansions in Baguio.

She told Miguel that the tourism committee that she heads at the city council is thinking of several proposals for the use of these mansions “in line with the city’s goal to provide family-oriented tourism.” Several months ago, Rondez proposed that the city council request the PCGG to “transfer ownership of all sequestered Marcos properties” in Baguio to the city government.

The woman councilor, also a lawyer, observed that these properties, particularly the mansions, “are just being sold to private entities, which for the most part will only personally benefit them and not the whole Baguio City.”

Balugas said these mansions worth millions of pesos are just rotting. But one cannot just enter the mansions, said Balugas, without the permission of the PCGG.

Rondez had invited Miguel to visit Baguio City to conduct an ocular inspection of the mansions and to have a dialogue regarding the possibilities of turning these over to the city.

Baguio Tourism Council head Anthony de Leon, manager of the posh Baguio Country Club, agreed with the proposal of Rondez.

De Leon is upbeat about adding more to the list of “must-see” sites in Baguio City. Although the city remains the “vacation and summer capital of the Philippines,” De Leon said, there is stiff competition between destinations nowadays, thus a challenge for stakeholders in Baguio’s tourism business to improve and innovate. “We need more tourist destinations,” he said.

Acquiring the mansions will compliment the rehabilitation of parks including the popular Mines View Park, which is just a stone throw away. These are all part of rebuilding Baguio City’s image as “vacation capital,” he explained.

Although Rondez admitted that she has yet to come up with definite plans regarding the mansions if and when it is turned over to the city, she wishes that in the future the so-called “opulence” that characterized the Marcos lifestyle could redound to the benefit of the city’s tourism. ([Bulatlat.com](http://Bulatlat.com))