



# City of Chicago



O2019-2719

Office of the City Clerk

## Document Tracking Sheet

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Meeting Date:</b>            | 4/10/2019   |
| <b>Sponsor(s):</b>              | Osterman (48)   |
| <b>Type:</b>                    | Ordinance   |
| <b>Title:</b>                   | Honorary street designation as "Honorary Marge Britton Way" |
| <b>Committee(s) Assignment:</b> | Committee on Transportation and Public Way                  |



ALDERMAN HARRY OSTERMAN  
48TH WARD

April 10, 2019

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF CHICAGO:**

**SECTION 1.** Pursuant to an ordinance heretofore passed the City Council, which allows establishing an honorary street designation, the Commissioner of Transportation shall take the necessary action for standardization of the:

**“5400 block of North Magnolia Avenue, from West Balmoral Avenue to West Catalpa Avenue as Honorary Marge Britton Way”**

**SECTION 2.** This ordinance shall take effect and be in force upon it's passage and publication.

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**HARRY OSTERMAN** <sup>DC</sup>  
**Alderman, 48<sup>th</sup> Ward**

Date: 4/8/19

Office of Budget and Management  
121 N. LaSalle, Room 604  
Chicago, IL 60602

To Whom It May Concern:

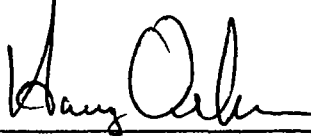
I, HARRY OSTERMAN, Alderman of the 48 Ward, hereby authorize the Office of Budget Management to withdraw the funds associated with the cost of installation for this honorary street designation for MARGE BRITTON WAY from my:

Ward's annual menu program budget

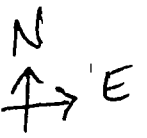
Ward's aldermanic expense allowance

upon passage of this designation ordinance, pursuant to Section 2-8-040 of the Chicago Municipal Code.

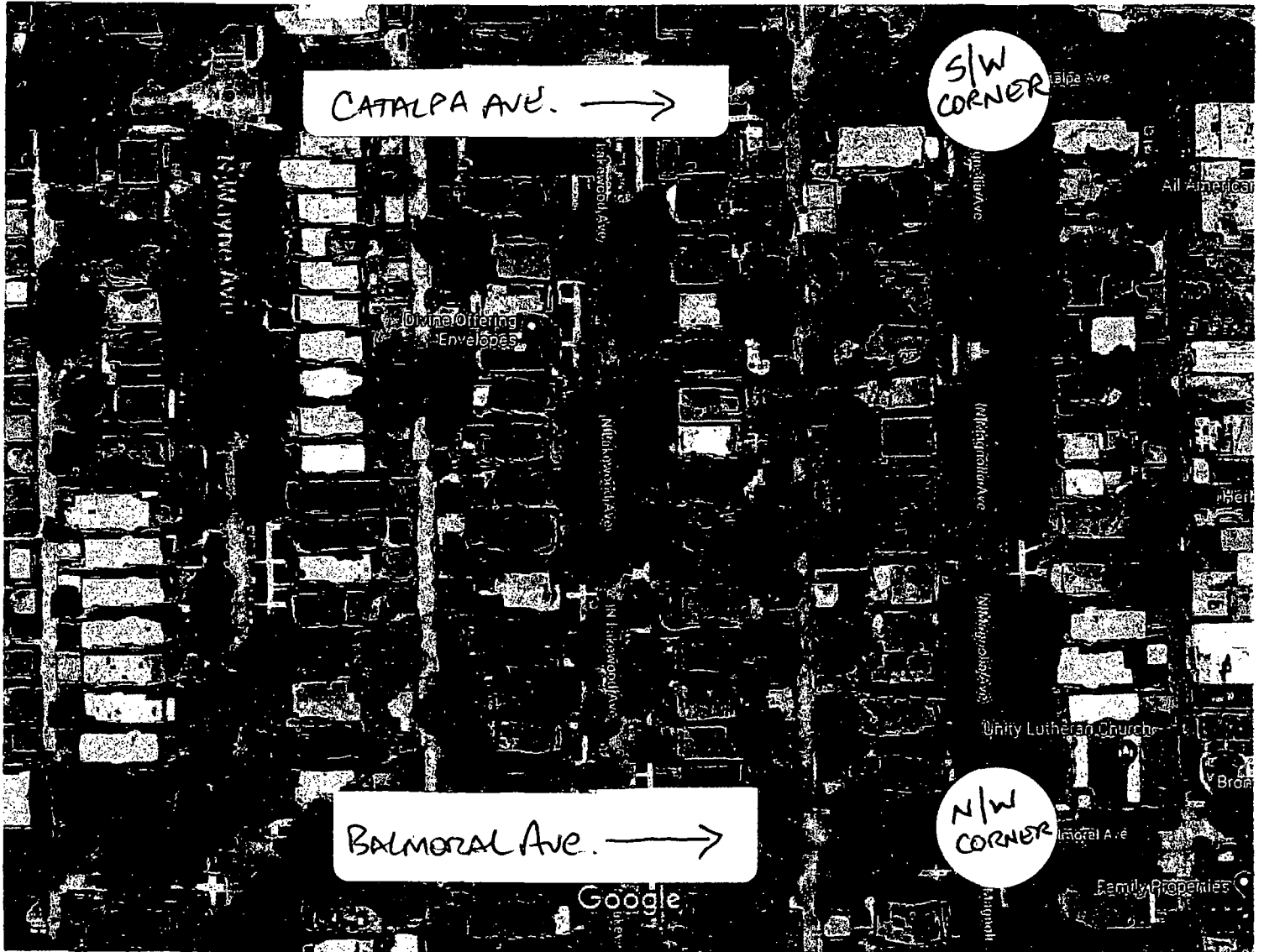
Sincerely,



Harry Osterman  
Alderman



5414 N Magnolia Ave



Imagery ©2019 Google, Map data ©2019 Google 100 ft

MAGNOLIA AVE

## **Marge Britton**

When Marge Britton, born in 1937, was 3 years old, she and her family moved into the home at 5535 N. Wayne Ave. in Chicago's Lakewood Balmoral neighborhood. Her family lived there for a few years before moving two blocks east to 5510 N. Magnolia Ave. While residing there, she attended St. Ita's Elementary School and St. Gregory High School, right in the neighborhood, and Mundelein College (where she earned a bachelor's degree in English-Journalism), about a mile away. As Marge puts it: "The world came to me—I didn't have to go."

After Marge married her husband, Hal, the couple lived in two homes nearby until getting a tip in 1968 that the house at 5414 N. Magnolia was for sale. It became the home where she and Hal would raise their six children and welcome nine grandchildren. And it's the house she still calls home today.

While she was always active in the community, with a very tight-knit group of friends, it was here that she truly began her community activism. In fact, the first meeting of what would become the Lakewood Balmoral Residents' Council (LBRC) block club, was held in her living room. The group's goal was to revive the neighborhood and its greater surroundings. Lakewood Balmoral, while in relatively good shape compared to the areas around it, "was looking a little rough around the edges," says Marge, with many homes and buildings being converted to boarding houses.

Several important issues spurred this group to become a well-organized and active community organization. First, when Marge and Hal tried to buy their home, it was difficult to find a bank that would lend them money, as redlining was prevalent and most banks would not issue mortgages in the area. Second, Truman College was looking at Catalpa and Broadway as a possible location. Third, the State of Illinois had released thousands of patients from psychiatric hospitals into halfway houses throughout Uptown and Edgewater, and many of these facilities were large and poorly run. Perhaps most important, nearby North Shore Baptist Church wanted to purchase and tear down the house at Lakewood and Berwyn so it could create a parking lot.

To tackle these issues, in April of 1969, Marge, Hal, and other dedicated neighbors officially formed LBRC. The organization's mission then, as it is now as LBRC celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is "to create a viable urban community, united by geography and vested interests, committed to the betterment of the area and its people, organized to confront the problems of urban life and to carry out activities that nurture a community spirit."

Marge served as chair of LBRC's community and public relations committee before becoming president of the group in 1972.

She and fellow community resident LeRoy Blommaert knew that getting other neighborhoods in the area organized was a key to taking control of the future of where they lived. LBRC was having success in steering the direction of its neighborhood, but Marge quickly realized that, while establishing community cohesiveness was valuable, only the attainment of true political power would ensure the future of Lakewood Balmoral and the greater Edgewater area.

One day, Marion Volini, a great friend and neighbor to Marge, came over to borrow a cup of sugar. They got to talking, and the discussion quickly turned to which one of them should run for alderman. At the time, Marge already had her six children, the youngest of whom was 2, and Marion had five kids, the youngest age 5. Marion Volini would be elected 48<sup>th</sup> Ward alderman in 1978 and serve until 1987.

Alderman Volini, Marge, and everyone else in LBRC worked tirelessly on so many fronts. From improving development, to removing adult bookstores, to tackling issues of education, crime, voter fraud, and the established political machine that was using the halfway houses and nursing homes for its own benefit.

Marge would go on to serve as vice president of the Edgewater Chamber of Commerce for a decade and to work as an aide on Mary Ann Smith's staff while Smith was 48<sup>th</sup> Ward alderman from 1989-2007. She also was part of the historic committee that was successful in getting Lakewood Balmoral listed on the state's National Register of Historic Places in 1999.

With her considerable organizational and writing skills, Marge found the perfect platforms to contribute to the success of her community. And it's likely that without the pioneering efforts of her and her peers, Lakewood Balmoral would not be the thriving Chicago neighborhood that it is today.

While Marge believes that raising her family was her greatest accomplishment, she acknowledges that contributing to the community has its own special value. Her advice to the generations that follow her is simple: "Get involved—with your neighborhood or with a volunteer organization. It's not just about what you can accomplish. You also will do a lot of good for yourself."