



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

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RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, along Division Street, and between Western and California Avenues, is Chicago's "little Puerto Rico", famously known as Paseo Boricua, where visitors can experience a full immersion into Puerto Rican culture including authentic food, music, art, and the Spanish language; and

WHEREAS, Paseo Boricua has become the economic, political, and cultural Puerto Rican capital of the Midwest, and the only officially recognized Puerto Rican neighborhood in the country; and

WHEREAS, in 1995, the City installed the world's largest piece of public art depicting rippling steel Puerto Rican flags as the welcoming gateways to Paseo Boricua; and

WHEREAS, at 50 tons each the award-winning steel flags were designed to be safe, stable, and strong enough to take wind loads and stay rooted for over 500 years, standing as a true symbol of strength to the thousands of Puerto Rican evacuees who sought shelter in Chicago after Hurricane Maria; and

WHEREAS, Paseo Boricua features one of the largest collections of public art in the country including murals, the Paseo Boricua Walk of Fame, light poles depicting Puerto Rican iconic images, and the recently installed Las Puertas de Paseo Boricua, a collection of 16 unique doors painted by artists reminiscent of the vibrant doors found in Old San Juan; and

WHEREAS, Paseo Boricua represents the heart and soul of authentic Puerto Rican food, offering a multitude of restaurants with island home cooking such as mofongo, asopao, lechon asado, and Chicago's very own contribution to Puerto Rican culture -the jibarito; and

WHEREAS, the Puerto Rican community celebrates its pride in its leaders through historical markers in and around the Paseo Boricua including a tiled mosaic and high school named after the famous Puerto Rican baseball player Roberto Clemente; schools named after Jose de Diego, "The Father of the Puerto Rican Independence Movement" and another Independence leader and Harvard educated attorney, Pedro Albizu Campos; a street through Humboldt Park named after Bronze Star Medal awardee and community activist, Oscar Lopez Rivera; and another street through Humboldt Park named after modern day Puerto Rican baseball star, Javy Baez; the PRCC Child/Parent Center named after the famous Puerto Rican poet, educator, and pianist Consuelo Lee Corretjer and Chicago's very own beloved native daughter activist and late wife of current Alderman Roberto Maldonado, Nancy Y. Franco-Maldonado; and

WHEREAS, the Paseo Boricua neighborhood is home to several esteemed cultural centers including

the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture, the only Puerto Rican Museum in the country completely dedicated to the preservation and perpetuation of Puerto Rican history; the PRCC's Vida SIDA, a community based health center focusing on AIDS prevention as well as servicing the health needs of the LGBTQ community; and AfroCaribe Cultural Center, which showcases the Afro-Caribbean music and traditions of Puerto Rico; Paseo Boricua will soon house the Nancy Y. Franco-Maldonado Paseo Boricua Art's Building providing housing, business opportunities, and commercial spaces for community artists to live and work as well as the UrbanTheater Company, the only Puerto Rican founded theatre company in Chicago featuring award-winning theater productions; and

WHEREAS, Paseo Boricua is also home to three major annual festivals when the community comes out to rejoice in full ethnic pride: the world-renowned Puerto Rican People's Parade; the Fiesta Boricua Festival; and the Three Kings' Day celebration; and

WHEREAS, the 2010 Census counted approximately 102,703 Puerto Ricans living in the neighborhoods surrounding Paseo Boricua, the third largest Puerto Rican population in the continental United States; and

WHEREAS, Humboldt Park is on the cusp of major changes where the cultural integrity of the community is being heavily challenged by the process of gentrification and the bridge between these two paths is a balance between preserving community character and affordability and future economic growth; and

WHEREAS, the area of Division Street [between Western and Grand) has been a port of entry for waves of European immigrants including Scandinavians, Germans, Ukrainians, Poles, and Eastern European Jews, each leaving their historical markers including Norwegian American Hospital, which is now in the process of developing an innovative Community Development and Wellness District, adding new economic vibrancy to the area; and

WHEREAS, one of the largest faith based institutions, New Life Covenant Church, has now anchored itself on Division and Kimball providing needed social service under its logo "A Church for the Hurting" and it is led by Pastor Wilfredo "Choco" De Jesus, a native son of Humboldt Park who was selected by Times Magazine as one of the 100 most influential people; and

WHEREAS, Division Street (popularly know to Puerto Ricans as "La Division"), has been the setting for Chicago's literary tradition including Stud Terkel's "Division Street: America, Saul Bellow's "The Adventures of Augie March" and "Humboldt's Gift", Nelson Algren's "The Man with the Golden Arm" and, more recently, Puerto Rican writers like Salima Rivera, David Hernandez, Johanny Vasquez, and David Delgado.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Paseo Boricua truly exemplifies the Puerto Rican heritage and is well known as the city's destination of choice for Puerto Rican food and rich cultural traditions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Paseo Boricua along Division Street, between Western and Grand Avenues, shall also be forever known, and locally, nationally, and internationally officially recognized

as the City of Chicago's "Puerto Rico Town"; and
Roberto Maldonado Alderman, 26th Ward

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the designation of "Puerto Rico Town" would lead to the creation of a Special Purpose District that would constitute a "Cultural Sanctuary" to allow for a process to involve the community in the prioritization and allocation of investments in existing and new businesses, art and culture that both preserves the community's unique identity and creates jobs and a strong economy.