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Black City Council pioneer Anna Langford dies

Anna Langford, the first African-American woman elected to the Chicago City Council, died Wednesday in her Englewood neighborhood home after a months long battle with [lung cancer](#). She was 90.

She was elected to the City Council in 1971 as alderman of the 16th Ward, which encompasses such South Side neighborhoods as Englewood and Gage Park. During that same election, Langford and former Tribune reporter Marilou McCarthy Hedlund were the first two women elected to the council.

Langford's son, Larry Langford, a spokesman for the Chicago Fire Department, said early Thursday that his mother lived an active lifestyle up until her diagnosis about three or four months ago.

"She was still driving her car at age 90," her son said in a telephone interview. "She enjoyed shopping, going to casinos, living life very large. She was enjoying her retirement."

Although she lost her bid for reelection in 1975, Langford returned to the council in 1983, the same year Harold Washington was elected as Chicago's first black mayor. She served two terms during that second stint before retiring in 1991.

After receiving her law degree from John Marshall Law School in 1956, she practiced criminal and civil rights law throughout Illinois and defended civil rights workers in the 1960s. She also joined marches led by Martin Luther King Jr. when the [Nobel Prize](#)-winning civil rights leader came to Chicago.

Born on Oct. 27, 1917, in Springfield, Ohio, Langford's parents died when she was a youngster. After living with her grandmother, Langford moved to Chicago as a teenager to live with her aunt and uncle. She later graduated from Hyde Park High School.