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Working to Keep Streeterville a Neighborhood

SOAR is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization

**SOAR Testimony
533 North St. Clair Street
Chicago Plan Commission Hearing
Thursday, September 18, 2008**

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Good afternoon. My name is Gail Spreen. I am President of SOAR, the Streeterville Organization of Active Residents, and co-chair of the Neighbors Action Task Force. I come before you today on behalf of SOAR in support of the 533 N. St. Clair Street development.

First, we thank the developer for actively including SOAR in the review process of this project. On multiple occasions, Sutherland-Pearsall contacted SOAR and kept us abreast on modifications. The developer also agreed to several of our requests including changing the address of the property to avoid confusion with nearby buildings, and granting the widened sidewalk along Grand Avenue back to the city for years of pedestrian safety and enjoyment.

SOAR is sensitive to the concerns of residents in the nearby 211 E. Ohio St. condominium. Those residents are impacted the most by this project since the proposed structure will block natural light to their units, and generate visual activity that is not currently in existence. Some portions of the 211 E. Ohio building will be as close as 17 feet to the pedestal garage base. We acknowledge that Sutherland-Pearsall has attempted to address these concerns by increasing the distance between the two buildings on the upper tower, and trying to minimize the drabness on the north façade of the pedestal garage base.

We are concerned about the amount of increased traffic this project, and other nearby projects, will bring to narrow St. Clair, adjacent intersections, and pedestrians. To mitigate these problems, we believe approval of this project should be contingent on the developer providing funds for the purchase and installation of countdown crosswalk signals for St. Clair at Ohio St., and for Traffic Management Aides to handle issues during key periods of heavy traffic volume. Measures must also be put in place to ensure the deep loading docks are used and that delivery vehicles don't use Grand Avenue as a drop off.

In addition, the hotel going in this location will surely market itself as being "steps away from the Magnificent Mile." Those steps should be safe and visually pleasing. We ask that the developer work with the city and other nearby properties to create a link between Grand Avenue and upper Michigan Avenue that is as truly magnificent as the destination to which it leads.

Thank you.

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