



FOUNDED IN 1975

**Working to Keep Streeterville a Neighborhood**

SOAR is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization

May 6, 2009

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Cory Warning  
Vice President, Acquisitions & Development  
Strategic Hotels & Resorts  
200 W. Madison St., Suite 1700  
Chicago IL 60606-3415

RE: Intercontinental Hotel

Dear Mr. Warning:

Thank you for your presentation to the SOAR Neighbors Action Task Force regarding the proposed tower for the Intercontinental Hotel at 525 N. Michigan Ave. We appreciate your outreach to us and believe we share a common interest in developing a quality neighborhood.

There are several aspects of your project which positively impact our neighborhood. Moving the main hotel entrance off Michigan Ave. and into the property will remove a hazardous congestion point currently in existence. A wide, landscaped sidewalk along Michigan Ave. that is fronted by retail will enhance the pedestrian experience. In addition, constructing the building to meet LEED certification allows Streeterville to continue on its mission to become one of the greenest neighborhoods in Chicago and the country.

Your plans indicate that the garage structure will utilize materials that will eliminate vehicular light shine-through. This is very important as it makes the views of your building from the outside as spectacular as the views your guests and residents will enjoy from the inside. There are residents in the 535 N. Michigan Ave. building that face directly south into the newly proposed garage. These residents should not experience any negative impact from lights shining through the garage structure into their homes. The garage structure should be constructed as one facility to keep future options open for the entire property.

In recognizing the positive attributes, we request a few changes be made to this project to lessen the impact on this historic street and enhance the experience of those using Grand Avenue and the link with Michigan Ave.

The tower portion of the structure should be set back from Michigan Ave. While a tall slender tower is desirable, its placement flush with other lower structures begins to create a canyon effect. There currently aren't many other tall towers flush to Michigan Ave. thus, this project would set a precedent that will make the Magnificent Mile less sunny and less attractive in the future.

We appreciate the intent to cap a part of Grand Ave. to create an attractive plaza along Michigan Ave., but we have several concerns:

- Initial plans call for an elevator and staircase to be located on the south side of Grand Ave. only. This is not acceptable since it will force pedestrians, especially those being dropped off on lower Grand Ave. by tour busses and trolleys, to

**Streeterville Organization of Active Residents**

244 East Pearson Street, Suite 101, CHICAGO IL 60611

T: 312/280-2596 F: 312/280-4631 Email: soarchicago@aol.com Web Site: www.soarchicago.org

cross the street outside of a crosswalk to reach Michigan Ave. A grand staircase, which begins on both the north and south side of Grand Ave., is necessary. This staircase should create a fabulous gateway to Michigan Ave. The elevator should be accessible 24 hours with necessary security to maintain safety.

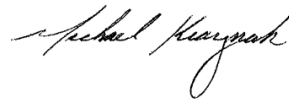
- The underside of the plaza needs to go beyond white paint to make it attractive and inviting. The current condition of this lower-level intersection is dark, dreary, off-putting to pedestrians and incredibly embarrassing to the community. Capping over more of the street will make that worse. We request this project include a creative solution that addresses the blight of lower Grand Ave. from the eastern edge of your new plaza, to the western edge of Michigan Ave. Skylights within the plaza can help bring natural light to the lower levels, and the incorporation of creative lighting, artwork and architectural elements can create an area that is visually appealing and safe. Something spectacular should be made out of this space similar to the walkway connecting concourses B and C in the United Terminal at O'Hare. Clear directional signage is needed to ensure pedestrians know the access points to reach the Magnificent Mile. Further, the service areas for your building along lower Michigan Avenue should also be softened and hidden as much as possible.
- The new plaza will become part of the Magnificent Mile experience for those coming up from lower Grand Avenue, and provide a place of rest for visitors and residents alike. We applaud the inclusion of green space on this plaza, but recognize that safety is a key priority as well. The landscaping should not create shadow areas or hiding places. Furthermore, an agreement with the owners and stakeholders of 535 N. Michigan Ave. is required in order to ensure a cohesive and usable plaza, and an agreement, in perpetuity, with the city is necessary regarding the maintenance of this plaza.

This is a great opportunity to create a spectacular gateway for our neighborhood and your property. We encourage you to capitalize on this opportunity by designing a creative, exciting, inviting environment that will enhance both your redeveloped property and the Magnificent Mile as well.

Sincerely,



Gail Sreen  
President and  
Co-chair Neighbors Action Task Force



Michael Kraynak  
Secretary and  
Co-chair Neighbors Action Task Force

Cc: Alderman Brendan Reilly  
Patricia Scudiero, Commissioner, Dept. of Zoning and Land Use Planning  
Paul Zalmezak, Dept. of Community Development  
Lucien Lagrange, Principal, Lucien Lagrange Architects

Grace Kuklinski Rappe, HoerrSchaudt Landscape Architects  
Edward Kus, Shesky & Froelich  
John Chikow, GNMAA  
Gina Forcucci, Streeterville Chamber of Commerce  
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