



FOUNDED IN 1975

Working to Keep Streeterville a Neighborhood

SOAR is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization

**SOAR Testimony
NORTHWESTERN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL PARKING GARAGE
430 E. Ohio & 433 E. Ontario Streets
Chicago Plan Commission Hearing
Thursday, March 18, 2010**

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Good afternoon. My name is Brian Hopkins, I am President of SOAR, the Streeterville Organization of Active Residents. I come before you today to speak, on behalf of SOAR in support of this project.

SOAR would like to thank Alderman Reilly and Northwestern Memorial Hospital for their outreach to SOAR and for addressing some of the concerns of the community.

As you are aware, SOAR and the community we represent, do not support the construction of stand alone above ground parking garages in Streeterville. SOAR sought to have the additional parking capacity required by recent updates to Planned Development #3 located outside of Streeterville – not in the already heavily congested Streeterville community. The medical campus institutions collectively chose employee convenience over community concerns. Going forward, the medical campus institutions must think differently and creatively about parking and transportation needs if they wish to have an operable medical complex and community support for future development efforts. The status quo is simply unacceptable.

While the institutional Transportation Management Plan (TMP) associated with PD #3 provides a mechanism to encourage more positive institutional behaviors, the current plan lacks any specific, measurable goal to reduce non-patient and non-visitor dependence on personal auto use. This goal, along with specific measurable metrics to achieve it, must be included in any and all future updates to this TMP as well as the TMP required for this new employee garage. The institutions must implement solutions that subsidize use of public transit, shuttles and carpools – not subsidies for inexpensive downtown parking for medical personnel and employees.

We know that NMH and the other medical campus institutions – Children’s Memorial Hospital, Northwestern University and the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago - have heard this message loudly and clearly throughout this proposal’s review. We call on the institutions to now respond, in a positive way, to the

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community's belief that traffic congestion and gridlock in Streeterville is at unacceptably high levels, and with every new development it's getting worse instead of better. We fully support the Planned Development process as a means to achieve our goal of accommodating growth without eroding the quality of life for residents. We look forward to working with Alderman Reilly to prepare amendments to this and other existing Planned Development ordinances, or where indicated, entirely new PD ordinances, that will codify the concept of smart, sustainable development that currently exists more in rhetoric than reality.

SOAR acknowledges NMH's efforts to lessen the significant impact this facility will have on the Streeterville community including the:

- Inclusion of a childcare facility in the garage
- Reduction in the number of parking spaces and decreased height of the overall structure
- Queuing length of the ramps inside of the facility
- Short-term parking within the garage for those picking up or dropping off at the childcare facility
- Redirection of the pass through lane at the west end of the facility to preclude the creation of a mid-block street
- Use of windows, lighting and physical controls to minimize visual impact
- Improved façade design

While SOAR recognizes NMH's efforts to green the roof of the facility to 30%, SOAR is disappointed that NMH did not implement a full green roof. Green roofs add environmentally friendly spaces that can particularly benefit an area such as Streeterville with its canyonized streets and emission heavy traffic. Green roofs aid with storm run-off, absorb noise, reduce the ambient city temperature during the warm summer months, and provide a visual benefit to the surrounding buildings. Green roofs and green design must be an integral part of all future Streeterville development – institutional or otherwise.

Further, we appreciate the commitment NMH has made to ensure that the pedestrian streetscape is consistent with the standards being identified as part of the "Big Picture" initiative. We thank you for your efforts with the community and the positive revisions that have been made to this proposal. We look forward to continued dialogue with all the institutions as we collectively work to address the ongoing issues and opportunities outlined.