

Good evening. My name is Gail Spreen and I am President of SOAR, the Streeterville Organization of Active Residents.

First, I would like to thank the Illinois Department of Transportation for coming up from Springfield and reaching out to listen. Particular thanks go to key individuals from IDOT who are here this evening - Director Susan Shea, Mr. Gary Stevens and Ms. Ellen Schanzle-Haskins – as well as the honorable Richard Neville who was asked by IDOT to preside over this administrative hearing. Thanks too to the unsung court reporters – both here and in the annex room - for providing the official record. We promise to try to keep all of this interesting for you.

Thanks go to the public officials who have kept an open ear and open door to their constituents on this important public safety issue – Senator Kwame Raoul, Representative Will Burns, and Alderman Brendan Reilly. I'd also like to include and thank Alderman Reilly's chief of staff Madeleine Doering.

Thanks go to Northwestern University for opening up its doors and its space to the Streeterville community yet again. Special thanks go to Janice Manning and Kathleen Dunne for their professionalism and attention to detail in organizing this meeting, Deputy Chief Dan McAleer and the University Police for keeping things running smoothly, and to Mylowe Wooley for all of the AV support.

Finally we thank everyone from Streeterville who has participated in this process to-date. Democracy requires involvement and you are involved. Thank you.

Incorporated as a non-profit in the State of Illinois on May 28, 1975, SOAR has tirelessly worked on behalf of Streeterville residents for over 34 years. The Streeterville neighborhood association, SOAR is recognized and well respected by residents, the medical campus institutions, the business community, and public officials at all levels of government.

SOAR represents more than 19,000 residential households in 96 existing condominium, co-op and rental buildings throughout Streeterville. Five new residential buildings are currently under construction. When completed, these high-rise structures will add nearly 2,000 residential units to the community. An additional eleven residential projects have been approved which, if constructed, will add more than 2,800 new residential units to this dynamic, urban community.

Beyond being home to tens of thousands of Chicagoans, important cultural, educational and medical institutions, and some of the world's greatest retail and dining, Streeterville is a destination for countless visitors who come from across the nation and around the world. It is a powerful economic engine for the region and it contributes greatly to the City's reputation.

As residents of this community, we understand, appreciate, and enjoy the diversity that comes from our unique mix of institutional, commercial, and residential uses. We work to promote a viable balance among uses so our community can continue to contribute powerfully to Chicago's future. SOAR is committed to the kind of thorough and thoughtful planning that will allow our community continued growth.

SOAR truly respects the mission and good work of Children's Memorial Hospital and warmly welcomes Children's to Streeterville.

Today, we are here today to discuss the safety of Children's heliport proposal. From the time this heliport proposal was first presented to the community, many residents expressed safety concerns about the heliport to SOAR and to Children's Memorial Hospital.

Early on SOAR recognized the need for independent expert review of this proposal. These experts from whom you will hear shortly, are highly qualified in their respective fields. That is why we asked each of them to provide an objective assessment of this proposal.

In 2007 and 2008 SOAR opposed City of Chicago approval of a heliport at the new Children's Memorial Hospital unless and until the serious safety issues identified were addressed and mitigated. The City of Chicago deferred all of the safety issues to the Illinois Department of Transportation.

The safety issues identified have never been addressed.

In fact, additional safety concerns have been raised after further expert review. As you will learn today, questions about the data integrity of the heliport application filed with the Illinois Department of Transportation have also been raised. Additional details about these concerns will be explained this evening.

This heliport proposal presents serious and significant risks to the patients, doctors, nurses, and staff of Children's Memorial Hospital as well as to workers, visitors and residents in the community. Children's Memorial Hospital has not demonstrated the safety of this proposal, and there is expert testimony that this proposal is indeed unsafe. This proposal needs a thorough and exhaustive examination of the risks involved. Can a heliport be operated safely in what a former investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board called "a hostile environment"?

The hospital, through its own experts, has admitted that the safety of the proposal has not been studied. It is the responsibility of the hospital to demonstrate to the community that the heliport will be safe. The hospital has not lived up to that responsibility.

Now is the time for the hospital to consider other options as well.

SOAR respectfully requests that the Illinois Department of Transportation deny Children's Memorial Hospital's rooftop heliport application. Further, SOAR encourages Children's Memorial Hospital to instead carefully review and utilize the alternative heliport location suggested by Alderman Brendan Reilly.

Thank you.