Michigan Avenue Safety Town Hall Draws the Community

Introducing “Do Pedestrians Have the Right of Way,” a Town Hall focusing on North Michigan Avenue Pedestrian Safety, Illinois State Representative Lamont Robinson (5th District) said that it takes a “partnership, between individuals, community groups, elected officials, residents, and City and private agencies” to address safety issues between pedestrians and moving vehicles. Such a partnership was evident at the well-attended meeting, held at Ogden International School’s East Campus on Thursday, February 13, when Illinois State Senator Robert Peters (26th District) and Illinois State Representative Kam Buckner (13th District), joined residents and representatives from The Magnificent Mile Association, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), AARP Illinois and many meeting co-sponsors to hear a community panel and to ask questions of experts in the room.

Phyllis Mitzen, President of Skyline Village Chicago, sponsor of the Town Hall, recounted her pedestrian crash at Delaware and Michigan last June, when a turning truck pinned her on the ground “and changed my life in seconds.” Mitzen suffered devastating injuries to her leg and foot, undergoing 14 hours of surgery at Northwestern Medicine, extensive rehabilitation and ongoing physical therapy. “A recent study by the Metropolitan Planning Council showed that the third highest crash area in Chicago is between Oak and Chicago on Michigan Avenue. We don’t want to see another person experience a crash, on Michigan Avenue or anywhere in Chicago.”

2nd Ward Alderman Brian Hopkins is a member of the Downtown Task Force of Vision Zero Chicago, whose goal is to reduce pedestrian crashes to zero. “Why is it impossible to meet this goal?” he asked. “I embrace the concept and the mission of the group.” He introduced CDOT Senior Planner David Smith, who has been managing transportation projects in Chicago focusing on implementing an efficient and comfortable network for people walking and biking since 2011. “Vehicle speed is the biggest indicator of the severity of pedestrian injuries and fatalities,” he said. CDOT plans on Michigan Avenue involve a redesign at the intersection at Delaware and a Rapid Delivery Project infrastructure involving low-cost temporary materials to address this urgent need.

Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine’s Dr. Mamta Swaroop, Division of Trauma & Critical Care, delivered recent data from her department. “In the last three days alone, we have treated patients hit by vehicles” she said. “And in 2019 alone, a high percentage of our patients experienced pedestrian trauma. Policy makers must see what trauma looks like; it only begins with the crash, it never leaves you.”

Reporting the results of an issue survey to members, SOAR President Deborah (Debby) Gershbein said, “We experienced a remarkable return of more than 50%. And the highest concerns were Safety and Traffic, which go together to a great extent. Along with allied organizations, such as Skyline Village

Chicago, SOAR is an aggressive advocate for traffic safety, including delivering a Board position prohibiting e-scooters in Streeterville and activities by our Traffic and Transportation Task Force, led by Streeterville resident and SOAR member John Ward, who is doing a remarkable job. Working together, we plan to conduct a Streeterville-wide Traffic Survey, with the goal of making all areas of Streeterville safer for people who live, work and visit here.”

Many of the responses from a lively and wide-ranging question-and-answer session came from Yadollah Montazery, Assistant Director of CDOT. He listed intersections along Michigan where No Turn on Red signs have been and are planned to be installed and discussed the installation of 3-second delays at stoplights to give pedestrians a head start at intersections. Alderman Hopkins discussed the importance of enforcement by but pointed out the difficulties for Chicago Police. He and other panelists said that pedestrians have a responsibility in their safety, including putting away mobile phones while crossing. “I’ve learned to look drivers in the eye before I cross streets,” said Gershbein. Alderman Hopkins concluded, “What we are doing is attempting to change human behavior. We have done it in the past, for example, through ‘Don’t Drink and Drive’ programs, effective now after many generations. I believe that through policies and education, we will bring pedestrian crashes down to zero.”
Safety and Security Task Force
While SOAR has emphasized pedestrian safety, residents who use rideshares and drive automobiles also should follow tips recommended by Chicago Police:

Rideshare Safety Tips

Protect Against Car Break-Ins

Protect Against Car Thefts

Attend CAPS (Chicago Alternative Policing Policy) Beat Meetings Chicago Police District 18 officers convene meetings for Beats 1834, serving Streeterville south of Superior, and Beat 1833, serving Streeterville north of Superior, at 6:00 pm on the first Thursday of every odd-numbered month at Access Living, 115 W. Chicago. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 5. For information contact CAPS018District@chicagopolice.org or phone 312.742.5870

Keep in Touch with SOAR Stay abreast of SOAR’s safety advocacy activities by reading SOAR Spotlight every week. Email info@soarchicago.org or phone 312.280.2596 with your concerns.

February Member Social: The Owner-Chief Behind Locanda Ristorante
Meet Antoine Cedicci, the man behind Locanda Ristorante and our host for the February Member Social, Wednesday, February 26, 5:30 to 7:30pm at 201 E. Walton (Residence Inn.) Members and guests are invited to sample complimentary Italian appetizers and pizza and enjoy wine or vodka at Happy Hour prices.

According to Windy City Times, Chef Cedici is not new to Streeterville. ‘(Locanda Ristorante) is the brainchild of chef Antoine Cedici, who was behind the Italian (spot) Pane Caldo (famed for its window-display seating.
Locanda specializes in seasonal dishes, rotating its menu weekly in addition to offering daily specials. Food writer Sabrina Medora profiled him in Chicago Now: “(Chef Cedicci is) an intensely quiet, dark haired man bouncing between the kitchen and the tables…. (He) grew up in the South of France where cooking was his way of life. Antoine spent his childhood making everything from scratch—olive oils, tomato sauces, pastas, cured meats, marmalades—using the freshest of ingredients and adding a little bit of cheekiness to each dish…. Having traveled throughout Europe and learning at the hands of chefs across Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and France, Antoine’s approach to food is driven by discovery and playfulness.”

SOAR Calendar
We invite SOAR members in good standing to attend and participate in task force meetings. Contact Task Force Co-Chairs at least one day in advance of meeting dates. Click here to view SOAR’s full calendar of events.

**Membership Task Force**
**Date:** Tuesday, February 18  
**Time:** 5:00pm  
**Location:** SOAR Board Room  
**More Info:** Linda Marshall, Pam Woodard

**Traffic and Transportation Task Force**
**Guest Speaker:** Joseph Schwieterman, Director  
**Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development**  
**DePaul University**  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 25  
**Time:** 6:00pm  
**Location:** SOAR Board Meeting  
**More Info:** John Ward

**SOAR February Social**
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26  
**Time:** 5:30 to 7:30pm  
**Location:** Locanda Ristorante  
201 E. Walton (Residence Inn)  
**More Info:** Laura Small  
**Register Here**

GET INVOLVED - JOIN A TASK FORCE!
If you’d like to be more involved in SOAR click here for a list of task force chairs to contact.

Build and Celebrate Community!
Don’t let your membership lapse…. renew today!

RENEW NOW

Aldermen Newsletters
Around the Community
Every month, SOAR Spotlight reports a sampling of news we believe will be of special interest to SOAR members.

Census Fraud  April 1 is Census Day but before then, census scammers may try to contact you by phone, mail, a home visit or direct you to phony websites. For information click here. Find the Chicago Region Office here. When in doubt, phone the Chicago Region Office at 800.865.6384

Winter Reminders  SOAR reminds building managers that timely shoveling of snow helps keeps all Streeterville residents safe. Dog owners are required to pick up after their pets, no matter how cold, windy, snowy or rainy the weather.

Publication Information
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Send submissions to Communications Consultant Rosalie Harris and comments to Member Services Manager/Volunteer Coordinator Meghan Farrell.

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