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September 12, 2007

The Honorable Richard M. Daley  
Mayor, City of Chicago  
City Hall  
121 N. LaSalle Street  
Chicago, IL 60602

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Dear Mayor Daley:

In March of 2006, the Board of the Friends of Downtown sent you a copy of a letter in which we asked the president of the Chicago Children's Museum to refrain from building a new museum in Daley Bicentennial Plaza in Grant Park.

As you, Alderman Reilly and other City leaders review the updated proposal from the Chicago Children's Museum, we wanted to remind you of the board's unanimous opposition to this proposal and implore you to work with the leaders of the Museum to find another location in downtown Chicago.

To be clear, we are big fans of the Children's Museum and its mission. And we understand its desire for a larger footprint and updated activities that will contribute to the museum's success in the decades ahead.

However, the new proposal – though different in design -- is like last year's in one important aspect: *It's a new building in Grant Park.* It should not have been proposed, nor should it be approved.

The 150-year old covenant that created Grant Park – the one that Montgomery Ward fought three court battles to successfully protect – prescribed a park that is forever free, open and clear. Since its creation, many factions, always with the best of intentions, have tried to encroach on its footprint. Fortunately, most of those attempts have failed and today people celebrate Ward's vision, wisdom and tenacity. In fact, with the advent of the Museum Campus and, more recently, Millennium Park, the city and its cultural institutions have generally expanded and improved the green-space *around* Grant Park without encroaching on its original size or purpose.

With the growing popularity of downtown Chicago and Grant Park as a visitor destination and residential neighborhood, allowing the Chicago Children's Museum, or any museum, to build on the historic Grant Park footprint would set the stage for other museums and cultural attractions to do the same – thereby turning one of our city's gems into a smaller park ringed by "pay-to-enjoy" activities. For example, we understand there is already an RFP being distributed that would put a freestanding restaurant in the southwest corner of Grant Park.

We agree with supporters of the Museum that the BP Pedestrian Bridge from Millennium Park does lead into an underutilized space. However, we believe there are other solutions and improvements that can be made to Daley Bicentennial Plaza without adding a precedent-making museum.

In conclusion, we ask you to work with the Children's Museum to find another suitable location in downtown Chicago that can ensure its success without dishonoring the work of Montgomery Ward and many other Chicago leaders who have protected one of our City's greatest assets.

Thank you again for your interest in our thoughts and opinions and for your continued leadership in making downtown Chicago a great place to live, work and play.

Sincerely,

Tom Wolf  
Vice President  
Issue Committee Chairman

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Lori Healey, Office of Mayor Richard M. Daley  
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Bob O'Neill, Grant Park Advisory Council  
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