

# Michigan Ave. 'wall' on danger list

**'THE FRONT DOOR OF CHICAGO' | National Trust worried that buildings will be gutted for taller towers**

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The Michigan Avenue "street-wall" was named Monday as one of "America's most endangered historic places."

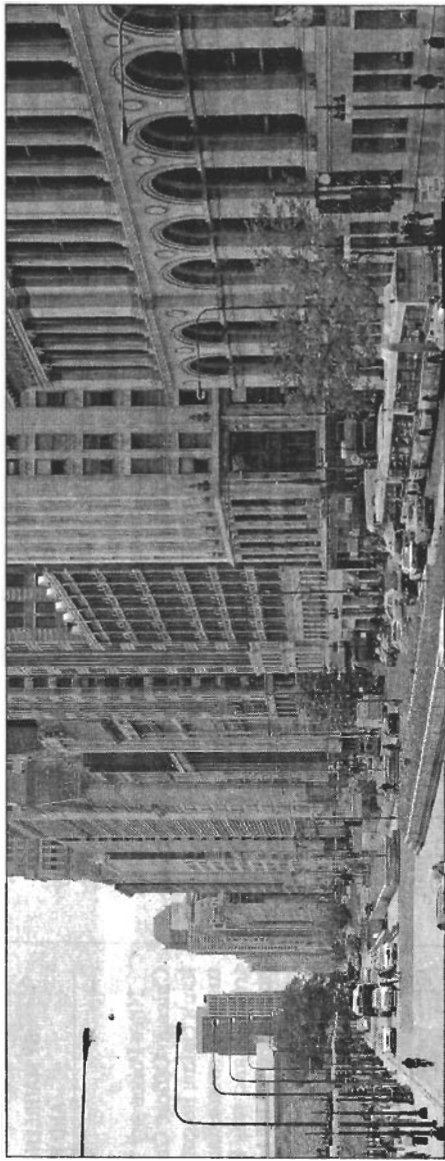
The 12 blocks of historic buildings run from Randolph to 11th Street facing Millennium Park, Grant Park and the lakefront. It's under increasing development pressure that could wipe out its unique character, according to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which puts out the annual list.

"It's diverse architecture, but it all hangs together somehow to make an iconic district that's a key part of Chicago's identity," said Royce Yeater, director of the National Trust's Midwest office. "The most common photo of the city you

see nowadays is the streetwall reflected in 'The Bean.' It's the front door of Chicago, and, if we're not careful, development could easily destroy it."

The National Trust is particularly concerned about buildings on the streetwall undergoing "facade-economies," in which the historic facade is preserved, but the rest of the structure is gutted and replaced by a super-tall office, hotel or condo tower. The streetwall was named a Chicago landmark in 2002, but the designation protects only the facades.

"The facades are important, but so is the whole relationship of the facade to the taller skyline behind it," Yeater said. "If we let one monstrous 70-story building go up, the context of the whole streetwall would just be obliterated, and we could end up with a whole series of huge towers



**The National Trust for Historic Preservation named the 12-block stretch of the Michigan Avenue "streetwall" from Randolph to 11th Street as one of "America's most endangered historic places" on Monday.** | DOM NAJOLIA/SUN-TIMES

behind much shorter facades."

Yeater pointed to a proposal to develop part of the now-closed Chicago Athletic Association, at 12

S. Michigan. "Anything that would intensify and clutter the skyline sets a terrible precedent," he said. "Once one of them happens, there

will be incredible pressure for more to do the same thing. It could be the crack in the dike." [Comment at suntimes.com](http://Comment at suntimes.com).