

MIXED REACTIONS TO CITY ADVERTISING IN CHICAGO



Mayor Rahm Emanuel of Chicago, is selling advertising space on city property, which is being done in an effort to raise additional revenue for the cash-starved city. Emanuel is also selling promotional sponsorships of public programs. The proposal was passed into the recent city budget, which is trying to raise \$25 million for the city. November 12 marked the first day that advertisements appeared on buildings owned by the city. Bank of America paid \$4,500 to the city of Chicago so the company could hang seven banners on the Wabash Avenue bridge houses that overlook the Chicago River. Should Bank of America not wish to extend the contract with the city, the banners will be removed from the bridge houses by December 12. According to the city's website, the advertising campaign is being used for the following: "generate the maximum value for the city's corporate fund operating budget while limiting the social impacts of such advertising activities, including visual pollution and preserving the continuity and integrity of the city's image." The city's first adventure for advertising on public property has already drawn ire from residents and visitors alike. The architecture critic for the Chicago Tribune, Blair Kamin, has received hundreds of emails from readers voicing their displeasure with the city's advertising campaign. "People in Chicago take pride in the architecture of the city. They don't want to see it cheapened," he said. The chief financial officer for the city, Lois Scott, has defended the idea of Emanuel and the administration. "The mayor and his administration are exploring any and all innovative options that will bring new revenue into the city to avoid reductions in services the city delivers and any additional financial strains on Chicago taxpayers," she said. The administration is also considering more methods of advertising, including ads on trash cans, stuffing fliers in water bills, and selling vending rights to city buildings. Reactions acquired from residents and visitors near the ads for Bank of America were quite mixed. Dave Olsen is a student at Loyola University Chicago. Olsen said that using historic landmarks to advertise the city is tacky. He also added, "The city should be paid a lot more than \$4,500 a month to put up advertisements like these." Olsen did not object to the idea of the city stuffing water bills with fliers, stating that one more flier does not cause a problem. Irene Kadsoki was visiting Chicago from Athens, Greece. She said that, "I generally oppose advertising on public structures, although it would take an overwhelming amount of advertising to make me think twice about coming to the city." A Chicago resident, Andre Collins, had the following to say about the advertising campaign: "It is a great way to increase revenue. As long as the city stays classy and does not put bank advertisements on the lions in front of the art museum, I'm all for it."