

CHICAGO

The City that Works

An Interview with the Honorable
Richard M. Daley, Mayor, City of Chicago



The Hon. Richard M. Daley

EDITORS' NOTE A former state senator and county prosecutor, Richard Daley was elected mayor of Chicago on April 4, 1989, and was re-elected by overwhelming margins in 1991, 1995, 1999, and 2003. During his 14 years in office, Mayor Daley has earned a national reputation for developing innovative, community-based programs to address crime, education, and neighborhood development, as well as other challenges facing large cities. In this exclusive interview, Mayor Daley discusses his administration's successful track record in economic development initiatives, such as fostering private-sector job growth and making the city an attractive location for corporate headquarters.

According to a recent Chicago Tribune poll, 72 percent of Chicagoans approve of the job you're doing as mayor, and they also like the economic-development initiatives undertaken by your administration.

I think the role of government in economic development is to manage operations in an efficient and fair way that protects the taxpayers' money. In other words, it's a huge government, and you have to manage it well, because the taxpayers are your shareholders. You're judged by how well you protect their money and by how well you invest their money in terms of quality-of-life issues.

If you look at the billions of dollars we've invested in water and sewer systems, schools, housing for seniors, fire and police departments, buildings, libraries, mass transit, and city colleges, you can see we're investing in the present and future of this city. It's extremely important to understand that we're trying to improve the quality of life for the people. Since 1989, we've invested more than \$11 billion in infrastructure. That's quite a bit of money, but especially in hard economic times, I think it's important.

If you don't spend the money now, it's going to cost you maybe twice as much in a few years. So you look at the present and the future. You say, that school is worth building, that library is worth building, and that police station is worth building because, if you don't build them, the inefficiencies will cost you more money over time. In the long run, especially when it comes to the water and sewer systems, it's going to cost you more to repair them each month than if you make the investments when you have to.

Chicago has had great success over the past few years in attracting private-sector job growth, especially in business services. Why?

Chicago is a very diverse city. We have manufacturing, and of course, everybody's losing manufacturing in the United States these days, which is a great concern. We still have a huge manufacturing base, and it keeps expanding, but we need to look at it differently. We need to have specialized manufacturing. We need to have vocational schools. We need to have the technology to compete with overseas manufacturers, and I think we can.

Professional services have been growing in Chicago for a number of reasons. First, there's higher education. Our universities – the University of Chicago, the Illinois Institute of Technology, the University of Illinois, Northwestern, DePaul, and Loyola – are outstanding. Our graduate schools and medical institutions – the University of Illinois, St. Luke's Presbyterian, Northwestern University, and the University of Chicago – are also outstanding. These quality institutions help

make Chicago a great place for businesses to locate or relocate.

Second, the younger people who come to Chicago are very well educated. That is, if you look at the demographics of the city over the past 10 or 15 years, you can see that many young people have moved to Chicago from around the country, from around the world, and especially from around the Midwest because of our great schools.

In addition to attracting young, well-educated people, Chicago is also attracting large corporations.

Yes, we are pro-business and pro-development. Of course, you have to have a business community to thrive. If you don't have a business community, and you don't have the kind of attitude that welcomes business, who's going to employ people? Who's going to pay taxes? That's what we have to realize. Boeing was a major coup for us – they relocated their corporate headquarters here from Seattle. They're very pleased with the quality of our workforce. They also see the diversity of Chicago and understand that it's a global city.

Corporations like the quality of transportation in Chicago and outside the city as well. Plus, people can live downtown and enjoy the quality of life, which is very unusual. Ford Motor Company talked about the quality of our workforce and our fit with them on environmental issues. I'm as pro-environment as anyone else, or even more so, and I know manufacturing can coexist with a good environment.

If you had to put your finger on just one thing that makes Chicago unique, what would you say it is?

Our workforce. I truly believe that. We're constantly training and retraining our workforce. We're also bringing vocational training back into the public schools for high school students, which is unheard of in the United States, and city colleges are working hand-in-hand with the private sector – all of these things are unique. I believe success comes down to your workforce and to how well you've prepared your workforce. We've done that well. That's why I really believe Chicago can compete with the rest of the world. ●