



CHICAGO BREAKING NEWS.COM

Your site for breaking news important to Chicago, from the Chicago Tribune, WGN-TV, News 720 WGN-AM and CLTV. Headlines you could have read ...

4:11 p.m.
Cops say Chicago man is Skokie's 'police bandit'

3:39 p.m.
Emanuel cancels appt at Chicago fundraise

CHICAGOLAND

PAGES 6-15

Mayor's sphere of influence extends to suburbs

By **John Kellman**
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Mayor Richard Daley, despite a reputed obsession with trash, graffiti and other minor details of urban governance, has cultivated influence that extends far past the city limits, making him either a valuable friend or fear-some enemy to generations of suburban leaders.

His many admirers say Daley marked a change from old-school city bosses who viewed the suburbs as parasites or rivals and instead tried to forge surrounding communities into a coalition for the common good.

"At the end of the day, Mayor Daley got it," said Randy Blankhorn of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. "While the city drives a lot of what happens here, we're co-dependent. That's a great reflection on him and the city of Chicago."

But the harmony wasn't universal. One of Daley's signature goals, the expansion of O'Hare International Airport, caused long, bitter clashes with some suburban towns, sparking familiar accusations of imperiousness and arrogance.

Yet his looming absence is stirring the same kind of uneasiness in the suburbs that many feel in the city. Some suburban leaders worry that Daley's successor, facing a massive budget deficit, won't take the same inter-



Jerry Bennett



John Gellis



Craig Johnson



Al Larson

est in regional issues.

"I'd hate to see that go away," said Schaumburg Village President Al Larson. "I'm worried they'll turn inward and not maintain the kind of relationship the current mayor has with suburbia and the collar counties."

Larson said Daley's father, the legendary Mayor Richard J. Daley, had the traditional big-city wariness of the suburbs. But the younger Daley, who took office in 1989, held a more nuanced view.

In 1997, he created the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, a group that brought together nearly 300 municipal leaders. Palos Hills Mayor Jerry Bennett said that organization has made the entire region more competi-

tive in the increasingly global contest for job-creating companies.

"I think he saw a need and a vision for us to all work together in the economic competition nationally and internationally," Bennett said. "What Chicago creates could mean a job for people in my town or elsewhere, and vice versa."

The admiration, though, was put to a severe test when Daley unveiled a plan to expand O'Hare. A confederation of suburban leaders quickly formed to protest what they said would be excess noise, but the mayor peeled away the opposition until just two towns were left: Elk Grove Village and Bensenville.

Elk Grove Village Mayor Craig Johnson, who sometimes referred to Daley as "Darth Vader," feared a new expressway to the airport would take part of his town's vast business park. In 2003, shortly after Daley had the Meigs Field airstrip destroyed in the middle of the night, Johnson ordered extra police patrols of the business park in case city backhoes began to encroach.

"That was a very scary time," Johnson said. "Think about it: What other human being in this country can tear up an airport in the middle of the night, an airport with flights scheduled to come in, and get away with it? That is unbelievable power. It made us very nervous. Who knew what he might do next?"

The fight was even more bitter in Bensenville, where more than 500 homes and businesses had to be acquired for demolition to accommodate a new runway. The struggle ended only when former Village President John Gellis was unseated last year by rival Frank Soto, who thought it wiser to settle than continue an expensive legal campaign.

"(Daley) took half the town and destroyed the community for nothing," Gellis said on Thursday, declining further comment. "My grandmother taught me that if you don't have anything nice to say about someone, don't say anything at all."

Others, though, said Daley treated his fellow mayors with respect, recognizing the challenges of leadership on any scale. Former Gary Mayor Scott King said he once saw Daley approach the mayor of Michigan City, Ind., to tell her about drug dealers he had seen while bicycling through her town.

"The thing, I think, mayors really appreciate, even from very small communities, was that he always made a point of saying, 'The job is the same,'" King said.

Tribune reporters Dan Hinkel, Norven S. Ahmed-Ullah and Andy Grtman and TribLocal reporters Mick Swazsko, Jim Jaworski and Brian Stodysko contributed to this report.

jkellman@tribune.com