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# Chicago Seeks Visibility, Not Trouble

By DAVID GREISING

Careful planning always precedes summit meetings like those scheduled for May in Chicago for the **Group of 8** economic powers and the **NATO** military alliance. But events rarely unfold as planned.

Host cities were tarnished after at least five recent G-8 summit conferences. The 2010 meeting, outside Toronto, gave rise to claims that the government official who organized the event had improperly directed construction projects to his electoral district.

When Italian officials held the 2009 meeting in L'Aquila, they were criticized for hosting the event so soon after an earthquake had devastated the region.

In 2008, Japanese officials wanted to showcase the host hotel in Hokkaido, only to be told such lavish accommodations were inappropriate while negotiating aid to Africa.

The 2005 meeting, in Gleneagles, Scotland, was upstaged when terrorists set off a bomb in London, apparently to protest the meeting. In Genoa, Italy, in 2001, a protester was shot and killed during an antiglobalization riot.

Chicago officials have said they expect to keep protesters and security threats well in hand. Last week, they sought to turn attention to the reasons the city campaigned to host the joint meetings: the potential for an economic boost and the opportunity to increase the city's worldwide visibility and its long-term economic vitality.

Two successful summit meetings during a weeklong stretch in mid-May could spur increased tourism and convention business, boosters said. The visibility and development efforts surrounding the meetings may help attract new corporate headquarters.

"If you want to be a global city, you've got to act like a global city," said Lori Healey, a former chief of staff to Mayor Richard M. Daley and a top official in the city's unsuccessful bid for the **2016 Olympics**, who is heading the planning effort for the G-8 and NATO meetings.

The city is laying specific and coordinated plans, according to a source involved in the effort. Officials from the city and World Business Chicago hope to brief economic and trade ministers and others traveling with their heads of state about Chicago's development strategy. They plan a tour of industrial corridors and technology centers and also plan to brief officials on case studies of

multinational corporations that have moved their operations to Chicago.

Deputy Mayor Mark Angelson said the city was trying to do more than just improve its image abroad. “In terms of long-term impact of the summits, we are enticing overseas companies to come here and set up their North American headquarters or headquarters of the Americas,” Mr. Angelson said.

**World Business Chicago**, a public-private development agency controlled by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, has recruited business, civic and labor leaders to complete the city’s economic-development agenda in time to present it to visiting dignitaries.

Longer-range efforts are also under way. The **Chicago Council on Global Affairs**, which plans a series of public forums before the conferences, has also formed a high-powered study group — headed by Michael Moskow, a senior fellow at the Council and the former president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, and William A. Osborn, the former chairman of Northern Trust — seeking to identify strategies for increasing foreign companies’ investment in the Chicago area.

Such efforts are focused on long-term results, using the conferences as a starting point. “The value of summits like these is not transactional. The summits are a piece of a strategy,” said Michael Sacks, who is vice chairman of World Business Chicago and a board member of The Chicago News Cooperative.

In the short term, the Chicago Convention and Visitors’ Bureau is seeking to increase the number of foreign visitors by nearly 45 percent over the next two years. Foreign visitors spend far more than domestic travelers do, but only about 4 percent of such visitors come to Chicago, placing it only 10th among United States cities. If the city achieves its goals, it could boost annual receipts from foreign tourists to \$6.5 billion, a significant hike from current receipts of about \$4.5 billion a year.

The city has its work cut out. Ms. Healy recalled how officials circling the globe during the 2016 Olympic bidding were startled to learn how little was known about Chicago by business and political leaders around the world. Corporate-relocation executives said ignorance about the city was common among corporate executives both in the United States and abroad.

“They have an idea of Chicago that is 20 or 30 years out of date,” said Ed McCallum, senior principal of the Greenville, S.C. relocation advisory firm McCallum Sweeney Consulting.

Summit organizers have declined to offer detailed estimates of the economic impact or the cost to the city of the meetings. They expressed dismay last week when Gerald J. Roper, the longtime head of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, told The Chicago Sun-Times that downtown businesses should post security outside their buildings during summit sessions, allow employees to work from home and even prepare evacuation plans in case of trouble. Indeed, disruptions to

businesses — whether from out-of-control protests or from the virtual lockdown that can take place when many world leaders convene — are among the generally underplayed side effects of summits.

The most definitive cost-benefit estimates to date come from a study ordered by the Scottish government to measure the impact of the G-8 meeting at Gleneagles in 2005. Researchers determined that while businesses received \$93 million in government payments and \$35 million from summit-conference-related events, disruptions caused by the event cost retailers \$11 million in tourism spending and \$13 million in lost sales. The bottom line was that the meeting generated a net \$112 million in immediate economic activity, researchers found.

Jamil Satchu, a vice president at L. E. K. Consulting, who vetted the cost and revenue assumptions put forward by Chicago 2016 and is an expert on the impact of mega-events, said it was a mistake to focus too much attention on short-term measures.

“The trickle-down effect of the summits will be relatively confined,” Mr. Satchu said. “Ultimately, the benefits are going to be very much business-community-focused. That’s fine. There’s nothing wrong with that.”

*[dgreising@chicagonewscoop.org](mailto:dgreising@chicagonewscoop.org)*