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How Chicago's wealthiest neighborhoods tipped the election to Emanuel

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Jesus 'Chuy' Garcia

Rahm Emanuel

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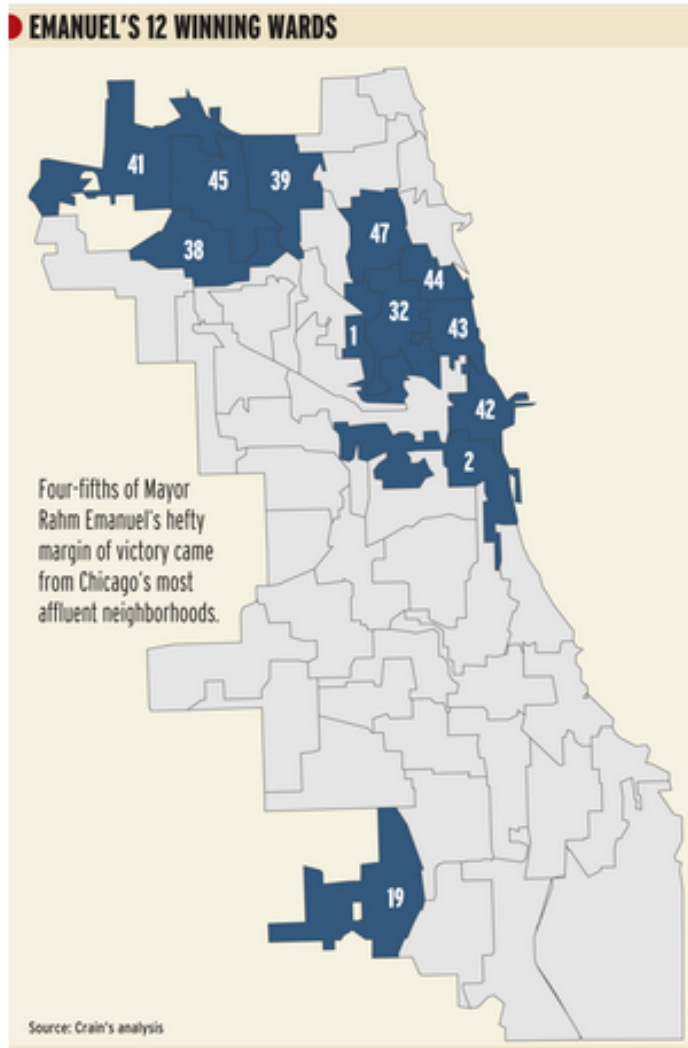
Daniel X. O'Neil via Flickr.com

Mayor Rahm Emanuel rallied support along the lakefront and won over some skeptical African-Americans, but his runoff victory came courtesy of voters in the city's 12 most-affluent wards.

Four-fifths of Mayor Rahm Emanuel's hefty margin of victory came from Chicago's most-affluent neighborhoods, according to a Crain's analysis.

In a campaign where the gap between the city's rich and poor emerged as an issue, Emanuel decisively beat challenger Jesus "Chuy" Garcia in the 12 wards where the median income is the highest in the city, at least \$55,548 per household. In those wards, Emanuel had a 51,492-vote margin, or 79.5 percent of his citywide margin of 64,722 votes, according to a review of the results in nearly 99 percent of the precincts.

During the six-week runoff campaign, Garcia accused Emanuel of neglecting economic development in the neighborhoods that would narrow income disparity. Emanuel emphasized the financial challenges facing the city and the experience he gained during his first term while attacking Garcia for a lack of preparation.



'WHITE AND WEALTHIER'

“Those wards, which are predominantly white and wealthier, were more concerned about the budget crisis and felt more confident that Emanuel would represent them,” said Dick Simpson, a political science professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. A former independent alderman, Simpson contributed \$10,000 to the Garcia campaign.

Emanuel won 65.35 percent of the vote in those wards in the **April 7 runoff**, compared with 34.65 percent for Cook County Commissioner Garcia. Citywide, Emanuel received nearly 55.7 percent, a convincing victory after receiving 45.6 percent in the four-way general election on Feb. 24.

Emanuel's vote total is likely to grow when **absentee ballots**, which disproportionately came from key Emanuel wards, are included.

The most-affluent wards include six on the North Side, Emanuel's base of support: 2nd, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 47th. Also included is the 19th Ward on the Southwest Side, which covers the Beverly neighborhood, and the 38th, 39th and 41st wards on the Northwest Side. Rounding out the group are two gentrifying wards on the Near Northwest Side, the 1st and the 32nd. Combined, the wards are 73 percent white.

The dozen wealthier wards also favored Emanuel during the general election, but at a much lower rate, 52.9 percent, and on much lower turnout.

'CITYWIDE CAMPAIGN'

Emanuel also improved his showing in the rest of the city, although it was a much closer race. In 38 wards with lower household incomes, Emanuel edged out Garcia, 51.7 percent to 48.3 percent, in the runoff. Those wards combined are just 22 percent white. That was a better performance for Emanuel than in the general election, when he received just 42.3 percent of the vote in those areas.

The mayor also won a second term by upending a bit of conventional political wisdom. Typically, incumbents have a hard time persuading voters who voted for another candidate in the general election.

But many voters were willing to give Emanuel a second chance, as he acknowledged during his speech on election night and again during a press conference yesterday. That may have been particularly true in the 10 wards that are 75 percent African-American, where Emanuel received 59.33 percent, compared with 42.4 percent in February.

"I am proud of the fact that we ran a citywide campaign that garnered results citywide," Emanuel said during the news conference. "Obviously different in different parts of the city, but we had strong majorities."

BY THE NUMBERS

Crain's examined the results in 2,042 of 2,069 precincts, or 98.7 percent. Crain's used income data from the Chicago Rehab Network's Affordable Housing Factbook and voting age population figures provided by Chicago-based research firm Rob Paral & Associates. Among the findings:

- The number of ballots topped 575,000 as of yesterday, an increase of 19 percent compared with February, when turnout was nearly a record low. On Election Day, some Garcia backers said turnout had to be in the range of 600,000 to 650,000 votes for the race to be a dead heat.
- In seven North Side lakefront wards, Emanuel rebounded with **nearly 71 percent of the vote**, even though he lost the 49th Ward in Rogers Park. Turnout was 42 percent of registered voters, higher than the citywide turnout of 39 percent.
- Garcia, a Cook County commissioner, seemingly failed to convert most of those who backed businessman Willie Wilson, who in February received 25 percent of the black vote and 10.6 percent citywide. In the runoff, turnout in the predominantly black wards was just 35 percent, below the citywide average.
- Garcia won 70 percent of the vote in the five wards that are 65 percent Hispanic, but still fell short of his goal of 75 percent.