



2026 Bank of America Chicago Marathon Community Cheer Zone Guidelines

Words of encouragement and cheers of support from spectators have helped thousands of participants cross the finish line at the Bank of America Chicago Marathon. Your energy and inspiration make a difference!

By participating as a Community Cheer Zone, your group has the option to be listed as a Community Cheer Zone in the Bank of America Chicago Marathon App, Powered by Tata Consultancy Services, be included in event communications and receive a Cheer Zone Kit with noisemakers and event information.

To be considered a Cheer Zone, a group representative must complete the Cheer Zone Form by **11:59 p.m. on Friday, September 11**, which includes reviewing and agreeing to these Cheer Zone Guidelines.

The following guidelines were created to ensure we are collectively creating a safe, respectful, fun and clean environment for all event attendees.

By participating as a Community Cheer Zone, you and your group agree that all representatives have read, understand and will adhere to the guidelines outlined below. Failure to adhere to the guidelines and/or direction from event officials may impact your group's standing with the Bank of America Chicago Distance Series events and the opportunity to participate as a Community Cheer Zone in the future.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Bank of America Chicago Marathon racecourse (the street from curb to curb) and all areas of Grant Park (including sidewalks) are permitted by the event and are closed to the public. Cheer Zones and spectators must remain on the sidewalk during the event. Additionally, Cheer Zone locations are not held or reserved by the event for groups. Cheer Zones must not interfere with official event sponsor activations and operational work, including but not limited to, start and finish line areas, aid and gel stations, professional fluid stations, medical facilities and timing technology/devices. The Bank of America Chicago Marathon reserves the right to request any Cheer Zone to relocate or be removed, per our safety and operational standards and/or if not compliant with the Cheer Zone Guidelines.

In addition to event guidelines, Cheer Zones are responsible for understanding and following all City of Chicago and Chicago Park District permitting requirements, including but not limited to amplified sound, erection of tents and structures and gathering size.

Have a question about the Community Cheer Zone application or guidelines? Email a member of the event at communityrelations@cemevent.com.

Cheer Zone Captain

- All cheer zones are required to designate a Cheer Zone Captain on race day. The Cheer Zone Captain's role is to ensure their cheer group is providing a safe and positive cheering experience.
 - The Cheer Zone Captain is required to be on site at their cheer zone from the beginning of the event through the end. The Cheer Zone Captain cannot be a registered participant of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon.
- Cheer Zone Captains are the main point of contact between their cheer zone and the event leading up to the event and on race day. This role is meant to create an open line of communication between the event and cheer zone should any concerns, questions or issues arise.
- Cheer Zone Captains will be required to attend the Cheer Zone Captain Info Session. The session will be hosted virtually on **Wednesday, September 23, from 12:30 - 1 p.m.**
- For questions about the Cheer Zone Captain role, please reach out to communityrelations@cemevent.com.

Race Day

- Community Cheer Zone Location: The locations of Cheer Zones are determined in collaboration with Event Organizers and Cheer Zone applicants. Considerations when determining a Cheer Zone location include, but are not limited to, proximity to on-course aid stations and activations, the requested Cheer Zone location, confirmed Cheer Zone locations and the opportunity to extend support to all areas of the course route.
 - If your group would like recommendations for Cheer Zone locations, please reach out to communityrelations@cemevent.com.
 - Please review the Bank of America Chicago Marathon course map to see where aid stations and event activations will be located to avoid overlap when requesting your Cheer Zone Location:
<https://chicagomarathon.com/event-info/participant-information/course/>
 - All event Aid Stations have amplified sound with music and DJs.
 - Cheer Zones are not allowed within Grant Park, as this is event-permitted space.
 - If your group would like to be included in the Bank of America Chicago Marathon App, you must complete the Cheer Zone Form by **Friday, September 11.**
- Community Cheer Zone Activations: Community Cheer Zone organizers are asked to be mindful and respectful of the community they are cheering in, as well as the safety of those at your Cheer Zone and the public navigating the sidewalks along the course route.
 - Community Cheer Zone activations should not include signage, branding or any type of activation that is in conflict with a Bank of America Chicago

Marathon official event sponsors. For a list of sponsors, visit <https://chicagomarathon.com/about/sponsors/>

- Your Community Cheer Zone activation is limited to the sidewalks and should not impede the racecourse (the street from curb to curb) which is permitted by the event.
 - To ensure participant safety, individuals who enter onto the racecourse (the street from curb to curb) will be asked to move back onto the sidewalk by event officials and/or city officials.
- Instructions and direction from any event officials including race staff, course marshals, volunteers, medical personnel, security officers and city officials must be followed.
- Individuals at Community Cheer Zones should not interfere with any participant, event vehicle, event or city official, volunteer or medical personnel or vehicle.
- All Community Cheer Zones must adhere to the City of Chicago Ordinances, including, but not limited to the Environmental Noise Ordinance:
 - No amplified sound or music is permitted before 8 a.m. Amplified music may be subject to enforcement in accordance with the noise ordinance.
- All groups are expected to act in a courteous manner during the event to ensure that it is a fun, welcoming and celebratory experience appropriate for all ages.
- Carry in, carry out: Please take responsibility for what you're bringing to your Cheer Zone, the environment and the local community. Carry all items with you when you leave so that no trash is left behind. At the conclusion of the event, we ask that you leave the location of the Cheer Zone as clean, if not cleaner, than it was before the event.
 - Failure to clean up your Cheer Zone area may impact your group's standing with the Bank of America Chicago Distance Series events and programming.
- Community Cheer Zone Materials:
 - Signage, tents or decorations must not conflict with official event sponsors and are prohibited on the street surface (i.e. decals, sidewalk chalk, spray paint), hanging on event fencing and barricades or stretching across the racecourse (i.e. banners spanning the street). For a list of sponsors, visit <https://chicagomarathon.com/about/sponsors/>
 - Signage should only represent the participating organizations themselves. Promotional materials or branding from third-party companies, especially those not affiliated with the event, are not permitted.
 - No materials may be distributed to participants, including, but not limited to food and beverages. Unregulated items can pose safety risks, interfere with race operations and create an inconsistent experience for runners.
 - As a safety precaution, tents must be weighed down and must not interfere with the racecourse. Tent guidelines include:

- A minimum of 40 pounds of weight must be properly affixed to each tent leg. Appropriate weights include specialty tents with openings or attachments for tent legs, concrete filled PVC tubs or buckets with eye hooks affixed to concrete. Inappropriate weights such as cinder blocks, water jugs, coolers, ice bags or gym weights are not allowed as tent weights.
 - Tents must be 10ft X 10ft or smaller.
 - Please ensure any items (rope, cord, strapping) used to attach your tent to weights do not create a tripping hazard.
 - Additional guidelines may be provided by Event Organizers in the lead up to or on race day based on anticipated or changing course conditions.
- All materials must stay on the sidewalk and out of the event permitted racecourse (the street from curb to curb).
- Moving or altering of barricades or barriers is not permitted.
- Helium and propane tanks are not allowed.
- Event-specific media questions should be directed to event organizers. If you are approached by a member of the media, we ask that you please refrain from speaking on behalf of the event and provide them with the following number to contact a member of the event's media relations staff: **312.586.7516**.
- Liability for any and all medical expenses incurred as a result of participation in the event, including, but not limited to, ambulance transport, hospital stays, physician and pharmaceutical goods and services will not be incurred by Event Organizers.
- The Bank of America Chicago Marathon positions course marshals throughout the course route to assist in keeping the racecourse (the street curb to curb) clear and support all event attendees to ensure everyone has a safe and enjoyable experience. If you encounter an issue on race day, please have your Cheer Zone Captain contact the event first (communication details will be sent closer to event date) and then look for a course marshal, event staff or city official for assistance.
- Cheer Sustainably! Respect the environment and the local community by incorporating the following guidance:
 - **DIY signs:** Create your own signs using materials you already have at home, such as old cardboard, fabric or scrap paper. Be creative!
 - **Reusable banners:** Instead of single-use signs, consider investing in durable, reusable banners that you can bring to multiple events. Please note the guidelines above specific to Cheer Zone materials.
 - **Use alternatives to confetti cannons:** Confetti cannons can create litter which can harm wildlife and the startling noise created by the cannon can be distressing to some. Opt for bubbles, cow bells, hand clappers, pom-poms, or just use your enthusiastic voices!
 - In this [Instagram post](#), Tina Muir, sustainability advocate for the Bank of America Chicago Distance Series, encourages us to reconsider the use of confetti cannons due to their harmful impacts while still celebrating our communities.

- **Use public transportation, bike or carpool:** Plan ahead to help reduce traffic congestion and minimize your carbon footprint at the event.
- **Bring reusable water bottles and snacks:** Use reusable containers and consider bringing homemade treats or snacks bought in bulk.
- **Leave no trace:** Make sure you leave the Cheer Zone as clean as you found it. Bring a reusable bag to collect any trash and recycle it properly post-event.

For questions related to the Bank of America Chicago Marathon Community Cheer Zones, please reach out to: communityrelations@cemevent.com.