The Chicago mayoral campaign presents a philosophical question not addressed by Plato or Aristotle.

Do we prefer a candidate, like Mayor-in-Waiting Rahm Emanuel or Gery Chico, who got rich taking advantage of political connections, or one like Carol Moseley Braun, who got poor taking advantage of political connections?

Even if Ms. Braun’s early campaign has been suffering Hindenburg-like implosions, we can now envision a post-election win-win for us all: Mayor Emanuel allows city garbage trucks to carry ads for her sputtering Ambassador Organics tea and coffee company.

Maybe that’s how Mr. Emanuel can help finance his otherwise solid plan to curb youth violence by expanding after-school opportunities.

His guess of the total cost is $95 million, and he proposes to find $25 million to cover it by, among other things, putting ads on city vehicle stickers, and garbage trucks and at sites like farmers markets.

Mr. Emanuel is the Energizer Bunny in coat and tie, zipping about L platforms in the morning, making scads of other appearances and unveiling serious, well-choreographed and seemingly focus-grouped policy plans. Coursing through them is an appreciation of budgetary distress.

Local officials everywhere must scour for revenue unless they raise taxes skyward, as Illinois House Democrats proposed last week, or eviscerate services and guarantee their own demise. A search for corporate sponsorships is obvious, if not new, be it selling naming rights to public stadiums; advertisements on police cars, public transit or lifeguard towers; or hawking exclusive rights to provide wireless service.

If you guarantee improving the schools, curbing youth violence and limiting public corruption, I could support dressing our teachers in chartreuse uniforms with Bill Gates’s photo on the breast pocket; wrapping City Hall in a Snapple banner designed by the environmental artist Christo; and having City Council finance meetings brought to you by JPMorgan Chase.

But there are some dos and don’ts.

Kelly Shannon, head of marketing at Loyola University Chicago, does not discount garbage-truck ads, especially given the allure of odd places. A university career fair was helped greatly by stickers in restrooms and messages near garbage cans warning students to make sure résumés didn’t wind up in the cans.

As for city vehicle stickers, Ms. Shannon, and others, don’t get it. “You may look at your sticker once to ensure the information is correct,” she said. “The only other people who look are cops and meter folks. If your audience is them, go for it. If not, not smart.”
Phil Clement, global marketing boss for the Chicago-based Aon Corporation, the world's largest insurance broker, said, “Any place people pay attention to is ripe for ad revenue.”

The next mayor’s staff should pick Mr. Clement’s noggin about a reported four-year, $125 million deal that Aon cut with Manchester United, possibly the world’s most famous sports team. Aon’s logo now adorns the team’s jersey, but only after a scrupulous assessment of the club’s worldwide fan base, online audience, jersey sales and impact on Aon’s corporate strategic goals.

So after you find a spot that people look at a lot, the next piece is strategy. Bus stops might be great for strong local advertisers but not for others. An investment bank would spurn a Streets and Sanitation truck — unless it’s trying to lure well-heeled, spray-painting gangs working alleys — but perhaps Hefty would promote its garbage bags.

It’s important, too, to analyze market opportunities and pricing bloodlessly so you don’t cheat yourself, as some contend the city did with the parking meter deal. Conversely, don’t fool yourself or voters about how many corporate dollars are really out there.

And there is, of course, the need to make good judgments about public trust and drawing lines.

Could money be so tempting that you’d stick McDonald’s golden arches on police cars? Would you want a sixth-grade history teacher looking like a Nascar driver with logos from Lettuce Entertain You, McGrath City Honda and Abbott Laboratories?

Finally, if you bring in big bucks by going commercial, you’d best return services that work. You have to deliver to consumers in order to deliver consumers to advertisers.

And that’s tougher than dreaming about fast money to be made plastering ads all over town, be it on Dumpsters or fruit stands.