



2014 Walks of Life Honoree

Martin J. Sweeney

Born and raised on Cleveland's West Side, the neighborhood he has represented as a member of the Cleveland City Council since January 13, 1997, Martin J. Sweeney is a native son who knows Cleveland, understands Cleveland . . . and loves Cleveland.

From his first days at City Hall, Councilman Sweeney began earning a reputation as a hard-working representative dedicated to the welfare of his ward. He is a hands-on, roll-up-his-sleeves Councilman who favors direct contact with constituents.

Councilman Sweeney is personally involved with countless issues, large and small, that impact the lives of the residents of his ward and the entire city of Cleveland.

In December 2005, Councilman Sweeney's horizon expanded to include all of Cleveland when his colleagues unanimously elected him President of Cleveland City Council, a position which he faithfully served for eight years. Mr. Sweeney has been deeply involved in the redevelopment of downtown. The heart of the city has received a much needed boost with new development projects that promise to secure the city's future including the Medical Mart and Convention Center, a downtown urban casino, new construction in the historic Flats, and an expansion of Cleveland State University including dormitories, student center, and a K-12 school on campus.

Martin is the son of Gerald F. and Bride Ann (Gallagher) Sweeney. He and his six siblings were raised in the West Park neighborhood where they all attended St. Vincent de Paul and St. Mel Church and School. A proud graduate of St. Ignatius High School, Martin earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Cleveland State University. He was a member of the legendary 1986 CSU basketball team that improbably advanced to the Sweet 16 Round of the NCAA Tournament, in the process capturing the heart of a city.

Martin is very proud of his Irish heritage. On his paternal side, the family came from Newport, Co. Mayo. His maternal grandparents came from Ballycroy and Tonragee, Co. Mayo. Martin has made multiple visits to Ireland. His favorite trip was when he was able to take his wife Kate and their four daughters to the original home of his grandmother Celia Lavelle Gallagher in Tonragee. Another memorable trip was in 2012 when he and his siblings were able to spend some time with Prime Minister Enda Kenny in Castlebar, Co. Mayo.

Martin and his wife, Katherine (Dempsey), have four daughters, Molly, Bride, Samantha and Margaret. The Sweeney family resides on West 133rd Street, across from Jefferson Park.