



The Hon. Martin J. Walsh

EDITORS' NOTE *Martin Walsh was sworn in as the city's 54th mayor on January 6, 2014. Before taking office, Mayor Walsh served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1997 to 2013. Representing Boston's diverse 13th Suffolk District, he was a leader on job creation and worker protections; substance abuse, mental health, and homelessness; K-12 education; and civil rights. He played a key role in defending Massachusetts' pioneering stand on marriage equality. Mayor Walsh also made his mark as a labor leader. Beginning in Laborers Local 223 in Boston, he rose to head the Building and Construction Trades Council of the Metropolitan District from 2011 to 2013. There he worked with business and community leaders to promote high quality development and career opportunities for women and people of color. At age seven, Mayor Walsh survived a serious bout of Burkett's lymphoma thanks to the extraordinary care he received at Boston Children's Hospital and Dana Farber Cancer Institute. His recovery from alcoholism as a young adult led to his lifelong commitment to the prevention and treatment of addiction. While working full-time as a legislator, he returned to school to earn a degree in Political Science at Boston College.*

Would you talk about where you see Boston today with regard to economic growth and are you happy with its progress?

I'm happy with where Boston is financially in terms of economic growth. General Electric's decision to move here is just another addition to our city. We've done a lot of work around attracting new businesses to the city, while also working to support our long-standing businesses.

As far as the vibrancy of our city, we're heavily dependent upon real estate tax, so it's important for us to continue to build our economy here.

What is the focus of your education reforms and how critical is it that reform is not only in Boston, but goes national as well?

It's important, particularly in the urban areas of America, but in Boston, there have been many battles over the years regarding teachers' unions and budgets.

Boston's Future



**An Interview with
The Honorable Martin J. Walsh, Mayor of Boston**

This battle should not come down to whether or not a teacher gets a good salary. This should come down to whether we're spending our money in an appropriate way to make sure that young people get a strong first-class education. I don't want to get caught up in the whole debate regarding teachers' salaries or benefits – we should be paying our teachers well. But we should also be working to make sure that we have good, strong programs in place for Boston. If we have people and money assigned to programs that aren't effective, it's time to move on and find something that is more effective.

How have you approached the issue of creating affordable housing?

We launched a housing plan in 2014 to create more housing supply to offset some of the high rental and home purchasing costs. We launched a plan to create 53,000 units of new housing by 2030. We currently have about 36,000 units either permitted or under construction working through the process. Much of that housing is middle-class, low-income housing. We set a record in 2014 for housing starts and then we broke that record again in 2015. In both of those years, more than half of the housing starts were moderate- to-low-income. We completed over 1,000 units of low-income housing and that was another one-year record.

We're continuing to focus a great deal of attention on how we can accelerate the creation of more housing in the city of Boston.

What efforts have been made toward reducing crime?

This has been a big issue. With the exception of shootings last year, every crime stat in the city went down including homicides, which are at a 60-year low.

Arrests went down by 15 percent. Our focus in Boston is not on locking people up but on lifting people up, and building positive community support and relations. Nobody is perfect. The mass shootings that have happened around the country are very sad, but we have not had one of those incidents in Boston. It could happen, which is why we're working to build better relationships every day in the communities, particularly with young men of color. We are also working to improve their educational opportunities and to create more housing that will make ours a more equitable city.

In Boston, we're ranked number one in income inequality right now, which is not where we want to be. We want to be better than that, and we have put some things in place to combat this and to make sure that all people can thrive in this city, not just a few.

How important has it been for you to engage public/private partnership in these efforts?

Boston is blessed with great companies that are very engaged with the public sector, particularly around summer jobs and helping us with schools.

It's essential to a thriving city to have a good relationship with the private sector and have them engaged in different aspects of public life. The future of Boston is the young people who need to be able to work in summer jobs. The future of Boston is the people who are in the schools getting educated, and companies benefit from that as well. They're able to help us build the workforce of tomorrow that might fill positions in those same offices where they had their summer jobs.

What excited you about the opportunity to be Mayor and made you feel you could make an impact?

I've been in politics for nearly 20 years. I was a member of the legislature for a long time, and I worked on issues that I deeply cared about. At this particular moment in history, the role of the mayor is important. We have worked with the President and the My Brother's Keeper initiative to make sure that young boys of color have opportunities. Much of the data we see from around the country shows there is deficit in education and in other areas.

What I learned at the statehouse from the issues I worked on made me feel we can make an impact in the city. We also need to have a dialogue around race and we're working to make sure we continue to have those conversations.

Boston is at a very important turning point in the history of our city. Being able to work on building a strong economy and moving forward is great, but so is dealing with issues of the past that have been so problematic. These issues have been talked about but never fully addressed across the board, and we have an opportunity now to do that. ●