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Executive decision

Group to honor high-ranking GM official for commitment to city

By K. Michelle Moran
C & G Staff Writer

For Matthew Cullen of Grosse Pointe Shores, Detroit isn't just the city where he works.

His commitment to the place where he was born and raised is evident in his professional and personal life, and it's one of the reasons he'll receive the 2007 Executive Leadership Award from the Marketing and Sales Executives of Detroit May 17 during a black-tie gala at The Reserve in Birmingham.



Matthew Cullen

The general manager of economic development and enterprise services for General Motors Corp., Cullen was a key figure in the company's acquisition of the Renaissance Center for GM's global headquarters. Gov. Jennifer Granholm appointed him to chair the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and he also chairs the Detroit Investment Fund, is chair-elect of the Parade Company and the Metropolitan YMCA, and vice chair of the Downtown Detroit Partnership. Among his many other civic and community affiliations, however, he's probably best known for work as a co-chair of the nonprofit Detroit RiverFront Conservancy, which is working to revitalize the Detroit riverfront with a mix of private and public projects, including the scenic RiverWalk.

"We need a strong city of Detroit for the region to be successful," Cullen said.

This is the MSSED's 15th annual black-tie fundraiser. Cullen sees the award as one acknowledging the work that he and his GM colleagues are doing to improve the city, rather than an honor for him as an individual.

"We are pleased to honor Matthew Cullen with our annual Executive Leadership Award in recognition of his leadership and support of a number of community- and charity-based organizations," said Richard Marsolais, chair of the MSSED gala and the business development manager for Honigman Miller Schwartz and Cohn LLP, in a prepared statement. "Mr. Cullen's leadership and community involvement stand as an example of his commitment to making Detroit and the surrounding community better for all who live and work here."

In his personal life, Cullen calls raising his sons his proudest achievement. He and his wife, Karen — who heads communications for Ilitch Holdings — are the parents of three boys, ages 6-10. Cullen received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Michigan in economics, and got his master's in business administration from the University of Detroit.

Faye Alexander Nelson, president and CEO of the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy, said Cullen's "vision and drive" have been critical to the riverfront's development.

"The Detroit RiverFront Conservancy is so pleased to be ready to open close to 80 percent of our East Riverfront project in early June 2007 — including significant portions of the new RiverWalk and two of the four planned plazas and pavilions — and Matt Cullen's leadership has been a major catalyst in getting us to this milestone," Nelson said. "(He) is a champion to not only the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy's mission and vision, but he is passionate about the overall transformation and revitalization of Detroit. It is an honor and a pleasure to work alongside him."

Cullen said he's not alone in his desire to move Detroit forward; many fellow Grosse

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Pointers also retain strong ties to Detroit.

“What I like about the Grosse Pointes is their connection to the city and that they’re close to the city. ... And, it’s just a great community to live in,” Cullen said.

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