

Post-Tribune

Costas deserves credit for the way Valpo's thriving

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By Rich Jackson Post-Tribune staff writer

Because I drive through Indiana often, I see enough cities to know that Valparaiso is on the move.

So, too, is Mayor Jon Costas, the likely Republican candidate -- and victor -- in the state's attorney general election.

Costas' anointing as the AG candidate is good for Valparaiso and good for Northwest Indiana.

First, understand that the Republican power structure all the way up to Gov. Mitch Daniels sought out Costas.

Neither the mayor nor the governor would say so, but enough powerbrokers called Costas to convince him to move away from his hometown.

A drive through Valparaiso, east on U.S. 30 and south on U.S. 421 shows why Republicans tabbed Costas. The vast majority of Indiana towns are dying on the vine. Valparaiso isn't.

In those reeling towns, Main Street organizations fill empty storefronts with community organizations or, worse, fake flowers and doodads, to falsely portray the city as thriving. But clearer eyes can see these towns as desperate with no direction.

A loss of factory jobs combined with the industrialization of farming added to big-box stores chasing away family-owned business have provided a 1-2-3 punch difficult to overcome.

Costas and Valparaiso have found a pragmatic, apolitical way out. By fixing crumbling infrastructure using state and federal money, along with creating incentives for private business, our town is thriving.

When Costas leaves town -- and political insiders say "when" not "if" -- Valparaiso is poised to continue forward given that Costas' administration thought in terms of decades, not months.

As part of the next Daniels administration, Costas can keep Northwest Indiana in the forefront of discussion on how Indiana can turn itself around.

Daniels likely wanted Costas because he's seen what happened in Valparaiso and he wants that kind of vision and vigor for the rest of the state.

The positives for Valparaiso and Northwest Indiana cannot be polluted by the guano of some Porter County Democrats.

Among their hooley:

We always knew he was going to leave.

He should honor his commitment to the electorate.

He's leaving the city in debt for all these projects.

The roundabout makes me dizzy.

(OK, they didn't say that. But I imagine a brain the size of a kiwi fruit rattles easily even in a semi-circle.)

These people forget Republican Party leaders asked Costas to run.

And it's not just about running, it's about serving.

Would these critics turn down both the honor and the duty of a statewide office? Although it's unlikely such small minds would be asked such a thing.

As for debt, only one project -- the new police station -- is bonded, and that passed a citywide referendum. In using an old, empty building, the city saved money and returned an eyesore into a cop shop we citizens can be proud of.

The naysayers have time on their hands to complain because they've done little to advance the city.

People like Costas fill their time working on tangible solutions to real problems.

Rich Jackson is the Porter County editor for the Post-Tribune. Contact him at 477-6011 or rjackson@post-trib.com