

**MY TURN**

## Calumet City planning for its future

13 HOURS AGO • GEORGE GRECHIK TIMES COLUMNIST

I went to a meeting a little while back.

Not at all unusual. As a teacher, library board member, parish council member, VictorFest committee chair, athletic board member, etc., etc. I've been to more meetings than I can count. Many were necessary and worthwhile, others not so much.

The one of which I write about here was different than the others I mentioned. It was a totally voluntary attendance on my part and it was not because I am part of a committee, organization, or board.

It was a planning workshop held at Calumet City City Hall on Feb. 20. When asked to sign in, I did, and under the column labeled "association or group" I marked "citizen."

A comprehensive plan for Calumet City is being made by a professional city planning group. They were contracted with a grant from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

An extensive survey, 15,000 in number, was mailed to Calumet City residents and the survey was also available online. Almost 1,000 surveys were completed. These have been tabulated and reveal some interesting findings.

As a trustee of the Calumet City Public Library, it was edifying to see the library received the highest number of "satisfied" (as opposed to "needs improvement" and "no opinion") responses in the category regarding people's opinions of various community services. Fire protection, garbage collection, and 911 response weren't far behind.

As for the categories that had a higher "needs improvement" than "satisfied" rating ... I'll let you speculate about that yourself or better yet, go to the website and view the report for yourself. [calumetcity2013.wordpress.com](http://calumetcity2013.wordpress.com) and click on "documents."

In the "favorite things about Calumet City" category, location by far received the highest rating.

There's a lot of talk about flooding in town, but 60 percent of the people in the survey have not experienced flooding.

I've mentioned before that Calumet City's proximity to Indiana is detrimental to business in town and the survey backs that up. Most people in Cal City do their shopping in Indiana with groceries being shopped for more than anything else. That is also true of people going to eat out.

And there are a lot of other interesting insights in the report. Check it out.

Anyway, the workshop I attended was to get direct input from citizens and to let them help design what the future of Calumet City might look like. This meeting was about what they call "City Center," the area around City Hall and Memorial Park. Not too many folks came, but it was another of those nasty winter nights we're all so tired of.

Another workshop took place earlier at the library and it was better attended. I believe there are to be more workshops too.

I don't know if all the ideas I heard are really plausible, but I was impressed with the professional expertise shown at the workshop and in the survey report. There are realistic possibilities for Cal City's future.

I also know the city is concerned with the future of Calumet City and that Jimmy Gigliotti, fair housing director for the city, and new economic development chief, Bryan Swanson, have been and will be working to make Calumet City a viable city in which to live, work, and do business.

A lot of people have written off Cal City and we do have significant problems, but it's equally true that a lot of people are happy with Calumet City, speak well of it, and want its future to be progressive.

If we are to prosper, we need more of the latter.

GOOD FOR ST. FLORIAN SCHOOL

Congrats to all those who worked so hard to convince the Archdiocese to keep St. Florian School in Hegwisch open.

Thanks for reading.