

Catalano mulls Fresno Council District 6 run

By John Ellis
jellis@fresnobee.com

Cary Catalano is just seven months off an election for the Fresno City Council, a hard fought battle that saw him lose by 5 percentage points to Esmeralda Soria.

That was in District 1, which covers west-central Fresno.

How about District 6 in 2016?

It might happen. Catalano, 41, says he's been encouraged by supporters to relocate to the northeast part of Fresno and run for the seat.

"I'm flattered to be asked by lots of people to consider the move," Catalano said. "I didn't put that out there. I just got off an election. I didn't say I wanted to keep running."

Still, Catalano is considering it.

The seat will be open because current member Lee Brand will reach his term limit and can't seek reelection. Open seats are always more competitive. So far, though, it's been pretty quiet in the northeast.

"I think people are looking for viable candidates because nobody's made it clear yet that they are running," he said.

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One oft-mentioned name who is considering a run is Holly Carter, the owner of Carter & Co. Communications, a Fresno public relations firm.

Right now, Catalano has two disadvantages to a 6th District run.

One is that he doesn't live in the district, which is a requirement. He'd have to move. He said he's willing. He also notes he's a Clovis West graduate — a school in the heart of District 6 — and is familiar with the area and knows many of his former classmates who still live there.

The other isn't a requirement, but is equally problematic: Catalano is a Democrat, and northeast Fresno isn't kind to Democrats. Former Fresno City Council Member Jerry Duncan didn't jokingly say that part of the city should be renamed "Reaganville" for nothing.

Carter already is both a Republican and a northeast Fresno resident.

But the party change, Catalano says, is coming — whether he relocates from his Fresno High-area home or not.

"I'm a lifelong Democrat," he said. "My core principals never changed. Unfortunately, my party left me. I didn't leave it."

Catalano said he is still being shunned by some unions and progressive Democrats because he supported Measure G, Mayor Ashley Swearingin's 2013 effort to privatize residential trash serve in the city.

“They dumped me on one issue,” Catalano said.

So Catalano will switch from Democrat to Republican, though he said he’ll continue his political philosophy of working with people from across the political spectrum to move Fresno forward.

As for the District 6 run, he plans to talk to people — Carter included — and assess the situation and make a decision by the end of July.

Other options, he said, are waiting four years and taking another shot at the District 1 seat when Soria (likely) seeks reelection in 2018. Or simply focusing on his city Planning Commission post and running his business, Catalano Fenske & Associates.

John Ellis: [\(559\) 441-6320](tel:5594416320), [@johnellis24](https://twitter.com/johnellis24)