

Pasadena Star News

David Spence: Addressing growth in the Valley

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HOW do we grow our economy without being overwhelmed by traffic congestion? How can we protect local control while addressing regional issues?

Where do we build the additional housing needed for our children and grandchildren? How do we protect open space, natural habitats and our underground water supply, which in turn affects the quality of our drinking water?

How do we enhance and preserve the high quality of life that we enjoy here in the San Gabriel Valley?

These are a few of the challenges facing the San Gabriel Valley, and there's no easy answer to any of them. Most of these issues go beyond the geographical boundaries of our communities. That is why the 35 cities, Los Angeles County and the our water districts here in the Valley work together through the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG) to address these common challenges.

This past year, the SGVCOG Governing Board made several strategic decisions that would allow us more effectively serve our constituents. These steps included expanding the COG membership and broadening our base of support to include the Valley's water districts. In doing so, we have created a true "umbrella" agency that includes the participation of all local governments in our region, and is the first such organization in Southern California and are better able to serve our residents and advocate on behalf of our communities.

In addition to broadening our membership, the COG's has

begun pursuing federal and state grant funding opportunities that support the COG's mission and committee initiatives. Both of these strategic initiatives were successfully implemented, and the benefits are now illustrated in the Agency's work plan for the coming year.

We are pleased to report that we've achieved many of the short-term goals we set forth in the previous year. These accomplishments include the award of grant funding for watershed improvements, energy efficiency upgrades for

our member agencies and transportation improvements, including the Alameda Corridor-East Construction Authority. Additionally, we have undertaken a study to address the issue of homelessness in our Valley and developed a compendium of environmental ordinances and resources.

We have more work to do to sustain our Valley's prominence as a wonderful place to live and work. The San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments met earlier this month to report on progress and set new short-term goals for the next six months and we have assembled another ambitious agenda. Addressing the issue of affordable housing as well as working to improve the environment are areas that have been given new priority in our organization.

At the same time we will continue to explore innovative transportation investments in our Valley with the goal of reducing emissions and congestion.

Meeting these challenges through cooperative and collaborative efforts will help protect and improve the quality of life for the 2 million residents of the San Gabriel Valley. As we tackle all of these concerns together, we aim to ensure that the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments is viewed as a leader in advocating for sustainable solutions for transportation, housing, economic growth and the environment.

In closing, we are pleased to announce that we recently redesigned our Web site at www.sgvkog.org to add to the Agency's transparency and public accessibility, and we invite you to pay our website a visit or attend a meeting to learn more about our organization and our initiatives aimed at serving the San Gabriel Valley.

www.sgvkog.org

David A. Spence is a Councilman from the city of La Canada Flintridge and the president of the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments.