

SAN GABRIEL VALLEY TRIBUNE

# OPINION

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## *Show of their strength*

**O**N THURSDAY, two of the most prominent organizations in the San Gabriel

Valley recognized former mayors Terry Dipple of San Dimas and Cristina Cruz-Madrid of Azusa, for their role in helping bring together our valley's disparate city governments into a powerful lobbying force.

We salute these two giants of the San Gabriel Valley and echo the sentiments of the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments and the San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership who honored these two with the fourth annual Jack Phillips Award at the Pacific Palms Conference Resort in Industry.

The timing for such recognition could not be better.

Dipple was honored for helping to form the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments and was its first president. Cruz-Madrid, a founding member, helped move legislation that created the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy. Today, the Valley is poised to receive funding for the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension to Montclair and the Alameda Corridor East Construction Authority, which funds key train track/roadway separations so all traffic can flow more freely. The state conservancy, known as the RMC, is working on greening the San Gabriel River by adding parks, trails and open space. It has given away more than \$50 million in grants so far.

What these two individuals did was look outside the box. Outside the box of their own city's limits. They treated the San Gabriel Valley as a unit, something very few elected officials have ever done.

Dipple said because San Dimas was so well run, he was able to work on regional problems. Cruz-Madrid, whose family is vested in Azusa for generations, looked out City Hall's window to see the historic Azusa Canyon and the beginning of the wildest part of the San Gabriel River. She was a fierce battler for river,

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### OUR VIEW

canyon and wildlands restoration. She served tirelessly on the RMC board and was not afraid to take on anti-environmental interests.

Her style — one more of confrontation than reconciliation — differed than that of Dipple, who worked as a conciliator. Yet both were effective as the COG resolution puts it in "San Gabriel Valley quality of life efforts."

Dipple was elected to the San Dimas City Council in 1976 where he served until 1996, the last eight as elected mayor. He was only 23 years old when first elected, the youngest councilman in California for 1½ years. He told our editorial board Wednesday he saw a need for the San Gabriel Valley to organize early on. "All other areas were clamoring for funds and we were being left out," said Dipple.

He was part of the Association of Cities, a loosely based group, but pushed for a joint powers agreement with 31 SGV cities to form the more powerful SGV Council of Governments. Dipple went to each city council meeting personally pitching the idea. Today, the COG has been successful in lobbying for grade separations, freeway improvements, mass transit and open space.

Cruz-Madrid, elected to the Azusa City Council in 1992 and then as mayor in 1997, was the first woman to serve as mayor of the Canyon City. In 1998, she worked with then state Sen. Hilda Solis to create the RMC, and has been a guiding influence on the RMC since that time.

Some wonder how two mayors from two small cities made such a big difference in the region. Perhaps it was their recognition of the need to be part of the greater good. The San Gabriel Valley, still struggling for its share of federal and state funds, is stronger as a unit because of these two leaders who found strength in numbers.