

Valley Forward preparing for its annual Livability Summit

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Jeremy Rifkin believes the world needs to make an economic transition posthaste.

Rifkin, president of the Bethesda, Md.-based Foundation on Economic Trends, will bring a greener, more sustainable vision of economic activity to Phoenix for the Valley Forward Association's annual Livability Summit on Earth Day, April 22.



Rifkin

Rifkin has written 18 books on economics and been an adviser to the European Union for the past decade. He said the world is in transformation and needs a renewable energy infrastructure to propel it into the next 30 years. He said the new economy will be based on four pillars:

- Wider adoption of renewable energy.
- Creating hydrogen fuel-cell storage.
- Developing distributed energy that turns nearly every building into a power plant.
- Transforming the power grid into an Internet-like mechanism that can shuttle power where it is needed.

Rifkin said the Valley could be an epicenters of such change because the sun is always shining here.

The global economy is ready to make its next leap as well, he said, but its aging, oil-dependent infrastructure likely will hold

VALLEY FORWARD LIVABILITY SUMMIT

WHAT: A half-day event to discuss the Valley's approach to sustainability and green initiatives

WHEN: 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. April 22

WHERE: Wyndham Phoenix Hotel

COST: \$130 members, \$135 nonmembers

WEB: www.valleyforward.org, www.foet.org

it back. Rifkin said peak oil prices will be a hindrance to sustained economic growth. Oil hit \$147 a barrel in July 2008, but the price was about \$84 earlier this week.

This year's Livability Summit is taking a future-focused look at the Valley. In the past, the event has focused on the current state of sustainability among businesses and government entities, said Valley Forward President Diane Brossart.

"This year, most of what we're doing is looking 40 years into the future for our community and what sustainability is going to mean," she said.

Arizona officials and business leaders have been pressing the sustainability issue more urgently for the past few years. People are lining up to back solar projects, and Brossart said the idea of sustainability has taken hold after many false starts.

"I don't think it's a trend anymore. I think it's here to stay," she said. "It has definitely moved into the mainstream."

