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**VALLEY RESIDENTS CITE AIR POLLUTION AS TOP ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE**

*Respondents Say Growth Supersedes Environmental Quality & Impacts Public Health*

PHOENIX (April 22, 2008) – A recent Valley Forward Association survey on sustainability issues reveals that three out of five Valley residents, 60%, cite air pollution and smog as the most concerning environmental issue in our region, with water supply coming in second, gleaming a 21% response rate.

Valley Forward Association commissioned a telephone survey of more than 400 Valley residents from WestGroup Research in March 2008 to determine perceptions on these issues prior to hosting its annual Livability Summit on Earth Day. The full-day summit brings together nationally renowned sustainability experts to discuss global trends and insight on maintaining a healthy lifestyle in our unique desert environment. Experts include Chicago Mayor Richard Daley; former U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Richard Carmona; National Public Radio's Steve Curwood and others.

Women are significantly more likely to report that air quality is a "very big issue" (65% of women vs. 52% of men), as are residents over the age of 30 (60% vs. 38% for those younger).

Overall, almost two out of three Valley residents disagree with the statement that the Valley is growing in a way that is beneficial for residents and protects the environment. A total of 64% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, while only 30% agreed with it.

Perhaps, most disconcerting is that almost two out of three respondents said they believe their health or the health of someone in their household is at least moderately affected by issues related to the environment, with 25% indicating a serious impact and 41% citing a moderate affect.

Just over half of those polled consider asthma to be the most pressing health issue caused by environmental problems in the Valley. However, nearly a third of those surveyed could not think of any health issues caused by the environment. One in 10 mentioned allergies, sinus problems or Valley Fever.

On a positive note, approximately one in four residents report they are actively working to make the Valley an environmentally friendly place to live, with 24% giving themselves a score between eight and 10 on a 10-point scale. The majority, 57%, reported moderate efforts, ranked between 5 and 7 on the same scale.

More than half of those polled, 52%, indicated they would like to see the government's role in environmental regulation increase; only one in eight think the government should be less involved.

To achieve greater public action on sustainability issues, Valley Forward will present its annual Livability Summit and a Green Scene Bus Tour on "Healthy Living in the Desert" from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m on Earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>. The program will be held at the Phoenix Convention Center and features: Dr. Richard Carmona, the 17th U.S. Surgeon General and a current Tucson resident on global trends in staying healthy; Steve Curwood, host and executive producer of National Public Radio's *Living on Earth*; and Wellington Reiter, dean of Arizona State University's College of Design. Chicago Mayor Richard Daley will provide the luncheon keynote address followed by a roundtable discussion on livable community initiatives with Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon.

"Our survey results clearly indicate that Valley residents are concerned about the impact of the environment on their health and well-being," said Diane Brossart, president of Valley Forward. "We hope through our Livability Summit and other programs to facilitate action to make the Valley a more sustainable place for residents and future generations."

Established in 1969, Valley Forward is a non-profit organization that brings business and civic leaders together to convene thoughtful public dialogue on regional issues and to promote cooperative efforts that improve the environment and quality of life in Valley communities. For more information visit [www.valleyforward.org](http://www.valleyforward.org).