

West Valley future might rest with renewable energy

by **Lesley Wright** - Jul. 22, 2010 11:15 AM
The Arizona Republic

Barry Broome sees a promising future for the West Valley in solar and renewable energies.

But the president and chief executive of the Greater Phoenix Economic Council told members of the Surprise Regional Chamber of Commerce recently that political leaders need to learn from the region's history of successful economic development.

"Pulling the old levers doesn't necessarily give you new results," Broome said. "When you are building an economy, you've got to figure out what are the levers that we've pulled in the past that have worked and what are the ones we need to pull in the future to change where we are."

He advocated following the example of former Arizona Sens. Carl Hayden and Barry Goldwater, who designed public policies to lure jobs to the state. He added that focusing on Arizona's brand, which has featured innovative health care and electronics, could overcome the body blow dealt by the immigration debate.

GPEC, which Broome said would soon be called Opportunity Greater Phoenix, contracts with cities to market the region and bring new business to Arizona. Clients include Surprise, Glendale and Peoria.

After World War II, Arizona's public and private sectors collaborated to bring aerospace to the state and took advantage of

a federal policy to remove the critical industry from the West Coast, Broome said.

The state could use the same strategy to exploit concerns about global warming, 9/11, the BP oil spill and reliance on oil-based energy.

Arizona's elected leaders now - rather than being champions of renewable energy - downplay government's role in bringing jobs to the state, Broome added. They have fractured economic development policy, made disastrous cuts to education, resisted comprehensive jobs training, targeted the wrong [tax cuts](#)



and undercut the Phoenix brand.

"These guys are operating in complete opposite fashion with how we got aerospace, which, by the way, revolutionized our state," Broome said, describing leadership as the "most inactive pro-business people in the United States."

Looming over the region is the specter of other failed cities and states, such as Cleveland, Ohio, and Flint, Mich.

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Broome said he realized when working in both cities that "trying to help people didn't matter if you didn't drive an economy."

He predicted that Arizona would recover in 2014, after a seven-year recession.

The market analyst likened wealth derived from the housing boom as "fool's gold," since the demand for public assistance increased with housing prices.

And he warned about comparing the savings-and-loan crisis of the 1990s to the recession, saying that is like comparing the Kuwaiti conflict to World War II.

To move forward, Broome advocated that political leaders focus on the state's competitive **assets** and help shake off the national perception of Arizona as an unbearably hot state with limited water and an aging population.

"When (potential **investors**) think of Arizona, what do they think of now? One thing - immigration," Broome said. "They don't have a second thought. If they had one before, they forgot all about it. This is something we've got to ride out."

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