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## Will County expects to benefit from Money story

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By [CINDY WOJDYLA CAIN](#) [ccain@scn1.com](mailto:ccain@scn1.com)

SHOREWOOD -- John Greuling expects his phone to start ringing now that Will County was featured in a Money magazine story about best places to live.

The county was cited as one of the best places to find a job because it was 20th in job growth from 2000 to 2008.

"Being No. 20 is significant," said Greuling, who is CEO and president of the Will County Center for Economic Development. He expects exploratory calls and e-mails from corporate real estate executives to surge.

"It's good for us," Greuling said during a Shorewood chamber luncheon on Tuesday. "It's something we're going to be able to wear on our sleeves for a while and be proud of it."

The same things that caused the county to add all those jobs also continue to make it attractive to developers who are eyeing the post-recession world, he said. For instance, Greuling said a few months ago he received a call from his counterpart in Houston. The Texas city's economic development director said Houston plans to enlarge its port on the Gulf of Mexico to take advantage of increased container shipping that will come when a Panama Canal widening project is completed in a few years.

To do that, Houston needs a rail link to the Chicago area and the city is eyeing a connection to the BNSF intermodal in Elwood, which is the largest inland port in the country. Other southern cities also might be interested in that link, Greuling added.

Greuling cited approval of the \$31 billion state capital bill as another positive trend that should help roll back the recession.

"The things coming to Will County as a result of the capital bill are stunning," he said. Four of the top five projects are completely or partially in Will County, he said.

"I think that's going to really help a lot of local people get back to work," said Shorewood chamber board President Brad Easter. " ... It's just good to see that our state is finally doing something to help pick up our economy. Money from the government is key."

One negative Greuling detailed was the lack of a strong economic development plan in Illinois. Greuling cited a energy technology company that grew out of Argonne National Laboratory research that is now probably headed to Kentucky instead of Illinois. Other states are more business friendly and aggressive, Greuling said. Greuling said no matter what the state or the national economy is doing, the CED plans to remain focused on the basics. "We need our people to be more engaged and involved, that's how we attract these companies," he said.

Gould was glad to hear about a CED business retention program, which he says needs to happen at the state level, too: "Chop wood. Carry water. This is how we're going to get through this. We're not laying down."