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[Kendall may ask state to ease path to more jobs](#)

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YORKVILLE — Last year, Kendall County did its 10-year survey of residents and learned that people are concerned about one thing more than any other: jobs.

“The key reason people are most likely to leave is a lack of jobs in the county,” said Mike Hoffman, a planner with Teska & Assoc. who does contract planning work for Kendall County.

It’s called job disconnect among regional planners, and it’s the phenomenon of people having to drive a long way to work. And as a region, the Chicago area has a high job disconnect.

That leads to longer commutes, higher traffic congestion, longer time spent getting to and from work and a higher cost of transportation. It’s no wonder with time at a premium and gas heading toward \$5 a gallon that living closer to work is becoming a more sought-after commodity.

That’s one of the reasons Kendall County Board members want to take a more aggressive approach toward economic development. They see that as a way of retaining residents and making Kendall County a place more people want to move to. Moreover, jobs are the fuel that drives the local economic engine.

Board members are looking to prod the state Legislature to change state law so Kendall can take advantage of some economic development incentives, such as enterprise zones and economic development areas.

State incentives

It will take legislation from the state to make Kendall eligible for enterprise zones and economic development project areas. The County Board will consider a resolution at its Tuesday meeting, asking the state to give Kendall authority to use either of those economic incentives.

“We could just start to see if the opportunity is there,” said County Board member Anne Vickery. “It doesn’t mean we hafta, doesn’t mean we’re gonna.”

Enterprise zones have been around in Illinois since 1982, when they were pushed nationwide by the Reagan Administration. There are 97 in Illinois, and the state estimates they have retained more than 188,000 jobs and created another 159,235 jobs.

But they are capped at the current number by the state, which means the Legislature would have to increase the allowable number for Kendall to consider developing one.

The biggest advantage to an enterprise zone, according to Hoffman, is it gives builders within a zone the ability to buy materials without paying sales tax. There also are tax credits and a possible property tax abatement available to a developer within a zone.

Hoffman said the state takes into account “economic distress” when looking at enterprise zones, which means about 8 percent unemployment, he said. The unemployment rate for Kendall County in January was 9 percent, according to the Illinois Department of Employment Security.

Few counties involved

Economic Development areas are similar to tax increment financing districts, although they probably give local government a bit more control, Hoffman said.

Right now, only three counties in the state are allowed economic development areas — Grundy, Whiteside and Stephenson. There also is an enterprise zone in Grundy County.

Once either of those incentives is developed, it can be expanded. Kendall officials said it is possible that if they cannot get authority from the state, they could have Grundy expand its zones into Kendall.

Board member Jesse Hafenrichter said Kendall should try to at least get authority from the state, noting she recently received a call from an attorney for a developer considering developing in either Kendall or Grundy.

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