

Workforce, assets lift region



Above: Northeastern Minnesota lists the world's largest freshwater port in Duluth among its vast infrastructure assets. Below: Workers at Premier Plastics remove ATV components from cast molds.

WITH A PROVEN HISTORY OF A STRONG WORK ETHIC, DEDICATION AND LOYALTY TO EMPLOYERS, NORTHEASTERN MINNESOTA'S WORKERS ARE AMONG THE MOST EDUCATED AND PRODUCTIVE IN THE COUNTRY.

The Minnesota State Planning Agency reports that the region's employee-turnover percentage rate is significantly lower than other parts of Minnesota and the nation. Employers that face the increasing challenge of recruiting highly-trained, dependable employees are looking to northeastern Minnesota to fulfill their labor requirements.

SKILLED WORKFORCE

One of northeastern Minnesota's greatest strengths is the ability to respond to the needs of businesses. Educational facilities throughout the region have long taken pride in an excellent educational system which molds workers from the start. Schools here strive to provide an education that is



contemporary, relevant and practical. As a result, students in northeastern Minnesota develop skills based on rigorous academic standards, evolving workforce expectations and the demands of an international marketplace.

In an effort to meet the needs of businesses in the region, Iron Range Resources has partnered with the Applied Learning Institute (ALI), workforce training organizations, industry and regional schools to prepare students with specialized training.

Roy Smith, Regional Workforce Development Coordinator with Iron Range Resources

& Minnesota State Colleges and Universities states, "The success of any region relies on its ability to increase intellectual capacity."

According to Dr. M. Sue Collins, President of the Northeast Higher Education District (NHED), the high quality of, and accessibility to, higher education on the Iron Range brings a competitive advantage to the region.

"The colleges of the NHED work closely with their K-12 partners to create seamless curricular pathways for our learners from secondary to post-secondary education and have renewed technical educa-

tion programming through the Applied Learning Institute. We have also engaged in program development for five new technical programs that business and industry helped design," said Collins.

At the heart of the collective work between agencies like Iron Range Resources and NHED is the opportunity to enhance the skills, abilities and aptitudes of the northern Minnesota workforce and of those who relocate to the region.

Collins stated, "the innovative strategy of listening intently to the needs identified by the region's industries, creating programs around those needs, and delivering state-of-the-art, relevant education through academic programming or customized training gives northeastern Minnesota a competitive advantage."

"We want our students to live, grow and work within the region," she added.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Collectively, the communities in northeastern Minnesota have a variety of industrial parks that can meet the needs of nearly any business. The industrial parks offer amenities ranging from curb and gutter to fiber optics, incubator buildings to build-to-suit sites and DSL high speed internet access. Manufacturers, telecommunications firms, software developers, and heavy industry companies already call these parks home.

In addition to the array of industrial parks, the region offers accessible transportation connections, reliable and affordable energy resources and relatively cheap land.

Bill Culbert, owner/broker/appraiser from Culbert Realty, said, "In northeastern Minnesota, commercial and industrial properties and real estate are significantly more affordable compared to the metro area."

TRANSPORTATION

The robust transportation system in northeastern Minnesota connects to local, regional and national markets. Airports, roadways and rail lines throughout northeastern Minnesota, as well as a major Great Lakes port, all provide efficient delivery and distribution of products.

Communities throughout

northeastern Minnesota are connected by a vital four-lane highway system that in turn connects to numerous state and federal routes. These essential routes allow efficient transportation of wood, agricultural products and other goods to and from the Canadian border to the port city of Duluth, Minneapolis/St. Paul, the nation, and beyond.

According to Adolph Ojard, Executive Director of the Duluth Seaway Port Authority, the Twin Ports (Duluth, Minn./Superior, Wisc.) is the largest port in all the Great Lakes and is the 16th largest international port.

"The Twin Ports provide multimodal transportation services to a variety of industries for domestic and international trade," said Ojard.

According to Ojard, the port regularly ships products like iron ore, coal, limestone, cement, and grain. Taconite pellets from northeastern Minnesota's Iron Range, are sometimes shipped as far as Italy, Spain, China and North Africa.

The port, which ships about 45 million net tons annually, has facilitated shipping of massive wind turbines, manufactured goods, generators, power substations, and oil refinery equipment.

Whether a company is importing raw materials or exporting a finished product, the rail/marine option offers a competitive advantage according to Ojard.

"Trains are about three times more fuel-efficient at moving cargo than trucks, and ships are generally about twice as fuel-efficient as trains," he stated.

UTILITIES

Utilities in northeastern Minnesota provide abundant and dependable natural gas, electric and steam power at affordable prices. In addition to private and cooperative electric companies that serve the region, several communities are served by municipal power utilities. Because they are locally regulated, rate structures can often be negotiated with the municipal provider. In fact, electricity prices in northeastern Minnesota are often below the national average for all customer classes.

For more detailed information about business expansion opportunities within northeastern Minnesota, visit ironrangeresources.com.

Living the good life



Home to the BWCAW, Voyageurs National Park and the Superior National Forest, northeast Minnesota is an outdoor lover's paradise.

According to the University of Minnesota Duluth School of Business and Economics, for the northeast (region of Minnesota), those who want to move in are about seven times the number that want to move out – the largest in-migration preference.

There are countless reasons why businesses and people want to live, work and play in northeastern Minnesota. The region boasts a quality of life like no other. Northeastern Minnesota is a great place to raise a family in a healthy and safe environment. Less time commuting means more time for family and friends. Add affordable, accessible housing, a superior education system and an excellent rural health care system, and northeastern Minnesota stands out among the most desirable living environments in the nation.

MINNESOTA'S PLAYGROUND

Everywhere you look, northeastern Minnesota is filled with recreational opportunities. With the great outdoors literally right out your backdoor, there's no better place to enjoy all that the great outdoors has to offer than northeastern Minnesota.

Home to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Voyageurs National Park, the Superior National Forest, and numerous state parks, northeastern Minnesota is an outdoor lover's paradise.

Spectacular hunting and fishing can be found nearly everywhere in northeastern Minnesota. Hikers and bikers can explore miles of paved and unpaved trails within the region. In winter, snowmobilers can take

advantage of more than 2,000 miles of snowmobile trails found within the region. All terrain vehicle trails and designated riding areas provide prime northwoods riding to ATV and off-road riders.

Bear, moose, deer, birds and other unique wildlife abound in northeastern Minnesota.

A HEALTHY, SAFE PLACE

Minnesota has long been a leader in healthcare and the northeast Minnesota region does not fall short. Northeastern Minnesota is better equipped to serve healthcare needs than most rural areas in the United States. With 18 hospitals within the northeastern region (including two world class systems – St. Mary's & St. Luke's), over 60 outpatient clinics, more than 200 physicians and over 100 dentists, high quality, accessible healthcare is available in northeastern Minnesota.

In northeastern Minnesota, the physician ratio is 3 per 1,000. The dentist ratio is 1:1,000.

According to CQ Press' 2008 rankings, Minnesota is the healthiest state in the country. The state has been among the top five states since 1996 and among the top three since 2006. (source: MN Department of Employment and Economic Development.)

For more information about the quality of life in northeastern Minnesota, visit ironrangeresources.com.

Top five reasons NE Minnesota's stock is rising:

1. Unprecedented growth
2. Innovation
3. World-class global companies
4. Quality of place
5. Millions available for financing

Now is the time to take your shot!

There has never been a better time to start or relocate your business in Northeastern Minnesota. Be a player in the unprecedented economic expansion poised on our horizon.

It's time to see beyond our great golf and northwoods charm, and take a serious look at the opportunities at hand.

Contact our business development team today and find out how Iron Range Resources can assist you with financing, site selection and incentive packages that are way above par.

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