

New GIS-based Website Simplifies Site Selection in 11-County Minneapolis-Saint Paul Region

MINNEAPOLIS, May 8, 2008 – The 11-county Minneapolis-Saint Paul region launched MetroMSP.org, a powerful new site selection website designed to streamline the process of finding the ideal property on which to expand or locate a business in the Metro MSP region.

The free website borrows its name from the internationally recognized symbol for the Minneapolis/Saint Paul International Airport, MSP. It uses sophisticated Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to enable users to quickly pinpoint potential sites and view critical data needed to make informed site selection decisions.

“Commercial, industrial and retail firms – large and small – can take advantage of this powerful resource to identify the ideal location for a new business or an expansion,” said Todd Klingel, president and CEO of the Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber convened a consortium of public and private partners to create MetroMSP.org and is administering the website.

“This will greatly simplify the process for companies and entrepreneurs, and make the Metro MSP region more competitive against other major metro areas around the country,” Klingel said. “Thanks to this unprecedented, innovative partnership between public officials and private sector businesses, we have a new economic development tool.”

The website covers the anchor cities of Minneapolis, Saint Paul and Bloomington, as well as the counties of Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Ramsey, Scott, Sherburne, Washington and Wright.

“Economic development is very competitive because cities and towns across America are actively pursuing the same jobs, businesses and investment,” said Bruce Halbasch, vice president of marketing at Kraus-Anderson Construction Company and chair of the MetroMSP.org steering committee.

“Before MetroMSP.org, companies interested in the Minneapolis/Saint Paul area might have to spend weeks researching this type of in-depth information or pay thousands of dollars to buy it from specialty data researchers,” Halbasch explained.

The website, accessible from any browser, catalogues and displays more than 5,000 available industrial, manufacturing, office and retail properties. Each property links to an interactive map that displays important information about the surrounding area, such as highways, airports, railways, lakes and rivers, educational institutions, retail centers and parks. In addition, existing businesses are mapped by industry, so users can view the local landscape for potential partners, customers and competitors.

“Providing quality, comprehensive site-selection information online is critical because more and more ‘first cut’ decisions are made on the Web,” said Janna King, president of Economic Development Services and a consultant to MetroMSP.org.

Users also can click on links to connect them directly with a selected site's real estate broker or city/county/chamber contact.

Besides profiling specific development sites, MetroMSP.org makes a case for why businesses would choose to expand or locate in the Metro MSP region. It includes dozens of national rankings in categories ranging from business vitality to a highly educated workforce.

"Unlike site-selection websites in other markets, MetroMSP.org answers both sides of the site-selection question: why a company would want to base here, and what is the ideal site to meet its unique needs. The data and the story go hand-in-hand," said Anne Hunter of Marketing Source USA, which developed the story side of the site.

The GIS software for MetroMSP.org was created by San Francisco-based GIS Planning Inc., a leading producer of economic development Web sites using geographic information systems. "This is the most sophisticated, powerful and user-friendly tool on the Internet to provide the information companies need when considering future growth," said Russ Riblett, GIS Planning's manager on the MetroMSP.org project.