

Lakehead Constructors plan move to waterfront

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With plans in motion for Husky Energy refinery in Superior to purchase Lakehead Constructors' facility at 2916 Hill Ave., the 100-plus-year-old construction company is making plans of its own.

Lakehead Constructors is planning to build a new headquarters at the end of Railroad Street in the Winter Street Industrial Park. Situated between Hallett Dock to the northeast and Amsoil to the south, the new location features 5.8 acres of land near the St. Louis River.

"The main thing is keeping a company here in town that has been here for (almost) 103 years and been a very large part of our community," said Jason Serck, Superior's economic development, port and planning director. "Lakehead's main business has been up on the Iron Range; they do a lot of mine work, infrastructure, things of that nature. Keeping them here, their headquarters here, is a huge thing for us."

The 5.8-acre site includes a portion of Railroad Street, which

will be vacated and sold to the company, to give it a larger, more secure site, Serck said. He said vacating the street is a four-month process.

Plans include constructing a 15,000-square-foot office building and 11,200-square-foot shop next year with lay-down space and equipment storage around the buildings.

"As Jason said, we just celebrated our 100th anniversary a couple years ago, and I'm looking at building something that's going to be around for quite a few years, something that looks good for an industrial park," Lakehead president Brian Maki said. "It's going to look very, very nice."

Lakehead Constructors was founded in 1916 by Roland C. Buck, a civil engineer, under the name R.C. Buck Company. The business specialized in design and construction of large scale harbor facilities that expanded into other areas of construction.

In 1934, a young engineer, Floyd Bernard, joined the company and worked his way up to ownership with two others, and in 1955, incorporated as Lakehead Constructors.

Maki said Lakehead built the refinery was built in 1950 and ran it until it sold to Murphy Oil in 1958.

"That's why we're on the same property," Maki said.

"I really do like this location for a number of reasons," Maki said of the Winter Street Industrial Park. "It gives us some visibility. Lakehead's been tucked back in the corner there for decades, and people will be able to see this company when they drive across the Bong Bridge."

The site was used for loading and unloading barges, and moving steel for construction of the Bong Bridge, Serck said.

The company will lease the land for \$1 so they can get into the site and make soil corrections before winter, and let it settle over the winter, Serck said. The lease will run until the sale of the property closes, expected in the spring, he said.

Lakehead Constructors is buying the land for about \$2 per square foot, the appraised value for the land, Serck said. He said the city negotiated a \$750,000 incentive payment for the project to help with the cost of site im-



Courtesy of Lakehead Constructors

Lakehead Constructors plans its move to the Winter Street Industrial Park next year. The rendering shows the company's plan for its 5.8-acre facility, which will be constructed in the spring at the end of Railroad Street in Superior.

provements for the \$5 million-plus project. To pay for the incentives, Serck said the Redevelopment Authority will use proceeds of the land sale and tax increment dollars, but there will be no new borrowing for the project. The city will make the incentive payment at the completion of the project.

"I think this is a great project," said Doug Finn of the Redevelopment Authority board. "We've heard discussion about Lakehead for years and years, and what's going to happen — really appreciate

you staying here and opening up the whole area. It's a good project for the community and everybody else."

Cory Schmidt, purchasing manager for Lakehead, said the project will utilize area labor, subcontractors they've worked with in the past such as Benson Electric, A.G. O'Brien, Northland Constructing Engineers, and others. Soil work will be put out for public bid, he said.

Maki said he anticipates construction to be complete in August.

But even with the move, Lakehead Con-

structors plans to take a piece of its history with them.

The large piece of taconite that currently serves as the company's sign will be moved and placed at the end of the road — Lakehead Lane — leading to Lakehead Constructors, Maki said. "It's a good location, convenient to the Bong, good visibility," Maki said. "The neighbors are good. I think a good looking facility there will get some other people interested in that land out there ... We're very excited about it."