

Three Business Issues

The three top business issues facing Duluth (Commissioner District One) and St. Louis County are Jobs.....Jobs..... and Jobs followed closely by 2) lack of opportunities for our children to stay, live and work here and 3) ever increasing barriers to developing businesses here.

St. Louis County (and Duluth) is a wonderful place to live and raise a familyif you have a job. Every political season the same question is asked and the answer, too, is the same. The number one business priority is jobs. But talk seems cheap. Once elected other priorities influence performance. In the county, I have helped develop the county's Economic Development Program objectives and am a member of our ED Committee.

Recently, we secured money to build a new access road and a stop light on highway 53 to Cirrus which will assist the company expand their facility and employment.

Opportunities for high school and college graduates to stay in St Louis County are limited at best. Recently, the county took a pro-active stand on this issue. We developed a policy allowing entry-level positions to be filled using either education OR experience as criteria instead of both. We will approach other governmental units including Duluth and the School districts to consider similar action. The county hires several hundred new employees each year. If only 50 were recent graduates, the accumulative impact over 10 years would be significant.

Governmental barriers are a deterrent to development. Permits, zoning rules, land use plans, licenses as well as governmental subsidies are encumbered with rules and regulations that appear to be designed to stop growth instead of encouraging it. Even our economic development groups who should be leading or, at a minimum, assisting businesses find their way through the maze, start the conversation with 'you can't' instead of 'how can we help.