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Expansion of composites in manufacturing in Rochester - by Karen Pollard

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Karen Pollard, City of Rochester

Composites were once considered “space age” materials, only to be used by NASA or the military. Today’s versatile composites are used in many applications in our everyday lives, saving us money and energy. Composites can also improve safety, such as in aerospace and construction applications. Products made out of composite materials can be impervious to corrosion and weather resistant, extending the life of components and products that incorporate composite materials.

The manufacturing of composites does require some specialized skills and training. The New England hub of composites manufacturing is in Rochester, N.H., and attracting and training skilled composites engineers and technicians is the specialty of Great Bay Community College’s ATAC (Advanced Technology and Academic Center). Short and medium-length programs turn out specialists in non-destructive testing, composites manufacturing, resin injection, CNC machining and other advanced specialty certifications. These trained professionals are hired by the multitude of advanced materials and composite manufacturers in the community, such as Safran Aerospace Composites, Albany Engineered Composites and Spaulding Composites. The demand for composite experience is high, and local firms have access to the program graduates immediately.

Safran, Albany and Spaulding also work closely with the Regional Richard W. Creteau Technology Center for high school students in Rochester, which is about to undergo a \$24 million renovation. In addition to IT and trades careers, Rochester’s Creteau Tech Center has developed internship programs for students, male and female, who show aptitude in STEM - sciences, math or robotics. A particular focus is on attracting young women into the profession’s pathway, as these composites positions often pay significantly more than entry level positions in typical female-dominated roles in service or retail industries.

Aerospace composites are important in Rochester, but so are medical device applications and construction materials manufacturing. Expansion of composites in manufacturing at all levels is happening, and the city has just acquired another 47-acre addition to the Granite State Business Park. The city’s newest and largest industrial park, manufacturers have access to live rail, an airport, natural gas, redundant power, broadband and key infrastructure in place such as municipal water

and sewer. This premier park is on the public transit route and has direct access to a state highway, making it easy for employees, vendors, suppliers and executives to interact with this high quality location.

Discover more information about available lots at www.RochesterEDC.com.

Rochester Composites Manufacturers:

- Albany International, Albany Engineered Composites
- Safran USA, Safran Aerospace Composites
- Spaulding Composites
- Lydall Performance Materials
- Continental Contitech

For over twenty years, Rochester, N.H. recognized the importance of composites and is actively supportive of the firms with this technological focus, seeing the relevant use across industry and sectors. The American Composites Manufacturing Association was one of the sponsors of a two-day workshop for composites industry experts from the full spectrum of manufacturers.

“The composites industry needs to promote itself and benefits to the general public,” said Rob Klawonn, president of Toho Tenax America Inc. “Government agencies and existing composites users and their suppliers understand the strategic importance of composite materials, but the average consumer is lacking a fundamental recognition of composites as a material or family of materials that benefit them.”

Some of the key ways they identified composites will expand in manufacturing include reduced raw materials costs, recycling of composites, education of engineers and development of global supply chains. Visit www.acmanet.org to find out more about the future of composites.

Rochester, N.H. plans to capture some of the coming wave of composites growth by participating in CAMX – The Composites and Advanced Materials Expo, along with their manufacturing and education partners. The goal is to keep up with rapid changes in the composites industry and new applications that are being discovered every day. Bringing attention of composites manufacturers to the assets and education Rochester already has in place is a priority activity, and one that will be achieved by networking at the sessions and in the exhibit halls.

The City of Rochester, N.H., is perfectly positioned one hour north of Boston and has critical access to supply chains to supporting growth in the composites industry. Well established employee training programs along with a growing network of vendors and suppliers in composites and advanced textiles makes this region a powerhouse in the competition for new investment and expansion.

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