



Photo provided by BEST WESTERN INTERNATIONAL

The Best Western Edgewater Resort in Duluth features a 35,000-square-foot indoor waterpark, part of an \$8-million-plus renovation.

Best Western looks to grow

- The hotel chain has its eye on expanding in Minnesota by adding 16 more hotels to the 28 it has in the state.

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Best Western International, the world's largest hotel chain, is looking to expand in Minnesota, where it has 28 hotels.

Best Western has targeted 16 locations throughout the state where it hopes to open hotels, including Brooklyn Park, Blaine, Forest Lake, Brainerd and Grand Rapids, said Roman Jaworowicz, director of the chain's region that encompasses Minnesota and seven other states. Jaworowicz said applications with Best Western's membership organization are pending that could result in five new hotels in Minnesota in the next 15 months.

Phoenix-based Best Western is a nonprofit membership organization made up of independently owned and operated hotels. In 2004, the latest year available, it had systemwide revenue of \$7.4 billion.

"We're not a cookie-cutter operation," Jaworowicz said. While all Best Westerns must

meet some standards — such as providing free high-speed Internet access, complimentary breakfast and clocks, hair dryers and ironing boards in all rooms — the hotels' designs and features can vary widely.

Some, such as the Best Western Edgewater in Duluth, have waterparks. The recently opened 35,000-square-foot indoor waterpark and arcade was part of a renovation of the Duluth hotel that cost \$8 million to \$10 million, Jaworowicz said. Other Best Westerns focus more heavily on business travelers with conference and business centers.

"We depend on our owners and operators to know the market better than we do," Jaworowicz said.

He said his company doesn't expect rising gas prices to keep travelers home this summer. "People will spend more time researching prices on the Internet and planning

their trips," he said. "Instead of having a road trip with multiple stops, they'll find a single place they want to go to and stay there longer."

That optimistic view mirrors most forecasts for the lodging industry this year. Smith Travel Research of Hendersonville, Tenn., recently projected a continuing rise this year in revenue per available room, a key industry yardstick. PricewaterhouseCoopers recently projected solid increases in daily room rates nationwide.

Ryan breaks ground on diabetes research center

Spring Point Project and Ryan Companies US Inc. began construction last week on a biomedical facility that will research cures for diabetes. New Richmond, Wis.-based Spring Point Project will use the facility to produce pigs to provide cell clusters suitable for clinical trials that could begin as early as 2009.

Spring Point is a nonprofit organization established to

develop premier resource animals for the clinical trials. Its research is aimed at developing protocols for effective cell transplants to treat diabetes. The organization is pursuing collaborative research agreements with the University of Minnesota and its Diabetes Institute for Immunology and Transplantation. In February, university researchers reported that they had successfully reversed diabetes in monkeys using transplanted cells from pigs.

Ryan is providing design, development and construction services for the site, which was secured through Welsh Companies. The animal housing facilities have been designed to meet Spring Point's complex air handling, shower, autoclaving and sterilization requirements. The 21,000-square-foot facility will comply with all government regulations for producing animals whose organs and tissues are suitable for human transplants.

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