

Press Release
17 December, 2014

Moving an Arctic city offers the chance for reinvention

Moving house can be stressful enough, but what about moving an entire city? Sweden's northernmost town of Kiruna is doing just that. A city of less than 20,000, yet one of the biggest municipalities in the world in terms of area, Kiruna has been forced to move or risk sinking into the earth. Mining the vast seam of iron ore running beneath the town, the same iron ore on which the city has grown rich, now poses a threat to Kiruna's survival. As the relocation plan moves into the "operational phase", Kiruna looks towards the chance for reinvention, attracting new talent, and long term growth.

The state-owned mining company, LKAB, which founded the town in 1900 and is now the largest iron producer in Europe, will fund the relocation of the Kiruna in order to be able to sustain mining activity up until the year 2033.

"The iron ore body is located beneath the city. The deeper we go the further we get under the city," says Anders Lindberg, Head of Public Relations, LKAB. "We are not under the city yet, but soon we will be. If you have infrastructure below the ground it will tear apart as we go deeper, so we have to take action."

From a worker perspective, this is good news. The continuing mining operations and the complex Kiruna project require a wide range of skilled labour, attracting a huge level interest from both inside Sweden and abroad.

Many residents however, have needed to be convinced of the positive potential. The news came to them in 2004 that their city would start to fall apart without drastic action begin taken. After many years of uncertainty as to the city's future, in 2013 White Architects of Stockholm was tasked with the huge project of overseeing the move. Their "masterplan" vision is a city that will transform itself into a more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable city, while preserving its unique identity and cultural heritage.

"The democratic ambition in the project is somehow Scandinavian, or Swedish," says Krister Lindstedt, Lead Architect for Kiruna's Masterplan. "That is, that everyone has a say in this... there is the ambition to listen to what people want in their new city."

The move will take place in phases, the first being the move of the city centre itself.

"Since the present centre of the city is located exactly where the land deformation starts, closest to the mine, it means that we have to start out with moving the centre of the city," Lindstedt continues. "The city hall is actually the building closest to the mine. We will establish a new city square that is the centrepiece, really, for the new Kiruna."

"To get a modern city centre is a big opportunity, we can make it a sustainable city. We can get a new sewage system, a new heating system..." adds Eva Ekelund, Land and

Development Manager of Kiruna Municipality

The hope is that a new modern Kiruna will increase business opportunities and make the city even more attractive to long term residents.

Located 140 km/87 miles north of the Arctic Circle, Kiruna is a remote city with a challenging sub-arctic climate. Famously, the sun never sets in summer and never rises in the winter.

Even with these less than ideal conditions, city planners believes in the region's people and business potential, a unique northern Swedish blend of tradition and technology. In addition to the mining industry which employs about 20% of workers in the area, Kiruna is a centre of space research and aerospace testing, and is an important tourist destination with its Northern Lights, Ice Hotel, and traditional Sami culture. Surprisingly, Kiruna has the fastest-growing rate of small businesses in Sweden, along with an increasing demand for housing. So the advantages of a better infrastructure, more housing, and a vibrant cultural life will be important to attracting and keeping residents in the longer term.

See the Video News Release and Broll, to share and download, on <http://mediaroom.sweden.se>

Contacts and sources:

LKAB

Fredrik Björkenwall, Public Relations Officer
fredrik.bjorkenwall@lkab.com
+46 980-715 44

Kiruna Municipality

Marianne Nordmark, Public Relations Officer
Marianne.Nordmark@kommun.kiruna.se
+46 980707 97

White Architects

Matti Kataja, Public Relations Officer
matti.kataja@white.se
+46 841082357

The Swedish Institute

Sergio Guimaraes, Media Relations
sergio.guimaraes@si.se
+46 73 684 20 65
www.si.se

Other links

Detailed project information “New Kiruna”

<http://www.white.se/projekt/268-nya-kiruna>

Kiruna City Information about the city move

<http://www.kiruna.se/stadsomvandling/City-in-transformation/>