

# Whirlpool buying M-TEC building

LMC to build new tech center on main campus

By JOHN MATUSZAK  
HP Staff Writer

BENTON HARBOR — Whirlpool Corp. has one more property in its stocking, and Lake Michigan College will have the money to expand its manufacturing and technology programs with the sale of LMC's M-TEC building at 400 Klock Road.

The sale was announced Wednesday. LMC Presi-

dent Bob Harrison declined to give the sale price for the center and 10 acres of property.

Kinexus, the employment and training center in Benton Harbor, had submitted a \$2.7 million bid in June for the 44,000 square-foot building. Kinexus, formerly Michigan Works, wanted to put all of its offices and its Bridge Academy training program under one roof.

Jeff Noel, Whirlpool's vice president for communications and world affairs, would not reveal the purchase price. He called it a "fair transaction" with

a value to the community that goes beyond the purchase price.

"M-TEC is a good fit for us" near its other sites, including its world headquarters, Noel said.

He said the building will be used to bring project teams together working on new Whirlpool products.

The sale will help LMC in building a new technology center on its main campus on Napier Avenue.

"M-TEC has been great for us and our students, but the problem is, it's 15 minutes from our main

campus," Harrison said.

Having the tech center near its main building will allow LMC to attract even more students to its growing list of offerings in engineering, robotics, energy production and other areas, Harrison said.

"We're excited about the long-term potential and to increase interest among high school and college students in manufacturing," Harrison said.

There is a growing demand for skilled workers in these areas, Harrison pointed out. LMC is

See M-TEC, page A8



Don Campbell / HP staff

Lake Michigan College's M-TEC Center in Benton Harbor is being sold to Whirlpool Corp. for an undisclosed amount. The college will build a new technology center on its main campus. Whirlpool will use the M-TEC building, constructed in 2000 at 400 Klock Road, for product development projects.

## M-TEC

From page A1

working with dozens of businesses, including Whirlpool, that have pledged to bring 260 new, high-skill jobs here within three years of the center's opening.

The college will keep possession of the M-TEC building until May, and Whirlpool has offered to lease the building to them if needed.

Harrison said LMC would like to break ground for its new center in the spring, and could occupy the building within a year. It will be located between the main building and Western Michigan University's Southwest campus location.

LMC is working on a transition plan for the 250 students and seven staff members who work at M-TEC.

The college has been trying to sell the M-TEC building and its 10 acres since at least 2007. Trustees gave Harrison the go-ahead to seek a buyer in November, and approved negotiations with a then-undisclosed purchaser earlier this month.

Along with the proceeds from the sale, LMC will use a \$600,000 federal grant to buy new equipment. The college has applied for a Michigan Skilled Trades Fund grant, Harrison said.

Its original plan for M-TEC had been to

eventually attract businesses to the area, but the neighboring properties turned out to be industrial brownfields unsuitable for manufacturing sites.

Instead, The Golf Club at Harbor Shores was built nearby.

After missing out on the purchase, Todd Gustafson, executive director of Kinexus, stated: "Whirlpool's continued investment in Benton Harbor and LMC's ability to expand its training programs are fantastic developments for the region."

The announcement of the sale comes less than a week after Whirlpool opened its 150,000 square-foot, \$18.6 million Benton Harbor Technology Center on Riverview Drive. The center is located in a former Whirlpool industrial plant.

With more than 4,000 employees in and around the Twin Cities, including 1,200 engineers, Whirlpool can always use more space, Noel said.

With its reinforced concrete floors and high ceilings designed for industrial use, M-TEC provides a lot of flexibility for product testing and design, Noel added.

"We believe in giving people the best environment possible for them to do their best work and create the best products," Noel said.

Contact: [jmatuszak@theHP.com](mailto:jmatuszak@theHP.com), 932-0360, Twitter: @HPMatuszak

and THE PRESIDENT widespread criticism, in-