

Defining the vision



None of the cedar shingles or handsome signs managed to hide the fact that NMC's "Technical Institute" had been a cherry processing plant. "The old site didn't enhance Traverse City or attract people to the waterfront or to college programs," NMC President Tim Nelson said. "We needed a larger vision."

Finally, the engine of change shifted into high gear in 1998 when NMC's Strategic Plan identified the technical campus as a priority. The following year, Grand Traverse County voters approved a \$34.7 million bond request that included \$7 million for West Bay redevelopment.

"There was some conversation about selling the property," Nelson said, "but the College felt a sense of stewardship about this waterfront location."

The question was how to best use the site physically and programmatically to serve the region.

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down the freezer building," Nelson said. "It was to do something meaningful here." After discussion and review, four program areas were identified that were synergistic with each other, the economy and the environment: The Great Lakes Maritime Academy, The Great Lakes Culinary Institute, The Great Lakes Water Studies Institute, and The Great Lakes Professional Development Center.

"All of these activities are about partnerships," Nelson said, "about leveraging resources and building relevancy for our community." The Maritime Academy has always developed in cooperation with the shipping industry and has now added ocean certification

and a bachelor's degree from Ferris State University to the curriculum.

The Great Lakes Culinary Institute is a partner with regional farms and vineyards to promote these products in its new training restaurant, Lobdell's, and at special events. The Professional Development Center will accommodate larger audiences for conferencing than NMC has been able to host.

"This facility will support the collaborative relationships we have with institutions like Munson Healthcare," Nelson said, "and provide lifelong learning opportunities for our whole region."

"Creating the Water Studies Institute was a conscious

choice to become engaged in a significant way in the stewardship of water," Nelson said, "because water is the resource that binds this region together. We have a responsibility as an institution to be more active and intentional — and NMC can be a point of neutrality which convenes important conversations."

Probably no one will miss the freezer building, Nelson acknowledged, "but it served us well." In fact, he said, "The old buildings have provided 15,000 tons of crushed materials — environmentally safe materials — as a foundation for the new facility."

The west wing of the building opened in early October as a home for the Great Lakes Water Studies Institute and the Great Lakes Maritime Academy. The east wing will open in January for the Culinary Institute and Professional Development Center.

"The Great Lakes Campus will be a new entry point for the college and the community,"

Nelson said. "NMC has been a hidden gem in many respects because of our location under the pines on East Front Street. The Great Lakes Campus will open us up to full view in an inviting way — and we invite everyone to experience it with us."



**Timothy J. Nelson
NMC President**