



September 23, 2009

## Beneficial partnership

### New center could help students, community

Ever since it opened in the fall of 1991, the Battle Creek Area Math and Science Center has challenged students to live up to their intellectual potential.

The center has helped shape the futures of many area young people who have gone on to some of the nation's top universities and built highly successful careers.

Now plans are moving forward that could result in the center relocating from the former Springfield High School to downtown Battle Creek. Such a move could result in enhanced educational opportunities as well as economic benefits.

The architecture and engineering firm of Tower-Pinkster, after completing assessments of four prospective sites, has recommended that the former Cereal City USA building at the west end of downtown is best suited for a renovated Math/Science Center with much-needed additional space. The proposed project would include construction of a new distribution building for the center's highly successful science kit program, which generated more than \$2 million in revenue last school year and already has surpassed that amount in sales this year.

As we have said before, the top priority for a new center is that it best meets the needs of students.

But it also is exciting to think of the center as an integral part of a communitywide strategy to strengthen both educational and economic opportunities in a revitalized downtown.

By being downtown, the center's students would be in close proximity to Kellogg Co. facilities as well as what we hope will become other developments related to food safety and research. Such endeavors could provide internship possibilities for students as well as future employment opportunities.

A strong partnership between business and education would make Battle Creek a more attractive place for families and employers, and help build our economic base.

Of course, the biggest hurdle in creating a new center is paying for it. As currently envisioned, the Math/Science Center project carries a price tag of about \$18.8 million. In these economic times, taxpayers should not be expected to shoulder such an expense.

While Battle Creek Public Schools serves as its fiscal agent, the Math/Science Center draws students from throughout the area.

Therefore the entire Battle Creek community has a stake in the center's growth and success. That is why we hope that private sources will step forward to help fund this important investment.

Math/Science Center students have pursued successful careers in medicine, research, technology, engineering and many other fields. But a sad irony is that many of the center's graduates have had to go elsewhere to take advantage of those opportunities.

One of the greatest benefits of developing a vibrant downtown where education and industry work hand in hand would be to create more job opportunities to retain some of our best and brightest young people here in our community.

We need to realize that investing in a new Math/Science Center today could yield tremendous dividends far into the future.

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