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## Whirlpool ready to build here

- Distribution center would be first in CenterPoint intermodal facility

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[Whirlpool ready to build here](#) By Don Munsch [dmunsch@fbherald.com](mailto:dmunsch@fbherald.com) Fort Bend Herald | [0 comments](#)

The new Whirlpool Corp. distribution center should open next year and bring 60 jobs initially to the area, a company representative said Tuesday.

Luke M. Harms, Whirlpool senior government relations specialist, spoke to the Fort Bend County Commissioners Tuesday afternoon after they approved a tax abatement agreement between Fort Bend County and Whirlpool Corp. for improvements located in the Kendleton area, Fort Bend County Reinvestment Zone No. 13.

Whirlpool, a home appliance manufacturer, plans to build a distribution site at the intermodal facility.

"There are many reasons we chose this site," said Harms, shortly after the meeting. "First of all, the type of work force that's available here is the type of work force we need, one that's experienced, highly skilled and can provide the dedicated work we need to meet our customers' demands.

"Secondly, the intermodal site is in a prime location and provides us the infrastructure and capabilities we need to move product."

Harms said Whirlpool, based in Benton Harbor, Mich., had considered a few other sites but decided on the Kendleton area.

He said the company performs a supply chain analysis determining where the optimal supply chain location is for transporting products, because that accounts for the company's highest costs.

"I would say we probably narrowed it down to four to five key sites after that initial phase," Harms said.

He expects the center to be ready in 2011 and the center will create 60 jobs from the outset, but after that, he said it's difficult to pinpoint job numbers.

"It's very dependent on shipment volumes because certainly we're in a very depressed economic environment but with the growth we expect in our industry, there's certain opportunity for growth in the future," he said.

The distribution center will serve multiple types of appliances, Harms said.

"We are very excited to be a member of the Rosenberg community and we think we're going to continue a very strong community partnership long into the future," he said.

Harms told commissioners during the meeting that Whirlpool marks the beginning of the company's 100th anniversary celebration on Thursday.

"Our company has changed a lot in those 100 years, but one thing that has remained the same is that we are focused on our customers and in delivering innovation and product quality," he said. "That said, we also have a much different landscape today where we are competing in a global environment. We have a lot of very capable competitors and we need to adapt our business to meet the increasing challenges that those things present."

Harms said Whirlpool acquired Maytag Corp. in 2006, and because of that acquisition, Whirlpool had a "footprint of distribution centers around the U.S. that did not match the size and scale of our operations. And that's where this facility fits in."

The new facility will be a key part of the Whirlpool network and will be responsible for distributing products to all North American regional distribution centers, Harms said.

The center will be 750,000 square feet, and the facility represent \$30 million in capital investment, he said.

"We also have things in place to make sure that we have room for expansion and that may happen in the coming years," he said.

He counted the community leadership, infrastructure and general support of the community as being assets for the development.

"We are excited to be the first large warehouse project in the CenterPoint intermodal center, and we look forward to growth here as we move forward," he said.

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