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Northville design firm revitalizes Grosse Pointe

McKenna Associates, a Northville design firm, was awarded Michigan's highest honor in community planning.

McKenna Associates was selected for their work writing "The Downtown Grosse Pointe Revitalization Program." This program helped Grosse Pointe rebound from the loss of Jacobson's Department Store, downtown's largest retail tenant.

Overnight, 135,000 square-feet of retail space was left empty — a third of Grosse Pointe's commercial inventory.

The Michigan Association of Planning presented McKenna and the City its "Excellence Award for Implementation" for the "Downtown Grosse Pointe Revitalization Program" at a ceremony Oct. 19 in Grand Rapids.

Grosse Pointe Mayor Dale

Scrace said, "The vitality, energy and excitement we see in Grosse Pointe's Village today is no accident, but rather the result of a thoughtful prescription the city and our McKenna planners laid out to help Grosse Pointe not only survive but thrive in the face of challenges.

"We are thrilled to be recognized for the hard work we've put into ensuring Grosse Pointe's greatest days lie ahead."

Today, new national retail tenants like Trader Joe's, Ann Taylor Loft, Coldwater Creek and Joseph A. Banks have taken the place of the hole left in Grosse Pointe due to Jacobson's closing. The Kroger store in the Village has also been remodeled.

McKenna Executive Vice President John R. Jackson said, "Grosse Pointe is proof

that communities can turn setbacks, even a devastating one like the loss of an anchor store, into opportunity with great results."

As part of the program, McKenna conducted a market study to provide the city with an updated view of which type of businesses would do best in Grosse Pointe. Following the study McKenna led Grosse Pointe through the process of writing a new master plan.

Peter Dame, Grosse Pointe city manager said, "The diversification of uses, changes in zoning, and public private partnerships have already paid dividends with new high end-retail and office tenants, reinvestments by new and existing businesses and two developments of more than \$10 million each during one of the most depressed periods

in our region."

To help ensure planning techniques were balanced with sensitivity to the traditional character of Grosse Pointe's downtown and neighborhoods, McKenna enlisted citizens to participate. The program was also the driving force behind the establishment of the Grosse Pointe Downtown Development Authority which allowed the city to establish key public-private partnerships.

"It's exciting to see how much positive change this program has brought," said Scrace. "With new businesses opening and more projects starting all the time, we believe it will be years before the Village of Grosse Pointe realizes the full value of this outstanding program."



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JOHN R. JACKSON
McKenna Associates
Executive Vice President

