

The National Association of Counties (NACo) features a prestigious annual Achievement Award Program that recognizes landmark county government initiatives. Awards are given in a number of program categories. One of this year's winners for the historic preservation category is the innovative Design Assistance 2.0 program, administered by Ron Campbell for Main Street Oakland County (MSOC).

Design Assistance 2.0 is a **unique partnership** between Oakland County, the Oakland Main Street communities and the private sector to enhance existing land use to a more productive and sustainable level. The program provides initial planning and design assistance to bring underutilized property to a higher common good.

Expanding on the success of the MSOC Design Assistance Program, which delivers conceptual designs for private façade improvements in Oakland County's 11 Main Street communities, Design Assistance 2.0 offers planning and conceptual design services to a broader and more visionary clientele. The program provides a theoretical **visualization** of the improved facades, landscaping, and interior renovation for adaptive or potential new use of a significant downtown building. It can also determine the physical condition of a building to help the property owner or DDA qualify for grants to maximize the potential of the property. These speculative improvements when put into action may also draw in business owners to a prospective location in the renovated building, attracting people to the area.

The process **engages** and encourages the stakeholders to think beyond the immediate project needs and to look at long term, more sustainable, benefits. The outcome is **protective** of a community's historical and cultural resources while **investing** in immediate economic growth of the community.

Design Assistance 2.0 administrator Ron Campbell is a Principal Planner and Preservation Architect with Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services. He has more than thirty years experience as an architect and preservationist. Ron provides preservation assistance to all of Oakland County's communities and technical/design assistance for the Main Street Oakland County Program.

Congratulations to Ron and the Main Street Oakland County Program on the achievement of winning the 2010 NACo award for Design Assistance 2.0!