

**Project Understanding and Approach**



Photo: Ken Radkow

## Gelfand Partners Architects

Gelfand Partners Architects works to provide a rigorous, collaborative process with which to make sustainable, functional and inspiring projects that serve the public interest.

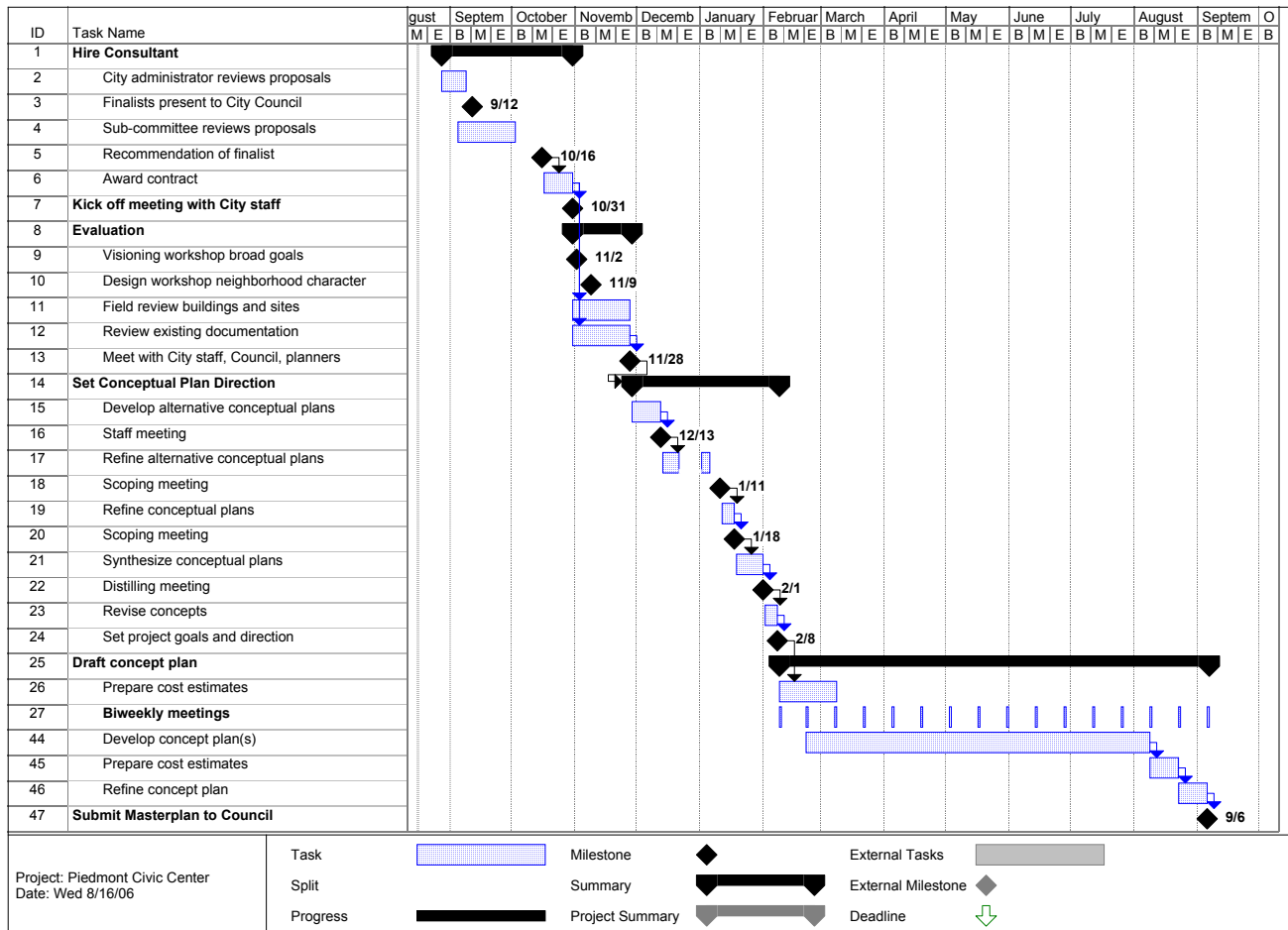
### Project Understanding and Approach

The Gelfand Partners team is experienced in master planning and assisting public and private clients in developing sensible, predictable, and visionary building programs. We are experienced in working with communities and with complex client groups. The Piedmont Civic Center Master Plan project calls on our core skills, experience, and commitment:

- Serving complex public and institutional clients
- Community design process
- Working with historic buildings to serve contemporary needs
- Sustainable design
- Designing responsively to context and resources

The project will require strong management to keep all aspects moving. As with any complex problem, the team will need to continue to move forward while exploring many contributing factors.

The RFP demonstrates that the City has already started to design a patient, collaborative approach. The schedule below was worked out to represent the tasks and timeline presented in the RFP. It calls for a period of scoping, visioning, and distilling, to examine the context, the assets, and the resources for the Civic Center. This is followed by a period dedicated to setting the conceptual plan direction, taking into account the community's goals. With consensus on the qualities and conditions of the existing buildings, and the goals of the community, we expect to work with city staff, planners, and council members to develop a master plan with specific scopes for all Civic Center sites, and a schedule and budget for implementation.



The most important initial task is that of building a consensus around a vision of the future of Piedmont as served by and as represented by the Civic Center. The Civic Center is a link with the history of Piedmont, and an investment in the future. The Civic Center is a service center, but reinforcing recreational, safety, and pedestrian oriented features will help maintain the quality of life so important to the sustainability of all core communities in the Bay Area.

We expect to use our particular skills in facilitating design workshops to elicit the meaningful participation of a broad array of stakeholders. We conducted workshops over a three year period with residents of the Mission District in San Francisco and were able to build initiatives for an improved streetscape, a community benefits district, and guidelines and incentives for future sustainable development by private and public developers.

Among the approaches we used were oral histories of the neighborhood from elderly residents, meetings in coffee shops, an interactive web page, and presentations to merchant groups. We were pleased to get adolescent participation by sending an after school leadership group out with a bag of disposable cameras to document the neighborhood as they saw it.

Our outreach to all the various members of the community helped calm fears and suspicions held by various small segments of other small segments. While we expected that our product would simply be a report, we were able to achieve a streetscape improvement project that will actually go forward this year. It will lead to better access for disabled and elderly residents, and a strong emphasis on pedestrian safety.

As we develop conceptual plans for Piedmont, we expect to use our deep experience in working with existing buildings and landscapes to develop options that are sensitive to the existing character of the buildings and their environment. In mature urban areas, there is a conversation across time that occurs among buildings, landscapes, and the shifting populations who conduct their lives and business there. Building is essentially an optimistic act, and we enjoy designing our new buildings and landscapes with both sensitivity toward the past and an eye toward the fresh, light, and green urbanscape of the future.

The great majority of our clients are public or non-profit agencies and we are thoroughly accustomed and successful in meeting the need to respect their resources and design for tight, predictable budget outcomes. Our living scopes and ongoing cost estimating keep dreams practical. In our work with existing buildings, such as Mission High School, the San Geronimo Valley Community Center, and West-



Principal Lisa Gelfand at Mission Street Community Planning workshop



Seniors at Mission Street Community Planning workshop



Historic Mission High School, San Francisco

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minster House of the First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, we have had the opportunity to work with many buildings of similar type to the distinguished Farr City Hall and also the Recreation Department.

We were able to completely renovate and change use at the National Register Tanforan Cottage in San Francisco and win a California Preservation Award for it. We are currently completing construction on a new arrival building in the Presidio of San Francisco that will showcase both the Presidio Trust's commitment to sustainability, and its respectful attitude toward the historic Parade Ground environs.

Our experience as master plan architects for the Los Altos and Travis School Districts has also helped us develop ways of moving complex committees and competing needs forward in equitable programs. We expect to use all these skills and experiences in helping Piedmont chart its future Civic Center.



Historic Tanforan Cottage, San Francisco