

# MURRAY & DOWNS

## Newsletter

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Lake Canyon Elementary School- Galt, CA

### Good Foundations A Principal's Perspective

Michael F. Ryan, Principal

A structure is only as good as its foundation. While this is an overused and perhaps even trite expression, it is particularly appropriate for architectural

projects. In this case we are referring to the foundation laid by the establishment of fundamental parameters which both define the project and prepare a path to its completion. They provide the framework for owners and their design team to clearly define the essence of the project they are about to begin.

***“What essential results will the client use to gauge the success of the design team and project in general?”***

When these parameters are not clearly defined or the project execution does not reflect them, the project will most likely be unsuccessful. In this article, we will review some of the parameters that we at Murray and Downs believe are critical to the success of all projects.

#### Fundamental Goals

Few, if any, projects are built without a pragmatic end goal usually driven by some physical need. Understanding this goal must go beyond the design product, answering the questions: What must the client gain/achieve at the conclusion of the project? (e.g., expansion of service lines, new client base,

increase in productivity, meeting the requirements for funding or some financial criteria, stature in the community, correction of existing deficiencies, etc.) What essential results will the client use to gauge the success of the design team and project in general? To be grounded in reality, the statement of goals must identify the financial limitations of the project (budget) as well as any critical milestone dates (schedule).

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the entire project team's clear understanding of these goals, and the motivation behind them. They provide the filter through which all project decisions are made. The project team, scope, budget and schedule are established and exist solely for this purpose.

#### Project Team

As early as possible in the project, it is critical to establish the key client decision makers and influencers who will set the direction or grant approval of the project. The project team may be a small select group or it may be a large focus group. It may include construction and construction manager expertise and a wide variety of special consultants. Once the project team has been identified, a description of each member's primary and supplemental responsibilities should be established.

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### District/Community/Board Input How user groups affect Architecture

Nancy Ryon, Project Architect

“How did we end up with a *Chrysler* when we thought we were getting a *Cadillac*? I thought we were going to get three new classrooms, not just two!” Questions and comments like these may sound familiar after construction is complete on a school site.

Input from the District, Community and Board is critical from the beginning to the end of a project

in order to identify and produce the desired, final product. Managing their expectations throughout the design process is key. Whether it's the spike in construction costs or the ongoing decisions that are made in order to keep a project within budget, it is imperative that all parties are informed of these occurrences and decisions to avoid the sometimes unpleasant surprise of change. Start with the end in mind, but keep your finger on the pulse at all times.

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## Tidbit

(Internal Office Communications)

### Glossed Over

For those who may not know the gloss levels of paint, here they are from low to high with their respective glossometer readings:

- Flat  
(less than 10)
- Eggshell or Satin  
(between 20 and 40)
- Semi-gloss  
(between 40 and 70)
- High Gloss  
(in excess of 80)

Typically, the higher the gloss level, the more “scrubbable” the surface. Specify Flat or Eggshell paints for low traffic areas and Semi-gloss or High-gloss paints in high traffic, high moisture areas and for doors, cabinets and trim.

## Stakeholder Input

» Continued from page 1



Nancy Ryon, Project Architect at Murray & Downs, will be presenting a workshop on the above subject at the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual C.A.S.H. Conference. This workshop will focus on how input from District, Community and Board members can positively, and sometimes negatively, affect the outcome of a project. She will identify key elements and milestones throughout the design process so that you can become better informed and achieve the desired results. If you plan on attending the C.A.S.H. Conference and would like to learn more about this topic, be sure to attend the workshop on Tuesday, February 21 at 2:15 pm. □

## Good Foundations

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### Scope

The project design needs to address the client’s vision of the nature of the spaces in terms of quality, aesthetics, and perception by the users and the community as a whole. Specifics include the needs in terms of size, number, and physical dimensions of spaces as well as the operational needs in terms of the flow of people, materials and information throughout the facility.

### Budget

While it is said that projects can be driven by scope or schedule and not cost, based upon our experience, cost is always a significant factor. Understanding the client’s budget and, in particular, the financial requirements affecting that budget are a necessary step in project set up. Budget

development requires an understanding of the true drivers of the budget and alignment of that budget with the scope. Budget development often must undergo several iterations before the designer fully

understands the client’s needs and limitations and the client understands the full impact of decisions on costs.

The budget must be comprehensive. It needs to include what are traditionally called “soft costs” or costs which are not related to construction but are necessary to occupy the building. Traffic mitigation, agency review, and design fees are examples. While these costs are often established and monitored by the client alone, it is important for the entire team to understand the decisions which may affect soft costs.

*“It is often true for architects and builders that a fast paced but reasonable schedule is the most efficient way of delivering a project.”*

There needs to be funds set aside for contingencies. As design professionals, we use our past experience to anticipate items which represent cost

to our clients. Unfortunately, there are aspects related to the design and construction of buildings which are not predictable and anticipating every cost is unrealistic. A look at the recent escalation in construction cost or the unanticipated discovery in the remodel of an old building reinforces the value of having adequate contingency funding.

### Schedule

If all projects are driven by a need, it follows that filling that need as soon as possible will be an objective of the team. It is often true for architects and builders that a fast paced but reasonable schedule is the most efficient way of delivering a project. In establishing a schedule, it is important to keep the focus on the underlying goals of the project and why a particular date has importance to the client. Completing a school before the first day of classes, targeting the bidding of a project with a favorable bid climate, or meeting the deadline requirements of SB 1953 are examples of goals which have a direct effect on schedule. With this focus, the entire project team can tailor the schedule to address these

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Miwok Village Elementary School- Elk Grove, CA

## Did You Know ...?

- 1) One out of every eight United States residents lives in California
- 2) Included on the Division of the State Architect website is a list of Financing and Incentive programs for school districts. These include the following areas: Energy, Water, Material Selection and Waste Management, Siting, Green Building, Landscaping, Transportation, Environmental Education, and a Miscellaneous section. Check it out at : [www.sustainableschools.dgs.ca.gov/SustainableSchools/financing/incentives.html](http://www.sustainableschools.dgs.ca.gov/SustainableSchools/financing/incentives.html)
- 3) School Facility Program Grants increased by 4.62% effective January 1, 2006:  
New Construction per pupil: Elementary: \$7,082 – Middle: \$7,490 – High School: \$9,805  
Modernization per pupil: Elementary: \$3,059 – Middle: \$3,236 – High School: \$4,236 □

## Staff News

### Introducing Our New Staff:



**J. Chris McGuire** – A graduate of the University of Oregon with a Bachelor of Architecture degree, Chris joins us from AC Martin Partners in Sacramento. He is highly skilled in 3-D modeling and graphic presentations. We are already finding his talents to be an essential part of our Design Staff! In addition to his duties here at Murray & Downs, Chris plans to begin studying for his architectural exams.



**Tamara Medeiros** – We are very happy to have Tamara join our team in the role of receptionist. She has demonstrated her ability to calmly and efficiently handle the front desk tasks with professionalism and good-natured flair! She joins us from the Chapa De Indian Health Program in Auburn. She has an Associate of Arts degree and enjoys endurance horse riding.

### Promotions:

**Debra Smith**, from Project Architect to Senior Project Architect – 1 year with firm

**Tony Harris**, from Project Manager to Senior Project Manager – 3 years with firm

**Mykel Davis**, from Project Coordinator to Project Manager - 3 years with firm

**Debbie Dayringer**, from Architect to Project Architect – 1 year with firm

**Eric Peterson**, from Production Coordinator to Project Coordinator – 7 years with firm

**Billie McConaha**, from Production Coordinator to Project Coordinator – 9 years with firm

**Alex Cunningham**, from Junior Drafter to Drafter – 2.5 years with firm

**Dan Salee**, from Junior Drafter to Drafter – 3.5 years with firm

**Trevor Jilbert**, from Project Coordinator to Project Manager – 5.5 years with firm

**Gerry Hughes**, from Estimating Specialist I to Estimating Specialist II – 9.5 years with firm □

## Good Foundations

» *Continued from page 2*

critical project milestones and arrive at a schedule that is reasonable to execute. Sometimes the client's goals require extraordinary schedules. While this often can be accomplished, each member of the project team will be impacted. The client must provide information and decisions quickly and the designers must synthesize the information into design products. Both, undoubtedly, will also work some overtime.

### Outside Influencers

Outside influencers are agencies or individuals who are not part of the project team and who may even object to the project but who have some level of control or approval authority over the project. Examples of approval agencies include: city & county planning or building departments, state agencies such as DSA & OSHPD, or utility providers such as electrical, telephone, and water. Examples of other influencers might be advocacy groups, local residents, or customer representatives.

### Construction Delivery Method

At this point in the project, construction seems a long way off. It is important to discuss the construction delivery method early, however, as it will influence project planning and possibly even team makeup. For example, the requirements for public bidding may impose restrictions on contractor selection and possibly even material selection and budget. The decision to negotiate with a single contractor may provide benefit from their early involvement in the design, but will require some level of commitment (for a detailed discussion of some of the different construction delivery models, visit our website at [www.murraydowns.com](http://www.murraydowns.com) to read the following past newsletters addressing the topic: Winter '03, Spring '03, Fall '03, and Winter '04).

Are the parameters listed here basic common sense? Perhaps they are. Experience has taught, however, that reaching an understanding and consensus amongst the project team on these issues is challenging. In this effort, it is important to avoid assumptions which will lead to misdirection of the project. Only clear communication among the entire team will accomplish the goals. Our intention in writing this article is to remind ourselves of the value in this understanding and thereby gain the reward of better projects. □

## Tidbit

(Internal Office Communications)

### Space from Above

Two rooms which are many times shown with ceilings are janitor closets and data closets. Both rooms can be made more functional by deleting their ceiling structure. At janitor closets, this may allow tall ladders and other equipment to be stored in



Pioneer High School- Woodland, CA

the room. At data closets sometimes hundreds of wires and cables are run to the data panels and terminals located within. Caution needs to be used when deleting ceilings to verify fire code issues and HVAC issues. If rated construction is required, the walls can be extended up to the structure above and if cooling is needed in a data closet you don't want to cool the entire attic space. Also, consider that if the walls do not run all the way up, then the attic space may be exhausting through your closet into the building. It is much easier to run wires and cables through vertical walls than it is to run them through ceilings, just remember to call for required fire caulking at rated-wall penetrations. Making use of all that wasted space above a ceiling may be advantageous for your project and appreciated by its users.

## Project Updates

In design or under construction



### K-12 Education Studio

#### Rescue USD

- Rescue ES
- Rescue ES Kindergarten Addition
- Pleasant Grove MS Gym Addition

#### Center USD

- Rex Fortune ES

#### Buckeye USD

- Silver Dove ES

#### Elk Grove USD

- Elementary Schools #39, 42, 44

#### Tahoe Truckee USD

- Truckee HS Gym Addition
- Truckee HS Cafeteria
- North Tahoe MS/HS Reconstruction

#### Dixon USD

- New Dixon HS

#### Lodi USD

- Bear Creek HS Addition
- Woodbridge MS Conversion to ES

#### El Dorado UHSD

- Union Mine HS Phase 3



### Civic Studio

#### City of Placerville

- City Hall Remodel
- Hangtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant

#### El Dorado Irrigation District

- EID Headquarters Expansion

#### County of El Dorado

- El Dorado Hills Community Library

#### Lakehills Community Church



### Higher Education Studio

#### Los Rios CCD:

- CRC Instructional Facilities #12
- CRC Police, Printing & Office Building
- CRC Science Mod. & Expansion



### Healthcare Studio

#### Marshall Hospital

- New Acute Care Facility
- Parking Garage
- MCPC OB/GYN Remodel
- Digital Radiography/Fluoroscopy Room #2

#### UC Davis Medical Center

- Same-Day Surgery Center
- Vascular Lab Remodel
- ER X-Ray Room #2 □

## Youthful Thoughts

Dear Marine downs,  
I was wondering if  
sometime I could look  
at the place. I am  
7 years old, and I  
want to be an archi-  
tect when I am older  
and a Civil Engineer but  
I most want to be an archi-  
tect. When I am older  
I mite apply here.  
I.E I apply - My sister  
still mite be here,  
and she can teach me.  
I like architects a lot.  
I don't know much about  
them but I am goin to  
get books about them.  
But I know they design  
houses. Please write back.  
From  
Skyler