

Overview

Fereydoon Ghaffari, AICP, is a professional urban planner with more than five decades of planning, design and development consulting experience. Mr. Ghaffari's extensive professional career has spanned fifty-six years of innovative planning service to the private sector, public organizations and community-based entities on five continents. Three themes emerge: 1) his planning innovations in first-of-a-kind projects have resulted in models adopted by other planners; 2) the international scope and diversity of his projects have demonstrated planning leadership in developing economies; and 3) his focus on triple-bottom-line sustainability has produced projects that balance human health and safety with the environmental and financial aspects of development.

Mr. Ghaffari came to the United States in 1947 to pursue an education in the sciences, math, and learn English as his third language. He completed a General Studies curriculum at the University of California, Los Angeles, and then continued his education at the University of Southern California, receiving a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1955. At USC, he was named, by his peers, as President of the American Institute of Architects Student Chapter and received a Phi Beta Kappa scholarship. He was selected by the School of Architecture faculty as a representative to a statewide conference on designs to accommodate the handicapped. He continued his education in city and regional planning at USC. Mr. Ghaffari became a permanent resident in 1957 and subsequently a U.S. citizen.

Throughout this extensive career, Mr. Ghaffari has worked essentially for three firms: Victor Gruen Associates (from 1955 to 1975), Abdolaziz Farmanfarmian & Associates (AFFA, from 1975 to 1979), and Ghaffari Associates (since 1980).

Upon graduation from USC, Mr. Ghaffari joined Gruen Associates as an entry level planner to become Head of the Planning Department in Los Angeles, CA and founder and Head of the Joint Venture (Gruen Associates & AFFA) in Tehran, Iran, and subsequently Vice President in charge of Planning at Gruen Associates.

As principle project planner responsible for complex plans, Mr. Ghaffari was responsible for land use plans such as the Master Plans for Palos Verdes Peninsula, California and Arvida Land Holdings, Florida, focusing on integrating diverse land uses in economically-sound and spatially-responsible large scale developments adapted to a variety of environments in the early 1960s – when many developers of the era focused on simple platting for land sales.

Beginning in 1961, as Head of the Planning Department at Gruen Associates, Mr. Ghaffari managed a planning staff of over 40 planners and technical professionals, prepared innovative comprehensive plans for the renovation of existing cities and development of new communities, including capital improvement programs and implementation procedures. In this capacity, he was instrumental in advancing the planning profession as an interdisciplinary field, collaborating with peer professionals in developing economic analyses and associated studies to ensure balanced new growth and rejuvenation of older parts of the communities.

"Valencia has developed methodically and to plan and follows very closely to guidelines laid down in the beginning by Fereydoon as the Project planner. The City lives up to the early predictions of the New York Times reporter, Lawrence O'Kane, July 17, 1966 'it could come closer than any 100-odd new towns in the country to the planning profession's vision of a conscientiously designed, self-contained metropolis.'"
- Thomas L. Sutton, Jr., AIA
Supervising Architect, Newhall Land and Farming Company

Mr. Ghaffari was principle planner for the master plans of Valencia New Town (California), McCormick Ranch (Arizona), and Waterwood on Lake Livingston (Texas). His noteworthy innovations included the creation of plans with development phasing that related the growth of the new community populations to expansion of the support facilities including schools and parks; hospitals; commercial, municipal, and institutional uses; and infrastructure. His plans ensured that residents' needs were met as the community matured. His efforts guided the provision of a complete range of human support services from the neighborhood level of 500 homes to the overall community scale with 200,000-plus population.

In the Valencia New Town master plan, he designed the "paseo system" of green space pedestrian and bicycle pathways connecting villages with communities and the regional center. In the McCormick Ranch plan, he linked residential communities and recreational areas together around a spine of open space. In the Waterwood on Lake Livingston Master Plan, a series of neighborhoods were grouped into villages and towns, separated by greenbelts and parkway. All of these are examples of Mr. Ghaffari's innovative designs to protect people's health and safety, the environment, while also ensuring the financial sustainability of the community.

In 1966, Mr. Ghaffari was instrumental in the successful award of the contract for the Comprehensive General Plan for the Capital City of Tehran, Iran to the Joint Venture of Gruen Associates and Abdolaziz Farmanfarmaian & Associates. He was appointed Managing Director of the JV, relocated himself and his family to Tehran to recruit and lead the 50-member international project team and several specialized consulting firms that prepared and completed the wide-ranging studies and the final landmark Comprehensive Plan. The planning process led by Mr. Ghaffari provided a unique international learning experience for emerging professionals in Iran who had virtually no planning lexicon or process.

It also introduced three novel planning concepts. 1) a major dual transportation system consisting of a rapid transit spine serving high density corridors combined with a secondary spine of freeways paralleling the higher density corridor, providing complementary mobility to the lower density areas, supported by bus service to the rapid transit spine; 2) a 25-year growth and development profile consisting of three levels of self-supporting urban units, each related to an activity center offering services ranging from small neighborhoods to community centers all the way up to urban regions; and 3) detailed recommendations for renewal and rejuvenation of older, existing areas of the City using a programmed strategy that would minimize disruption to the established social and economic fabric of the populations.

*"The Comprehensive Plan for Tehran, prepared under Fereydoon's direction, was a pioneering effort in Urban and Regional Planning in Iran and became a model and a guide for subsequent Comprehensive Planning efforts in other major cities in the country."
- Abdol-Aziz Farmanfarmaian
Farmanfarmaian & Associates*

Upon completion of the project, he declined an invitation from the President of Tehran University to remain and head the School of Architecture as its dean and to develop a planning curriculum. Mr. Ghaffari coordinated the closure of the JV offices, remaining in Tehran to secure all required municipal, cabinet, and national approvals. Today, the east-west and north-south rapid transit spines have been completed.

*"Fereydoon has brought creativity and insight to the challenge of solving client problems. His innovative approach to planning projects ... had a great impact on subsequent planning and he set the bar higher for the planning studies that followed. He has also been responsible for ... fostering the design expertise of many young planners who have gone on to have their own special imprint on the planning profession around the globe."
- Ki Suh Park, FAIA, FAICP, Hon. FKIA
Design & Managing Partner,
Gruen Associates*

After returning to Gruen Associates in Los Angeles, Mr. Ghaffari was named Vice President, responsible for all technical operations and administration of the firm's Planning Department. He directed master planning studies for new towns in California, Arizona and New Mexico. He innovated the design of a coordinated Multi-Service Center concept for delivery of municipal, county, state and federal public services to be co-located in shared facilities situated throughout the State of Maryland in four levels of centers, each responsive to the size and demographic scale of an associated population service area.

In recognition of his creative and innovative planning leadership of the Gruen-AFFA Joint Venture, Mr. Ghaffari was invited to return to Iran as a Partner and Member of the Executive Committee of Farmanfarmaian & Associates just as the nation was intensifying its development efforts to implement various elements of the Comprehensive Plan (1975). His leadership charter was to establish the AFFA Planning Department and guide

preparation of specific plans for new towns located on the east and west of the City of Tehran (Khaneh, Kan, and Toseh Lavizan). He tapped the expertise of many Iranian planners whom he had mentored during preparation of the Tehran Comprehensive Plan, in addition to emerging local planning professionals, to accomplish these challenging new assignments. All of the new town plans were completed under his direction and development had commenced on these projects as well as others identified in the detailed project list.

Mr. Ghaffari was asked by the partners of AFFA to establish the Athens, Greece office of the firm when the government of Iran awarded the firm (and its partner, TAMS) the assignment to design a new International Airport to the southwest of Tehran (1978). Under Mr. Ghaffari's leadership, a team of 120 international planning, architectural and engineering professionals were recruited to design the Master Plan, develop working drawings and specifications for 50 support buildings including the circulation element for traffic and flow of goods. All documents were completed under his direction. He ensured delivery of the final products to the client in Tehran even in the middle of civil unrest and in spite of the fact that the AFFA offices in Tehran, including his entire personal planning library, were nationalized by the new government. Mr. Ghaffari organized the orderly closure of the Athens office.

Upon returning to the States, he established his own firm, Ghaffari Associates, where his work had a major influence on the international planning scene in Spain, India, Taiwan, China, and Indonesia – in many cases

introducing local planning and design professionals to modern concepts of complex urban and rural comprehensive planning.

Significant domestic U.S. work included the 285,000 acre Tejon Ranch Master Plan & Asset Management Plan (1983). Mr. Ghaffari's challenge was to create a master plan that preserved major portions of the undeveloped farming property in permanent reserve while also defining development potentials that would permit the company to generate sufficient revenues to ensure the long-term viability of the overall asset management strategy.

Early in this period, Mr. Ghaffari recognized the potential of microcomputer applications to communicate the economic potential of planning designs to development clients. Tejon Ranch was one such innovative application, involving his development of a 25 year forecast of benefits/costs of alternatives and residual land value analyses. Another innovative application was his use of financial analyses for Indivest Inc. to explore alternatives for the project design of a 24-story office tower in Westwood, CA in response to neighborhood groups' concerns and municipal development criteria. The resulting positive collaboration with neighborhood groups enabled the developer to continue to innovate projects in the community.

*"I knew of Mr. Ghaffari's earlier work at Gruen Associates when he was instrumental in developing the initial studies that led to the development and adoption of the Westwood Village Specific Plan, which is still in effect today. ... I was extremely impressed with Mr. Ghaffari's work, and in the mid-1980's I asked Mr. Ghaffari to join my team as a consultant in the planning and development of two major projects in Westwood Village: Center West... and Plaza La Reina.
- Kambiz Hekmat, Founder of Indivest Inc.*

*"Fereydoon Ghaffari is an innovative planner with a good grasp of planning issues both in concept and methods. He is a team builder who can impart his expertise on all those who work with him.
I endorse the nomination of Fereydoon Ghaffari for membership in the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Planners."
- David Jay Flood, FAIA, CDS
L.A. Olympics Organization
Commissioner*

For almost two years (1983-1984), Mr. Ghaffari suspended operation of his firm, Ghaffari Associates, in order to serve the City of Los Angeles and the US and Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committees as a planner of multiple Olympic sport and administrative venues. He gave many dedicated hours to the intense design experience and collaborative work required to host "the most financially successful Olympics" to that point.

Key projects at the LA Olympics, for which Mr. Ghaffari was principle planner, included: the equestrian, cycling, and field hockey event venues; the Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel headquarters and meeting facilities for the International Olympic Committee and the administration of all sports federations; the Los Angeles International Airport Athletes' Arrival & Processing Facilities; and the Los Angeles Convention Center

Press Facilities. In recognition of his valued services, he was asked to stay on at the completion of the Olympic Games to assist in the post-Olympic reconstruction of all sports venues back to original status.

Beginning in 1991, Mr. Ghaffari's reputation as an internationally experienced professional planner persuaded architectural firms to retain Ghaffari Associates to prepare complex master plans for the intense industrial, commercial and residential projects emerging in China as it began allowing foreign investment in manufacturing facilities. Major projects for which he developed master plans include the Intex Industrial Park and Residential Community (Guangzhou), Intex Industrial Park (Fuqin), and the largest project by far – the Unitex Industrial Complex (Xiamen) – all three of which were completed.

*"[Mr. Ghaffari] was very professional in dealing with the Chinese government people, architects and builders. He was extremely concerned with retaining the natural elements of the 228 acre site of the Intex Industrial Park in Xiamen. His plan included enhancing the existing lagoon on the site and locating the roads and buildings on the site and grading of land around the building so as to save three 200-year-old trees that existed on the property. ... Intex Industrial Park in Xiamen has received accolades from business leaders as well as municipal authorities in the region.
- Tien P. Zee, Chairman/President
Intex & Unitex Group*

As principal planner for the Unitex Industrial Park in Xiamen, China and the Intex Industrial Park and Residential Community in Guangzhou, China, Mr. Ghaffari's consensus-building overcame initial resistance to the implementation of novel patterns of mixed industrial, commercial and residential developments. He persuaded the client to implement environmentally-sustaining open space and recreational facilities to complement commercial and industrial developments. He identified opportunities to preserve valued land (including preservation of ancient trees and investments in pedestrian and health-oriented jogging trails) which resulted in the creation of world-class facilities valued by top tier international corporations. The Municipality of Xiamen, an environmental leader in sustainability in China, awarded the Unitex project five citations from 1999 to 2006.

Mr. Ghaffari was retained by other international client to provide planning services on numerous projects in China and Indonesia. Projects included:

Huangguoshu Falls Regional Master Plan (Guizhou, China) envisioning the transformation of the Huangguoshu River Valley into a comprehensive 4,000 acre new community oriented around a destination resort, including golf courses, hotels, theme parks, water-related recreational activities in addition to residential development. The focus of the project was the famous Huangguoshu Falls and River.

Tenjo New Community (Jakarta, Indonesia) - a new residential and resort community on 8,000 acres of wooded, rolling land one half hour from downtown Jakarta, adjacent to a new government complex.

Hwaxi Resort Community Master Plan (Hwaxi, China) - a destination resort community in the beautiful river valley South of Guiyang. The core of the 1200 acre development is the formerly private vacation retreat of government officials, proposed to be rejuvenated and adapted as a modern destination resort and conference center.

After his Olympic experience, Mr. Ghaffari volunteered his services to the L.A. Leggers_{sm}, a health-oriented marathon training program in its inaugural year, founded by Los Angeles' KNX NewsRadio Announcer, Bob Scott with the assistance of U.S. Olympian Jeff Galloway. Mr. Ghaffari provided training route design services; developed the initial training handbook to guide the board of directors and support volunteer runner organization; and was instrumental in incorporating the organization as a self-sufficient nonprofit community-benefit entity. He served on the initial, and subsequent, boards of directors and ran five marathons with the group from 1989 to 1992. The L.A. Leggers_{sm} have been recognized as "the premier Los Angeles marathon training program" by several area and runners' magazines.

In 1994, Mr. Ghaffari was nominated as a member of Lambda Alpha International in its Los Angeles Chapter. The honorary land economic society recognizes professional and community service of individuals in inter-disciplinary fields relating to utilization and preservation of the land. He viewed this honor as an opportunity to continue to promote the highest possible recognition of the planning profession as a peer to other areas of intellectual and design endeavor. He rose through the ranks of the local chapter, served on the board of directors, and was named President of the Los Angeles Chapter in 2000. As President, Mr. Ghaffari organized and moderated a panel of six inter-disciplinary experts discussing the challenges and opportunities within the contemporary development process in Southern California, hosted at the University of Southern California.

He has devoted many volunteer hours serving on the LAI Executive Committee as Historian, in addition to other services in support of the local and national organizations. He has been recognized as Member of the Year at both the chapter and the international levels.

"Leaders like Fereydoon Ghaffari have the drive and the vision to reach beyond their close circle of peers to connect with others and build bridges across disciplines. His contributions have provided our students and our own public community with a better understanding of the contribution each profession brings to the design, development, and implementation of projects."

*- William Jennings, Dean
College of Business & Economics,
California State University at
Northridge*

Mr. Ghaffari is proudest of his work to design and lead the LAI Speakers' Series, a lecture event highlighting planners in collaboration with other land-related disciplines from among the LAI membership, hosted at California State University, Northridge. He is a member of the board of advisors of the CSUN College of Business and Economics Center for Real Estate.

He also worked with the APA to qualify LAI as a CM Provider providing AICP members credits for attending LAI international and chapter events worldwide.

Fereydoon Ghaffari's work has had a positive impact on the local and international communities and environments where he served as project planner and on the clients whose development value he understands. He has demonstrated a unique ability to balance the economic with the physical components of a project's challenges and deliver environmentally-sound, financially-viable and socially-appealing alternative scenarios responsive to clients' needs and community priorities. Many planning and design colleagues working around the globe today have benefited from his professional guidance, patient mentoring and genuine friendship. Students and the public in the academic community continue to learn from his lecture series of planning, design and real estate professionals, just as he was inspired by the leaders during his own college years.