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Achieving a successful project - Selection of the right design team and general contractors

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In today's marketplace buildings are not only designed to meet building code requirements, but also sustainability as required to achieve LEED certification. With emphasis shifting daily on building to attract tenants it becomes important that a qualified consultant be part of the pre-construction team and review preliminary costs, materials and systems, the plans and specifications, construction scheduling, and make recommendations. Involving the consultant early in the project will result in savings and realistic construction estimates. Often another pair of eyes proves invaluable. This is especially true when value engineering is earnestly pursued and savings are on everyone's mind to the point that dollar signs can overshadow reality.

Restoration/renovation projects are overall usually more intense and time consuming than most new buildings. With new buildings the owner and designer make the building conform to their standards. Restoring/renovating an existing building the team must work within existing tolerances. To achieve LEED certification what is needed should be studied so money is spent wisely to achieve the best ROI possible.

Broadly restoration is to bring a building back to its original grandeur and renovation is to repair a building or bring it up to the latest building code requirements. When embarking on these types of projects the owner of the building should seek the help of a qualified person well versed in this endeavor to be their representative.

The owner's representative shall review the local and state requirements for the project and select the team of professionals that will help navigate the project through the permitting process and prepare all documentation required for public agencies, historical commissions and neighborhood committees meetings. These professionals should be up to date on not only the present codes and regulations, but have knowledge of recent and pending changes.

Selection of the right professional design team to prepare concepts for presentations to the various public agencies and follow through into the design phases, construction documents, contract administration and final certification to the building inspector is critical. This team's presentation and past performance skills on projects of this type must be exceptional. This is no place for on the job training.

When the bids are reviewed the consultant should be part of the process. The consultant should review contractors and sub-contractors credentials, workload and pricing. The question; has the general contractor or construction manager worked with them, should be asked.

Selection of highly experienced general contractors or construction managers for bidding the project must be done. This should be done by evaluating each candidate against a set list of criteria for this type of project. Once the list of finalists is determined the bid packages should be compiled and issued.

When the bids are received the team should meet and review them together to make sure all items have been addressed. Low price, although a significant factor, should not be the governing factor for choosing the successful bidder. Call in the bidders and review each bid to make sure all items have been addressed and if not throw out the bid because it indicates a lack of attention.

When all bids have been reviewed, the successful contractor selected, the contract drawn and executed your construction oversight specialist should take the reins and drive this project to success. During the construction phase the consultant should be present during pre-construction and progress meetings involving the contractor(s). Review of on-site storage of materials and punch list completion are critical.

Have a very successful project.

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