



CELEBRATING
55 YEARS

nerej

Selection of the right professional design team for a restoration or renovation project is critical

February 14, 2008 - Construction Design & Engineering

Restoration/renovation projects are overall usually more intense and time consuming than most new building. With new construction the owner and designer make the building conform to their standards. Restoring/renovating an existing building the team must work within existing tolerances.

Broadly, restoration is to bring something, such as 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.

Knowledge of past and present materials, procedures and systems should be extensive. Contracts and construction techniques as well as up to date knowledge of construction costs are a prerequisite for success. Adaptability and flexibility are attributes that need to be considered.

Selection of highly experienced general contractors or construction managers for bidding the project must be done as a team not individually. This should be done by soliciting letters of interest and evaluating each candidate against a set list of criteria for this type of project. This becomes a process of elimination until a list of qualified bidders is achieved.

One of the items in the criteria must be what resources the general contractor or construction manager has at his disposal. This should also include a review of a list of possible sub-contractors and their resources. A visit to their offices and review of each ones management systems for the office and field must be done.

References must be checked, visits to completed projects and discussions with building owners and maintenance staff must be done. Also, a review of the bidders' financial records should be performed. Have their projects been on-time and within budget or have there been high cost overruns and the cause.

Pre-bid services should be performed for generating an in-depth construction budget and schedule. This performer must be highly experienced and finite otherwise you might find your project's cost

much higher than expected.

Once all of the above is achieved and the list of finalists is determined the bid packages should be compiled. Some of the items to be included are; letter to bidders with milestone dates, bid and special payment forms and the construction documents. Make sure you retain the right to reject any bid for any reason and have sub-contractor approval.

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. Remember an extremely low price does not usually equate to a successful project. Call in the bidders and review each bid to make sure all items have been addressed and if not have the bid resubmitted. People do overlook some things sometimes.

When all bids have been reviewed, the successful contractor, the contract drawn and executed your construction oversight specialist should take the reins and drive this project to success. Do not try and run this project yourself because it will probably lead to extremely high costs and long delays for completion. Most owners are not construction specialists and should not be that's why they pay other people so they can concentrate on their core business.

John King is president of CIREES, Inc. Braintree, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540