



Building Confidence

Los Angeles

Santa Barbara

Construction Management Essentials for Homeowner Association Projects

Construction management is a process that facilitates planning, coordination and control of a project from beginning to completion. Large projects have many participants, and everyone is focused on their own particular perspective and contractual role. A qualified construction manager (CM) serves as the glue holding the entire construction process together, providing managerial expertise, controlling budgets, initiating cost savings ideas, mitigating risks, and ensuring communication. The benefit of an independent set of eyes is enormous, and the value a good CM provides generally saves owners money well in excess of their fees. Most importantly, they ensure a properly planned and successful project, and provide associations the maximum benefits from their investments.

Assemble the right professional team. Many professionals are required for large projects: architect, engineers, consultants, contractors, designers, landscaping, etc. For a project to be successful given this enormous number of “moving parts”, it is critical that the right team is assembled at the outset. All professionals involved must be experienced, appropriate, and team players. Most importantly, they must be managed to bring out their best work to meet the vision and goals of the project.

Planning. The greatest effects on a project come in the early planning stages when a comprehensive and accurate scope of work should be established and the budget defined. It is critical that all existing conditions are identified and fully understood prior to creating the drawings and construction documents that will determine how to accomplish the project. Building systems are tightly interrelated and there may be multiple breakdowns that obscure a proper diagnosis. Fixing only the most obvious one could doom a project to failure.

Choosing the best architect for your project is more than a matter of design and inspiration. No one wants an initial design that is impractical or beyond their budget. Set yourself up for success by realistically evaluating an architectural firm’s temperamental and procedural compatibility with your board. It is critical that the chosen architect produce drawings in a timely manner, and that they are well established, clear and coordinated, and in sufficient detail for the contractor to build efficiently. Contrary to popular understanding, it is these drawings that determine the cost of the project, much more so than the contractor, who can only bid on what is drawn. This is the stage at which a CM is of great value. Every design decision has a cost and schedule implication. We integrate management of the design and cost seamlessly during this whole process to keep a finger on the pulse of cost and schedule.

Stonemark has standard operating procedures for all our project processes. When we pre-qualify project professionals, we investigate and interview them thoroughly to determine their strengths

and weaknesses. What is their previous project experience? Do they have the proper insurance, and how good is it? What is their expectation for the number of man-hours required? Has their intended job captain had experience with this specific type of project before? What are their expectations in terms of schedule and number of meetings? What are their payment expectations? Which subconsultants will they employ? In short, we determine their ability to deliver and willingness to be part of a controlled process to meet the client's cost and schedule requirements.

Communications. It is typically the CM's role to establish a clear and consistent chain of communication and command for the input and distribution of information. All requests for information and change orders, and directives to and from the client should be introduced and addressed through proper channels to ensure issues are responded to without delaying progress, and captured and documented for the project. It is our experience that when a problem arises, it can often be traced back to a gap in communication.

Schedule. Scope, cost and schedule are the essential bottom-line issues faced by every project, regardless of size. They are always competing. If one changes, they all change. Typically, everyone is looking very carefully at cost, but schedule very much affects cost. When we interview contractors, we specifically focus on their scheduling capabilities and efficiencies. We discuss their approval cycles and milestones: are they realistic, overly optimistic, can they deliver the project in the time frame necessary? A contractor's general conditions and management labor can add 8% to 15% to the cost of a project; fees that are based entirely on duration. Any time increase also extends all other disciplines as well. A good CM will manage and reduce costs by accelerating the design and construction schedule.

If you have performed thorough planning and preconstruction services - assembled the correct team, coordinated the design and engineering properly - problems will have been anticipated and mitigated, and the contractor can accomplish the project smoothly, on time and within budget. During construction, a CM's presence on-site provides independent monitoring and quality control, coordination, and ongoing management of the budget and schedule.

A good construction manager will protect an association from unnecessary liability, will centralize communication and act as project liaison to fully and seamlessly integrate all project participants, all while saving money, accelerating schedule and ensuring quality.

Stonemark Construction Management is a full-service planning and construction management firm that specializes in large, complex projects involving engineering challenges and water infiltration issues. We have never seen a project where the schedule, costs and quality of materials could not be better controlled. At Stonemark, the strength of our reputation is built on the quality of our service. We build confidence by building better buildings... better relationships... and a better construction experience for our clients. It isn't just what we do—it's what we do best.

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