

## Managing Your Construction Project

Before you embark on a major project, consider shifting perspective from the construction itself to the groundwork- the planning stage. Project management is a process of defined and critical steps: Planning, Preconstruction, and Construction. Construction is the third phase of this process, vastly more expensive than the first two. However, it is the first two phases that establish the eventual cost. Properly planned projects reduce expensive change orders and cost overruns, limit liability, and help to ensure the success of the project.

**Planning & Investigation.** The greatest effects on a project come in the early planning stages. What are the existing conditions that will affect the work? What exactly is the scope of work to be performed? All existing conditions need to be investigated and fully understood prior to performing any renovation project. Review carefully how the building is constructed. Water infiltration is frequently the result of multiple sources; fixing only the most obvious one may doom your project to failure. Building systems are tightly interrelated and there may be multiple breakdowns that obscure a proper diagnosis. For example, quality re-roofing projects involve everything at the roof level, not just the roofing trade itself. Whose responsibility is the flashing, repairs to siding or stucco at the roof to wall juncture, gutters and roof drainage, any mechanical systems or other equipment on the roof, chimney and skylight repairs? Waterproofing between all these assemblies should be replaced concurrently.

During the planning phase, consider carefully before requesting free bidding from contractors. Because there is a limited pool of contractors that carry the appropriate insurance to work for homeowner associations, you should be mindful not to abuse them. Each time a contractor looks at a project his bid will tend to be higher. It is better to retain an independent expert to prepare your budget. An independent expert will capture any details the contractor may have omitted in his bid, as well as any ancillary trade work that may fall in the cracks during the overall project. In addition, as your representative, they can often negotiate better terms on your behalf. Go out to bid only once, when you have the funding in place and intend to start work immediately.

**Preconstruction.** Once you have charted your course, create the proper documents for bidding to execute the required scope of work. Professional construction managers provide the necessary expertise to convert the scope of work into comprehensive bid documents, which may include drawings, technical specifications on each trade and details of how the work of different trades interface. Bidding documents are necessary to receive apples-to-apples bids and ensure quality control of the eventual construction. You may also need a licensed architect, engineer or waterproofing specialist to prepare proper design documents. Bid documents should include General Conditions and Requirements. These may include site-related

conditions, such as whether or not buildings will be occupied, safety considerations, temporary access requirements and responsibility for resident communications. Include payment terms, insurance requirements and the form of contract. Consult with your attorney regarding construction contracts. Once you put together all of these documents into a bid package, you are finally ready to invite contractors to bid. Your expert should review all bids carefully to ensure that contractors have not missed anything: this is a common reason for change orders and mid-project cost overruns.

**Construction.** Be sure to transition into construction with a preconstruction meeting with all contractors and your construction expert. Include the association manager in this meeting to identify how communication will flow with homeowners. Your construction expert must be on-site as needed to oversee quality control, ensure contractors perform per specifications, and approve payment requests. If you have diligently and properly executed the planning and preconstruction phases, construction will be smooth and uneventful.

Associations are wise to acknowledge that managing large construction projects is beyond the usual expertise, contractual obligations, and time constraints of most association managers and boards. To ensure a successful project, be sure you retain an expert to ensure quality control, watch the budget, and protect your association's liability.

*Stonemark Construction Management is a full-service planning and construction management firm that specializes in management of capital improvements, defect investigation and repairs, water infiltration & problem building analysis for homeowners associations, multi-family residential, custom home and commercial projects.*

*Please visit our website at [www.stonemarkcm.com](http://www.stonemarkcm.com) for reprints of this and many other educational articles. Sign up for our RSS feed to receive new articles & updates automatically in your in-box. Follow our [blog](#) for project journals, & information on construction issues & project management. Follow us on Facebook or LinkedIn.*