

Before you build or renovate... 6 common misconceptions

You're thinking about building—or renovating or remodeling—for your business. Perhaps you're growing and need more room, or different, more expansive utilities. Or a new business contract requires adding equipment or facilities.

Because it's one of the biggest projects you'll ever undertake—and because the decisions you make early on will have the biggest impact on the success of the project—you want the entire process to go as smoothly and efficiently as possible right from the beginning. Mistakes made early in the process will cost you much more down the road.

Mistaken ideas can lead to trouble

So if you plan on building or renovating your office, medical or commercial/industrial facilities, consider these common misconceptions.

1. Start with the drawings.

Not advisable. The first step is not, as many people think, hiring an architect to draw your dream. Pre-planning your vision *for the project as a whole* is the first step, and you need to do several critical things before you get to the drawing stage.

2. Select your site using the services of an experienced real estate broker.

A good thing, but not enough. While a real estate broker can tell you about available sites and negotiate a price, these are only two parts of the vital site-selection step. If completed without enough information—for example, results of environmental and subsurface investigations testing for material suitability—serious problems can be overlooked and result in significant project cost overruns later.

3. Count on an architect to conform to your budget.

Not usually. Architects specialize in designing facilities that satisfy their clients' visions while demonstrating their own unique solutions. Though they should be made aware of the budget, most don't commit to managing the design as it relates to cost. In the most successful scenarios, the contractor works closely with the architect—a collaboration that results in what's known as a "design-build" project.

4. Depend on in-house staff to manage the process for you.

Even if you have this capability, how will your staff find the extra time to manage your project? Unless you're building frequently, you probably aren't dealing with current codes, regulations and products—and may not be aware of the liabilities and risks you assume by acting as general contractor.

5. Expect that any recognized contracting company will complete the project on deadline.

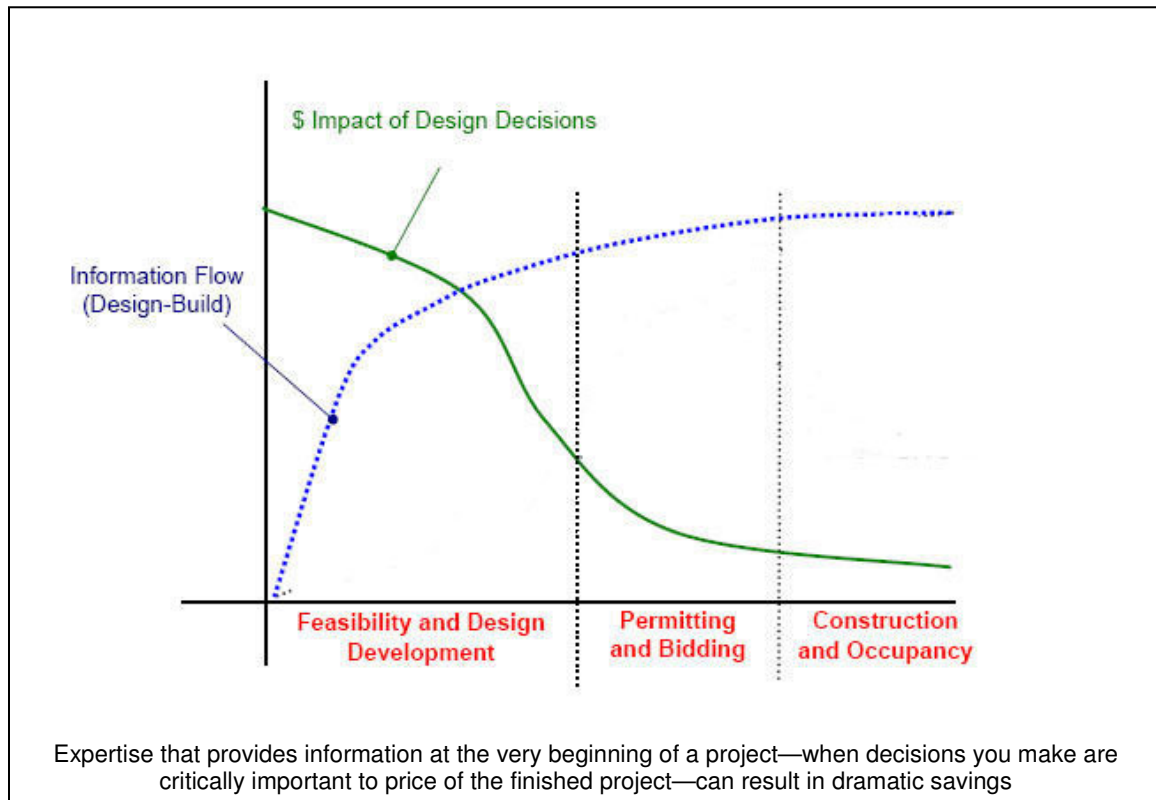
Not reliably. Just as with costs, time overruns are frequent in commercial construction. And while challenges do happen, not every construction team has the experience and the subcontractor relationships to overcome them gracefully while relentlessly meeting deadlines.

6. Count on being finished once your project is completed.

With the right team, yes. In some cases projects are completed in full, and you'll never have to worry about what went on. But it's not uncommon for owners to face nagging continuing issues such as open permits, unresolved billing disputes, construction defects, consequences of poor site selection, and more.

What to do instead

Given these potential pitfalls, you ask, what does a successful process look like? The graph below shows a simple pictorial representation of the ideal process. It's called Design-Build and tends to eliminate the potential for problems like those described above.



Practical example

When a client decided to move from his leased space to his own facility, he asked us to review the feasibility of his ideas. On learning about his preferred location, we suggested completing several soil borings. We agreed to coordinate the testing and analyze the cost implications of the findings. Although the cost of the property appeared very reasonable, we explained that the test results showed he would have incurred a significant cost to remove and replace unsuitable material before he could build. As a result, he kept looking and soon found a site better for his intended use.

Traditional process offers less owner control

With the traditional Design-Bid-Build approach, where costs accrue as work is done, most people feel they will have good control. However, at each step costs can unexpectedly escalate, timelines can expand, and accountabilities can slip. As the owner of the project, you have little control of the final numbers and will be financially responsible for any and all of these concerns along the way.

Design-Build empowers owners

With the right team using the Design-Build approach, you work upfront to produce a plan with all phases accounted for and total costs guaranteed not to exceed the estimate. From pre-construction site selection, environmental studies, plat and zoning reviews, permit acquisition and more, through to the design and construction process, you can relax. The right design-build construction team minimizes stress for you—because you made the high-level decisions early on that serve as the team’s guidelines throughout the project.

“The Design-Build process facilitates getting your project done within the cap—more on-time and on budget, with fewer headaches. It’s a clever, valuable, and expeditious way of doing business,” said Rob Burns, Roselle Public Works.

To avoid the 6 misconceptions, get better-built structures, protect your legal and financial interests, and get your business up and running in the new building in the shortest possible time—use a team of design-build experts.

Phil Van Duynes
Itasca Construction Associates, Inc.
Experienced. Accountable. Ethical.
Design-Build experts specializing in value-based commercial construction
300 Park Boulevard, Suite 305W
Itasca, IL 60143
Phone: 630.773.6700
www.itascachicago.com