

MULTI-HOUSING NEWS

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Creating Urban Magic

12 Tips for Successful Redevelopment

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Have you ever noticed construction at a theme park? A tremendous amount of effort is put into making even the largest construction undertaking disappear into the fabric of its surroundings. Much attention is devoted to maintaining the fantasy for the guests, removing them from the more mundane realities of building the business of entertainment.

I propose that an owner or owner's representative has a responsibility to act as an illusionist on behalf of the residents in and around an urban renovation project.

Your efforts, however well intentioned and productive, disrupt routine, invade privacy and in some cases threaten long-term neighborhood relationships. It becomes imperative that you plan to maintain the fantasy of normalcy for your residents and neighborhoods, to the best of your ability.

Have any of your renovation projects exceeded budgets or missed delivery schedules? The effort that is most frequently short-circuited is the planning phase prior to project initiation. The tendency is to jump to action and engage the gears of the transformation process without the highly beneficial investment of preparation. The lack of a sound planning foundation translates to wasted time and money, and unhappy tenants and neighbors.

1. Any time you renovate or demolish an existing structure, it is imperative that your examination of the infrastructure is extensive. Perform as thorough a discovery of the property as possible. It is virtually impossible to eliminate all of the unknowns before you begin, but destructive testing is crucial to gaining the knowledge you need to make informed decisions. You will need to bring affected infrastructure up to current code expectations. The discovery process will make or break your budget and schedule and could have profound impact on your decision to proceed. Take into account the age of the building prior to any demolition. Consider:

- Any building built before 1950 may have asbestos in the insulation, fireproofing, floors, walls or roof. Newer buildings may have asbestos in the roof or floors. If you do not know if there is asbestos in a building, OSHA says you must act as if it exists.
- Lead was banned from residential paints in 1978; however, it is used in industrial paints and can be found in layers of paint in older housing and steel structures
- The health effects of exposures to heavy metals can be serious. Cadmium, chromium, man-

ganese and mercury may be found in paint, weld joints, concrete, steel, electrical apparatus, etc.

- Are reliable record drawings available or are you working with a blindfold?

2. Confirm the adequacy of city services. What is your access to water, sewer, cable and power? What is the condition and capacity of the services to the site? What upgrades are required? What system interruptions will affect the surrounding neighbors and how will you minimize the impacts? How will you keep the neighborhood involved and informed?

3. Please the Planning Commission. Create harmony between your design and the existing cityscape. Maintain the character of the community. Neighborhood and/or historical preservation are key components to any successful urban renovation project. Consider the angles and shapes that surround your buildings as well as the style, colors and materials used in adjacent construction. Consider what you will save, protect or replace in the structure and streetscape.

4. Safety is of utmost importance. You are responsible not only for the personnel engaged in the construction process, but also the residents, potential residents, business owners, business clientele, etc. You will be interfering multiple times a day with people driving or walking by the site. Spend appropriate time preparing the site and all personnel to adhere to clearly defined safety expectations.

5. Cloak the project with collaboration. Success is highly dependent upon relationships with current and future tenants, property management, trade partners, suppliers and compliance agencies.

- Utilize "green" building components in your design whenever possible
- Take steps to minimize loss of business for local storekeepers
- Compensate pioneer tenants that move into your property at the beginning of a renovation process
- Minimize impacts on existing tenants and keep them informed of your progress
- Involve property management personnel in your decision-making and communication process
- Clarify communication and decision expectations between property managers, tenants, and trade partners

6. Select your trade partners and suppliers with great care. Improper choices can cost you in time/cost over-runs, contractual disputes, lost revenues and aggravation.

- The most important attribute for a subcon-

tractor or supplier is their responsiveness. Ensure they have sufficient resources and availability to support your efforts.

- Make sure their processes are built for speed
- Ensure they are financially stable and resilient
- Technical skills and relevant experience are essential to the delivery of quality installations and creative contributions in problem solving situations. Select trade partners that are experienced in your approach and can provide insight and timely recommendations. Tap into that intellectual capital.

7. Make the local community part of the magic by keeping them informed and by responding to their concerns. Involve them in decisions regarding hours of operation, parking, site access, privacy and security.

8. Surprises are the uninvited guests at every renovation party. Each wall you open has the potential to expose a new problem. The very nature of this beast is to be ever-changing and challenging. The personnel, processes, budgets and schedules you have in place must be resilient and responsive. Communication and quick reflexes are critical.

9. If you are matching existing fixtures or building finishes, confirm current availability before you finalize your decision. If availability is a problem due to discontinued stock or slow boats from Italy, decide early about complete replacement with something different and accommodate additional funding and/or time in your budget and installation schedule.

10. Wow the community with the speed of your construction by using pre-cut or panelized materials. Look for opportunities to engage in initial assembly off site if you have access to bring larger materials into the structure, once assembled.

11. There is not likely to be an abundance of storage or lay-down space on site. Locate an appropriate space for this purpose. If you must stage materials in a remote location, you will probably accommodate multiple just-in-time deliveries throughout the day, for immediate installation. Avoid high-traffic periods of the day, if possible.

12. Provide adequate protections for the adjacent properties. Make certain to put enough money in your budget to make the dust, waste and noise disappear. Manage storm water run-off and silt migration. Good fences make good neighbors.

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