HOW TO MANAGE A HEALTHCARE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT FROM START TO FINISH
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If you’ve been following our company at all throughout the past 50+ years, you’ve probably heard us talk about healthcare construction and know that we’ve always had a strong focus on building innovative medical facilities and improving medical clinic construction. In fact, our first Design-Build project ever, was a long-term healthcare facility, so we’ve been doing it for quite some time.

We’ve learned a lot over the years regarding healthcare construction - the biggest of which is the importance that a builder have a very sound plan and vision for a medical facility. Long before a hammer can hit a nail or a shovel can break ground, there’s a lot of research and planning to be done.

Throughout this guide, we’d like to let you in on our thoughts of how a healthcare builder should manage a project, from start to finish. There’s a little of our “secret sauce” in here – and we’re okay with that. After all, we’re confident it’s just what the doctor ordered.
A healthcare builder must first thoroughly understand your business. This is a nonnegotiable. This is an absolute. In order to cater to the pains of your patients, we, as builders, must first understand your business model, your goals, your vision for the future, your anticipated growth. It’s basic business plan intel - but considerations that a builder must be educated on before we can ever build the perfect facility for you.

Execution of a sound business assessment includes interviews with your staff to understand supply and demand in the service area, lots of walking the halls, and reviewing recent historical data on inpatient and outpatient services. With this, your healthcare builder should sharpen their pencils and start to project future clinical volume for the next several years. For facility owners, this can be a very exciting step.

Additionally, this is when the healthcare builder will brief you on a few things we’ll look for you to provide over the course of our working relationship. This will include a range of documents from a strategic plan of the hospital to surveys of existing site conditions and soil information.
Before your builder starts to work with your already existing facility, they should request to do a thorough investigation of the systems you already have in place. This is a responsibility of the Healthcare Planner on the job, the MEP/FP Engineer and the Project Developer.

You should expect that your builder will want to perform a facility evaluation to understand the current condition, limitations, code and regulatory compliance, and potential reuse of your structure and its systems. Expect a report on the evaluation. Your builder should then begin preparing cost information that summarizes the expenses of proposed changes to your medical facility.
The next step, creating the Master Facility Plan, is a significant undertaking in the healthcare construction process and is one in which we have much experience executing.

At The Korte Company, we utilize data of the external and internal environment of the hospital to identify major trends and implications. We like to review the existing strategic plan of the hospital and prepare an initial department space allocation program. At the end of this phase, we will have developed a preliminary conceptual site plan and architectural drawings.
INITIAL FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

While we offer this step as an optional step, it’s very important that we stress its significance. This step includes your healthcare builder evaluating initial credit assessment and debt capacity. This will help further strengthen your long-term plan for growth, and thus, make your facility better prepared for long-term success. In this step, if executed, funding options are reviewed.

SCHEMATIC DESIGN AND DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Now that all the assessments have been made to your existing medical facility or hospital campus, it’s time to move into schematic design and design development. Here, you begin to figure out what this project is going to cost. At this point of the healthcare construction process and medical facility construction planning, it’s important to have full involvement from the team. That includes the Healthcare Planner, the Project Developer and the design team.

The Project Developer is responsible for constructability, estimating, phasing and scheduling, and the design team often includes the architects and all applicable engineers and consultants (included, but not limited to, physicians, specialists, radiation physicists and others).
The field assessment is next. And in this part of medical facility construction, the full design team travels to the site of the construction to obtain an initial project assessment. A survey is conducted of existing conditions including topography, site utilities, property lines, easements and more. Additionally, city and/or county zoning and parking ordinances are considered while defining site constraints.

In this phase, your healthcare builder should arrange for an assessment of hazardous materials, if not already available, and request existing statements of conditions reports.

We recommend a full-team walkthrough of existing buildings and healthcare facilities, identifying a long list of pertinent healthcare planning details, including, but certainly not limited to, ADA compliance, as-built floor plans (red line mark-ups), fire and smoke prep, interior room finishes, existing structure systems and location, and mechanical and electrical systems.
In our first round of staff interviews, we like to open up conversation between the Director of Healthcare Planning, the architecture team leader and the Project Developer. It’s crucial to get everyone on the same page, especially when it’s the final cost that is being determined.

A good healthcare construction company will make sure they thoroughly understand statistics that are vital to the health of the hospital or medical facility before they can determine their final plan of action. So bed/matrix censuses, hospital strategic plans and a thorough mapping of existing flow, staffing and adjacencies must be confirmed and understood.

In this part of the healthcare construction project, we interview executive and management teams for conceptual vision and direction. Additionally, we look to talk to department managers, as they’re the ones that really know how their particular healthcare facility works and what they need to make it better than it already is.

At this point in the healthcare construction project, your Design-Builder should have a strong understanding of phasing and exactly how much the healthcare provider is wanting to spend. They should also be able to forecast whether or not phasing is dependent upon funding.
The Owner should now expect to see layouts of the medical facility floor plan and more. These include a site plan, architectural floor plans (identifying existing and new building locations, department and room identification, flow, room finishes, and more), exterior elevations (walk-around or rendering of both interior and exterior), a roof plan, key wall sections, and an outline of specifications.
The Project Developer should now review energy and sustainable design plans, cost estimating, phasing, constructability, valid engineering review and scheduling. We recommend a second round of staff interviews and a thorough look at the building program’s approval.

The healthcare Design-Build will present their initial GMP for review and comment, and then present again for approval.

Architectural drawings of floor plans, elevators and room sizes should now be set and outline specification to 50% complete. Here, all code reviews are performed and the builder addresses any code issues. Third-round staff interviews are conducted.

It’s now time to present for Preliminary State Regulatory Review.
The completion of your final construction documents is the responsibility of the entire Design-Build construction team and is vital to the long-term success of both the project and your new or renovated healthcare facility.

Midway through final documentation, construction documents should be reviewed by the project manager, project engineer and project superintendent. At this stage, a constructability drawing review is crucial. Additionally, the estimate should be analyzed for accuracy and to make certain any changes to the plan have been accounted for. This way, everyone is on the same page.
Next, the medical facility project enters what we call the procurement stage - a very detailed stage consisting of several critical steps.

First, it’s important that your healthcare Design-Builder produce a detailed construction schedule. While this may seem overly cautious, it will guarantee that the project is on-time and on-budget. Additionally, it will keep everyone accountable - something that is crucial with any project, especially a large healthcare construction project.

In the procurement stage, your builder should review and pre-qualify potential local and regional bidders with you. This is very important, as it’s your money and you should know exactly where and how it’s being spent. When possible, we like to utilize the local labor force. It’s just the way we do things, and recommend you consider having your healthcare builder do this as well.

Your healthcare builder should work to develop a detailed set of bid instructions and solicit full coverage of all major bid packages. This is the next step in qualifying the subcontractors that will be putting their “name” on the building as well. Remember that old axiom of a chain only being as strong as its weakest link? Well it applies here too.

At The Korte Company, we’ve never delivered a project late or over-budget, and a company-wide commitment to detailed construction schedules is why.
Let’s shift gears and talk about the actual build. If you work in construction, you’ll likely already have a healthcare construction process in place. If you don’t, there are a few areas of focus that are key components in the successful delivery of your Design-Build healthcare construction project.

First, make sure that your team is well-versed in establishing clear, precise lines of communication. This is vital to the success of any construction project and is one of the biggest benefits of Design-Build healthcare construction.

Once lines of communication are set, the project should mobilize. And it should run like a well-oiled machine. There should be a thorough preconstruction
meeting with the owner and all major subcontractors and vendors. Pre-installation meetings on all major building components are also necessary.

Throughout your healthcare construction project, your healthcare construction company should conduct bi-weekly meetings to coordinate construction, monitor progress and retain accountability. Quality control should be a topic of most conversations, ensuring proper installation and adherence to all contract documents. Remember, if the healthcare construction project was planned properly in the beginning, the end result should be exactly what everyone is expecting. That’s building smart.

Finally, it’s time for the ribbon-cutting. But, the job doesn’t end there. A good healthcare builder should provide as-built drawings, operations manuals, training in use of building and equipment, and of course, an eleven-month checkup. Expect all with The Korte Company.
At the end of a project, we don’t walk away. That’s not our style. We know that our continued support is not just appreciated, but many times necessary for the continued functionality of any given facility. There are many items to consider after the move in. Documentation, accreditation, licenses, surveys, etc. are all items that may be heading your way in the not-too-distant future.

We can help. We often assist with updating area plans, master plans, maintaining and updating Master Life/Safety documentation (as required by state and independent certifying agencies) usable square footage, statement of conditions for environment of care, etc. We also participate in state/CMS occupancy surveys and reviews.

In a nutshell, we take care of our clients and the facilities we build long after they’re built. After all, we’re just as proud of the project as you are.
In our almost 60 years of building, we’ve established ourselves as leaders in healthcare Design-Build construction. From small renovations to larger hospital builds, our approach offers a holistic response that promotes the healing process through integrated and innovative technology and patient well-being. From healing gardens to high-tech research labs, our diverse range of expertise has helped solidify our position as a leader in the industry.

Project in the works?
We’d like to hear about it. If nothing else, consider it a very educated second opinion. Contact our VP of Healthcare — Chris Gilliam.

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Read our Build Smart blog
From the informational to the educational, Our blog covers everything “build smart”. Start reading at KorteCo.com/blog.

Clients, projects and experience
We’ve always taken great pride in knowing that our work speaks for itself. Learn more at KorteHealthcare.com.