

## **Top 50 Things Learned During the White Oak Library District Building Projects**

1. You catch more flies with honey. In other words, be nice to those working hard to build your building and they will more often than not be nice to you.
2. Going through the development of a full building program / space needs study is the best way to unite a Board around the goal of building a new facility.
3. Whenever possible, have the library Board heavily involved in big decisions but have them allow the Director and staff to make the decisions about the functional design of the library.
4. Wherever possible, design your building to look and feel good for 20 years. Avoid super trendy colors and finishes and service trends.
5. If your library has money and you regularly hire consultants for everything that is not strictly library service related, by all means hire building consultants to help you (especially the ones who spoke today).
6. Architects write specs and create concepts, contractors create shop drawings.
7. Good contractors put a lot of time and effort into their bids. Rebidding a project doesn't always produce lower bids.
8. Communicate! Communicate! Communicate with your architect! Making changes to the plans after the bidding process is expensive.
9. If you add things to the initially agreed upon scope of work, be prepared to pay for your architects to design or administer those changes.
10. Everything costs more than you think it will.
11. Commercial furniture is very expensive.
12. Find an architectural firm that wants to give you the building you want, not the building they want to design.

13. Don't fall for the bait and switch - i.e. don't let one architect sell you on his/her firm and then have another architect actually take the lead on the project. Insist that the lead project architect be involved in the interview process.
14. Attempt to simplify your building systems. Flashy and automated = expensive to service. Try to minimize the use of overly complicated lighting systems or meeting room a/v systems.
15. If you need to pass a referendum, be realistic about what the public might support, but also don't ask for too little.
16. If the public votes no to a referendum and it doesn't look likely that they will approve the same plan in years to come, have a "Plan B" and maybe even a "Plan C" that you can fall back on.
17. Leave no stone unturned when spreading the word about your referendum. It helps to build a critical mass of awareness.
18. Many voters do not pay attention to referendum marketing. They will learn of your referendum when they read about it on the ballot, in the voting booth.
19. You cannot change a "No" voter into a "Yes" voter. Your job is to make a great case to the undecided and yes voters, and then to get all of them to show up on Election Day.
20. Have thick skin. Many naysayers and anti-tax Tea Party types will say all sorts of hurtful things in an attempt to keep your referendum from being successful. Answer nonsense with sense, and be professional and polite while doing so.
21. Be a good client and pay your bills promptly.
22. Use a general contractor or an at-risk construction manager – i.e. do not have your library hold the individual contracts with the sub-contractors.
23. Building projects work much more smoothly when the Director is empowered to make on the fly decisions when meeting with architects and contractors.

24. If you are unhappy with one aspect of a contractor's performance you shouldn't withhold payment for other work they have done.
25. A good bid document will have relevant contractors providing "attic stock" of things like ceiling tiles, carpet squares, paint, etc. Do not allow the contractors to drain you of these items when they are correcting punch list items.
26. Avoid beginning a major project in the Fall to avoid expenses tied to "Winter Conditions".
27. The general contractor's site superintendent can be your best friend.
28. Your architect should be your best friend too.
29. If your library doesn't have much money but you are familiar with construction "lingo" and comfortable holding your own in a budget or planning meeting, then you can probably get away with using the traditional Design - Bid - Build model. If not, you need to hire a Construction Management firm.
30. The construction process is full of mistakes and inefficiencies, mostly due to subcontractors who do not provide a foreman or any sort of oversight on site. You and your architects will spend a good deal of time fighting for the library to not have to pay for those mistakes.
31. Be flexible with day to day decision between you and the architect and the subcontractors. If presented with an alternate idea that will accomplish what was intended in the architect's design that ultimately saves the contractor time/money, go ahead and approve that change. They will remember that the next time you want a decision to go your way.
32. Don't "hold back" dollars out of the project budget out of fear that the architects might spend everything. Their job is to give you the complete building you want and need so give them the entire financial picture upfront.
33. As a library Director, the building project may take up 50% or more of your time. Be prepared to delegate some authority to others so that they may operate the library efficiently in your "absence".

34. Weekly or bi-weekly construction site meetings between the library director, the project architect, the general contractor's site superintendent, and other relevant players is a must.
35. When it comes time for furniture to be installed into the new facility, there are different types of furniture packages (i.e. shelving, commercial, systems) and a vendor may want to be a prima donna and have the entire building to themselves during installation. Push back on that.
36. You can save a huge amount of money if your staff participates in moving/relocating materials as needed during the project as opposed to hiring movers.
37. If you have old, unneeded steel furniture or shelving, consider recycling it yourselves to make extra cash for the building project.
38. If you hire an auctioneer to get rid of surplus furniture/equipment in preparation for occupying your new library space, remember that they will likely want to take 30-50% of the sale proceeds.
39. For ease of bookkeeping and your own sanity, keep your project funding in a separate bank account from your normal library operating funds. If you passed a building bond referendum do not co-mingle your bond proceeds and your subsequent property taxes collected to pay back said bonds.
40. Yes, building permit fees apply to units of local government. Don't be afraid to stand before your local city council or village board and ask to have building permit fees eliminated for your project, or at worst reduced to just the amount your project will cost the municipality due to inspections, etc.
41. As the "owner", try to visit the construction site at least once per day. Take lots of pictures...at a minimum take pictures once per week.
42. Keep your staff away from the construction area for safety and also to keep them from inadvertently giving instruction to a contractor which may end up costing you money in a change order.

43. Don't be afraid to take a week of vacation in the middle of the project. So long as the architects and general contractor know about it well ahead of time, they can schedule things around your vacation.
44. When it comes to getting an occupancy permit for your new building or space, the inspectors from the fire department and from your city/village hold all of the cards. At the 11<sup>th</sup> hour they can and will ask for something that they want but which is not required by code...and if you want to occupy your building you will provide it even though they approved your drawings at the beginning of the project.
45. Does your municipality conduct inspections with internal staff or does it use an outside firm for this? You need to know this because if they hire those inspections out, the inspectors will be more difficult to work with and likely be way less willing to provide friendly interpretations of building codes.
46. You get a 1 year warranty on pretty much everything that is built or installed in a building project...take advantage of that!
47. Be prepared for the contractors that installed building equipment and/or the manufacturers of that equipment to want to sell you service agreements. Some are necessary and some are not. All are expensive.
48. Ask for your warranty and closeout documents to be delivered in electronic format.
49. You will receive training on your new building systems. That training will not be enough.
50. Have fun! You may never again get to leave your mark on something so permanent in your career.