

A Four-Step Guide to Giving New Life to Older Buildings

This information is excerpted from a guide with the same title by The Western Group. Now celebrating its 75th anniversary, The Western Group specializes in the exterior restoration and preservation of commercial, institutional and industrial buildings. Based in St. Louis, Mo., the Honolulu branch manager is Mitch Dudoit, Western Waterproofing Co. Inc.

This year, for the first time, expenditures for renovating existing commercial buildings in the United States are expected to double the expenditures for constructing new buildings. Building restoration and preservation is a timely subject when you consider the factors surrounding it.

- 80 percent of the nation's inventory of 4.6 million commercial structures are 15 or more years of age. Of these, 750,000 are more than 67 years old.

- The U.S. Department of Commerce estimates that new commercial construction will decline at a rate of 4 percent per year for the balance of this decade. Restoration's growth will offset this decline.

- Less than 10 years ago, new commercial construction had ap-

proximately 57 percent market share while commercial renovation had the remaining 43 percent. In 1989, this picture was reversed with commercial renovation holding approximately 61 percent market share.

Building owners and managers know that the lives of their buildings can be extended for many years to come by using specialty contractors experienced in the proper techniques and products of restoration and preservation.

Step One

An ounce of prevention has always been worth a pound of cure. That proverb certainly applies to protecting buildings from the various forces that lead to their gradual deterioration.

Managers can avoid high restoration bills by scheduling periodic inspections of their buildings. Experienced craftspeople are available to accompany building owners and managers during these periodic inspections, showing you what to look for and where to look. This is important because the practiced eye can usually spot telltale signs before they become serious, costly

problems. It's suggested that managers conduct an annual walk-through inspection of their buildings.

Step Two

In the event you've already discovered signs of deterioration or should some be spotted during an inspection, then your next step is selecting the right restoration team: architect, engineer and/or specialty contractor, depending on the specific needs of the project.

Otherwise, what you may perceive in the beginning as a routine restoration project could end up becoming an unsatisfactory experience, one filled with cost overruns, missed deadlines, business interruptions, legal problems or shoddy workmanship.

To prevent this from happening, here is a checklist for you to use when narrowing your selection of specialty contractors for a specific project.

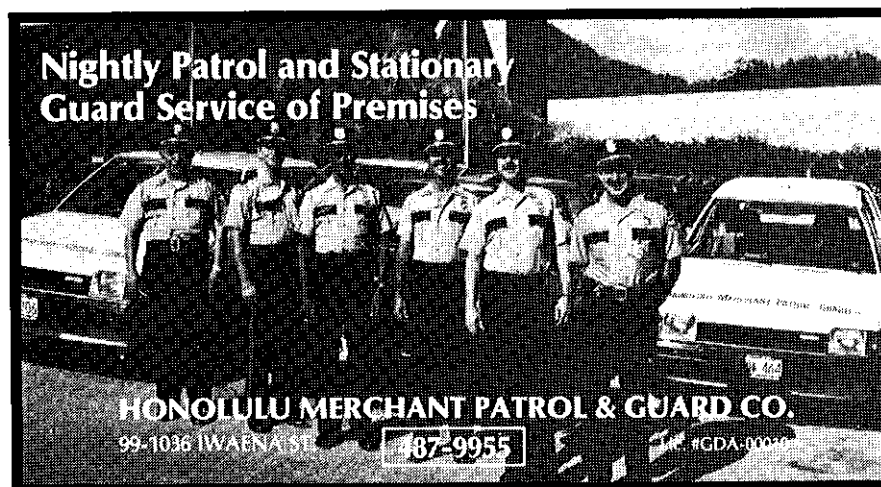
1. Ask for references. Check with those references to determine how well the restoration contractor performed from the building owners' or managers' perspectives.

2. Interview each potential restoration contractor to determine his ability to perform the intended work.

3. Find out how the contractor expects to complete your project on schedule. Ask about each firm's scheduling system.

4. Find out how each contractor plans to schedule daily work shifts so that your business isn't going to be interrupted during the restoration process.

5. Ask for a walk-through on at least one project that each contractor has completed recently. Ask what quality assurance standards were built into the project and how these were carried out.





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manager and the restoration team that will be responsible for the project. At this time, it's important that everyone becomes acquainted, including the project superintendent and foreman.

Among the topics that should be discussed at this meeting are access, timing, safety requirements, electrical and water requirements, staging areas and toilet facilities.

During the project, be alert for the following:

1. Adherence to quality workmanship, consistent with the proposal
2. Use of quality and up-to-date materials that are produced by reputable manufacturers
3. Clean and orderly job site
4. Scheduling of routine safety meetings by the contractor and adherence to safety codes by all craftsmen
5. Promptness in response to requests or problems
6. Scheduling of regular progress meetings (for all projects with extensive time frames) that cover job progress with a written record of what transpired at the meeting
7. Periodic payment requests covering the work completed during that time interval
8. Thoroughness and timeliness in handling paperwork relative to contract and billings.

When work is done, you should insist on the following: a final walk-through by all parties; forwarding of warranties and guarantees to the building owner; and promptness in responding to any future problems that may arise. *

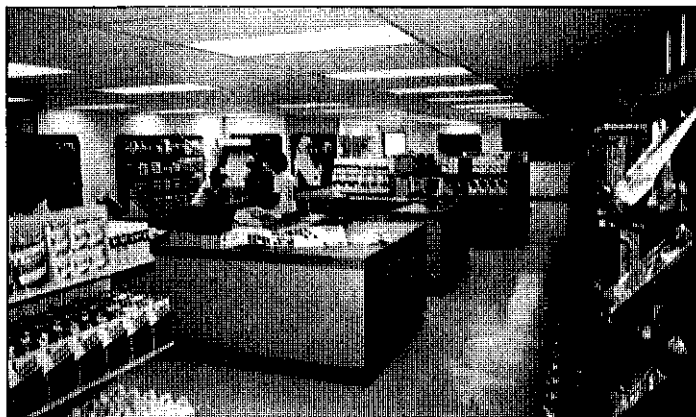


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6. Determine how well each contractor has been able to match projected budgets with actual costs.

7. Ask each contractor about his bonding capacity. Then call the bonding companies named to confirm what the contractors have told you.

8. Research each contractor's financial ability to perform. Ask for their financial statements and bank references.

9. Learn about each contractor's experience, particularly on projects that are relevant to your own with respect to both type and scope of work performed.

10. Ask each contractor if he intends to provide continuous on-site management. Find out how each contractor appropriates staff resources to the work currently underway.

11. Get the names of people from each contractor's staff who will make up the team assigned to your project. Request current resumes and references for the people who will serve in key positions, particularly the project manager and field supervisor.

12. If subcontractors are to be used, direct the steps in which the subcontractor is selected and managed by the prime contractor.

13. Determine how each contractor stands behind his work. Ask about formal walk-through procedures at the completion of projects.

Step Three

Once you've selected the contractors that you want to bid or negotiate your restoration project with, here are some of the items you should ask for in their proposals:

1. Summary of work to be accomplished

2. Scope of work to be performed. This should include the following:

a. A detailed explanation of what is to be done and on what parts of the building or structure

b. Costs for work to be performed

c. Time frame in which work is to be accomplished

d. Proposed starting date

e. Listing of items to be furnished by companies other than the restoration contractor (i.e. utilities, license, insurance, etc.)

f. Exclusions

g. Guarantees (if applicable)

h. Payment schedule (i.e. invoicing frequency and when invoices are to be paid)

i. Proposed schedule for work so that it causes the least amount of disruption with the daily operations of building owners and tenants

j. Work to be performed by the contractor's own work force and work to be performed by subcontractors

k. Hourly rates or unit prices for additional work

l. General conditions


Step Four

Once you've selected the contractor you want to perform your restoration work, take these three steps:

1. Award the written contract

2. Request samples for approval

3. Have a pre-start meeting between the building owner and




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