

## Three Major Benefits of Preconstruction Planning

Written by: Chris Hillyer, Regional Director of Preconstruction Services, Skanska

The preconstruction process is a vital phase in the construction industry, laying the foundation for a seamless and efficient project. If a builder gets preconstruction right, they pave the way for a smoother building process.

Achieving excellence from the outset requires early client involvement, meticulous planning, and collaborative decision-making. By engaging clients from the beginning, builders can ensure cost certainty, anticipate potential changes, and seek the best value for their clients. The proactive and client-centric approach minimizes surprise, fosters transparency, and ultimately enhances the overall project outcomes.

In fact, a collaborative approach to the preconstruction process can lead to more successful construction projects.

### 1. Take a More Client-Centric Approach

Setting expectations about the working relationship, transparent communication, and anticipating clients' needs are some of the most important lessons learned in preconstruction. By actively involving clients and understanding their goals, preferences, and constraints, builders can tailor the project to meet their specific requirements. The client-centric approach not only fosters a strong working relationship, but it also ensures that the project aligns with the clients' vision.

During the preconstruction phase, builders work closely with clients to identify project objectives, establish budgets, and define the scope of work. By engaging in open and transparent communication, teams can effectively address any concerns,



clarify expectations, offer solution-oriented alternatives, and build trust. Clients count on the builder to have a solution-oriented mindset, seamlessly manage every aspect of the build and minimize surprises.

Anticipating clients' needs comes from experience, but thoroughly thinking through the details, including the small things – like temporary fencing, safety railings, and traffic control barriers – is vital because these are the “little” things that can impact budget if not planned properly. Working together to develop a strategy and an agreed-upon schedule is paramount. This collaborative process enables clients to actively participate in decision-making, so they feel invested in the success of the project.

A client-centric approach comes down to leadership. Every client wants good service, trust in the builder, a smooth project with minimal design compromises, and a final building that meets their needs. Keeping a service mindset will make for a smoother building process and a more satisfied client.

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## 2. Proactively Control Your Budget

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Value management is a key aspect of the preconstruction phase but is most effective when used in a proactive manner. Builders are charged with materializing the client's vision, but it is also important to ask critical questions and examine the project from different angles to identify potential areas for improvement. This involves analyzing various construction methods, trends, materials, and systems to identify cost-saving opportunities without compromising quality or functionality. By respectfully challenging design choices or suggesting alternative solutions, builders can optimize the project's efficiency and cost-effectiveness. In some cases, the value management process may lead to building system selections with higher costs, but it will ultimately provide the best value to the client.

While benchmarking is important, historical data alone is not enough to develop a complete picture of a project's cost. Consider current market trends, as well as the unique set of requirements, assumptions, and values that make up the project. Collaborating with architects, engineers, and subcontractors to brainstorm ideas and find strategic and innovative solutions that maximize client value is essential. The preconstruction team will analyze and synthesize all this data – both tangible and intangible – to produce a baseline cost model, which is used to set the foundation of the guaranteed maximum price.

After establishing the initial cost model, estimators should continue to develop, maintain, and communicate the budget. The estimating never stops. Each scope is assigned accurate target values. Input from trade partners is an ongoing conversation. As decisions are made, there should be continuous estimating and budgeting – not just at rigid design milestones. As the process moves on, it is important to rightsize contingencies and allowances that were put in place to cover the initial project scope.

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## 3. Mitigate Risks

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While budgeting and cost estimation are crucial aspects for the preconstruction process, looking beyond the numbers and considering potential risks is equally important.

Preconstruction teams must practice risk mitigation and proactively plan to avoid unexpected delays and expenses during construction. By conducting thorough feasibility studies, evaluating site conditions, and considering potential challenges, builders can anticipate and mitigate risks early on. Focusing on risks during the preconstruction phase allows flexibility in the planning.

Constructability reviews are important at major design milestones and they help mitigate risks. This process allows for preconstruction and operations team members to focus on quality control, carefully review each major building component in the design, evaluate details to ensure components are buildable, schedule impacts, assess ease of maintenance and access, and other factors. Conducting constructability reviews throughout the design phase and at milestones reduces the number of requests for information, errors, change orders, and delays. These frequent, sometimes informal reviews can be chances to identify and resolve any potential issues in design drawings that could lead to costly redesigns.

During the preconstruction phase, preparing the team for success by developing a project execution plan (PEP) is crucial. The PEP captures the strategic and carefully thought-out plans for construction and serves as a road map to define how the construction team will manage the project and potential risks in the field.

The preconstruction process plays a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for a successful construction project. By involving clients from the early stages, builders can ensure cost certainty, anticipate potential changes and proactively seek the best value for their clients. This collaborative approach fosters open communication, minimizes surprises, and enhances overall project outcomes.

The preconstruction phase is not merely a technical requirement but a valuable opportunity to establish a solid foundation for success. By embracing collaboration and proactive planning, builders can ensure that final construction projects meet or exceed their clients' expectations, as well as finish on time and within budget. 



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### About the Author

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Chris Hillyer is regional director of preconstruction services at Skanska – San Antonio. Visit [skanska.com](http://skanska.com).

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### About the Article

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