

Right team is key to successful health care building plans

Austin is a mecca for bicycle enthusiasts. Each type of bike has a different purpose and is designed for a particular terrain and use.

Much like selecting a suitable type of bike to ensure that the cycling experience is well-rewarded, health care professionals constructing their own building should select a suitable team of professionals to handle the different aspects of construction.

Austin boasts a large concentration of health care providers, and a significant number are considering construction of a building in which to house their practices.

To ensure that the building construction experience is a timely and positive one, health care practitioners need to have the right team in place.

The team of professionals should consist of:

- A real estate broker who focuses on the client's property needs and financial goals and guides the client through the acquisition of the property and completion of the purchase.

Hire a broker who has the research capacity to develop a list of suitable properties and a negotiation strategy not only for the purchase price, but for terms and conditions to minimize the client's risk due to contractual liabilities and obligations.

The broker should meet with the client's real estate attorney to discuss the agreed contractual terms and conditions and to make any changes necessary to protect the client's interest.

A broker well-integrated in Austin's health care real estate will also be able to recommend proven service providers to assist the client in assembling the right team.

- A real estate lawyer who reviews the terms and conditions of the purchase contract, condo regime documents, and construction contracts pertinent to the purchase.

- A lender who finances health care professionals. Secure the loan commit-

ment early. The loan agreement should define all costs, origination fees, environment inspections, construction inspections, appraisal costs, the lender's legal fee requirements, and any additional fees contemplated.

The loan document should contain a time line for the items required in the closing process for which the lender is responsible. The loan should contain a contingency of 10-15 percent for cost overruns.



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- An insurance broker to review all contracts and insurance requirements to protect the buyer prior to, during and after the construction period.

- An architect experienced in health care building design and program management. He/she is responsible for all permitting and certifications. In order to help coordination of design and speed construction design on projects of 10,000 square feet and under, it is desirable that the engineer and architect work under the control of the architect, with the architect bearing all design responsibility.

- An engineer experienced in mechanical, electrical and plumbing health care building design.

- A project manager. It's good practice for the buyer (owner) to employ a representative skilled in construction management and inspection. The project manager is responsible to the owner and protects the owner's interests.

The project manager is the owner's (buyer's) representative and oversees the general contractor. The project manager also mediates disputes arising from the construction and ensures that the construction process moves ahead in a timely manner by coordinating with the general contractor and the various trades.

Most of all, the project manager

saves time and eases frustrations in dealing with construction issues.

- A general contractor that is bondable and experienced in health care construction.

The general contractor should be financially solid. Always use a proven team of subcontractors. The construction contract should have completion dates and should include a monetary penalty for late completion. The construction contract should allow the owner to approve, disapprove or substitute subcontractors.

- A specialized trade contractor. The construction contract should allow the owner to directly employ this type of contractor, as the work may be highly technical in nature and require special conditions and supervision. A few examples would be the installation of imaging equipment and medical gas systems.

Specialized trade contractors are usually required to install these particular types of equipment in order for the manufacturers' warranties to be in effect.

Health care professionals have an enormous, two-fold responsibility: patient care and welfare as well as the financial success of their practice.

In order to keep this responsibility as their priority, health care professionals who have a suitable team assembled will avoid time-consuming and unnecessary distractions from what they do best – administering efficient and professional patient care.

Like selecting a bike suitable for the cyclist's ultimate riding experience, selecting quality team members suitable for health care building construction will determine the success of the project, and the result will be a positive experience for the health care professional.

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