

When Churches Have The Most And The Least Cost Control In A Building Project



*By
Earl Myler
Chairman*

Most of us would think that the more money we spend during a building program, which includes time spent in preparation of construction documents and the construction of the project, the more control we would have. However, that is not the case. Churches have the most control during the very early stages of a church building program. The early stages include the planning and design process. That is also when the least amount of money is spent in a church building program.

In the planning stage, churches will be establishing what they want to build; ie, what type of program space is needed and how much new space it is going to take for each of the program areas. Church leaders will also be setting the building budget during the early planning process. When setting the building budget, two things are of great importance.

The first thing is to make sure the building budget is realistic. It is not uncommon for most churches to underestimate the construction costs, especially when construction cost inflation runs well ahead of the consumer inflationary index. Unfortunately, this situation occurs in about 80% of the churches planning on building new facilities.

The second most important thing is to make sure the church can afford what it is intending to build; ie, the building budget is affordable. Too many times churches plan to build a size of a facility that is way more than they can afford. It is easy to acquire lender guidelines to help churches determine what they can afford.

During the design stage, the size and scope of the project designed by an architect needs to stay within the building budget that has been determined during the planning stage. There is always a tendency by building committees to begin deviating from the earlier planning process; ie, they begin "growing" the project, which then jeopardizes the building budget and perhaps the success of the entire building program.

It is after completion of the planning and design stages that churches begin having less control over what happens but begin spending larger sums of money.