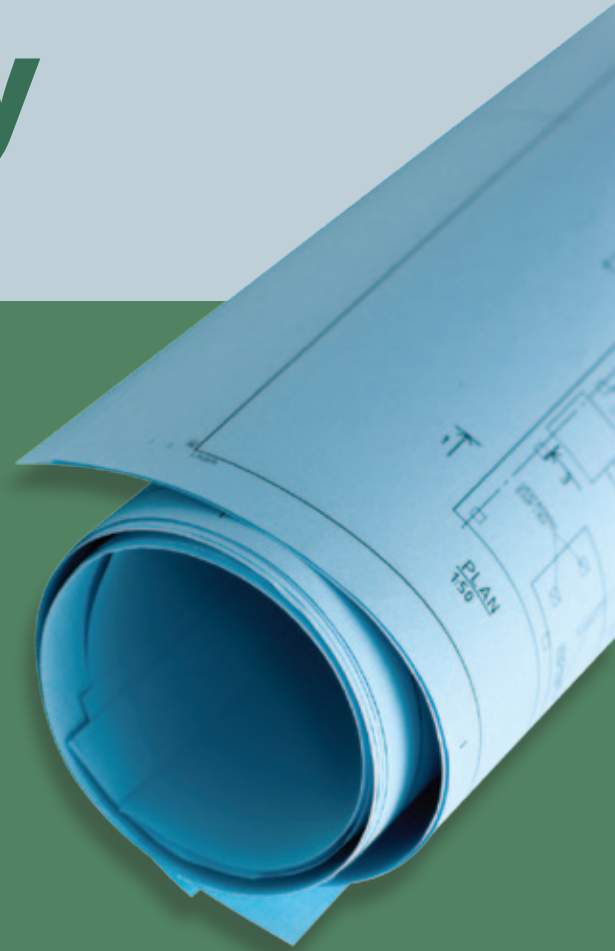




# Sustainability and the At-Risk CM

By Ron Whisker, CCM

How does the concept of At-Risk CM differ from Agency CM when working through sustainable design projects? Like the Agency CM, the At-Risk CM needs to become thoroughly familiar with the intricacies of sustainable design. He must come to an appreciation, early on in the process, of just how thoroughly integrated most sustainable designs are. He must also understand the level of thought, planning and documentation that will be required.



This planning, knowledge, and documentation will not only be needed at the conclusion of the project, but as an ongoing requirement prior to and during construction, too. The CM's preconstruction team needs to make certain that any potential subcontractors who are involved in early conceptual pricing are doing so with the project's sustainable goals and requirements in mind.

Both the At-Risk CM and his subcontractors need to become thoroughly familiar with the owner's goals in regard to sustainable aspects of the project at an early stage in the process. Some owners may be interested in sustainability only as long as it doesn't cost appreciably more or take longer to accomplish. Others may be committed to achieving a LEED Platinum certification. In either case, the owner's goals must be addressed. In addition to the basic parameters such as the size and shape of the building, the layout, number and size of interior spaces, the owner may have specific preferences in the choice of major MEP equipment manufacturers, type of lighting, finishes used, selection of doors or ceilings, etc. All of these parameters could have a bearing upon the direction of the design, and on how these preferred components can be integrated into the overall sustainable design concept. They could significantly impact cost of the project.

In addition, the At-Risk CM may typically want or need to exercise greater control over his construction costs by carefully crafting a greater number of subcontract scopes of work. Many times, under an Agency CM contract an owner may choose to have a smaller number of prime contracts with broader scopes of work under each. Each of these prime contractors may have an additional layer or multiple additional layers of subcontractors. Under a sustainable project, when coupled with a greater number of separate subcontracts, the At-Risk CM must ensure that each of these subcontractors thoroughly understands what is required and follows through with both the correct material and procedures. He must additionally make certain that the subs all provide the required documentation to satisfy the applicable sustainable requirements.

The complexity and scope of sustainability requirements should be taken into consideration when analyzing who the At-Risk CM's key subcontractors and suppliers will be. Just as with the At-Risk CM himself, his subcontractors also need to be both understanding of, and committed to, the sustainable goals of the project. These subcontractors must understand that there will be additional hours and resources involved in the design process to facilitate the integration of their systems with the others in the project. The At-Risk CM must be sure that the selected subs are capable, as well as willing to perform the additional work throughout the course of the project, and again following the successful completion of the construction phase. The At-Risk CM may be contractually obligated to provide a certain level of certification. He needs to satisfy himself that the subs understand what they are obligating themselves to do, and then he must see that it is done correctly.

It is imperative that the At-Risk CM pass along to his subcontractors a clear understanding of what is required, especially if some of his chosen subcontractors have not been exposed to the specific and unique nature of this undertaking on a previous sustainable project. Since there typically are a larger number of subcontractors chosen to provide services under an At-Risk project, these may also be smaller firms who may not have had the opportunity to have worked on a previous sustainable project. So, it is crucial for the At-Risk CM to clearly define these expectations in any subcontracts he issues, in order to be sure that all of his subcontractors' costs are covered in his Guaranteed Maximum Price to this owner, when the time comes to issue the GMP.

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The At-Risk CM should also be giving early consideration to his site utilization plan to include such things as demolition and construction phase waste recycling, sustainable irrigation systems, rainwater collection systems, and/or geothermal well fields. An effective waste recycling effort, for example, will require the At-Risk CM to provide significant additional laydown space for multiple waste containers for each type of material being recycled. In a suburban, rural or industrial project, this may not be a substantive issue, but in a typically tight urban site, it will be.

Sustainable projects might add yet another dimension of complexity to any subcontractor's work. The additional set of requirements required by a sustainable project can sometimes be overlooked during pre-construction discussions. Or worse, the CM may assume that the sub understands exactly what is required because the At-Risk CM has had far more experience with sustainable projects than his subcontractors.

On a sustainable project, this need for clear understanding of requirements on the part of each and every subcontractor is magnified. It must be reflected in their pricing throughout the design and pre-construction phases, and then be carried through construction and post construction. **CM**

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