Charles Merritt - Ten steps to consider to ensure your next roof restoration is a successful one

June 13, 2011 - Spotlights

Time to fix your roof? Let's face it - re-roofing and roofing repairs are an inevitable part of a building's life cycle. As one of the most exposed and vulnerable components of a building, with the obligation to protect everything and everyone below, it is expected that a roofing system will demand a significant amount of attention and investment on the part of the building owner. This is especially true when it is time to repair or replace it. It is important to remember that what may appear more costly up front will offer substantial gains in the end. Here are 10 steps to follow to ensure successful and sustainable results on your next roof restoration project.

1. Know your roof rehabilitation options: complete tear-off, partial tear-off, re-roof over old membrane. Nine times out of ten, the best option is to fully replace the existing roof, not recover it. Many building owners try to cut costs by applying a new roof on top of a deteriorated one. This can be a very costly "cutback." If the old system has deteriorated to the point of having wet, saturated insulation, covering it will only allow moisture infiltration to continue and cause damage to the interior as well as the structural components of a building.

2. Hire an engineer. While hiring a contractor directly to perform the roof restoration may seem like a more economical solution, many building owners do not realize that hiring an engineering consultant can ultimately save them time, money, and (perhaps most importantly) avoid problems and pitfalls down the road. Here is what an engineering consultant can bring to the table:

1) Knowledge of the most appropriate design and roofing system for each individual roof;

2) Experience gained from extensive roofing studies and roofing system analyses they have conducted; and

3) Resources to properly guide the owner through the following steps in the most efficient and thorough manner.

3. Have thorough specifications and drawings prepared. A qualified engineer will investigate the roof, prepare thorough specifications and drawings with customized details that fit your site, and should suggest how you can optimize your new roof, possibly by installing a green roof or a VOC compliant roofing system. They should also point out any surrounding problems at parapets, bulkheads, railings and other critical locations that may need repairs prior to installing the new roof.

4. Stick with reputable and well-established manufacturers. Your engineer should provide options for at least two or three roofing systems-all of which should be name-brand materials from major manufacturers and have been on the market for over 10 years. A roofing system guarantee from a company that later goes out of business is completely worthless.

5. Ask your engineer or manufacturing company for a list of recommended contractors. If you hire an engineering consultant, their experience working with various contractors will allow them to clearly identify those who are established and reputable, provide quality workmanship, remain on schedule

and within budget, have proper insurance requirements, and are the best fit for your project.

6. During the bid analysis phase, compare apples to apples. Too often, building owners often choose by bottom-line price alone and neglect other critical factors. Because it's difficult to compare individual specifications in multiple bids, your engineer can assist you with this phase of the project by soliciting bids from a select group of contractors through a standard bid proposal process. During bid analysis, the engineer will then create a one-page spreadsheet to make bid comparisons much easier. This standardized process allows for a clear apples-to-apples comparison and negotiations.

7. Always protect yourself by requiring that your company be covered as additional insured before the job begins. Insurance coverage should include liability limits, auto coverage and workers compensation insurance. It is also necessary that your engineer obtain a lien waiver from the contractor before you release any money owed to them.

8. Have a pre-construction meeting will all parties involved. Before the project begins, it is crucial to establish a protocol for all communications, chain of command, verbalize expectations, and come to an agreement on important issues such as when the job will start, estimated completion date, staging locations, change order procedures, and any possible disruptions to tenants and/or employees.

9. During the construction phase, have your engineer monitor the work. Frequent on-site observations of the work in progress will allow your engineer to ensure complete adherence to design and contract requirements, as well as anticipate and/or solve any potential problems before they occur.

10. Examine potential tax benefits as it relates to your roof restoration. Be sure to consult with your tax advisor to see if your roof restoration qualifies as a deductible to further increase your return on investment.

Charles Merritt, Sr. is the president, Merritt Engineering Consultants, P.C., Bayside, N.Y.