



How to create a realistic construction schedule

The time it takes to design and build a new restaurant depends on a variety of factors.

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Chuck Taylor

The length of construction from conception to ribbon-cutting varies depending on the restaurant segment.

While construction best practices might be common knowledge among experienced restaurant operators and developers, novice owners opening fast-casual franchise restaurants may not know how to create a successful restaurant construction schedule.

A restaurant construction timeline depends mainly on the following factors:

- The size and type of restaurant
- The amount of equipment in the back of house
- The finishes being used
- How prepared and organized the owner/operator is in terms of having drawings done and hard delivery dates on the fixtures, furnishings and equipment (FF&E)

As the best restaurant construction firms will tell you, the most common reason restaurant construction schedules and budgets increase is not a commercial construction crisis (such as a burst pipe, etc.), but a delay in delivery of construction materials. Delivery scheduling is absolutely crucial to an on-time opening.

Because of this, successful general contractors will make sure independents and novice franchisees are aware of all these pre-construction phases that go into opening a restaurant:

- **Design:** The architect creates drawings (typically four to six weeks)
- **Permit:** Up to three months, depending on the location

- **Bidding:** Usually two weeks

The design phase is the time to consider lead times on equipment and finishes. For example, an oven could take six weeks to be delivered, while certain wall tiles could take four weeks. Once these times are determined, a construction timeline can be built around them. An experienced restaurant construction contractor can also help owners prepare their delivery schedule.

During the bidding phase, the best general contractors will examine the property carefully to see if a roof needs to be replaced, if bathrooms aren't up to code or if there are any serious construction demons, all of which will affect your commercial construction budget and schedule.

Only after these three processes are done can you actually start building your restaurant. Too often, new restaurant operators rent space before they even hire an architect, which is a costly mistake to a restaurant construction budget and timeline. Restaurant operators could be paying rent on a space that they haven't even moved into yet.

One way to avoid paying rent on a restaurant space before you open is to make sure there is verbiage in the lease/contract that says something along the lines of "rent to commence within 20 days of opening and here is our projected opening date."

That said, the actual restaurant construction process (physically building out the space and installing materials) typically takes eight weeks for a carry-out storefront; 12 weeks to build a fast-casual restaurant space; and 16 weeks for a full-service restaurant.

Simple, right? It can be, if you're working with the right construction team.

Chuck Taylor is the director of operations for Englewood Construction. He can be reached at 847-233-9200, ext. 712 or check out www.hardhatchat.com.

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