

Commercial interior planners save money and insure project integrity *By: Amy Taylor*

Your business is expanding and experts are being called. You know you need an architect, contractor and sub-contractors, but did you know you also need a commercial interior planner?

This professional can save you thousands of dollars over the course of construction, whether it is construction of a hotel, a bank or a prison.

A commercial interior planner will make sure your new building is not only attractive and functional, but also follows all local and state building codes and Americans with Disabilities Act codes and requirements.

How important is that?

Mary Lynn Nettles, principal of The Nettles Group Inc., cites dozens of cases where codes weren't understood or followed precisely and ended up costing the client money.

For example, something as simple

as electrical outlets or junction boxes for fixtures can cause untold delays and lost finances if they are not installed at precise heights and locations. Numbers outside hotel room doors must also be at precise heights and include Braille; anything less could be rejected by inspectors and would have to be replaced at the owner's expense.

"There is just so much involved," said Ms. Nettles. "People can pick out things that are pretty." But good taste is only a miniscule part of the commercial interior planner's job. They must be knowledgeable in specification writing, codes and where to find the best deal on everything from the most durable carpet and upholstery to the most efficient lighting systems and how to design millwork.

Commercial planners work with the architect and the owners from the beginning of a project. They attend

meetings with the architects and general contractor and are often on the job site during construction. They oversee every detail of the interior, from how the walls can be placed for the best allocation of space to the type of artwork hanging on those walls.

Batson Hewitt and Jay Keenan, developers of the French Quarter Inn, attest to the importance of interior planners. Brought in to oversee the myriad details of designing and specifying a hotel, The Nettles Group saved the owners more than \$25,000 over the life of the project.

So now you're convinced you need an interior commercial planner, but how do you find one?

Industry insiders say the best way to find someone with experience and expertise is to ask around. But don't just take the word of friends and business associates when choosing an interior commercial planner.

Instead select a few firms, review their work, thoroughly check references and above all, make sure they are proficient in documentation and specification writing.

Expect your interior planner to provide budgets, specifications and finish schedules for contractors. These allow commercial interior planners to provide a detailed guidebook for all involved in the project.

For more information about commercial interior planners or The Nettles Group, contact Mary Lynn Nettles at 747-2233.