

Modular construction has emerged as a powerful solution to address workforce housing shortages, reduce timelines, and enhance quality control in the building industry. Yet, despite its clear benefits, many projects run into costly early pitfalls that can ripple throughout the entire process. This post explores the biggest early mistake owners and builders make with modular projects—and how companies like **Irontown Modular**, **The Other Side Village**, and **My Cozy Outdoors** are helping to change the landscape.

Understanding Modular vs. Manufactured: Definitions and Building Codes

A common source of confusion—and a frequent early trap—is misunderstanding the distinction between *manufactured homes* and *modular construction*. While these terms are sometimes used interchangeably in casual conversation, they have very different definitions, regulatory frameworks, and permitting workflows.

- **Manufactured housing** is built entirely under the HUD code, a federal standard specific to manufactured homes. These units are shipped as complete housing units on wheels and are often categorized as personal property rather than real estate.
- **Modular construction** is built to local or state building codes (often the International Building Code - IBC) and transported as sections or modules to be assembled on-site. The modular units become a permanent part of the building's structure and real property.

Failing to clarify these distinctions early in the process can result in permit surprises and delays—key contributors to schedule mishaps and budget overruns.



Why This Matters for Workforce Housing

Workforce housing projects particularly benefit from the precision and efficiency of modular construction. Yet this sector also faces unique constraints around recruitment, worker availability, and compressed timelines. With labor shortages, workforce housing developers must optimize every step, making early clarity on construction methods and codes vital.

Industry leaders such as **Irontown Modular** have successfully partnered with public and private stakeholders to deploy modular systems in workforce housing developments, reducing reliance on scarce skilled labor and accelerating timelines.

The Biggest Early Mistake: Overlooking Integration of Permitting and Site Logistics

After clarifying what modular construction means in terms of regulations and building code compliance, the largest early stumbling block becomes clear: **failing to align permit workflows and site logistics with the modular factory schedule.**

This manifests in several closely related ways:



- **Late corridor decisions:** Corridors and module layouts often require finalization early to guide factory work, but owners sometimes delay these decisions, resulting in costly rework or adaptations in the factory.
- **Late crane planning:** Scheduling cranes to place modules is a critical path task that, if delayed, can create cascading schedule impacts.
- **Permitting surprises:** Unexpected permit conditions or inspections that were not anticipated in the early stages can stop work or require expensive design revisions.

Parallel Workstreams: Compressing Schedule Through Factory and Site Coordination

One of modular construction's greatest advantages is the ability to *compress schedules* by performing factory module fabrication simultaneously with site preparation and foundation work.

However, this opportunity becomes a risk if the project team fails to coordinate timelines re-thinkingthefuture.com early and tightly. A missed inspection on a foundation, or a permit hold-up on the site, can prevent modules from being installed as scheduled—causing expensive factory storage or demobilization.

Expert modular builders such as **The Other Side Village** specialize in this coordinated approach, leveraging technology and integrated project scheduling to keep modular and site workflows truly parallel.

How Early Planning Prevents Late Crane and Corridor Issues

Crane logistics and corridor design are two of the most overlooked elements in the early phases of modular projects. Yet, their early planning is essential to smooth construction phases.

Early Planning Aspect Potential Late-Stage Issue Impact on Project
Corridor dimensions and module connections finalized too late
Corridor design finalized too late
Factory waste, rework, increased costs, delays
Cranes secured and scheduled well before delivery
Late crane hiring or permit conflicts
Schedule stoppage, storage fees, increased labor costs
All inspection and permit requirements identified
Permit surprises or incomplete inspections
Work stoppages, redesigns, and delayed occupancy

Best Practices for Early Phases

1. **Confirm modular vs. manufactured scope clearly:** Confirm with the design and permitting teams which code applies, what the factory capabilities are, and ensure clarity among all stakeholders.
2. **Lock corridors and module layouts early:** Work with your modular provider—whether it is **My Cozy Outdoors** delivering innovative, semi-permanent outdoor housing or a multifamily modular provider—to finalize these design elements before factory work begins.
3. **Plan crane logistics early and apply for permits promptly:** Identify crane locations, access paths, and timing months in advance to avoid emergency rescheduling.
4. **Communicate with permit authorities early and often:** Engage permitting agencies early to uncover any special inspections, code interpretations, or conditions that could affect installation.
5. **Integrate project schedules:** Use technology like BIM coordination, shared schedules, and regular stakeholder meetings to ensure factory and site remain in sync.

Industry Voices: Learning From Modular Experts

Irontown Modular, known for pioneering factory-built multifamily and workforce housing, emphasizes the synergy between factory precision and site readiness. Their project coordinators highlight that many early issues are traceable back to unclear scope decisions or rushed permitting submissions—both avoidable with early diligence.

One client recently told me they were shocked by the final bill. The Other Side Village, which focuses on off-grid, modular community developments, stresses the necessity of contingencies around crane scheduling and inspections given remote site challenges. Their teams advocate front-loading logistics months in advance.

My Cozy Outdoors, combining modular design with outdoor living modules, points out the importance of defining regulatory pathways early since their custom units sometimes straddle definitions between accessory structures and modular units, complicating permits.

Conclusion: The Early Mistake That Can Make or Break Your Modular Project

The biggest early mistake people make with modular projects is **failing to integrate modular design, permit requirements, and site logistics early enough—especially locking in corridor decisions, crane scheduling, and permit workflows.** This misstep leads to late crane planning headaches, late corridor decisions that force factory changes, and unexpected permit surprises that halt progress.

Successful modular projects like those by **Irontown Modular**, **The Other Side Village**, and **My Cozy Outdoors** show that the key to unlocking schedule compression and cost efficiencies lies in front-loaded collaboration, transparency, and firm timelines.

For owners, developers, and builders seeking to embrace modular construction—especially in the workforce housing sector with its labor constraints—the lesson is clear: dedicate significant effort to planning permitting workflows and site logistics in parallel with factory design and production. Doing so changes the game.