Before the Lease: Nine Questions an Albany Business Should Ask About Its Next Office

Signing a commercial lease feels like the finish line. For the construction side of a move, it is closer to the starting gun, and several of the choices that decide what an office build-out will cost are already locked in by the time the ink dries. These are the questions worth asking while you still have leverage.1. What exactly does the landlord deliver?

Some suites are handed over as a raw shell. Others come as a vanilla box with finished walls, a ceiling grid, basic lighting and working restrooms. A few are "as is," which means whatever the last tenant left behind. Ask for the delivery condition in writing, room by room if you can get it.

2. How big is the improvement allowance, and how is it paid?

An allowance quoted per square foot sounds generous until you learn it is reimbursed only after the work is done, or that it excludes furniture, cabling and design fees. Find out when the money arrives and what invoices the landlord needs to see.3. Who picks the contractor?

Some buildings require the landlord's builder. Others let the tenant choose but want approval of insurance and drawings. Knowing this early avoids a stalled schedule later.

4. Does the electrical service match your plan?

A twelve-person accounting office and a twelve-person engineering firm with workstations and plotters do not draw the same power. Have someone open the panel before you commit.5. Is the HVAC zoned for private offices?

Large open floors are often served by a handful of big zones. Cut that floor into offices and conference rooms and some rooms will run hot while others run cold. Rezoning is a real cost line, not a detail.

6. How many restrooms will code require for your headcount?

Plumbing fixture counts are tied to occupancy. Growing from twenty people to forty over the lease term can change what the suite has to provide.7. Which building department reviews the work?

Plenty of offices with an Albany mailing address actually sit in Colonie, Guilderland or Bethlehem. Each municipality runs its own permit desk, and review times differ.

8. What are the building's work rules?

Quiet hours, ***Go here*** freight elevator bookings, loading dock access and the landlord's insurance requirements all shape how quickly a crew can move.9. What happens at the end of the lease?

Restoration clauses can require you to remove what you built. Ask before you design a glass-walled boardroom you might have to tear out in ten years.

Where a contractor fits in

A pre-lease walkthrough with a commercial builder turns these questions into numbers. Clifton Construction (Clifton Development Group LLC), an Albany general contractor, works on office renovations and tenant fit-ups across the Capital Region and can measure a suite with Matterport scanning so the existing conditions are documented before anyone draws a new layout. Bringing that information into a lease negotiation is far cheaper than discovering it after move-in day has been promised to your staff.

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