

RELOCATING YOUR BUSINESS IN 2023

CAM FOSTER | ASSOCIATE BROKER

Historically, transitioning to a new space has always been a complex process, as it requires planning, organization, and diligence. Welcome to 2023, where thanks to everything from global supply chain issues to rising inflation and other costs, each piece of the relocation process carries even more weight. The Boulos Company has been helping businesses find, secure, and plan for new locations since 1975 – Over the years we've provided our clients with countless tips and suggestions on relocation practices based on how they've changed over time. Here are a handful of items you should keep in mind that are more important than ever considering the many moving pieces affecting commercial real estate both throughout the country and here in Maine.

TIP #1: PLAN YOUR TIMELINE

One of the most critical aspects of the relocation process is planning ahead. In a world where tenant build-out projects are missing deadlines left and right, this has never been truer. Planning starts with creating a timeline, considering all stages of the move to prevent disruption of day-to-day operations. Depending on where you are in the process and what your needs are, the timeline can involve identifying what your business needs are in a new location, identifying and touring those spaces, negotiating a lease, updating the space, buying furniture, coordinating the move, updating branding, and the list goes on. A tenant representation broker can work with you to estimate an outline of how long these items should take so you know what to account for in your plan.

Once you're zeroing in on a space, you'll also want to understand your new layout and make decisions about how you will utilize the space. If there are areas in the current space that are not working, identify them and aim to address those issues in your new footprint. Make note of potential ways in which your business can adapt to your new location. For major renovations, determine whether an architect is required and keep in mind what is necessary in terms of building permits and how much time they may take to acquire. These are decisions that should

be made well in advance of your move, and you should have a firm grasp on what it will take to use your space the way you'll want to before you sign a lease.

TIP #2: REVIEW YOUR IT NEEDS:

Relocating is an excellent opportunity to upgrade office technology, and the way companies leverage IT has changed considering hybrid work environments. We suggest taking ample time to review the IT and communication structure you have in place in your current location, comparing it to what you'd like to see in the new one, and outlining what you'll need to do to fill in the gaps. An example of this that comes up frequently is IT in the conference room – We don't need to tell you that video conferencing is more common than ever, but the webcam you have set up in your current office might not cut it in 2023, and setting up video conferencing capabilities in a conference room so that everyone can effectively see/be seen and hear/be heard can look a lot different depending on the size of your company, the size of your meetings, and what you want to do in them

Regardless of hybrid work, the pre-pandemic IT-related relocation considerations still apply. Your new office may require new network cabling, additional phone lines, or even a dedicated server room. If you want to have high-speed Wi-Fi available throughout, you may need a Wi-Fi mesh network. Many of these decisions need to be made before any construction/ renovation, which is why IT should be considered throughout site selection and build-out processes. If you don't have an IT professional on staff, you can hire an IT consultant to make sure that all your systems are ready to go on day one.

Lastly, you'll also want to consider cybersecurity, and whether any changes in IT and IT-related processes can put your systems at risk. When you consider that over one million computer viruses are being released every day, making sure your network is protected from hackers is paramount. A cyber security professional can be very valuable, helping to keep important information safe.

TIP #3 UNDERSTAND LOCAL PERMITTING:

Whether you choose to apply for permits and approvals on your own or through an architect or space planner, it has never been more important to get out ahead of this process. Cities in Maine have experienced historically long wait times for years, and it is expected to continue. There are many factors affecting this. The economy is still hot, and demand for construction projects that require permits is up in both residential and commercial sectors. This demand is coming from more people than ever in the advent of giant spikes in Maine's inbound move rate. All this demand is being serviced by a relatively small city/town staff, which was already dealing with more permitting requests than ever before, even prior to any pandemic-related demand spikes.

Could all the above start to simmer down in 2023 as the economy cools due to increased interest rates? It's a possibility, but as of now, we'd recommend you plan for the worst. Understand what you need to do with your space early on to make it work for you and take the time to understand what portions of that work will require permits.

If you need to do construction to your space, talk with a space planner or architect to understand what work will require permitting. You can always reach out to the city about permitting questions but be realistic regarding how long it will take to hear back, and keep this in mind as you're communicating with your tenant representative or your new potential landlord. Different cities and towns will have different processes and systems for permitting, so keep this in mind as well.

TIP #4: CONSIDER YOUR HYBRID WORK PLAN

The way people work is changing. The age of flexible work has arrived, and it looks like it's here to stay. You have new criteria to consider to ensure a work environment that optimizes productivity and attracts and retains good talent.



PHOTO: Corey Templeton Photography

So how do you design a space for the future? Each business is different and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Many companies now have a mix of in-office employees, remote employees, and hybrid employees, and different reasons for bringing employees into the office. Those goals for how you want to use your office, how often your employees are in the office, and the type of work they are doing while they are there, all have an impact on how you layout your space in 2023, as different types of work require different types of space.

We highly recommend engaging your staff to figure this out. Staff feedback is key and can help you get a sense of how much private space, shared offices, and collaboration spaces you should have based on the types of work people are doing, and the benefits that they get from doing that work in the office. Measure twice, cut once, and get feedback from your team for key decision-making. If you don't know where to start when it comes to getting useful information like this from your staff, you can bring in a commercial broker, space planner, or architect to begin the conversation. A good space planner can help you extrapolate what types of workspaces are most important to your employees, and how much you need of them based on when your people are on site.