Vanilla Box or Turnkey? A Quick Read for Capital Region Landlords

If you own a vacant commercial suite in the Albany area, you have probably heard both terms from brokers. They describe two very different bets.A vanilla box is a clean, code-ready shell. Think finished and primed walls, a ceiling grid with lights, a working restroom or two, base HVAC, a sprinkler system and an electrical panel with capacity. It does not have a layout. The next tenant designs that.A turnkey delivery goes further. The landlord builds the tenant's specific layout, finishes included, and hands over keys to a space ready for furniture.The case for vanilla boxIt shows well. Prospects can picture their business in a bright, finished room much more easily than in a dark shell full of the last tenant's leftovers. It also keeps your options open, since you are not guessing at one tenant's needs. And the money you spend tends to stay useful across many future leases.The case for turnkeySome tenants, especially smaller ones, have no appetite for managing construction. Offering turnkey can win a lease that a vanilla box would lose. The tradeoff is risk: you are spending on choices that fit one business, and if that tenant leaves early, the next one may want walls moved.A middle pathMany owners prepare a vanilla box, then offer a defined improvement allowance on top. The tenant chooses the layout, the landlord controls the budget.Questions to settle before choosingHow long has the space sat empty, and why? Which tenant types are touring it? Do local comparable listings show finished suites or raw shells? How much capital can you commit now, and how much would you rather tie to a signed lease? Honest answers usually point clearly toward one approach.Watch the restrooms. Restroom count and accessibility are among the most expensive items to change later, so a vanilla box that already meets them is easier to lease to a wider range of users.Practical first stepDocument the space accurately before deciding. Clifton Construction, an Albany general contractor whose work centers on commercial and industrial construction, builds vanilla boxes *Clifton office renovation Albany* and tenant fit-ups and offers Matterport scan-to-CAD as-built drawings that brokers and prospective tenants can use to plan. Either route goes better when everyone is working from real dimensions.

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