

Do You Speak Lease?

BY LYNN DRAKE

Some of us speak Greek, Spanish, French or Mandarin in addition to English. We think we can speak real estate, but you had better know someone who can speak fine print or your lease terms could get lost in translation.

Pay careful attention to how a commercial or industrial property is listed. A client called me excited to find an office in Farmington Hills, MI, for rent at just \$1 a square foot near I-696. He suggested I drop everything to check it out. The deal wasn't so attractive when I learned it had been written in California lease language as the price per square foot per month. So the actual rate was \$12 a square foot, a good rate, but not extraordinary.

As I looked through the lease and spoke with the building manager I found the landlord was unwilling to do any improvements to the space without an additional cash outlay. Inside the fine print I found the tenant was responsible for any increase in heating and maintenance cost to the lobby and halls and was liable for all utilities and janitorial services. The realistic price was \$15.50 a square foot. Not a deal considering the liabilities.

My goal is to make people happy and educated in their commercial property dealings. As Sym's, the giant clothing warehouse says, an educated consumer is our best customer.

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