THE ATLANTA COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION MARKET BRIEF

THE HEADLINE READ

Costs kept climbing and the calendar got tighter. Material inputs to nonresidential construction rose 7.1 percent over the year while contractors absorbed roughly half of it. Craft labor stayed the binding constraint, and subcontractor availability, not price, is what now decides whether a fourth quarter start holds its date.

LABOR 01

Tight Craft labor remains the binding constraint. Firms hiring craft workers report unfilled openings at near record rates.

45% of firms reported project delays tied to workforce gaps.

What it means for you: budget pricing has a shelf life. Ask how long your labor pricing is good for, in writing, before you build a schedule on it.

MATERIALS 02

+7.1% inputs to nonresidential construction, year over year through June.

+52.4% aluminum mill shapes. Copper and brass mill shapes +26.0%. Steel mill products +16.9%.

+3.5% contractor bid prices over the same year, about half the increase in input costs. Contractors have been absorbing the difference. That cushion is not permanent.

What it means for you: projects heavy on mechanical, electrical and plumbing carry the most exposure. Insulated glass is the lead time to watch, longer still when the color is not standard.

SUBCONTRACTORS 03

~8 mo of work under contract industry wide. The South carries the strongest backlog of any region in the country.

88% of firms hiring craft workers report unfilled openings. Roughly a quarter say their subcontractors have lost workers.

Flat projected electrical employment through the next decade, even as data center and power demand climbs.

What it means for you: the gap between trades matters more than any single availability number. A job can be fully staffed on the easy trades and still miss its date on one crew.

Continued on reverse

THE CHECKLIST

Five things worth verifying before you sign anything on an October through December start.

1. **Ask how long your pricing is actually good for.**
   Not the proposal date. The expiration. Get it in writing for both labor and materials, and find out what happens if the schedule slips past it.

2. **Find out which trades are confirmed in writing and which are still verbal.**
   This is the single most revealing question you can ask your project team. The answer usually tells you more about your date than the schedule does.

3. **Identify your two or three highest exposure materials, then check those lead times.**
   On most commercial interiors that is the mechanical and electrical package, plus glass. Build the order date into the schedule rather than the other way around.

4. **Ask what happens to your price if the start date moves by sixty days.**
   A quote that survives a two month delay and one that does not are very different pieces of paper. Better to know that in August than in November.

5. **Know who at the table is accountable to you and not to the project.**
   The general contractor, the architect and the landlord all have their own interests, and all of them are legitimate. The question is whether anyone in the room represents only yours.

WHERE THESE NUMBERS COME FROM

· U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Producer Price Index and employment projections. bls.gov
· Associated General Contractors of America, construction data and 2025 Workforce Survey. agc.org
· Associated Builders and Contractors, Construction Backlog Indicator. abc.org
· Lead time observations are CIG's own, drawn from bid packages quoted in the first half of 2026.

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