

BUSINESS



Chris Procopis, left, Mike Levien, owners LexPro Research Due Diligence & Background Investigations, and Levien's dog Carly work in their second-floor office at 20 Summer St., in Stamford. Pyramid Real Estate Group which represents the building, has draped a banner in the front proclaiming that dogs are welcome.



By Richard Lee
Staff Writer

One Stamford office building has gone to the dogs, and with vacancy rate at more than 20 percent in much of Fairfield County, the real estate company that represents the building said it believes it might be a good idea for others to follow suit.

For 3 1/2 years, Chris Procopis and Mike Levien, owners LexPro Research Due Diligence & Background Investigations, have brought their dogs to work at their second-floor office space at 20 Summer St.

"Landlords should consider it. We wouldn't be bringing our dogs if they were unruly and barked or went to the bathroom," said Procopis, whose greyhound, Crystal, is a regular visitor.

Procopis' wife, Christine Johnson, is president of Greyhound Rescue and Rehab, a nonprofit organization that has placed more than 800 greyhound racing dogs in homes.

Levien regularly brings Carly, his yellow Labrador retriever, and Joya, his black Lab, to work.

"People consider their pets part of the family. It's a natural extension of bring our pets to work. We haven't had any problems or complaints," he said. "This was not advertised as dog friendly. We asked."

No need for a potential tenant at the 35,000-square-foot, five-story building to ask anymore.

Pyramid Real Estate Group, which represents the building, has draped a banner in front of it, proclaiming that it welcomes dogs.

"You have to find new ways for clients to help fill vacancies."

Russell Munz
Pyramid Real Estate Group

Russell Munz, chief operating office of Pyramid, said the firm's management is simply taking the lead from hotels and motels that cater to dog owners, hoping that dog lovers will fill some of the vacant 4,000 square feet in the building.

"I put the sign out a couple weeks ago, and we've gotten some phone calls. You have to find new ways for clients to help fill vacancies. It's the type of creative and fun thing we do to make work interesting," said Munz, who with his wife, Ruthie, own Georgia, a 140-pound Leonberger. "I think this is a fresh concept. In these times, landlords are receptive to any tenant they can get."

Munz considers 20 Summer St. to be Class B office space, typically owned by a local entity that may be more agreeable to lease space to

someone who would want to bring a dog to work.

"The dog-friendly office banner is fun, and it fires up our brokers, and in my experience people who are having fun and are happy enjoy what they do and do a better job for our clients," he said.

The idea of allowing dogs in Class A office space probably would not work because of the size of the buildings, their amenities and the large number of occupants, many of whom may have allergies that would be exacerbated by dogs, said Margaret Carlson, portfolio manager for RFR Realty.

"Our portfolio doesn't lend itself to having dogs in the buildings. There are liability issues," she said. "We allow service dogs."

Noting that RFR Realty leases do not allow non-working dogs in its buildings, she said tenants' requests to bring dogs to work on national Bring Your Dog to Work Day have been denied.

That would not set well with Lisa Silver, owner of Silver Contract Interiors, who has brought her poodle, Chloe, to work with her at 20 Summer St. for six years.

"I wouldn't be renting here without being able to do so," she said.

Take your dog to work every day on Summer St. ■