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Chinese, Mandarin-speaking Realtors in hot demand

SoFla firms are expecting and preparing for an increase in Chinese real estate buyers

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By Francisco Alvarado



Miami skyline and China's flag

In an effort to reel in investors from China, South Florida developers and brokerage firms are recruiting real estate professionals who are fluent in Mandarin and are of Chinese descent. At the same time, Chinese-owned real estate companies are establishing offices in Miami to capture a share of the Asian buyers market.

Anthony Kang, a partner in the Miami office of [Arnstein & Lehr](#) who often handles closings for Chinese nationals purchasing properties as investment or for their children attending the University of Miami or other local colleges, said buyers from China have traditionally gravitated toward New York City or California, but are now showing greater interest in the South Florida real estate market.

"They are finding out about Miami through word-of-mouth, American television shows and the Miami Heat," Kang told *The Real Deal*. "[Team star] Dwyane Wade's sneaker sponsor is Li-Ning, a Chinese shoe company. The NBA is quite popular in China."

Development companies and real estate firms are expecting and preparing for an increase of Chinese real estate buyers, as firms like the American Da Tang Realty open offices in Miami, Kang said. "Several Mandarin-speaking real estate associates I know have been actively recruited by local brokerage firms," he added.

In June, a month after the company [announced it was opening a Miami office](#), American Da Tang hired Angie Ki as its chief business development officer. Ki, who declined comment for this article, previously worked as an adviser for EB5 Affiliate Networks Regional Centers, a company that sponsors development projects funded by Chinese and other foreign investors seeking permanent U.S. residency.

According to her LinkedIn profile, Ki's job at American Da Tang is to direct all aspects of the firm's South Florida real estate business. An affiliate of the American Da Tang Group [scooped up a Brickell development site for \\$74.8 million in cash in December](#).

[Philip Spiegelman](#), principal of International Sales Group, told *TRD* that last April his firm hired Ying Peng, then-public relations and marketing director for Miami Real Estate Invest. Spiegelman said Peng played an instrumental role in building her former employer's international client base, making Miami Real Estate Invest one of the leading real estate brokerages in the city catering to Chinese clients.

As the market consultant for ISG China, Peng's focus is developing relationships in Asian markets with agents, brokers, financial advisers, accountants, lawyers and anyone with a circle of influence to high net worth prospective buyers and investors. She is marketing all South Florida properties ISG is selling, including [Muse](#), [Echo Brickell](#), [Echo Aventura](#), [Sage Beach](#), [W Fort Lauderdale Beach](#), and [Downtown Doral](#).

"Ying is articulate, bilingual and well educated," Spiegelman said. "She has established ISG as a legitimate player in the Asian markets."

Last month, The Rubin Group at Douglas Elliman hired [Han Cheng Jeng Fu](#), an investment fund manager, as director of luxury sales. Justin Rubin told *TRD* he brought in Jeng in order to tap into his international network of high-net-worth individuals, especially in China.



Ying Peng



Han Cheng Jeng Fu

Jeng, who is fluent in Mandarin, currently serves as chairman of Red Rock Asian Capital Investment Group, an investment firm that focuses on mining, development, and the distribution of high-tech products and insurance in the United States, Asia and Latin America.

“Han Cheng is a long time friend and associate who is a valuable individual to work with,” Rubin said. “He will head up our initiative to target Chinese buyers and bring them to Miami.”

[XiaoXiao Zhang, who joined Beacon Hill Property Group in January](#) as the investment sales director for Asia, told *TRD* her mission is to launch the

Brickell Avenue-based commercial real estate firm’s China business.

A resident of Miami for the last seven years, Zhang said she was in charge of the China division of a local international trading company prior to joining Beacon Hill.

“My primary focus is bringing Chinese capital to the South Florida commercial real estate market,” Zhang said. “We are working with both Chinese high net worth individuals and institutional investors who have already invested in the U.S. and are interested in the South Florida market.”

She said Beacon Hill is currently working with Chinese investors on several local projects including a soccer training facility involving soccer star Pele. “We really tailor the opportunity to the client,” she said. “High net worth individuals have been more interested in stable retail and multi-family assets, while institutional investors are more interested in injecting capital into development projects.”

Still, Miami faces many challenges in attracting Chinese buyers to the city, Zhang said. “We need a few investors to pull the trigger on large scale investments and the money will start to flow,” she said. “A direct flight wouldn’t hurt either.”