

How property agents attract Chinese buyers: From floor numbers to feng shui

Source: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/how-property-agents-attract-chinese-buyers-from-floor-numbers-to-feng-shui/8ct096nso>

The developer of an apartment block in Epping, Sydney came under fire late last year for erecting a sandstone wall at the front of the property. It was etched with Mandarin characters and painted red - a lucky colour according to the ancient Chinese philosophy of feng shui.

It drew the attention of local residents - the City of Parramatta Council told SBS News it was still investigating the matter - but the project's building manager said the block was, quite simply, aimed directly at Chinese buyers.



The total investment from Chinese homebuyers in Australia amounted to \$87.6 billion in 2016.

Source: iStockphoto

While the **demand from Chinese buyers may be easing** in Australia, partly due to tighter access to finance for those from overseas, the group still accounts for about three-quarters of the country's foreign buyers. Their total investment in 2016 amounted to \$87.6 billion.

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It's no surprise then, that real estate agents are going the extra mile to attract their business.

Jamie Mi, international division head and partner at Melbourne real estate agents Kay & Burton, told SBS News its developers "usually translate their promotional material into Chinese, or even make a video describing the project in Chinese". The company also advertises in Chinese newspapers and magazines.



销售服务

Kay & Burton在地产行业所享有的声誉，是独一无二的。我们的团队，由澳洲国内最娴熟的谈判者，以及最受尊敬的销售代表们组成。经常会有一些公司声称他们拥有最好的团队，但在我们这里，成就能够证明一切。由我们精挑细选后进入Kay & Burton的人员，包括一流的拍卖师、项目专家、物业管理顾问、国际关系专家、以及市场营销专家。

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Melbourne real estate agents Kay & Burton have a Mandarin version of their website. Source: Supplied

At least two other agents, Adelaide's Harris Real Estate and Harcourts - which operates nationwide - also translate some of their property brochures, attend Chinese property expos and work with multilingual mortgage brokers.

But as those in the industry tell SBS News, many homebuyers from China, as well as those in Australia with Chinese heritage, want more than just features written in their mother tongue - particularly if they follow feng shui.

The magic numbers

Melbourne-based real estate agents Sodichan.com is aimed solely at the Chinese market. Its CEO Esther Yong said many buyers request properties with specific house numbers.

"Number eight and number nine is something they really like. Eight, phonetically in Chinese means 'fortune'," she said. "Nine means longevity and everlasting."

"If your house number is number eight, 89, or 88, it's a lucky number ... they will actually pay a bit for it sometimes."

If your house number is number eight, 89, or 88, it's a lucky number ... they will actually pay a bit for it sometimes. - Esther Yong

The philosophy also applies to floor numbers. Ms Yong said she had heard of developers reserving the eighth and ninth level solely to sell to Chinese buyers.



Some property developers may reserve the eighth and ninth floors solely to sell to Chinese buyers, one industry expert told SBS News. Source: iStockphoto

Other numbers are avoided.

"A lot don't like number four," Ms Yong said. The Chinese pronunciation of 'four' sounds like the Mandarin word for 'death'.

A house facing a T-junction is also bad news. According to feng shui, the road running into the house represents a knife edging towards the property. A house on a corner isn't ideal either as the road is seen as being in the shape of a sickle, or harvesting hook.

"If it is number four and it's a T-junction and if the feng shui is not good ... they probably won't go ahead [with the purchase]," Ms Yong said.

What exactly is feng shui?

Hong Kong-based feng shui master Philip Wong told SBS News the concept was based on a balance of energies "we can't see [but] we can feel". Following the principles of feng shui is thought to bring good health and fortune.

"Feng means qi, shui means water ... Qi is hard to describe, it's something like energy, [and] water represents wealth," Mr Wong said. The latter is another reason properties with a sea view or swimming pool are desirable.

Qi can escape out of windows, Mr Wong said, so many feng shui followers avoid putting a desk or bed next to them.

Ms Mi said the majority of Kay and Burton's Chinese clients "all have a degree of understanding in feng shui", while Ms Yong said about 70 per cent of her clients at Sodichan observe the basic principles.

Those from "the south part of China and throughout, until Singapore and Malaysia and Taiwan are very into feng shui, whereas northern Chinese are not so," Ms Mi said.



'Qi' can escape out of windows. Source: Digital Vision

She said in recent years she had also noticed "the wealthier they [her clients] are, the more feng shui that they're into". Some buyers even enlist the help of a feng shui master to consult them through the sale.

On occasion "they could pay \$200,000 to \$300,000 [more than the asking price] for it just because they brought in a feng shui master and the feng shui master said it is really good for them", Ms Yong said.

They could pay \$200,000 to \$300,000 more

She also told of one occasion where the asking price "was \$445,000 or something, and the buyers actually didn't mind rounding up to \$488,000" because 88 is considered a lucky number.

On higher ground

Another factor some Chinese buyers may look for is the elevation of the property. Temples are often built on mountains in China, so it's considered good luck.

"There's this area called Doncaster in Melbourne. It's right up at the [top of the] hill, Chinese buyers have been paying a lot for that area," Ms Yong said. "There has been a feng shui master that actually said that Doncaster was like the 'dragon head of Melbourne'."



Houses on a hill and near water are considered to have good feng shui. Source: Getty Images

The positioning of the front and back door can also be a make or break aspect.

"Having the front door facing the back door of the house, it's actually not very good feng shui," Ms Yong said. "If you go to the front door and there is a direct back door going out, I think generally buyers do avoid houses like that."

Ms Yong said Chinese buyers also tend to prefer the back door to be higher up than the front.

"If your site is on a slope it's better that your back is higher. The [idea is that] money comes in and it's harder to flow out," she said.

Home is where the heart is

Mr Wong said Chinese buyers often steered clear of houses with a toilet or kitchen in the middle of them.

"The house is like a human; the middle of the house is like the heart. So if you have a kitchen in your heart, that means it's heartburn, so it's not good for your health," he said.

"And also ... all the dirty things are going out from the toilet and washroom. So inside your heart there are some dirty things, it's not good for your health as well."

The house is like a human; the middle of the house is like the heart

Having an ensuite backing onto your bedhead may also problematic.

"If the dirty things [are] always going [on] behind your back ... it's easier to get a headache, hard to get sleep," Mr Wong said.

Ms Mi said in some cases, the buildings nearby could even affect a sale.

"Close to a private school is meant to be good ... but not when you're close to a girls' school," she said.

"When you look at the yin and yang in the feng shui knowledge, the yin is female and the yang is male, so if you have a lot of girls in front of you, a lot of negative or yin energy, then it's probably affecting your health."

Fixing bad energy

Agents Kay & Burton have been enlisting the help of feng shui masters to assist vendors in styling their houses before they go on sale. Ms Mi said bad feng shui can be remedied.

"For example, you use burgundy [red] rugs to kill a certain kind of energy ... or you use a mirror in front of the house," she said. "If you're at a T-section and you're struggling, a convex mirror [can help], it sticks out so all the bad energy will be bounced back to the street."

And, it would seem, the lessons in how to attract Chinese clients are extending beyond Australia and its property market.

"If you look at the casinos in Macau and Hong Kong and a lot of big business operations, all they are doing constantly are consulting with their feng shui master to set up the next year's business strategy," Ms Mi said. "It goes on and on."