

THE REAL DEAL

Venezuelans buying South Florida real estate, but not necessarily for the bargains

September 27, 2011 11:15AM

By Alexander Britell

A home for sale in Weston, increasingly a destination for Venezuelans

Brazilians have led the way among a surge in Latin Americans purchasing real estate in South Florida, representing a segment that has been one of the biggest drivers of the market's torrent of home sales.

But a smaller, still sizable component of foreign buyers is also coming from Latin America, albeit with a slightly different motivation. In the second in a three-part series, we take a look at the buying patterns of the third-largest group of foreign homebuyers in Florida. Click [here](#) to read the first part.



On the one hand, Brazilians, buoyed by a strong real currency, have looked for condominium bargains, largely second-home purchases in downtown Miami and Miami Beach. Venezuelan buyers, on the other hand, have come to South Florida for stability and security from an uncertain political regime.

"For the Venezuelans, buying a second home for their family [to live in] is more important than a second home as an investment," said **Michael Internoscia, vice president of sales at Pordes Residential Sales & Marketing**. "They want a home for their family in times of need or crisis, a community of people in the neighborhood, so if they have to move they have a home and a school system they're comfortable with."

Venezuelans saw a more than 100 percent increase in their share of the foreign homebuyer market last year, with 7 percent of all foreign buyer transactions in Florida being made by Venezuelans, according to data from the Miami Association of Realtors covering the year 2010.

Like most South Florida buyers, especially in Miami, Venezuelans do look for condos -- 56 percent, in fact, while more than 32 percent bought detached single-family homes.

The vast majority, or approximately 66 percent of Venezuelans' Florida purchases, occur in the Miami-Fort Lauderdale metro area.

Internoscia said Venezuelans did a lot of buying in the lower- to middle-price range, that is, less than \$500,000.

It's backed up by the data, which show that Venezuelan buyers paid a median price of \$258,300 for homes they bought in South Florida, but they were largely on the lower-end -- 81 percent paid less than \$500,000.

Around 12 percent of them paid more than \$1 million, however, which was actually the highest of any foreign buyer demographic in Florida. Approximately 28 percent of Venezuelan buyers in Florida made their purchases in either suburban or small town/rural areas.

Part of the reason is that while Doral, a longtime [Venezuelan stronghold in Miami](#), still attracts buyers, more and more are looking to large suburban homes in places like Weston in Broward County.

"I would say like 35 percent of our clientele is coming from Venezuela," said Dean Skar, a realtor focusing on the high-end market with Coldwell Banker in Weston. "I see that it's getting stronger and increasing."

Sklar cited the same factors -- safety, a good school system and a low crime rate -- as reasons for Weston's appeal to Venezuelans.

So while Brazil's currency could lose what was, for a time, a significant advantage for real estate buyers, Venezuelans, driven by a different motivation, could continue to be a pipeline to South Florida's real estate market.