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## Pepine Realty targeting foreign buyers with recent hire

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To capitalize on the expansive foreign-buyer portion of the real-estate market, Gainesville-based Pepine Realty hired Saveela Asad in September to spearhead the company's new Global Division.

"There's a lot of diversity in Gainesville, and because of that, a lot of firms are now realizing that it is important to have a global division to cater to those segments," Asad said.

Born in Florida but raised in Pakistan, Asad speaks English, Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi, and though her clients are from all over, her primary service is to those from Pakistan or India. Asad noted how the University of Florida and UF Health Shands Hospital are the main draw, attracting a multitude of cultures from across the U.S. and internationally for education and work.

Gainesville is "such a diverse place, and it's so accommodating for so many people of different backgrounds," she said. "If you go to other states, cultural communities stick together and just do their own thing; here, they've said, 'Even though we come here and we're a community, we feel like we're a part of Gainesville.' It's not like you're just Pakistani or just Indian."

From 2012 to 2013, foreign buyer volume dropped nationwide — from \$82.5 billion to \$68.2 billion — but both years still accounted for the two highest totals on record, according to the National Association of Realtors Profile of International Home Buyers. Florida had the largest state share, grabbing 23 percent of the 2013 total.

Betsy Pepine, owner of Pepine Realty, explained the importance of having Asad's Pakistani-Indian specialties: The number of Pakistani-Americans doubled from 2000 to 2010, according to the Pew Research Center, making their growth the second fastest among Asian-Americans. Meanwhile, Indian-Americans represent the third-largest Asian community in the U.S.

"Gainesville has large and growing Pakistani and Indian communities, and we want to ensure the needs of this segment of the market are being served," she wrote to The Sun in an email. "Bringing on Saveela, who is fluent in multiple languages, to head up Pepine Realty's Global Division will greatly enhance our ability to serve this important community."

Moving to Gainesville in 2012 for family, Asad said she's just starting in real estate with Pepine, but her diverse background in banking, event management and relationship building made the job transition a natural one.

“I’ve always liked working with people,” she said. “I got into real estate because it gives you the same opportunities: Interacting with (people from) different walks of life, helping them find what they’re looking for.”

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