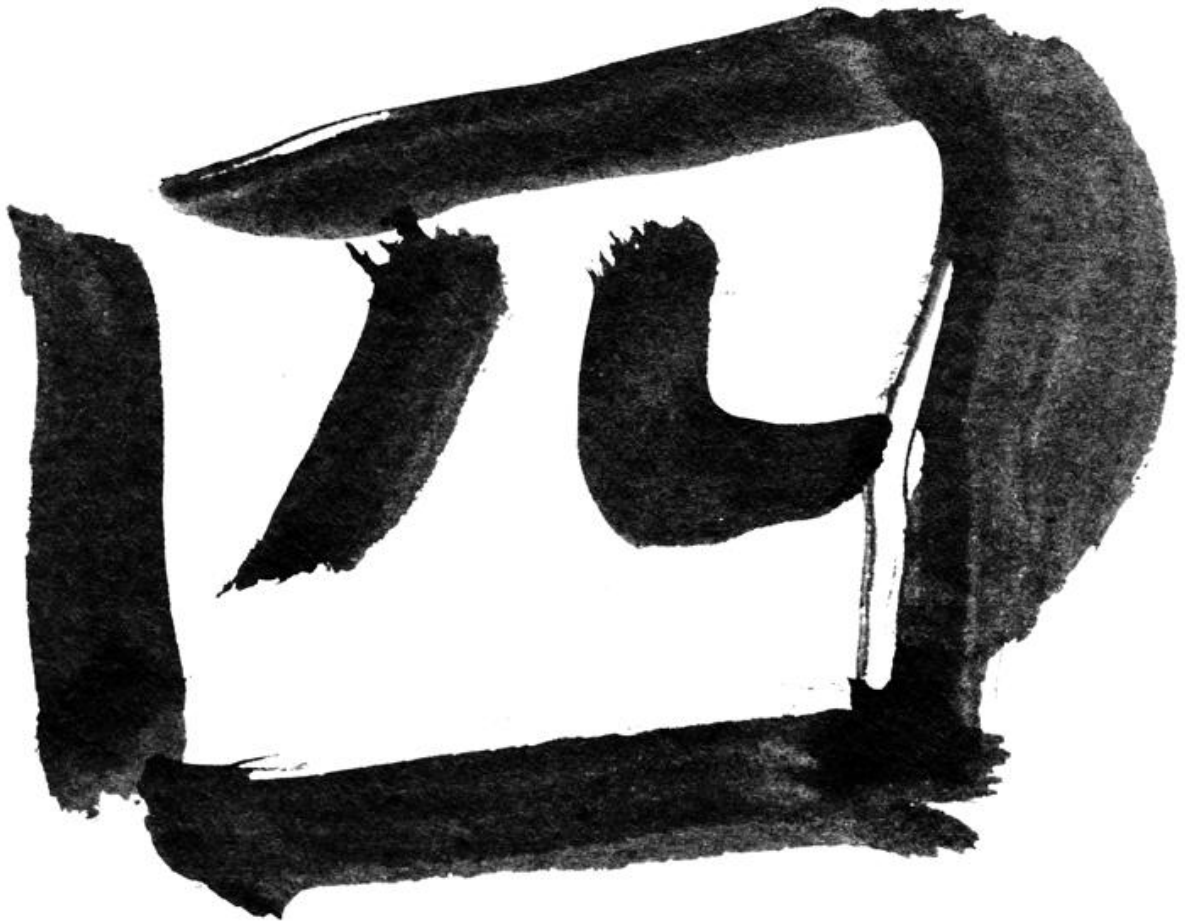


The fear of 4

For developers, it's a foregone conclusion: Asian condo buyers won't see this digit thought to be unlucky

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“Four” in Chinese is pronounced similar to the word “death” in some dialects. (Shutterstock)

By Beth Healy | GLOBE STAFF

Boston's next big skyscraper, the luxurious 61-story One Dalton, being built in the Back Bay, will feature multimillion-dollar condos and feng shui design — and an extra nod to superstition.

While many American buildings skip the 13th floor on the elevator panel, the Four Seasons Hotel and private residences at One Dalton will also omit the 4th and 44th floors.

It's common practice in China and much of southeast Asia, according to real estate specialists. The number 4 is considered unlucky, with a pronunciation that's similar to the word "death" in some Chinese dialects.

"The goal is to be aware of and respectful of cultural preferences beyond our own," said Justine Griffin, spokeswoman for the developer, Carpenter & Co. of Cambridge.

It's just the latest sign that the spike in new luxury apartments in Boston is drawing more than empty-nesters from the suburbs. One Dalton's developer has predicted that 30 percent of the 185 condominiums on the upper floors of the 700-foot glass tower will be purchased by international buyers.

The \$750 million project is funded in large part by a loan from a London hedge fund and wealthy individuals from around the world.

Where superstition about the number 13 may seem quaint in US business culture, the floor number is still widely left out of new buildings. The aversion to the number 4 appears to be even more ingrained in China, the world's largest country by population and its second-biggest economy.

"It's an inauspicious number," said Natalia Kaylin, a feng shui design specialist in Westford. And while she focuses on color, harmony, and other elements of the practice, she said one ought not ignore tetraphobia, as fear of the number 4 is known, when dealing with Chinese clients.

“It’s intertwined,” she said. “It’s cultural.”

And anyone looking to appeal to Chinese customers is paying attention, including developers of Boston high-rises and Las Vegas casinos.

The \$700 million Millennium Tower Boston, a 60-story structure close to completion near the old Filene’s department store in Downtown Crossing, will also skip the 44th floor.

“As is typical in many projects in the United States, Millennium Tower Boston doesn’t have a 13th floor. Additionally, out of respect to our Asian owners, there is no 44th floor in the building,” Jeff Nead, a spokesman for Millennium Partners, said in a statement.

In Nevada, the Wynn Las Vegas and Encore resorts do not have floors numbered 40 through 49.

So Boston is just catching up. The Dalton Street tower will be Boston’s third-tallest, after the Hancock and Prudential towers.

It has yet to cast its shadow on the neighborhood around the Christian Science Plaza. Crews have been digging deep to lay pilings and a foundation. A structure should be visible later this year, and it is expected to be completed in mid-2018. It will be the tallest residential tower in the city.

The triangular structure was designed by Henry Cobb, the architect who created the Hancock. The hotel will occupy the lower third, with condominiums on the upper two-thirds. There will be a large swimming pool, a residents-only restaurant, and penthouses on the top floors.

Apparently the tony name behind the building, Four Seasons, passes muster despite the number in its moniker. The brand is used around the world, including in China.

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