

Falling dollar attracts Italians to properties in US

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Falling property prices in the US and a weaker dollar are attracting investors from Italy, which has largely escaped the housing bubble collapses other parts of Europe have experienced.

Sorgente Group, which operates property investment funds, says it is trying to persuade Aegon, the Dutch insurer, to sell San Francisco's Transamerica Pyramid, Valter Mainetti, chief executive of Sorgente, said.

Sorgente, based in Rome, this year bought a 53% stake in New York's Flatiron building.

Mr Mainetti said: *'There are good opportunities in the US. Prices are falling'*.

But he said he was happy to wait, predicting that the dollar would fall further to \$1.45 to the euro by the end of the year.

Sorgente, which traces its origins to the 19th century, last month beat a Libyan sovereign wealth fund to buy the Galleria Sordi shopping mall in central Rome for €180m (\$256m).

But opportunities to buy historic and 'trophy' properties in Rome or even new developments are limited.

So while the Libyans are looking to invest some of their \$80bn sovereign wealth fund in their former colonial ruler, Sorgente, with a portfolio valued at €1.8bn, is increasingly focusing abroad.

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