

## Henry Rodriguez's Casey Key retreat for sale



The Casey Key estate of developer Henry Rodriguez, and his wife Susanne, just went on the market for \$5,995,000. STAFF PHOTOS / E. SKYLAR LITHELAND

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When real estate developer Henry Rodriguez scouted a certain house on Casey Key in 2003 for possible purchase for his family, he remembers that he knew he wanted it within 30 seconds seeing it. He never even walked inside.

"It was so much property, set way back from the road, and it had a lot of waterfront," he said. "The house itself was built in 1940 and had been renovated and was really not much at all. I knew we would have to completely renovate the thing, but that didn't matter. I had found this amazing, big private place for us make our home."

Rodriguez and his wife, Susanne, spent the next two years reworking the home into a Old World Spanish villa (elegantly rustic) with the help of architect Thorning Little. They retained the footprint of the original dwelling, but reconfigured every space, gutting the entire house and putting into the home Mediterranean details, such as hand-painted wooden ceiling beams, French doors to the many terraces, stone and hardwood floors, five fireplaces (one in the massive 14- by 28-foot kitchen that features a 15-foot-long, granite-topped island), stone columns, carved interior doors with heavy vintage hardware, opulent chandeliers, ornamental wrought-iron stair and balcony railings imported from Mexico.

But all the amenities are up to the minute, including hurricane windows that look vintage enough but perform to modern code.

Susanne Rodriguez designed the custom furniture and selected the rich fabrics and trim for the 5,484-square-foot (air conditioned), two-story home, which has four bedrooms as well as a media room off the kitchen and a laundry room as big and nicely appointed as a studio apartment in Seville. The couple's second-floor closet room has built-ins that were painted with roses and vines by Tampa artist Joanna Karpay, who did the paintings on the ceilings and walls in the rest of the house, too.

The Rodriguez estate is named Casa Salamanca; it references the girlhood home in Spain of Henry's mother. Salamanca is a city in western Spain known for its exceptionally beautiful buildings and its university. The Old City was named a World Heritage Site in 1988.

Besides the main house, the Rodriguez estate includes a detached guest house and a four-car garage, as well as an outdoor shower and private meditation garden hidden by tropical flowers and foliage. The walled estate that sits on one and a half acres, with 290 feet of waterfront, is now on the market for \$5,995,000, offered by Realtor Deborah Beacham of Michael Saunders & Company. The home's custom-crafted furniture is negotiable, separately from the sale of the home. Casa Salamanca is not visible from the street and is set off by a circular entrance courtyard and motor court.

As Old World Spanish as the inside looks, with enough columns, arches, tile murals and stone to make you think you're in a nobleman's residence in Salamanca, the outside spaces rival anything the architects of the Disney resort hotels have attempted. The enormous free-form, rock-rimmed, disappearing-edge swimming pool features a bougainvillea capped waterfall (there is a nice view of it from the second-floor master bath walk-in shower, too), grotto, concealed water slide, and man-made sandy beach under palm trees.

"I like to say it's the only beach in Sarasota that doesn't have erosion problems," said Henry, who had the resort pool area constructed for his two young sons. The children also enjoy a play area and tree house with a view of the bay and family dock.

Why would anyone want to leave such an island paradise? Life there sounds like an endless vacation.

"It was a hard decision, but it came down to convenience, as odd as that sounds," said Henry. "Last year I established an investment firm in downtown Sarasota in the Northern Trust building, and the commute from Casey Key is awful, especially in the winter. I'm hopeful that it's possible to again find the perfect house for us, this time in an established neighborhood like Harbor Acres that's close to downtown, but offers us the lifestyle we want."

The owner of Casa Salamanca says he and his wife have little interest in modern architecture and will be looking for a traditional home.

"Ideally I'd like to cut and paste this home into a downtown neighborhood, but since I can't, we'll definitely be on the lookout for another Mediterranean home with authentic detailing," he said.

Would he consider building from scratch?

"No thank you. I'd like to stay married."