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Renovated 1970s-era house near sea in Palm Beach brings \$25 million

DARRELL HOFHEINZ, PALM BEACH POST

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A trust linked to investments executive William E. Ford is on the seller's side of deal in which a renovated 1970s-era house at 134 Casa Bendita changed hands for a recorded \$25 million in Palm Beach.

Investments-data executive Henry A. Fernandez and his wife, Alexia M. Fernandez, were the buyers, the deed recorded June 2 shows. The couple owns no other property in Palm Beach County under their names, an online search of courthouse records showed.

The deed shows Miami attorney Mark S. Meland sold the house as trustee of the Palm Beach Residence Trust. Meland recently served in that same role across town when a different trust paid more than \$93 million for a never-lived-in house on the southwest corner of Everglades Island, a deed recorded May 21 shows. Meland and Ford could not be reached for comment, so it's unclear if the off-market purchase on Everglades Island is related to the sale of the house on Casa Bendita. The Palm Beach Daily News has been unable to confirm if any real estate agents were involved in the Everglades Island sale.



An extensively renovated 1970s-era house has sold for a recorded \$25 million at 135 Casa Benita in Palm Beach. The trust that sold the house is linked to investments executive William E. Ford of General Atlantic. *Ed Butera Of IBI Designs/Provided By Margit Brandt Of Premier Estate*

The four-bedroom residence on Casa Bendita last sold for \$20.83 million in June 2022, courthouse records show.

The most recent sale of the house on Casa Bendita — with 8,733 square feet of living space, inside and out — closed May 28, the multiple listing service shows. Built in 1970, the house has a sloped Mansard roof and modified Regency-style architecture.



A loggia looks out to the pool area at 134 Casa Bendita, a Palm Beach house that just changed hands for \$25 million. Ed Butera Of IBI Designs/Provided By Margit Brandt Of Premier Estate

The house is the second one east of North County Road on Casa Bendita, a cul-de-sac about midway between Royal Poinciana Way and the Palm Beach Country Club. A half-block west of the ocean, the lot measures about two-fifths of an acre and has deeded beach access.

The house has been extensively renovated, according to previous reporting by the Palm Beach Daily News. Among those renovations, the living room and dining room were combined more than a decade ago into a great room crowned by an 18-foot ceiling. The room has two of the home's three fireplaces.

Ford is chairman and CEO of the international investments firm General Atlantic, which has an offices in Miami and New York City among its multiple locations, the company's website shows. Under Ford's leadership, the site says, the company has expanded into 17 countries, with assets under management totaling about \$126 billion. The company's investment platforms include "growth equity, credit, energy transition and sustainable infrastructure strategies," according to the site.

Agent Margit Brandt of Premier Estate Properties handled the seller's side of the deal on Casa Bendita, according to the multiple listing service. She declined to comment, and the Palm Beach Daily News has been unable to confirm if any agent represented the buyer.

On the buyer's side, Henry Fernandez is chairman and CEO of the international financial services company MSCI Inc., formerly known as Morgan Stanley Capital International, which he has led for nearly 30 years, according to the firm's website. The New York City-based company provides investment data, stock market indexes and risk-management tools to investment companies worldwide.

The house on Casa Bendita has a kitchen featuring Wolf and Sub-Zero appliances, sleek custom cabinetry and a work island, according to Brandt's sales listing. The layout also includes a butler's pantry, wine storage, a two-car garage and a "discreet enclosed carport."



Just sold for \$25 million, a house at 134 Casa Bendita on the near North End of Palm Beach has extensive poolside areas for entertaining. *Ed Butera Of IBI Designs/Provided By Margit Brandt Of Premier Estate*

With a covered loggia, the pool area has multiple entertaining areas, while the landscaped grounds include private lounging spaces and garden paths, the listing says.

The house stands on land that was once part of the long-demolished Casa Bendita estate designed in 1921 by society architect Addison Mizner for John S. "Jay" Phipps. Among the neighborhood's features is a landmarked coquina-stone wall from the original estate that runs along one side of the properties on the south side of the street.



A garden entrance offers a view of the pool area at 134 Casa Bendita in Palm Beach. *Ed Butera Of IBI Designs/Provided By Margit Brandt Of Premier Estate*

Across town on Everglades Island, Meland served as trustee of the Everglades Trust in the purchase of 757 Island Drive, which recorded at \$93.341 million via a deed recorded May 21. That house was developed on speculation by Palm Beach billionaire Randall Smith of the investments firm Alden Global Capital and his real estate investor wife, Barbara.

The off-market sale on Island Drive marked the second highest-dollar deal ever in Palm Beach for a lakefront property without additional ocean frontage, property records show. The house stands on a corner lot of about an acre — with water on two sides — on Everglades Island, which lies west of the barrier

island that comprises most of Palm Beach.



A recently built house facing the Intracoastal Waterway at 757 Island Drive on Everglades Island in Palm Beach sold for a recorded \$93.34 million via a deed recorded May 21. *DAMON HIGGINS/PALM BEACH DAILY NEWS*

With 371 feet of waterfront on its west and south sides, the property on Island Drive affords dramatic views over the Intracoastal Waterway to the southeast, south, southwest and northwest. The eight-bedroom house on Island Drive has 13,152 square feet of living space, inside and out, with 11,637 of that total under air conditioning.

In the 2022 sale on Casa Bendita, the seller was Canadian businessman and Palm Beach real estate investor Steven K. Hudson. Hudson was represented at the time by Douglas Elliman Real Estate agent Chis Leavitt, with Elliman agent Vince Spadea Jr. on the buyer's side. Asked if he was involved in either of the recent sales on Casa Bendita or Island Drive, Spadea said he had no comment.