



Green mansion a rush of *Nature*

McKinney's \$29M 'Water Flower' blooms with energy efficiency, environmentally friendly materials — and water elements.

By MEGAN V. WINSLOW
Daily News Staff Writer

MANALAPAN — There's a drip-drip-drip in the entry of Frank McKinney's newest home.

And a deeper bloop ... bloop ... bloop.

When McKinney activates the 24-foot water wall behind the double-helix staircase, the sound of the rushing cascade blends with water dripping from the chandelier and the steady blooping of bubbles escaping the water-filled glass floor.

"It's really a sensory overload," he said Wednesday during a tour of the \$29 million oceanfront Manalapan mansion he has named *Acqua Liana*, the Tahitian and Fijian words for "Water Flower."

"You heighten the five senses to that state of subliminal euphoria," he said. "It's almost like when someone comes in the



Above: The entry features several water features, including a glass water wall, a glass floor over the small pool and a chandelier from which water drips.

Left: One of the two master bathrooms in the master suite has a reclaimed mahogany tub and an ocean view.

Daily News Photos
by Jeffrey Langlois



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of the home, at Palm
BeachDailyNews.com**

MCKINNEY

Windows in the four-car garage offer an underwater view of the pool

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front door here, they'll become intoxicated."

After more than a year and a half of construction, the self-proclaimed "real estate artist" is hoping for just that reaction Friday evening when he unveils Acqua Liana during a dramatic reception at 620 S. Ocean Blvd.

By that time, the residence's environmentally conscious lighting, renewable materials, water reclamation system and other state-of-the-art green features should have secured coveted Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design — LEED — certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, making it the largest home to earn such credentials from the Washington, D.C., nonprofit group.

While the seven-bedroom, 11-bath South Pacific-inspired mansion covers 15,000 square feet, the green additions will significantly reduce the residence's carbon footprint to that of a much smaller home, he said. A basketball court-sized solar panel system on the roof is designed to generate enough energy for two average-size homes and thus cut electric bills to between \$1,200 and \$1,500 a month — about a third of what they could be.

"The homeowner probably isn't buying the house for its green factor, because they're saving money," the 45-year-old Delray Beach resident said. But "they're going to feel better about the environment by buying it."

McKinney acknowledged some environmentalists might not embrace such

a large residence. In fact, U.S. Green Building Council rules required that he start with a point deficit on the LEED certification scale because of the size of the home.

"There's the purist out there who says, 'This is a blasphemy; this is an oxymoron. How can you have a green mansion? Shame on you,'" McKinney said. "And then there's the realist who says, 'Houses since 1970 in America have increased 40 percent



McKinney

His first green project.

in size. I mean every house, not just what I build for a living, but the average home in America. So houses are getting bigger. Inevitably, there are going to be big houses built. Why not build them green?"

This is McKinney's first green project. He said the idea arose during trips to Bali, Tahiti, Fiji and Hawaii as he sought a new architectural style for his luxury oceanfront developments. Inspired by the exotic locations, McKinney settled on a South Pacific motif and then realized the associated natural materials are conducive to building green.

For example, he incorporated the polished wood floors indicative of a Hawaiian bungalow, but they are constructed of reclaimed wood. And all those decorative water features inside, and the network of ponds and pools outside, actually make the site two to three degrees cooler than neighboring properties.

While LEED certification can add value to a home, it need not take away from its allure, said Marie E. Coleman, communications coordinator for the Green Council.

"You're not living in these sort of wilderness huts by cut-

ting down on utilities," she said. "We're using sustainable materials that look good, that are aesthetically pleasing, that also help to boost the value of the home. And, as a bonus, it's green, it's sustainable."

With Acqua Liana, McKinney has worked to seamlessly mesh environmentally friendly features with an opulence rivaling any of Manalapan's juggernaut estates. On the north end of the house, there's a 2,180-square-foot master suite with floor-to-ceiling ocean views and a \$40,000 onyx ladies' shower overlooking an outdoor reflection pond.

Steps from the waterworks at the front door is a 2,000-gallon saltwater aquarium, which shares a wall with a glass wine room and then meanders over the living room to spill into a bar counter.

Outside, residents can lounge atop a "floating" sun terrace in the lap pool or venture into the windowed four-car garage for an underwater view of the pool swimmers. Between a thatched cocktail hut and a 16-person hot tub with a gas fire feature is the two-bedroom, two-bathroom guesthouse offering views of the waterfall feeding the swimmable water gardens.

"It's stunning," McKinney said. "I tell you, it's the best house we've ever done."

McKinney's real estate broker, Pascal Liguori, would have to agree.

Liguori said he has not seen anything like the home in the 30 years he's been in the real estate business, a fact evident from the responses

of interested buyers. Serious inquiries have arrived from Brazilian, German and Swiss families.

"Just about every room, no matter what window you look out, you see some view of water — whether it's the ocean, the pool area, the Intracoastal," Liguori said. "It was really well-designed to take advantage of water views from every room."

As McKinney's workers strive to clean, furnish and prep Acqua Liana this week for another legendary McKinney unveiling, a team from the Florida Solar Energy Center at the University of Central Florida will scramble to submit the necessary paperwork to the U.S. Green Building Council for certification.

Based on the number of points Acqua Liana earns, it could gain basic, silver, gold or platinum certification, said Eric Martin, a senior research engineer with the Energy Center who has inspected the project to verify its green achievements.

Martin said McKinney's project and other residences demonstrating a similar environmental awareness are commendable.

"I hope not only this project but just the way the green movement has been developing over the past several years (will make) people think at least twice about what they do in the context of sustainability," Martin said. "And I think this is a good example of that it can be done, and, in a way, why wouldn't you do it?"

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