

Residents Claim Del Webb Faulty in Construction

By Mike Padgett, The Business Journal

January 5, 2001 - A lawsuit alleging construction defects has been filed against Del Webb Corp. by homeowners in a gated golf community in north Scottsdale.

The complaint alleges shoddy workmanship in the installation of roofs and stucco exteriors and defectively designed fire sprinkler systems in the Terravita community. The upscale neighborhood is near the southwest corner of Scottsdale Road and Carefree Highway.

Del Webb spokeswoman Jacque Pappas said the company in 1998 initiated roof inspection and stucco repair programs in the community. So far, most of the 1,378 residences have been inspected and, if needed, repaired at no cost to the owner, even if warranties have expired, she said.

Tom Miller, the homeowners' attorney in the lawsuit, said experts hired by his office investigated the construction of 12 homes and visually checked 104 others. Although only a few of the 1,378 homes in Terravita were inspected thoroughly, a similarity of those homes' defects suggests "that all or a majority of the (other) homes have the same problems," he said.

Defendants named in the lawsuit include Del Webb Corp., Del Webb Terravita Corp. and Terravita Home Construction Co.

Other defendants who could be added to the lawsuit later include various subcontractors who worked in Terravita, said Miller.

He blames poor workmanship on shortages of skilled workers in a high-growth industry.

At the Home Builders Association of Central Arizona, executive director Connie Wilhelm said worker shortages have led to longer construction time, not shoddy workmanship.

Pappas added that several months ago, 800 Terravita residents signed a petition disagreeing with the class-action lawsuit.