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Large Pinal County project under way

By Misty Williams
Tribune

A massive gated development in the works for Pinal County will bring a private golf course and nearly 2,400 homes to the Queen Creek area with sales beginning by the fall. [View map](#)

Work on the more than one-square-mile project by Shea Homes, called Encanterra, is already under way at the southeast corner of Gantzel and Combs roads.

It's the latest development in a continuing spate of home building in the region.

The housing market is flat, but Arizona's long-term outlook is positive, said Hal Looney, area president of Shea's resort community division Trilogy.

"The job market still remains strong," and it's affordable compared with California or Las Vegas, Looney said.

Construction on homes is expected to start in the fall with the first residents moving in around spring 2008 and full build out by 2014.

Shea hopes, in part, to appeal to workers commuting to Chandler's growing high-tech employment zones, he said.

The largest hurdles areas like Pinal County and the far West Valley are facing are traffic congestion and rising energy costs, said Jay Butler, who heads up the Realty Studies department at Arizona State University.

Builders will return to a more traditional way of selling - emphasizing locations, amenities and home designs, Butler said.

"How do they go back and differentiate themselves from their competition?" he said. "The market may be smaller. The market may be more selective."

Encanterra's location is better situated than some communities farther out in Pinal County, Looney said.

Ironwood Road, which turns into Gantzel and reaches up to U.S. 60, is being widened, he said.

The homes, some of which will feature dual offices for married couples who work at home, are also designed to attract baby boomers, project general manager Janet Jackson said.

The development will also include a 45,000-square-foot club with athletic and spa facilities, a library, an Internet cafe, a restaurant and a bar, she said.

Houses will range in size from 1,450 square feet to 3,660 square feet, though prices haven't been set yet, Jackson said.

The Scottsdale-based Trilogy division is planning to expand its resort-style communities beyond its current operations in Arizona, California and Washington - entering into a number of major markets across the nation with significant boomer populations by 2020.



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