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Custom-home builder says people are 'afraid to drop out of the norm'

BY ASHLEY MACHA
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Trudy Licano started Via Homes Inc. in Mesa in 1984 after becoming the state's first female licensed contractor. Her latest endeavor is The Enclave-Via Bella, a subdivision of 10 custom homes on 11 acres in Gilbert.

"The Enclave is very up-scale and intimate," said Licano, who serves as president and CEO of the company. "There are custom-home divisions that are large and mass-produced. Ours is one street with 10 beautiful, highly detailed lots."

Via Homes' services range from helping with lot purchases to architectural design and drafting.

"When I see a need, I've tried to fulfill it," Licano said. "People are afraid to drop out of the norm and go for it."

Via Homes also built Gateway Norte Builders Park in Mesa, an industrial development that caters to the construction sector.

Licano began her career working for a home builder and hoped to pursue a career in marketing. She soon began to recognize her potential and skill in design, drafting, construction and sense of space. So, she began her own business and was joined by her husband, Attorney Mike Licano is Via's in-house counsel and construction superintendent.

"It's been wonderful," she said. "Having both of us ensures success."

INNOVATOR:
Trudy Licano

Licano

What was it like being Arizona's first woman to become a licensed general contractor? "In 1984, we had some people who thought they were the first person, but I was the true first lady and the qualifying party for a residential general contractor's license. It was such a thrill."

What got you interested in custom homes? "It was an evolution of its own. Design and construction was just second nature. I was getting a marketing degree and got my real estate license, and then I was invited by a 40-house-per-year company to be their secretary. I took them to 400 houses in one year's time."

Who contributed the most to your success as a businesswoman and an entrepreneur? "My father. His success as an independent businessman impressed me. I had wonderful opportunities to learn from one of the best businesspeople I know."

For more: www.viahomes.com.

Via HOMES