

## Editorial: Condo owners shouldn't be only ones who have to pay

By Staff Reports

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Headline: "Crews work to correct serious flaws in condo community."

Serious flaws? Sounds bad.

Actually, this seems to be an understatement.

Residents at the Lake Barrington condo at Naples Lakes Country Club in East Naples are resorting to civil lawsuits and paying out of pocket for repairs as problems which make some units unlivable come to light six to eight years after construction.

"It's clear and evident mistakes were made," says Joe Schmitt, administrator for Collier County's building department.

Inspections show exposed rebar; concrete floors sloped in the wrong direction, causing rainwater to flow inside condos; plywood rather than drywall covering outside walls — a violation of plans approved by the county and the state's building and fire codes, county officials say. Also, exterior walls and windows were not properly fastened, county officials say.

Residents longing for rays of light have this: The repairs, expected to cost \$5 million, appear to be going well.

The problems are so bad that property owners are going to all that expense even though their units are worth less now than when they bought them.

While the residents sue the developer, Toll Brothers, and Toll Brothers sues its subcontractors, county government ought to track what happened internally. A certain level of consumer protection was assumed and, apparently, not delivered. The 209 unit owners in 11 buildings might agree that when there's talk about this whole miserable situation having no winners, county inspectors belong in the mix.

We wonder what it would take to get the Collier County Sheriff's or Southwest Florida State Attorney's offices, or both, involved, too. It would appear, based on what we know now, that buyers paid for quality and safety they did not get.