
While Americans worry about interest rates and increased housing costs, Europeans are buying the choice lots.

Deltona Corporation . . .

then quoted as saying. "The sales were here one day, gone the next."

The Deltona Corporation, accustomed to building about 1,000 houses a year, put up less than half that many in 1974. The company recorded its first loss in ten years. While 1973 had ended with a \$5.9 million profit, 1974 ended with a loss of \$6.5 million. Deltona architects and engineers bounced back with a "no frills" house for \$17,500 that sparked some sales. Still, 1975 was only slightly better with losses of \$5 million.

Then, on April 30, 1976 the Mackles were hit with the second — and even heavier — blow. On that final day of April, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers turned down Deltona's request to dredge 71 miles of canals in several crucial areas of its Marco Island development. The denial meant that 2,700 acres — 4,300 homesites — on Marco Island could not be developed. It meant a loss of some \$105 million in potential land sales.

Deltona had already sold many of those homesites despite warnings from state officials. Now the company had to make restitution to some 6,500 customers who had already made cash payments to the company of \$77 million in principal and interest. Deltona posted a \$10 million loss in 1976.

The Corps' decision was the culmination of several years of disagreement among conservationists, government groups and Deltona over the dredging of several ecologically fragile areas on the gulf coast. Florida Audubon vice president Charles Lee denounced the proposed dredging of 65 acres as "one of the largest single acts of destruction ever to befall Florida's natural coastline." Charles Cullison, executive vice president of the National Audubon Society, said the dredging would

threaten a 4,500-acre wildlife sanctuary next to the project. Other analysts claimed the destruction of mangrove trees in the area would destroy the region's natural system of cleaning and filtering the water. A University of Florida biologist stated that 70% of the proposed canals would be unfit for swimming and 56% would be so polluted that a swimmer with an open wound could develop gangrene.

In May 1971 Joel Kuperberg, then executive director of the trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund, the state's land agency, warned Deltona officials: "All land sales should cease . . ."

Nevertheless, Deltona sold 2,000 lots after Kuperberg's warning. It sold 791 lots after the Florida Pollution Control Board denied Deltona the certification needed to obtain a federal dredge-and-fill permit.

Deltona claimed all along that it had received the necessary state and federal permission for its project in the 1960s, and that the environmental concerns of the 1970s were being unfairly applied to the company. Furthermore, Deltona disputed the authority of this new generation of state and federal regulations to bring much of Deltona's Marco Island development to a halt. So, as land sales



Marco Island is busy with construction these days. Here, Deltona's South Seas Club condominium rises from the sand. South Seas covers 55 acres and will offer 1,263 units.