

# Lawsuits piling up over Mastro Jr. apartment projects

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Several recent lawsuits against Michael K. Mastro Jr. and his companies Global General Contractors and Global Development LLC have accused the businesses of doing substandard work on apartment projects in Seattle and Bellevue.

Paul and Barbara Stephanus filed eight lawsuits in late August against Mastro Jr. and his companies in King County Superior Court. The attorney representing Mastro Jr. has filed court papers denying all of the allegations.

The plaintiffs bought the properties through limited liability companies set up by Mastro Jr.'s father, Michael Mastro Sr., a prominent Seattle developer. The elder Mastro was forced into involuntary bankruptcy last year by three creditor banks.

Mastro Jr. had contracts with the LLCs to construct the buildings.

The lawsuits are yet another headache for Mastro Jr., who has been sued by the trustee in his father's bankruptcy proceedings, and extend the legal disputes involving the Mastros to another group of properties.

The plaintiffs "started buying the LLCs back in the late '90s, when Mastro Sr. was on a tear and Mastro Jr. was throwing these things up pretty quickly. The market was just on fire," said the Stephanuses' attorney, Chris Casey of

Casey & Skoglund PLLC, in Seattle.

Casey expects to file five additional lawsuits involving other buildings constructed by Mastro Jr., which would bring the total to 13.

In the Stephanus cases, Mastro Jr. did repairs as requested, but the plaintiffs claim the work failed to fix underlying problems, according to Casey. A number of the repair issues are related to water damage, where the outside surfaces of the buildings let water penetrate the interiors, Casey said.

"(Mastro) actually put it in writing that they would never have anything to worry about — that they would come out and do the repairs. But at some point my clients felt things were not going to get any better and what they have got to do is one complete repair by someone who knows what they are doing and that costs a lot of money," Casey said.

Casey estimates the repairs will run about \$1 million per building.

Mastro Jr.'s attorney, Anthony Scisciani III with the Seattle firm Scheer & Zehnder LLP, said his client did all the repairs requested and had not heard from the plaintiffs since 2008.

"My client maintains he did the repairs and hasn't heard from them in some time," Scisciani said. "It's difficult to reconcile these allegations with the historical silence."

Scisciani has filed court documents denying the allegations in each of the



KING COUNTY PHOTO

**LITIGATION BLUES:** The Excalibur Apartments in downtown Bellevue is one of several properties caught up in legal disputes between Michael K. Mastro Jr. and Paul and Barbara Stephanus.

cases.

The plaintiffs want Mastro Jr. to cover the costs of hiring another firm to do the repairs and paying rents lost while units are being fixed.

Casey estimates as many as 700 families renting units in the nine projects

listed in the lawsuits could be affected. He described the condition of the buildings as "horrible" and said, "It will take a great deal of effort to get them back up to speed."