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MERITAGE CORP
Form 424B3
May 16, 2002

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Registration Statement No. 333-87398

PROSPECTUS

Meritage Corporation

\$300,000,000

Debt Securities

Common Stock

Preferred Stock

Warrants

Guarantees

Under this prospectus, we may sell a variety of securities. We will provide specific terms of these securities in supplements to this prospectus. You should read this prospectus and any supplement to this prospectus carefully before you invest.

Our common stock is listed on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol MTH. We will list any common stock issued pursuant to a prospectus supplement, subject to notice of issuance, on the New York Stock Exchange.

See Risk Factors, which begin on page 2, for a discussion of certain factors that should be considered in evaluating an investment in our securities.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or passed upon the adequacy or accuracy of this prospectus. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The date of this prospectus is May 14, 2002.

We have not authorized anyone to provide you with any information other than the information incorporated by reference or provided in this prospectus or any prospectus supplement. We are not making an offer of these securities in any state or other jurisdiction where the offer is not permitted. You should not assume that the information in this prospectus, any prospectus supplement or any document incorporated or deemed to be incorporated by reference in this prospectus is accurate as of any date other than the date of that document.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Forward-Looking Statements	1
About this Prospectus	1
Meritage Corporation	1
Risk Factors	2
Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges and Ratio of Earnings to Combined Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock Dividends	5
Use of Proceeds	6
Plan of Distribution	6
Description of Debt Securities	7
Description of Capital Stock	15
Description of Warrants	19
Legal Matters	20
Experts	20
Where You Can Find More Information	20

FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

Certain of the matters discussed or incorporated in this prospectus may constitute forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933 and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. In general, forward-looking statements can be identified by use of words such as expect, believe, estimate, project, forecast, anticipate, plan and similar expressions. Our forward-looking statements may address such matters as, but are not limited to, projections of revenue, income or loss, anticipated benefits of acquisitions, capital expenditures, plans for future operations, financing needs, the impact of changes in interest rates, projected job growth and economic conditions in our housing markets, plans relating to our new products or services, potential business and real property acquisitions and new or planned development projects, as well as assumptions related to these matters. Under the caption Risk Factors and elsewhere in this prospectus and in the documents we incorporate by reference, we have described several important factors currently known to management that could cause actual results to differ materially from those in the forward-looking statements.

Forward-looking statements express expectations of future events. All forward-looking statements are inherently uncertain as they are based on various expectations and assumptions concerning future events and they are subject to numerous known and unknown risks and uncertainties that could cause actual events or results to differ materially from those projected. Our past performance or past or present economic conditions in our housing markets may not be indicative of future performance or conditions. Due to these inherent uncertainties, current or potential investors in our securities are urged not to place undue reliance on forward-looking statements. In addition, we undertake no obligation to update or revise forward-looking statements to reflect changed assumptions, the occurrence of anticipated or unanticipated events or changes to projections over time.

See our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2001 and our other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, or SEC, for a further discussion of risks and uncertainties applicable to our business.

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is part of a registration statement that we filed with the SEC utilizing a shelf registration process. Under this shelf process, we may sell any combination of the securities described in this prospectus in one or more offerings up to an aggregate initial offering price of \$300,000,000. This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we sell securities, we will provide a prospectus supplement that will contain specific information about the terms of that offering and the securities being sold in that offering. The prospectus supplement may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus. You should read both this prospectus and any prospectus supplement together with additional information described under the heading Where You Can Find More Information.

Any statements in this prospectus or in any accompanying prospectus supplement concerning the provisions of any document are not complete. In each instance, reference is made to the copy of that document filed or incorporated or deemed to be incorporated by reference as an exhibit to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part or otherwise filed with the SEC. Each statement concerning the provisions of any document is qualified in its entirety by reference to the document so filed.

MERITAGE CORPORATION

We are a leading designer and builder of single-family homes in the rapidly growing Sunbelt states of Texas, Arizona and California. We focus on providing a broad range of first-time, move-up and luxury homes to our targeted customer base. We and our predecessors have operated in Arizona since 1985, in Texas since 1987 and in Northern California since 1989. To expand our presence in Arizona, in 2001 we acquired Hancock Communities, another well-established homebuilder that serves the first-time and move-up markets in the Phoenix area. We operate in Texas under the Legacy Homes name, in Arizona as

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Monterey Homes, Meritage Homes and Hancock Communities, and in Northern California as Meritage Homes. At December 31, 2001, we were actively selling homes in 74 communities, with base prices ranging from \$90,000 to \$820,000. Information about our active communities is provided through our Internet web site at www.meritagehomes.com. The information on our website is not considered part of this prospectus.

Our principal executive office in Arizona is located at 6613 North Scottsdale Road, Suite 200, Scottsdale, Arizona 85250, and our telephone number there is (877) 400-7888. Our principal executive office in Texas is located at 4050 West Park Boulevard, Plano, Texas 75093, and our telephone number there is (800) 210-6004.

RISK FACTORS

Our future operating results and financial condition depend on our ability to successfully design, develop, construct and sell homes that satisfy dynamic customer demand patterns. Inherent in this process are factors that we must successfully manage to achieve favorable future operating results and financial condition. These operating and financial factors, along with many other factors, could affect the price of our securities. You should carefully consider the following potential risks and uncertainties before investing in our securities.

Homebuilding Industry Factors. The homebuilding industry is cyclical and is significantly affected by changes in economic and other conditions, such as employment levels, availability of financing, interest rates, and consumer confidence. These factors can negatively affect the demand for and pricing of our homes. Homebuilders are also subject to various risks, many of which are outside their control, including delays in construction schedules, cost overruns, changes in governmental regulations, increases in real estate taxes and other local government fees, and availability and cost of land, materials, and labor. Although the principal raw materials used in the homebuilding industry generally are available from a variety of sources, the materials are subject to periodic price fluctuations.

The homebuilding industry is also subject to the potential for significant variability and fluctuations in real estate availability and values. Write-downs of our land inventories could occur if market conditions deteriorate and these write-downs could be material in amount. Write-downs may also occur if we purchase land at higher prices during stronger economic cycles and the value of that land subsequently declines during slower economic cycles.

Fluctuations in Operating Results. We historically have experienced, and expect to continue to experience, variability in home sales and net earnings on a quarterly basis. As a result of such variability, our historical performance may not be a meaningful indicator of future results. Factors that contribute to this variability include:

timing of home deliveries and land sales;

our ability to acquire additional land or options for additional land on acceptable terms;

conditions of the real estate market in areas where we operate and of the general economy;

the cyclical nature of the homebuilding industry, changes in prevailing interest rates and the availability of mortgage financing;

costs and availability of materials and labor; and

delays in construction schedules due to strikes, adverse weather, acts of God, reduced subcontractor availability and governmental restrictions.

Interest Rates and Mortgage Financing. In general, housing demand is adversely affected by increases in interest rates and housing costs and the unavailability of mortgage financing. Most of our buyers finance their home purchases through third-party lenders providing mortgage financing. If mortgage interest rates increase and, consequently, the ability of prospective buyers to finance home purchases is

adversely affected, home sales, gross margins and cash flow may also be adversely affected and the impact may be material. Our homebuilding activities also depend upon the availability and costs of mortgage financing for buyers of homes owned by potential customers, as those customers (move-up buyers) often need to sell their existing residences before they purchase our homes. Any reduction of financing availability could adversely affect home sales.

Changes in federal income tax laws may also affect demand for new homes. Various proposals have been publicly discussed to limit mortgage interest deductions and to limit the exclusion of gain from the sale of a principal residence. Enactment of such proposals may have an adverse effect on the homebuilding industry in general. No meaningful prediction can be made whether any such proposals will be enacted and, if enacted, the particular form such laws would take.

Competition. The homebuilding industry is highly competitive. We compete for sales in each of our markets with national, regional and local developers and homebuilders, existing home resales and, to a lesser extent, condominiums and rental housing. If we are unable to successfully compete, our financial results and growth could suffer. Some of our competitors have significantly greater financial resources or lower costs than we do. Competition among both small and large residential homebuilders is based on a number of interrelated factors, including location, reputation, amenities, design, quality and price. Competition is expected to continue and become more intense, and there may be new entrants in the markets in which we currently operate and in markets we may enter in the future.

Lack of Geographic Diversification. We have operations in Texas, Arizona and Northern California. Our lack of geographic diversification could adversely affect us if the homebuilding business in our current markets should decline, since there may not be a balancing opportunity in stronger markets in other geographic regions.

Additional Financing; Limitations. The homebuilding industry is capital intensive and requires significant up-front expenditures to acquire land and begin development. Accordingly, we incur substantial indebtedness to finance our homebuilding activities. We may be required to seek additional capital in the form of equity or debt financing from a variety of potential sources, including bank financing and securities offerings. Also, lenders are increasingly requiring developers and homebuilders to invest significant amounts of equity in a project both in connection with origination of new loans as well as the extension of existing loans. The high level of our indebtedness could have important consequences to our securityholders, including the following:

our ability to obtain additional financing for working capital, capital expenditures, acquisitions or general corporate purposes may be impaired;

we must use a substantial portion of our cash flow from operations to pay interest and principal on our indebtedness, which will reduce the funds available for other purposes, such as capital expenditures;

we have a higher level of indebtedness than some of our competitors, which may put us at a competitive disadvantage and reduce our flexibility in planning for, or responding to, changing conditions in our industry, including increased competition; and

we are more vulnerable to economic downturns and adverse developments in our business.

We expect to obtain the money to pay our expenses and to pay the principal and interest on our indebtedness from cash flow from operations. Our ability to meet our expenses thus depends on our future performance, which will be affected by financial, business, economic and other factors. We will not be able to control many of these factors, such as economic conditions in the markets where we operate and pressure from competitors. We cannot be certain that our cash flow will be sufficient to allow us to pay principal and interest on our debt, and meet our other obligations. If we do not have enough money, we may be required to refinance all or part of our existing debt, sell assets or borrow more money. We cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so on terms acceptable to us, if at all. In addition, the terms of existing or future debt agreements may restrict us from pursuing any of these alternatives.

Operating and Financial Limitations. The covenants under our existing senior notes indenture and credit facilities impose significant operating and financial restrictions on us. These restrictions will limit our ability, among other things, to:

- incur additional indebtedness;
- pay dividends or make other distributions;
- repurchase our stock;
- make investments;
- sell assets;
- enter into agreements restricting our subsidiaries' ability to pay dividends;
- enter into transactions with affiliates; and
- consolidate, merge or sell all or substantially all of our assets.

In addition, the indenture for our existing senior notes requires us to maintain a minimum consolidated tangible net worth and our existing credit facilities require us to maintain other specified financial ratios. These covenants may adversely affect our ability to finance our future operations or capital needs or to pursue available business opportunities. A breach of these covenants or our inability to maintain the required financial ratios could result in a default on our indebtedness. If a default occurs, the relevant lenders could declare the indebtedness, together with accrued interest and other fees, to be immediately due and payable and proceed against any collateral securing that indebtedness.

Government Regulations; Environmental Conditions. Regulatory requirements could cause us to incur significant liabilities and costs and could restrict our business activities. We are subject to local, state, and federal statutes and rules regulating certain developmental matters, as well as building and site design. We are subject to various fees and charges of governmental authorities designed to defray the cost of providing certain governmental services and improvements. We may be subject to additional costs and delays or may be precluded entirely from building projects because of no growth or slow growth initiatives, building permit ordinances, building moratoriums, or similar government regulations that could be imposed in the future due to health, safety, welfare, or environmental concerns. We must also obtain licenses, permits and approvals from government agencies to engage in certain activities, the granting or receipt of which are beyond our control.

We are also subject to a variety of local, state and federal statutes, ordinances, rules and regulations concerning the protection of health and the environment. Environmental laws or permit restrictions may result in project delays, may cause substantial compliance and other costs and may prohibit or severely restrict development in certain environmentally sensitive regions or geographic areas. Environmental regulations can also have an adverse impact on the availability and price of certain raw materials such as lumber.

Recent Acquisition. During 2001, we acquired Hancock Communities. We cannot guarantee that:

- the Hancock business will be integrated successfully with our existing business;
- the market and financial synergies we anticipate will be achieved in our expected time frame, or at all;
- the combined companies will not lose key employees, management, suppliers or subcontractors; and
- we can successfully manage new housing lines that were previously managed by Hancock or new lines planned for the future.

Future Expansion. We may continue to consider growth or expansion of our operations in our current markets or in other areas of the country. Our expansion into new or existing markets could have a material adverse effect on our cash flows or profitability. The magnitude, timing and nature of any future

expansion will depend on a number of factors, including suitable acquisition candidates, the negotiation of acceptable terms, our financial capabilities, and general economic and business conditions. New acquisitions may result in the incurrence of additional debt. Acquisitions also involve numerous risks, including difficulties in the assimilation of the acquired company's operations, the incurrence of unanticipated liabilities or expenses, the diversion of management's attention from other business concerns, risks of entering markets in which we have limited or no direct experience and the potential loss of key employees of the acquired company.

Dependence on Key Personnel. Our success largely depends on the continuing services of certain key employees, including Steve Hilton and John Landon, and our continued favorable development depends on our ability to attract and retain qualified personnel. We do not have employment agreements with certain key officers and the loss of their services could harm our business.

Dependence on Subcontractors. We conduct our construction operations only as a general contractor. Virtually all architectural and construction work is performed by unaffiliated third-party subcontractors. As a consequence, we depend on the continued availability of and satisfactory performance by these subcontractors for the design and construction of our homes. We cannot assure you that there will be sufficient availability of and satisfactory performance by these unaffiliated third-party subcontractors. In addition, inadequate subcontractor resources could have a material adverse affect on our business.

Inflation. We, like other homebuilders, may be adversely affected during periods of high inflation, mainly because of higher land and construction costs. Also, higher mortgage interest rates may significantly affect the affordability of mortgage financing to prospective buyers. Inflation also increases our cost of financing, materials and labor, and could cause our financial results or growth to decline. We attempt to pass cost increases on to our customers through higher sales prices. To date, inflation has not had a material adverse effect on our results of operations; however, inflation could impact our future operating results.

Natural Disasters. We have significant homebuilding operations in Texas and Northern California. Some of our markets in Texas occasionally experience severe weather conditions, such as tornadoes or hurricanes. Northern California has experienced a significant number of earthquakes, flooding, landslides and other natural disasters in recent years. We do not insure against some of these risks. These occurrences could damage or destroy our homes under construction or our building lots, which may result in losses that exceed our insurance coverage. We could also suffer significant constructions delays or substantial fluctuations in the pricing or availability of building materials. Any of these events could cause a decrease in our revenue, cash flow and earnings.

RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES

AND RATIO OF EARNINGS TO COMBINED FIXED CHARGES AND PREFERRED STOCK DIVIDENDS

The following table sets forth Meritage's ratio of earnings to fixed charges and ratio of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends for each of the periods indicated:

	Years Ended December 31,				
	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997
Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges	4.66x	5.00x	4.28x	6.65x	3.60x
Ratio of Earnings to Combined Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock Dividends	4.66x	5.00x	4.28x	6.65x	3.60x

The ratio of earnings to fixed charges and ratio of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends are identical because Meritage had no outstanding preferred stock during such periods. For the purposes of these calculations, earnings consist of earnings before income taxes and extraordinary items plus fixed charges less capitalized interest. Fixed charges consist of interest expense including

amortization of deferred debt costs, one-half of rent expense, which is deemed to be representative of an interest factor, and capitalized interest. See Exhibit 12.1 to the registration statement containing this prospectus for a calculation of ratio of earnings to fixed charges and ratio of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends for the periods presented.

USE OF PROCEEDS

Unless we otherwise specify in the applicable prospectus supplement, the net proceeds we receive from the sale of the securities offered by this prospectus and the accompanying prospectus supplement will be used for general corporate purposes. General corporate purposes may include the development of new residential properties, the repayment of debt, land acquisitions and possible acquisitions of other homebuilders. The net proceeds may be invested temporarily or applied to repay short-term debt until they are used for their stated purpose.

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We may sell the securities:

through underwriters or dealers;

through agents; or

directly to purchasers.

The securities may be sold in one or more transactions at a fixed price or prices, which may be changed, or at market prices prevailing at the time of sale, at prices relating to prevailing market prices or at negotiated prices. We will describe in a prospectus supplement the particular terms of the offering of the securities, including the following:

the names of any underwriters or agents;

the purchase price and the proceeds we will receive from the sale;

any discounts and other items constituting underwriters or agents compensation;

any initial public offering price and any discounts or concessions allowed or re-allowed or paid to dealers;

any securities exchanges on which the applicable securities may be listed; and

any other information we think is important.

If we use underwriters in the sale, the underwriters will acquire the securities for their own account. The underwriters may resell the securities in one or more transactions, at a fixed price or prices, which may be changed, or at market prices prevailing at the time of sale, at prices relating to prevailing market prices or at negotiated prices.

The securities may be offered to the public through underwriting syndicates represented by managing underwriters or by underwriters without a syndicate. The obligations of the underwriters to purchase the securities will be subject to certain conditions. The underwriters will be obligated to purchase all the securities of the class or series offered if any of the securities are purchased. The underwriters may change from time to time any initial public offering price and any discounts or concessions allowed or re-allowed or paid to dealers.

We may sell securities through agents or dealers designated by us. Any agent or dealer involved in the offer or sale of the securities for which this prospectus is delivered will be named, and any commissions payable by us to that agent or dealer will be set forth, in the prospectus supplement. Unless indicated in the prospectus supplement, the agents will agree to use their reasonable efforts to solicit purchases for the period of their appointment and any dealer will purchase securities from us as principal and may resell

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those securities at varying prices to be determined by the dealer. We also may sell securities directly to investors. In this case, no underwriters or agents would be involved.

Underwriters, dealers and agents that participate in the distribution of the securities may be underwriters as defined in the Securities Act, and any discounts or commissions received by them from us and any profit on the resale of the securities by them may be treated as underwriting discounts and commissions under the Securities Act.

We may have agreements with the underwriters, dealers and agents to indemnify them against certain civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act, or to contribute with respect to payments which the underwriters, dealers or agents may be required to make.

Underwriters, dealers and agents may engage in transactions with, or perform services for, us or our subsidiaries in the ordinary course of their businesses.

In order to facilitate the offering of the securities, any underwriters or agents involved in the offering of those securities may engage in transactions that stabilize, maintain or otherwise affect the price of the securities. Specifically, the underwriters or agents may overallot in connection with the offering, creating a short position in the offered securities for their own account. In addition, to cover over allotments or to stabilize the price of the securities, the underwriters or agents may bid for, and purchase, the securities in the open market. Finally, in any offering of the securities through a syndicate of underwriters, the underwriting syndicate may reclaim selling concessions allotted to an underwriter or a dealer for distributing the securities in the offering if the syndicate repurchases previously distributed securities in transactions to cover syndicate short positions, in stabilization transaction or otherwise. Any of these activities may stabilize or maintain the market price of the securities above independent market levels. The underwriters or agents are not required to engage in these activities, and may end any of these activities at any time.

Some or all of the securities may be new issues of securities with no established trading market. Any underwriter to which securities are sold by us for public offering and sale may make a market in those securities, but will not be obligated to do so, and may discontinue any market making at any time without notice. We cannot and will not give any assurances as to the liquidity of the trading market for any of our securities.

DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES

This prospectus describes certain general terms and provisions of our debt securities. When we offer to sell a particular series of debt securities, we will describe the specific terms of the series in a supplement to this prospectus. We will also indicate in the applicable prospectus supplement whether the general terms and provisions described in this prospectus apply to a particular series of debt securities.

Unless otherwise specified in a supplement to this prospectus, the debt securities will be the direct, unsecured obligations of Meritage Corporation and will rank equally with all of its other unsecured and unsubordinated indebtedness. Meritage Corporation's payment obligations under any series of debt securities may be guaranteed by one or more co-registrants.

The debt securities will be issued under an indenture between us and a bank or trust company, as trustee. We have summarized select portions of the indenture below. The summary is not complete. The form of the indenture has been filed as an exhibit to the registration statement and you should read the indenture for provisions that may be important to you. Capitalized terms used in the summary have the meaning specified in the indenture.

When we refer to "we," "our" and "us" in this section, we mean Meritage Corporation unless the context otherwise requires or as otherwise expressly stated.

General

The terms of each series of debt securities will be established by or pursuant to a resolution of our board of directors and set forth or determined in the manner provided in an officers' certificate or by a supplemental indenture. The particular terms of each series of debt securities will be described in a prospectus supplement relating to that series, including any pricing supplement.

We may issue an unlimited amount of debt securities under the indenture that may be in one or more series with the same or various maturities, at par, at a premium, or at a discount. We will set forth in a prospectus supplement, including any pricing supplement, relating to any series of debt securities being offered, the aggregate principal amount and the following terms of the debt securities:

the title of the debt securities;

the price or prices (expressed as a percentage of the principal amount) at which we will sell the debt securities;

any limit on the aggregate principal amount of the debt securities;

the date or dates on which we will pay the principal on the debt securities;

the rate or rates (which may be fixed or variable) per annum or the method used to determine the rate or rates (including any commodity, commodity index, stock exchange index or financial index) at which the debt securities will bear interest, the date or dates from which interest will accrue, the date or dates on which interest will commence and be payable and any regular record date for the interest payable on any interest payment date;

the trustee for the series of debt securities;

whether the debt securities rank as senior debt securities, senior subordinated debt securities or subordinated debt securities, or any combination thereof;

the form and terms of any guarantee of any debt securities;

any depositories, interest rate calculation agents or other agents with respect to the debt securities;

whether, the ratio at which and the terms and conditions upon which, if any, the debt securities will be convertible into or exchangeable for our common stock or our other securities or securities of another person;

the place or places where principal of, premium, if any, and interest, if any, on the debt securities will be payable or the method of payment, if by wire transfer, mail or by other means;

the terms and conditions upon which we may redeem the debt securities;

any obligation we have to redeem or purchase the debt securities pursuant to any sinking fund or analogous provisions or at the option of a holder of debt securities;

the dates, if any, on which, and the price or prices at which, we will repurchase debt securities at the option of the holders of debt securities and other detailed terms and provisions of these repurchase obligations;

the denominations in which the debt securities will be issued, if other than denominations of \$1,000 and any integral multiple thereof;

whether the debt securities will be issued in bearer or fully registered form (and if in fully registered form, whether the debt securities will be issuable, in whole or in part, as global debt securities);

the portion of principal amount of the debt securities payable upon declaration of acceleration of the maturity date, if other than the principal amount;

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the currency of denomination of the debt securities;

8

the designation of the currency, currencies or currency units in which payment of principal of, premium and interest on the debt securities will be made;

if payments of principal of, premium or interest on the debt securities will be made in one or more currencies or currency units other than that or those in which the debt securities are denominated, the manner in which the exchange rate with respect to these payments will be determined;

the manner in which the amounts of payment of principal of, or premium or interest on the debt securities will be determined, if these amounts may be determined by reference to an index based on a currency or currencies other than that in which the debt securities are denominated or designated to be payable or by reference to a commodity, commodity index, stock exchange index or financial index;

any provisions relating to any security provided for the debt securities;

any addition to or change in the events of default described in this prospectus or in the indenture with respect to the debt securities and any change in the acceleration provisions described in this prospectus or in the indenture with respect to the debt securities;

any addition to, change in or deletion from, the covenants described in this prospectus or in the indenture with respect to the debt securities; and

any other terms of the debt securities, which may modify, supplement or delete any provision of the indenture as it applies to that series.

In addition, the indenture does not limit our ability to issue subordinated debt securities. Any subordination provisions of a particular series of debt securities will be set forth in the officers' certificate or supplemental indenture related to that series of debt securities and will be described in the relevant prospectus supplement.

We may issue debt securities that provide for an amount less than their stated principal amount to be due and payable upon declaration of acceleration of their maturity pursuant to the terms of the indenture. We will provide you with information on the federal income tax considerations and other special considerations applicable to any of these debt securities in the applicable prospectus supplement.

If we denominate the purchase price of any of the debt securities in a foreign currency or currencies or a foreign currency unit or units, or if the principal of and any premium and interest on any series of debt securities is payable in a foreign currency or currencies or a foreign currency unit or units, we will provide you with information on the restrictions, elections, general tax considerations, specific terms and other information with respect to that issue of debt securities and such foreign currency or currencies or foreign currency unit or units in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Transfer and Exchange

Each debt security will be represented by either one or more global securities registered in the name of The Depository Trust Company, as depositary, or a nominee (we will refer to any debt security represented by a global debt security as a "book-entry debt security"), or a certificate issued in definitive registered form (we will refer to any debt security represented by a certificated security as a "certificated debt security") as set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. Except as set forth under the heading "Global Debt Securities and Book-Entry System" below, book-entry debt securities will not be issuable in certificated form.

Certificated Debt Securities. You may transfer or exchange certificated debt securities at any office we maintain for this purpose in accordance with the terms of the indenture. No service charge will be made for any transfer or exchange of certificated debt securities, but we may require payment of a sum sufficient to cover any tax or other governmental charge payable in connection with a transfer or exchange.

You may effect the transfer of certificated debt securities and the right to receive the principal of, premium and interest on certificated debt securities only by surrendering the certificate representing those

certificated debt securities and either reissuance by us or the trustee of the certificate to the new holder or the issuance by us or the trustee of a new certificate to the new holder.

Global Debt Securities and Book-Entry System. Each global debt security representing book-entry debt securities will be deposited with, or on behalf of, the depositary, and registered in the name of the depositary or a nominee of the depositary.

The depositary has indicated it intends to follow the following procedures with respect to book-entry debt securities.

Ownership of beneficial interests in book-entry debt securities will be limited to persons that have accounts with the depositary for the related global debt security, which we refer to as participants, or persons that may hold interests through participants. Upon the issuance of a global debt security, the depositary will credit, on its book-entry registration and transfer system, the participants' accounts with the respective principal amounts of the book-entry debt securities represented by the global debt security beneficially owned by such participants. The accounts to be credited will be designated by any dealers, underwriters or agents participating in the distribution of the book-entry debt securities. Ownership of book-entry debt securities will be shown on, and the transfer of those ownership interests will be effected only through, records maintained by the depositary for the related global debt security (with respect to interests of participants) and on the records of participants (with respect to interests of persons holding through participants). The laws of some states may require that certain purchasers of securities take physical delivery of the securities in definitive form. These laws may impair the ability to own, transfer or pledge beneficial interests in book-entry debt securities.

So long as the depositary for a global debt security, or its nominee, is the registered owner of that global debt security, the depositary or its nominee, as the case may be, will be considered the sole owner or holder of the book-entry debt securities represented by the global debt security for all purposes under the indenture. Except as described below, beneficial owners of book-entry debt securities will not be entitled to have securities registered in their names, will not receive or be entitled to receive physical delivery of a certificate in definitive form representing securities and will not be considered the owners or holders of those securities under the indenture. Accordingly, each person beneficially owning book-entry debt securities must rely on the procedures of the depositary for the related global debt security and, if that person is not a participant, on the procedures of the participant through which that person owns its interest, to exercise any rights of a holder under the indenture.

We understand, however, that under existing industry practice, the depositary will authorize the persons on whose behalf it holds a global debt security to exercise certain rights of holders of debt securities, and the indenture provides that we, the trustee and our respective agents will treat as the holder of a debt security the persons specified in a written statement of the depositary with respect to that global debt security for purposes of obtaining any consents or directions required to be given by holders of the debt securities pursuant to the indenture.

We will make payments of principal of, and premium and interest on, book-entry debt securities to the depositary or its nominee, as the case may be, as the registered holder of the related global debt security. We, the trustee and any other agent of ours or agent of the trustee will not have any responsibility or liability for any aspect of the records relating to or payments made on account of beneficial ownership interests in a global debt security or for maintaining, supervising or reviewing any records relating to beneficial ownership interests.

We expect that the depositary, upon receipt of any payment of principal of, premium or interest on a global debt security, will immediately credit participants' accounts with payments in amounts proportionate to the respective amounts of book-entry debt securities held by each participant as shown on the records of the depositary. We also expect that payments by participants to owners of beneficial interests in book-entry debt securities held through those participants will be governed by standing customer instructions and customary practices, as is now the case with the securities held for the accounts of customers in bearer form or registered in street name, and will be the responsibility of those participants.

We will issue certificated debt securities in exchange for each global debt security if the depositary is at any time unwilling or unable to continue as depositary or ceases to be a clearing agency registered under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or Exchange Act, and a successor depositary registered as a clearing agency under the Exchange Act is not appointed by us within 90 days. In addition, we may at any time and in our sole discretion determine not to have the book-entry debt securities of any series represented by one or more global debt securities and, in that event, will issue certificated debt securities in exchange for the global debt securities of that series. Global debt securities will also be exchangeable by the holders for certificated debt securities if an event of default with respect to the book-entry debt securities represented by those global debt securities has occurred and is continuing. Any certificated debt securities issued in exchange for a global debt security will be registered in such name or names as the depositary shall instruct the trustee. We expect that such instructions will be based upon directions received by the depositary from participants with respect to ownership of book-entry debt securities relating to such global debt security.

We have obtained the foregoing information concerning the depositary and the depositary's book-entry system from sources we believe to be reliable, but we take no responsibility for the accuracy of this information.

Change of Control

Unless we state otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, the debt securities will not contain any provisions that may afford holders of the debt securities protection in the event we undergo a change in control or in the event of a highly leveraged transaction (whether or not the transaction results in a change in control) that could adversely affect holders of debt securities.

Covenants

We will set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement any restrictive covenants applicable to any issue of debt securities.

Consolidation, Merger and Sale of Assets

We may not consolidate with or merge with or into, or convey, transfer or lease all or substantially all of our properties and assets to, any person, which we refer to as a successor person, unless:

we are the surviving corporation or the successor person (if other than Meritance Corporation) is a corporation organized and validly existing under the laws of any U.S. domestic jurisdiction and expressly assumes our obligations on the debt securities and under the indenture;

immediately after giving effect to the transaction, no event of default, and no event which, after notice or lapse of time, or both, would become an event of default, shall have occurred and be continuing under the indenture; and

certain other conditions that may be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement are met.

Events of Default

Unless otherwise stated in the applicable prospectus supplement, event of default means, with respect to any series of debt securities, any of the following:

default in the payment of any interest upon any debt security of that series when it becomes due and payable, and continuance of that default for a period of 30 days (unless the entire amount of the payment is deposited by us with the trustee or with a paying agent prior to the expiration of the 30-day period);

default in the payment of principal of or premium on any debt security of that series when due and payable at maturity, upon redemption or otherwise;

an event of default as defined in the debt securities of that series or our failure to comply with any of our other agreements in the debt securities of that series or the indenture with respect to that series, which default continues uncured for a period of 60 days after we receive written notice from the trustee or we and the trustee receive written notice from the holders of not less than a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series as provided in the indenture;

certain events of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization; and

any other event of default provided with respect to debt securities of that series which is described in the applicable prospectus supplement accompanying this prospectus.

No event of default with respect to a particular series of debt securities (except as to certain events of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization) necessarily constitutes an event of default with respect to any other series of debt securities. The occurrence of an event of default may constitute an event of default under our bank credit agreements in existence from time to time. In addition, the occurrence of certain events of default or an acceleration under the indenture may constitute an event of default under certain of our other indebtedness outstanding from time to time.

If an event of default with respect to debt securities of any series at the time outstanding occurs and is continuing, then the trustee or the holders of not less than a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series may, by a notice in writing to us (and to the trustee if given by the holders), declare to be due and payable immediately the principal (or, if the debt securities of that series are discount securities, that portion of the principal amount as may be specified in the terms of that series) of and accrued and unpaid interest, if any, on all debt securities of that series. In the case of an event of default resulting from certain events of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization, the principal (or such specified amount) of and accrued and unpaid interest, if any, on all outstanding debt securities will become and be immediately due and payable without any declaration or other act on the part of the trustee or any holder of outstanding debt securities. At any time after a declaration of acceleration with respect to debt securities of any series has been made, but before a judgment or decree for payment of the money due has been obtained by the trustee, the holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series may rescind and annul the acceleration if all events of default, other than the non-payment of accelerated principal and interest, if any, with respect to debt securities of that series, have been cured or waived as provided in the indenture. We refer you to the prospectus supplement relating to any series of debt securities that are discount securities for the particular provisions relating to acceleration of a portion of the principal amount of such discount securities upon the occurrence of an event of default.

The indenture provides that the trustee will be under no obligation to exercise any of its rights or powers under the indenture at the request of any holder of outstanding debt securities, unless the trustee receives indemnity satisfactory to it against any loss, liability or expense. Subject to certain rights of the trustee, the holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series will have the right to direct the time, method and place of conducting any proceeding for any remedy available to the trustee or exercising any trust or power conferred on the trustee with respect to the debt securities of that series.

Unless stated otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, no holder of any debt security of any series will have any right to institute any proceeding, judicial or otherwise, with respect to the indenture or for the appointment of a receiver or trustee, or for any remedy under the indenture, unless:

that holder has previously given to the trustee written notice of a continuing event of default with respect to debt securities of that series; and

the holders of at least 25% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series have made written request, and offered reasonable indemnity, to the trustee to institute the proceeding as trustee, and the trustee has not received from the holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series a direction inconsistent with that request and has failed to institute the proceeding within 60 days.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the holder of any debt security will have an absolute and unconditional right to receive payment of the principal of, premium and any interest on that debt security on or after the due dates expressed in that debt security and to institute suit for the enforcement of payment.

The indenture requires us, within 90 days after the end of our fiscal year, to furnish to the trustee a statement as to compliance with the indenture. The indenture provides that the trustee may withhold notice to the holders of debt securities of any series of any default or event of default (except in payment on any debt securities of that series) with respect to debt securities of that series if it in good faith determines that withholding notice is in the interest of the holders of those debt securities.

Modification and Waiver

We may modify and amend the indenture without notice to or the consent of the holders:

to establish additional series of securities permitted under the indenture;

to cure any ambiguity, defect or inconsistency;

to evidence the assumption of a successor corporation of our obligations under the indenture;

to comply with any requirements of the SEC or the Trust Indenture Act;

to provide for uncertificated securities in addition to or in place of certificated securities;

to add, change or eliminate any other provisions of the indenture so long as that change does not apply to any then existing series of debt securities or modify the rights of the holder of any such security with respect to that provision; or

make any change that does not adversely affect in any material respect the interests of the securityholders of any series.

We may modify and amend the indenture with the consent of the holders of at least a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of each series affected by the modifications or amendments. We may not make any modification or amendment without the consent of the holders of each affected debt security then outstanding if that amendment will:

reduce the amount of debt securities whose holders must consent to an amendment or waiver;

reduce the rate of or extend the time for payment of interest (including default interest) on any debt security;

reduce the principal of or premium on or change the fixed maturity of any debt security or reduce the amount of, or postpone the date fixed for, the payment of any sinking fund or analogous obligation with respect to any series of debt securities;

reduce the principal amount of discount securities payable upon acceleration of maturity;

waive a default in the payment of the principal of, premium or interest on any debt security (except a rescission of acceleration of the debt securities of any series by the holders of at least a majority in aggregate principal amount of the then outstanding debt securities of that series and a waiver of the payment default that resulted from such acceleration);

make the principal of or premium or interest on any debt security payable in currency other than that stated in the debt security;

make any change to certain provisions of the indenture relating to, among other things, the right of holders of debt securities to receive payment of the principal of, premium and interest on those debt securities and to institute suit for the enforcement of any such payment and to waivers or amendments; or

waive a redemption payment with respect to any debt security.

Except for certain specified provisions, the holders of at least a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series may on behalf of the holders of all debt securities of that series waive our compliance with provisions of the indenture. The holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series may on behalf of the holders of all the debt securities of such series waive any past default under the indenture with respect to that series and its consequences, except a default in the payment of the principal of, premium or any interest on any debt security of that series or in respect of a covenant or provision which cannot be modified or amended without the consent of the holder of each outstanding debt security of the series affected; provided, however, that the holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series may rescind an acceleration and its consequences, including any related payment default that resulted from the acceleration.

Defeasance of Debt Securities and Certain Covenants in Certain Circumstances

Legal Defeasance. The indenture provides that, unless otherwise provided by the terms of the applicable series of debt securities, we may be discharged from any and all obligations in respect of the debt securities of any series (except for certain obligations to register the transfer or exchange of debt securities of such series, to replace stolen, lost or mutilated debt securities of such series, and to maintain paying agencies and certain provisions relating to the treatment of funds held by paying agents). We will be so discharged upon the deposit with the trustee, in trust, of money and/or U.S. government obligations or, in the case of debt securities denominated in a single currency other than U.S. dollars, foreign government obligations, that, through the payment of interest and principal in accordance with their terms, will provide money in an amount sufficient in the opinion of a nationally recognized firm of independent public accountants to pay and discharge each installment of principal, premium and interest on and any mandatory sinking fund payments in respect of the debt securities of that series on the stated maturity of those payments in accordance with the terms of the indenture and those debt securities.

This discharge may occur only if, among other things, we have delivered to the trustee an opinion of counsel stating that we have received from, or there has been published by, the United States Internal Revenue Service a ruling or, since the date of execution of the indenture, there has been a change in the applicable United States federal income tax law, in either case to the effect that, and based thereon such opinion shall confirm that, the holders of the debt securities of that series will not recognize income, gain or loss for United States federal income tax purposes as a result of the deposit, defeasance and discharge and will be subject to United States federal income tax on the same amounts and in the same manner and at the same times as would have been the case if the deposit, defeasance and discharge had not occurred.

Defeasance Of Certain Covenants. The indenture provides that, unless otherwise provided by the terms of the applicable series of debt securities, upon compliance with certain conditions:

we may omit to comply with the covenant described under the heading *Consolidation, Merger and Sale of Assets* and certain other covenants set forth in the indenture, as well as any additional covenants which may be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement; and

any omission to comply with those covenants will not constitute a default or an event of default with respect to the debt securities of that series, or covenant defeasance.

The conditions include:

depositing with the trustee money and/or U.S. government obligations or, in the case of debt securities denominated in a single currency other than U.S. dollars, foreign government obligations, that, through the payment of interest and principal in accordance with their terms, will provide money in an amount sufficient in the opinion of a nationally recognized firm of independent public accountants to pay and discharge each installment of principal of, premium and interest on and any mandatory sinking fund payments in respect of the debt securities of that series on the stated maturity of those payments in accordance with the terms of the indenture and those debt securities; and

delivering to the trustee an opinion of counsel to the effect that the holders of the debt securities of that series will not recognize income, gain or loss for United States federal income tax purposes as a result of the deposit and related covenant defeasance and will be subject to United States federal income tax on the same amounts and in the same manner and at the same times as would have been the case if the deposit and related covenant defeasance had not occurred.

Covenant Defeasance And Events Of Default. In the event we exercise our option to effect covenant defeasance with respect to any series of debt securities and the debt securities of that series are declared due and payable because of the occurrence of any event of default, the amount of money and/or U.S. government obligations or foreign government obligations on deposit with the trustee will be sufficient to pay amounts due on the debt securities of that series at the time of their stated maturity but may not be sufficient to pay amounts due on the debt securities of that series at the time of the acceleration resulting from the event of default. However, we will remain liable for those payments.

Guarantees

Our payment obligations under any series of debt securities may be guaranteed by one or more of the co-registrants. The terms of any guarantee will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement.

DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK

The following summary describes the material terms of our capital stock. However, you should refer to the actual terms of our articles of incorporation and bylaws and to the applicable provisions of the Maryland General Corporation Law.

Common Stock

We are authorized to issue up to 50,000,000 shares of common stock, \$0.01 par value per share, of which 11,411,480 shares were outstanding as of April 26, 2002. These amounts reflect a 2-for-1 stock split in the form of a stock dividend which Meritage effected on April 26, 2002 to stockholders of record at the close of business on April 12, 2002. The outstanding shares of our common stock are, when issued and paid for, fully-paid and non-assessable.

Voting Rights. The holders of our common stock are entitled to one vote for each share held on all matters submitted to a vote of stockholders and do not have cumulative voting rights. As a result, the holders of a majority of the shares of our common stock entitled to vote in any election of directors may elect all of the directors standing for election. Our directors are divided into two classes serving staggered two-year terms.

Our articles of incorporation contain a provision allowing action to be authorized by the affirmative vote of the holders of a majority of the total number of shares of common stock outstanding and entitled to vote thereon notwithstanding any provision of law that would otherwise require the authorization of the action by a greater proportion than a majority. This provision may allow authorization of certain extraordinary transactions and amendment of our articles of incorporation, including an amendment changing the terms or rights of our outstanding common stock. But for this provision, under Maryland law, these extraordinary transactions and amendment of our articles of incorporation, with certain limited exceptions, would require the affirmative vote of the holders of two-thirds of the outstanding common stock entitled to vote thereon.

Dividends. The holders of our common stock are entitled to receive ratably such dividends that may be declared by the board of directors out of legally available funds. We do not intend to declare cash dividends in the foreseeable future. We expect to retain earnings to finance the continuing development of our business. Future dividends, if any, will depend upon our financial condition, results of operations, capital requirements, compliance with debt covenants of existing indebtedness, as well as other factors considered relevant by our board of directors.

Liquidation Rights. Upon our liquidation, dissolution or winding-up, the holders of our common stock are entitled to share ratably in all assets available for distribution after payment in full to creditors and holders of preferred stock, if any.

Other Provisions. The holders of our common stock have no preemptive, subscription, redemption conversion or other similar rights. The rights, preferences, and privileges of holders of common stock are subject to, and may be adversely affected by, the rights of the holders of shares of any series of preferred stock which we may issue in the future. However, we are not currently authorized to issue preferred stock under our articles of incorporation.

Transfer Agent. The transfer agent and registrar for our common stock is Mellon Investor Services, LLC.

Preferred Stock

We are not currently authorized to issue preferred stock. We will need to obtain stockholder approval to authorize the issuance of preferred stock. We anticipate that the board of directors will have the authority to determine the terms of our preferred stock without further stockholder approval. The preferred stock, if authorized by our stockholders, will be issued in one or more series with the designations, rights, preferences and limitations determined by our board of directors, including the consideration to be received for the preferred stock, the number of shares comprising each series, dividend rates, redemption provisions, liquidation preferences, mandatory retirement provisions, conversion rights and voting rights.

If we issue preferred stock with voting rights, it could make it more difficult for a third party to acquire control of Meritance and could adversely affect the rights of holders of common stock. Preferred stockholders typically are entitled to satisfaction in full of specified dividend and liquidation rights before any payment of dividends or distribution of assets on liquidation can be made to holders of common stock. Also, any voting rights granted to our preferred stock may dilute the voting rights of our common stock. Under some circumstances, control of Meritance would shift from the holders of common stock to the holders of preferred stock with voting rights. Certain fundamental matters requiring stockholder approval (such as mergers, sale of assets and certain amendments to our articles of incorporation) may require approval by the separate vote of the holders of preferred stock in addition to any required vote of the common stock.

Certain Provisions of Maryland Law

We are incorporated in Maryland and are subject to the provisions of the Maryland General Corporation Law, certain of which provisions are discussed below.

Business Combinations. Under the Maryland Business Combinations Act, business combinations between a Maryland corporation and an interested stockholder or an affiliate of an interested stockholder are prohibited for five years after the most recent date on which the interested stockholder becomes an interested stockholder. These business combinations include certain mergers, asset transfers, loans and other transactions or issuances, transfers or reclassifications of equity securities. An interested stockholder is defined as:

any person who beneficially owns ten percent or more of the voting power of the corporation's shares; or

an affiliate or associate of the corporation who, at any time within the two-year period prior to the date in question, was the beneficial owner of 10% or more of the voting power of the then outstanding voting stock of the corporation.

A person is not an interested stockholder under the statute if the board of directors approved in advance the transaction by which the stockholder otherwise would have become an interested stockholder.

After the five-year prohibition, any business combination between the Maryland corporation and an interested stockholder generally must be recommended by the board of directors of the corporation and approved by the affirmative vote of at least:

80% of the votes entitled to be cast by the outstanding shares of voting stock of the corporation voting together as a single voting group; and

two-thirds of the votes entitled to be cast by the holders of voting stock of the corporation other than shares held by the interested stockholder with whom or with whose affiliate the business combination is to be effected or held by an affiliate or associate of the interested stockholder voting together as a single voting group.

These super-majority vote requirements do not apply to certain business combinations if the corporation's stockholders receive a minimum price, as defined under Maryland law, for their shares in the form of cash or other consideration in the same form as previously paid by the interested stockholder for its shares and the corporation and interested stockholder meet certain other requirements.

The statute provides for various exemptions from its provisions, including business combinations that are exempted by the board of directors prior to the time that the interested stockholder becomes an interested stockholder.

The business combination statute could have the effect of delaying, deferring or preventing a transaction or a change in control that might involve a premium price for holders of our common stock or otherwise be in their best interest.

A Maryland corporation may adopt an amendment to its charter electing not to be subject to the Maryland Business Combinations Act. No such amendment to our charter has been adopted.

Control Share Acquisitions. Maryland's Control Share Acquisition Act provides that control shares of a Maryland corporation acquired in a control share acquisition have no voting rights, except to the extent approved by a vote of two-thirds of the votes entitled to be cast on the matter. Shares owned by the acquiror, by officers or by directors who are employees of the corporation are excluded from shares entitled to vote on the matter. Control shares are voting shares of stock, which, if aggregated with all other shares of stock owned by the acquiror or in respect of which the acquiror is able to exercise or direct the exercise of voting power (except solely by virtue of a revocable proxy), would entitle the acquiror to exercise voting power equal to:

one-tenth or more but less than one-third;

one-third or more but less than a majority; or

a majority or more of all voting power.

Control shares do not include shares the acquiring person is then entitled to vote as a result of having previously obtained stockholder approval. A control share acquisition means the acquisition of control shares, subject to certain exceptions.

A person who has made or proposes to make a control share acquisition may compel the board of directors of the corporation to call a special meeting of stockholders to be held within 50 days of demand to consider the voting rights of the shares. The right to require the calling of a special meeting is subject to the satisfaction of certain conditions, including an undertaking to pay the expenses of the meeting. If no request for a meeting is made, the corporation may itself present the question at any stockholders meeting.

If voting rights are not approved at the meeting or if the acquiring person does not deliver an acquiring person statement as required by the statute, then the corporation may redeem for fair value any or all of the control shares, except those for which voting rights have previously been approved. The right of the corporation to redeem control shares is subject to certain conditions and limitations. Fair value is determined, without regard to the absence of voting rights for the control shares, as of the date of the last control share acquisition by the acquiror or, if a meeting of stockholders is held, at which the voting rights

of the shares are considered and not approved, as of the date of that meeting. If voting rights for control shares are approved at a stockholders meeting and the acquiror becomes entitled to vote a majority of the shares entitled to vote, all other stockholders may exercise appraisal rights. The fair value of the shares as determined for purposes of appraisal rights may not be less than the highest price per share paid by the acquiror in the control share acquisition.

The control share acquisition statute does not apply (a) to shares acquired in a merger, consolidation or share exchange if the corporation is a party to the transaction, or certain other transactions or (b) to acquisitions approved or exempted by the charter or bylaws of the corporation. Neither our articles of incorporation or bylaws have any provisions exempting any control share acquisitions.

Certain Provisions of our Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws

Our articles of incorporation and bylaws include provisions that could have an anti-takeover effect. These provisions are intended to preserve the continuity and stability of our board of directors and the policies formulated by our board of directors. The following is a summary of the provisions of our articles of incorporation and bylaws that we consider material, but does not purport to be complete and is subject to, and qualified in its entirety by reference to, the provisions of our articles of incorporation and bylaws.

Indemnification. Under Maryland law, a corporation's articles may, with certain exceptions, include any provision expanding or limiting the liability of its directors and officers to the corporation or its stockholders for money damages. However, no provision may restrict or limit the liability of a corporation's directors or officers to the corporation or its stockholders to the extent that (1) it is proved that the person actually received an improper benefit or (2) a judgment or other final adjudication adverse to the person is entered in a proceeding based on a finding in the proceeding that the person's action, or failure to act, was the result of active and deliberate dishonesty (and was material to the cause of action adjudicated in the proceeding). Our charter contains a provision limiting the personal liability of officers and directors to Meritage and its stockholders for money damages to the fullest extent permitted under Maryland law.

In addition, with certain exceptions, Maryland law permits a corporation to indemnify its present and former directors and officers, among others, against liability incurred, unless it is established that:

the act or omission of the director or officer was material to the matter giving rise to the proceeding and was committed in bad faith or was the result of active and deliberate dishonesty;

the director or officer actually received an improper personal benefit in money, property, or services; or

in the case of any criminal proceeding, the director or officer had reasonable cause to believe that the act or omission was unlawful.

Our charter provides that Meritage will indemnify (1) its directors and officers to the full extent allowed under Maryland law and (2) its officers who are not directors to such further extent as shall be authorized by the board of directors and be consistent with law.

Advance Notice Procedures. Our bylaws establish an advance notice procedure for stockholders to make nominations of candidates for election as directors or to bring other business before an annual meeting. These stockholder notice procedures provide that only persons that are nominated by board of directors, or by a stockholder who was a stockholder at the time of giving notice and has given timely written notice to our secretary before the meeting at which directors are to be elected, will be eligible for election as directors. These stockholder notice procedures also provide that at an annual meeting only the business as has been brought before the meeting by our board of directors, or by a stockholder who has given timely written notice to our secretary of the stockholder's intention to bring the business before the meeting, may be conducted. To be timely, a stockholder's nomination or notice must be received by our secretary not less than 20 days nor more than 30 days prior to the meeting. The stockholder notice procedures described above will be shortened, as described in our bylaws, in the event we give less than 30 days' notice or prior public disclosure of the date of the meeting.

In addition, under these stockholder notice procedures, a stockholder's notice to us proposing to nominate a person for election as a director or relating to the conduct of business other than the nomination of directors will be required to contain specified information. If the chairman of a meeting determines that an individual was not nominated, or other business was not brought before the meeting, in accordance with our stockholder notice procedure, the individual will not be eligible for election as a director, or the business will not be conducted at the meeting, as the case may be.

DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS

We may issue warrants for the purchase of common stock, preferred stock or debt securities. Warrants may be issued independently or together with our common stock, preferred stock or debt securities and may be attached to or separate from any offered securities. Each series of warrants will be issued under a separate warrant agreement to be entered into between us and a bank or trust company, as warrant agent. The warrant agent will act solely as our agent in connection with the warrants and will not have any obligation or relationship of agency or trust for or with any holders or beneficial owners of warrants. A copy of the warrant agreement will be filed with the SEC in connection with any offering of warrants.

The prospectus supplement relating to a particular issue of warrants to purchase common stock, preferred stock or debt securities will describe the terms of those warrants, including the following:

the title of the warrants;

the offering price for the warrants, if any;

the aggregate number of the warrants;

the designation and terms of the common stock, preferred stock or debt securities that may be purchased upon exercise of the warrants;

if applicable, the designation and terms of the securities that the warrants are issued with and the number of warrants issued with each security;

if applicable, the date from and after which the warrants and any securities issued with them will be separately transferable;

if applicable, the principal amount of debt securities that may be purchased upon exercise of a warrant and the price at which the debt securities may be purchased upon exercise;

if applicable, the number of shares of common stock or preferred stock that may be purchased upon exercise of a warrant and the price at which the shares may be purchased upon exercise;

the dates on which the right to exercise the warrants will commence and expire;

if applicable, the minimum or maximum amount of the warrants that may be exercised at any one time;

whether the warrants represented by the warrant certificates or debt securities that may be issued upon exercise of the warrants will be issued in registered or bearer form;

information relating to book-entry procedures, if any;

the currency or currency units in which the offering price, if any, and the exercise price are payable;

if applicable, a discussion of material United States federal income tax considerations;

anti-dilution provisions of the warrants, if any;

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redemption or call provisions applicable to the warrants, if any;

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any additional terms of the warrants, including terms, procedures and limitations relating to the exchange and exercise of the warrants; and any other information we think is important about the warrants.

LEGAL MATTERS

Snell & Wilmer L.L.P., our outside counsel, will issue an opinion regarding the validity of the offered securities. If counsel for any underwriters passes on legal matters in connection with an offering made by this prospectus, we will name that counsel in the accompanying prospectus supplement.

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements of Meritage as of December 31, 2001 and 2000, and for each of the years in the three-year period ended December 31, 2001, have been incorporated by reference herein in reliance upon the report of KPMG LLP, independent accountants, incorporated by reference herein, and upon the authority of said firm as experts in accounting and auditing.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We file annual, quarterly and special reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. Our SEC filings are available to the public over the Internet at the SEC's web site at <http://www.sec.gov>. You may also read and copy any document we file at the SEC's public reference room at 450 Fifth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20549. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for further information on the operations of the public reference rooms. Our common stock is listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Our reports, proxy statements and other information can also be inspected at the offices of the New York Stock Exchange, 20 Broad Street, New York, New York 10005.

The SEC allows us to incorporate by reference the information contained in the documents we file with the SEC, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to those documents. The information incorporated by reference is an important part of this prospectus, and information that we file later with the SEC will automatically update and supersede this information. We incorporate by reference any future filings we make with the SEC under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14, or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 after the date of this prospectus and until we sell all the securities covered by this prospectus, other than portions of these documents that are either (i) described in paragraphs (i), (k) and (l) of Item 402 of Regulation S-K promulgated by the SEC or (ii) furnished under Item 9 of a Current Report on Form 8-K. We also specifically incorporate by reference the following documents, which we have already filed with the SEC:

- (a) our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2001;
- (b) our definitive Proxy Statement dated April 2, 2002;
- (c) our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended March 31, 2002; and
- (d) the description of Meritage Corporation's capital stock contained in the Form 8-A of Emerald Mortgage Investments Corporation (a predecessor at Meritage Corporation) filed on July 7, 1988, including any amendment or report filed to update such description.

Any information contained in this prospectus or in any document incorporated or deemed to be incorporated by reference in this prospectus will be deemed to have been modified or superseded to the extent that a statement contained in this prospectus, in any other document we subsequently file with the SEC that also is incorporated or deemed to be incorporated by reference in this prospectus or in the

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applicable prospectus supplement modifies or supersedes the original statement. Any statement so modified or superseded will not be deemed, except as so modified or superseded, to be a part of this prospectus.

We encourage you to read our periodic and current reports. We think these reports provide additional information about our company that prudent investors will find important. You may request a copy of these filings as well as any future filings incorporated by reference, at no cost, by calling us or by writing to us at our principal executive offices in Arizona at the following address: Meritage Corporation, 6613 North Scottsdale Road, Suite 200, Scottsdale, Arizona 85250, Attention: Investor Relations. Our telephone number is (877) 400-7888.

PROSPECTUS

MERITAGE CORPORATION

Debt Securities

Common Stock

Preferred Stock

Warrants

Guarantees
