



Courtesy Parsons the New School for Design

passive powerhouse

The 2011 Solar Decathlon will reach beyond the National Mall in Washington, D.C., as students from Parsons the New School for Design, Milano the New School for Management, and Stevens Institute of Technology will develop not one, but two Passive House-certified homes next year: one that will be judged in the biennial competition, and one that will be constructed in the city's Deanwood neighborhood. "We wanted our project to show how our single-family house could be easily adapted in an urban context, which is a more sustainable framework for solar energy due to the density of inhabitants," says Laura Briggs, lead faculty on the Empowerhouse project and assistant professor and chairwoman of sustainable architecture at Parsons.

Deanwood residents, during

design charrettes with the students, requested workshops on energy issues that will start this fall. After the competition, the structures will be combined to create a semi-detached, two-family home for local residents, who will help with the construction. Consuming up to 90 percent less energy for heating and cooling, the project also will feature water conservation and stormwater management systems, daylighting, and a green roof and garden. Architects from Zavos Architecture+Design of Frederick, Md.—the architect of record—and members from D.C.'s Habitat for Humanity will take training courses in Passive House principles.

Construction for both houses will begin in the spring, with completion slated for the end of 2011. For more information, visit parsit.parsons.edu.—*jennifer lash*



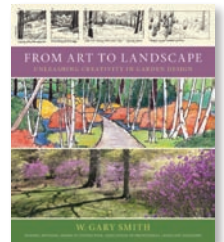
An early design concept shows one possibility for the project's exterior, but the design is not yet final. The two houses ultimately will be joined at the Deanwood site (left) in Washington, D.C.

cultivating al fresco creativity

Landscape architects struggle with some of the same creative tensions as architects do: where to find design inspiration, how to get out of a compositional rut, how to cultivate sensitivity to a site's unique characteristics. W. Gary Smith's new book, *From Art to Landscape: Unleashing Creativity in Garden Design* (Timber Press, \$39.95), is a lively, colorful look at how he channels his inner artist.

Smith—known for his work on botanical and public gardens such as

Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, Pa., Winterthur in Delaware, and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center children's garden in Austin, Texas—



devotes the first part of the book to developing the artist's eye. One fascinating chapter explains how he builds a visual vocabulary by abstracting the patterns in nature: radial, mosaic, serpentine, and so on. Part two explains how these ideas have shaped his practice. In one example, 325 bundled grasses, set upright in a naturalistic drift pattern, bring random order to a sprawling rock garden.

"I want to be in a garden where I stop and say, 'Wow, what made them do that? What made them put those things together?'" he writes. "If I'm having that kind of response, I know I'm in a garden where my own creative spirit has been engaged."

With this latest release, architects can compare notes, perhaps find new ways to loosen the muse, or just enjoy the abstract artistry of Smith's lyrical gardens, sketches, plans, and paintings.—*cheryl weber, leed ap*