

## Student-designed house built in Syracuse

SYRACUSE, N.Y. -- A prefabricated house designed by Syracuse University architecture students arrived in six pieces Thursday, trucked to Tully Street in Syracuse from a manufacturing plant in Pennsylvania.

By early afternoon, the pieces had been bolted together into a house -- the latest accomplishment in a broad-based effort to transform the Near West Side of the city.

The Near West Side Initiative, a collaboration between Syracuse University, the non-profit housing agency Home HeadQuarters and other groups, is a multimillion-dollar effort to rejuvenate one of the city's oldest and poorest neighborhoods.

Not every element of the plan is coming together as quickly as the two-story house at 521 Tully St., which went up in about five hours Thursday, but the effort is clearly picking up momentum, said Mark Robbins, dean of the SU architecture school.

"We will get a head of steam," Robbins said as he snapped pictures of the house going up.

Nowhere is that progress more apparent than Tully Street.

As a crowd gathered Thursday morning to watch a 90-ton crane lift pieces of the new house onto its foundation, Donald and Helen Walrath watched from their house next door, where they have lived for 14 years.

The Walraths' one-story bungalow sports a fresh, multi-colored paint job on the porch, new siding, a new driveway and sidewalk, rain barrels, and a new garden that runs the length of the house -- all courtesy of the Near West Side Initiative.

A year ago, the Walraths and other neighbors on the 500 block, whose houses face Skiddy Park, were the beneficiaries of a barn raising-style "**block blitz**" coordinated by Home HeadQuarters. Some 100 volunteers worked on the houses, installing siding, painting and landscaping, among other tasks.

This spring, another partner in the initiative, the Syracuse Center of Excellence, an environmental and energy federation led by SU, replaced a paved area of the Walraths' yard with a 20 foot-by-80 foot rain garden so lushly landscaped that it resembles a small park.

"They've done wonders around this neighborhood," Donald Walrath said.

Home HeadQuarters has acquired 71 residential properties -- roughly one-third of the houses in the 25-block area surrounding Blodgett School and Skiddy Park. The group plans to fix the houses up, replace them or give them to new owners who will renovate.

So far, 10 houses have been renovated or will be soon, three demolished or deconstructed, two sold, two given to new owner-occupants, and two rented, said Karen Schroeder, speaking for Home HeadQuarters. The house at 521 Tully is the first new structure. But more new construction is on the way.

Two blocks from Tully Street, crews are clearing a Marcellus Street site for the construction of an energy-efficient house designed by the world-famous Cook+Fox architectural firm. Designs for the Cook+Fox house, which will be squeezed in among homes generally valued at less than \$40,000 by the city assessor, have been featured in The Wall Street Journal and an Italian architectural magazine.

Two other energy-efficient homes designed by other firms will be built nearby. The three designs emerged from a competition coordinated by the SU architecture school.

Hilary Mansur, a fifth-year architecture student, joined six fellow students Thursday at Tully Street to watch their manufactured home design come together. The students took a course last fall during which they worked out the general design of the house. Visiting professors Lea Ciavarra and Anne Marie Lubrano, partners in a Brooklyn architectural firm, put the finishing touches on the design and located a manufacturer, Haven Custom Homes.

Now that the house has been erected, Mansur and the other students will spend the next two months working on site, under the direction of construction manager VIP Structures, to install siding, flooring and other finishes.

The house is being purchased by Karaline Carr. Carr and her fiance, Isaac Rothwell, plan to get married in September.

The buyer will pay \$80,000, said Schroeder, of Home HeadQuarters. The remainder of the cost, about \$100,000, will be covered by state grant money from the Restore New York program, Schroeder said.

Carr, 33, who works in the admissions office at the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry, said she looks forward to gardening in the yard. Rothwell, 27, a youth services planner at the Center for Community Alternatives, is a musician and producer who plans to establish a personal studio in the basement.

Rothwell said he also hopes to buy a commercial property in the neighborhood to start a music production business.

### **S.U. Students Design Near West Side Home**