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## A Sunny Vision For the Future

U-Md. Team Displays Its Solar House

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The house looks like an ultra-modern rancher. It has all the traditional spaces -- kitchen, bathroom, foyer and living room -- and something more: It is powered entirely by the sun.

Constructed by University of Maryland students, the house is part of the U.S. Department of Energy's 2005 Solar Decathlon on the Mall. The competition has drawn college teams from around the United States and from several foreign countries. The Maryland team is the only one from the Washington and Baltimore areas.

The solar homes will be open for tours beginning tomorrow; the winner will be announced Oct. 14 at 2 p.m.

Rob Murray of Bowie is project manager for the Maryland team. On a recent afternoon, he was busy checking in with teammates, working on the underside of the house and directing contractors.

He is one of 150 architecture, engineering and liberal arts students involved in the project since 2003. He also worked on the school's solar home for the 2002 decathlon, which placed fourth among 14 entries in the inaugural competition. Murray earned a civil engineering degree in May but put off starting his career so that he could take part in the event.

"I enjoy the project and getting the experience," Murray said. "We learned a lot of the principles we apply here in class . . . so this project adds real-world application."

Walking through what the Maryland team calls the Terps House is like stepping into a residence of the not-too-distant future.

The modest, wood-frame structure is 50 feet long. Its interior is a study in natural materials. The flooring and cabinet work are made of bamboo. The foyer walls are lined with gray stone. The bathroom and kitchen walls are covered with mosaic tiles made from recycled glass. Pralines 'n' cream-colored paint adds a feeling of spaciousness.

District resident Najahyia Chincilla, a graduate student in the architecture program, helped design the house. She said she wanted to create a sense of fresh air and light. "We wanted a space that was light, airy and spacious," Chincilla said.

In addition to engineering and architectural elements, judging criteria include how the teams use solar power for everything from computers and cooking appliances to cooling and heating systems. Houses are also judged on their livability.

The houses all feature solar panels. Each house is equipped with a system that stores energy for use on not-so-sunny days.

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The Maryland team raised \$150,000 to buy materials and sought donations of money, tools and supplies to help cover their costs.

Once the competition ends, the Maryland team plans to donate its house to the Red Wiggler Community Farm, a nonprofit organization based in Clarksville that employs adults with developmental disabilities. The house will be home to a staff member of the organization.

*The Terps House is one of 18 solar houses that will be open to the public tomorrow through Oct. 16 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays -- except Wednesday, when they will be closed -- and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends.*

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