

# passive aggression

A BURGEONING TREND IN GREEN LIVING IS GAINING A FOOHOLD IN THE LOCAL LUXURY REAL ESTATE MARKET.

Starting more than a decade ago in Europe as a way to build more energy-efficient homes, the Passive House trend has reached the United States and is now building steam in the Washington area. Touted as the best energy-conserving system for home building, Passive Houses use only about 10 percent of the energy needed by a typical home, thanks in large part to super-thick walls, roofs, and foundations, as well as virtually air-tight insulation from top to bottom.

"As an architect, my firm was trying to push for ways to make homes more energy efficient," says David Peabody, principal of Peabody Architects (3417 Halcyon Dr., Alexandria, 703-684-1986; [greenhaus.org](http://greenhaus.org)), who along with partner Brendan O'Neill of O'Neill Development (11 Russell Ave., Gaithersburg, MD, 301-840-9310; [oneilldev.com](http://oneilldev.com)) completed the region's first-ever Passive House in Bethesda earlier this year. "But some of the frustrations were that we were just throwing insulation and fancy heating systems into designs without a definitive program. I heard about the Passive House trend.... and the theory behind it made so much sense."

Peabody's property, a gorgeous and fully loaded 4,100-square-foot, four-level home, sold for \$1.435 million in October. According to Sondra Mulheron, a Realtor for Long & Foster (10244 River Road, Potomac, 877-98300060; [longandfoster.com](http://longandfoster.com)) responsible for brokering the deal, about half of the potential buyers came to see the home specifically because it is a Passive House—a total she says is unsurprising. "Most of the high-end buyers in our area are more consciously aware of green features in a home," she explains.

It seems the trend is a fast-developing one for the local market. "My sense is that the DC area will end up seeing more Passive Houses come on the market in the next few years," says Amy Rose Dobson of Curbed DC ([dc.curbed.com](http://dc.curbed.com)), a leading real estate news site that regularly chronicles the habits of buyers and sellers. "It also helps that this market is likely to understand the science behind Passive Houses, rather than be confused by it." Among the innovative details are double- or triple-pane windows, airtight foam insulation, and an energy-recovery ventilator system, which provides



then embark on more Passive Houses in the near future, as interest is on the rise. "It is a way of life—you're minimizing your consumption but not sacrificing comfort," he says.

As for Peabody, he is currently at work on his second Passive House, commissioned by a client who saw his Bethesda abode. "What this is is the second generation of green design," says Peabody, who has had extensive experience building homes with eco-centric details. "This is green design grown up." **CF**

a constant stream of fresh air; in winter the heating energy required is about that of a hair dryer.

"I think it makes a lot of sense," says Roger Lin, managing partner of Southern Exposure Homes (5765F Burke Centre Pkwy., Burke, VA, 703-839-2255; [southfacehome.com](http://southfacehome.com)), which is putting the finishing touches on a 3,700-square-foot Passive House in South Arlington. "We were intrigued as builders that this is a much higher-quality home. It's not simply about making the finishes look nice." Lin plans to list the property at north of \$1 million and

The second coming: Southern Exposure Homes' Passive House in Arlington

