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Designer with links to county helps build idea home

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The Dispatch

Southern Living magazine has chosen three idea homes to be built, and one of those homes, with the help of Traci Kearns, a North Davidson High School graduate, will be in Asheville.

Kearns, 29, manages a two-person team at her Alchemy Design Studio in Asheville. After graduating from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a degree in interior architecture, Kearns is using her talents to benefit the environment.

"My involvement began at UNCG," Kearns said. "It interested me, and it was a good way to give back."

According to Helen Todd, spokeswoman for Southern Living, each of the three homes has its own theme. The house in Asheville is a "green" house. The house in Fort Worth, Texas, has a "how families live today" look. And the Oxford, Miss., house is built under the design of a Southern classic architect.

The Asheville home was built to the third-party standards of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design guidelines.

Guidelines for building a LEED home include using renewable, salvaged and durable materials. Bamboo is a key material when building green, along with nonsynthetic paint and carpet.

Kearns managed the interior design of the sustainable home design. Planning took place to ensure that constructing and retrieving materials for the "green" house was environmentally sound.

"Inside we used recycled tile for the floor and glass tile for the kitchen backsplash," Kearns said. "A lot of

our materials came from within 500 miles. We wanted to lessen the carbon footprint."

Carbon footprint is the term used when referring to the measure of the impact human activities have on the environment in terms of greenhouse gases produced.

"From the Southern Living perspective, we look for a developer doing unique work in an up-and-coming city," Todd said. "We really like Traci's design, and we like to use locals. We love what she has done with the house."

Kearns is working on developing her own home, which will have a lot of characteristics of a "green" house.

The Asheville home is located in the Whisper Mountain community. The 3,200-square-foot house will cost around \$1 million and will be on display starting at 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. During the week it will be open between 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is \$5, which will go toward the Mission Children's Hospital.

The home will be featured in Southern Living's August issue.

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