

URBANbuild Makes it Right

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The School of Architecture's URBANbuild program was conceived before Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast region, but after the storm, the project has become focused on the recovery process. This year, URBANbuild 5 continued that mission by teaming with another group with the same focus, the Make It Right project in the Lower Ninth Ward.



Tulane architecture students work to complete the fifth URBANbuild home in the Lower Ninth Ward. This year Tulane teamed up with the Make It Right project. (Photos by Ryan Rivet)

[URBANbuild](#) project architect Byron Mouton says the partnership with [Make It Right](#) was a natural fit. Make It Right, conceived by actor Brad Pitt, embraces new technologies and energy-efficient materials in its homes, just as URBANbuild does.

"There are lots of people out here with similar ambitions, trying new systems and technologies and figuring things out together," Mouton says. "Since we're using all these new methods, all the builders are sharing what they learned."

Those technologies include solar power, systems for collecting rainwater and reusing water for irrigation and in the toilets.

The learning opportunity presented to the 11 Tulane architecture students working on the home is "invaluable," says Mouton, who supervised the students who contributed to designing the house. Seeing the project through from start to finish helps students "realize the ramifications of what they draw," says Mouton.



In the final phase of completion, students add paint to the home they helped build.

"We make many critical detail decisions in the field," Mouton says. "We have to weigh the options and work with experts from other areas who will often suggest methods of resolution we would never consider."

That experience is one that fourth-year student Laura Casaccio says she will take with her when she graduates.

"It's been great to be a part of this process," Casaccio says. "The best part has been working with the professional builders and seeing how they understand buildings not as architects."

The URBANbuild 5 house is scheduled for completion this month.