

# Covering the Issues

**How green was that valley?...** *Newsweek* (March 17, 2008) predicts that despite the housing downside, the value and construction of sustainable houses will only go up. They're "Not Just for Tree Huggers," claims Daniel McGinn. But "It's Way Too Easy Being Green," argues Daniel Brook in the online journal *Slate* (December 26, 2007). The LEED point system has serious shortcomings: it's often prohibitively expensive, and its loophole-filled checklist ignores a project's true context. Brook cites the extreme example of a 24-story luxury single-family "home" that will seek (and likely obtain) a LEED rating. Obviously, something's wrong here. Apparently revised standards and "neighborhood design" considerations are in the works. Bryan Walsh discusses exactly this point with New Urbanist guru Andrés Duany in *Time* online (December 19, 2007). In "How Green is Your Neighborhood," Duany promotes his standard neo-traditional planning message, now with a new green lens.

**Digging into the Dig...** Even though the *Boston Globe's* Noah Bierman says there will be "No Big Dig Copycats" (March 14, 2008), Nicole Gelinis in *City Journal* (Autumn 2007) concludes, "The wrong lesson to take from the Big Dig is that other states shouldn't bother with ambitious infrastructure." In her well-researched "Lessons of Boston's Big Dig," Gelinis takes on our favorite hometown saga. Her story, more complex than the usual local coverage, extends from the 1930s advent of the Central Artery through the current blame game, discussing the politics, funding strategies, "mitigation" realities, construction innovations, personalities, and rat scares along the way. There's humor, too: describing the state transportation secretary credited with launching

the Big Dig, she observes, "If Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs had a child, it might have been Fred Salvucci." In the end, the Big Dig is a lesson in management and the need for learning how to "do it smart."

**Ars longa, vita brevis...** "Never Go Out of Style!" proclaims the cover of the December 2007 issue of *House & Garden*. Alas, it seems that *House & Garden*, first published in 1901, has done just that — the December issue was its last. *H&G* occupied a special niche: its featured places were so extraordinarily unattainable that you didn't feel inadequate — it was more like an art-history lecture. Today, the *House & Garden* website automatically redirects to *Domino*, a Condé Nast "sister" publication that is just another glorified shopping list. This shift in messages is subtle but significant: from "places to learn from" to "you can buy it all." Of course, in many ways, the early spirit of *H&G* has been reincarnated as *Dwell*. And according to rumors on media blogs, Condé Nast has noticed...

**An architectural report card...** *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* weekly ideas magazine offers "The Architecture Issue" (March 7, 2008). Delving far beyond a mere catalogue of recent campus construction, the issue tackles a diverse mix of related topics and perspectives. Behavioral psychologist Susan Painter explains why dorm rooms should be small, while dean Thomas Fisher discusses the (often horrible) design of architecture-school buildings. Scott Carlson presents a thoughtful appreciation of St. John's University, Marcel Breuer's first major campus design — worthy reading for all who are wrestling with midcentury Moderns. There's some unusual campus adventure, too, as the issue showcases the finalists for a different sort of academic



exercise: a "back-of-the-envelope" ideas competition for the George W. Bush Library.

**Happy Birthday, HDM...** As we enjoy the end of our own first decade, we'd like to give a shout-out to *Harvard Design Magazine* as it also celebrates its 10th anniversary (Fall 2007/Winter 2008). This "Open Mike" issue proves why *HDM* matters, demonstrating its "commitment to the best possible design thinking." Frequent contributors were invited to write on a topic of their choosing: in tones variously representing soapbox, scholarship, and reflection, the resulting essays discuss playgrounds, slums, rising sea levels, a reinterpretation of Alvar Aalto, an open letter to Rem Koolhaas, design pedagogy, and the importance of interdisciplinary education. Don't miss the student-authored "Blowfish," the now-famous laugh-out-loud list of "what to do when a design jury attacks" — tactics that might be applied to annual reviews and community meetings, too.

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