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The preliminary phase of this assignment began with a material exploration of sinker cypress. Cypress logs, hundreds of years old, are dredged out of marshes and along the river. During its submersions the logs absorbs oils and minerals, creating a colorful gradient that dictates its story. The memory of place becomes a part of the wood.
Taking cues from Port Sulphur’s industrial history, the project utilizes the previous sulphur refinery as a sustainable tree farm tasked with helping replenish the dying cypress swamps in southern Louisiana. The farm stretches between the River and marsh, with a main thoroughfare used to provide both access and water to the trees. A crane system runs the length of the site and is used to gather samples and specimens. The difference in geometries between the lot lines and the reach of the crane is used to hold pristine examples of cypress trees, specially bred to withstand the increasing salinity levels in the marsh. A house is situated amongst the trees adjacent to a ritualistic bathing space, which meets the bank the Mississippi. On the opposite end of the site, a point of repose is nestled into the marsh as a place of analysis and study of ongoing land erosion. The concept behind the project was to author a highly conceptual narrative concerning a single person fixated on a task and daily routine.
A major point of focus for this project was the collection and reuse of water. Various places of reflection are designed to allow for the user to interact and observe the systematic tendencies of the Mississippi and its relationship with the cypress swamp.
A ritualistic bathing space was designed as part of the user’s daily routine. Water is allowed to flow into the building during times of flooding along the Mississippi, as well as gathered from the roof collection systems.
With complexity of family structure and growing pressures on modern American families, we have outgrown the suburban ideal and way of cellular family living. And as cities continue to expand, the suburbs around them are densifying. More commonly than not these new developments consist of large, single-family homes packed onto a few joined lots. While this achieves the goal of increasing density, these families are placed in close proximity to one another with little to no connection. Although they maybe looking for something more flexible than the norm, most families still desires the unique qualities of subdivisions and the amenities they can bring. Scale, spatial organization, shared/private space, yards and landscape - all of these things must be maintained. By using suburbanized cohousing as an armature for densification, many issues of the modern family can be address, such as increased work load, cases of adult child dependency, and natural family cycles. While American’s are generally hesitant to adopt cohousing as a way of living, families who may seek extra support, like families with special needs relatives, can find that in cohousing.
Decatur, Georgia - A Suburb of Atlanta

Twenty minutes from downtown Atlanta, the once railroad stop town of Decatur has become absorbed and continually densified by suburban sprawl. The site, which is located near historic downtown Decatur, is surrounded by a development built of typical colonial revival style homes. The repetition of seven prototypes creates a sort of architectural monotony and sense of placelessness. Once a church, the 1.73 acre site has been slated for redevelopment into 20 luxury homes; thus achieving the goal of density, but is lacking connections to context and community.

Thesis: Toward a More Cooperative Living

Investigating cohousing as an armature for increasing density in American suburbs
The skylights are carefully placed to let light filter into the communal living room, and cognitive therapy space. This softer light is proven to be beneficial to many different types of special needs.

The lofted living room provides a separate communal space for the community to gather. Additionally, the cognitive therapy space, with insulated walls and filtered, soft light, allows the residents access to a space for one-on-one and group therapy.

The community house, which is open to all residents, hosts multiple shared amenities focused on the user group of special needs families. The entry has a small seating area to help ease transitions into public space that many disabilities like autism find helpful. The communal kitchen, dining room, and children’s play area allow for the entire community to share meals. An auxiliary building, pool, and patio area are open to the surrounding neighborhood to act as a community pool.

The basement contains a rec room for games and movies, as well as storage. Additionally, spaces for music and art are open to residents for therapeutic and learning purposes.

Because of the program, user group, and desire to make this foreign mode of housing fit into normative American suburbs the architecture is meant to blend into the existing surrounding. Using typical suburban rhythms and forms, the cohousing community is designed to bring the residents together - forming a more cooperative neighborhood.

The communal elements are centered and oriented toward the street to allow the neighborhood to also access the pool and auxiliary building. By carefully organizing the cohousing subdivision around a specialized user group, Americans will be adaptable to this way of living as an immediate benefit is evident, while promoting efficient land use and more meaningful connections within American suburbs.

BLENDING IN TO PROMPT CONNECTIONS

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