

Case Studies in Healthy Housing – a Research Seminar



Groves at Mile Branch, Covington, Louisiana by MSH-Architects – Photo Credit Lynne M. Dearborn

ARCH 596: Special Problems in Health and Wellbeing, Credit: 4 hours

Prerequisites: ARCH 321 or 521, consent of instructor

Synchronous, online seminar via Zoom - Tues & Thurs.
9:30-10:50 + 1-hour meeting/week with instructor
and/or project research assistant.

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Our environment has a powerful impact on our physical and mental health, especially in our homes where young children, disabled, frail and aging adults spend nearly 90% of their time. This seminar will engage in detailed examination of housing design qualities and environmental characteristics that combine to support health of occupants in their homes, with a particular focus on affordable housing recently constructed in the United States. The course builds on Professor Dearborn's two ongoing research studies that have mapped the intersecting domains of state-level affordable housing policy, funding mechanism, and contemporary design and construction to understand how architects and developers are responding to the imperative to create housing that offers occupants healthier residential settings. Well-designed affordable housing can become the foundation for long-term individual and community physical, mental, social, and economic wellbeing and improved quality of life. For children, high quality housing environments have also been shown to improve physical and mental health over the lifespan and increase life-expectancy.

The seminar will expand students' knowledge of healthy housing, and research ethics and techniques. Students will be expected to actively engage in skill-building around human-subjects research in architecture, interviewing and guided case study development, and to apply these skills within a team-based case-study research project investigating cases in six states where policies encourage development of healthy affordable housing.

The work of the semester is divided into 3 stages:

1. Healthy Housing and Research Background – Knowledge and Skill Building
2. Team-based Case-study Investigation, Data Collection including Interviewing, and Processing of Data
3. Seminar-wide analysis of individual cases and cross-case analysis