Student Name:

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Year and Stream:

Masters Year 2

MArch (design)

Project Name:

RETIRE TO THE COAST

Centre for Active Ageing

Project Description:

This thesis project is a response to both the predetermined theme - ‘coast and sea’ - as well as Malta’s current demographic climate, characterised by an ageing population. My intent for this thesis project is therefore, primarily that of integrating the idea of active ageing and ‘blue care’; promoting wellbeing in older age, by maximising the physical and psychosocial benefits of exposure to blue environments for the ageing members of the selected coastal community. Additionally, the project highlights the importance of these everyday, coastal, public spaces, in sustaining social connectivity within communities that are experiencing a growing sense of social disconnection. This intent is materialised in a centre for active ageing, where the proposed program challenges the current mindset on retirement homes as institutionalised environments that tear residents away from their lifelong communities and socio-cultural settings. Instead of offering an alternative for retirement homes, this program seeks to prolong the transitional period between living within a community to living in an institutionalised care environments.

The design intent follows six predetermined principles - (1) enhancing memories, (2) safe, pleasant and socially engaging pedestrian environments, (3) legibility, (4) access to nature, (5) sensorial environments, and (6) optimised mobility - used to ensure that the overall design is one that supports and promotes active ageing. In addition to the aforementioned principles, three site specific guides - (1) Breaking Barriers, (2) Maximising Edges and (3) Highlighting Views and Treating Boundaries - were set in order to inform design decisions and enhance, rather than supplant, the present site context.

The chosen site, the ‘Tal-Għażżenin’ peninsula in St Paul’s Bay, is one that already hosts a number of social nodes most of which are associated with the ageing community, however, the most prominent node is the Maria Regina Primary School, a 1950s building that is partially vacant and available for adaptive reuse. This presented an opportunity to tie the two programs together, creating an intergenerational program where certain facilities, like the library, formal and informal learning spaces and fitness facilities are shared between the two programs; the primary school and active ageing centre.

The project carries forward the aspiration of a group strategy that acknowledges the national emergency of an ageing population and proposes that the existing urban fabric of St Paul’s Bay becomes a host for an integrated network of care in the community that could, in due course, be implemented nationwide.