**Meraki Center for Independent Living**

Meraki, Greek for “the soul, creativity, or love put into something,” truly embodies the core values of the Meraki Center. Located in the Greek community of Tarpon Springs, FL, Meraki encourages personal growth, inclusivity, and individuality. Often in centers for independent living, individuals with disabilities are empowered to live active, self-determined lives. At the Meraki Center, individuals are additionally encouraged to express themselves in their work and truly find purpose in doing what they love.

**LOCATION ANALYSIS & SITE SPECIFICATION**

Meraki Center for Independent Living is located on a busy street in Tarpon Springs, Florida. The Greek population in this area is 10.4%, making it the highest in the U.S. The existing building is composed of concrete block walls and smooth finish concrete floor. Steel columns support steel trusses that are located under a flat roof. The facade of the building is a typical segmented storefront. There is an outdoor space located at the back end of the building.

**RESEARCH SUMMARY**

**What is Autism?**

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) refers to a broad range of conditions that result in challenges regarding communication, social skills, and behaviors (Autism Speaks).

**Diagnosis:**
- An estimated 1 in 69 children are affected by autism.
- Diagnosis is increasing because of increased awareness.

**Challenges for Adults with Autism**
- Daily routines/skills (cooking, cleaning, etc.)
- Social skills/communication
- Physical health (muscles, balance, and coordination)
- Mental health (emotions and behaviors)
- Over or under sensitive to environmental stimuli

**Universal Design**
- Inclusive design that accommodates everyone despite their abilities, height, backgrounds, etc.
- As it pertains to education, it is an adaptable environment where they can excel in different trades and hands-on skills.

**Center for Independent Living**

A CIL is a facility designed to educate and train individuals with cognitive disabilities and encourage them to live independently.

**SPECIAL FEATURES**

- **A combined cashier/grocery station** allows individuals to gain skills in customer service and practice the act of purchasing and stocking goods.
- **An outdoor garden and meditation space** gives individuals the option to connect with nature which can be extremely beneficial for both physical and mental health.
- **A workshop** gives individuals an active learning environment where they can excel in different trades and hands-on skills.

**USER-FRIENDLY TECHNOLOGY:**

In-Ceiling Sound Masking
Smart Lighting Control
Centralized Building Monitors
User-friendly Technology:

**FLOOR PLAN**

*Smart Lighting Control*
*In-Ceiling Sound Masking*
*Centralized Building Monitors*
*User-friendly Technology:*
The dry-erase column assists staff in teaching individuals the skills required to cook. Magnetic action cards can be rearranged on the column to note the order of actions performed to prepare and cook a specific meal.

**FURNITURE & FINISHES SPECIFICATION:**

1. Interface Carpet Tile 102905
2. Interface Carpet Tile 332904
3. Interface Carpet Tile 332906
4. Slip Resistant Rubber Flooring
5. Pervious Concrete Pavers
6. Armstrong Slip Resistant Tile
7. Armstrong Eco-friendly Tile
8. 3form Resin Panel
9. Geos Recycled Glass
10. Interface Slip Resistant Tile
11. Ceramic Subway Tile
12. 3form Gray Oak

**USER-FRIENDLY TECHNOLOGY:**

Cubbies enable users to personalize their space by bringing in items from home to encourage them to live out their own meraki.

**BRAND RECOGNITION:**

A built-in fish tank promotes a positive environment for users to relax. The multi-color light settings and vast array of Floridian fish can be visually stimulating to people with cognitive disabilities.

**WELL-BEING:**

A living wall enriches and enlivens the Meraki Center. Some benefits of this green feature include air purification by removing unpleasant odors, sound absorption, and a wayfinding indicator of the fresh foods below.

**GROCERY STATION:**

A living wall enriches and enlivens the Meraki Center. Some benefits of this green feature include air purification by removing unpleasant odors, sound absorption, and a wayfinding indicator of the fresh foods below.