

## Students 'top out' Habitat house

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AUBURN, Ala. — Auburn University students and local officials on Friday "topped out" the construction on a one-of-a kind Habitat for Humanity house that students built in Opelika.

The topping out — a construction term to signify the completion of the main structure of a building — included the traditional placing of an evergreen tree on the roof of the house, in the 300 block of Avenue A between Third and Fourth streets in Opelika, to mark the occasion.

The prototype house was designed by 16 architecture and building science students for Alabama affiliates of Habitat for Humanity dubbed DesignHabitat by the students.

The project began last

August when architecture faculty member David Hinson was approached by Design Alabama officials about creating a new house design for Habitat. The class was formulated, and AU partnered with the Alabama Association of Habitat Affiliates and Design Alabama, a non-profit, citizen-led organization formed by the state Council on the Arts.

Hinson, an associate professor of architecture, said the students, along with volunteers from East Alabama Medical Center's Cornerstone Society, worked hard to get this far in such a short time.

The four bedroom, 1.5 bath house has 1,250 square feet and was designed with Alabama's climate and culture specifically in mind, Hinson said.

"It's designed to promote

both cross and natural ventilation and the house has a reasonably large, room-sized screen porch. The porch is a key cultural response," he said. "It's an integral part of a Southern neighborhood and we wanted to design it with a more robust porch than you find on Habitat houses.

"The house is oriented on the site to respond to the path of the sun, and the roof has deep overhangs. The roof will be of white metal to reflect as much summer heat as possible," he added.

Hinson said the project is on schedule for completion by May. The next goal is to get the roof completed, windows and doors in by the time AU students go on spring break March 25.

"After spring break, we want to move into siding the house and the interior," he said.