



# MENTAL GARDENS

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# WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

- Mental health is still stigmatized in our society
- Effects of stigma include:
  - Feelings of hopelessness
  - Increase in psychiatric symptoms
  - Lower self-esteem
  - Difficulties in social relationships
  - Lower chance to seek treatment





## WHY NOW?

COVID-19 Pandemic negatively impacted people's mental health by:

- Loss of jobs
- Isolation
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Unhealthy coping mechanisms

Health care professionals were impacted as well by:

- Increase in PTSD
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Insomnia
- OCD

(Kuriala, 2021)



Everyone has been affected mentally and emotionally from the pandemic and now is the perfect time to bring awareness to mental health and how to take care of yourself when in stressful situations or how to recover from the distress of quarantine and social distress.

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## MY COMMUNITY

Looking at my own community and mental health treatments offered, one stood out more than the others; Western State Hospital.

Other than being a local hospital, I had an influential professor who worked at WSH, and she spoke about the changes happening at the hospital which made me even more curious about WSH.

# WESTERN STATE HOSPITAL

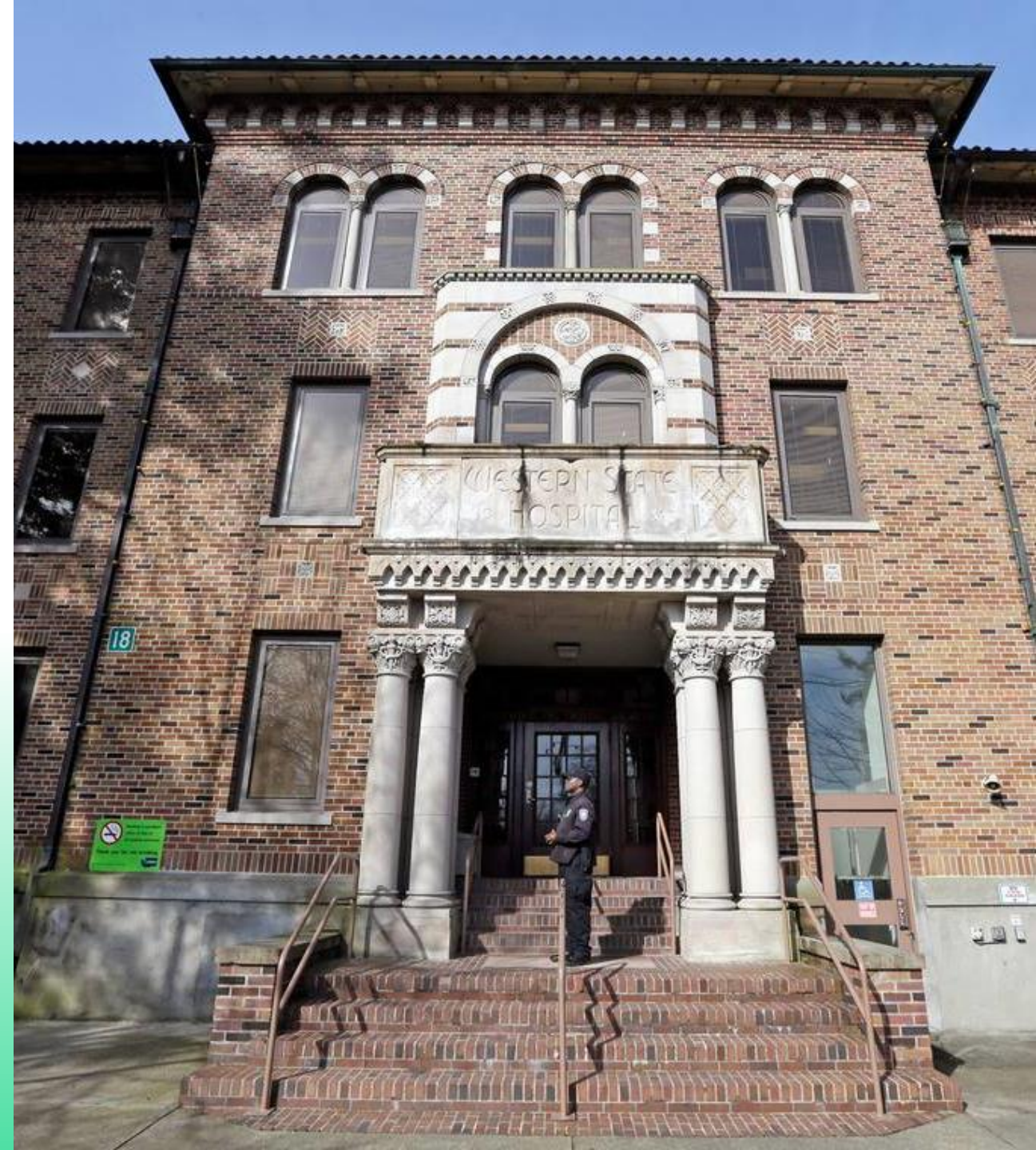
Western State Hospital (WSH) is one of two state-owned psychiatric hospitals in Washington. It has more than 800 beds available for inpatient treatment

- One of the largest psychiatric hospitals in Washington.

Western State no longer has the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services Certification due to:

- The hospital only met 4 out of the 26 conditions
- Physical and sexual abuse
- Neglect

(Behavioral Health Administration, 2022)





## **WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?**

Western State has a negative image, one that is deserved due to the abuse and neglect that happened in the hospital, but this also stigmatizes mental health.

However, mental health shouldn't be isolated to one area, it can be expansive.




**THE SOLUTION: A GARDEN**

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## MY PIVOT

Western State influences how people perceive mental health, and I want to foster a better understanding about mental health to combat stigma about seeking treatment and support.



From this, the idea of a garden specifically designed around mental health took form and became something that can be applied anywhere.

The Centre for Urban Design and Mental Health is an organization based in the U.K. that focuses on how cities can and should be designed around mental health and help improve mental health among its residents.

One method the Centre uses is the incorporation of green spaces around office building and neighborhoods.

- Gardens being used as lunch areas for employees
- Office windows overlooking a green space
- Windowsills with flowers
- Walkways with trees or grass growing

(Centre for Urban Design and Mental Health, N/A)

# UD/MH

THE CENTRE FOR URBAN DESIGN AND MENTAL HEALTH



## MENTAL GARDENS HOSPITALS OUTSIDE THE USA

In 2016, Singapore launched Therapeutic Gardens, gardens designed “...to meet the physical, psychological and social needs of park users,” and offer Therapeutic Horticulture Programmes.

The park shown to the right is Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park and is designed to engage the senses with four zones: Fragrance, biodiversity, edibles and medicinal, and colors and textures.

(Nature Parks Board, 2023)



# BENEFITS OF GARDENS

People have reported wanting more green spaces in cities, which would help reduce physical and mental stress.

Not only that, but being outside has benefits such as:

- Decreases the likelihood of mood, anxiety and eating disorders for children
- Sunlight increases of Vitamin D and serotonin levels, which improves mood, boosts focus and reduces stress

In Washington State, SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) is common due to the infrequent sunlight.

(Mental Health America, 2023; Sheffield, 2022)





## **MORE BENEFITS TO GARDENS**

In multiple Japanese studies, viewing plants reduced fear, stress, anxiety, blood pressure, pulse rate and muscle tension.

In another study, patients in post-operative that had a view of plants or trees reported:

- Better mood
- Reduced pain medication use
- Reduced surgical complications
- Shorter hospitals stay

(Thompson, 2015)



## **COMMUNITY GARDEN**

Gardening allows people to come together and build or strengthen social connections in a community.

Many gardeners are happy to share their knowledge about planting to new beginners and often volunteer to encourage gardening at homes or at local gardens.

With this social connection, the community becomes more tight-knit and the garden becomes a way to be introduced to people in, out, or new to the community.

(Wimmer, 2022)

# HUMAN CENTER DESIGN



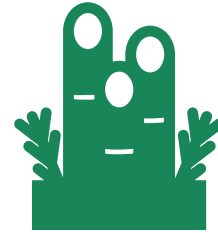
The garden is for the community, meaning it is built and designed by the community.



Mental health facilities, safe spaces or green spaces should support our community and be designed around them, not a buzzing city life.



## CONCEPTS FOR THE GARDEN



A gazebo or another structure could be in the center of the garden with mental health symbols to signal and decorate the garden.



Benches and tables can be located around the garden for people to use at their discretion.





**FEATURES FOR THE  
GARDEN**

Lavender,  
Chamomile and  
Jasmine

Blue Space or a  
Water Feature

Sunflowers, Forget-  
me-Nots, Daffodils  
and Hydrangeas



# OTHER IDEAS FOR THE GARDEN



Fresh produce, fruit, and vegetables can help ease food insecurity.



Herbs such as mint and rosemary can be used for cooking but also have mental health benefits.



# GARDENS EVERYWHERE

While this idea started in WSH, gardens and green spaces should be everywhere!

University campuses, office spaces, rehabilitation spaces and so many more will benefit from having green spaces focused on mental health.

Where else would you want a green or blue spaces in ***your*** community?

# REFERENCES

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**THANK YOU!**

