



A Therapeutic Garden for patients in the Mental Health Program

Credit: ft3 Architecture

YOU CAN PLANT THE SEED: A PLACE WHERE WELLNESS CAN GROW AND PATIENTS CAN BLOSSOM

The inside of the McEwen Building at St. Boniface Hospital, where mental health services are offered, underwent extensive renovations in 2021 to provide an optimal environment for healing. These improvements were made possible by donor support and included anti-ligature and security upgrades to reduce potential safety risks for patients and staff alike. Updates to the physical space created a calmer and more home-like setting for inpatients.

Now the Mental Health Program would like to make similar patient-focused improvements on the grounds of the McEwen Building by creating a therapeutic garden.

Images are concept renderings only.

THE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM AT ST. BONIFACE HOSPITAL

St. Boniface Hospital's Mental Health Program provides multidisciplinary psychological and psychiatric services to adults of all ages. The program team works to treat patients with anxiety, depression, dementia, and psychosis.

Over 400 inpatients are admitted every year into the Mental Health Program. While some are admitted for fewer than three days, the average stay for a patient in the McEwen Building is 25 days.

Care teams also manage more than 13,000 outpatient visits annually.

THERAPEUTIC GARDEN

Hearing birds sing. Feeling a gentle breeze on your face. Having an open sky above your head. Natural light. Being outdoors is known to relieve symptoms of anxiety, stress, and depression.¹

As human beings, we instinctively understand that being in nature is good for us and promotes wellness.






"The benefits of interacting with nature have been demonstrated in recent studies to provide stress relief, increase social interactions, encourage physical activity, and support mental well-being," explained Sandra Torchia, Program Director, Mental Health, Palliative Care, and Spiritual Health at St. Boniface Hospital.

"A green space devoted to the Mental Health Program will provide our patients with a sanctuary to engage their senses and optimize recovery from conditions such as depression and anxiety utilizing the restorative values of nature," added Torchia.

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, "getting outside and being in nature are a winning combination for your psychological and physical well-being," and can "significantly reduce cortisol (stress hormone) and raise endorphin levels and dopamine production."²

A secure, welcoming space on the very doorstep of the McEwen Building will allow patients in the Mental Health Program to heal and recover in a calm, peaceful, and natural setting. Currently, they do not have such a space in which to spend time outdoors.

The garden will feature:

-  A winding walkway
-  Various seating and gathering areas
-  Stationary outdoor fitness equipment
-  A basketball half court
-  Trees, raised plant and flower beds, and shrubbery.

A secure, fenced environment and adequate lighting are important parts of the therapeutic garden, to balance both patient safety and privacy.

Within the controlled space of the garden, health-care teams will still be able to supervise patients appropriately, as they do inside the McEwen Building.

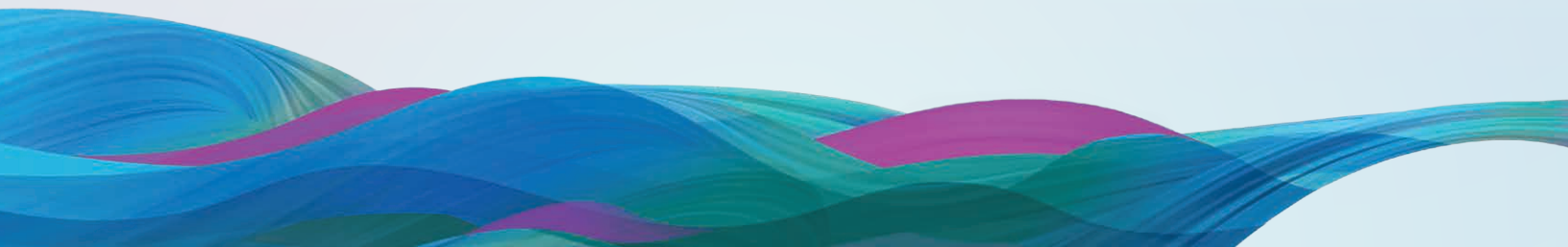
Patients and their health-care teams will use the proposed therapeutic garden as a gathering space for co-ordinated group-led and individual activities such as light exercise.³ The garden will offer unlimited opportunities for arts and crafts, gardening, conversation, reading, relaxation, and mindfulness practice.

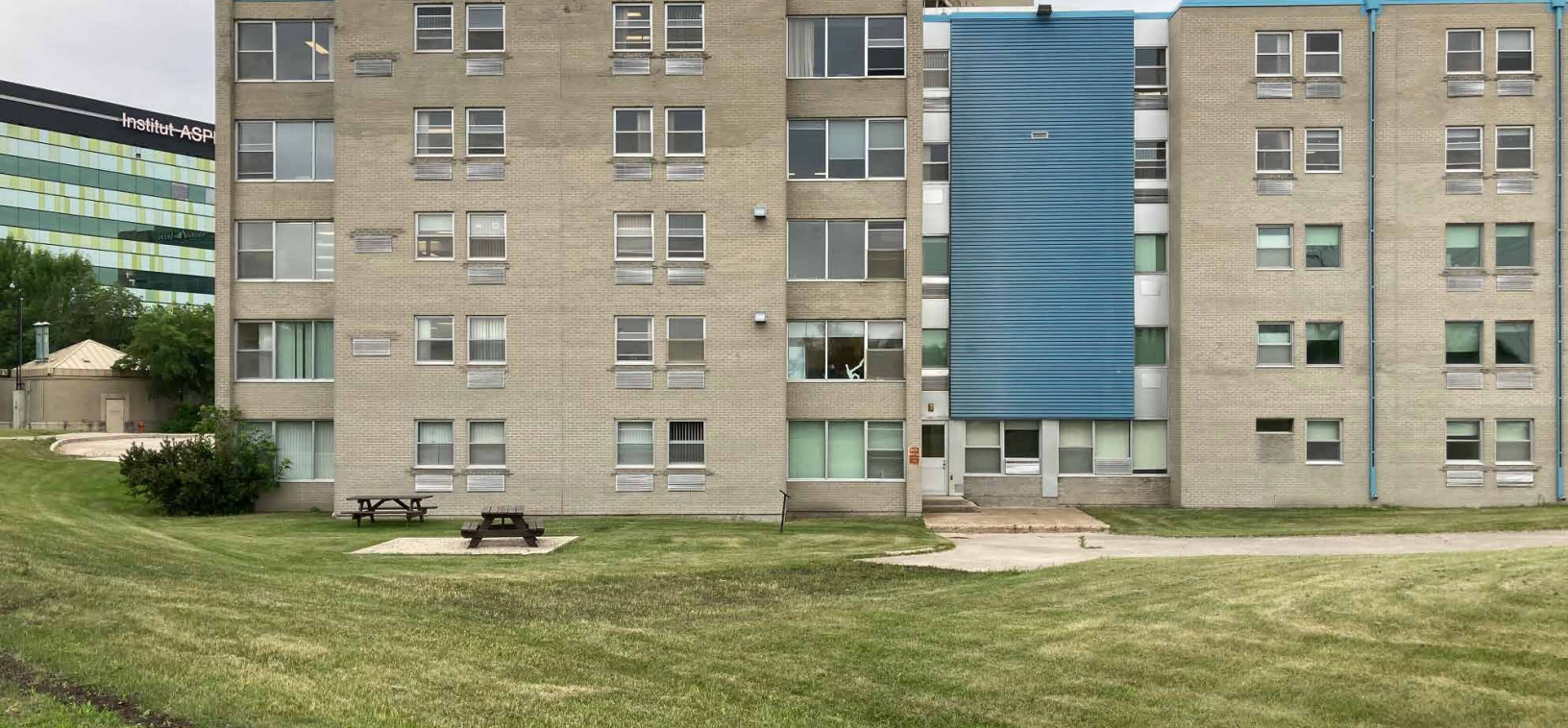
Footnotes

¹ ontarioparks.com/parksblog/mental-health-benefits-outdoors/

² cmha.ca/news/mental-health-and-the-great-outdoors/

³ journals.lww.com/co-psychiatry/Abstract/2005/03000/Exercise_and_well_being_a_review_of_mental_and.13.aspx





BEFORE

AFTER



Credit: ft3 Architecture



Credit: ft3 Architecture

OUR GOAL

St. Boniface Hospital Foundation is seeking to raise funds to create a therapeutic garden and build fencing on the grounds of the McEwen Building at St. Boniface Hospital. The total cost is estimated at \$430,000, subject to change.

YOUR IMPACT

The therapeutic garden will provide a safe, inviting environment for McEwen Building inpatients and outpatients in the Mental Health Program attending appointments or group sessions.

Elements of any natural, outdoor setting are known to promote and improve mental health. Patients will enjoy the many benefits of being outside: green space, fresh air, birdsong, and sunshine. Surrounded by plants and flowers, they will have an opportunity to “shoot some hoops” or engage in light exercise, to go for walks, or to relax and recover as part of their treatment.



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