

# Book review



## Landscape and Urban Design for Health and Wellbeing

Using healing, sensory and therapeutic gardens

**Category:** Book Reviews / Non-fiction

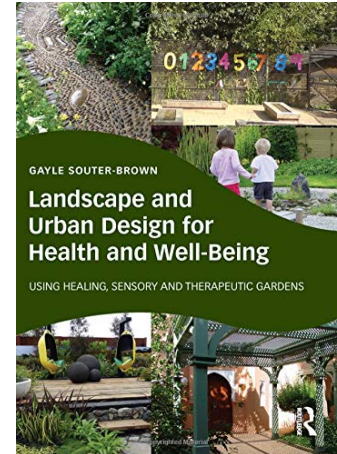
**Author:** Gayle Souter-Brown

**Year:** 2014

**Publisher:** Taylor & Francis, UK

**ISBN:** 9780415843522

**Audience:** For Mental Health Workforce, For Community



**Summary:** Exploring the design of greenspace for health and wellbeing

Urban design is an area of interest for me; as well as having been on community park committees, taken landscape design courses and run main street refurbishment projects, I've just moved from way up north to the centre of Auckland. So I was really looking forward to reading this book and getting some positive reinforcement and ideas about the benefits of well-designed spaces for the health and wellbeing of the community.

My anticipation was rewarded but I was also disappointed. The book was preachy; paragraph after paragraph and chapter after chapter reinforced the same message of the health and wellbeing benefits of well-designed public spaces. I kept wondering, who was the target audience? The introduction says it is for "students and practitioners of design, health and education". I get that, and it's a worthy aim, but let's not turn them away from the excellent message with too much preaching.

### Getting past the preach

Fortunately I can report, once I got past the preachiness, I found a very interesting and informative book. The history of healing gardens, with references to Islamic and monastic gardens as having nailed the health-giving peacefulness of gardens, is thought-provoking. And the discussion on school playground design that, of late, has minimal seating to encourage more physical activity, points out that in reality it has instead encouraged violent play.

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The chapter on salutogenic design guidelines will be one of the most referenced, and the acknowledgment of the limited budgets that communities usually have for these types of projects is refreshingly real.

Lists, bullet points and boxes may have made this type of book more readable than the large tracts of text, but it is broken by case studies and photos. The relevance of the case studies make interesting reading – but perhaps would have made more impact with more accompanying before and after photos.

This is a book that makes you dream of a world where nature comes first and development fits around it. It is the book that you wish all town planners, school boards and elected representatives would read – and that if they persist through the reiteration, they'll learn the positive impact that they can have on the health and wellbeing of he tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

**Reviewed by Margaret Wikaire, Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive at the Mental Health Foundation**

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