

CalPolyPomona

College of
Environmental Design

Studying Mental Health in Urban Green Spaces

Andrew Lazaro | Advisor Dr. Brandy Chappell-Hill | Spring 2025

Introduction

More often than not, public green spaces in the San Gabriel Valley is centered mostly around physical health, including workout machines, walking trails with 1 mile loop indicators and baseball diamonds. However, with as much space as we do have, why is there no consideration towards mental health as much as there is for physical health?

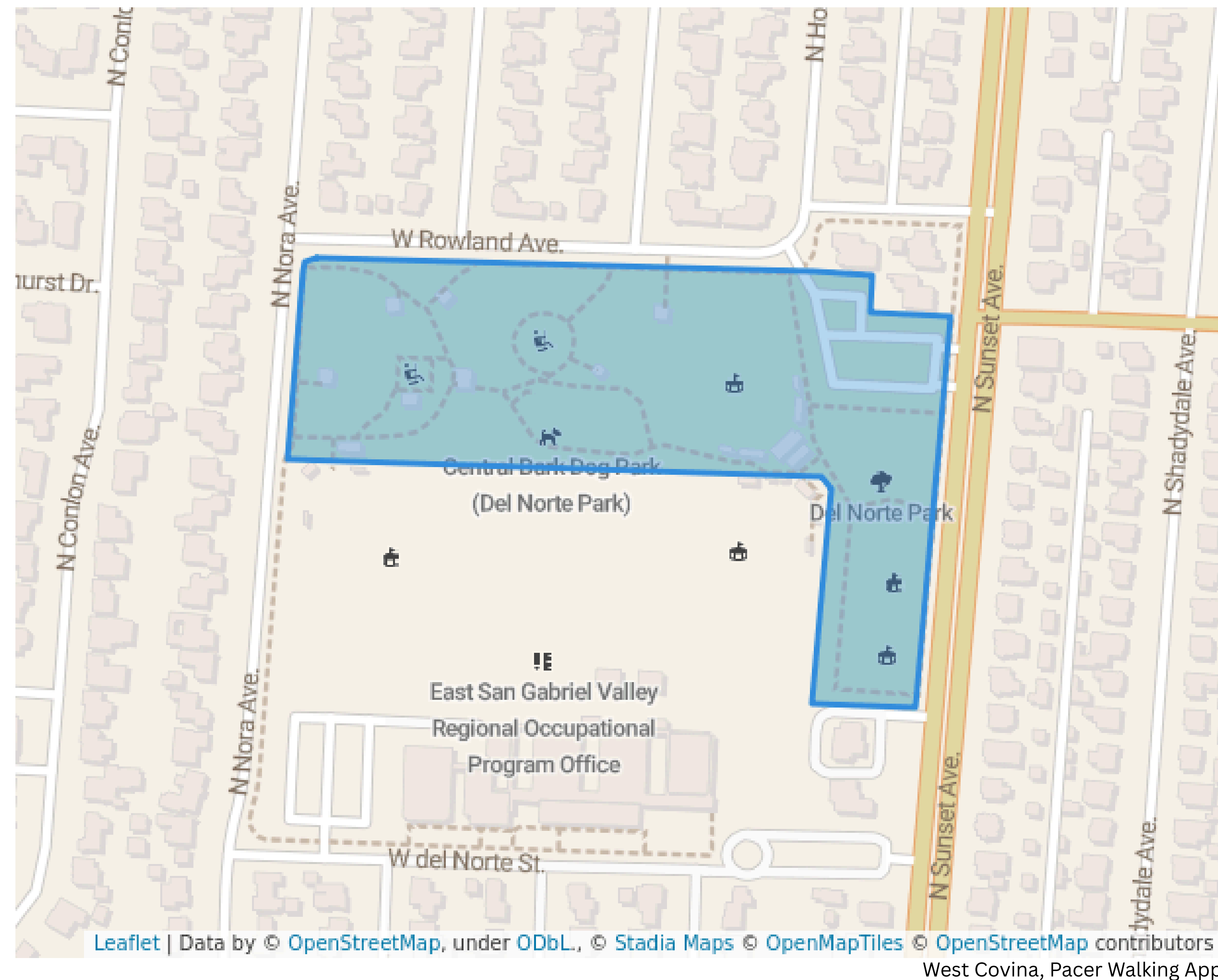
Mental health services are far and few in between, often having many barriers to connect with a psychologist let alone finding one that works for you and committing to meeting. The **purpose** of this research is to explore how to increase mental health using public parks and urban green spaces. Nature can be used to our advantage, only if it is easily accessible.

Methodology

The method used to document this research is qualitative in the form of surveys, conducted in person. Six multiple choice questions gauging use of the park to how likely would you recommend the park to others, with the final open ended question asking, "using one word or more how would you define mental health?" This questionnaire was created to be more personalized.

Key Findings

People thought that a Japanese Garden would be a unique addition to the park, as well as plant diversity. Over time I heard people express that while the park is great how it is and does not need any large-scale changes, they would like to have their amenities such as restrooms and lighting not only upgraded but regularly maintained. In 2012 a splashpad was built at the park funded with the Federal Community Development Block Grant funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. However, a couple of park-goers mentioned that it will not turn on when it is hot outside and shade over the splashpad would be a useful upgrade.



Andrew Lazaro, 2025

56% of adults
in the U.S. who
**need mental
healthcare
receive no
treatment**

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Recommendations

Not to the park but to the City of West Covina I would reiterate how public participation works as a core factor of the entire planning process itself. Favoring small scale interventions as a foundation to build on rather than large transformations as an end-all-be-all. To keep biases out of urban planning and remember we are serving the public. I can try to recommend designs that can be translated to any park in Los Angeles county however, there needs to be more of a study of demographics and what the people want, not how a proposed project works in a certain area at a certain time.

Conclusion

My thought process at the beginning of this study was that people would appeal to a large-scale intervention while redesigning a public park to better promote mental health. This is selfish of me to assume others wants and needs but it goes back to one of the core principles of planning, to increase awareness and education of the planning field while serving the public population. I can desire Plant Diversity for all public parks, but if Del Norte park is expressing consistent maintenance for basic amenities, I must make sure that their voices and opinions are not only heard but taken into careful consideration because they matter.

