

## **Verdant cells project**

While the concept of prisons is generally related to harsh environments and isolation, more recent studies have suggested that better rehabilitation can take place with more humane designs, and those integrated with nature. This architectural project considers bringing nature inside the cells to transform the inside, changing the mental and emotional states of inmates. This project would realign what has traditionally been a sterile, isolated, highly restrictive prison environment towards one of rehabilitation and mental health with a much stronger connection to the natural world.

The underlying principle of the project indeed is biophilic design, a design philosophy that incorporates ways of bringing natural elements into built environments to improve human well-being. Biophilic principles in prison design would mean a sea change from the kind of Spartan, isolated cells commonly to be found in every prison. The project envisions that every prison cell will be shining bright with natural light, the occupant will have access to greenery, and materials should call for a connection with nature.

Large windows or skylights that allow plenty of sunlight to come in are one of the other main design elements in prison architecture. It is a fact that natural light lifts mood, minimizes stress, and regulates sleep patterns-all helpful toward rehabilitation. Green walls or indoor vertical gardens inside the cells add another dimension to the effect of nature inside the cell, making it more lively and friendly. Natural materials-wood, stone, earth tone colors-further soften the hard lines of prison architecture and make cells less confining.

In addition to single-cell improvements, shared green spaces are important. The project introduces small gardens, outdoor courtyards, and walking paths into the prison complex, allowing inmates to connect with nature in a structured, secure manner. Access to such areas can prevent feelings of loneliness and, therefore, allow inmates to be more focused on their inner selves, particularly concerning meditation and relaxation. The community gardens, where inmates are allowed to apply horticultural therapy, build teams among themselves and give them a sense of responsibility in taking care of the living things, which is rehabilitation.

The theoretical underpinning of this project lies in the knowledge that contact with nature can have a salutary effect on mental health and well-being. Surveys confirm that contact with natural surroundings reduces stress, is associated with reduced anxiety, and improves emotional regulation. In the prison environment, where individuals often become disconnected from all that surrounds them and experience almost overwhelming levels of stress, these benefits could be truly profound.

The project would induce feelings of peace and emotional stability, inducing chances for inmates to either visually access gardens or tend plants. It would reduce aggressive behaviors, improve interpersonal relationships, and increase responsibility. These could reduce recidivism rates, as inmates are provided with tools for emotional regulation and personal growth.

Besides being rehabilitative, the project allows them to instill principles of sustainable design. Green roofs, solar panels, and energy-efficient materials used will not only

reduce the prison's environmental footprint, but it also gives a practical lesson on how this can be conducted with environmental stewardship. The inmates can contribute to the maintenance of these greener features, which adds to their vocational skills and therefore affords them a closer connection with the environment.

Recyclable water systems can also be used to maintain the green areas, rainwater, or greywater for irrigation, for example. The inclusion of nature within the correctional infrastructure serves not only the benefit of the inmates themselves but also the bigger cause of sustainability and environmental awareness.

Integrating nature into the cell realigns the purpose of incarceration from punitive to rehabilitative.

This project will enhance the psychological well-being of inmates through exposure to natural elements, create an atmosphere that supports personal growth, and increase sustainability in correctional facilities. The thought of designing space questions conventional prison architecture and contemplates spaces that give life back to human spirits, even under restraint.