

*Let us challenge the current state of the ADA Design Standards. Imagine a set of architectural standards—ones supplementary to the ADA—that not only protect physical disabilities, but also the mental health conditions in which society endures that are invisible to the eye.*

Health— a familiar concept that binds our overall sense of wellness or wellbeing. It encompasses all physical, social, and mental aspects of the mind and body and can dictate both successes or failures one might encounter in a lifetime. As a society, physical health is extremely prominent – it is the form of health we can see with our eyes; an athlete on crutches, a senior in a wheelchair... That being said, many people pay close attention to their physical ability because it is right in front of them. However, by emphasizing an outward focus on physical health, we are missing an inward focus on mental health and the consideration of those that experience ill mental health.

Extensive research classifies mental illness as a disability, and consequently shall be protected under the ADA. Throughout this thesis, a set of design standards have been curated with combined methods of personal and scientific research through the WELL Building Institute to unify concepts of light, comfort, biophilia and fitness best suited to alleviate symptoms of mental illness. Further, the proposed building applies such supplemental ADA Design Standards into one site with three major typological applications: residential, commercial, and educational, located in the colorful River North Arts District in Denver, Colorado.