

University of Colorado Denver
Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) Program

Quick Facts:

- Established in 1971 and fully accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board since 1986
- Over 1,400 MURP graduates since the program's inception, with MURP alumni practicing through Colorado, the US and the world
- The only graduate planning program in Colorado and the top graduate planning program in Rocky Mountain region of the United States
- One of three core graduate programs within the university's College of Architecture and Planning (along with Master of Architecture and Master of Landscape Architecture)
- Designed as a two-year program (full-time) with approximately 50 students per annual cohort and around 110 total students in the program at any given time
- 7 full-time well-respected, engaged and energetic tenured/tenure-track and clinical-track faculty
- A deep network of talented adjunct instructors and lecturers
- 84% pass rate (8 points higher than national average) on the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) examination

Our Geographic Context:

Our location in Downtown Denver and the Rocky Mountain West significantly influences the Department of Urban and Regional Planning and the MURP program. Denver is the largest urban center in a 600-mile radius and serves as the region's cultural, intellectual, and economic capital. Its thriving, revitalized downtown and vibrant core of historic urban neighborhoods attract a diverse, physically active, highly educated population. Denver features virtually every form of urbanism, making it an ideal learning laboratory. The city's large and diverse community of planning and design professionals has contributed to Denver's reputation as a national model for innovation and experimentation. The Rocky Mountain West provides a backdrop of tremendous scenic beauty, valuable natural and strategic resources, and abundant recreational amenities, which present their own planning challenges and opportunities.

Our Vision:

- To be a national leader in educating skilled, engaged planners and supporting vibrant, equitable, and sustainable places and communities.

Our Mission:

- Teach our students the knowledge, skills and values they need to be confident, principled, and visionary planners, using Colorado as our classroom to engage students in real-world, experiential learning.
- Advance the theory and practice of planning through insightful, relevant research that directly informs policy and improves our built, natural and social environments both locally and globally.
- Serve as a vital resource for communities and professionals and help develop sustainable solutions to the complex planning challenges facing our region, nation, and planet.

Our Identity and Distinction:

The concept of ENGAGEMENT represents who we are as a department and the identity we present to the world that distinguishes us from other academic institutions of urban and regional planning. But what does ENGAGEMENT mean? How do we ENGAGE as it relates to our mission? To the Department of Urban and Regional Planning...

ENGAGED teaching means:

- Applying pedagogical methods that are creative, dynamic, and compelling
- Building expertise through hands-on, experiential learning
- Gaining knowledge through interaction and dialog with professionals from across disciplines
- Cultivating broader perspectives through involvement with community members and institutions
- Thinking critically about the role of planners in the community
- Understanding the processes and techniques of public participation

ENGAGED research means:

- Advancing planning through robust inquiry and analysis of pressing real-world issues
- Translating research effectively into recommendations to maximize its value to society
- Promoting new approaches to cooperation to empower underserved communities
- Forging long-term working partnerships with researchers and research institutions worldwide
- Collaborating with colleagues to elevate CU Denver as an esteemed research institution
- Employing students in the research process to foster learning and mentoring opportunities

ENGAGED service means:

- Contributing time and expertise to benefit people and communities, both locally and beyond
- Bringing people together and fostering an environment of inclusiveness, respect, and equity
- Nurturing the personal and professional development of individuals
- Inspiring others to collaborate through planning to improve their communities
- Achieving the missions of the department, college, and university
- Working together to ignite evolution that enriches places for people and the planet

Through ENGAGEMENT, we distinguish ourselves as a national leader in educating skilled, engaged planners and supporting vibrant, equitable and sustainable places and communities.

Our Values:

- Advocacy. We believe planners must be visionary in their work, politically engaged, and articulate proponents for positive change.
- Collaboration. We believe planners must understand and value the principles and perspectives of allied disciplines that participate in planning and city building.
- Engagement. We believe students should learn planning by interacting directly with professionals and the public to solve real-world planning challenges.
- Evidence-Based Approaches. We believe that planning research and practice should be rooted in critical thinking, appropriate methods, and rigorous analysis for developing evidence-based solutions.
- Service. We believe our program should serve as a resource for planning professionals and the public by offering ideas, solutions, research, advocacy, and inspiration.
- Social Justice. We believe planning must strive to create the most just and equitable processes and outcomes for historically marginalized, underrepresented, and disenfranchised individuals and communities.
- Sustainability. We believe planning must be based on the principles of economic viability, environmental resiliency, and social equity.

MURP Program Hallmarks:

The seven hallmarks below form the foundation for the MURP program's identity and administration and represent the program's competitive advantages over our peers.

- Engaged and Experiential Learning. We give students numerous opportunities throughout our program to gain hands-on experience by participating in real-world projects and interacting with professional planners and community stakeholders. We use Denver's diverse urban setting and Colorado's rural and mountain landscapes as a real-world classroom for students to engage with the built, natural, and social environments.
- Physical Planning Orientation. We emphasize physical planning and design throughout our curriculum and connect them to policy, research, and the social sciences. We work closely with the College's Architecture, Urban Design, Landscape Architecture, and Historic Preservation programs to explore and develop applied solutions to urban social, economic, and environmental issues.
- International Learning Opportunities. We provide students the opportunity to study planning from an international perspective. By offering lecture courses that focus on global planning and development issues, studios that involve on-site coursework and engaged learning in other countries, and collaborations with universities and organizations abroad, we help students expand their personal and educational worldview.
- Integrated Planning Technologies. We integrate throughout our curriculum key professional technologies in realms such as digital mapping, 3D modeling, data visualization, and spatial analysis. We capitalize on Denver's entrepreneurial spirit and tech-focused economy to provide students with state-of-the-art resources and numerous opportunities to learn a variety of technologies and applications used as critical tools in the planning process.
- Self-Directed Elective Curriculum. We empower students with the opportunity to craft a planning education suited to their career goals and personal interests. Students may choose any combination of elective courses, whether oriented toward one of our three curriculum pillars, a traditional or customized planning specialization, or a generalist survey of the planning field.
- Professional and Career Development. We present students with instruction, guidance, and resources for understanding the many career paths within planning and allied fields and how to strategically position themselves to successfully achieve their professional and personal goals. We enable students to be prepared for not only for their first planning job, but for a lifelong career.
- Diverse Faculty Experience. We embody a planning faculty comprised of a mix of clinical professors and lecturers who bring to the classroom years of professional experience and expertise in planning-related fields, and tenure-track professors who bring experience in scholarship and research. All of our faculty make teaching a top priority.

MURP Curriculum Pillars:

Our MURP program curriculum is built upon three pillars that reflect issues at the forefront of the planning profession today and that are particularly relevant to our city and region.

- Healthy Communities. The link between human health and the built environment has become a key factor in planning cities and regions. Colorado is known for its physically fit and active adult population, but our vulnerable populations face significant challenges such as childhood obesity, disconnected neighborhoods, and lack of access to healthy food. Colorado has become a national leader in finding ways to plan and design healthier environments, and our Healthy Communities curriculum pillar supports that effort. We work with partners at the local, state and federal levels, as well as the non-profit, educational and private sectors, to provide students comprehensive and interdisciplinary training in the tools, innovations and policies necessary for creating physically, socially and economically healthy communities.

- Equitable Urbanism. After decades of planning efforts, many cities today have achieved significant revitalization and are experiencing surging populations and robust economic growth. However, not all people and communities have shared in this urban renaissance. Many communities in rural and industrial regions continue to suffer population declines and disinvestment leading to stark inequities among the country's cities and towns. And within the booming cities, many residents face skyrocketing housing costs, gentrification, and displacement. A focus on equity as the primary lens through which planning and investments are made is an emerging trend in Colorado. Our Equitable Urbanism curriculum pillar emphasizes this perspective as we work with public, private, and non-profit organizations to provide students with opportunities to learn how to plan for more equitable communities.
- Regional Sustainability. Climate change, environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and sprawling development present critical challenges to planners worldwide. In the Rocky Mountain West, the impacts are evident in habitat loss, wildfire risk, and conflicts over water and energy resources, among others. At the metropolitan level, Denver and its adjacent communities already serve as a model for regional planning and cooperation, exemplified by regional initiatives on arts and culture, transit, stormwater and wastewater, and economic development. Our Regional Sustainability curriculum pillar emphasizes these efforts in regional planning and investments to help students understand how built and natural environments can co-exist more sustainably at various regional scales.