OVERVIEW
This seminar course introduces students to the design, management, and maintenance of parks and public spaces. The course is particularly focused on questions of community, and foregrounds how issues of race, class, and culture interact to shape access to, and inclusion in, public spaces. Throughout the semester, we will focus on four different layers of public space: parks, plazas, sidewalks, and streets.

In the first section, we outline foundations of public space theory with a particular emphasis on how space is more than just a container for action but is instead deeply revealing of how we think about notions of democracy, diversity, and equity. In this way, public spaces are mirrors of society, reflecting our biases, dreams, and beliefs about who belongs, and who does not.

In the second section, we discuss various ideals of public space and show how these norms are shaped by, and shape, powerful political-economic trends such as privatization, gentrification, telecommunication, and militarization.

In the third section, we discuss the nuts and bolts of public space planning, design, management, and maintenance, and develop a methodological toolkit for assessing the quality, utility, and “publicness” of public space.

In the final section, we conclude with possibilities and potentials for public spaces that are opened up by activities such as protest, dissent, and community involvement.

Each week in this discussion-based, hands-on, interactive course we will look at key case studies, hear from guest lecturers, and/or conduct site visits to public spaces throughout the Denver metropolitan region.