

RODWIN ARCHITECTURE

Connect With An Architect | Empowering Boulder-Area Realtors to Know the Code

“Understanding the Rules for Building in Boulder” is a class educating Boulder-area Realtors on exactly what its name implies. But don’t take its easy-to-swallow title as an indication of easy-to-follow subject matter.

Spanning 14 years and reaching 2,000 Boulder-area Realtors, the free course has established itself as a cornerstone of Realtor education in Boulder County. Bonus: Those who successfully complete the two-hour curriculum also earn two continuing education credits.

The creator of the program is longtime Boulder resident and highly-sought architect Scott Rodwin, President of Rodwin Architecture and CEO of its sibling practice, Skycastle Construction. Scott identified a need among local Realtors frequently seeking his advice on topics related to homes, but not necessarily within the purview of a Realtor’s expertise around the sale and purchase of them.

“About 17 years ago, we started receiving calls regularly from Realtors in town saying ‘I have a client who wants to do something with their house.’ They had questions about everything from building in flood zones to modifying historic landmarks to building setbacks, costs, and permit requirements,” Scott recalls. “Our willingness to offer friendly and helpful answers without charge made us an unofficial resource for local area Realtors.”

Unable to supply answers at the pace of the questions they received, Scott and his team crafted a solution.

“Understanding the Rules for Building in Boulder” turns Realtors—whom Scott says have become a “crucial clearinghouse for reliable information”—into trained and trusted resources who feel empowered to serve their community better.

“Their class is one of our all-time most popular,” Veronica Precella, CEO of BOLO Realtors, said. “It provides an essential tool for our members when counseling their clients. Scott’s

contribution to our association is priceless and we appreciate his constant support.”

As a BOLO Affiliate Partner, Rodwin Architecture provides the class pro bono to BOLO members and offers private course instruction to local Realtor offices upon request.

“Even when people aren’t in the process of buying or selling, Realtors remain the most accessible resource in the neighborhood,” Scott said. “You might be planning a bathroom remodel, or considering a kitchen makeover; and at a cocktail party, you might strike up a conversation with a Realtor about your plans.”

Why Boulder County’s Building Regulations Are Such a Beast

A testament to the nature of our locale’s building rules and regulations, the team at Rodwin and Skycastle updates “Understanding the Rules for Building in Boulder” four times a year.



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Why? First, Boulder County's building and land regulations comprehensively and rigorously reflect its commitment to sustainable and responsible development, the public's safety, community needs, and the protection of its unique historical character.

But that's just its base level.

Layered above are contributing regulatory factors including a diverse topography, evolving technologies, and an enormous demand for housing amidst dwindling available land on which to build.

Finally, like the Rockies towering behind it, Boulder County keeps getting hit with unprecedented poundings of proverbial pow. Through flood and fire, Boulder has become one of the steepest, strictest regulatory mountains in the nation. Even the most adept and tenured Realtors can't cut an easy turn on this slope.

"The rules for building in Boulder are so complex and constantly changing; it's virtually impossible for any Realtor to know all that information," Scott explained.

But not knowing the basics, thinking you know something that has actually changed, or being slightly misinformed about a

building regulation can seriously burn a Realtor who is held liable for the information they share with clients. A significant part of Scott and his team's work around the course is to collect, consolidate, and distill in one place all of the most current information a homeowner, buyer, or seller in Boulder County might need to know to make decisions about a property.

Rodwin and Skycastle aren't ones to drop the ball there.

Architects Who Connect: The Minds Behind A Cross-Disciplinary Course

The teams at Rodwin and Skycastle comprise a level of experience, education, and professional expertise in local building regulations that have resulted in the emergence of both practices as champions of stunning modern design, community engagement and philanthropy, and industry-leading sustainability practices in Boulder County.

Politically active, particularly in issues around development and affordable housing, Scott serves as President of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Colorado North section, sits on the Better Boulder Board of Directors, and formerly as President of the Colorado Green Building Guild (CGBG). Skycastle Construction President and Co-owner

Brandon David holds in common with his business partner a degree in architecture and a deep passion for creating extraordinary green homes. Course co-presenter and Rodwin Architecture's Studio Director Jim Kadlecsek was a Realtor himself during part of his 40 years of experience in both residential and commercial building.

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Through 24 years in business, they've received dozens of local and national awards, honors, press accolades, and professional certifications.

Leveraging what they learn from "Understanding the Rules for Building in Boulder," Boulder-area Realtors can confidently hold and guide building regulation conversations with clients and cocktail party-goers alike.

If a client with a qualifying property has individualized needs or nuanced questions, their Realtor can point them to Rodwin Architecture for a feasibility consultation and,

for \$1,500, receive a detailed development feasibility report (roughly ten pages of every constraint and opportunity that applies to a specific property).

Scott says his firm's unique connection with the real estate community has been mutually beneficial to everyone. Its aim, ultimately, is to help clients feel confident about making building decisions by getting to the point of the question everyone wants to know, whether buying, selling, or staying put: "What can I do with my property?"

Adapting as a Realtor to BoCo's Shifting Build Landscape

Boulder County has weathered its share of storms in the past decade alone, from devastating floods in 2013 to epic wildfires in 2020, and the expansive damage and loss caused by the Marshall Fire just last year.

Each bout of Mother Nature in fierce mode necessitates modifications and new regulations to Boulder County's building code. Each of those changes, however beneficial in the long run, makes building in this beautiful landscape more challenging than it was before.

Following the Marshall Fire, Scott's team committed half of its housing project capacity (five rebuilds in total) to offering





discounted design services to families whose homes were lost in the flames. Scott also provided free one-on-one consultations to 50 other families whose rebuild projects he wasn't able to take on, answering fundamental questions like where to start, how to navigate the rebuilding process, best-guess timeframes, cost ballparks, and who they needed to connect with to bring it all together.

Shannon Wehner, a Rodwin Architecture project manager and Senior Architectural Designer, and President-Elect of the CGBG, pivoted much of her work toward CGBG's immediate laser focus on providing community and government resources for rebuilding sustainably from the fire. CGBG, as a result, played a critical and central role in bringing desperately needed information and resources from municipalities and vendors to homeowners in the wake of the loss of their homes to the Marshall Fire.

"Boulder has a lot of experience with disasters, so they've gotten very good at handling a response to those," Scott said.

He's right. Tracking the area's response to the Marshall Fire, the AIA National Disaster Assistance Program shows Boulder County to be way ahead of the curve at more than double the national rate for rebuilding after a disaster.

There is no question that Boulder County's connected community and quick-to-contribute nature play a significant role in its ability to rebuild with speed, efficiency, and hope, even after the elements give us their worst.

Despite its losses, the popularity of this region continues to surge, with more and more hoping to call Boulder County "home." This squeeze—a booming population with a finite amount of buildable land—has sparked a continuing evolution in policy and regulation as well.

Boulder County's unnaturally extreme encounters with natural disaster remind us that we can't always predict how the realty game might change from one moment to the next. As such, the rules of the game for buying, selling, and building in Boulder County are always in flux, aiming to balance growth, safety, and sustainability in this region that's equally abundant in natural beauty and natural challenges.

Our efforts to build a strong realty community and bridge it to others through supportive, uniting initiatives keep us set up to bounce back with equal ferocity.

Green From the Get-Go

While "Understanding the Rules for Building in Boulder" is Scott's longest-running course, it's neither his first nor only. Scott also taught his passion, green building, for the City of Boulder, Boulder County, Naropa University, and nationally for the AIA.

Rodwin Architecture's first projects 24 years ago helped pioneer sustainable design in the Rocky Mountain region long before "green building" became a buzzy marketing point. For Scott, sustainability was simply the right thing to do. His ethos has remained steadfast, its mark forever fused into the national, state, and most certainly Boulder's architectural landscape.

While Boulder today has some of the strictest green building codes in the country, Scott's practice has been at it all along, building some of Colorado's first LEED Platinum and "regenerative" (net-energy positive) houses.

Guiding Clients Securely: A Design-Build Approach

Undoubtedly considered leading green-building experts, Scott says Rodwin and Skycastle have found their niche in people who seek them out for their reputation in finding balance across three things: excellence in design, and the highest levels of green building and service.

Accomplished through a close partnership between Rodwin and Skycastle, he's established a specialized design-build model to serve the needs of Boulder's happily green market.

Critically important, Scott stresses, and his firm's number one concern, is that custom home buyers have someone they can trust to guide them through such a complex process.

"It's likely the most expensive financial investment they'll ever make in their lives. We take our responsibility to navigate people safely through this process very, very seriously."

Sustainable, custom, high-end homes around 4,000 square feet at \$3-\$7M in hard construction cost make up the majority of projects at Rodwin and Skycastle. Several commercial projects also stand out among Colorado's best. Notable to Boulder-area Realtors is Scott-and-team's remodel of the BOLO Realtors office.

Realtors, Colorado residents, and visitors alike can explore several recognizable Rodwin/Skycastle projects, many of them garnering national awards.

In Denver: Montbell's flagship retail store on the 16th Street Mall; Brother's Bar & Grill (across from Coors stadium); Japon Sushi; and many more.

In Boulder: Cult-favorite sushi restaurant Japango (big sushi fan, Scott); Radiance Power Yoga; the Brewer's Association office; Bohemian Biergarten; Tara Waldorf High School; collaborations on Whittier Elementary School and Columbine Elementary School; and many, many more.

In essence, with work as dynamic and sustainable as Boulder County itself, it's not surprising that Scott and his team reached across their field to initiate and grow the connection with local Realtors.

Just about every top-performing Realtor we know—and we know a few—prioritize either participating in or creating their own community-minded initiatives like Scott Rodwin's free and invaluable course for Realtors. If you've already taken advantage of it, let us know how it's helped you and your clients!

If you've yet to tap into "Understanding the Rules for Building in Boulder," find the registration link for the next live webinar on August 22 at members.bolorealtors.com/calendar.

