

# GREEN BUILDING GUIDE

BOULDER COUNTY  
BUSINESS  
REPORT

April 30 - May 13, 2010  
Section D

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JONATHAN CASTNER

From left, Ron Flax, Brandon David, Scott Rodwin and Kirsten Snobeck of Rodwin Architecture in Boulder stand in Japango, a sushi restaurant in Boulder, one of the company's first projects that has won numerous design awards.

## Rodwin builds on green foundation

BY ELIZABETH GOLD  
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BOULDER — With a staff of LEED-accredited professionals, awards for sustainable building design, a green home guide book in the works and a thriving firm, Scott Rodwin's work is in demand.

Rodwin Architecture designs residential and commercial buildings rooted in sustainable principles.

Last year, Rodwin Architecture celebrated its 10th anniversary. Like most architectural firms, according to Rodwin, he started out in his house. By year three, the company moved into an office on Pearl Street.

With nine employees and no layoffs when most firms were forced to, Rodwin Architecture doubled revenue and size since 2008.

### *Boulder architect grows business rooted in sustainable principles*

**Boulder County Business Report:** A lot of your firm's reputation is rooted in green building standards. How did you first get involved in the movement?

**Rodwin:** Although I graduated from Cornell University in 1991, green building was never mentioned in any of my classes. I joined a group called Ecovillage of Ithica in 1990 and learned new concepts for creating dwellings. In school I was taught that form follows function, which had mostly to do with human use rather than environmental impacts of buildings.

**Business Report:** What are some basic strategies you focus on when

designing green buildings?

**Rodwin:** The top of the list is paying attention to passive solar when looking at how to respond to the environment. You can have a huge house with two-story windows to get a great view. But if you have to buy large air-conditioning units to overcome the heat of the sun, it's not taking the environment into account. We look at multiple equations rather than just the human equation: budget, building codes and response to the environment.

In this example, we could size overhangs to keep the building warm in the winter and cool in the summer, reduce the size of the

windows or change the glazing to reflect heat out.

**Business Report:** What are different categories for designing sustainable buildings?

**Rodwin:** There are three: energy, environmental quality and controllability. Energy is divided into two categories — efficiency and renewable power.

A subcategory of environmental quality is indoor air quality, which contributes to better health. We look for products with minimal toxicity.

Good natural daylight fits in the environmental quality category as well. Tests have shown that buildings with natural daylight cause retail sales to go through the roof. And schools have demonstrated increased test scores when the

➤ See **Rodwin, 2D**

**RODWIN** from 1D

environment is healthy. That's all the result of natural lighting and good indoor quality.

The controllability factor shows that users have the best experience when they can control light and heating and cooling at their desks. It leads to greater satisfaction.

**Business Report:** Who are your clients?

**Rodwin:** About 95 percent of our work is in Colorado with the rest all over the country.

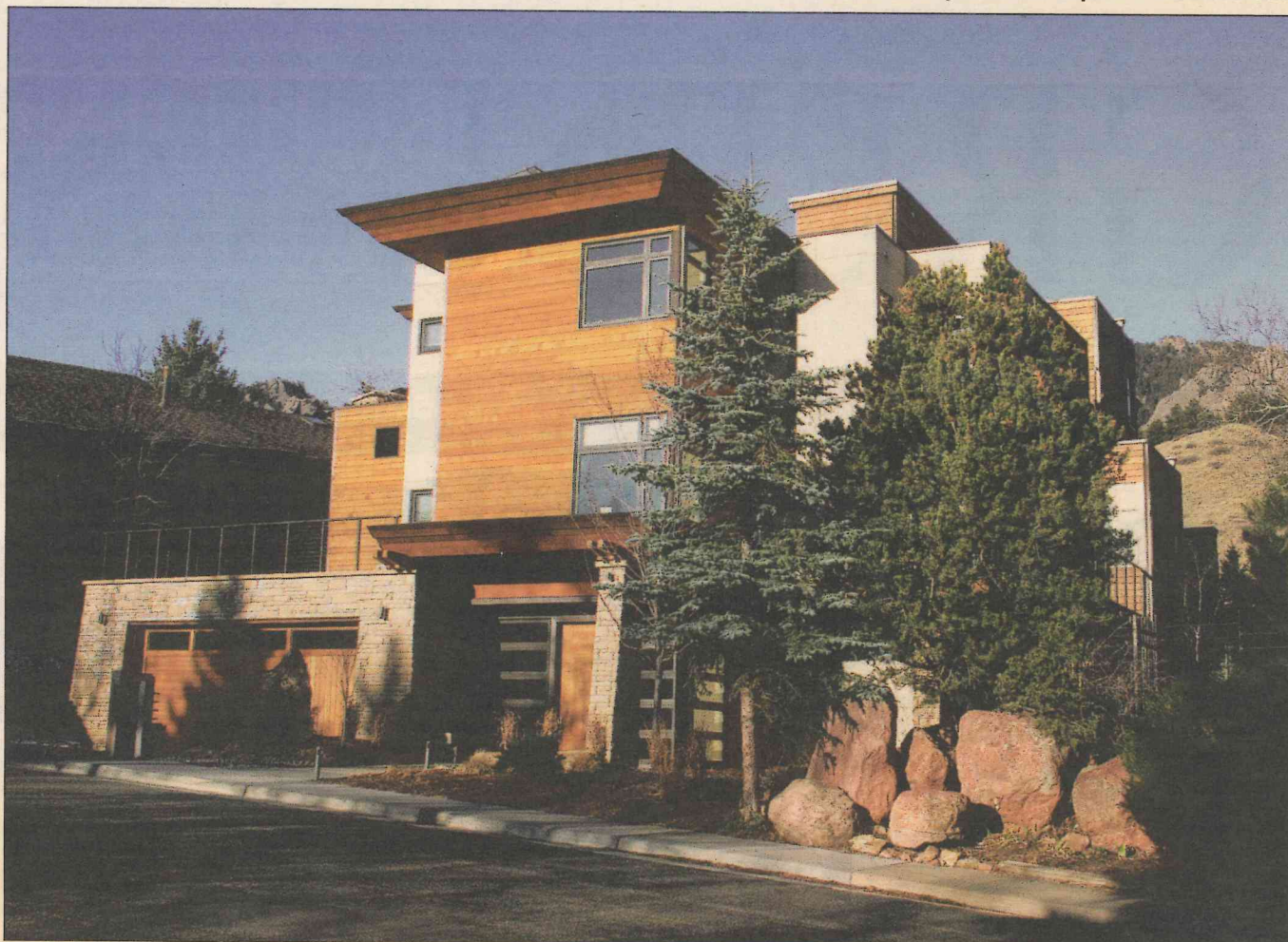
**Business Report:** You teach classes on sustainability. Where do you do that and who attends?

**Rodwin:** We teach A to Z on how to build a green building for the city of Boulder and Boulder County. Homeowners, builders, engineers, architects and people in the trades attend.

**Business Report:** What can municipalities do to promote green building?

**Rodwin:** They can provide education and links to rebates, financial and regulatory incentives and requirements — things like for new and remodel commercial building permits, permits require more energy efficiency than code. Boulder does all three.

**Business Report:** What are some new developments in green building?



The Edge House in Boulder, designed by Rodwin Architecture, is the second single-family home in Colorado to achieve LEED Platinum certification. COURTESY RODWIN ARCHITECTURE

**Rodwin:** Net-zero energy buildings are the cutting edge now. The definition is that in one year, the building uses no more energy from the grid than it puts back into the grid. It's measured in utility bills. We have one house that is now near-net zero, until

its first year of utility bills is available.

**Business Report:** How does the cost of green building compare to doing only what's required?

**Rodwin:** The cost of technology has gone down as it becomes more popular.

The cost of solar panels, for example, has decreased in the last five years. A 5-kilowatt array ([amount of electricity) that provides about 50 percent of the electricity for a 3,000-square-foot home was about \$30,000 five years ago. Now it costs about \$15,000.

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