

TRAVEL BOULDER

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

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GREEN BUILDING

A BOULDER LIFESTYLE

UNLEASH YOUR CREATIVITY

ARCHITECTS, ARTISTS & MAKERS

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FOOD AND DRINK FOR TAKEOUT

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TRAVELBOULDER.COM

GREENER BUILDING



GREEN HOME

BY CAMILLA MCLAUGHLIN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RODWIN ARCHITECTURE
AND SKYCASTLE CONSTRUCTION



Green was a lifestyle here in Boulder County, long before it was trendy and valued everywhere else.

Nate Kipnis came to Boulder to attend the University of Colorado, but he learned almost as much about sustainability from living in Boulder as he did in school. His firm, Kipnis Architecture + Planning, has locations in Evanston, Illinois, and Boulder. He is considered to be at the forefront of sustainable residential design and architecture.

"It was just wild to see a city that had solar panels in 1982, and that people had all these passive home designs. It was mind-boggling," said Kipnis, who designed his first solar home in Boulder when he was 22 years old.

Other Boulder County architects share that sentiment.

"We're in the NFL here," said David Sloan, citing the high level of knowledge of green design and sustainable practices. "We are surrounded by abundance, and the expectations and talent are high."

Sloan, who owns Sloan Construction, is also president of the Colorado Green Building Guild (CGBG). Founded in 2004, the guild's mission is to connect and educate industry professionals and to "ensure the widespread adoption of sustainable practices to increase the efficient use of resources, create healthier buildings and support vibrant, sustainable communities."

Along with a series of educational events, the guild also sponsors an annual Green Homes Tour, which showcases a range of examples including modern and traditional custom homes, remodels and multi-family projects. (This year's Boulder Green Homes Tour is a virtual event due to COVID-19.)

Architects here are focused on energy efficiency and sustainable practices, with some such as Bryan Bowen, founder of the firm Caddis, pushing the applications in the community overall. Bowen won the Colorado Green Building Guild's leadership award in 2019 for the award-winning Project Renovate, which involved energy, aesthetic and functional upgrades to 300 affordable housing units for families and seniors.

Unlike many other regions, builders and contractors in Boulder and surrounding towns are equally dedicated to green building. There is also a long track record of Boulder homes earning regional and national green recognition.



LOOKING BEYOND NET-ZERO

In most of the country, net-zero remains an elusive goal; in Boulder, it is on the way to being the norm. Still getting to net-zero or even close requires a combination of strategies including passive solar elements such as a super-insulated building envelope, airtight construction, high-performance windows and overhangs to temper overheating from direct sun later in the day on Western exposures.

Active solar heating is also almost a given to reach net-zero status.

“Solar panels are so cheap now that it’s insane not to include,” said Kipnis, noting that on a high-end house, a solar system would be in the \$20,000 range.

For net-zero, battery storage for times when the sun doesn’t shine for a couple of days in the winter is part of the strategy. Protocols and best practices for batteries are still being sorted out.

Prices are down but not where they will be someday, Kipnis said,

“Batteries are on a little different trajectory than solar,” he said. “We encourage people to pre-wire for that if they have the money, but absolutely, make a really big mechanical room and get it set up for batteries. And then obviously, put electric charging in the garage.”

Boulder’s long-term goal is to move away from reliance on fossil fuels and natural gas. Increasingly stringent energy and sustainability requirements for buildings are part of the process moving toward a greater reliance on electrical power and alternative fuel sources. As a founding member of AIA’s 2030 Commitment, whose goal is to design full net-zero buildings by 2030, Kipnis is a leader in the move away from fossil fuels.

Not to be confused with current electric heat and powered appliances, this new vision uses solar energy as well as geothermal and other sources. A heating system, for example, would typically employ an air source heat pump or geothermal. Both heat pump dryers and heat pump water heaters would replace current electric or gas models, and, according to Kipnis, they are “wildly more efficient.”

Scott Rodwin, president of Skycastle Construction and principal of Rodwin Architecture, has been on the leading edge of innovation for the last 25 years. His designs have achieved the highest level third-party certifications including EnergyStar and LEED Platinum.

More than architectural vision and building science contribute to Boulder’s status as a national leader in energy efficiency and sustainability. Local government and the community are equally dedicated.

“The green building movement has been very strong in Boulder for at least 20 years, and green building requirements have been among the strictest in the nation,” said Rodwin.

Newcomers often remark about the composting and recycling bins throughout the city, just one indication of how much stewardship of the land and environment is valued. It’s a commitment that also appeals to many who opt to relocate here.

“For the most part, the people who are moving to Boulder move here with a pretty

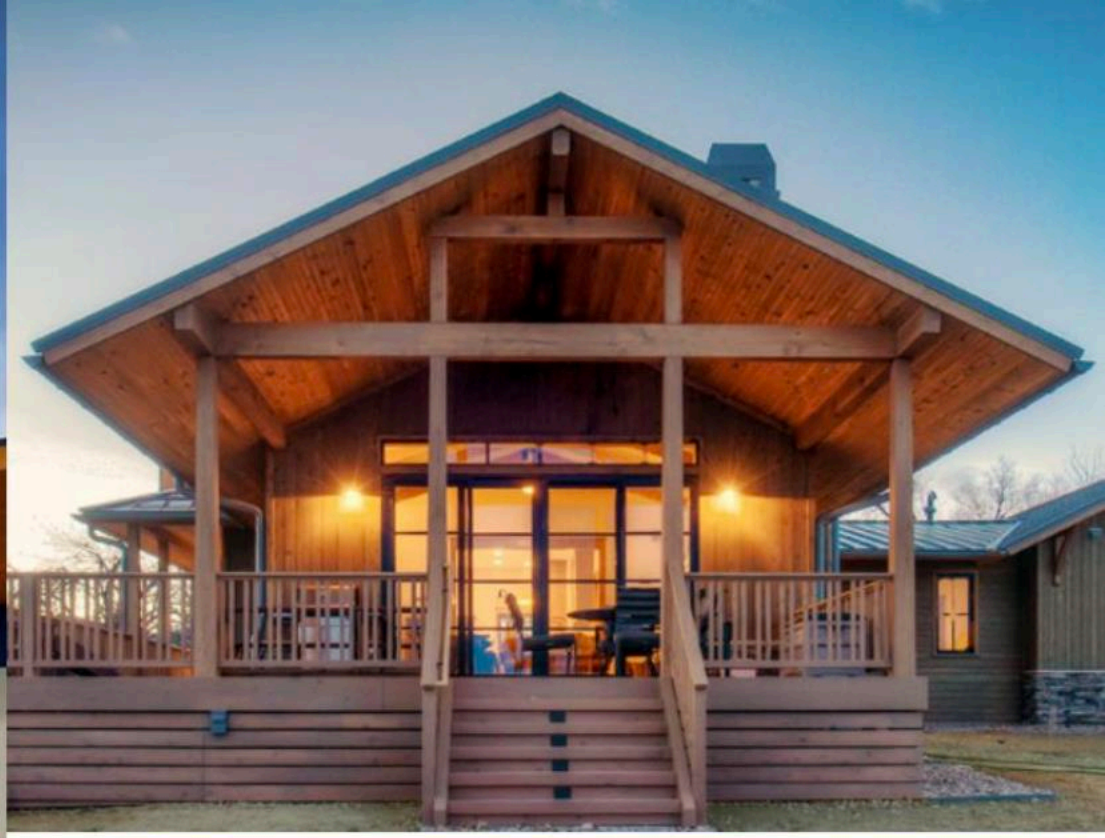
strong environmental ethos and a high level of knowledge,” Rodwin said.

Similar to the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED program are Boulder’s Greenpoints program and the county’s Greensmart programs, which date to 2007 and 2008. In 2016, Boulder adopted a climate change commitment to reduce community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent (below 2005 levels) by 2050 and achieving 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030.

In 2017, Green Points was replaced with a comprehensive energy code; those requirements were further strengthened in January 2020. New 3,000-square-foot and larger residences are required to be net-zero. Remodels, if the constructed value exceeds 50 percent of the home’s former value, must meet new home construction standards. Additionally, 75 percent of the waste from remodels must be recycled or repurposed instead of sent to a landfill. New homes are required to be solar-ready, and also must include dedicated circuits for electric vehicle recharging.

Rodwin uses a car analogy to illustrate this transition.

“We used to be a Subaru town,” he says. “Then it went from Subaru to a Prius. In the last few years, it’s gone from a Prius to a Tesla. At this point, the city of Boulder requires that you essentially design and build at the very least a Prius, and because of land prices, for most people that ends up becoming a Tesla.”



LIVING

WHAT'S NEXT? EMBODIED CARBON

The new lesson for green?

"Everything old is new," said architect and sustainable design specialist Lauren Folkerts with HMM Architecture + Interiors.

Some passive strategies rely on time-tested methods such as deep overhangs. Looking ahead, Folkerts said she expects to see "more use of straw bale construction and American clay plaster because of the growing emphasis on embodied carbon."

Net-zero is a good metric for energy efficiency, and it's easy to track. But it's much more complicated to measure the carbon usage of products and materials that go into buildings. Regulations that apply to energy expended in a structure don't necessarily calculate embodied energy.

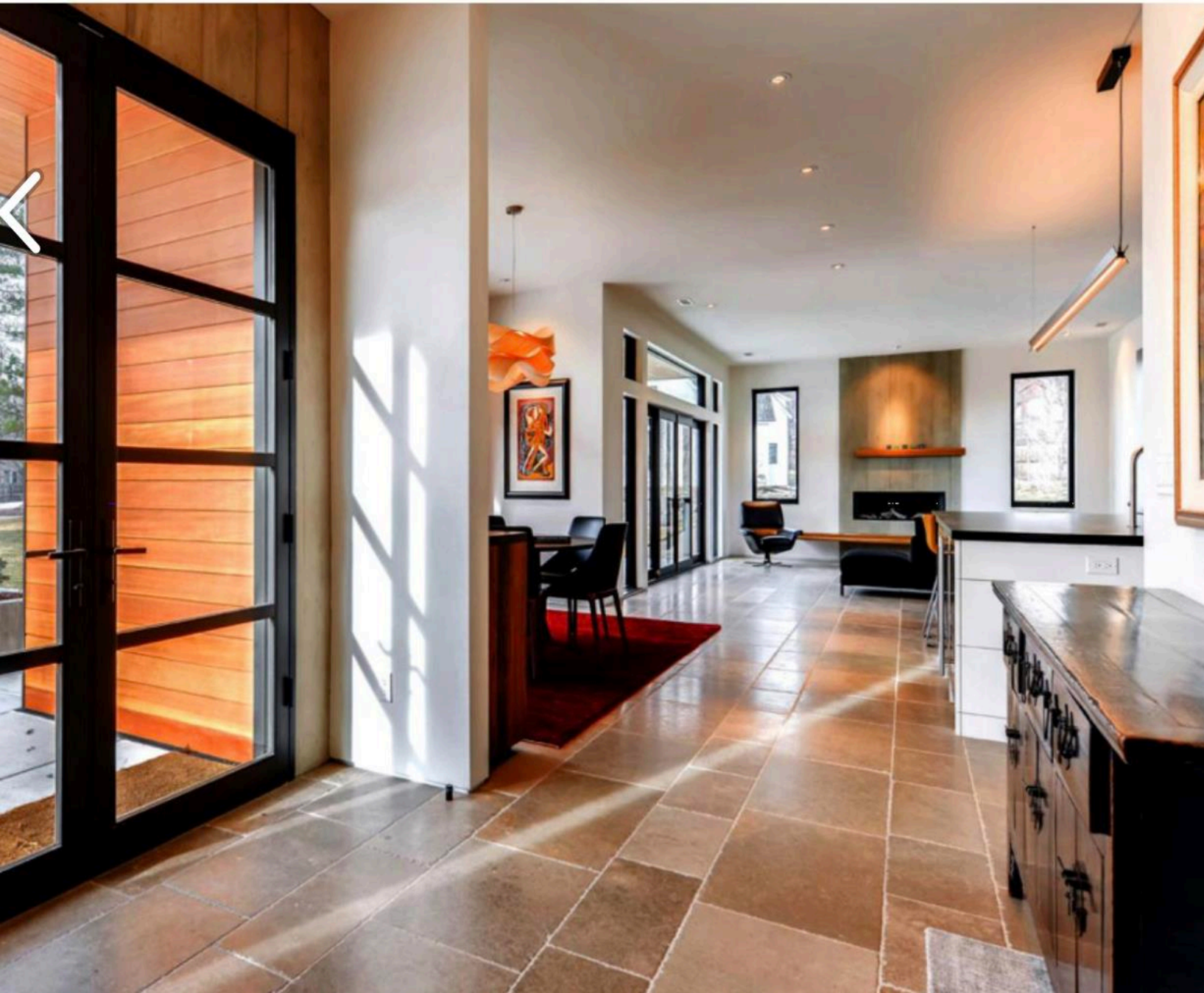
Now, Folkerts said, we are starting to get a deep enough understanding of carbon use to look at the lifestyle of products.

Noting we have approximately 20 to 30 years left of carbon resources, she said having insulation that uses 30 years' worth of carbon is something we can't afford to do. Traditional insulators such as cellulose and wool are generating interest, as are new products such as hempcrete and rigid insulation boards made out of renewables.

Folkerts said she expects to see more of these products coming to market.

"Embodied energy is going to be a huge shift in the way people see buildings," she said

More shifts ahead? Wellness, particularly indoor air quality, which has been in the background, is fast becoming a focus for consumers. Also on the horizon are regenerative buildings that create more energy than they use. But most say we're not quite there yet.



MEET THE ARCHITECTS

LOOK AROUND YOU.

TAKE NOTE OF THE HOMES, BUILDINGS AND PROPERTIES THAT DOT THE STREETS OF BOULDER. ONE THING THEY ALL HAVE IN COMMON? STUNNING ARCHITECTURE.

BY SARAH KUTA

BOULDER IS ON THE CUTTING-EDGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO SUSTAINABLE, ECO-FRIENDLY PRACTICES. WE SAT DOWN WITH A FEW OF BOULDER COUNTY'S TOP ARCHITECTS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS IMPORTANT PROFESSION AND WHAT INSPIRES THEIR WORK EACH AND EVERY DAY.



Jennifer Lombard
bldg.collective
2872 Bluff St.,
Boulder

Why did you pursue a career in architecture and interior design?

I've always loved design and creating spaces — I actually went into interior design first, thinking I didn't have the math chops to be an architect. In the course of working as an interior designer for an architecture firm, I realized that a) there wasn't that much complex math involved and b) I wanted to do both design and architecture, so I went back to school and got a master's of architecture.

How do you describe your style and vibe?

Contemporary yet timeless — pretty, comfortable and warm. I love to mix different time periods and styles so that the result feels curated and collected, rather than like it was all purchased at once. Nothing too fussy or precious — spaces are meant to be used!

What architectural/interior design trends are you seeing a lot of right now?

On the architectural side, we're seeing a lot of people asking for more dedicated home office spaces or more separation in their living spaces — with everyone at home all the time this year, there's a definite push for more discrete spaces rather than full open concept plans.

On the interiors front, richer colors and jewel tones are one trend I'm loving — we're also using a lot of handmade materials right now. Things with a tactile quality and variation to the finish, that feel more warm and crafted and less machine-precise.

What do you wish more people knew or understood about your industry?

That designers do way more than pick pillows and paint colors! Joking aside, the value in hiring an architect or designer. It's an investment, but having an expert to guide the process will almost always save you so much time and money. We help manage the thousands of decisions that come with a project, and can look holistically at the choices being made so that you end up with a gorgeous and functional final product.



Scott Rodwin
Rodwin Architecture
1245 Pearl St. Suite
202., Boulder

Why did you pursue a career in architecture?

I always loved art and physics. Architecture is the intersection of those two.

How do you describe your architectural style and vibe?

We are known for a warm Colorado modern style, but we work in every style. The style of each project primarily expresses the clients' personality and taste, rather than ours. Our firm's focus is on providing extraordinary customer service, cutting-edge sustainable design and an integrated design/build delivery model.

What architectural trends are you seeing a lot of right now?

Boulder's architecture is becoming more luxurious, modern and sophisticated. And we are constantly pushing the boundaries of sustainability (including net-zero energy and LEED platinum certification).

What inspires your work?

One of our clients summed it up best yesterday when he said to me, "I am so grateful to be living in this house during COVID." We aspire to create homes that enhance the quality of life of our clients. Our designs are informed by the pragmatic (budget, energy-efficiency, function and flow) and the sublime (how it relates to the site, the views, the light and the social patterns of how our clients inhabit the home) and we seek the optimal balance of those two influences.

What do you wish more people knew or understood about your industry?

Like medicine, creating a custom home is an organic exploration. No two are ever the same and no outcome is guaranteed. This is art, not manufacturing.

What are the benefits/powers of architecture?

As Winston Churchill famously said, "We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us." Most people contort their lives around the home that they have. But it is possible to craft a home that supports and enhances the life you aspire to live. That's what we strive to create for each of our clients every day.



Elizabeth Smith
Fänas Architecture
2930 Broadway,
Suite 106, Boulder

Why did you pursue a career in architecture?

Simply put, I just couldn't stay away. My roommate in college was in the design school and I found myself doing her homework every night because it was such fun!

How do you describe your architectural style and vibe?

My architectural style and vibe is a direct reflection of each individual client. I don't strive to design my dream house for anyone. The goal is to design the perfect home for each client and I thoroughly enjoy all styles: contemporary, Tuscan, mountain modern, traditional, craftsman, mid-century modern

What architectural trends are you seeing a lot of right now?

There is still a steady stream of clients looking for a contemporary home, but we are also seeing a small shift towards craftsman as well.

What inspires your work?

Seeing amazing design materials used in unexpected ways, innovative spaces and the potential for truly transforming a building into a place people are drawn to. Also, it goes without saying, the clients I work with.

What do you wish more people knew or understood about your industry?

Design is the driving force behind every project, but there is so much more that goes into every project. Working with local jurisdictions, consultants, contractors and vendors, managing expectations related to schedule and helping clients stay focused on design decisions are just a few.

What are the benefits/powers of architecture?

Architecture creates and defines environments. The opportunities are endless and the potential to influence so many people is undeniable.



Dale Smith
Fänas Architecture
2930 Broadway,
Suite 106, Boulder

Why did you pursue a career in architecture?

I always had a strong art background throughout my public school years, but realized there were too many starving artists in the world (who were much better than me). I discovered architecture (a tangible art) a couple of years after high school, and have enjoyed it ever since.

How do you describe your architectural style and vibe?

I don't have a style per se. I love the diversity. With study and research, we can recreate any genre, and by applying our sense of "appropriateness," make it ours.

What architectural trends are you seeing a lot of right now?

It has been so great to see a turn towards the new modern and contemporary work being done, especially in the Boulder area. Elizabeth & I spent the 1990s in Vail, doing a lot of the Colorado craftsman style, which is a great mountain look, but it's wonderful to look behind other doors.

What inspires your work?

Everything. And clients who allow you to do what they hired you to do.

What do you wish more people knew or understood about your industry?

A couple of things. That not only are we designers, but also project managers, from top to bottom of each project. And that it's not all science (the objective), that much of it is art (the subjective). It should be fun, romantic.

What are the benefits/powers of architecture?

When well designed, spaces accomplish what they were intended for. Regardless of what you're doing in there, it's a joy.



Lauren Folkerts
HMH Architecture
and Interiors
1701 15th Street,
Suite B, Boulder

Why did you pursue a career in architecture?

Early on, I realized the power that buildings have not only to provide shelter, but to uplift us. While the potential is always there, many buildings miss the mark. The challenge of making buildings that are comforting, not confining, that inspires curiosity, that foster connection, and are not only good for us, but good for our world, drew me to becoming an architect.

How do you describe your architectural style and vibe?

I love regional modernism. Natural local materials and vernacular styles combined with modern features and detailing have always resonated strongly with me, but that doesn't mean it's the right choice for every project. In practice, our team works together with our clients, drawing inspiration from the site, the surroundings and the unique demands of the project to create something timeless regardless of style.

What architectural trends are you seeing a lot of right now?

You can't get away from modern right now. Even more traditional houses are getting edgier modern touches. But what I'm excited about are curves. I've been seeing arched doorways, curved sofas and circular windows bringing some sensuality back to architecture.

What inspires your work?

My inspiration always starts with the place, the people and the goal. Why here? Why now? What opportunities and challenges do the overlapping circumstances create? I find even the most basic things like the color of the dirt and the quality of afternoon light awe-inspiring.

What do you wish more people knew or understood about your industry?

HGTV and Pinterest are pushing architecture more and more into the realm of instant gratification and, to get there, people are sacrificing quality, sustainability and good design. That's not to say there shouldn't be an Instagrammable moment in your building, but a great building should do so much more than that.

What are the benefits/powers of architecture?

Buildings influence every aspect of our lives, from the quality of the air we breathe to our mood, our productivity and the habitability of the planet. Fortunately, there don't have to be trade-offs. Turns out, doing the right thing is usually better for us, the world and the bottom line.



Nathan Kipnis
Kipnis Architecture
Planning
1200 Pearl
Street, Boulder

Why did you pursue a career in architecture?

I grew up on the North Shore of Chicago near some spectacular homes designed by some amazing architects including Frank Lloyd Wright. Later, the 1973 oil embargo crisis opened my eyes to our reliance on oil, and I thought that I wanted to somehow, someday, do something to change that.

How do you describe your architectural style and vibe?

Our general vibe is really clean design that is a direct response to the site's context, the client's wishes and the local climate. We don't ever design two homes exactly the same — we believe in personalizing each and every design.

Our firm's overall philosophy can be summed up as high design/low carbon — to design beautiful architectural buildings and spaces that have a positive impact on society and the planet.

What architectural trends are you seeing a lot of right now?

It's fascinating and heartening to see that the concepts of low-carbon design that we espoused decades ago are being implemented across so many projects now. In addition to building for sustainability and resilience in the face of climate change, this past year has also brought healthy home features to the forefront.

What inspires your work?

The state of the planet drives me every day. We are in a critical time — with the earth's climate being attacked relentlessly. There is a lot of work to do and not much time to do it. While it's easy to focus negatively on the task at hand, I try to think positively about the solutions that are available. Every day, it's clearer to see what needs to be done for a more sustainable and resilient future.