

Colorado Environmental Film Festival Returns to Golden on February 21-23

There's excitement building about the possibility of the Sundance Film Festival coming to Boulder, but we already have a nationally renowned environmental film festival that takes place every February right here in Golden.

The Colorado Environmental Film Festival (CEFF) is a juried film festival that lives up to its name, bringing all kinds of film — long-form, shorts, children's films, and animated films — for a weekend run that includes awards, filmmaker Q&As, and more.

I recommend the **All Access pass** for \$99, because it not only includes entry to all screenings but also includes streaming access for most of the films for seven days after the festival. Buy it at <https://ceff.net/tickets>. There are three screening rooms at the Green Center on the Colorado School of Mines campus, so that's the only way to see your favorite films which might be scheduled simultaneously. Go to <https://ceff2025.eventive.org/films> for a complete list of the films.

Attendees will have plenty to choose from at this year's CEFF, including **9 films with ties to Colorado, 60+ feature-length and short films from 17 countries, and ten world premiere screenings.** The weekend also promises thoughtful discussions with filmmakers, panels, and a vibrant **Eco-Expo** in which to connect with environmentally conscious brands and organizations.

Golden Real Estate has been a sponsor of CEFF for most of its 16 years, so you'll see our ad in the program inviting you to visit our nearby office in downtown Golden. We'll also have a booth at the Eco-Expo in the lobby of the Green Center where we'll have an up-to-the-minute display of all the active solar powered homes in the Denver MLS. We'd be happy to take you to see any of them!

It makes sense that we're the only real estate brokerage sponsoring CEFF, because we are experts in all aspects of "green" building, and half of us drive electric cars. We have also become experts in "hardening" homes to resist wildfires, so please ask us questions or read some of my previous columns on those topics at www.JimSmithColumns.com.

CEFF groups films by several categories, including **Activism & Environmental Justice; Adventure; Consumption & Waste; Energy & Climate Chaos & Fossil Fuels; Health & Food; Land Use & Conservation; Wildlife; and Water, Rivers & Oceans.**

Among the films at this year's festival, I'm personally looking forward to a few particular films. First on that list is "**Half-Life of Memory: America's Forgotten Atomic Bomb Factory**," a 55-minute documentary about the sloppy operation and incomplete cleanup of Rocky Flats, the government's plant between Boulder and

Denver which manufactured the plutonium triggers for thousands of nuclear weapons.

As an aside, one of our broker associates, Kathy Jonke, was an environmental geophysicist for the contractor working on-site at Rocky Flats during the clean-up. She recommended this film before I saw it was on CEFF's schedule. Ask her sometime about her work.

Opening night is Friday the 21st at 7:00 in the Green Center's auditorium, featuring an 86-minute feature film, "**Bring Them Home**" about a small group of Blackfoot people who established the first wild buffalo herd on their ancestral lands. It is followed by a discussion with Executive Producer Melissa Grumhaus.

My choice of screenings at 10 a.m. on Saturday is the one which includes "**Our Movement Starts Here**," a documentary about the fight against a toxic landfill in North Carolina.

My choice of screenings at 1 p.m. is the one with three films about forests in Canada, Tasmania and on Washington's Olympic Peninsula.

Saturday's 3:30 p.m. screening of four different films includes "**Way the Wind Blows**," a short documentary about one family's journey of recovery from the 2022 Marshall Fire in Boulder County, which destroyed 1,000 homes. That set also includes two interesting films about glaciers.

Between the 3:30 screenings and the 7:15 screenings on Saturday will be an "**Evening Soiree**," a party with drinks and plant-based foods. Tickets for either of those screenings (or the All Access pass) includes an invitation to this party. This is when the awards for the best films will be presented in the Green Auditorium, along with the world premiere screening of "**The Snake and the Whale**," a 90-minute investigative documentary that uncovers antiquated dams on the Lower Snake River that are driving the extinction of fish and killer whales.

I'm going to attend the 7:15 set of three films, one of which is "**Responsible**," about the interplay of capitalism and environmentalism. The subtitle of the film is "**There Is No**

Business to Be Done on a Broken Planet."

On Sunday morning, I have chosen the screenings which include an animated short about invasive fauna and flora in Hawaii, a bird oasis on an abandoned golf course, overgrazing versus regenerative grazing in Nevada, a Tibetan nomad with a camera, and a threatened wetland between the banks of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Both of the Sunday morning film screenings

are family-friendly and free. Bring the kids!

At Sunday's 12:15 p.m. **Lunch & Learn** session, hear from members of the **Denver Electric Vehicle Council** and get the inside scoop on a variety of electric vehicles. Talk to the owners about their real life experiences driving an EV in Colorado and check out several models in the **Electric Vehicle Roundup** outside the Green Center from 9:15 to 3:30.

For the 1 p.m. screenings on Sunday, I have chosen the set which has five films focusing on sustainable home construction. This includes the "**Heart of a Building**" PBS program about John Avenson's net-zero home in Westminster which was aired in January on Channels 6 and 12.

The closing set of screenings starting at 3:30 on Sunday includes the "**Half-Life of Memory**" mentioned above, plus two other films: one about lead poisoning of birds and



animals who feed on the carcasses of animals killed with bullets containing lead; plus one about the large amount of water consumed in the manufacture of computer chips.

A big part of CEFF's mission is to educate, with a yearly focus on young filmmakers and films aimed at school age children from grade 4 through high school. These programs are always free, too. So, starting at 10 a.m. on Friday the 21st, prior to the festival's opening, there is a "**CEFF 4 Classrooms Field Trip**" in the Bunker auditorium at the Green Center. It is for schools, youth organizations, home schools and more, designed to share a variety of youth-friendly environmental films. In addition to showing nine short films, two of them by young filmmakers, it includes a Q&A session with filmmakers and other field experts related to the film topics. Register at info@ceff.net.

ADU Law Enables Homeowners to Invest on Their Own Lot

Beginning in July, homeowners in Colorado will be able to create an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) within their home (preferably a walk-out basement), over their detached garage, or by building a tiny home or casita in their backyard.

The enabling law was **HB24-1152**. Until this law was passed, local zoning regulations made it difficult to get approval to build an ADU; but now local governments can not block ADU development using zoning regulations, although other local laws, such as building codes, still apply.

Many homes, such as single-story homes with no basement on a small lot with no detached garage, will not be able to take advantage of this law, but many others can, and that's the purpose of the law — namely, to increase the housing supply through increased density. Before this new law, there wasn't much that Colorado homeowners could do to increase the housing supply. Now they can, and increase their wealth in the process.

In September *Colorado Biz* had an article that described how the law works: "*ADUs add housing units with minimal impacts to infrastructure and with increased compact infill development. They provide intergenerational living options and enable child or eldercare and aging in place. Because they're small, ADU rents are typically low.*"

The financial information for a specific ADU varies greatly, dependent on the particular ADU and site costs. That makes the numbers used in the article only rough estimates. The cost of an ADU is dependent on choices made by the homeowner who is installing the unit. It can be very expensive, but there are ways to keep it reasonable. Regardless, the article is a helpful summary.

One of the many reasons cited for expanding the use of ADUs is to increase the availability of affordable housing, although this rationale has been questioned. There are many things that can make ADUs cost-effective, thus increasing affordability (both for purchase and rent).

Two of the factors that contribute to affordability are the size of the units and the cost of the land. ADUs are small but not uncomfortably small, and day-to-day life is unchanged. They tap into a trend of smaller living spaces.

For a homeowner considering putting in an ADU, it's one real estate investment that includes no cost for land. ADUs use space that is, at best, underutilized, and already owned. This is a big plus where the value of land is high.

As part of the new law, the legislature appropriated money and tasked the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) to develop programs to enable homeowners with moderate means to afford construction of an ADU. The idea is to jump-start ADU finance in the private sector.

Finally, units assembled off-site (referred to as manufactured, modular, or prefab) can reduce cost significantly, and have other advantages such as shorter lead times, far less on-site construction, environmental benefits, etc. A Colorado company that specializes in manufactured detached ADUs is **Verdant Living** (www.verdantliving.us). The owner of that company, **John Phillips**, is happy to discuss ADU options with you. Because of the huge variety of situations where ADUs are possible, he tries to recommend options that might work, often not involving his company. He can be reached at 303-717-1962 (voice or text).

His is a Denver business. Another player in the field of manufactured housing on the national level is **Boxabl** (www.boxabl.com), which specializes in factory-made homes that literally unfold after being delivered on a standard width flatbed trailer. Its "**Casita**" is a 361-square-foot modular home, offering a stylish, efficient living space with a kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom. It's delivered with all-electric appliances (including laundry) and 100-amp electric service. It is currently priced at \$60,000. It must be installed on a foundation prepared with electrical and plumbing hookups. It is built to meet building codes.

Recently, the company introduced the "**Baby Box**," a 120-square-foot living space built to RV standards. Easy setup, no special equipment or foundation needed. The MSRP of Baby Box is \$30,000 with introductory pricing of \$19,999. It comes, like a mobile home, on a frame with permanent wheels. It too has a bathroom and kitchen, but with water tank and waste tank like any RV. It is intended for delivery to mobile home parks.

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