AIA Triangle

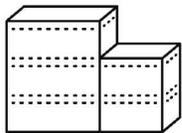## 2026 ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AWARDS
SUBMISSION CRITERIA & CHECKLIST

The 2026 Design Awards program celebrates the best contemporary architecture by Triangle architects regardless of budget, size, style or type. These projects show the range of outstanding work architects create and highlight the many ways buildings and spaces can improve our lives.

*The **AIA Triangle Community Impact Through Design (CITD) Award** is a distinguished award established to celebrate and honor the lasting legacies of **Phil Freelon, FAIA**, and **Steve Schuster, FAIA**, recognizing projects that create meaningful and enduring positive impacts within their communities.*

*Projects may be submitted concurrently for consideration in both the **Design Award categories** and the **CITD Award** in the same year, provided they meet the eligibility criteria for each. Projects that have previously received recognition in **Design Awards** or the **CITD Award** categories are eligible for resubmission in future years for consideration in the other applicable categories.*
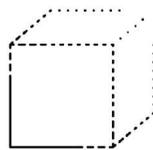
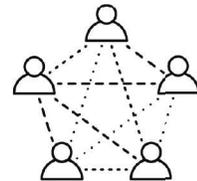## AIA TRIANGLE DESIGN AWARDS

Architectural Design Award		Community Impact Through Design Award
BUILT	**UNBUILT**	**CITD**
eligible for Merit and Honor	*eligible for Merit and Honor*	*eligible for Merit and Honor*
• Large Projects • Interior Arch. • Residential • Small Projects		

All projects are eligible to win 1 award per division above, either in the same year or in subsequent years.

In 2019, the AIA adopted the Framework for Design Excellence as the set of guidelines and requirements to assess project performance. Climate action requires a holistic approach addressing the interdependence among people, buildings, infrastructure and the environment. The Framework for Design Excellence provides the elements that support this vision during project evaluation.

While projects submitted do not need to address all 10 principles included in the framework, designers are asked to reflect on how the project performs in this context and highlight relevant narratives and metrics when applicable. Please refer to page 4 regarding additional instructions regarding submission requirements relating to the AIA Framework for Design Excellence.

2026 Design Awards Eligibility

Design Awards will be classified into two divisions - Built and Unbuilt - for publicity and organization purposes, with specific categories within each division. **The Jury retains the right to reclassify projects.**

Eligible entries must be authored by a member or associate member of AIA Triangle. Entries can have any location, but the design team must include meaningful impact by a member of AIA Triangle. An entrant may enter more than one submission.

Note: Renovations and additions are eligible for submission in all Design Awards categories, but project scope must be clearly and accurately represented through graphics and written descriptions.

BUILT
The categories will be Large Projects, Interior Fit-Ups, Residential Design, and Small Projects.

Projects must have been constructed on or after January 1, 2021. Projects in the Built categories are eligible for Honor and Merit Awards.

Projects previously awarded an Unbuilt Award or the CITD Award are eligible for consideration for a Built Award. Projects are eligible to be submitted concurrently for a Built Award and the CITD Award, and are eligible to win both in the same year.
Previously awarded projects in their respective categories are not eligible for resubmission in the same category.

- **Large Projects** - Projects submitted in this category will include a broad range of project types including, but not limited to, civic, educational, institutional, faith-based, office, retail, hospitality, and manufacturing over 1,500 Sq Ft. Mixed-use residential projects will be categorized under Large Design.

- **Interior Architecture** – projects submitted in this category should focus on the design of interior spaces. Projects may be of any size and may include new construction or renovations. Project types include, but are not limited to, civic, educational, institutional, faith-based, office, retail, hospitality, and manufacturing. Projects that are within the scope of a larger project are eligible, but individual rooms or spaces within the same project shall be considered as one entry. Projects in this category are eligible for Honor and Merit Awards.

- **Residential Design** – projects submitted in this category will include single family or multi-family projects of any size. Mixed-use residential projects will be categorized under Commercial Design.

- **Small Projects** – projects submitted in this category will include public installations, objects, works of environmental art, or architectural design up to 1,500 Sq Ft. Renovations, additions, and projects that are within the scope of a larger project are eligible, but project scope must be clearly and accurately represented through graphics and written descriptions.

UNBUILT
Projects submitted as unbuilt include commercial design, residential design, competitions, master planning, urban planning, and conceptual design. Submissions may be of any size and in any stage of design so long as they are as-yet unrealized. Submissions do not need to be tied to a client or a commission. Unbuilt projects are eligible to receive Honor and Merit Awards.

Digital Entry Submission

Entry Fee:
$260 for large firms (50 or more employees)
$210 for medium firms (11-49 employees)
$160 for small firms (10 or fewer employees)

Entry Fees are non-refundable

Submission Deadline:
February 27, 2026, 6:00 pm
The Design Awards portal will be open from February 2 through February 27. You may complete the Registration Round and the Submittal Round at the same time, if you wish.

Submit the following for each entry:

Online Form:

- In the Design Awards portal register or sign in with your firm log-in
- Submit your project data into the **Registration Round**
- **Be sure to make note of the 8-digit ID number provided with your registration.** This will be used on your Digital Upload PDF during the Submission Round.

- You will then have until **February 27, 2026** to submit your Digital Upload into the **Submission Round**.
- *If you submitted for awards last year with AIA NC or AIA Triangle, you can resubmit any eligible project. You will have the option to update the project data.*
- In the **Submission Round** you will submit:
  - Concealed identification data
  - Descriptive data
  - 1 high-resolution Public Display Image (JPEG, 16:9, 300 dpi)

Digital Upload:

- 1 Project PDF with no more than 13 slides (16:9, max 20 MB)
  - cover page containing only your ID number centered on the page, no images or special formatting
  - up to 12 high-resolution project slides (300dpi)
  - include any photographs, drawings, diagrams, and short-form narratives you wish to present
  - pages shall be labeled with your ID number and page number
  - **Do not include your firm name** in any file names or on any slides
  - Use the following naming conventions for your Digital Upload:
    PROJECT NAME_LARGE
    PROJECT NAME_INTERIOR
    PROJECT NAME_RESIDENTIAL
    PROJECT NAME_SMALL
    PROJECT NAME_UNBUILT

Digital Entry Submission (continued)

Descriptive Data:

The online form will contain both the Concealed ID and Descriptive Data Sheet. The format provided must be used without the addition of any photographs, drawings, lines, or color.

The "Short Description of Project" should be up to 200 words and will be read aloud while the jury views your Digital Upload during the first phase of the jury process.

AIA Framework for Design Excellence:

In 2019, the AIA adopted the Framework for Design Excellence as the set of guidelines and requirements to assess project performance. Climate action requires a holistic approach addressing the interdependence among people, buildings, infrastructure and the environment. The Framework for Design Excellence provides the elements that support this vision during project evaluation.

Following the "Short Description of Project" will be the "Architect's Statement Concerning the AIA Framework." Please review the AIA Framework for Design Excellence and choose the three principles that had the greatest impact on your project. Your statement is an opportunity to share how your work responds to, reflects, and embodies these selected principles. Your statement may be up to 500 words. The AIA Framework can be accessed through the link below.

https://www.aia.org/resources/6077668-framework-for-design-excellence

AIA Triangle Design Award submissions will be accepted in an entirely digital format, as outlined above.

Please note deadline extensions will not be allowed. Please plan accordingly.

Please follow the directions for submissions as described in this document. If you have any questions regarding the online submission process, contact us:
    Keri Dixon, AIANC Director of Communications
    919-833-6656

    kdixon@aianc.org

Evaluation Criteria

All entries will be judged on the basis of their architectural design excellence. The AIA Triangle Design Awards program promotes excellence in design regardless of project type. Jurors will be asked to consider important issues/challenges particular to each project type. However, all entries within each category will be judged collectively.

The jury will decide the number of awards to be given and will confer two levels of award: Honor and Merit

Certificates for all award-winning entries will be presented at the awards reception. It is important to have a representative from the winning firm present to accept the award. Winners will receive three certificates: one for the architect, one for the owner and one for the contractor. Additional certificates will be available at the expense of the award recipient.

Note: Award winners will not be notified prior to Awards Reception.

The Jury

Each year the AIA Triangle Design Awards task force selects an architect to serve as Jury Chair. The Jury Chair is selected for their breadth of experience, passion for serving the design community, and the unique lens through which they view the practice of architecture. The Jury Chair is then given free reign to assemble a jury of their choosing.

Most importantly, the jury is not local to AIA Triangle, thus giving them the ability to judge the work without bias or knowledge of past winners.

Exhibition / Publicity

Awarded Projects
The AIA Triangle Awards Committee will publish the public display image and "short description" for all the awarded projects to our social media platforms. Additionally, the entire digital submission document for all the awarded projects will be shared on the AIA Triangle website. Photos and the "short description" from awarded projects may be used in future publicity materials to promote the AIA Triangle Awards program.

Projects Submitted for Awards Consideration
All entries will be posted on the AIA Triangle website under Design Awards. All entries will be exhibited at the Design Awards Reception.

Drawings and photographs shall not be restricted against publication. It is the entrant's responsibility to clear all drawings and photographs for release by the AIA Triangle Awards Committee which will assume no responsibility for copyrights or photographic fees. The photographs provided for each entry may be used for unrestricted newspaper, magazine, website, and social media publicity. Credit must be given to the photographer by the entrant.

Design Awards Entry Checklist

Online Form

- ☐ concealed identification data
- ☐ Photo release form
- ☐ Descriptive data
- ☐ 1 high-resolution Public Display Image (JPEG, 16:9, 300 dpi)

Digital Submission Package

- ☐ 1 PDF with no more than 13 slides
- ☐ 16:9, max 20 MB

Submission Deadline:
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