



The AIA Charlotte Design Awards seeks to honor passion and commitment to pushing the boundaries of design and transforming spaces through exceptional innovation, creativity, and sustainability. Our region has become one of the fastest growing in the country, and economic growth has brought both opportunity and competition. Inspiring design work that positively impacts the communities we serve in an increasingly complex environment should be celebrated. The AIA Framework for Design Excellence challenges architects with a vision of what the profession strives to achieve. The framework's ten principles are relevant for every architect, every client, and every project, regardless of size, typology, or aspiration.

The AIA Charlotte Design Awards judging criteria align with at least one of the ten principles in the AIA Framework for Design Excellence. Specifically, the judging criteria emphasize **sustainability, resilience, and equitable design**, which directly connect to the **Framework's principles** such as:

1. **Design for Integration** – The evaluation criteria require submissions to convey a strong narrative about the project's **design intent, process, and response to challenges**, demonstrating how the design integrates with its context, stakeholders, and broader planning considerations.
2. **Design for Equitable Communities** – The awards encourage projects that positively impact communities, addressing public needs and fostering inclusivity, similar to the Framework's focus on designing spaces that promote social equity.
3. **Design for Energy & Ecosystems** – Climate change is explicitly mentioned as a consideration in submissions, requiring architects to discuss **sustainability strategies** and how they influenced the project's design decisions.
4. **Design for Economy** – The awards celebrate innovative solutions that balance **functionality, aesthetics, and impact**, mirroring the Framework's goal of creating efficient and high-value design solutions.

Overall, the **AIA Charlotte Design Awards** use the **Framework for Design Excellence as a reference**, ensuring that winning projects align with **broader architectural best practices** in sustainability, community impact, and innovation.

Submissions will be accepted in an entirely digital format, via an online form, accompanied by a digital upload of your images. Please follow the directions for submission outlined in this document. If you have questions regarding your submission, contact Kate Shelton at [kate.shelton@aiacharlotte.org](mailto:kate.shelton@aiacharlotte.org) or 704-369-2302.

### **Design Awards Entry Checklist for Submission Round**

**Your entry should include:**

**ONE Online Form, will include the following:**

- \_\_\_ Concealed Identification Data (reference 2c)
- \_\_\_ Image and Photo Release Form (see Publication in the Additional Information section)

#### **Design Awards Descriptive Data (reference Submission Requirements section)**

- \_\_\_ Short Description of Project – 500 words (reference 2b)

**ONE Digital Upload, including (reference item 2c in the following description):**

\_\_\_ 13 high-resolution (8.5x11 OR 16:9, 300dpi) JPEG images – one for each of the views, photographs, drawings, or diagrams you wish to present.

\_\_\_ Address the [Framework for Design Excellence](#) on slide 13

\_\_\_ A high-resolution (8.5x11 OR 16:9, 300dpi) JPEG “Project Title- Public Display Image”

This will be used in a PowerPoint, please consider formatting image for landscape, not portrait. Your logo can be placed on this image.

\_\_\_ A 820 x 500 JPEG image “Project Title – Public Display Image for Website” – this image

will be displayed on AIA Charlotte’s website scrolling banner of images. Your logo can be placed on this image.

### **Submission Tips**

Submissions should include the graphic (visual) and narrative content sufficient to convey the design parameters and design solution. Submissions typically include a combination of photographs (monochrome or color), drawings (plans, sections, elevations), diagrams, benchmarks and annotations. Please include a graphic scale and north arrow on the plans, as applicable, for reference.

Every submission should clearly depict the project scope, its aspirational goals, its relationship to context, program and so on.

It is critical to help jurors understand the important qualities of the project as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. Be aware of the number of images and information that can be comprehended from a single page viewed *in quick succession*.

Submissions should be as comprehensive as possible and relate to the salient aspects of the design. An image of each primary building facade should be evident in the submission. In the case of a group of buildings, a photograph showing the overall composition of structures should be included.

### **Entry Fees:**

\$225 Member Rate (Early Bird April 30 – May 14)

\$275 Member Rate (May 15 – May 30)

\$200 Member Rate (Additional Entries)

\$300 Non-Member Rate (Early Bird April 30 – May 14)

\$350 Non-Member Rate (May 15 – May 30)

### **AIA CHARLOTTE 2025 DESIGN AWARDS PROGRAM: SUBMISSION CRITERIA**

The AIA Charlotte 2025 Design Awards aims to recognize and celebrate the visionary efforts of our area architects and the architecture that exemplifies innovation, creativity, and excellence within our communities. The role of the architect is one of great responsibility; defining our built environment, rethinking how we inhabit and interact with our surroundings, reimagining the blend of functionality and aesthetics, all while balancing and even enhancing the impact we have on the planet.

Please see below for more information regarding the Program Entry Requirements within the list of Entry Categories.

## **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

### **Program Eligibility: Entrants**

Current AIA Charlotte members who are registered architects are eligible regardless of project location or the architect's residence.

Registered architects practicing in Charlotte (and are not current AIA Charlotte members) are eligible to submit projects located in North Carolina.

If the design architect is not registered in the State of North Carolina, the North Carolina state-licensed architect of record must be credited on the submission form noting the collaboration and applicable title / role 'Architect of Record' or 'Design Architect', or similar.

Any registered architect with work completed in Charlotte is eligible regardless of the architect's residence or location of primary office.

### **Program Eligibility: Projects**

Projects that have previously received an AIA Charlotte Design Award are not eligible for entry into the AIA Charlotte 2025 Design Awards Program, unless the award was under the 'Unrealized' category and the project is now eligible for a different category.

Projects must have been completed within the past ten (10) years for entries submitted for the built categories. Design for unbuilt projects must have been completed within the past five (5) years for entries submitted for the unbuilt category.

Awards for unrealized projects shall recognize unbuilt design(s) as well as theoretical or conceptual work, including installations, environmental art, and research. *Projects cannot have been undertaken for academic credit.*

A maximum of five (5) submissions are allowed per individual entrant.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

All projects will be judged based on their design and architectural excellence according to the highest guiding principles of the AIA, the [Framework for Design Excellence](#), inspiring sustainable, resilient, and equitable design. This evaluation criteria is applicable to all Award Categories. Use the 13<sup>th</sup> image of your submission to address how the project addresses at least one principle of the AIA Framework for Design Excellence.

All eligible project submissions shall be reviewed by a chaired jury of approximately 4-8 individuals selected by AIA Charlotte from a wide range of leading professionals within the design community.

Entries will be evaluated individually and not in competition with other submissions.

## **DIGITAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

### **Follow these steps for each submission**

#### **1) Registration Round**

Fill out one online form: You will register your firm in our Design Awards System. (If you have registered for awards in the past with us, AIA North Carolina or AIA Triangle, you can log in and resubmit any eligible project for an AIA Charlotte award. You will have the option to

update any of the information you previously submitted.) After you have registered your firm, you may submit your project's information into the "Registration Round."

In order for members to receive member entry fee pricing, they must enter their membership number on the registration page. Members and non-members submitting more than one project will receive a link to submit additional entries at a \$25 discount per entry.

## **2) Submission Round**

You will then have until May 23, 2025 to submit your information into the "Submission Round." In the submission round you will submit your Concealed ID, Descriptive Data, Digital Images, and Photo Release Form.

Entrants shall submit individual projects online into the appropriate Entry Category as described above.

### **2a) Submission Content**

You will upload a maximum of 13 Digital Images, one "Public Display Image", and one "Public Display Image for Website" during the Submission Round process. The 13<sup>th</sup> image should address how your project conforms to at least one of the principles of the AIA Framework for Design Excellence. Project submissions shall be in the form of high-resolution (8.5x11 OR 16:9, 300dpi) JPEG images.

Digital images should be uploaded in the order to be viewed during judging. The Public Display image will be used for both printing and posting on our website homepage banner. We are asking for two file sizes to accommodate these image displays (see checklist on page 1).

During digital image upload, you will be asked to select which image will serve as the Jury

Photo. This image will serve as a reference to your project while the jurors are reviewing submissions in the online portal.

### **2b) 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 500 words or less and will be read aloud while the jury views electronic images during the first phase of the jury process and later used for publication of the winners.

### **2c) Concealed Identification**

A form is provided through the online portal to record the concealed identification for the project. All information requested on the form must be included. No information regarding the project's designer shall appear elsewhere in the submission – *the projects shall remain anonymous during jury deliberations*. Should the submission receive an award, material for publicity and certificates will be taken directly from the information provided on this form. The architect for the project is to be the "Architect of Record" which is the licensed architect(s) or firm(s) with whom the owner contracted. A limited number of individual names may be added to the award as long as the parties involved agree. Proper and accurate credit for the project is the responsibility of the entrant. In the case of disputes or ambiguities about the proper credit, the award may be deferred.

## **AWARD CLASSES**

### **Honor Award**

To be bestowed for exceptional work, easily distinguishable by a superlative level of design, function, rigor and other remarkable characteristics.

### **Merit Award**

To be bestowed for work that demonstrates a high level of design quality and approach worthy of recognition and commendation.

### **Citation Award**

At the jury's discretion, to be bestowed for work that may not fit exactly into a particular Entry Category or has other unique aspects worthy of recognition.

The jury will determine the final (maximum) number of awards and whether to confer the Honor, Merit, or Citation Award(s) to certain projects.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Award Certificates**

Certificates for all award-winning entries will be at the Design Awards Gala. Winners will presented receive a maximum of two (2) certificates. Additional certificates will be available at the expense of the award recipient.

### **Publication**

AIA Charlotte intends to publish the entries that receive awards. Therefore, it is essential that drawings and photographs not be restricted against publication. It is the entrant's responsibility to clear all drawings and photographs for release. A form is provided through the online portal to secure the necessary permission(s).

## **ENTRY CATEGORIES**

The AIA Charlotte 2024 Design Awards Program is offering awards in the following Entry Categories:

- **New Construction & Substantial Renovation**
- **Residential**
- **Adaptive Reuse/Preservation**
- **Interior Architecture**
- **Unrealized Projects**
- **Design Innovation & Emerging Practices**
- **Collaborative Project Delivery**

## **Entry Category Descriptions**

### **New Construction & Substantial Renovation**

Projects submitted in this category will include a broad range of types such as Commercial, Educational, Multifamily, Housing, Institutional, or Faith-based Architecture. Master Planning and Urban Design projects are also eligible for recognition under this category. Renovations and addition projects are eligible, but project scope must be clearly and accurately presented through graphics and written descriptions. New Construction & Substantial Renovation projects are eligible for Honor, Merit, and Citation Awards

### **Residential**

Projects submitted in this category will include single family residential projects or multi-family projects of no more than (4) units. Larger multi-family projects will be categorized under New Construction / Substantial Renovation. Renovation and addition projects are eligible, but project scope must be clearly and accurately presented through graphics and written descriptions. Housing projects are eligible for Honor, Merit, and Citation Awards.

### **Adaptive Reuse / Preservation**

Projects submitted in this category may be of any project type (Commercial, Educational, Residential, etc.) but should include either a renovation within an existing building or a new construction that expands an existing structure or site. Projects that have been

recognized for historical value through inclusion in Historic Districts or listing on Historic Registers should identify the type and reason for recognition in the written project description. Projects that do not have official recognition or designation are also eligible and should outline the historical significance in the project description. The intent of this award is to recognize thoughtful interventions or restorations that create a synergy between old and new construction. Routine maintenance, such as painting or reroofing is not considered restoration work for the purposes of this award. Adaptive Reuse/Preservation projects are eligible for Honor, Merit, and Citation Awards.

### **Interior Architecture**

Projects submitted in this category should illustrate outstanding building interiors created by architects. These projects may include new construction or renovations of existing construction. Individual rooms or spaces within the same project shall be considered as one project. Interior Architecture projects are eligible for Honor, Merit, and Citation Awards.

### **Unrealized Projects**

Awards for unrealized projects shall recognize unbuilt design(s) as well as theoretical or conceptual work, including installations, environmental art, and research. *Projects cannot have been undertaken for academic credit.* Projects submitted in this category may be unrealized architectural designs of any project type or conceptual design studies that investigate a specific topic or project type for research purposes. Unrealized client-sponsored projects (commercial or residential buildings, interiors, transportation, infrastructure, monuments, etc.) are eligible for recognition. Projects under construction or

otherwise apparently assured of construction are not eligible. Projects cannot have been undertaken for academic credit or as a non-commissioned design competition entry. Unrealized projects are eligible for Merit and Citation Awards only.

### **Design Innovation & Emerging Practices**

This category recognizes projects that push the boundaries of design through cutting-edge solutions, smart technology integration, and forward-thinking methodologies. Submissions should highlight innovative material applications, emerging building typologies, advanced tectonics, unique detailing, and evolving design trends. Emphasis is placed on work that is experimental, imaginative, and exploratory, demonstrating a bold vision for the future of the built environment.

### **Collaborative Project Delivery**

This category honors projects where successful interdisciplinary collaboration played a defining role in achieving excellence. Entries should showcase how architects, engineers, contractors, public agencies, private stakeholders, and other team members worked together in Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), Integrated Project Delivery (IPD), or other deeply integrated processes. Recognized projects will demonstrate seamless coordination, shared goals, and innovative problem-solving that resulted in more efficient, impactful, and community-driven outcomes. Descriptive Data Options to address Framework for Design Excellence.