AIA Charlotte

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 or 704-369-2302.

Design Awards Entry Checklist for Submission Round
Your entry should include:

_____ Contact Information
_____ Project Category
_____ Short Description of Project – 500 words (reference 2b)
_____ File Uploads:
- Up to 13 project digital images
- Public Image

_____ Concealed Identification Data (reference 2c)
_____ Image Release & Usage Authorization
_____ Payment

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

- 13 high-resolution (16:9, 1920 x 1080 px) 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 landscape 1280 x 780 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.

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:

Large Firm (50+ total employees)	$275
Medium Firm (11 – 30 total employees)	$225
Small Firm (1 – 10 total employees)	$175
Additional Submissions	$175
Non-Member	$375

AIA CHARLOTTE 2027 DESIGN AWARDS PROGRAM: SUBMISSION CRITERIA

The AIA Charlotte 2027 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 architects 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.

For more information and/or clarification, please contact:
Kate Shelton @ kate.shelton@aiacharlotte.org

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 2027 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.*

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 13th 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

Project entries are submitted electronically through the AIA Charlotte website Design Awards page. All submission content is submitted in one upload and payment is required at the time to

complete submission. ***Submitters will not be able to return to the project entry to make additional edits or upload content.***

2a) Submission Content (refer to checklist)
You will upload a maximum of 13 Digital Images and one "Public Display Image", during the Submission Round process. The 13th 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 "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. The design architect should be disclosed if applicable. Proper and accurate credit for the project is the responsibility of the entrant. In the case of disputes or ambiguities about 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 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 entries that receive awards. Therefore, it is essential that drawings and photographs are not 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 confirm the necessary permission(s).

ENTRY CATEGORIES

Projects may be entered in more than one category; each requiring a submission fee. The AIA Charlotte 2027 Design Awards Program is offering awards in the following Entry Categories:

- **Civic/Cultural Architecture**
- **Commercial Architecture**
- **Adaptive Reuse/Preservation**
- **Unrealized Projects**
- **Education Architecture**
- **Health Architecture**
- **Historic Architecture**
- **Interior Architecture**
- **Residential Architecture**
- **Small Project Architecture**

Entry Category Descriptions

CIVIC/CULTURAL ARCHITECTURE Building design projects involving structures for religion, museums, performing arts, sports, community centers, fire stations, police stations, justice facilities and other community serving buildings**.**

COMMERCIAL ARCHITECTURE Building design projects involving structures for commerce, including but not limited to office, retail, multi-family housing and food service**.**

UNREALIZED PROJECTS Awards for unrealized projects shall recognize unbuilt design(s) as well as theoretical or conceptual work, including installations, environmental art, and research.

EDUCATION ARCHITECTURE Building design projects involving public and private structures for K-12, community colleges, and universities.

HEALTH ARCHITECTURE Building design projects involving structures for well-being and health care.

HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE Building design projects involving the preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, or sympathetic adaptive reuse of older structures. Projects must remain historic in character.

INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE Projects involving the design of interior spaces of any building type.

RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE Single-family residential projects, including homes, additions, restorations, renovations, and interiors.

SMALL PROJECT ARCHITECTURE Building design projects involving structures that are less than or equal to 5,000 gross square feet.

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