



Kentucky HONOR AWARDS '26

FOR EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The AIA Kentucky Honor Awards program is dedicated to recognizing and applauding the design contributions of Kentucky architects and outstanding Kentucky architecture, to establish a standard of excellence against which architects can measure their own performance, and to promote public awareness and appreciation of the value of architecture and architectural practice.

The Kentucky Society's "Honor Award for Achievement of Excellence in Architectural Design" is the highest professional honor bestowed upon a Kentucky architect by his or her peers, and it distinguishes the architect as one who is dedicated to making architecture the best it can be.

***In preparation for this year's awards, we have been actively listening to our members' feedback and responding with improvements to the program. Here are some important details and updates to be aware of:**

- Submissions are still blindly juried by a different panel of out-of-state architects each year
- All submissions will be featured on a banner exhibit visiting public libraries in Lexington and Louisville
- **(*NEW)** All submissions will be nominated for inclusion as a project feature in the upcoming season of the CBS hit, "[America ByDesign](#)"
- **(*NEW)** Previous submissions not yet recognized are encouraged to be resubmitted at a 50% discount
- **(*NEW)** Submissions have been modernized to an HD PDF format for design flexibility, software preference, and higher resolution images
- **(*NEW)** Awards Category thresholds have been updated to better align with current construction costs

The following requirements shall be adhered to in the preparation of submissions to the 2026 AIA Kentucky Honor Awards Program. Responsibility for compliance rests with the entrant, and entries submitted incorrectly may be disqualified.

ELIGIBILITY

An entry must be a work of architecture completed after January 1, 2016 and prior to June 1, 2026 and may be:

- a new building
- a renovation
- a restoration
- a complex of buildings forming a single project
- a park or plaza
- a mall
- a new interior design project

Eligible projects include:

- projects built anywhere in the world designed by a Kentucky AIA Architect or Associate member
- any project built in Kentucky and designed by any AIA Architect | AIA Associate member.

Architects and/or Associates responsible for the project must be an AIA member at the time of the submittal. Any entry submitted in a previous AIA Kentucky Honor Awards Program and not accorded recognition may be entered again in the 2026 program at a 50% discount, provided that the project was completed within the prescribed dates.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

- Entry Fee: **\$175** each new submission / **\$87** each resubmission from previous years
- The entry must be submitted by an AIA Member. The AIA member number must be verified.
- All entries will be submitted online, and work may continue on the entry until the submission deadline.
- Entrants are encouraged to submit more than one project. Each entry will be assigned a unique entry number that will identify the submission.
- AIA Kentucky reserves the right to review the submission for compliance with submission rules. Non-compliance may result in rejection of the entry without refund of the entry fee.
- Entry materials will not be returned. The entrant's signature constitutes written permission for AIA Kentucky to use submission materials for publication and Chapter archival purposes.
- Winning entrants will be required to provide AIA Kentucky, at their own cost, any photographs, digital images, and written materials needed for publicity purposes.
- All entry fees and submission forms must be completed through our online registration system by 10:00 p.m. EST on **Wednesday, May 27, 2026**. The submission deadline date will be strictly observed, with no exception.
- Winners will be recognized at an Awards Banquet at the Speed Art Museum on **Tuesday, September 22, 2026 following the AIA Kentucky Annual Convention**. Additional details TBD.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Honor Awards Program entries for 2026 may be submitted in a variety of categories, allowing the Jury to differentiate between projects of various types and scales. When submitting your project, you must specify which category best describes your project:

- **Small Project Award** — less than \$2M
- **New Construction** — less than \$10M
- **New Construction** — greater than \$10M and less than \$50M
- **New Construction** — greater than \$50M
- **Additions/Renovations/Restoration** — less than \$10M
- **Additions/Renovations/Restoration** — greater than \$10M
- **Unbuilt Work** – An Unbuilt entry may be any commissioned or non-commissioned project as described below, and may be any building design, interior architecture, restoration, or urban design/planning project for which the documentation has been complete since January 1, 2016.

Commissioned: Projects selected to pursue. May be owner commissioned, not yet built, or abandoned, or projects selected to complete for a design competition, not yet built, or abandoned. Construction must not have commenced prior to the deadline for receipt of entries.

Non-commissioned projects: The intent of this award category is to welcome ideas and work of practicing architects and architectural educators throughout Kentucky. The project may be academic, a design competition entry executed in direct response to an organized design or entry requirement, or theoretical / research projects submitted in the interest of advancement in the profession.

- **AIA Kentucky 25-Year Award** – All entries intended for the 25-year award must be a constructed work of architecture built over twenty-five years ago anywhere in Kentucky and still being used for the original purpose. The award intends to recognize projects of distinction that add value to the communities in which they belong and that have retained their original design intent. All AIA Kentucky member architects are eligible to submit project entries. Also, all AIA members, Kentucky licensed non-resident architects are eligible to submit project entries located in Kentucky. The 25-Year Award submissions will be judged by the AIA Kentucky FAIA Design Awards Task Force and only one 25-year award winner will be selected.
- **People’s Choice Award** – All entries in the categories of Small Project, New Construction, and Additions/Renovations/Restoration will automatically be included in the public voting process for the People’s Choice Award. All projects will be grouped into one general pool, and one People’s Choice Award will be presented. Participants are encouraged to share the voting opportunity with colleagues, friends, and family once the voting platform opens, but please note as you make this public that all project categories (except unbuilt) are automatically included as participants in the voting process, none are nominated.

The Jury is encouraged to recognize Honor, Merit, and/or Citation Award status in any or all categories. However, it is the jury’s discretion to award as many or as few awards for each category as the Jury believes are justified by the quality of the submissions. The categories above only serve to organize the projects. There is no limit to the number of awards given in any project category.

CONCEALED PROJECT IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION

List the key participants in the design team and their specific role (architect of record, other architect, etc.) as well as engineers and other consultants, in the firm section.

Note: please enter other architectural firms or consultants under the title Firm(s) and indicate their specific role i.e., architect of record, structural engineer, general contractor, owner, photographer, etc.

All relevant project team information MUST be provided, and we urge absolute accuracy since the data will be used as provided on publicity materials, award certificates, and in the printed brochure of winners. Any errors or omissions will be the responsibility of the entrant. AIA Kentucky will not be responsible for misrepresentation, breaches of agreement or conflicts of interest.

SUBMITTAL FORMAT AND FILE REQUIREMENTS

All submission forms, file uploads and payment fees will be handled through our online submission site. After creating an account, you may begin working on your forms and uploading the required files. You can save your work as you go and return to the site as needed, but all submission materials and entry fee payments must be complete and submitted by the submission deadline, which is **10:00 p.m. on May 27**.

PROJECT / JURY PDF

All descriptive information, drawings, and photographs are to be compiled and submitted in PDF format. The restrictions for this document have been significantly relaxed, to allow more creative freedom in the submittal process. As such, PDF submittals shall conform to only the following requirements:

- The total size for each entry – all pages included – may not exceed **100 MB**.
- Each submission may contain a maximum of **18 pages**, based on 8.5x11 page size in landscape format. This includes the Cover Page and up to two Project Description pages. At your discretion, you may submit individual images on separate pages or arrange multiple elements in layout on a single slide.
- Please remember you must conceal reference to the architecture firm or design team members on all pages/images submitted for jury review. Identification of project authorship within the PDF, including the file naming convention, will **disqualify the submission**. The PDF file name shall be only the entry code assigned by the submission site.
- Each PDF entry shall contain the following:
 - **Page 1 – Cover Page** containing only the Honor Awards logo and your **entry number**.
 - **Pages 2 & 3 – Project Description and Introduction:** Minimum text size 9 point. Provide project information including entry ID #, location, submission category, synopsis of program and solution, etc. If applicable, discuss how the project addresses applicable measures of [AIA's Framework for Design Excellence](#).
 - **Subsequent Pages (4-18) – Visuals:** Include images along with additional, succinct annotation. The format and design of these pages are at the entrant's discretion. However, all pages should remain in landscape orientation.

Please include photographs, drawings, floor plans, elevations, sections, renderings, and graphic images as necessary to provide a clear understanding of the extent and quality of the finished project. Drawings should indicate scale graphically.
 - Any/all use of AI must be acknowledged.

IMAGE GUIDELINES

Due to the maximum PDF file size of **100 MB**, a maximum resolution of 300 dpi is recommended. Higher res image files are unnecessary and will slow down the jury process.

The images may either be color or black and white. Images may not be manipulated or enhanced in any way that changes the building itself. Removal of power lines or other obstructions is acceptable if there is no enhancement of the building as it appears in its current built form as a result. Sky replacements/enhancements, removal or transformation of building surfaces, materials, and mechanical/electrical appurtenances are not permitted.

Remove any firm identification from all images and drawings. The identity of the client should be concealed in all written documents and visual images, except for signage in photographs. Failure to abide by this requirement may result in disqualification of the entry.

DON'T FORGET... The maximum number of image pages is 15. The total number of pages allowed in PDF is 18 (including the first three pages described above) and the maximum PDF file size should not exceed **100 MB**. If your file exceeds this limit, please resize it to this range.

THANK YOU for your interest and participation in the 2026 AIA Kentucky Honor Awards. Best of luck!

AIA Framework for Design Excellence

The world today is facing broad and complex challenges that threaten every aspect of our lives. The architect's call to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public has a new and broader meaning amid challenges such as increasing climate extremes and social inequity. Architects everywhere must recognize that our profession can harness the power of design to contribute to solutions addressing the most significant needs of our time. Every project can be used as a platform for addressing big problems and providing creative solutions. Every line drawn should be a source of good in the world.

The Framework for Design Excellence represents the defining principles of good design in the 21st century. Comprised of 10 principles and accompanied by searching questions, **the Framework seeks to inform progress toward a zero-carbon, equitable, resilient, and healthy built environment.** These are to be thoughtfully considered by designer and client at the initiation of every project and incorporated into the work as appropriate to the project scope. The Framework is intended to be accessible and relevant for every architect, every client, and every project, regardless of size, typology, or aspiration.

The Framework for Design Excellence challenges architects with a vision the profession strives to achieve.



Design for INTEGRATION

Good design elevates any project, no matter how small, with a thoughtful process that delivers both beauty and function in balance. It is the element that binds all the principles together with a big idea.

- What is the concept or purpose behind this project, and how will the priorities within the nine other principles inform the unique approach to this project?
- How will the project engage the senses and connect people to place?
- What makes the project one that people will fight to preserve?
- What design strategies can provide multiple benefits across the triple bottom line of social, economic, and environmental value?



Design for EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES

Design solutions affect more than the client and current occupants. Good design positively impacts future occupants and the larger community.

- What is the project's greater reach?
- How could this project contribute to creating a diverse, accessible, walkable, just, human-scaled community?
- Who might this project be forgetting?
- How can the design process and outcome remove barriers and promote inclusion and social equity, particularly with respect to vulnerable communities?
- What opportunities exist in this project to include, engage, and promote human connection?
- How can the design support health and resilience for the community during times of need or during emergencies?



Design for ECOSYSTEMS

Good design mutually benefits human and nonhuman inhabitants. What we design has a direct impact to the ecosystems in and around the site. Understanding the site dynamics will allow us to be more conscious of our impacts.

- How can the design support the ecological health of its place over time?
- How can the design help users become more aware and connected with the project's place and regional ecosystem?
- How can the project support regional habitat restoration?
- How can the project support equitable access to nature?



Design for WATER

Good design conserves and improves the quality of water as a precious resource.

- How does the project use water wisely, addressing efficiency and consumption while matching water quality to appropriate use?
- How can the project's water systems maintain function during emergencies or disruptions?
- How does the project handle rainfall and stormwater responsibly?
- How does the project contribute to a healthy regional watershed?



Design for ECONOMY

Good design adds value for owners, occupants, community, and planet, regardless of project size and budget.

- How do we design robust projects that enhance economic, natural, intellectual, and experiential resources?
- How will the design choices balance cost with long-term value?
- How can the performance of this project be improved in ways that are cost and design neutral?



Design for ENERGY

Good design reduces energy use and eliminates dependence on fossil fuels while improving building performance, function, comfort, and enjoyment.

- How can passive design strategies contribute to the project's performance and form?
- How can the project exceed building code efficiency standards to approach net zero energy and net zero carbon?
- Can the project be powered by clean, renewable energy sources?
- How can the project provide for continuous performance improvements over its lifetime?



Design for WELL-BEING

Good design supports health and well-being for all people, considering physical, mental, and emotional effects on building occupants and wider surrounding community.

- How can the design encourage a healthy lifestyle?
- How can the project provide greater occupant comfort?
- How can the project be welcoming and inclusive for all?
- How can the project connect people with place and nature?
- How can material selection reduce hazards to occupants and communities throughout the supply chain?



Design for RESOURCES

Good design depends on informed material selection, balancing priorities to achieve durable, safe, and healthy projects with an equitable, sustainable supply chain to minimize possible negative impacts to the planet.

- What factors (priorities) will be considered in making material selection decisions?
- How are materials and products selected and designed to reduce embodied carbon and environmental impacts while enhancing building performance?
- How can material selection reduce hazards and support equitable labor practices in the supply chain?
- How does the project promote zero waste throughout its life cycle?
- How does the project celebrate local materials and craft?
- How long will the project last, and how does that affect your material?



Design for CHANGE

Adaptability, resilience, and reuse are essential to good design, which seeks to enhance usability, functionality, and value over time.

- How does the project address future risks and vulnerabilities from social, economic, and environmental change?
- How is the project designed for adaptation to anticipate future uses or changing markets?
- How does the project address passive survivability and/or livability?



Design for DISCOVERY

Every project presents a unique opportunity to apply lessons learned from previous projects and gather information to refine the design and construction process.

- How can the design process foster a long-term relationship between designers, users, and operators to ensure design intentions are realized and the building project performance can improve over time?
- How are performance data and experiential stories shared, even if the findings fall short of the vision?
- What strategies promote a sense of discovery and delight?

