



2026 AIA CALIFORNIA AWARDS Design

DEADLINES

Early Bird Registration Deadline*: February 11, 2026 by 11:59pm PST

Normal Registration Deadline: March 4, 2026 by 11:59pm PST

Submission Deadline: March 25, 2026 by 11:59pm PST

- ✓ [Register](#)
- ✓ [Submit](#)
- ✓ [How to Submit Guide](#)

FEES

All fees are non-refundable. Please review eligibility prior to registering for awards. This fee must be paid online at the time of registration. Refunds will not be given for entries that are disqualified, late, or incomplete; credits will not be given for future submissions.

Early Bird Registration	Amount	Normal Registration	Amount
AIA Member Fee	\$395.00	AIA Member Fee	\$420.00
AIA Member Small Project Fee	\$250.00	AIA Member Small Project Fee	\$300.00
Non Member Fee	\$595.00	Non Member Fee	\$625.00
Non Member Small Project Fee	\$430.00	Non Member Small Project Fee	\$500.00

ELIGIBILITY

- Architects with a California license may submit built projects located anywhere in the world
- Architects licensed in other states may only submit built projects located in California.
- Submissions must be built projects completed on or after January 1, 2019

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Each completed submission package must follow these guidelines. Your entry will be disqualified if it fails to comply with the following requirements:

- Full Project Portfolio
- Completed Common App
- Photos and photo release form(s) completed
- **Does Not Reveal Firm Name or Architect**

CATEGORIES

Select which category your **built** project falls under. While a Design Award is not given based on category, projects with the same category will be considered together.

- **Adaptive Reuse, Renovation or Historic Preservation:** Renovations of existing buildings, renovations or preservations of existing buildings, historic preservation of building with a



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historic background, or buildings where the original intent has been transformed for a new purpose

- **Mixed-Use:** Buildings with commercial and residential properties
- **Single Family Residential:** Any residential space intended for one family
- **Multi-Family Residential:** Any residential space intended for two or more families. This category should not include university dorms, hotels, or any other commercial, institutional or education project
- **Institutional/Education:** Projects serving educational, healthcare, research, or institutional missions. This includes schools, universities, hospitals, medical facilities, laboratories, libraries, research centers, religious institutions, and other facilities
- **Large Civic Projects:** Public and civic infrastructure serving community needs. This includes government buildings, courthouses, law enforcement facilities, community centers, transportation hubs, cultural institutions, parks facilities, and other projects serving the public realm
- **Commercial:** Projects primarily serving business, hospitality, or retail functions. This includes office buildings, hotels, retail centers, restaurants, entertainment venues, co-working spaces, data centers, and other commercially-driven projects
- **Interior Architecture:** Tenant improvements and any project where the interior of a built project has been designed, updated and/or enhanced
- **Small Project, Object:** Projects under \$500,000 fabrication and installation budget. This could include an art sculpture or art installation
- **Small Project, Structure:** Projects under a \$1,000,000 construction budget. This could include a pool house or accessory dwelling unit

PORTRFOLIO GUIDELINES

Submitted in PDF format, 8.5x11 landscape orientation. No more than 8MB and 13 pages. No firm name. Preferred file name: 2025_DA_Project Name

- Page 1: Cover Page with Project name and location (Do NOT include firm name anywhere in PDF)
- Page 2: Project Summary – 250 word max, may include images
- Page 3: A readable site plan with North arrow clearly indicated
- Page 4: At least one floor plan, but no more than two
- Page 5: Project sections and/or elevations
- Page 6: Page 6: Include at least one sustainable design strategies diagram and resiliency diagram with a brief description of strategies used (An additional page may be used should you need additional space) *NEW
- Pages 7 – 13: Project Photos
 - Must be clear and concise, with a high resolution
 - Limit of four (4) photos per page
 - No renderings or concepts (must be built projects)
 - Recommended to include at least one picture of the project within the surrounding area (for context).



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- For the adaptive reuse/historic preservation category: must include a minimum of one before and one after picture (preferably side by side on one page)
- For the interior architecture category: must include at least one exterior picture (to provide context to the project's surroundings).

**Page 6 & 7 may be combined if there is heavy overlap between strategies.*

COMMON APPLICATION

AIA California is aligned with AIA's [Framework for Design Excellence](#) with the integration of 10 key principles into the award program requirements. While California leads the nation with the implementation of zero carbon standards and codes, the Framework identifies specific metrics to evaluate buildings that illustrate progress toward a zero carbon, equitable, resilient, and healthy built environment.

AIA California's Design awards follows AIA's Design Excellence criteria using the Common App. Submittals are encouraged to highlight project performance through narratives and metrics in the Common App.

Prior to the Design Awards Jury, each project will be reviewed by a Common Application Review Jury; multiple panelists will review each project's success in achieving sustainability and building decarbonization goals; the average score, along with technical review comments, will be forwarded to the Design Awards Jury. *(Important note: providing incorrect information or failing to provide information will result in a lower technical review score; projects with low scores may not be awarded by the Design Awards Jury).*

When completing the Common App, pay particular attention to Measure 6, Design for Energy and be sure to provide the correct EUI information. EUI information can be obtained from energy models or LEED (or similar) documentation. If T24 Compliance documentation was used, see the instructions and calculator for calculating site EUI from T 24 compliance documentation.

AWARDS

The Jury has the discretion to recognize all projects with any of the following awards **Honor, Merit and Citation**. Past recipients in this program may not apply again, regardless of award level. If the project was awarded in another award suite (Residential Design Awards or Urban Design Awards) in a previous year, it is eligible to be submitted.

Award recipients and non-recipients will be notified in late July. An award celebration will be held towards the end of the calendar year.

AIACA AI DATA USAGE DECLARATION

AIA California recognizes that AI is a valuable and increasingly common tool, and that its use will continue to evolve within the profession. We support its responsible use, while emphasizing that AI should be applied thoughtfully, ethically, and with clear intent. For all submissions for recognition including awards, scholarships, articles, etc., participants are



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expected to ensure that all work reflects their own ideas, judgment, and professional integrity, with AI serving only as a supportive tool—not a substitute for original authorship.