

AIA East Bay 'Beyond' Awards 2026

Eligibility & Submission Criteria



Celebrating design that honors
the seen and unseen

Call For Submissions:

The 18th Annual AIA East Bay recognizes outstanding achievements in architecture and design. This prestigious competition is designed to recognize the contributions of teams of architects, contractors, and developers in creating and implementing outstanding projects in our built environment.

Projects that honor the earth's precious resources empathize with site context and promote social equity while equally striving to celebrate the art and science of architecture will be strongly encouraged for submission.

All submissions are evaluated by a panel of accomplished jurors, distinguished for their contribution to the profession of Architecture and Design.

Schedule:

- Deadline for submissions: August 10th, 2026, at Midnight PT.
- Design Awards Reception & Presentation Gala: October 22nd, 2026.
 - Location: David Brower Center, 2150 Allston Way, Berkeley, CA 94704

Eligibility:

Projects designed by AIA East Bay Chapter members located anywhere in the world.

Projects designed by any AIA members located within Alameda, Contra Costa, Napa, or Solano counties.

Projects designed by non-AIA-affiliated Architects located within the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Napa, or Solano with an AIA East Bay Chapter member on their design team for the submitted project.

Built Projects must have been completed since January 1st, 2023, and have not previously received an AIA East Bay Design Award.

Projects must be complete at the time of submission except for those submitted to the Unbuilt or Student category.

Categories:

Projects of all types are eligible for entry: New / Extension / Renovation / Unbuilt.

All submissions will be evaluated within the following categories:

- **Adaptive Reuse/ Renovation/ Historic Preservation:** Designs that transform, preserve, or revitalize existing buildings. This may include either adaptive reuse of buildings for new purposes or restoration of historically significant structures or renovations that retain the character of the original design while bringing new life to the space.
- **Mixed-Use Design:** Designs that combine two or more functions (typically residential, commercial, office, or cultural) within a single, integrated development.
- **Single Family Residential Design:** Residential projects designed for one household, including new construction, additions, and major renovations.
- **Multi-Family Residential Design:** Housing projects designed for two or more families, such as townhomes, duplexes, apartments, or condominiums. (Note: Does not include dormitories, hotels, or institutional housing.)
- **Institutional / Education Design:** Designs that serve learning and public engagement at all scales - from early childhood through higher education, and mission-driven religious or specialized training facilities, etc.
- **Civic Design:** Designs that foster community engagement, public life, and social well-being at all scales - from local government buildings and public parks to cultural institutions and community gathering spaces. This category recognizes projects that enhance the urban fabric and strengthen the relationship between people and their public environments.
- **Commercial Design:** Designs that contribute to the economic and social vitality of our communities, including hospitality venues, office buildings, co-working spaces, and retail environments.

- **Winery Design:** Structures serving the production (Winery), presentation (Wine Stores) and consumption of wine (Tasting Rooms). This may include new builds, renovation, adaptive reuse or additions to existing structures.
- **Healthcare Design:** Designs that include hospitals, medical centers, clinics, etc.
- **Interior Design:** Tenant improvements and interior build-outs that significantly reimagine or enhance interior space through thoughtful architectural design.
- **Urban Design / Site Planning:** Designs that celebrate large-scale planning and spatial design- master plans, city districts, public realm strategies, transit oriented developments, wayfinding and landscape-integrated urban systems beyond individual buildings, etc. It values visionary planning that enhances connectivity, sustainability, and civic life at neighborhood-to-regional scales.
- **Small Project – Object:** Designs with a fabrication and installation budget under \$500,000. Examples include art installations, sculptures, furniture, or small-scale built works.
- **Small Project – Structure:** Designs with a construction budget under \$1,000,000. This may include pool houses, pavilions, tiny homes, or ADUs.
- **Student Design:** Conceptual or built work completed by students currently enrolled or graduated within the past 18 months from academic institutions within Alameda, Contra Costa, Napa, or Solano Counties. For example, personal thesis or group projects are encouraged.
- **Unbuilt Projects:** Designs that remain unbuilt for any reason, including competition entries, research-driven proposals, or passion projects. Must have a clear connection to the East Bay.

Award Distinctions:

Each category has three possible Award levels: **Honors, Citation, and Merit.**

Notice: All awards and levels are at the jury's discretion. Depending on submissions, not all categories may be represented in the final awards distribution. Judges reserve the right to move projects or combine categories as they see fit.

Special Awards:

People's Choice: Selected by the community during the awards event. One winner is chosen across all categories, based on audience voting.

Beyond Award: Honors a project that transcends aesthetics to push boundaries of equity, sustainability, and innovation. Celebrates architecture's ability to reshape the world through inclusive and transformative design.

How to Submit Your Project:

Register your projects: Submissions Open July 6th.

Entry Fees:

AIA East Bay Members: \$275

Non-AIA East Bay members: \$450

Students: \$15 per each application.

Fine Print:

There is no limit to the number of entries that a firm may submit.

All visual materials submitted must be cleared for public reproduction.

The eligible member credited with the project must be the Architect of record or the Firm of record.

For projects by non-AIA Architects, at least one AIA East Bay Chapter member must be attached to the project and included on the application form.

Make full payment of entry fees by the submission deadline.

Submission Requirements:

All submissions shall be completed via the online platform.

All submissions must meet a minimum of one category of the [AIA Framework for Design Excellence](#).

The entry form must be completed with an acknowledgment of AIA East Bay's use of submission information and images as outlined in the full submission guidelines.

All submission materials shall be cleared for release and use by the entrant and AIA East Bay.

All judging is anonymous. No submission shall include any name of the design team in the Descriptive data, images, or submittal materials (other than the confidential entry form).

FORMAT OF PROJECT SUBMISSION:

All submittal materials shall be uploaded in PDF format with a consistent visual size/layout. The preferred aspect ratio is 16:9 or 1920 X 1080 pixels, landscape-oriented where possible. Please

be mindful to omit firm/architect names, emails, phone numbers, or other identifying text or images anywhere in your submission.

The first page of all submissions should be a project summary page that includes the following:

- Project Name
- Project location (City, County, State, Country)
- Substantial completion date (month/year)
- Select a Category of project type
- For unbuilt only: Design completion (month/year)
- Cost (optional)
- Sustainability certification/target (optional)
- Select the applicable category (s) of the AIA Framework for Design Excellence with a brief description of how your project addresses it.
- Descriptive data (300 words maximum)

No less than three and no more than ten image pages, PDF format. (11 maximum pages with captions and photographer credits, including project attributes on the first page.) There is no limit to the number of images, graphics, or text per page. Layout and presentation are at the submitters' discretion, using their best efforts to present their project.

Upon submission, the project materials become the property of AIA East Bay. AIA East Bay will use images from all submitted projects in multimedia presentations at the awards reception, on the AIA East Bay website, and its social media platforms. AIA East Bay reserves the right to use the submissions for publicity and public relations.

All submissions require a client consent form acknowledging the entry of their project into the AIA East Bay Design Awards. You will agree to these via our submission form.

Provide a descriptive summary of 300 words or less demonstrating the comprehensive approach for the project as it relates to celebrating the Art and the Science of Architecture, honoring the earth's precious resources, being empathetic to the site context, and how it promotes social equity. A narrative on the project's Design Excellence and sensitivity towards Sustainability with emphasis on the "Beyond" Factor is highly encouraged.

Here are two examples of past submissions to help clarify the format we are expecting

- [Balboa Park Pool](#)
- [Blackbird](#)

Please submit all requested information via our online submission form. Required fields are marked with an asterisk. Please be sure the information appears EXACTLY as you wish to see it published and listed on the awards certificates. Check the spelling of names carefully. We suggest you print the submission form page in advance, craft your answers, and then cut and paste your final into our form. Complete and submit all parts of the project submission, along with payment of entry fees, by the due date.

For additional submittal information and questions, please email Info@aiaeb.org.

For opportunities to get involved with the Reception and Design Awards event, please email the Design Awards Committee: DesignAwards@aiaeb.org.