



2026 AIA Prairie Illinois Design & Service Awards Call for Entries

This program is held to recognize architectural projects and individuals for their outstanding design accomplishments and contributions to the community. The AIA Prairie Illinois Chapter continues this tradition by inviting you to submit your firm's best recent work for the 2026 program. You may submit multiple entries. Winners will be notified in early November and recognized at the Annual AIA Prairie Chapter Meeting, Awards Program and Holiday Celebration at a December date TBD in Bloomington, Illinois.

Service Awards Categories

Emerging Professional of the Year -

Nominees must be an Emerging Professional (EP) – who have completed their academic studies up to the point of licensure or up to 10 years after completion of their academic studies, and must have demonstrated leadership and/or enthusiastic qualities in the profession of architecture and contributed notably to the profession.

Member of the Year -

Nominees must be an Associate, Architect or Emeritus member and have demonstrated leadership and/or enthusiastic qualities in the profession of architecture and contributed notably to the profession.

Citizen of the Year –

The Citizen of the Year award is given to recognize and encourage distinguished achievements of allied professionals, clients, organizations, and others whose efforts have resulted in a significant and positive improvement to the architectural profession and/or the built environment.

A nomination may cite achievements including, but not limited to:

Service to the Profession: service to the AIA through participation, the profession as a whole, or a sustained effort at intern development.

Public Service (community based): Recognizing sustained leadership in efforts of significant interest in one or more Illinois communities, including, but not limited to civic improvement, governmental projects, conservation and urban renewal.

Education/Training: Recognizing professional endeavors in education.

Architectural Practice: Recognizing special skills and achievements in the organization, operation, and management of an architectural office that has produced results outside the routine and/or received outstanding recognition by the profession.

Submission Requirements for All Service Categories

All entries are submitted online. The entire submission including narrative, images, reference letters, supporting documentation, etc. must be uploaded as a single PDF smaller than 1 GB. The submission should include an 8.5x11 title page including submitters name, firm and contact information along with the nominee's name, and recognition category.

To submit a nominee, please upload your complete submission to the submission site, by **September 18, 2026 at 5:00 pm**. The nomination should follow the naming standard of "Category – Nominee Name".

These categories are open to any member of the AIA Prairie Illinois chapter in good standing. There is no fee to nominate an individual, and self-nominations will be accepted.

Questions should be directed to aiaprairieillinois@gmail.com or 217-525-0981.

Design Awards Categories

Restoration Design –

A built project that creatively, effectively, and efficiently reuses an existing structure for a new purpose and/or represents adaptive re-use or the preservation/restoration of a historic structure that enhances the natural and built environment of a community.

Architecture Design–

A built project that demonstrates innovation in overall concept design or detail.

Interiors Design–

A built project, large or small in scope that involves new construction, renovation, or preservation/restoration to Interior Architecture.

Eligibility

All architects licensed and practicing within the boundaries of AIA Prairie Illinois are eligible to submit entries, regardless of project size, budget, style, building type, or location (projects may be located outside the State of Illinois). Entries are welcomed and encouraged from both established and new practitioners and designers from small and large firms.

An entry may be any building or complex of buildings completed since January 1, 2021. Completion is synonymous with substantial completion as defined in the standard AIA documents governing construction. The entry is to be submitted by the architecture firm.

The submitting architect may qualify as a member of a design team, whether or not serving as the head of the team. When one architect is not the sole author, all other participants contributing substantially to the design of the project must be given credit as part of the submission, regardless of professional discipline.

For multiple building projects, the architect submitting the project (or portion thereof) shall offer detailed evidence of authorship of each portion of the project.

Projects receiving awards from past AIA Prairie Chapter Design Award Programs are not eligible.

Project authorship will remain concealed throughout the deliberations of the jury. If the authorship is revealed on any of the images, plans, or narrative, the entry will be disqualified. All efforts should be made to make the submission “blind” to the jury.

Jury Selection Criteria

Projects will be judged by measure of the architect’s performance against each project’s potential and not against other projects. Decisions will be based upon the overall excellence of design in the various categories. One project will be awarded an “Excellence in Design” in each category and additional project may be awarded a “Merit” or “Honorable Mention” award within each category. At the Jury’s discretion, multiple awards may be awarded within each category. Projects should exhibit:

Design achievement, which demonstrates exemplary skill and creativity in the resolution and integration of formal, functional, and technical requirements including ecological stewardship and social responsibility that acknowledges and advances social agendas. Projects should reflect a strong sense of place, of ecology and environmental sustainability, of history, and of purpose as an integral part of the demonstrated design excellence.

In addition to design achievement, projects may be exemplary in the following subcategories:

Technical advancement, which includes engineering achievements (structural, mechanical, transportation, computer, etc.) as well as innovation in the use of materials.

Preservation/restoration includes demonstration of exemplary skill, sensitivity and thoroughness in preservation, restoration and/or the alternative or adaptive reuse of existing buildings regardless of their original architectural significance.

Submission Requirements for All Design Categories

1. Project Synopsis (Executive Summary)

A project summary limited to 1500 total characters, including spaces and punctuation to be provided along with entry.

2. Project Information/Descriptive Data (Narrative)

This is the basic information provided to the jury about your project. Please describe your project as succinctly as possible. Place emphasis on the elements of design achievement defined in the Judging Criteria and the selected award category. Avoid elaboration of features already made clear by the photographs and drawings. Include information about project intentions, including program requirements, cost data, and the distinguishing aspects of their resolution. For preservation/restoration projects it is especially important to provide the jury with sufficient information to differentiate between the original architects' work and the newly altered, preserved, or restored work.

3. Photographs/Images

All rights for images should be owned by the submitter allowing AIA Prairie to use all provided images. Images submitted should include the building in use, when possible, and include:

Exterior (if applicable)

A minimum of one image for each exposed side of the building in its context or environment and keyed to the site plan or a site diagram which clearly explains the orientation. This can include an aerial photograph of the building and its environment if available.

For a group of buildings, a minimum of one image of the project sufficient to illustrate the complete project, including its relationship to its environs.

For projects involving exterior alterations, a minimum of one image of each altered (exposed) side together with one image of the same side before alteration (unless evidence is submitted on the unavailability of the latter.)

Interior

A minimum of one image for each major functional space

4. Drawings

Drawings, plans, and diagrams should include the types described below. Plans can be drawn at any scale in any medium, but the scale must be indicated graphically.

Site plan of sufficient size to show the project, its context, solar orientation, and an indication of the locale and/or climate type. Provide view arrows with a key for all context images.

Floor plan or plans, elevations, and one or more sections sufficient to explain the solution. All plans (site and floor) must include a North arrow.

5. Additional Considerations

Highlight exhibits of sustainable principles that minimize the use of resources and show exceptional regard for other environmental concerns within the design and construction. Illustrate sustainable design strategies when applicable in section, plan, elevation, or by conceptual diagram.

All entries are to be submitted online.

The entire submission including Project Synopsis, Project Information/Descriptive Data, all images and drawings along with additional requirements, must be uploaded as a single PDF smaller than 1 GB. The submission should include a separate 8.5 x 11 title page including submitters name, firm and contact information along with the project name, project location and design category. **The title page is the only place the firm names shall be referenced in the submittal.**

Upon the jury's final selection, you may be contacted to provide high-resolution images for presentation and publication if the originals do not suffice.

To submit a project, please follow the steps below:

1. Contact Mary Young at the AIA Prairie office at 217-525-0981 or aiaprairieillinois@gmail.com to arrange payment and provide the firm name and project name.
2. Upload your complete submission for Design [HERE](#) and Service [HERE](#). A separate email for payment will be send once the completed submission has been received. You must complete payment by **September 18, 2026 at 5:00pm**.

The non-refundable entry fee of \$60 for members and \$90 for nonmembers for each project submittal must be paid to:

AIA Prairie Illinois
Attn: 2024Awards
201 East Adams Street, Ste. 1A
Springfield, IL 62701

No entry fee will be refunded for entries that are disqualified, late, or not completed.