AIA Delaware

2022 Design Awards Program
Submission Insights

AIA Delaware is committed to excellence in architecture and looks forward to celebrating outstanding works of architecture through its biennial Design Awards Program. The purpose of the program is to recognize and honor excellence in architectural design by licensed architects and to honor the clients and project teams who work with them to create and enhance our built environment.

Submission Insights

Each project will be evaluated based on the content of its submission and judged on the success with which the project has met its individual requirements, resiliency, functionality and beauty, with particular emphasis on design excellence. Responsible architects use their knowledge and skills in support of the belief that buildings and communities can be sustainable and safe, accessible and beautiful and create an increasingly livable and vibrant world. In developing a submission, consider effective ways to tell the project's story from start to finish.

DO

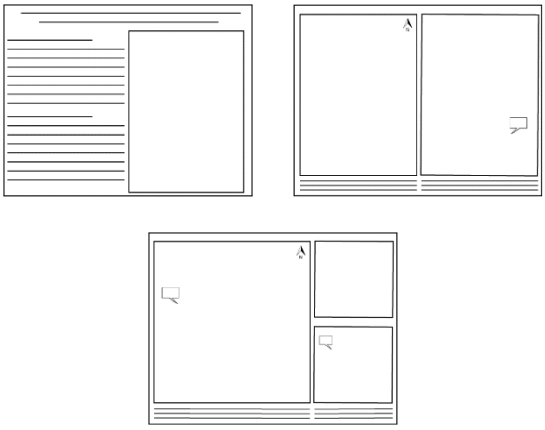
Efficiently/succinctly explain the client's needs / problems.

Briefly tell the story of getting to the solution.

Highlight the process and connect to the goal.

Caption every image and use call outs to describe the solution.

Present your creativity and your client's satisfaction.



DON'T

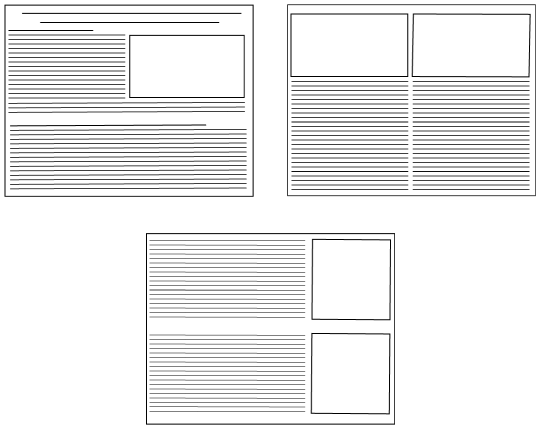
Assume the jury knows the project or its location.

Just list facts.

Present project as just a project.

Use too much text to describe the solution.

Market your or your firm's or capabilities.



A Few Observations

Observations on creating a winning submission.

Ten-Second Rule
Our Design Awards Program receives many submissions. A jury has little time to devote to each entry - probably more than four or five minutes, but not a lot more. The required format for project submittals has this in mind. It's critical that your entry be clear, well laid out and quickly and easily read so that the jury will not disregard it immediately and will instead flag it for review.

Framework for Design Excellence
Projects will be evaluated on how successfully they have met their individual requirements and on their own merit, not in comparison with any other project, regardless of type, size, scope or cost.

The AIA Delaware Board of Directors formally adopted the AIA Framework for Design Excellence as criteria for the Design Awards Program.

The Framework for Design Excellence represents the defining principles of good design in the 21st century and seeks to inform progress toward a zero carbon, equitable, resilient, and healthy built environment. Each submission must, unless otherwise noted, describe how the project design achieved outcomes of at least two of the 10 principles in the Framework.

When you submit a project, tell the story of how the design solves problems to serve our communities and build a better world. The measures cover issues such as sustainability, equity, ecology, wellness, and energy.

Tell a Story
Consider the best way to introduce your design. You may want to start your submission with an interesting detail shot so the jurors will want to see the rest of the project.

The jury's ability to understand the context of the project is critical. Be careful not to lose that context when adjusting or cropping images.

For projects involving changes to existing structures, documentation of original conditions is highly recommended. Include process sketches that communicate the development of the project and/or its construction.

Images showing the site or immediate context before the project's construction are especially advised for historic resources projects.

If your project is a renovation, restoration, addition or conversion do include a "before" photo—and if that "before" shot is really scary, consider leading with that. Indicate the project's physical context or site character through graphics and/or imagery.

Make the jury want to see more. Arrange the pictures in an order that works to your advantage. It can get very old very quickly to see entry after rambling entry with little or no organization.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words
Good images are critical to a winning entry. Larger images are better than small and more is not always better. Carefully select images that best represent your project, rather than bombarding the jury with every photograph or image you have.

Don't include a lot of drawings just because you are proud of them - make sure they tell the story. A site plan, floor plans and a location map may be all that's really needed. Then supplement these only if a drawing helps convey why your design is extraordinary. We have known juries to discard a project after one poorly chosen image changed their minds about the project.

Make it Count, Less IS More
Although the jury will probably concentrate on images, a clear, concise description of your project can be very compelling. Think carefully about what you want to say and stay lean. Avoid using "Archi-speak" even another architect doesn't want to read (i.e., "The volumetric proportion of this place gives it a transformative quality.")

Follow the Directions
Before submitting, reread the Call for Entries and Submission Requirements and review your entry to make sure each required element has been addressed. Make sure you have answered all required questions and omitted restricted information such as project authorship, firm names and logos.

We will attempt to contact you if there is an issue with your submission to give you an opportunity to fix it. You may also be assessed an administrative fee, so be careful. Don't let this happen to you!

Each Jury is Different
Remember, these observations are based on commentary from past juries and every jury is different.

Good luck!