



# AIA COTE<sup>®</sup> Top Ten

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2023 Call for entries



AIA

# The American Institute of Architects Committee on the Environment is currently accepting submissions for the 2023 AIA COTE® Top Ten Awards.

## Recognition

Projects will receive significant recognition, including acknowledgement in AIA publications, electronic media, and with an in person or virtual celebration.

Recipients may be asked by the AIA Communications department, or by various media representatives, for additional information about their projects. All submitted materials will become property of The American Institute of Architects.

## Requirements

Please review each category for information about the deadline, eligibility, judging criteria, and submission requirements.

## Questions?

[aia.org/COTE](https://www.aia.org/COTE)

[COTETopTen@aia.org](mailto:COTETopTen@aia.org)

## Cover image credit

Ford Foundation Center  
for Social Justice

Architect: Gensler

Photographer: Garrett Rowland

The AIA Committee on the Environment (AIA COTE®) Top Ten Awards recognize projects that exemplify the integration of design and performance.

While it celebrates the holistic vision of good design as articulated by the AIA's Framework for Design Excellence, the 2023 AIA COTE Top Ten program elevates narratives and expands reporting in the areas of equitable communities, energy and carbon, well-being, and water. Project teams should use the Framework for Design Excellence to assist with writing project narratives and the most recent version of the AIA COTE Super Spreadsheet (3.1) to ensure the accurate calculation of metrics.

A goal of the program is to recognize performance over intentions. Projects must have performance and occupant satisfaction data available for 12 months or more with at least 75% occupancy, recognizing the challenges this has posed during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no time limit for submission after project completion; the more evidence of a project's contributions to real-world solutions, the better.

Finally, transparency is a fundamental element of sustainable design. The AIA COTE Top Ten exists so that architects can learn from the successes of the very best projects. To jointly improve our work and realize our shared vision of a healthy, sustainable, and equitable future, all submissions are expected to have honest and accurate metrics, narratives, and images, and all claims should be substantiated with evidence.

## DEADLINE

All submissions must be received by 5pm ET on December 8, 2022. The submission deadline date will be strictly observed; no exceptions will be made.

## ELIGIBILITY

All architects licensed in the U.S. can submit their completed built projects, regardless of project size, budget, style, building type, or location. Completed new buildings, renovations, restorations, interior architecture, and urban/regional plans are eligible.

- Projects must be completed at least twelve months prior to the submission deadline. "Completion" is synonymous with "substantial completion" as defined in the standard AIA documents governing construction.
- Submitting firms are required to be signatories to the AIA 2030 Commitment. Firms that are not currently a signatory are required to join the 2030 Commitment to be considered for an award.

- The submitting architect/firm does not have to be the head of the design team but should be identified as a major contributor to the project. When one architect/firm is not the sole author, all other participating firms contributing substantially to the design of the project must be given credit as part of the submission, regardless of professional discipline.
- A project that credits any 2023 AIA COTE Top Ten Awards jury member or his/her firm as architect, associate architect, consultant, or client is ineligible and will be disqualified if submitted.
- Submitting firms (and any included associate firms) must agree to the Unpaid Labor Declaration Policy.

### THE JUDGING CRITERIA

The AIA COTE Top Ten program was founded on the idea that sustainability is essential to design excellence, and vice versa. Therefore, a key criterion for judging projects is the integration of compelling design and exemplary performance. The jury evaluates entries based on how successfully projects have met their individual requirements. All projects must demonstrate design achievement, including a sense of place and purpose, of community and history, of performance, aesthetics, community connection and resilience, and stewardship of the natural environment. The Framework for Design Excellence, originally developed by the AIA Committee on the Environment, serves as a touchstone during jury deliberations.

Submissions are reviewed by two groups: technical reviewers and jurors. Technical reviewers examine submitted narratives and metrics for completeness, accuracy, and level of achievement along each Framework principle. Their evaluations are provided to jurors, who review submissions individually, then convene to collectively discuss submissions and prepare a shortlist for further deliberation. The jury reconvenes to discuss finalists and select the recipients of the award.

### SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

#### Entry fee

An architect or firm may submit more than one project, but each project requires payment of a separate non-refundable registration fee.

\$500 (AIA members) | \$850 (nonmembers)

#### Client authorization

Client authorization must be received by AIA **before the submission deadline** to avoid disqualification. A separate email will be sent to your client to receive approval to enter this project into the AIA COTE Top Ten Award.

#### Uploaded materials for jury review

- Project images must be submitted in a single .PDF file, not to exceed 25 MB and a maximum of 26 pages
- Pages must be 8.5 x 11 inches. Any other size is subject to disqualification.
- 5 additional photos without words or drawings must also be submitted to serve as announcement images
- All images, photos, and copyrighted materials will need to be properly credited

- When possible, images should include the building in use and the following in any order to best tell the jury your project's story. Emphasis should be also placed on graphics that best inform the jurors about the innovative sustainable design solutions that have been developed.
- Preservation/restoration projects (if applicable) may add an additional two pages (not to exceed 28 pages total) to provide the jury with sufficient information to differentiate between the original architects' work and the newly altered, preserved, or restored work
- One image showing each exposed side of the building or environment
- One additional image showing the context of each exposed side of the building (may be omitted if the project's relationship to its context is defined clearly in other prints)
- For a group of buildings, one image of the project is sufficient to illustrate the complete project, including its relationship to its environs
- For projects involving exterior alterations, 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)
- At least one interior image for each major functional space
- Conceptual diagrams, elevations, floor plans, sections, and site plan (including North arrow)
- One image per Framework for Design Excellence principle.

### **Super Spreadsheet**

The submission of the Super Spreadsheet is a requirement for all qualifying entries. The following tabs and sections are mandatory and highlighted in green within the Super Spreadsheet: Introduction (all sections), 3-Ecosystems (sections 3.1 and 3.2), 4-Water (all sections), 6-Energy (sections 6.3 and 6.4), 7-Well-being (sections 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3); 8-Resources (sections 8.2, 8.3, 8.4 and 8.7), 9-Change (sections 9.1 and 9.2), and 10-Discovery (section 10.2). Mandatory metrics for input into the awards interface are handily summarized on the AIA COTE Top Ten Award Summary Tab within the Super Spreadsheet. Teams are encouraged to complete as much of the Super Spreadsheet as possible. Please review the data carefully prior to submitting a digital copy of the excel file.

### **Open office hours**

AIA COTE will offer open office hours during the awards submission phase to answer questions pertaining to the use of the Super Spreadsheet and the submission in general.

### **Performance & modeling reports**

Teams are encouraged to upload summary reports, such as energy and carbon modeling reports, as well as any performance metrics. Please note if summary reports correspond with final design drawings or building in occupancy.

# Submission requirements in detail

## PROJECT ATTRIBUTES

Throughout the entire application, please provide the full name of the project.

- Project Name
- Project Address
- ASHRAE Climate Zone
- Other Climate Zone (if applicable)
- Total Building Area (Conditioned and Unconditioned Area)
- Site Area
- Regularly occupied space
- Avg daily occupancy
- Peak occupancy
- FTEs
- Project completion year
- Annual days of operation
- Average hours of operation
- Total Construction Cost
- Building Program Type (per CBECS)
- Project Type (New/Reno/Interiors)
- Site Environment (Urban/Suburban/Rural)
- Previously Developed Site (Yes/No)
- Is the firm an AIA 2030 Signatory? (Yes/No)
- Is this project reported in the AIA DDx? (Yes/No)
- Third party rating system 1
- Third party rating system 2
- Third party rating system 3
- If other, specify



# AIA COTE Top Ten Criteria

The mission of the AIA COTE Top Ten program is to advance design thinking and practice around climate action, health, resilience, and equity and to elevate exemplary projects from which we can all learn.

AIA COTE originally developed the COTE Top Ten Measures for its awards program. In 2019, the Measures were rebranded as the Framework for Design Excellence and adopted by the AIA organization wide as the defining principles of good design in the 21st century. However, the definition of “exemplary” is ever-evolving as both the market and our understanding changes. Accordingly, while the criteria for the AIA COTE Top Ten are organized by the Framework for Design Excellence, the AIA COTE Top Ten award pushes further by asking additional questions around design intent and requiring specific metrics that indicate the relative impact of the project.



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

**(<500 words)**



## 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 does this project contribute to creating a diverse, accessible, walkable, just, and human-scaled community? Who might this project be forgetting? How did 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 does the design support health and resilience for the community during times of need or during emergencies?

**(<200 words)**

### DESIGN INTENT

#### Mandatory (<100 words)

Describe the project's approach toward building equitable communities:

- Who does the project serve? Identify the stakeholders who are directly or indirectly impacted by the project.
- Describe the stakeholder engagement process (including workshops, meetings, surveys, or other forms of engagement) over the course of the project.
- Identify project goals that support equitable communities and describe how those goals were developed.
- Describe the project team's explorations or design strategies that respond to the above-stated goals.
- Describe stories or evidence that demonstrate how the project successfully contributes toward more equitable communities.

#### Encouraged (word count: 300)

Every community is unique, and every project has unique opportunities to respond to issues of equity and inclusion. Describe any exemplary practices or outcomes for this project.

Ideas include but are not limited to:

- Supply chain/labor practices
- Mobility needs and requirements
- Community health impacts
- Design for community adaptation
- Cultural heritage/community identity
- Environmental justice
- Engagement methods
- Community vulnerability assessments

### METRICS

#### Encouraged

Teams are encouraged to complete the Community tab of the Super Spreadsheet.



## DESIGN FOR ECOSYSTEMS

Good design mutually benefits human and nonhuman inhabitants. How does the design support the ecological health of its place over time? How does the design help users become more aware and connected with the project's place and regional ecosystem? How does the design build resilience while reducing maintenance? How is the project supporting regional habitat restoration?

**(<200 words)**

### DESIGN INTENT (<100 WORDS EACH)

#### Mandatory

- How does the design minimize negative impacts on animals (e.g., dark skies, bird safety)?
- How does the project support biodiversity and improve ecosystem services?

### METRICS

#### Mandatory – calculated from the Super Spreadsheet, Ecosystems Tab, Section 3.1 - Vegetated Area and 3.2 - Quality of Plantings

- Percentage of site area that was vegetated (landscape or green roof) pre-development
- Percentage of the site area that is vegetated (landscape or green roof) post-development
- Increase in percent of vegetated area, post-development
- Percentage of vegetated area planted with native species

#### Encouraged

- Teams are encouraged to complete the Ecosystems tab of the Super Spreadsheet.

Please explain if a mandatory metric is unavailable or a metric requires additional interpretive information.





## 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 do 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?

**(<200 words)**

### DESIGN INTENT (<100 WORDS EACH)

#### **Mandatory**

Describe how the project's storm water and potable water strategies contribute to site and community resilience.

#### **Encouraged**

- Describe the quality of the water that runs off the site.
- Describe how and where the project's black water is treated.

### METRICS

**Mandatory – calculated results from the Super Spreadsheet, Water Tab, Section 4.5; all fields on this tab must be completed.**

- Water Use Intensity (gal/sf/year), benchmark
- Water Use Intensity (gal/sf/year), predicted
- Percent reduction in potable water use from benchmark, predicted
- Percentage of total annual water demand met using potable sources, predicted
- Percentage of storm water managed on-site

#### **Encouraged**

- Water Use Intensity (gal/sf/year), measured
- Percent reduction in potable water use from benchmark, measured
- Percentage of total annual water demand met using potable sources, measured

Please explain if a mandatory metric is unavailable or a metric requires additional interpretive information.



## DESIGN FOR ECONOMY

Good design adds value for owners, occupants, community, and planet, regardless of project size and budget. How does the project provide abundance while living within its means? How do the design choices balance first cost with long-term value? How was the performance of this project improved in ways that were cost and design neutral?

**(<200 words)**

### DESIGN INTENT (<100 WORDS EACH)

#### **Mandatory**

- How does this project contribute to local and/or disadvantaged economies?

#### **Encouraged**

- How did design choices reduce system sizes and minimize materials usage, allowing for lower cost and more efficiently designed systems/structure?
- How did lifecycle cost analysis influence the project's design?

### METRICS

#### **Mandatory**

- Construction cost per square foot

#### **Encouraged**

- Teams are encouraged to complete the Economy tab of the Super Spreadsheet.

Please explain if a mandatory metric is unavailable or a metric requires additional interpretive information.



## DESIGN FOR ENERGY

Good design reduces energy use and eliminates dependence on fossil fuels while improving building performance, function, comfort, and enjoyment. How do passive design strategies contribute to the project's performance and form? How does the project exceed building code efficiency standards to approach net zero energy and net zero carbon? Is the project powered by clean, renewable energy sources? How does the project provide for continuous performance improvements over its lifetime?

**(<200 words)**

### DESIGN INTENT (<100 WORDS EACH)

#### Mandatory

- Describe any energy challenges associated with the building type, intensity of use, or hours of operation, and how the design responds to these challenges.

#### METRICS

- Use the Super Spreadsheet, the AIA's 2030 DDx or Zero Tool to establish an energy use benchmark. This benchmark is not the same as the ASHRAE 90.1 Appendix G baseline. Use the Super Spreadsheet for all calculations below.

#### **Mandatory – calculated results from the Super Spreadsheet, Energy tab, Section 6.3 – Measured Energy Consumption/Generation and Section 6.4 – Annual Energy Use Summary**

- Is the building all-electric?
- In its measured usage, including on-site renewables, did the project achieve its 2030 Commitment reduction target (70% reduction by 2015, 80% reduction by 2020)?
- Project's total carbon (embodied + operational) over 10 years in kg CO<sub>2</sub>e
- Percent reduction (inclusive of renewables) from benchmark, measured
- Percent of total energy from renewable sources, measured
- Percent reduction (inclusive of renewables) in operational carbon from benchmark, measured

#### Encouraged

- Teams are encouraged to complete the Energy tab of the Super Spreadsheet.

Please explain if a mandatory metric is unavailable or a metric requires additional interpretive information.



## DESIGN FOR WELL-BEING

Good design supports health and well-being for all people, considering physical, mental, and emotional effects on building occupants and the surrounding community. How does the design encourage a healthy lifestyle? How does the project provide for greater occupant comfort? How is the project welcoming and inclusive for all? How does the project connect people with place and nature? How does material selection reduce hazards to occupants?

**(<200 words)**

### DESIGN INTENT (<100 WORDS EACH)

#### Mandatory

- Was a chemicals of concern list or other third-party framework used to inform material selection? If so, how?
- How did the project advocate for greater transparency in building material supply chains?

### METRICS

#### Mandatory data – calculated results from the Super Spreadsheet, Well-being Tab, Section 7.1 – Daylighting and Quality Views, 7.2 – Occupant Control, and 7.3 – Indoor Air Quality Management

- Percent of regularly occupied area that is daylit (sDA 300/50%)
- Percent of regularly occupied area that is compliant with annual glare criteria (ASE 1000, 250)
- Percent of regularly occupied area with quality views
- Percent of regularly occupied area with access to operable windows
- What is the design goal for maximum CO<sub>2</sub> in parts per million (ppm) when spaces are fully occupied?
  - » Is this goal relative to outdoor CO<sub>2</sub> levels or an absolute value?

#### Encouraged

- Teams are encouraged to complete the Well-being tab of the Super Spreadsheet.
- Upload daylight modeling report.

Please explain if a mandatory metric is unavailable or a metric requires additional interpretive information.



## 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 or priorities were considered in making material selection decisions? How were materials and products selected and designed to reduce embodied carbon and environmental impacts while enhancing building performance? How was material selection used to 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 which materials were chosen?

**(<200 words)**

### DESIGN INTENT (<100 WORDS EACH)

#### Mandatory

- Did embodied carbon considerations inform the design? How?
- Did the idea of circularity/circular economy inform the design? How?

#### Encouraged

- Describe any special steps taken during design/construction to make disassembly, deconstruction, or reuse easier at the building's end of life.

### METRICS

**Mandatory – calculated results from the Super Spreadsheet, Resources tab, Section 8.2- Building Reuse/Life Span, Section 8.3 - Embodied Carbon/Tools and Scope, Section 8.4 - Embodied Carbon/Calculations and Strategies, and Section 8.7 - Recycled | Regional | Reused | Third-Party Certification Materials (Sustainably Harvested Wood section only)**

- Percentage of project floor area, if any, that was reused or adapted from existing buildings
- Was embodied carbon modeled? (Y/N)
  - » If yes, what is the project's embodied carbon intensity in kg CO<sub>2</sub>e/sf?
- Percentage of installed wood that is FSC certified (All/Most/Some/None)

#### Encouraged

- Teams are encouraged to complete the Resources tab of the Super Spreadsheet.
- Upload the embodied carbon report from modeling tool used.
- For LEED projects, upload a copy of the BPDO calculator.

Please explain if a mandatory metric is unavailable or a metric requires additional interpretive information.



## 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?

**(<200 words)**

### DESIGN INTENT (<100 WORDS EACH)

#### Mandatory

- In what ways does the design anticipate climate change over the life of the building?
- How does the design anticipate restoring or adapting function in the face of stress or shock, such as natural disasters, blackouts, etc.?

### METRICS

#### Mandatory – calculated results from the Super Spreadsheet, Change tab, Section 9.1 – Local Hazard Research and Section 9.2 – Resiliency

- Research Score
- Resiliency Score

#### Encouraged

- Teams are encouraged to complete the Change tab of the Super Spreadsheet.
- Can the building be used as a safe harbor to support a community during a crisis? (Y/N)
  - » If so, explain.
- How many hours can the building function through passive survivability?
  - » Explain your calculations.

Please explain if a mandatory metric is unavailable or a metric requires additional interpretive information.





## 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 did 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 were performance data and experiential stories shared, even if the findings fall short of the vision? How were lessons learned through construction administration shared to project teams? What strategies promote a sense of discovery and delight?

**(<200 words)**

### DESIGN INTENT (<100 WORDS EACH)

#### Mandatory

- What lessons learned through this project have been used to improve subsequent projects?
- If a post-occupancy evaluation was performed, describe the process and outcomes.
- If post-occupancy performance testing was conducted (such as blower door, thermal imaging, etc.), describe the process and outcomes.

### METRICS

#### Mandatory – calculated from the Super Spreadsheet, Discovery Tab, Section 10.2 - Level of Post Occupancy Engagement

- Post Occupancy Evaluation Score

#### Encouraged

- Transparency Score (from the Super Spreadsheet, Discovery Tab Section 10.3: Level of Transparency)
- Commissioning Score (from the Super Spreadsheet, Discovery Tab Section 10.1: Level of Commissioning)
- Feedback Score (from the Super Spreadsheet, Discovery Tab Section 10.4: Level of Occupant Feedback)

Please explain if a mandatory metric is unavailable or a metric requires additional interpretive information.