

AIA NEI 2025 Design Awards Application

3. Project Information

Project Name

Is this project a resubmission or has it been submitted in the previous 5 years to another AIA program? Yes No

If yes, please indicate the year submitted and any recognition received.

What is the gross conditioned floor area (sq. ft.) of the project?

What is the primary use/category of the project?

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Commercial (Retail/Restaurant) | Healthcare |
| Institutional – Educational, K -12, Higher Education | Institutional – Civic, Municipal |
| Interior Architecture | Preservation/Renovation |
| Residential – Single Family | Residential – Multi-Family |
| Religious | Student Work |
| Unbuilt | |

Was a design charrette or sustainability workshop conducted with owner and team? Yes No

Which of the following levels of community engagement were used during the design process?
(Select all that apply.)

No community engagement practices were applied for this project.

Inform: Potential stakeholders were informed about the project.

Consult: Stakeholders were provided with opportunities to provide input at pre-designed points in the process.

Involve: Stakeholders were involved throughout most of the process.

Collaborate: A partnership is formed with stakeholders to share in the decision-making process including development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution.

Empower: Stakeholders were provided with opportunities to make decisions for the project.

Unknown

Not applicable (please explain)

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4. Project – Ecosystem

Submissions will be reviewed and awarded based on the successful integration of the [AIA Framework for Design Excellence](#)

What percent of site area supported vegetation (landscape or green roof) pre-development?

What percent of site area supported vegetation (landscape or green roof) post-development?

What percent of site area is covered by native plants that support native or migratory species or pollinators?

Which of the following intentional design strategies were used to promote design for ecosystem? (select all that apply.)

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Biodiversity | Dark skies | Bird safety |
| Soil conservation | Habitat conservation, flora/fauna | |
| Abatement of specific regional environmental concerns | | |
| None of the above | Unknown | Not applicable |

5. Project - Water

Is potable water used for irrigation?	Yes	No	NA
Is potable water used for cooling?	Yes	No	NA
Is grey/blackwater re-used on-site?	Yes	No	NA
Is rainwater collected on-site?	Yes	No	NA

What percentage of stormwater is managed on-site?

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6. Project - Cost

Unless otherwise noted, AIA NEI and the jury will keep financial information confidential. AIA NEI will only describe financial information in public narratives with prior consent from the submitter.

What is the cost per square foot for this project?

How does the cost to construct this project compare to similar buildings in the region?

7. Project - Energy

Using ZeroTool, what is the 2030 Commitment baseline EUI (in kBtu/sf/yr) for the project?

What was the predicted EUI (in kBtu/sf/yr) of the project, including on-site renewables? (Note: carbon offsets should not be counted.)

What was the percentage reduction from the benchmark? (To calculate, first subtract predicted EUI from baseline, then divide by baseline.)

Is the project all-electric? Yes No

8. Project – Well-being

What level of air filters are installed?

Do greater than 90% of occupied spaces have a direct view to the outdoors? Yes No

Was a 'chemicals of concern' listed used to inform material selection? Yes No

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9. Project – Resources

Were embodied carbon emissions estimated for this project? Yes No

What is the estimated embodied carbon emissions (in kgCO₂e/m²/yr) associated with the project, including the extraction and manufacturing of materials used for construction?

10. Project – Change

What is the estimated service life of the project? (in years)?

Which of the following risk assessment and resilience services were provided? (select all that apply.)

Hazard identification	Climate Change Risk	Building vulnerability assessment
Hazard mitigation strategies above code	None of the above	
Unknown	Not applicable	

11. Project – Discovery

Has a post-occupancy evaluation been conducted? Yes No

Which of the following building performance transparency steps have been taken?
(select all that apply.)

Present the design, outcomes, and/or lessons learned in the office

Present the design, outcomes, and/or lessons learned to the profession

Present the design, outcomes, and/or lessons learned to the public

Publish post-occupancy data from the project

Publish lessons learned from the design, construction, and/or occupancy

None of the above

Unknown

Not applicable (please explain)



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Please describe your project emphasizing elements of design achievement including project intentions, programming requirements, cost data and the distinguishing aspects of your resolution (limit 500 words).

Please provide a timeline and summary on how the project came to be including the client's perspective from the start and what impact the project has made on the client and community (limit 500 words).

ICivic108 – Hemmens Cultural Center-North Addition – page 6

Please describe your project emphasizing elements of design achievement including project intentions, programming requirements, cost data and the distinguishing aspects of your resolution (limit 500 words).

The new addition to the Hemmens Cultural Center in Elgin, Illinois brings new life to this important midcentury-modern civic building. Originally built in 1969 as a civic performance venue, designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in the International style developed by Mies van der Rohe, the Hemmens has long been a community landmark. Yet as cultural needs and accessibility standards evolved, the building's limitations for current needs became apparent. This addition and selective renovation reinvigorates the Center. It extends the building's utility, provides new lobby, banquet, and office areas that can function independently of the main performance hall, improves circulation and access, provides improved wheelchair accessibility, and presents a strikingly modern face that invites new generations of users while respecting the midcentury roots that define its character.

The expanded lobby creates a more welcoming and identifiable entrance, improving circulation for patrons while enhancing accessibility, flow, and first impressions. Accessible restrooms on upper and lower levels together with ramps and an elevator address long-standing ADA challenges, making the space inclusive for all visitors.

The new reception area / banquet rooms on the second floor with their outdoor balconies provide vibrant social spaces and panoramic views of downtown's Civic Center Plaza, enriching the visitor experience and supporting new programming opportunities. Wood detailing and warmer tones complement the more austere original detailing.

Other interior upgrades include a walk-up box office visible from main avenues, new office support space for Hemmens personnel and city staff and redesigned back-of-house areas (including dressing rooms, green rooms, and loading docks) that significantly improve the center's operational capabilities, keeping pace with the needs of touring professionals.

The new structure reflects and complements the original building's midcentury modern vocabulary—steel, glass, clean lines, and Miesian detailing—while providing a deliberately contemporary new main entrance. Here the strategic grafting of new elements onto this older building provides powerful revitalization: Rather than erasing the past, it honors it, bringing new life to this aging structure, allowing it to serve modern purposes while preserving its historic and cultural significance. This method is also deeply sustainable: Repurposing this existing 56-year-old building avoids the carbon costs of demolition and new construction; conserves embodied energy and reduces waste. It is a form of architectural recycling that merges stewardship of the past with innovation for the future. Here the architectural grafting of new onto old provides a dialogue across time, a way of saying that what was once new can continue to serve, inspire, and adapt—without being erased.

The addition reinforces the Center's cultural role as a hub for the arts—hosting the Elgin Symphony Orchestra, theater groups, dance recitals, community events, and more. The expansion ensures that this civic landmark remains a vibrant, relevant anchor in Elgin's arts and community center well into the future.

Please provide a timeline and summary on how the project came to be including the client's perspective from the start and what impact the project has made on the client and community (limit 500 words).

The original Mies van der Rohe-style Hemmens building was designed by the architectural firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill and completed in 1969 as part of the development of Civic Center Plaza, which includes Elgin's City Hall.

This timeline demonstrates how the Hemmens Cultural Center's most significant expansion in more than 50 years evolved—from vision and community involvement to design, build-out, and grand opening:

- c. 2003–2005 – Expansion Feasibility Study & Master Plan

Three decades later deficiencies had become apparent. This architect worked with the Hemmens Director and Facilities Manager on a feasibility study and master plan exploring expansion of the Hemmens to the north. At this time, we also designed a new proscenium for the main stage to create a more dramatic and warm stage presence while housing various stage functions. Financing was tight so the project was delayed.

- 2020 – Schematic Design Initiated

In 2020 the expansion project was revived and schematic designs for a north-side addition to integrating a lobby, box office, drop-off canopy, restrooms, balcony, loading dock, and offices.

- July 29, 2022 – Council Approval

In July 2022, the Elgin City Council signed off on architectural and engineering contracts for the building targeting final design by December, with bidding in January 2023 and construction planned for 2023 – 2024.

- Jan–Feb 2023 – Bidding & Preparation

Contractor selection was finalized and site mobilization commenced

- July 26, 2023 – Groundbreaking Ceremony

A formal groundbreaking, celebrated with Elgin officials and community members, officially launched the construction process.

- Spring–Summer 2023 – Structural Progress

Steel framing, decking, and structural work advanced to create the lobby, canopy, balcony, and restroom areas

- Late 2023–April 2024 – Shell & Systems Installed

Construction continued with exterior shell finishing, updates to mechanical and electrical systems, and water intrusion repairs

- Late 2024–Early 2025 – Interior Buildout and Punchlist

Construction efforts focused on installing finishes, accessible restrooms on both floors, box office interior/exterior access, reception area, storage, offices, and completing punch-list tasks

- Spring 2025 – Completion and Grand Opening

In May 2025 the \$14.4 million, 16,477 ft² expansion—including a north lobby entrance, upgraded event spaces, balcony, and accessible facilities—was officially unveiled with a celebratory public grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Spanning two decades—from early feasibility studies to the 2025 public opening, the Hemmens expansion reflects a visionary yet pragmatic evolution, as well as the persistence of the client in making the project a reality. The project reinforces the Center's legacy while modernizing its function, accessibility, and presence as a civic anchor.

Elgin personnel view the Hemmens Theater Addition as a successful project that modernizes the facility, enhances visitor and performer experiences, and reinforces the Hemmens' position as a cornerstone of Elgin's arts community. Department of Cultural Arts and Special Events Director Amanda Harris said of the project, "This will continue to make the Hemmens an attractive venue for the community and the region for decades to come. And it will further solidify Elgin's burgeoning reputation as a city of the arts."