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[Business](#)

Restaurant, train station, warehouse garner state architectural awards



John J Korom Photography

Eppstein Uhen Architects won a merit award for transforming a "hopeless space" at the Milwaukee Intermodal Station.

By [Mary Louise Schumacher](#) of the Journal Sentinel

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An old warehouse transformed into an "urban beacon," a modernist train station and an elegant sushi restaurant in Madison were among the architectural projects recognized Wednesday for their excellence by AIA Wisconsin, the state society of the American Institute of Architects.

Practicing Wisconsin architects received awards for seven projects at the 55th annual awards ceremony at the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center in Madison.

The out-of-town jurors said they were "quite selective" and focused on projects that contributed to the profession in unique ways as opposed to those based on historical styles.

Most entries made some effort toward sustainable and environmentally sound building practices, a sign that elements such as green roofs are becoming more common, the jurors noted.

Sushi Muramoto, 546 N. Midvale Blvd., Madison, designed by **Aro Eberle Architects**, also in Madison, was one of three projects recognized for overall design excellence.

Cedar columns with glass display cases embedded in them were praised by the jurors as a striking characteristic for the restaurant, as seen from the street. At night, the illuminated interior creates columns of light to complement those vertical lines. The bar inside is also backed by a bold, red and silver mural, a contemporary homage to Japanese painting.

The Palomar Welcome Center, designed by **Johnsen Schmalig Architects** in Milwaukee, was the sales and exhibition center for a now canceled mixed-use condo and hotel development in the Park East corridor. The up-and-coming firm, founded in 2003 by Brian Johnsen and Sebastian Schmalig, is the only firm to win two awards this year. Last year, it won three of the 10 annual awards.

Jurors praised the elegance of the welcome center's long, glass scrim, illuminated from behind, which turned a windowless brick warehouse into an "urban beacon" that signaled change for the Park East area. Design solutions also included sustainable materials, including a bamboo floor and locally quarried stone.

The Grand Itasca Clinic and Hospital in Grand Rapids, Minn., designed by **Kahler Slater** in Milwaukee, was inspired by the mining, farming, timber and milling industries of northern Minnesota. The palette of the landscape permeates the interior and exterior of this clean, crisp building. Slatted "corn rib" fences recall the area's agricultural heritage and provide a visual screen.

Four projects were given merit awards for particular aspects of their design.

The Milwaukee Intermodal Station, designed by **Eppstein Uhen Architects**, was praised for transforming a "hopeless space," the 1965 Amtrak station, into a landmark building and transportation hub. Jurors praised the luminous, three-story glass atrium with its curtain of glass and crisscrossing white beams.

Johnsen Schmalig's second award was for the interior of a loft created on the top floor of a former cold-storage facility in Milwaukee. The minimalist residence is divided into three distinct but interconnected zones.

The four-story National Conference of Bar Examiners building in Madison, designed by **Potter**

Lawson, also of Madison, maximized the use of a small, urban infill site. Its structural beauty is transparent, with columns and slab edges exposed both inside and out. A green roof terrace was incorporated, and recycled materials were used for floorings.

A private home in De Soto by **River Architects** in La Crosse uses the vernacular of simple, timber-frame, rural structures to create cutting-edge contemporary spaces, including a lookout tower, multiple outdoor living spaces and a green house.

This year's jurors included Kathy Achelpohl of Kansas City, Mo.; Stephen Knowles of Minneapolis; and Kevin Rice of New York.

William P. Wenzler of Milwaukee received the Golden Award, the highest honor the state architects' society bestows on an individual architect.

A lifelong resident of Milwaukee, Wenzler established his firm in 1955 and continues to work part time. He was singled out particularly for his commitment to providing quality, affordable housing to low-income families and for his designs for church, university and urban housing projects. He is the 22nd architect to receive the award.



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