Design Awards Highlight New Trends & Innovations.

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Now in its 52nd year, the annual PCI Design Awards program does not disappoint. Another 16 buildings were honored this year with a PCI Design Award, as selected by a judging panel of industry design professionals. These projects represent the full gamut of markets and sizes. (Bridge and transportation awards, which are presented in *Aspire* magazine, can be viewed at www.pci.org.)

The Design Awards highlight many things to the buildings industry and construction in general. Some of these include innovations and trends in design, new applications and advancements in the use of precast concrete, and optimization of the many inherent attributes of high-performance precast concrete.

For example, each year more projects are utilizing precast concrete's thermal mass and ability to incorporate continuous insulation into their envelope design. Since precast concrete is also a continuous air barrier, and a vapor retarder (at 3 inches thick or more), this allows designers to efficiently meet all three of these important code requirements, while dramatically improving the energy performance of a structure.

Another great example is the use of new materials with precast concrete. In the past year, several projects have incorporated terra cotta, on a large scale, by embedding it into precast concrete panels. One such project received a PCI Design Award this year. This opens the door to a more cost-effective and durable approach to using terra cotta in projects.

We also see an expansion of the use of precast concrete in all building types, small and large. Most designers are familiar with using precast concrete for parking structures, bridges, industrial buildings, entertainment venues, etc. However, as evidenced by this year's award winners, precast can provide an optimum high-performance solution for almost any project application, from hospitals and offices to schools and small structures. The co-winners in the Custom Solutions category are great examples of smaller projects that utilized precast concrete to create stunning projects while meeting program requirements.

You can read about this year's winners in this issue of *Ascent*, as well as online at www.pci.org. You can also view more photos and learn about high-performance precast on our website. We hope the projects in this issue will inspire you to greatness and to earning your own PCI Design Award. △