

January 23, 2007

How to Win the Best of 50+ Housing Awards!

An Insider's Look at the Judging Process

Each year, a panel of distinguished judges sorts through hundreds of entries to the Best of 50+ Housing Awards.

**THE 2007
BEST OF
50+
HOUSING
AWARDS**

They're in a room where the lights have been dimmed so that photos of the entries projected on the screen can be seen. They're trying to get the most information they can about each entry in a limited time frame. What's the best way to get your entry noticed in this environment? We asked judge Steve Wattenbarger, AIA, chairman of Wattenbarger Architects, LLC, in Bellevue, Wash., to break it down for us.

For more information on the Best of 50+ Housing Awards, check out the story in this issue of 50+ Housing e/Source.

- Follow the order of the criteria in the entry requirements. "That's the way the judges read the input as they are looking at the entry on the screen and reviewing what the entrant has provided," says Wattenbarger. This also makes it easier for the reviewer to make notes and keep track of their comments.
- Keep it simple. Wattenbarger encourages entrants to use bullet points in the responses and descriptions. "This is probably one of the chief things that make the entries either easy or difficult to understand," he explains. "The judges have a very short amount of time to make a decision about an entry--probably less than three or four minutes. The review of the project takes longer, but the judge needs to absorb the key information in four minutes or less. So, the simpler the better! Bullet points make it easier for the judges to see what's going on."
- Avoid "marketing" language in design entries. "Marketing superlatives are really not what the judges are looking for. They're looking for points that tell them how the project works, how it was designed, and the reasons behind the design decisions. Those are the most important aspects."
- Use great graphics. Wattenbarger recommends keeping text concise and to-the-point and using high-quality photography and art to convey the project's qualities.

Wattenbarger's closing advice? "Keep it simple, keep it direct, put in the order it's asked for. You'll be way ahead of a lot of others."

The entry deadline for the 2007 Best of 50+ Housing Awards is Feb. 23. This year's awards ceremony will be held Thursday, May 31, in Denver during *Building for Boomers & Beyond: 50+ Housing Symposium 2007*. Get more information about the awards, including categories and entry criteria, here http://www.nahb.org/award_details.aspx?awardID=131§ionID=121, or call 800-368-5242 x8220.