



**NEOCON CONVENES INDUSTRY-LEADING JURY
FOR THE 36TH BEST OF NEOCON AWARDS**

*Powerhouse Panel of Architects, Designers, Facility Managers, and
Business Media Journalists to Evaluate the Latest Innovations*

(Chicago, IL – April 15, 2026) Continuing a 36-year legacy of honoring innovation in the built environment, [NeoCon](#) has assembled its 2026 jury for [Best of NeoCon](#)—the commercial design industry’s premier awards program. This year’s multidisciplinary cohort brings together approximately 45 architects, designers, facility managers, and end-users from leading firms and organizations, including **CannonDesign, Gensler, HDR, HKS, HOK, Marmon Mok, Northwestern Mutual, Shepley Bulfinch, State Farm, and Walgreens**, among others, for rigorous, in-person evaluations at The Mart. The 2026 program spans hundreds of entries within 46 categories, with expanded lighting classifications introduced alongside the debut of [Illuminate at NeoCon](#), a dedicated exhibition spotlighting lighting innovation.

“We personally invite the most respected practitioners because their ability to evaluate products through the lens of real-world application is central to maintaining the program’s credibility and relevance,” says Eileen McMorrow, Director of the Best of NeoCon program. “We strive to diversify the jury across project types, firm sizes, areas of specialization, and geographic regions. Both designers and facility managers are sourcing solutions for substantial, complex projects, and that breadth of perspective is critical.”

Jury Grounded in Real-World Impact

Jurors are currently specifying for major projects across the country, including corporate headquarters, healthcare campuses, higher education facilities, and large-scale mixed-use developments ranging from 90,000 to over 1 million square feet. From global financial institutions and Fortune 500 workplaces to hospitals, research labs, and academic buildings, these projects demand high-performance, durable, and human-centered solutions. Facility manager jurors are likewise overseeing workplace transformations, campus-wide upgrades, and specialized environments—ensuring products are evaluated not only for design excellence, but for long-term functionality and operational impact.

Juror Perspectives

To ensure a well-rounded review process, the jury includes both returning and first-time participants representing diverse disciplines and markets. During on-site evaluations, jurors engage directly with manufacturers to better understand product development, materiality, and intended use.

Paola Contreras, Senior Interior Designer at HDR with 20 years of experience across healthcare, justice, and behavioral health environments, explains, “I value the opportunity to understand how products are developed and brought to market, especially those that support clarity, safety, and dignity for the people using these spaces. Being a part of the jury process offers a chance to learn from manufacturers first-hand and see how new ideas are being translated into real solutions.”

Returning juror Jennifer Leighty, who is in her 24th year at Walgreens, managing workplace experience for the company’s corporate environments, adds, “As someone who attends NeoCon regularly, having a behind-the-scenes look at how products come together is incredibly valuable. Hearing directly from the teams about their inspiration, the challenges they’re solving, and how their designs function in practice adds a level of understanding you can’t get anywhere else.”

Jessica Maples, Design Director at Gensler with more than two decades of experience designing workplace interiors, notes, “Serving on the jury offers a unique vantage point into emerging manufacturers, sustainability innovations, and creative partnerships. It’s a chance to stay informed, connect great design and products with our clients, share that insight with our teams, and help inspire the next generation of designers.”

Business Impact Awards

Returning for its fourth year, the Business Impact Awards will once again recognize products that drive organizational performance, from efficiency and cost savings to improved use of space. Finalists advance to a second round of on-site review by a panel of business journalists from outlets including *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Crain’s Chicago Business*, *Forbes, Inc.*, *The New York Times*, and *Wirecutter*.

Honors & Awards Ceremony

Awards for Gold, Silver, Innovation, Sustainability, and Business Impact, along with the program’s highest distinction—Best of Competition—will be announced during the official ceremony on Monday, June 8, at The Mart, kicking off NeoCon 2026.

People’s Choice Awards

Following the ceremony, attendees will once again be invited to participate in the People’s Choice Awards. This digital and on-site voting initiative empowers the broader design community to select their favorite standout products from this year’s winners. Voting will be open through Tuesday, June 9, with five winners announced at the BIFMA Breakfast and across NeoCon’s social media channels on Wednesday, June 10.

Submission Rules, Deadlines, and Fees

NeoCon exhibitors are encouraged to submit entries via the [Best of NeoCon online portal](#). Eligible products must have entered the U.S. market since June 2025 and be on display at NeoCon 2026. Products previously entered in the 2025 program are ineligible. Submission deadlines and entry fees are detailed below:

April 1-30 (standard): **\$1,000** per entry
May 1-20 (late): **\$1,100** per entry
Business Impact Opt-In: **\$500** per entry

More details on the program and entry process can be found at neocon.com/awards/best-of-neocon.

NeoCon is open to trade, C-Suite executives, and other industry-related professionals, and registration is free for all attendees. Register [here](#).

For showroom, exhibitor, and general NeoCon news, images, and real-time information, follow NeoCon on: [Instagram](#) (@NeoCon_Shows), [LinkedIn](#) (@NeoCon-Shows), and [Facebook](#) (@NeoConShows).

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: What is the Best of NeoCon Awards program?

A: Best of NeoCon is the commercial design industry's leading awards program, recognizing excellence across workplace, healthcare, hospitality, and education sectors. Now in its 36th year, the program evaluates hundreds of new products introduced at NeoCon, honoring those that set new standards for the built environment.

Q: Who serves on the 2026 Best of NeoCon jury?

A: The 2026 jury includes approximately 45 industry professionals spanning architecture, interior design, facility management, and business media. Jurors represent leading firms and organizations such as Gensler, HOK, HDR, CannonDesign, Northwestern Mutual, Walgreens, and State Farm, bringing diverse expertise and real-world project experience to the evaluation process.

Q: How are products evaluated for Best of NeoCon?

A: Jurors conduct rigorous, in-person evaluations at The Mart before NeoCon, engaging directly with manufacturers to assess product innovation, materiality, functionality, and real-world application. Products are reviewed across 46 categories, with additional consideration for sustainability, innovation, and business impact.

Q: What are the Business Impact Awards, and how do they differ from other categories?

A: The Business Impact Awards recognize products that deliver measurable organizational value, such as increased efficiency, cost savings, and improved use of space. Unlike other categories, finalists undergo a second round of evaluation by a panel of journalists from top-tier business media outlets.

Q: What are the People’s Choice Awards, and how can attendees participate?

A: The People’s Choice Awards invite NeoCon attendees to vote for their favorite standout products from this year’s Best of NeoCon winners. Voting takes place both digitally and on-site following the awards ceremony and remains open through June 9. Five winners will be announced at the BIFMA Breakfast and across NeoCon’s social media channels on June 10.

Q: What are the key deadlines and fees for award submissions?

A: Submissions are open exclusively to NeoCon 2026 exhibitors for products released after June 2025. Exhibitors can submit their products through the online [awards portal](#) starting March 1, 2026.

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About NeoCon: NeoCon is the world’s leading platform and most important event for the commercial interiors industry, held each year at The Mart in Chicago. Since launching in 1969, NeoCon has served as the annual gathering place for the commercial design world’s manufacturers, dealers, architects, designers, end-users, design organizations, and media. The three-day event showcases game-changing products and services from more than 400 leading and emerging companies—providing unparalleled access to the latest and most innovative solutions. A robust educational program of keynote presentations and CEU sessions offers world-class expertise and insight into today’s most relevant topics as well as the future of commercial design. www.neocon.com

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About Best of NeoCon: Best of NeoCon is the official awards program honoring outstanding new products from exhibiting companies across a wide range of verticals. Best of NeoCon features entrants in 46 product categories evaluated on-site by a diverse jury of leading architects, designers, specifiers, and facility managers with expertise spanning the commercial, healthcare, education, and hospitality sectors. Entries are considered for Gold, Silver, Innovation, and Sustainability awards, plus the singular honor of Best of Competition. Entrants may also opt in to be considered for the Business Impact Award, which recognizes exceptional solutions through a business-oriented lens. Finalists are reviewed on-site by a dedicated jury of business media professionals. www.neocon.com/awards/best-of-neocon

About The Mart: The Mart is the largest privately held commercial building in the United States: It encompasses 4.2 million gross square feet, spans two city blocks, rises 25 stories, and is visited by an average of 30,000 people each business day (or nearly 10 million people annually).

The Mart serves as the home to Chicago’s most creative and technologically innovative companies, including Motorola Mobility, PayPal, Avant, and MATTER, as well as Fortune 500

companies Conagra Brands, Allstate, Medline Industries, Beam Suntory, IPG, and Grainger. It is also the largest and most important center for design in North America, with more than 250 premier design showrooms offering the latest resources for both residential and commercial markets.

Media Kit:

Access the official show press kit [here](#).

Media Contacts: Novità Communications

[Sarah Claypool](#) / [Danielle McWilliams](#) / [Katie Fosdick](#)