

Council on Vertical Urbanism Announces 2026 Award of Excellence Winners

Annual global competition recognizes projects redefining density, performance and urban possibility in a period of rapid transformation

CHICAGO—The [Council on Vertical Urbanism](#) (CVU) today announced the recipients of its [2026 Award of Excellence](#) honors, recognizing 73 projects, concepts and initiatives that exemplify new directions in vertical urbanism across the globe. Awardees representing work from 20 countries across 20 categories and subcategories reflect a growing emphasis on adaptability, interdisciplinary thinking and long-term urban value. (View the full list of winners [here](#).)

The 2026 competition brought together submissions from architects, engineers, developers, planners, contractors, manufacturers and researchers working at multiple scales, from individual buildings and structural systems to district-scale infrastructure and urban regeneration strategies. Winning entries were selected by multidisciplinary juries composed of experts from across the built environment industry.

“What distinguished this year’s winners was not simply technical achievement or architectural ambition, but clarity of purpose,” said CVU CEO [Javier Quintana de Uña](#). “These projects demonstrate a deeper understanding of what cities now require: flexibility under changing conditions, intelligent resource use, cutting-edge technology integration, meaningful public engagement and development strategies capable of delivering lasting social and environmental value.”

Many of this year’s recognized projects prioritize integration over isolated architectural gestures, linking mobility infrastructure, climate-responsive public space, mixed-use density and adaptable building systems. Several winning entries also explore emerging construction methodologies, next-generation materials, adaptive reuse and new approaches to embodied carbon reduction.

For the second consecutive year, CVU is also inviting awards participants to contribute embodied carbon and material usage data through the organization’s [Carbon Commitment Initiative](#), a voluntary effort to establish shared global benchmarks for lower-carbon tall building development. Nearly 50 projects worldwide have already committed data over the past two years, with CVU now targeting contributions from more than 100 projects ahead of the release of initial findings at the 2026 VU Summit in London this October. Contributed information will support the development of a public-facing benchmarking dashboard within the CarbonSpace platform, created in collaboration with Sustainability Executive Program Partner [MVRDV NEXT](#).

The future of cities

This year's announcement also marks a pivotal moment for the organization itself, as the Council on Vertical Urbanism evolves from the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat to reflect an expanded ambition for the future of cities. The transition expands upon the organization's longstanding focus on tall buildings by situating them within the larger urban systems that shape daily life, including density, infrastructure, livability, climate responsiveness and public realm.

That evolution also reflects changes taking place across the built environment industry, according to [Paul De Santis](#), Partner and Design Director at Goettsch Partners, who chaired the construction category jury.

"Across disciplines, there's growing recognition that buildings must be evaluated by more than their individual presence or technical achievement," said De Santis. "The most consequential work emerging today considers how projects contribute to the larger urban ecosystem...how they support connectivity, sustainability, adaptability and the everyday experience of the city itself. That broader perspective was evident across many of this year's submissions."

While height remains central to urban development, CVU's expanded vision recognizes that the success of cities will increasingly depend on how effectively buildings support social cohesion, environmental performance, mobility and resilience.

"Cities are entering an era defined by simultaneous pressures: climate adaptation, housing demand, infrastructure constraints and rapid social change," added Quintana de Uña. "The projects recognized this year demonstrate that the future of vertical urbanism will not be defined by height alone, but by how effectively buildings conserve resources, support public life, adapt over time and strengthen the resilience and equity of cities. What these winners ultimately show is that density, when approached intelligently and responsibly, can become one of the most powerful tools for shaping a more sustainable and livable urban future."

Award of Excellence winners will advance to the next phase of the competition during the [2026 VU Summit](#), taking place 26–29 October in London, where project teams will present their work live before juries. Final "best in category" distinctions and overall awards will be announced during the conference's awards ceremony and dinner on 28 October.

Now in its 24th year, CVU's annual Awards Program continues to serve as an international benchmark for excellence in vertical urbanism and city-making.

About the Council on Vertical Urbanism

The [Council on Vertical Urbanism](#) (CVU) is the leading nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing tall buildings and responsible density in cities across the globe. Our extensive network of worldwide members spans nearly every discipline essential to constructing, connecting, and sustaining the built environment—from architecture, engineering, and real estate development to planning, policy, and public investment—driving engagement, innovation, and the meaningful transformation of urban areas. We disseminate industry-leading knowledge through hundreds of multidisciplinary programs each year: conferences, awards, funded research, and academic

partnerships, all anchored by a rich repository of publications and online resources, including the most comprehensive database of detailed information and images for 45,000+ tall buildings internationally. Best known as the global arbiter of building height, conferring the official title of “world’s tallest building,” CVU is headquartered in Chicago, with offices in Toronto, Shanghai, and Venice.

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