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War Memorial Veterans Building Receives Design Award
Historic restoration project is honored with special AIA SF commendation

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San Francisco, CA — Hundreds of architects and designers gathered in the War Memorial Veterans Building in San Francisco to find out who would win the acclaimed American Institute of Architects, San Francisco Chapter 2016 Design Awards. Little did they know, that the building where the award ceremony was taking place, would be recognized with one of the most prestigious awards – a Special Commendation for Historic Preservation.

Located in the San Francisco Civic Center Historic District, the Veterans Building is regarded as one of the finest and most complete manifestations of Beaux Arts architecture and civic design in the United States. The renovation project involved comprehensive seismic upgrades, earthquake-damage repair, energy and accessibility modernizations, and improvements to the interior and theater of this landmark building.

The Veterans Building was formally dedicated on Armistice Day, Nov. 11, 1932. Since then the building has been the site of numerous historic events, the most notable of which was the signing of the United Nations Charter in 1945.

The building was damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, but remained open until the start of the improvement project that began in July 2013 and wrapped up in September 2015. San Francisco Public Works managed the project from planning to completion and provided architectural services and construction management.

While granting the Veterans Building a Special Commendation for Historic Preservation, the American Institute of Architects, San Francisco Chapter jury commented that what makes a successful preservation project so great is the passion that a team of preservationists and historians brings to the table.

“Every one of the construction workers were not just workers, they were artists,” San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee said at the dedication ceremony. “When Public Works employees do a building, they put their hearts into it.”

The American Institute of Architects, San Francisco Chapter Architecture Award recognizes and celebrates outstanding achievements in architecture. Submissions are judged on quality of design, resolution of the program or idea, and innovation, thoughtfulness and technique.

“We are one of the few public works agencies with a full architecture division,” said San Francisco Public Works Director Mohammed Nuru. “The Veterans

Building is the third Beaux Arts building we have restored in San Francisco's Civic Center. It is truly an honor to have our project recognized by the City's architecture community."

The Veterans Building is managed by the [San Francisco War Memorial & Performing Arts Center](#) and is home to the Herbst Theatre and the Green Room reception space. The San Francisco Posts of the American Legion returned to the Veterans Building to occupy meeting rooms and administrative offices. The facility now houses the offices of the San Francisco Arts Commission, Grants for the Arts, a new 4,400 square-foot San Francisco Arts Commission gallery, and new performance and facility space for the San Francisco Opera. The project modernizes and preserves the building to continue to serve the veterans, arts and public, as well as strengthen the cultural vitality of the Civic Center, for future generations.

The total cost of the improvement project was \$156,369,000 and was funded by certificates of participation, City funds, grants and gift funds.

In addition to Public Works, the project team included Pankow Builders, general contractor; Simpson, Gumpertz & Heger/ Bello & Associates, structural engineer and envelope; Carey & Co., historic preservation architect; Weiss Associates, civil engineer; SJ Engineers, mechanical and plumbing; Glumac, electrical; Auerbach Glasow French, lighting; Auerbach, Pollock, Friedlander, theatrical: RLS, acoustics and telecom; Kai-Yee Woo & Associates, FF&E; and many other outstanding consultants and sub-contractors.

For more information about the War Memorial Veterans Building and the Special Commendation for Historic Preservation award, see the American Institute of Architects, San Francisco Chapter [website](#) and the San Francisco Public Works project [page](#).

About [San Francisco Public Works](#): The 24/7 City agency cleans and resurfaces streets; plants and nurtures City-maintained street trees; designs, constructs and maintains City-owned facilities; inspects streets and sidewalks; builds curb ramps; eradicates graffiti; partners with neighborhoods; trains people for jobs; greens the right of way; and educates our communities.

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