

# Celebrating Architecture through Film

Contributed by AIA Sierra Valley

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## SUMMARY

Started in 2008, the “AIA Sierra Valley Film Festival – Celebrating Architecture” was established to promote and celebrate the architecture profession. The program was designed as multiple events that form a single program. This ongoing program is not only intended to benefit members, but, most importantly, to benefit the local community. By engaging the community, AIA Sierra Valley (AIA SV) heightened the awareness and understanding of architects and their value to society.

## FILM AS THE BASIS OF A LARGER EVENT

The AIA Sierra Valley Film Festival is a multi-faceted event, held at the State Theater in Modesto, and is a celebration of architecture through film. Each film event involves a social gathering and presentation, followed by a film about architects and/or architecture. For the social gathering, local architects present their work and local college students showcase their work; this portion of the event is titled “future architects.” Next, both local AIA members and guest speakers give short presentations about the profession or their work. Both chapter members and guest speakers give architectural presentations preceding the film program. Following the presentation, the feature film is shown.

## HOW TO ORGANIZE A FILM FESTIVAL

At the outset, AIA SV formed a film festival committee to organize and prepare the events. The committee formed a theme, “Celebrating Architecture” and scheduled each event to fit that message. AIA SV included the expertise of local art leaders such as the directors of both the Modesto Art Museum and Modesto Film Society.

The film festival committee looked for inspiring films about architects or architecture. Once a film was selected, the pre-film speaker was established.

AIA SV offers the following advice to other components looking to create a film festival: reach out, reach out, reach out. The AIA SV film festival committee worked endlessly to promote the event to the community. AIA SV received generous sponsorships from local businesses and members of the community.

One main goal for this event was to include non-architects. Often AIA events are filled with members and affiliated professionals; so, the main goal for the film festival was to introduce and celebrate the profession,

and, in response, to introduce the public to it. To increase attendance, each event was mentioned in the *Modesto Bee*, a local newspaper.

## THE FEEDBACK

The average attendance was 150 to 160 people with a maximum of 220 at one event. Many members have cited the film festival as the best local event in years. Feedback has been resoundingly positive, with responders stating the event was spectacular and inquiring about the date for follow-up films.

Based on feedback, this program has led to the creation of other events such as the Downtown Modesto Guided Architecture Walking Tour, the State Theatre 75th Anniversary, The Modesto Architecture Database, and Modesto Architecture photo sharing on Flickr. Due to the success of this program, the AIA SV plans on making this festival an annual event.

## RESOURCES

### More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 22.08.21 AIA GE Forms Cycling Team
- 22.08.04 Kids in Architecture: A Grade 5 Curriculum
- 22.08.07 Architecture, It's Elementary! A K-5 Curriculum

### Feedback

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact [bestpractices@aia.org](mailto:bestpractices@aia.org).

### Key Terms

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architectural associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA components
- Events