

A HOME FOR EVERY NEIGHBOR

HOUSING DESIGN COMPETITION APPLICATION

Create homes for all ages, abilities and stages of life

Headwaters Regional Development Commission (HRDC) invites designers, builders, students, teams and community members to imagine a practical, welcoming home that advances universal design, affordability, sustainability and neighborhood compatibility.

Submission deadline	November 1, 2026
Winning award	\$2,500
Who may enter	Open to everyone; individuals and teams are welcome
Competition information	hrdc.org 218-766-4483
Submission method	Follow the submission instructions posted at hrdc.org

Competition Purpose

- Raise awareness of the need for more attainable and accessible housing choices.
- Inspire practical and creative designs that can support people throughout life.
- Help design and building professionals, students and residents learn from one another.
- Advance housing concepts that can fit northern Minnesota communities and neighborhoods.

Required Entry Materials

- ☐ Completed application and applicant certification
- ☐ Annotated development drawings
- ☐ Site plan
- ☐ Floor plans
- ☐ Elevations and renderings

Please review the complete competition rules and current submission instructions at hrdc.org before submitting.

1. Applicant Information

Complete one application for each entry. A team should identify one primary contact.

PRIMARY APPLICANT OR TEAM CONTACT

Full name

Organization, school or company (if applicable)

Mailing address

City, state and ZIP code

Email address

Phone number

ENTRY TYPE

- ☐ Individual entry
- ☐ Team entry
- ☐ Student entry
- ☐ Professional entry
- ☐ Community member entry
- ☐ Other:

Team members and affiliations *List every person who should be credited for the design.*

Design title

2. Design Concept

Use additional pages if needed. Keep responses clear for both design professionals and community members.

Design summary *Describe the home, the intended household(s), and the central idea behind the design.*

Universal design *Explain how people of different ages, abilities and mobility levels can approach, enter, use and adapt the home.*

Construction approach *Describe cost-conscious, sustainable, durable or innovative materials, systems and methods.*

Context and neighborhood fit *Explain how the design can work on varied sites and complement existing structures.*

Estimated construction considerations *Optional: note assumptions, cost-saving strategies, phasing or factors that affect feasibility.*

3. Universal Design Features

Check the features included in the concept and briefly explain how they work together.

ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

- ☐ At least one step-free entrance
- ☐ Accessible route from parking or public way to the entrance
- ☐ Doorways and circulation routes designed for a range of mobility needs
- ☐ Adequate turning and maneuvering space
- ☐ Easy-to-use door and window hardware

DAILY LIVING AND ADAPTABILITY

- ☐ Main-level space for living, cooking, bathing and sleeping
- ☐ Kitchen features usable by people with different reach and mobility needs
- ☐ Bathroom layout that supports safe use and future adaptation
- ☐ Good lighting, visual contrast and understandable wayfinding
- ☐ Flexible rooms or features that can change as household needs change
- ☐ Storage, controls and outlets located for convenient use

Other inclusive or universal design features

How the design supports dignity, independence and belonging

The checklist is a planning aid, not a substitute for applicable building codes, accessibility requirements or the competition rules.

4. Submission Checklist and Evaluation

Label all materials with the design title and primary applicant or team name.

REQUIRED SUBMISSION MATERIALS

	Item	What to include
☐	Completed application	All sections are complete and the certification is signed.
☐	Annotated development drawings	Key design decisions, dimensions, materials and universal-design features are clearly identified.
☐	Site plan	The building footprint, access, parking, outdoor areas and relationship to the site are shown.
☐	Floor plans	Rooms, circulation, entries, key dimensions and adaptable features are understandable.
☐	Elevations and renderings	The exterior character, scale and relationship to neighboring structures are communicated.

Scoring Criteria

Item	Weight	What reviewers will consider
Universal Design	50%	Spaces can be used by a wide range of people regardless of age or ability; the concept supports access, safety, adaptability and independence.
Function	20%	The approach is sustainable, cost-efficient and/or innovative while remaining practical to build.
Cost	20%	The design is buildable on a variety of sites and compatible with existing neighborhood structures.
Documentation	10%	The application is organized and well written, and the concept is understandable to design/build professionals and community members.

5. Applicant Certification

Read each statement, check each box, and sign below.

APPLICANT ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- ☐ I certify that the information in this application is accurate to the best of my knowledge.
- ☐ I certify that the submitted work is original or that I have permission to use all included materials, images and contributions.
- ☐ I have identified all team members and contributors who should receive credit for this entry.
- ☐ I understand that my entry will be evaluated using the published competition criteria.
- ☐ I understand that submission does not guarantee an award or that the design will be constructed.
- ☐ I have reviewed the competition rules and submission instructions available at hrdc.org.
- ☐ I authorize HRDC to contact me regarding this entry and the competition.

OPTIONAL PUBLIC PRESENTATION PERMISSION

- ☐ I give HRDC permission to display and share images and descriptions of this entry for competition, educational and community-engagement purposes, with applicant/team credit.
- ☐ I do not give permission for public display beyond confidential review by competition evaluators.

Printed name

Signature

Date

FINAL REVIEW BEFORE SUBMITTING

- ☐ Every required application section is complete.
- ☐ All drawings and supporting materials are included and clearly labeled.
- ☐ The primary contact has retained a complete copy of the submission.
- ☐ The entry will be submitted by November 1, 2026, using the instructions at hrdc.org.

Questions? Visit hrdc.org or call 218-766-4483.

Hosted by Headwaters Regional Development Commission with support from the AARP Community Challenge.