

2026 SANTA BARBARA COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN COMPETITION

General Information

Get Creative! Have you ever imagined how much fun it would be to design a home for yourself or create a truly unique building for your community? Be the first of your friends to take part in a Design Charrette (Shuh-ret)!

What: A fast-paced, exciting, mind expanding, creative experience designing a building or space in a limited amount of time. *****Drafting Skills Are Not Required*****

When: Design Charrette: Tuesday, February 24, 2026: 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Juried Review: Saturday, February 28, 2026: 8:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Where:

Choose the Location Closest to Your Home/School	Location 1 (North County)	Location 2 (South County)
Design Charrette Tuesday, February 24	Allan Hancock College Building G, Room 106 800 South College Drive Santa Maria, CA 93454	Location TBD

Juried Review (for 12 finalists) Saturday, February 28	Elverhøj Museum 1624 Elverhoy Way Solvang, CA 93463
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Be part of this exciting two-phase event!

Community design projects are chosen each year such as:

- a community center
- a fire station
- a museum

You won't know what the project will be until you arrive at the Charrette. Each participant will originate an urban or architectural design based on an entirely new written design program. Although you may be one of 50 designers at the charrette, no two solutions will be alike. There is no right or wrong design. Each student will address the issues presented in their unique way bringing experiences and insights to their work.

You can draw, sketch, paint or use any media to illustrate your ideas on paper. Architects will then evaluate your work and select 12 finalists, who will later be invited to appear at a Juried

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Review to present their design to a panel of four design professionals and educators.
Competition winners will then be announced!

- Competition open to all 9th to 12th grade students in any Santa Barbara County school.
- There are no fees or cost to enter.
- Food provided for students during the Charrette and for those invited to the Jury Review.
- “Certificates of Participation” are awarded to all participants, with special cash awards and prizes for the 12 finalists.
- Designers must arrange to be dismissed from regular classes the day of the Charrette and for transportation to and from the event site.
- This is an “open book” competition. You may bring reference materials, even Google.
- Your completed work will be created by hand, on paper provided to you. Again, drafting skills are not required, however you must draw with drafting tools or freehand to scale. This is required so you can be sure that the room you design, for example a bedroom, is large enough to contain a 6’-0” x 5’-0” bed, and a dresser, etc.
- Not sure about “scale”? Visit the Architectural Foundation of Santa Barbara website, (www.afsb.org). The High School Design Competition page has several helpful videos explaining design creativity, scale, drawing techniques, and other competition material.
- You may also contact the Executive Director of the Architectural Foundation directly for more information: Lydia Rao at (805) 965-6307 or via email at lydia@afsb.org.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. How can you sign up to participate in this Competition’s Design Charrette?

It’s easy. Let your teacher, counselor, or advisor know that you are interested in participating no later than Tuesday, February 17 and have them notify the Architectural Foundation of Santa Barbara (contact information is below). Online sign up is [available here](#). Or you may call directly. It is important to let the competition sponsors know so they can prepare the Charrette site to be ready for you.

2. What do I have to draw to complete the design Charrette?

You will be expected to draw *Site Plan*, *Floor Plan*, and *Elevation* to **scale** with drafting tools or freehand. That means that these drawings **must be measured**. The judges will also determine whether your design fits the criteria of the design program.

You will receive (3) 18”x24” sheets of drawing paper in your design packet.

- Sheet 1: This will be a pre-printed *Site Plan* where your project will be built. It will show roads, site slopes, trees and whatever else might impact your design. You will draw the building outline you design and other site elements on this sheet.
- Sheet 2: This will be a blank sheet where you will draw your *Floor Plan* at 1/4” per foot scale of your design. Plus one exterior *Elevation* of your design.

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- Sheet 3: This will be a blank sheet also, where you will draw one other drawing to illustrate your design. This could be another elevation, a perspective, a sketch or whatever you think will get the idea across to the judges and jury.

3. *What can I expect upon arriving at the Design Charrette site?*

- *A large working studio space, like a gym or a meeting conference room.* (see FAQ #5)
The site in Santa Maria venue, for example, is a large classroom where 25± long tables have been set up, some posters and notices mounted on the walls and 40 to 50 other student designers all wondering what will happen next.
- You will be welcomed with an introduction of the Charrette and will then be read the 2026 Design Program. This is a written description of the building or structure you will be designing.
- You will choose a workstation at the ends or middle of one of the long tables and set up your tools for the event. **Limited** tools will be available at the site for your use. You are welcome to bring your own equipment: pencils, pens, markers, templates...whatever you need to create and express your ideas!
- You will be given a design packet including a copy of the Design Program and the drawing paper for your presentation.
- You will spend the next 6+ hours designing, sketching and drawing your project. *So have fun!*
- At the end of the day, you will exit the building. After you leave, a panel of architects will review your design and score them. Twelve designers will be invited to participate in the Juried Review on Saturday, February 28th.

4. *What do I need to bring to the Charrette?*

Design Tools (if you have these items, bring them with you):

- Drawing Board at least 18" x 24" and not much larger
- Straight edge (T-Square) if you intend to draft your drawings
- Triangles and templates, as needed
- Eraser and erasing shield
- Architects Scale
- Sketching and scratch paper
- Dusting brush
- Drafting tape
- Any reference material

Please bring your creativity, yourself, your insights, experience and individuality! Your critical thinking and reading skills and your desire to do the very best you can!
You may bring an iPod or other musical device with earphones.

5. *How should I dress for a Charrette?*

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Are you kidding? There's no dress code! Well, dress comfortably, but in layers. It's a long day. The competition site can be quite chilly in the morning and get warm in the afternoon.

6. *How do I get to the Charrette site?*

You must arrange for your transportation, through your school or individually, to the site. Carpooling is encouraged.

<i>Design Competition Location 1:</i> Allan Hancock College Building G, Room 106 800 South College Drive Santa Maria, CA 93454	<i>Design Competition Location 2:</i> Location TBD
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7. *What don't I need to bring to this event?*

Food: The sponsors will provide morning and afternoon snacks for you as well as a healthy and nutritious lunch, at no cost to you at all. Drinks are included. You may, however, bring food of your own if you really wish. If you have dietary restrictions, please let us know!

Paper: For your design presentation. Three sheets of 18"x24" paper, either plain or graph, will be provided to you by the sponsors of the competition.

8. *What if I don't know anything about drafting, scale, design or architecture but I really want to design a building? How can I prepare for this event?*

We're glad you asked that. There are two ways you could prepare for this Charrette:

- Go to the Architectural Foundation of Santa Barbara website's page for the High School Design Competition (<https://afsb.org/programs/high-school-design-competition/>). Here you will find several videos which will introduce you to basic ideas about design, creativity, drawing, presentation, and scale.
- Contact the Architectural Foundation of Santa Barbara office (**contact info at the end**) and request a workshop led by one or several local architects which can be arranged at your school or at the Architectural Foundation's office in downtown Santa Barbara or other convenient location throughout the County.

9. *How will my work be reviewed and judged?*

Design professionals in architecture and urban design will review presentations and provide productive, helpful, friendly feedback. Completed work will be judged in three categories: Design, Presentation, and Creativity. Architects will also be at the competition site during the competition, and are available to answer questions.

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10. What's in it for me?

The experience immerses you in a design problem. A "Certificate of Participation" will be issued to all designers completing the Charrette. The 12 finalists, in addition to receiving a "Finalist Certificate," have an opportunity to win awards and cash prizes as follows:

First Place: \$500.00

Second Place: \$350.00

Third Place: \$300.00

Two Honorable Mention Awards: \$150.00

Finalist Awards: \$75.00

11. Who is responsible for this event?

- The Architectural Foundation of Santa Barbara with help from our very generous sponsors:
 - Rotary Club of the Santa Ynez Valley
 - Rotary Club of Santa Barbara
 - Allan Hancock College

The Architectural Foundation of Santa Barbara is located at 229 E. Victoria Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101. Please contact Lydia Rao, Executive Director at (805) 965-6307 or email lydia@afsb.org for further information.

www.afsb.org

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