





ARCHITECTURE A SOARING VISION

# WIND GATE WAY



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by John Schwarb

**AS YOU ARE DRIVING** on Interstate 70 just west of downtown Indianapolis, the roof of the new Col. H. Weir Cook Terminal Building at Indianapolis International Airport emerges on the horizon, arched over a concrete canyon, seemingly ready to take flight. Once you have turned off the highway onto the airport access road, the terminal remains nearly a mile away—a mile over which anticipation builds as you approach the massive structure of steel and glass.

The impact of the first glimpse of the airport is just as powerful to those arriving by plane. “You see the building as an icon in the landscape. That begins a procession of entry into the city, much like a great road entering a historic Roman city,” said lead architect Ripley Rasmus of St. Louis-based Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum (HOK). “You know where you are, and it’s different from being in LaGuardia or JFK or Chicago O’Hare or San Francisco. You’re in Indiana and connected to that landscape.”

This is more than air travel—this is a quest to blur the boundaries between outside and inside. Standing in the midst of a terminal with 82-foot ceilings, natural light pouring in from practically every direction, there is a sense of freedom, of space—of flying without ever leaving the ground.

“This building,” Rasmus said, “is intended to create a procession that unfolds like the experience of being in the city and in the state of Indiana—like arriving at the party.”

Indianapolis leaders have worked hard and committed countless dollars to shed the image of flyover country and transform the city into a dynamic destination. In recent years, the efforts have yielded a downtown renaissance, new museums and libraries, a \$50 million urban recreation trail, a \$700 million NFL stadium, Final Fours, and Super Bowls. IND is the most ambitious and successful enhancement yet, a \$1.1 billion civic construction project, the largest the city has ever seen—resulting in a proper gateway from the rest of the world to this thriving, 21<sup>st</sup>-century city.

At the very least, the terminal was necessary for Indianapolis to continue to grow as a premier location for major sporting events and conventions. It was also time for the city to make a statement about its identity to the world.

“The terminal is truly something that represented the culture and the vision that Indianapolis had for itself,” Rasmus said. “We began to think about embodying the city’s culture and its attitude about its future in this project. It was purposely designed to impart the sense of being in the equivalent of Grand Central Station, or Indy’s own Union Station. You shouldn’t mistake that something important is happening here.”

(Opposite page) The dramatic, curved roof of the Col. H. Weir Cook Terminal Building is one of the facility’s many architectural references to flight. (Previous spread) Enveloped in glass and accessible to all, Civic Plaza is the hub of the airport’s activity.