

2004 NOMA Awards for Excellence in Architecture

Descriptive Data Sheet

OVERVIEW: This project involved the adaptive reuse of a historic train station (specifically 65,000 square feet of the *Train Shed*) to become the headquarters of two professional firms – a civil engineering firm and an architecture firm.

HISTORY: Standing on the site of the nation's first Union Station, this historic building, also referred to as "Union Station" is located in the heart of downtown Indianapolis, Indiana. The station is composed of two distinct structures, the Romanesque *Head House* built in 1888 and the massive 12 track *Train Shed* built in 1922. Rail activity at Union Station peaked in the 1940s during WWII but went through a period of decline and severe neglect from the 1950s to the 1980s. In the mid 80s, the station underwent a \$50 million restoration, converting the *Head House* into upscale restaurants and the *Train Shed* into a festival marketplace with shops, restaurants, and night clubs. The marketplace and restaurants closed in 1996, leaving the *Train Shed* unoccupied until the late 90's when its owner, the City of Indianapolis, began to lease space to a variety of tenants. In 2001, the former food court was converted into an indoor GO-KART racing facility, but was again vacant by 2002.

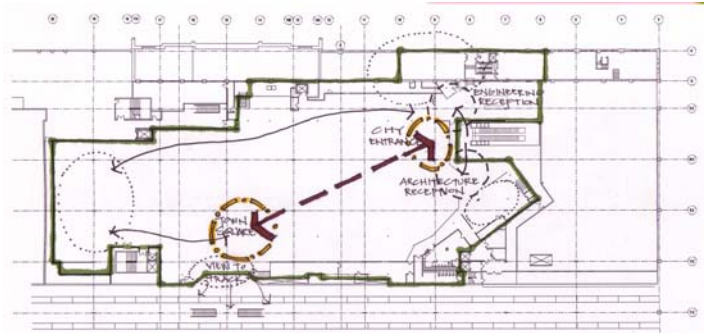


PROGRAM AND COST: In the spring of 2003, two professional firms came together in an effort to make Historic Union Station their new home. By moving downtown, both firms sought to establish a more visible and dynamic image. They wanted to create a first class space on a relatively low budget of less than \$37 per square foot. The programmatic

goals of the engineering firm were: to house 110 employees with room for up to 150 in a space broken up into three distinct engineering divisions; to create functional and efficient arrangements within each division (including work spaces for management, engineering and technical staff, meeting and support spaces); and to arrange for convenient sharing of support and administrative staff by all three divisions. The architectural firm wanted to provide space for 26 design and administrative staff in a studio environment that would inspire creativity, encourage team work and display design excellence.

RESOLUTION: With 47,500 square feet of “open field” on the platform (main) level, 17,500 square feet on the “hills” (north and south mezzanines), and the “sun” above (skylights), a conceptual framework was needed within to organize the space. The sunny, open landscape with hills above would be home to a new town. Using urban planning and town planning concepts, the platform level is broken down into elements much the same way any town would be planned, with a symbolic main entrance, a main street, neighborhoods, various landmarks for orientation, and a town square. The town’s main entry is defined by a 124 foot long, 16 foot high, curving purple wall (see photos) that serves as the gateway from the reception areas of the two firms to the heart of the town. In order to complement the very strong grid of steel structure that

supports the roof of the old **Train Shed**, a non-orthogonal axis was drawn counter to the grid to form “Main Street”. This primary circulation path connects two major focal points on the platform level – the Entrance to the City (main entrance / reception areas) and the Town Square (the staff lounge,



open gathering spaces, the main street conference room, and views to the 4 active train tracks and passing trains). Branching off of Main Street are the drives or lanes that lead into and connect the neighborhoods (engineering divisions). These drives also connect Main Street back to the walkways that run parallel to the mezzanines (or hills) on the north and south of the town. The architectural studio is located in the southern hills (mezzanine). The northern hills (mezzanine) are occupied by the engineering firm’s executives and directors.

The architectural forms used in this project are intended to complement and contrast the existing steel structure and create a new character for the space. The main entrances and reception areas are defined by flowing curves that shape the space and create a warm and welcoming atmosphere. The curved forms reflect the arched steel structure above. Angled walls and translucent panels are used to create dynamic spaces that contrast the existing structure and introduce a vibrant, exciting mix of forms, materials, and colors. In the heart of the town, offices pods serve as landmarks and help to reduce the scale of the large open space into more comfortable and intimate workgroups. Translucent windows are placed within the office pods so that one might peek out their “window” and see what’s going on in the town. With virtually no exterior window in the majority of the space, translucent panels are used throughout to maximize the borrowed light from the skylights and assure a connection to the outside world. The result is unique combination of historic and contemporary styles.

From stretches of panoramic curves and dynamic angles, to intimate niches and warm rich colors; from windows that peer onto the rumbling train tracks at the Town Square, to the skylights which wash sunlight throughout and illuminate the geometric forms below, the atmosphere of this town is felt.

The architecture and engineering firms get new homes, the town’s people prosper in their new neighborhood, the City proper has a revitalizing anchor in its once forgotten historic landmark, and the old train station breathes life again.