

# Indy's Top 10 architecturally wondrous buildings

What makes a building architecturally significant—and which buildings in Indianapolis fit that bill?

Those are the questions a small group of experts associated with the American Institute of Architects Indianapolis sat down to answer in early November.

During a 1-1/2-hour discussion, six designers debated the merits of dozens of local structures built after World War II, in hopes of determining which were the most highly regarded in the city.

The exercise was conducted with hopes of sparking conversation among architects and the general public about Indianapolis' most prominent buildings, said Brandon Farley, president of the AIA Indianapolis executive committee.

"This was really driven by the idea that we could start a conversation," Farley said. "I think if we're driving more conversations about the incredible buildings we have in our city, we're doing something great for the architectural community."

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## The panel

► **Olon Dotson**, professor and interim department chair at Ball State University College of Architecture and Planning

► **Brandon Farley**, architect at StructurePoint and president of AIA Indianapolis

► **Sanford Garner**, owner of RG Collaborative and a former AIA Indianapolis president

► **Patrick Kestner**, owner of Still Architecture in Indianapolis and vice president of AIA Indianapolis

► **Jason Larrison**, architect at J.S. Held and a former director of the Department of Business and Neighborhood Services in the Mayor's Office

► **Sheila Snider**, retired architect and a former campus architect at IUPUI, and a former AIA Indianapolis president

Source: AIA Indianapolis

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The panel featured several local AIA executive committee members, along with a few industry professionals—all of whom have their own understanding of what makes a building architecturally significant.

"We had a really well-rounded group involved in this—people who really know their stuff," Farley said. "But we were all coming at it from a different perspective and different ideas of what makes a building unique and important."

The list, he said, certainly isn't intended to be comprehensive and was compiled without putting the picks in a specific order. Farley said he expects some people to disagree with some of the panel's selections.

After all, not all the selections were unanimous, and Farley said he opposed a couple—The Pyramids on the northwest side, in particular—but advocacy from other members led to their inclusion.

He said while The Pyramids are prominent, he doesn't consider them to be the most technically perfect buildings the city has to offer. Other panelists expressed similar views on other properties that made the cut, such as Victory Field and the Ruth Lilly Visitors Pavilion.

Aside from the final selections, the panel considered buildings like Eskenazi Hospital and the Community Justice Campus, although Farley said the panel ultimately determined the justice campus needed to be fully operational before including it on the list.

“If we made the same list a few years from now, I think we’d almost certainly need to include it in the discussion,” he said.

Here’s the list, in alphabetical order:

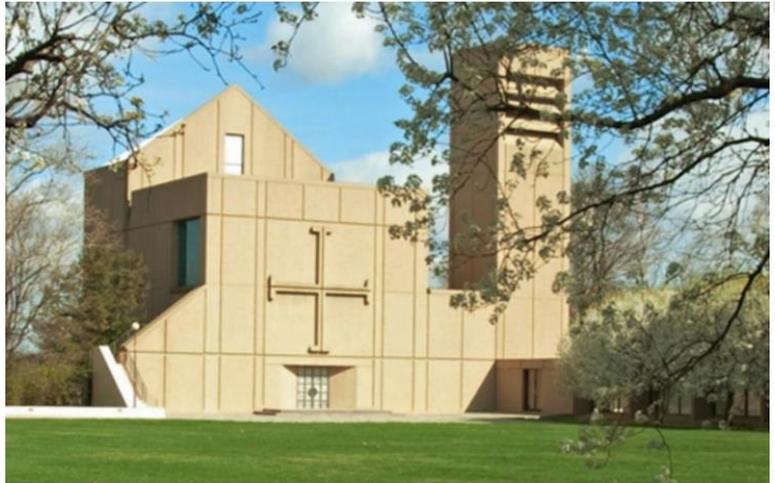
### **Christian Theological Seminary**

**Address:** 1000 W. 42nd St.

**Opened:** 1966

**Architect:** Edward Larrabee Barnes

**From a panelist:** “Sweeney Chapel at CTS is not a huge building by any means, but it is so well done,” said Patrick Kestner, owner of Still Architecture in Indianapolis and vice president of AIA Indianapolis. “When you are in that space and when the light comes around through that stained glass, it’s just a beautiful example of how a chapel could be done.”



*(Photo courtesy of CTS)*

**Details:** The original Sweeney Chapel is a simple, geometric structure that blends into the woods and is the result of a change in plans after accomplished designer Eero Saarinen withdrew due to other commitments.

### **Clowes Memorial Hall**

**Address:** 4602 Sunset Ave.

**Opened:** 1963

**Architect:** Woollen Molzan Partners

**From a panelist:** “That was the very beginning of Evans Woollen’s work in Indianapolis; it is certainly indicative of that style of iconic brutalism. I’d take Clowes every day,” said Olon Dotson, professor and interim department chair at Ball State University College of Architecture and Planning.



*(IBJ file photo)*

**Details:** The sole representation of brutalist architecture on the list, Clowes was an anomaly when it opened. However, that design style took hold in the city, with several prominent downtown buildings—like the Minton–Capehart Federal Building and Barton Tower, both also designed by Woollen Molzan—following suit in the years that followed.

## Col. H. Weir Cook Terminal at Indianapolis International Airport

**Address:** 7800 Col. H. Weir Cook Memorial Drive

**Opened:** 2008

**Architects:** HOK and AeroDesign—which was a joint venture of eight local firms, including CSO Architects

**From a panelist:** “The airport embodies the definition of great architecture. It’s thoughtfully designed, efficient and functional. Not to mention beautiful,” said Brandon Farley, architect at StructurePoint and president of AIA Indianapolis

**Details:** The terminal includes extensive public art, although many panelists lamented that many of the original works have been replaced by advertisements over the years. Even so, the property was a unanimous pick.



(IBJ file photo)

## Cummins Global Distribution Headquarters

**Address:** 301 E. Market St.

**Opened:** 2017

**Architects:** Deborah Berke Partners and Ratio

**From a panelist:** “I really like Cummins tower. To me, it’s a good example of the new paradigm for office buildings,” Farley said. “It’s definitely a more interesting, more thoughtful take on an urban office building. They could have easily made that a two-story building spanning the entire city block and be done, but they didn’t, right? They stacked the area up along the perimeter. They preserved the urban edge, made some interesting site choices.”

**Details:** Cummins’ headquarters is the newest building on the AIA’s list and sits atop the former site of Market Square Arena, which was demolished in 2001.



(IBJ file photo)

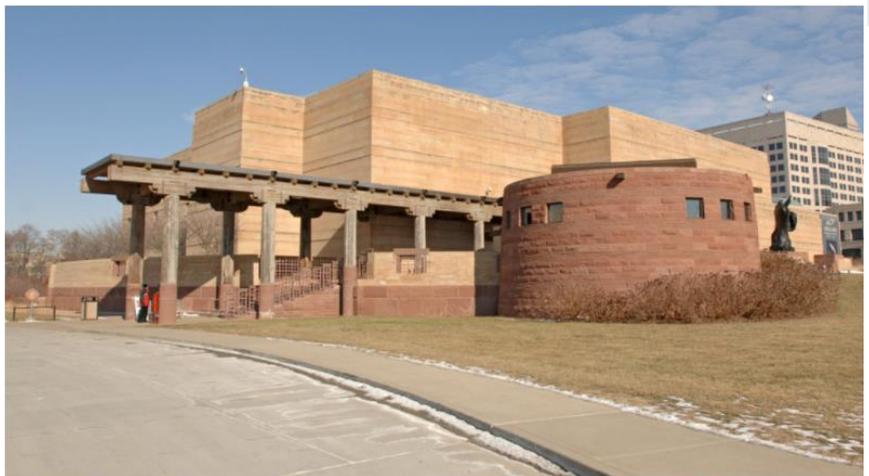
## Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art

**Address:** 500 W. Washington St.

**Opened:** 1989

**Architect:** Jonathan Hess

**From a panelist:** “The Eiteljorg is a significant, great piece of design,” Kestner said. “The exterior is reflective of its interior and reflective of its mission. It’s a cool building.”



(IBJ file photo)

**Details:** Hess took inspiration from travels throughout the Southwest with museum founder Harrison Eiteljorg, studying the land, architecture, and people.

### **Irwin Library at Butler University**

**Address:** 4600 Sunset Ave.

**Opened:** 1963

**Architect:** Minoru Yamasaki

**From a panelist:** "Its clean, mid-century-modern terrazzo interior is very open," Dotson said. "It's known for these little arched openings repeated over and over again. [Yamasaki] was known for this, even on the World Trade Center. ... It was radical for the time."



(Photo courtesy of Butler University)

**Details:** Irwin Library was designed with 21 shades of white by Yamasaki, a prominent 20th century architect who also designed the original World Trade Center.

### **NCAA Hall of Champions and addition**

**Location:** White River State Park

**Opened:** 2000, renovations/addition completed in 2009 following a 2007 electrical fire

**Architects:** Original: Michael Graves, in partnership with Schmidt Associates. Renovations/addition: Ratio and Jack Rouse Associates

**From a panelist:** "If you look at the Hall of Champions and you take that and set it somewhere else, it still stands out," Kestner said. "If you take the addition and put it in suburban Chicago, it blends in. I think it's a good piece of architecture ... [but] I would have a hard time putting the addition on and not the original building."



(IBJ file photo)

**Details:** While some, like Farley, advocated for including only the addition on the list, others were adamant the entire building be included.

### **The Pyramids**

**Address:** 300 Depauw Blvd.

**Opened:** 1972

**Architects:** Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo

**From a panelist:** "I discovered The Pyramids when I was on top of what used to be Indiana National Bank building, and I looked northwest and it almost blinded me," Dotson said. "I think they are interesting. Someone took a chance. The Pyramids generate discussion and debate."

**Details:** Originally, The Pyramids were expected to be part of a nine-building office park, but with little uptake on space in the first three, the remainder of the project was scrapped.



*(Photo courtesy of Cushman & Wakefield)*

### **Ruth Lilly Visitors Pavilion in Newfields' Virginia B.**

#### **Fairbanks Art & Nature Park**

**Address:** 4000 Michigan Road

**Opened:** 2010

**Architect:** Marlon Blackwell

**From a panelist:** "I proposed to my wife on the porch of that building. I love that building," Farley said. "But it's kind of a ridiculous building. It's a multimillion-dollar pavilion in the woods. It contains bathrooms and a sitting room. You can watch the birds, I guess. ... It's beautiful as art, but great architecture serves a function and has a purpose."



*(Photo courtesy of Newfields)*

**Details:** The pavilion is considered by panelists to be one of the most beautiful buildings in Indianapolis, but some stopped short of calling it strong architecture. Even so, the visitors center has received national acclaim, including the top design award from the national American Institute of Architects.

### **Victory Field**

**Address:** 501 W. Maryland St.

**Opened:** 1996

**Architects:** HOK Sport and Browning Day Mullins Dierdorf

**From a panelist:** "It's extremely well done. It's a great venue," said Sanford Garner, a former AIA Indianapolis president who owns RG Collaborative.



*(IBJ file photo)*

**Details:** Home of the Indianapolis Indians, Victory Field has played a major role in revitalizing downtown and giving people a reason to spend time in the corridor on summer evenings. Some panelists argued the venue is the nicest minor league baseball stadium in the country.