

Projects of Note

McCormick Place's South Building Ties Complex Complex Together

Thompson Ventulett Stainback & Associates' addition adds more than one million square feet

by Stephanie Stubbs, Assoc. AIA

Thompson Ventulett Stainback & Associates Inc., working with associate architect A. Epstein & Sons International Inc., created a glass-enclosed, swoop-roofed grand entrance addition worthy of the Windy City's monumental convention complex, McCormick Place. The addition, called the South Building, adds



The new grand entrance.

more than 900,000 square feet of exhibit space and 160,000 square feet of meeting space to McCormick Place.

The new building also performs double duty as a connection device, linking to two of the complex's existing structures. The expansion contains a grand concourse that emanates from the public arrival plaza, travels in the air over adjacent rail lines, rises to the exhibit floor level, and transforms into a pedestrian bridge that crosses over Chicago's famed Lake Shore Drive before leading into the complex's east building. Following this bold path, it cements the visual impact of the convention center as a modern monument, now visible from downtown Chicago.

Perhaps one of the reasons Thompson Ventulett Stainback & Associates was so successful in the execution of this phase of the project is that they also served as master planners of a multi-phased effort to develop the convention complex. The master plan calls for two additional expansions of the convention center, plus a 70,000-seat domed football stadium and a 1,200-room hotel.

"Our design challenge was to create a



McCormick Place's South Building.

major entrance of appropriate scale for this city's convention center," the architects said, "to create a public space sequence that would link all three buildings into a cohesive complex and maximize contiguous exhibit hall floor space." The South Building has earned the firm a 2001 AIA Honor Award for Architecture, which it will receive at the AIA national convention in Denver, May 17-19. ■