



PROFILES | 2012

Tom Rossbach, AIA, ACIDirector Aviation Architecture
HNTB Corporation**A model for success**

Tom Rossbach's love of aviation began at age eight in the basement of his childhood home. There, he and his father, who was an engineer, spent hours building balsa wood model airplanes. He frequently questioned and researched why the designs could not be done in newer innovative ways. The hobby soon grew to Tom building models of his own airplane designs, a foreshadowing of an interest in aviation and a successful design career to come.

As a young architect, Tom got his first taste of airport design in 1985, five years out of college. "I told my employer that if they didn't assign me to the new aviation project they had just won, I would pursue other job opportunities I had available." He got the gig. Since then, he has worked on nothing but airport projects. As he says, "Aviation design gets in your blood."

Decades later, the little boy who once designed and built model airplanes is now a successful airport designer with HNTB. Clients both internationally and domestically have benefitted from Tom's practice of including sustainability early in the planning phase and his use of cutting-edge technology to improve passenger convenience, airline operations and airport revenue.

A sought-after terminal planning architect and overall airport program manager for such clients as San Diego International Airport, Chicago O'Hare International Airport and Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, Tom is currently pioneering the use of rooftop solar panels, thermal energy storage, wind turbines and daylighting to reduce energy demand or create on-airport generated electrical power.

Today, young professionals gladly would stand in line for an infusion of Tom's industry knowledge, a product of working on more than 40 airport terminal projects in the past 25 years. However, it's Tom's ability to imagine an airport and then manifest his vision that truly sets him apart. "Many times projects are envisioned, but there are limitations on their ability to be funded," he said. "My goal is to produce innovative, but financially implementable airport projects."

Tom continues to help break new ground in airport project delivery and is leading one of the industry's first "progressive" design-build airport projects at San Diego International Airport. This twist on the design-build process allows the client, after a qualifications selection of the design-build team, to have the ability to evolve the project under a "not to exceed cost." But, design modifications can still be accommodated through the early stages of this innovative design-build process.

"I challenge my team to find better, more cost-effective, forward-looking ways to do things," he said. "We don't design terminals for today. We design them for tomorrow, so they are relevant years from now."

It's during those projects that Tom still draws upon his childhood hobby. He takes the scope, schedule and objectives of a complex project, carefully applies best practices gleaned from an extensive career, plans how the project will be executed, attaches the wings of innovation and delivers a model for success.

Education:

- BS, Architectural Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Neb.

Professional registrations:

- Registered Architect: California, 1989 (C 20415)

Professional affiliations:

- Airports Council International
- American Association of Airport Executives
- American Institute of Architects

Hire date with HNTB

August 2004

Years of industry experience

30