



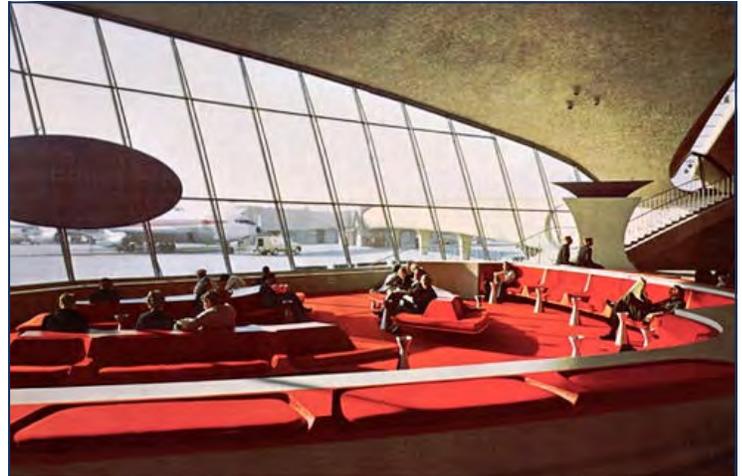
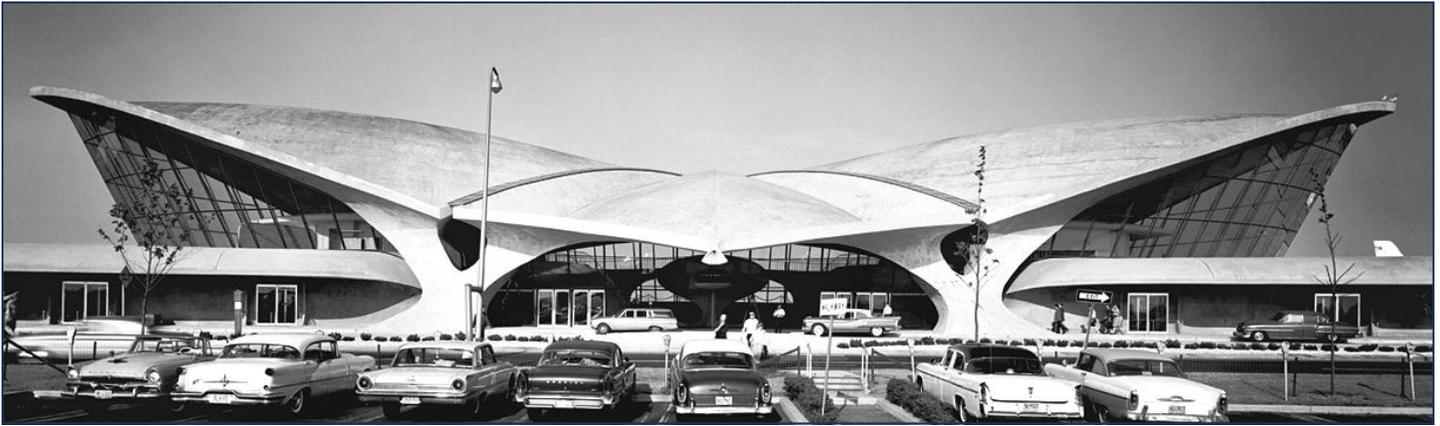
TWA Flight Center, JFK International Airport, Queens County

Rendering of the new TWA Terminal from the front cover of the 1961 TWA Annual Report.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has made an outstanding commitment to the historic Trans World Airlines terminal at John F. Kennedy International Airport, expertly guiding its preservation and redevelopment. Listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, the emblematic terminal was conceived as “a building that starts your flight with your first glimpse of it.” Through the environmental review process, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has provided in-depth technical assistance to the Port Authority on the building’s preservation and reuse in consultation with the Federal Aviation Administration.

The terminal was part of a new international airport promoted by New York City Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia, who anticipated that air traffic would play a key role in the city’s post World War II expansion and growth. Beginning in the 1940s, the Port of New York Authority (now the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey) oversaw the airport’s planning and development. The new facility, first called Idlewild Airport or New York International Airport, consisted of a large central complex designed around a 160-acre landscaped plaza surrounded by seven airline terminals, each independently designed, linked by roads, taxiways, and parking lots. The TWA terminal opened in 1962 and was the last component of the original plan to be completed.

TWA, one of the largest airlines in the country at the time, hired Finnish-born architect Eero Saarinen (1901-1961) to design its signature terminal. Saarinen was at the cutting edge of the modern architecture movement and envisioned a building that embodied the spirit of flight, a concept shared by his client. Saarinen rejected the strict rectilinear forms of the International style that dominated corporate American architecture and used bold curvilinear forms to convey a sense of movement. The terminal’s exterior shell, comprised of four interlocking vaults resting on Y-shaped buttresses, encloses a breathtaking interior that integrates structural, circulation, functional, and decorative elements to create complex patterns that flow through the light-filled space. Upon entering, the traveler immediately experienced a powerful sense of upward motion or lift (i.e. flight) as they were drawn up through the terminal and out to the departure gates.



Top: Historic view of terminal. Bottom left: the restored Solari board in the lower lobby. Bottom right: Historic view of recessed seating area in upper lobby.

While TWA was an airline industry leader for many years, by the late twentieth century the company had serious financial problems. American Airlines purchased TWA's assets in 2001, ending its seventy-five year existence as an independent airline and making its iconic jet age terminal redundant. Additionally, the Saarinen-designed building was inadequate in function and scale to meet the demands of twenty-first century air travel. TWA flew its last flight on December 1, 2001 and the terminal at JFK officially closed in January 2002. Since the building was determined eligible for listing (and later listed) on the State and National Registers, the Port Authority, as required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, consulted with the SHPO on the property's redevelopment. Early in the review process, the Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RAC), which includes organizations that rallied in support of the landmark and the government of Finland as well as the SHPO, was established to provide input on the terminal's rehabilitation. With the help of the Port Authority's skillful oversight, the RAC has provided an extraordinary level of detail in its review of the building's preservation and reuse project.

Today, the Port Authority is dedicated to reviving Saarinen's masterpiece and has worked hard to repair the landmark terminal and return its public spaces to their original appearance. The \$19 million project covers a wide range of work items, including asbestos abatement, roofing, and window repair as well as restoration. A team of design professionals have overseen the removal of later alterations and the repair of historic features and finishes. Notable examples include: replacing and/or repairing the made-to-order, circular ceramic tiles covering surfaces throughout the interior (floors, stairs, and walls); restoring the dramatically-sculpted information desk and "futuristic" flight information screen (Solari board) at the center of the lower lobby; reconstructing the recessed seating and viewing area in the upper lobby; and rehabilitating the east and west flight tubes (passageways) that formerly led to the departure lounges and gates. The restored lobby areas, closed since 2002, are slated to open to the public in fall 2011 while the Port Authority seeks redevelopment and reuse proposals. The TWA terminal is one of the world's great twentieth century architectural landmarks and its rebirth is a testament to the exceptional oversight of the Port Authority and the encouragement and support of its preservation and community partners.

