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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Austin Expands with New Hotels, Attractions *Renaissance continues in Texas capital city*

Austin caters to a diverse audience of music fans, art aficionados, history buffs, sports enthusiasts, politicians and more. As the city's popularity as a travel destination grows, so does the demand for entertainment, new attractions and distinct accommodations. And Austin answers the demand with new hotels, museums and retail projects.

Austin's newest cultural landmark, the Long Center for Performing Arts, opens March 28. This world-class facility provides a permanent, acoustically perfect performance space for Austin Lyric Opera, Ballet Austin, and Austin Symphony, now in its 97th season. In addition, the Long Center will host touring Broadway shows and big-name concerts in the Bass Concert Hall. The smaller black-box theater will welcome the city's numerous comedy improv groups and independent theatrical productions. Local shows will also welcome audiences here.

In addition, several new hotels are under construction and several more have been announced, including a Westin Hotel, W Hotel and highly anticipated 21C Museum Hotel. Other downtown hotels have completed or are undergoing renovation in order to provide the most current amenities to business and leisure travelers.

ATTRACTIONS

Mexican-American Cultural Center (*now open*) – The 126,000-square-foot cultural center, located on Lady Bird Lake at the end of River Street, provides educational and community resources dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Mexican- and Native American cultural arts and heritage. Music, theatre, literature and culinary arts are only a few among the selection of available classes. The center also offers rentable space for exhibits, performances and private events.

http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/macc_index.htm

Bass Concert Hall at the University of Texas Performing Arts Center (*under renovation from Spring 2007-Fall 2008*) – UT's flagship 3,000-seat theatre closed when the curtain dropped on the 2006-2007 season in order to complete a \$14.7 million renovation. A new glass facade will create a five-story, light-filled lobby with an elegant restaurant. The theatre itself will receive new seating and flooring, state-of-the-art acoustics, lighting and other updates.

www.utpac.org

Lance Armstrong Bikeway (*under construction; completion scheduled March 2008*) – The long-anticipated bikeway will enable bicyclists to travel east and west on a dedicated route through downtown.

When finished, the path will extend from Veterans Dr. at Lake Austin Blvd. on the west side of town to the Montopolis Bridge at US-183 on the east side. The path consists of a combination of off-street concrete trails, on-street striped bike lanes, and on-street signed bike routes.

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/publicworks/armstrong.htm>

Long Center for the Performing Arts (*under construction, grand opening March 28, 2008*) – This highly anticipated project, located at the site of the old Palmer Auditorium, is the centerpiece of a 54-acre cultural park on the shores of Lady Bird Lake. The center provides a permanent home for the Austin Symphony Orchestra, Ballet Austin and Austin Lyric Opera, as well as performance space for some 200 smaller performing arts groups in Central Texas. An Austin Music Memorial commemorates the contributions of major Austin artists and music industry professionals.

www.artscenterstage.org

2nd Street Retail District (*now open, development continues*)—Six blocks of street level retail surrounding the new Austin City Hall feature restaurants, coffee shops, boutiques, galleries and trendy furniture stores. Development continues as St. Bernard Sports, Taste: Select Wines, Malaga and other restaurants and shops continue to open their doors throughout the next few years. The district is also home to the Block 21 project, which is scheduled for completion in 2009 and includes a W Hotel, new *Austin City Limits* studio, a nightclub operated by Austin's own Willie Nelson, and additional street-level retail. Second Street between Colorado and San Antonio streets. www.2ndstreetdistrict.com

The Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art (*Mari and James A. Michener Gallery Building, opened April 30, 2006; Edgar A. Smith Building, opening fall 2008*) – More than 17,000 works of art are part of the collection at the nation's largest university art museum. Located on campus at the University of Texas, it showcases American, contemporary Latin American and European art. The second phase of construction includes an auditorium, lecture hall, café, bookstore and outdoor gardens and plaza.

www.blantonmuseum.org

Austin Music Hall (*opened November 2007*) – Renovations to Austin's original music venue doubled its size. The new version of the old classic features an expanded mezzanine level, multiple full-service bars, an outdoor terrace, upgraded climate-control system, larger stage, new artist lounges, updated interior design and exclusive club and box seating. www.austinmusic hall.com

The Domain and Domain Crossing (*opened Spring 2007*)— Neiman Marcus and Macy's anchor an upscale shopping center in northwest Austin that also features 70 other restaurants and stores, including Tiffany's & Co, Barney's CO-OP and David Yurman. Plans also call for 75,000 square feet of office space, 400 high-end apartments and a Westin hotel. Mopac Boulevard between Braker Lane and Burnet Road. www.simon.com

Round Rock Premium Outlets (*opened Summer 2006*) – The 120-outlet center in nearby Round Rock offers a mix of discount shops for apparel, shoes, fashion accessories, leather goods, home furnishings and gifts. The single-level outdoor village follows the architectural scheme of the Texas Hill Country. Featured shops include Harry & David, Burberry, Coach, the Disney Store, Puma, J. Crew and Michael Kors. www.premiumoutlets.com/roundrock

HOTELS/ LODGING

NEW PROPERTIES

Westin Hotel (*under construction, scheduled completion mid-2009*) – Hixon Properties recently announced plans to construct an 18-story, 300-room Westin Hotel in Austin's popular Warehouse

District. The project will also include 15,000 square feet of meeting space, restaurant, outdoor pool deck and spa.

21C Museum Hotel (*construction slated to begin mid-2008*) – This project marks the second under the 21C brand. It will contain luxury condominiums, a high-end hotel, world-class art collection, open to the public year-round, upscale restaurant and artists' lofts. Plans call for the property to reflect "Austin's famously laid-back lifestyle through an extraordinary approach to art-inspired life and commerce."
www.21cmuseumhotel.com

Block 21/W Hotel (*announced*) – W Hotel anchors this \$225 million project in the 2nd Street district. The space will also include 200 luxury condominiums, a new Austin Children's Museum facility, new studios for *Austin City Limits* and a nightclub co-owned by ACL's pilot star, Willie Nelson. Shoppers can browse among 50,000 square feet of street-level retail as well. www.stratusprop.com

Marriott Hotel (*announced*) – White Lodging is poised to start construction on a 1,000-room Marriott hotel on Congress Avenue between Second and Third Streets. The property serves as a headquarter hotel for the Austin Convention Center and includes 50,000 square feet of meeting space and two large ballrooms.

Hyatt Place Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (*planned, opening date TBD*) – Global Hyatt Corp. has plans to build a Hyatt Place at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, at the intersection of Highway 71 and Thornberry Road. The new hotel is part of a 200-hotel project across the United States. The property aims to accommodate business travelers, with free Wi-Fi access, sleeper sofas, oversized desks, ergonomic chairs, flat-screen TVs and more. www.hyatt.com

Twelve Domain (*construction begins mid-2008*) – The Novare Group plans to build a 28-story condominium and hotel tower in North Austin as part of the massive Domain retail project. The tower will house 360 condominiums atop a Twelve Hotel, an Atlanta-based boutique hotel. Features of the Twelve brand include in-room computers that act as concierges, allowing guests to make dinner reservations, request valet or housekeeping services in addition to browsing the Internet.

Executive Education and Conference Center at the University of Texas (*scheduled for completion/opening August 2008*) – Plans for the newest meeting facility on the University of Texas campus include a 300-seat amphitheatre, 800-seat divisible ballroom, classrooms, conference rooms and breakout rooms. In addition, the center will house 297 guestrooms and three dining outlets.
www.meetatexas.com

The Seaholm Plaza Hotel (*announced*) – A large-scale redevelopment of Austin's Seaholm Power Plant integrates the plant's Art Deco façade into a new center for retail, restaurants, offices and meeting and event space. A 160-room upscale hotel with two restaurants, bar, pavilion and meeting space serves as the hub of the project. The complex will offer direct trolley service to the Austin Convention Center.

Hotel Van Zandt (*plans underway, construction delayed*) – Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants will manage Hotel Van Zandt, a 29-story boutique hotel at Red River and Davis streets. The hotel is slated to contain 55 luxury condominiums, 290 hotel guestrooms, a 100-seat restaurant and 12,000 square feet of meeting space including a 5,500-square foot ballroom. www.hotelvanzandt.com

Hotel St. Cecilia (*announced*) – Bunkhouse Management and Clayton, Levy & Little Architects are turning the former Miller-Crockett House into a boutique, 14-room hotel just off South Congress Avenue, in Austin's hippest neighborhood. Named in honor of the patron saint of music, the hotel will offer private bungalows, a new pool and modern lounge. www.bunkhousemgmt.com

RENOVATIONS/UPDATES

Renaissance Austin Hotel (*renovation completed February 2008*) – The Renaissance Austin Hotel recently announced completion of its new 5,000 square-foot meeting space, the Glass Oaks Room. The hotel now offers Austin’s largest in-house meeting facility, with a grand total of nearly 65,000 square feet of available space. The Glass Oaks Room features upscale contemporary design with soft lighting, fresh wildflowers, vaulted copper-tin ceilings, arched doors, large-scale windows, acoustical wood, and an overall neutral palette. The space is also engineered with high-tech audio-visual and lighting amenities. A recent multi-million dollar renovation of the hotel was also completed in 2007, and included the construction of a new Internet café offering both wireless and direct internet connectivity, a new fitness center and lush bedding. www.renaissanceaustin.com

Hyatt Regency Lady Bird Lake (*renovation underway, scheduled for completion late 2008*) – The Hyatt’s premier downtown property has revamped the lobby to expand public areas and include a coffee shop accessible from the hiking trail outside the hotel. Renovations continue throughout the year with changes to dining outlets, a new workout facility, refurbished patio area and improvements to the ballroom. www.austin.hyatt.com

The Driskill Hotel and 1886 Café & Bakery (*guestroom renovation scheduled May 2008-September 2008*) – Austin’s historic grande dame has revamped its casual dining outlet, 1886 Café & Bakery. The new menu features bistro-style dining with specialty mojitos and margaritas, as well as local brews and refurbished furniture. In addition, the hotel is updating guestrooms with plasma TVs and upscale bath amenities. www.driskillhotel.com

Four Seasons Hotel Austin (*renovation completed September 2007*) – The upscale hotel recently completed the construction of a new fitness center and spa with relaxation lounge, treatment rooms, nail salon and eucalyptus steam room. A new restaurant, TRIO, offers upscale steaks and seafood, along with a world-class wine list. Guest room renovations include the installation of plasma TVs, DVD players, wireless Internet and iPod docking stations. www.fourseasons.com/austin/

Sheraton Austin Hotel (*renovation complete*) – Newly designed guestrooms now feature wireless internet, plasma screen TVs and new bedding. In phase two, a “Sheraton Link” café will offer Starbucks® coffee along with multiple laptop bays, high-speed internet and full service business center. The hotel also plans to landscape the outdoor terrace in the hotel’s plaza overlooking the river. Guestrooms completed renovation September 2007; the next phase to update the lobby, terrace and meeting space starts in early 2008. www.sheratonaustin.com

Hyatt Place – Austin North Central (*renovation complete, now open with new branding*) - Formerly an AmeriSuites brand, the renovated hotel features 120 newly refurbished guestrooms and public areas. Guestrooms offer free wireless internet access, high-definition television and signature bedding. Other highlights include self-registration/check-in kiosk, “e-room” with internet, and complimentary shuttle service within a three-mile radius. <http://austinnorthcentral.place.hyatt.com/>

Wyndham Garden Hotel (*renovation completed Summer 2007*) – Guests now enjoy luxurious bedding, complimentary high-speed wireless internet, work areas and upscale guest bath amenities. The property features such amenities as a complimentary business center, more than 10,000 square feet of meeting space, on-site catering, an outdoor pool and whirlpool, restaurant and fitness center. www.wyndham.com

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