

PALMER EVENTS CENTER

The Palmer Events Center (PEC), an award-winning 131,000 square foot multi-use events center, is part of a 54-acre cultural park on the shores of Lady Bird Lake (formerly Town Lake). The facility's architecture suggests a "Pavilion in the Park" with its asymmetrical shade roof extending far beyond the exterior walls, creating a generous wrap-around terrace. Second story balconies offer some of the best views of the Austin skyline and Lady Bird Lake.

The PEC houses two exhibition halls, spacious lobbies, five meeting rooms, plenty of pre-function space and extensive support areas. The facility is a popular choice for public consumer shows, trade shows, conferences, conventions, receptions, banquets, concerts, society balls, dances and sporting events.

Awards

The Palmer Events Center complex has won a number of architectural awards:

- Citation of Honor from the AIA/Austin.
- Design Award of Honor from the Texas Society of Architects. *Texas Architect* described the architecture as offering a "sweeping gesture of invitation to the entire city."
- Design Award for "Architecture in the Community" from the Connecticut AIA.
- Design IMPACT Award from Downtown Austin Alliance, for its dramatic and positive effect on the downtown community and its surrounding neighborhood.
- Excellent "Two Star" Rating from the City of Austin Green Building Program.
- ACRES Public Sector Award for Excellence from the Austin Commercial Real Estate Society.

The Building and Parking Garage

The PEC features 70,000 square feet of exhibit space that can be divided into two halls of 45,000 and 25,000 square feet. Two lower level lobbies offer ample pre-function space. Five upper level meeting rooms also feature plenty of pre-function space with balconies that offer some of the best views of downtown Austin and Lady Bird Lake. With a combined square footage of 5,000 square feet, the meeting rooms are also ideal for receptions and special occasions.

The building materials reflect Austin's casual and local character with natural limestone, wood trusses and decking, textured concrete, and galvanized metal roofing. Inside, curtain wall windows allow ample natural light. The building's standing-seam roof is reflective and opens at the top to allow air to flow up and out, creating a welcome breeze. Additionally, ceiling fans 20 feet in diameter are located under the overhang. Interior details include stone mosaic coloring and limestone carvings by local artisans.

The PEC also features an on-site 1,200-car Parking Garage, with entrances off of Riverside Drive and Barton Springs Road.

History

The PEC site has experienced many changes over the years. Its history dates back to 1940, when the City of Austin purchased an airplane hangar on the south shores of Town Lake (renamed Lady Bird Lake). The hangar was then converted into an all-purpose City Coliseum in 1949. Butler Park (formerly Town Lake Park) now occupies the site of the former City Coliseum.

In 1959, Palmer Auditorium, known as the Municipal Auditorium, officially opened for business. In 1981, the City of Austin rededicated the facility to be named the Lester E. Palmer Auditorium, in honor of Mr. Palmer's service to the city, first as an Austin City Council Member beginning in 1955, and then Mayor of Austin from 1961-1967.

The Palmer Events Center opened to the public in June 2002. Palmer Auditorium was then renovated into the privately operated Long Center for the Performing Arts, which opened in 2008.

The City of Austin owns and operates the Palmer Events Center and the adjacent Parking Garage, which are managed by the Austin Convention Center Department.