

# THE TECH ISSUE

# Connect

WHY GREEN  
IS GOOD  
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MARCH/APRIL 2014

MEETINGS INTELLIGENCE



"THIS TOTALLY CHANGES THE WAY THAT WE LOOK AT MEETING SPACE. WE CAN HAVE A MEETING JUST ABOUT EVERYWHERE AND ANYWHERE."

—JESSICA LEVIN

## THE NEW SOCIAL

Marketing with Pinterest, Google+, Vine and Instagram video

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How high-tech watches, glasses and more are changing events PAGE 40

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A vibrant nighttime photograph of the Dallas skyline. The city is illuminated with a variety of colors, including bright greens, blues, and purples. The lights from the buildings and streetlights are reflected in the calm water in the foreground, creating a shimmering effect. The sky is dark, making the city lights stand out prominently. In the top right corner, there is a yellow circular graphic containing the word 'PLACES'.

# TEXAS

By Leah Sekula

The Lone Star State is famous for its gargantuan size, measuring almost twice as large as Germany or Japan. But the state's fierce independence and spirit of adventure are as well-known as the famed "everything's bigger in Texas" remark. This state has big options for meetings, too: New JW Marriott and Westin hotels in Austin; a multiuse sports facility coming to Frisco in 2016; millions being invested in Dallas (shown), a 1,000-room Marriott Marquis debuting soon in Houston; and much more.



## Austin

Known as the “Live Music Capital of the World,” Austin is certainly not bluffing about its bustling music scene. The area boasts more than 250 live-music venues and is home to some of the most popular festivals in the country, such as Fun Fun Fun Fest, South by Southwest and Austin City Limits.

And it’s not just big music festivals that are attracted to the city. ESPN recently announced that Austin’s Circuit of The Americas (shown), a 1,600-acre sports and entertainment venue, will be the host of the Summer X-Games from 2014-17.

Smaller meetings fit in effortlessly in Austin, too. Brooke Murphy, manager of planning and administration for the National Notary Association, held her 2013 conference in Austin. “We try to select locations in the heart of our host cities to give attendees an opportunity to take in the local sights and sounds, but it isn’t always possible to be in the center of the action on an association event budget,” she says. “Austin’s Arboretum area turned out to be a perfect compromise, as we were able to offer our attendees more affordable nightly room rates than were available downtown, without compromising on style or convenience.

“One of the biggest challenges association planners face is how to keep an annual event fresh and exciting for repeat attendees without breaking the budget. What ultimately drew us to Austin was the combination of the city’s geographically central location, vibrant culture and affordability,” Murphy says.

One such cultural district is Sixth Street, the celebrated entertainment hub of the city. This area attracts a diverse crowd with its art galleries,

casual cafes, upscale restaurants and boutique shopping. The Arboretum shopping area has more mainstream stores and is near Renaissance Austin Hotel, which has 65,000 square feet of total meeting space, including 24 meeting rooms and the 30,300-sq.-ft. Rio Grande exhibit hall.

The 900,000-sq.-ft. Austin Convention Center downtown has 54 meeting rooms and seven ballrooms that can combine into two larger ballrooms, measuring 43,000 and 23,000 square feet each. The convention center has a digital bandwidth of 1 billion bits per second. It is also centrally located and within walking distance of several hotels, including Hilton Austin, Hampton Inn & Suites, Courtyard Austin Convention Center, Omni Austin Hotel Downtown and Hyatt Place Austin Downtown. More hotels are on the way. JW Marriott Austin will be the city’s largest hotel with 110,500 square feet of meeting space; and the 17-story The Westin Austin Downtown will have 13,500 square feet of space. Both hotels are expected to open in 2015.

**NOTEWORTHY:** Austin-Bergstrom International Airport is a 15-minute trip from downtown and serves more than 70 direct destinations.

### Quick Facts:

**Area guest rooms:** 30,000 | **Nearest airport:** Austin-Bergstrom International Airport  
**Convention center:** Austin Convention Center | **Meeting rooms:** 54  
**Total meeting space:** 370,967 square feet

