

JW MARRIOTT: AUSTIN'S BIGGEST HOTEL

By Jena Tesse Fox



IN FEBRUARY, AUSTIN, Texas, got its largest hotel, which is reportedly the largest JW Marriott in North America and the second-largest JW Marriott in the world. Created by the Simeone Deary Design Group, the 34-story, 1,012-room JW Marriott Austin has a style that, according to Gina Deary, co-owner of the design group, is meant to evoke “a sense of Austin’s eccentricity and personality...It was important that the



THE FIVE WS

WHAT: JW Marriott Austin | **WHO:** Simeone Deary Design Group and HKS Architects
WHERE: Austin, Texas | **WHEN:** February 2015 | **WAY:** New-build

design provided tourists with a sense of place and made locals feel like they were at home. It needed to appeal to a business and leisure traveler and accommodate large numbers of people while still feeling intimate.”

For example, columns throughout the hotel and lobby were made from Texas limestone; the lobby’s ceiling and floor have a topographical map of the city; an illuminated graphic behind the check-in area is designed to look like a large cactus; and a large outline of the state was etched into the bottom of the fifth-floor pool.

THE LOBBY AS AUSTIN

The lobby was designed to have sight lines from the front door to the entire space—“impactful from an aesthetic as well as a revenue-generating standpoint,” Deary explains. “Guests can see both restaurants, the bar, the check-in desk and the lobby in one

Above, left to right:
The hotel lobby lounge uses screens and fireplaces; The illuminated graphic behind the check-in area is designed to look like a large cactus.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JW Marriott Austin



Left:
Guestroom furniture is decidedly contemporary.

glance.” Rather than a “cavernous” vibe, the designers worked to give the lobby a sense of intimacy “while still feeling open and airy.”

To tie the concept together, the lobby’s terrazzo floor (which, Deary says, was poured in an organic pattern) reflects Austin’s topography. “This is mirrored in the ceiling made of painted, carved chipboard.” Art installations also evoke the city’s culture and art scenes, with an oversized fireplace (a lobby focal point that houses a copper sculpture interpretation of Austin’s flight of bats) and sculpture and floor-to-ceiling stretches of metal screens that, Deary says, are reminiscent of macramé wall hangings and create intimate seating groups.

While the designers wanted the lobby to feel “energized,” they also implemented measures to make sure the noise level could be controlled. By focusing on effective use of area rugs and draperies, the team was able to reduce the noise level enough to ensure conversations can take place but to allow the space to maintain a bustling feel. Fabric-wrapped panels, carpeting and draperies were used in the ballroom and prefunction spaces, resulting in acoustically sound spaces.

ELEMENTS AND STYLE

The furniture pieces throughout the hotel are contemporary “to reflect the city’s modernity,” Deary says, but notes that a mix of styles “celebrate the eclectic nature and vibe of Austin.” Contemporary block sofas are positioned next to sculptural chairs under ultra-modern light fixtures with handmade rugs and art pieces designed by local artisans.

“Since the concept was inspired by the many geographic influences of nature as well as by the contemporary culture and vibe of Austin’s artisan scene, we layered in readily available materials indigenous to Austin,” Deary explains. Texas limestone, stained white oak and chiseled stone were used throughout the property, and a range of textures helped create a “natural habitat” feeling. Likewise, Deary says that the hotel’s color palette “is a strong reflection of the landscape of Austin,” and an “urban understanding of the city’s natural resources.” Shades of taupe, cream and white are punctuated by ochre, purples and blues. “All aspects of nature are incorporated,” Deary says.

The one area that the team “rethought” during development was the outdoor pool deck, which started as an amenity to the hotel but turned into a destination space that feels like a “park in the sky,” Deary says.

KEEPING AUSTIN GREEN

Another key focus for the hotel’s design was LEED Silver certification, which Eddie Abeyta, HKS Architects’ lead designer and principal, says involved implementing key sustainability features.

These features included a rainwater cistern installed in the parking garage that mitigates the amount of stormwater runoff from the site. “The cistern captures enough rainwater from the site and the roof to offset 100 percent of the hotel’s irrigation needs and completely eliminates the need for potable water,” according to Abeyta. “Additionally, an automated system is installed in each guestroom to determine which rooms are unoccupied, automatically resetting the temperature controls to reduce energy consumption.”

Other green features include high-efficiency plumbing fixtures; a vegetated shade structure designed to provide solar protection for large expanses of south-facing window wall; a light-colored roofing membrane to minimize the heat-island effect; and a west-facing tower façade designed with an increased insulation value to help reduce heat load on guestrooms.

The hotel has already achieved a two-star Austin Energy Green Building rating. **HD**

PARTICIPANTS

Owner: White Lodging Services Corporation

Architecture Design Firm: HKS Architects

Structural Engineer: Magnusson Klemencic Associates

Interior Design Consultant: Someone Deary Design Group

General Contractor: Hunt Construction Group / DPR Construction, A Joint Venture

Landscape Architecture: The Office of James Burnett

Audio Visual Consultant: Network Technologies, Inc.

Mechanical/Electrical Consultant: Blum Engineering

Kitchen Consultant: Systems Design International