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## Evolving Architecture

Austin Business Journal - by [Kate Harrington](#) ABJ Staff

As an Austin native, Jack Tisdale readily attests that for many years the city was architecturally boring.

But Tisdale, an Austin principal with **Susman Tisdale Gayle Inc.**, says that trend is turning around as national and environmental influences shape new development here. Austin is no longer a sleepy government and university town, and perhaps no medium expresses that change as well as the city's architecture.

The use of native materials, judicious placement of glass and broad overhangs are now elements that increasingly define commercial buildings, says Michael Antenora, principal with **Antenora Architects LLP**. The Hill Country aesthetic, once a prominent part of Austin's commercial buildings and originally borrowed from historic Italian structures, is taking a more modern feel in the city.

"The Tuscan hills are very similar in latitude and weather to this region, and people started adapting that style in Texas," Antenora says. "It was very appropriate. ... It allows light to come in, but not direct light. People are now making a more modern abstraction of what made those hill towns work and using a more modern nod to overhangs that were used for centuries."

Austin is in the throes of new urbanism, says Chuck Croslin, vice president of PBS&J. But the town may not have found itself yet in terms of a new urbanist style.

"I think it will continue to be more modern, more contemporary," Todd Runkle, office director with **Gensler's** Austin office, says of Austin's commercial design future. "Those national and international [elements] will continue to influence Austin, but I still think Austin will retain its own modern, cowboy style."

### 360 Condominiums



**Architect:** Preston Partnership LLC

**Developers:** Novare Group, Andrews Urban LLC

Austin architects report mixed feelings on how well-suited the condominium project is to Austin. While some say its glass facade and lack of overhangs don't accommodate residents in Austin's harsh climate, Runkle says the project is changing Austin's skyline and giving the city a more modern feel.

### **2nd Street District**

**Architects:** Antoine Predock Architect, Cotera+Reed, Elizabeth Salaiz Architect Inc.

**Developer:** City of Austin

In an architectural sense, the building responds to its environment, Antenora says. "Considering the light, orientation to the sun and overhangs for shading, it's a response to the climate. ... It's also poetically regionalist. The architect was trying to make a visual connection with geographical and geological formations in Texas. He was trying in a cultural sense to make a connection to the environment."

### **6th & Brushy**

**Architect:** Earl Swisher

**Developer:** Richard Kooris

Of the East side condo projects in general, Croslin says the scale is appropriate and that they feel and act like infill, creating a sense of community -- whereas a 38-story condo doesn't have the same effect.

### **Computer Sciences Corporation Buildings**

**Architect:** PageSoutherlandPage

**Developer:** Computer Sciences Corp.

The buildings emulate projects built in cities like Detroit and Chicago before electricity became dependable, Antenora says. The CSC buildings' orientation to the sun ensures light penetrates the buildings without heating them.

### **The Domain**

**Architects:** JPRA Architects, Gensler

**Developers:** Simon Property Group, Endeavor Real Estate Group

"I had some real concerns about the Domain at first, partly because it has a cardboard feel to it," Tisdale says. "But the more I go out there, the more it's taking on life, especially at street level, and starting to mature. People are using the space. It's starting to promote activity and becoming a destination point. ... You see people sitting by a tree, drinking wine, and that's what urban architecture is supposed to do."

## **Hill Country Galleria**

**Architect: RTKL Associates Inc.**

**Developers: Opus West, Trammell Crow Residential**

"[The project] is appealing to someone going into a shopping environment, but it's outside," Tisdale says. "There's a lot of material and forms in play. ... It's visually active. You're seeing that too in more urban housing projects -- more depth to the design and to the skin of the building."

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