

Hey Google: Meet the Newest Architectural Addition to Austin's Skyline

BLOCK 185 – AUSTIN, TX

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Jon Robert,
Senior Associate,
Pelli Clarke & Partners



Austin, Texas, nearly topped the charts as the fastest-growing city in the United States in 2022, coming in at number two right behind the San Francisco Bay Area. However, a quarter of a million people have departed San Francisco since 2020, and many of them ended up in Austin. Capitalizing on good talent, a number of major employers have set up shop in Austin, including Amazon, Oracle, Tesla, and Google.

Austin's Newest Neighbor

In 2022, Google announced a \$9.5B investment that would create approximately 12,000 new jobs across the country at its new data centers

and offices. One of these developments is a brand-new skyscraper in Austin called Block 185, which includes a number of Ellison custom balanced doors specified by the architects in charge. Google will lease the entire building.

Block 185 is the final piece of the puzzle for the redevelopment of the Green Water Treatment Plant site in downtown Austin. The building is built on 1.56 million gross square feet of land and includes 800,000 square feet of office space.

Block 185, with its sail-like curtainwall and receding terraces, stands 35 stories high and features vast outdoor balcony space offering superior views of nearby Lady Bird Lake. Its design, which needed to possess a contemporary flair, had two main requirements: security and aesthetics.

Security First

“There was a level of security that needed to be incorporated into these doors, which is ultimately why we chose Ellison over another manufacturer,” said Jon Robert, senior associate with Pelli Clarke & Partners, the design architect for Block 185.

Ellison balanced doors are Pelli Clarke & Partners’ go-to because of their “minimalist beauty, integral hardware, reduced leaf projection, and ease of operation for users,” according to Robert.

“We do consider other doors as alternatives or as value engineering options as a project warrants, but we like to start with Ellison as the baseline specified door on most projects,” added Robert.

Ellison Bronze custom balanced doors have long been the standard for balanced door design and function for architectural firms throughout the world, and have been used on countless landmark structures for nearly a century.

The design for Block 185 required all-glass doors on the exterior side of the vestibules with matching signal switch style doors on the interior side. The interior doors were equipped with Von Duprin panic exit devices due to Google’s requirement for a minimum of two-point latching for security purposes. This configuration of Ellison doors meets security mandates while delivering a cohesive look and matching functionality.





Sleek and Sound

The Ellison custom balanced doors are installed at adjacent corners of the building at identical entrances. Both of the vestibule-type entrances feature a pair of balanced doors flanked by single-leaf doors on each side. There is an additional pair of Ellison balanced doors inside the building leading to the parking shuttle lobby. Finally, three more pairs of “medium stile” balanced doors are installed within an interior security wall, and a single, non-balanced swing door stands at the entrance of the security booth.

All Ellison doors on the project are made from stainless steel with exposed pivot shafts and feature a sleek #4 satin finish. There are no thresholds, and the gear boxes are recessed into the floor for a clean appearance as guests and Google employees enter and exit the building.

The sidelites between the doors are triple laminated for additional strength, which helps to support the structural steel in the surrounding entrance portal framing. This framing carries the weight of the structural glass system installed overhead and is designed to let plenty of natural light in. This allows the building to operate more sustainably with less reliance on heating and cooling systems and creates more inviting lobby spaces.

“The integral balanced hardware and beauty of the doors in the closed position – but also as they swing – is what we really appreciate most about these doors,” added Robert.

Taking the LEED

Block 185 was built targeting LEED® Gold certification, but exceeded sustainability expectations and was awarded LEED® Platinum in January 2023. This included perfect scores in three categories: indoor environmental quality, innovation, and location and transportation. In addition, Block 185 scored full credits for the subcategory of daylighting, courtesy of its glass curtainwall design supplemented by all-glass Ellison Bronze entryways on the ground floor.

In addition to Pelli Clarke & Partners as the design architect, the project team included architect of record STG Design; structural engineer Thornton Tomasetti; and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineer Blum Consulting Engineers.

The building topped out in July 2021 and was fully completed by July 2022.

Ellison
CUSTOM CRAFTED BALANCED DOORS

