

From Electric Power to Brain Power

The Seaholm Substation site was once a tangle of electrical wires that provided the sole source of power for the City of Austin. As distribution technology improved, new infrastructure was built and the substation was decommissioned. Occupying one of the most desirable locations the city owned in downtown Austin, the site entered the [Voluntary Cleanup Program](#) in 2010. Approximately 1.3 acres were investigated and contamination was remediated with TCEQ oversight. Approximately 22,300 cubic yards of impacted soils containing polychlorinated biphenyls, total petroleum hydrocarbons, volatile organic compounds, and metals were excavated and disposed. A Final Certificate of Completion for residential land use was issued in January 2013, allowing the redevelopment of the site into Austin's new state-of-the-art [Central Library](#). The \$123 million project includes a rooftop garden, laptop checkouts, and a concert space that can hold 350 people. The area is designated as the Seaholm EcoDistrict, combining new sustainable features with the existing infrastructure that represents its industrial past.

TCEQ voluntary programs promote the redevelopment of brownfields, or contaminated properties. These sites can often be returned to productive reuse with investigation and remediation of the soil and groundwater. Redevelopment of these sites, especially in cities where infill development is limited, improves the property value, tax revenue, and employment on formerly non-productive areas.



Central Library main entrance