

FACE-LIFT AT 20

Atlanta Marriott Marquis gets \$138 million renovation



Sweetwater Room

MORE INFORMATION

ATLANTA MARRIOTT MARQUIS

265 Peachtree Center Ave.
404-521-0000
www.atlantamarquis.com

WHEN TO GO

Need an excuse to check it out or looking for a deal? Try one of the Atlanta Marriott Marquis' theme packages, including:

- Georgia Aquarium
- Romantic Getaway
- New World of Coca Cola
- Zoo Atlanta
- Frogstastic Family Fun
- Louvre Atlanta
- Take Me Out to the Ballgame

Packages start at \$184 per night. Contact the hotel for details, including pricing and availability.



Pulse Lounge

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ATLANTA MARRIOTT MARQUIS

BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK

Since celebrating its 20th anniversary in August 2005, the Atlanta Marriott Marquis has slowly been transforming itself with a \$138 million makeover. That's good news whether you're looking for a space to host your company meeting, a weekend getaway destination that lets you spend more time on romance than on traveling, or an alternative to your guest room for folks who show up and announce they'd like to stay for three months.

"We're changing everything from what it used to be," says Chris Anderson, director of sales and marketing. The goal of the renovation project is to give guests "something totally different that they can't see anywhere else" while enhancing "the comfort level our guests have come to expect as well as appeal to the growing Gen-X business traveler market."

Refurbishing Georgia's largest hotel without closing down has meant tackling sections one at a time. On a mid-September Friday night when I checked in on the progress, sections of the lobby and atrium levels were still under construction. "This whole area will be our new front desk," said Anderson, with a sweep of his arm. The regis-

tration desk will be conveniently located near the 16 elevators that whisk guests up to the 47 floors of 1,663 guestrooms and 94 suites. (The temporary location is mere steps away.) Other projects still underway include a new 25,000-square-foot ballroom and a 6,000-square-foot health club and spa.

But much of the work is already complete. The hotel is ready to host events from corporate meetings to weddings with the 13,343-square-foot Imperial ballroom, and 15 meeting rooms on the marquis level, 12 meeting rooms on the lobby level, with eight new meeting rooms on the atrium level that add 11,000 square feet of space. Seating and table arrangements in these rooms are customized to the needs of each event. "We've been called 'the largest boutique hotel' due to our personalized service and high-quality amenities," Anderson says.



Sear restaurant

All of the rooms and suites have been updated, as well. My executive suite featured a master bedroom with a new king-size bed—which provided firm comfort—dressed in white 300-thread-count linens. The floor-to-ceiling windows in the dining and living room spaces offered spectacular Midtown views. In case that failed to entertain, the living room was equipped with a 32-inch TV facing a sofa and chairs upholstered in silk, while the bedroom boasted a flat-screen TV. The bathroom featured granite counters, funky faucets and amenities from Bath & Body Works. Soft gold walls throughout the living spaces beautifully set off the dark wood furnishings and deep orange accents.

Comfortable as the room was, the energetic vibe of the new bars and restaurants lured me downstairs. "Every one of these was designed as an individual bar or restaurant that could actually sit in either Midtown or Buckhead," said Anderson. Pulse begins each day as a deluxe smoothie bar, then transforms into a cocktail bar at 6 p.m. It boasts a unique 50-foot-tall color-changing sail, adopted as the hotel's new iconic symbol.

(Spreading the 'pulse' theme, a heartbeat sounds in the lobby.) High Velocity, one of the city's largest sports bars, serves 48 varieties of beer and has 21 42-inch plasma-screen TVs and a 40-foot theatrical projection screen. Its Sweetwater Room and media room can each be reserved for groups. The Pool Bar features three private cabanas near the indoor/outdoor pool. Sear, which is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, serves American and regional classics, such as prime rib and lowcountry barbecued shrimp and grits. More than 140 varieties of wine are housed in temperature-controlled glass walls. After enjoying dinner and a couple of glasses of wine, there's nothing more convenient than an elevator commute home for the evening. But an overnight stay isn't necessary, since parking is complimentary for restaurant patrons.

Designed by John Portman, the Atlanta Marriott Marquis features the world's largest atrium and second-largest cantilever (the Grand Canyon's new cantilever recently seized the title of world's largest). The renovations help ensure it remains a destination for visitors and locals for years to come. **SP**