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Atlanta's high-end luxury market could get another entrant from one of the hotel industry's top players.

J.W. "Bill" Marriott, chairman and chief executive officer of Marriott International, confirmed rumors Tuesday that the hotel company that bears his name is looking to bring a third Ritz-Carlton to Atlanta.

"We continue to evaluate our opportunities," he said during a brief interview at the Marriott Marquis in downtown. "A Ritz-Carlton in Midtown is something that we are looking at."

Industry watchers have buzzed for months that the Bethesda, Md., hotelier is looking to add a third Ritz location — there is a Ritz in Buckhead and one downtown — to compete in the city's burgeoning luxury market. In the past few weeks Rosewood, a top luxury brand out of Dallas, has opened in Buckhead, while St. Regis, one of the legendary hoteliers, is under construction on West Paces Ferry Road.

Other new competitors for luxury dollars — either under construction or in the not-quite-a-done-deal stage — include Palomar, Loews and Mandarin. W, the Ritz of the affluent young, will have four hotels in Atlanta by 2009.

Marriott was in town to tour the renovated Marriott Marquis — the city's largest hotel — and participate in the chain's annual day of community service. He helped Marriott employees sort thousands of pounds of food and pack groceries at the Atlanta Community Food Bank in their annual "Spirit to Serve Our Communities Day."

Atlanta is one of the company's top three markets with 67 hotels across the area, including locations in DeKalb, Cobb, Clayton, Fulton and Gwinnett counties.

The Marriott Marquis has put the finishing touches on a \$138 million renovation that has seen updated guest rooms, new restaurants, improved convention space and the creation of a spa. The hotel has more than 1,600 rooms, more than any other lodger in town.

"I just toured this hotel, and it is beautiful," Marriott said in a message taped for staffers. "I've never seen a better renovated property in my career. It is truly spectacular."