



## Growing appetite

Local restaurateurs say there is still demand for new restaurants in a tough economy

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# Loews Hotels optimistic about Atlanta outlook

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CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Despite the recent economic blow endured by the hospitality industry, Atlanta continues to succeed in attracting big-name hotel brands to its streets.

As Loews Atlanta Hotel becomes the newest property to debut on the Atlanta skyline, **Loews Hotels'** CEO and chairman, Jonathan M. Tisch, weighs in on what this addition means to the Loews brand and to Atlanta.

"When you look at the national footprint of our properties, clearly we were missing a couple of gateway cities, and now with the opening of Loews Atlanta Hotel, we feel that we are represented in one of the most dynamic cities in the country and we can look north and west where we'd also like to be in Boston, Chicago and San Francisco," said Tisch, who is also co-chairman of the board and a member of the office of the president of **Loews Corp.**, Loews Hotels' parent company.

Situated along Peachtree Street, the new hotel anchors Daniel Corp. and Selig Enterprises Inc.'s mixed-use development, 12th & Midtown, which features 725,000 square feet of class A office space, 60,000 square feet of retail and 52 luxury residences.

The first new-build hotel for the Loews Hotel chain in more than five years, the 414-room hotel is also Loews' first Georgia property.

"The vision started with the Selig organization and Daniel Corp. and we were thrilled that they asked us to be their



BYRON E. SMALL

**Making a mark:** Loews Hotels' CEO and chairman, Jonathan Tisch, said Atlanta is one of the key markets in which Loews wanted to be represented.

partner and to be such an integral part of a mixed-use development," Tisch said.

Touting the company slogan, he said, "Value is the new luxury. Fortunately we deliver both."

The Loews Atlanta Hotel hopes to offer patrons value and luxury in one.

Featuring 414 guest rooms including 44 suites, the property also includes an exhale spa and fitness center along with Loews Hotels' signature restaurant and bar, eleven and Bar eleven.

"We believe people want value. Value means different things to different people, and we think that we can offer value for \$150 a night and people will get

to stay in a brand-new facility that has wonderful amenities," Tisch said. "We will offer them value so they can feel good about their choosing our hotel rather than one of the other properties in town."

The new hotel contains 25,000 square feet of meeting space, including 11,100 in the Ellington Ballroom and 5,400 in the Mercer Ballroom, which boasts views of Piedmont Park. An outdoor space adds another 4,800 square feet of space for groups of up to 1,230 guests.

"This hotel really represents our mix of business. We have the right amount of meeting space and we have the ability to offer the great amenities to somebody traveling on business or somebody traveling with their families," Tisch said. "There are some great operators in town, there are some wonderful properties, but we feel that we will be able to hopefully get an extent of our fair share of business because of the way we've designed and built the hotel."

Despite the local hotel competition and tough economic times, Tisch is optimistic that Atlanta's attraction as a destination and the Loews ability to lure customers into its guest rooms will make for a successful enterprise.

"When you consider the very important ability to attract people either by air or by road, Atlanta is at the top of any list," he said. "We wouldn't be here unless we thought it was a market that had demand generators built in that would continue to grow and thrive."

Tisch mentions the city's convention facilities, cultural attractions, and strong business, arts and sports communities as

some of Atlanta's strongest "demand generators."

"Even though the current climate may be challenging on a daily basis, we will overcome this. Atlanta will overcome it as a destination, and we will start to turn things around as a country," Tisch said. "We certainly are still going to have days that are going to be very perplexing ahead but my sense is that things aren't getting worse, and certainly to be opening in this environment causes us to be optimistic about what we will encounter for the next year or for the next 10 years."

Although Tisch said the current economy has forced Loews to be conservative about its staffing levels and overall operations, the opening of Loews Atlanta Hotel spurred some much-needed job stimulation for Atlanta's hospitality industry.

"We try to be very careful about our staffing levels. That said, we offered 219 positions to people in the community and we feel good that we can, in these very difficult times, be a resource for new jobs; yet we will run the hotel in the fiscally prudent manner that we've been known for, for decades," he said.

Jim Sprouse, executive director of the **Georgia Hotel & Lodging Association**, sees the Loews' addition to Atlanta's hotel offerings as a positive all around.

"The Loews Hotel is a grand addition to Peachtree Street and Atlanta," Sprouse said. "Atlanta is a city filled with fabulous choices for visitors. The Loews Hotel provides another sophisticated choice for travelers and event planners."