

## New airport hotel opens at Coastal Grand Mall



Visiting the ceremonial opening reception at the new Hilton Garden Inn in Myrtle Beach were from left, Michael Gibson, founder and CEO of M. Gibson Hotels, the owner of the hotel; Candace Parkerson, vice president for sales and marketing at the Gibson company; and the hotel general manager, Michael Petrosino.

By Steve Porter  
The Herald

"We felt like Myrtle Beach did not have a designated upscale product at the airport and we felt we would be the only designated airport hotel in the marketplace. The Hilton Garden Inn is structured to have a corporate customer base," said Michael Gibson, founder and chief executive officer of M. Gibson Hotels, the developer and operator of the new Hilton Garden Inn located just off Harrelson Boulevard about a mile from the Myrtle Beach International Airport terminal.

The hotel has an informal aura, but provides top notch services and is meant to attract the business traveler who wants to be able to check in and out, enjoy meals and perhaps partake of some recreation in the simplest and most efficient manner possible.

A reception on Monday night marking a ceremonial opening of the hotel brought to town not only Gibson, whose company headquarters is in Knoxville, Tennessee, but also his vice president for sales and marketing and other company officials. Perhaps the most noticeable difference between the Garden Inn concept and most other hotels is at the very entrance. An atrium lobby literally blends into a gathering area where guests can enjoy breakfasts and dinners, as well as a full service bar located in the same area. There's no separate dining or lounge area and food is served buffet style right there.

What is separate is a large meeting room that can be divided into sections. When opened up completely, it provides enough space for up to 150 people for meetings, receptions and other activities.

The hotel is only one of the Gibson group of franchised Hilton properties. "We build Hilton Garden Inns, Hampton Inns and Hampton Inn Suites and we are a franchisee with Marriott and Intercontinental, so we have a broad base of hotels," Gibson said. The agreement with Hilton to operate with its flag on the hotel has a 20-year term.

The Gibson company was founded 11 years ago and now has 15 hotels located in Tennessee, Indiana, South Carolina, and Kentucky, five of them in Knoxville alone. The rooms in the Myrtle Beach hotel have been designed with the hurried businessperson in mind.

There is a hospitality center in each room that allows the guest to entertain as well as carry on business at an oversized desk and ergonomic chair.

There are all the accessories needed for a businessperson to operate his or her computer, and even a remote hookup that allows them to order printing at the hotel business center computer in the lobby.

The dining is informal, with cooking done by the Great American Grill.

Cooks prepare breakfast and dinner to order, which can be delivered as room service or carried to a room and heated in the microwave.

The rooms even include electronic hookups that allow guests to play their MP3 and CD players through the room equipment. There's also a full workout facility, outdoor pool and whirlpool.

The hotel has 112 rooms and is one of more than 400 Hilton Garden Inn hotels that have been built in the past few years in North America and in Europe, and there are plans to construct 13 of them in Saudia, Arabia.

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843.626.3131

