

# The Augusta Chronicle

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## Crowne Plaza in North Augusta opens

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The hotel opened Friday, and features a ballroom, pool, fitness area and four meeting spaces.

After a little more than a year of construction, North Augusta's Crowne Plaza Hotel is open for business.

The 180-room hotel includes a restaurant, Salt and Marrow, and a bar area with local liquors. There's also 17,500 square feet of meeting space, a pool, courtyard, rooftop bar and ballroom.

Located within Riverside Village and next to SRP Park, the hotel offers views of the community and access to some of the area's biggest attractions.

On the first floor is the hotel's Salt and Marrow Parlor Bar and Salt and Marrow Kitchen, which are inspired by local cuisine and are open to the public. Contemporary images of nature and animals adorn the lobby, which is filled with modern furniture and painted with cool colors.

Jeff Brower, the hotel's general manager, said the decorations honor Augusta's past.

Brower said the restaurant's food is custom to the region. The menu includes salmon, oysters, baked potatoes and red grits. The food is also made on a grill system, which Brower said harkens back to cooking on a hearth centuries ago.

The hotel opened Friday, and Brower said 75 guests checked in over the weekend, finding out about the location largely through word of mouth.

People from the community are welcome to use the hotel as a study or work space, Brower said. A room at the front of the building will be used as a common area.

"If you're technology driven, that's there and that's available. If you're looking to gather and be in comfort, you have a living room where you can read a book outside, you've got pool areas, so it's just a great gathering space as a whole for multiple generations," Brower said.

The hotel is also environmentally conscious. Tables in meeting rooms are bare, and the pool is filled with unheated saltwater.

Brower said 85 people are employed at the hotel, but that could grow to 140 depending on the season and staffing needs. He said the coming of U.S. Army Cyber Command and the overall growth in the area inspired the hotel to build in North Augusta.

“The main draw was the overall development and the growth of Augusta,” Brower said. “It’s certainly an exciting time, and this village is a component of that.”

About two dozen community members attended a tour of the hotel Monday and enjoyed cocktails and a meal in the dining area.

Carol Scogin lives near Riverside Village and biked by the site with her husband as buildings underwent development.

“The way it’s decorated, I love it. I think it’s really pretty,” she said.

She said she was also impressed by the 5,500-square-foot ballroom, which could fit 400 people comfortably. The four meeting rooms can accommodate 80 people in total.

“The idea that it’s meant for small groups, I think that’s perfect for North Augusta,” Scogin said.

Lee Sheppard, originally from Asheville, N.C., said the hotel could be the Augusta area’s pre-eminent hotel, like the Omni Grove Park Inn in the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina.

“To have a calling card like that is really important to a city, and this kind of puts North Augusta on the map as far as a destination spot,” Sheppard said.