

Golden Nugget opens with changes in progress

■ A \$100 million renovation of the former Trump Marina by new owner Landry's Inc. goes on amid the gambling.

By MICHAEL CLARK
Staff Writer

ATLANTIC CITY — The ringing sounds of slot machines were drowned out by the loud buzz of a machine used to tear up casino-floor carpet. Employees wheeled slot machines from one side of the casino to the other. And customers stared toward the ceiling as workers hoisted two new banners in the main casino lobby.

"Out with the old and in with the gold," the banners read. "Watch the transformation."

The old Trump Marina Casino Hotel opened for the first time today as the Golden Nugget with various signs of a casino's rebirth in progress.

"Nothing will go untouched," said Amy Chasey, vice president of marketing for Golden Nugget Las Vegas.

The work is part of a \$100 million face-lift for the aging casino, which was officially taken over by Landry's Inc. at 6 a.m. Tuesday after the Casino Control Commission approved the property's sale the day before.

One of the biggest and most immediate developments at the

Atlantic City property is the transformation of the casino's old Harborview Restaurant into the upscale Chart House seafood restaurant.

Newer, brighter carpeting leads the way to the new restaurant, along the remodeled skybridge connecting separated parts of the casino property. Carpenters continued to remodel the restaurant on Tuesday to get it ready for its grand opening on Thursday. The redesign and upgrades were a massive undertaking, officials said, with brand new flooring, furniture and decorations for the restaurant, which overlooks the Farley State Marina.



Staff photo by Ben Fogletto

Lynn and Ronald Romano, of Toms River, look at plans for the former Trump Marina, which opened Tuesday as the Golden Nugget.

Nugget

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A new-age theme matches the design of the casino's new hotel rooms. Four of the gaming hall's rooms have been remodeled and are open for guests to tour on the seventh floor.

The dominating white and beige fabrics used in the old rooms are being replaced with brighter, mixed designs. New marble counter tops and other modern-looking furniture fills the rooms.

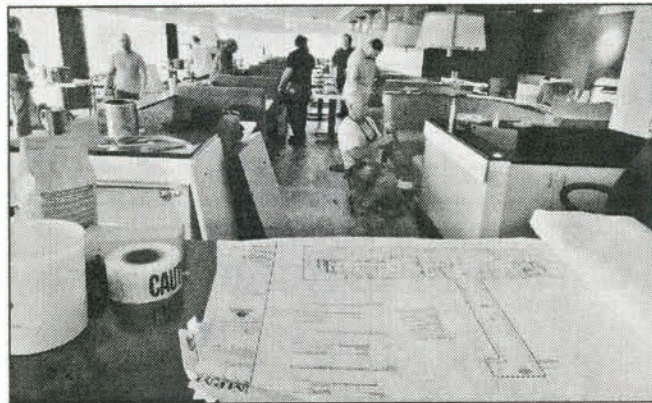
The only thing that will remain from the hotel rooms' old style is the black-and-gray-striped carpets.

"That's all that was really still useable that didn't look outdated," Chasey said.

Chasey said the casino will soon start booking those four individual rooms with rates that will likely be slightly more than a normal Trump Marina room.

Other changes were in the middle of being completed, included the erection of a wall blocking off one side of the casino's gaming floor. That section will soon become a new eatery called The Café.

The presence of so many construction workers on Tuesday made the Golden Nugget's first day of operation far from typical. While most casinos typically open their doors with renovations complete, the messy process of rein-



Staff photo by Ben Fogletto

The Golden Nugget opens Tuesday as work continues on its transformation, including converting the Harborview Restaurant into the Chart House seafood restaurant.

venting the property is on display for customers and will be done incrementally through the summer.

The first day's developments ranged from big improvements, such as redecorating the former "Disco" bar into a red-laced lounge dubbed "The Red Room," to minor adjustments, such as altering employee name tags to say "Golden Nugget."

Some customers complained about the construction noise, but most huddled around the lobby to watch with fascination as one casino slowly became another.

"It's sort of cool and historic to see this happening," said Louise Parker, of Bethlehem, Pa.

"I think it's good leadership to make sure that they're showcasing the improvements as it goes along," said Joseph

Kelly, president of the Greater Atlantic City Chamber. "It really builds excitement and is a great image for people to see that things are happening here."

Chasey said executives have few concerns about the process going on while the daily business continues, mostly because they've been through it before.

Landry's renovated and redesigned a similarly tired casino in Las Vegas, investing \$300 million into the property after buying the gaming hall for the same price.

"That was a 14-month process," Chasey said, "and it was very successful."

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