



## **RICHARD C. KESSLER**

### **Chairman and CEO**

Combining an entrepreneurial business sense with creative energy and dedication to purpose, Richard C. Kessler is a visionary, entrepreneur, astute businessman and philanthropist. Kessler earned his bachelor and master degrees in Industrial Engineering/Operations Research from Georgia Institute of Technology. He has also received honorary PhD's. from Valparaiso University and Newberry College. Born in Savannah, Georgia and reared in Effingham County, Richard has received the Effingham County Honored Treutlen Award for Outstanding Leadership, the distinguished Alumnus Award at Georgia Tech, and the Dean's Medal for singular commitment and contribution to the Candler School of Theology at Emory University.

During his 53 years in the field of hotel development and hotel management, he served as President and Chairman of Days Inns of America for nine years, and for the past 39 years as Chairman and CEO of The Kessler Enterprise, Inc., currently operating as The Kessler Collection. Kessler has become a nationally recognized hospitality industry leader. Richard served seven years on the Industry Advisory Council of the American Hotel and Motel Association, and in 2013, he was elected to the board of the Culinary Institute of America. Richard has helped develop outstanding hospitality practices nationwide in multiple facets of the industry.

Directing the ownership, development, and operational elements of The Kessler Collection, today, Richard oversees a portfolio of twelve luxury boutique properties located in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Colorado. He is passionate with historic renovations and has renovated and restored the 1888 Casa Monica Resort and Spa in St. Augustine, FL, the Mansion on Forsyth Park and the Kehoe House in Savannah, GA. In 2020, Richard opened the JW Marriott Plant Riverside District in Savannah, which has awarded both the 2021 ULI Global and Americas Awards for Excellent | Winner Urban Land Institute and the ALIS 2020 Development of the Year award, as well as numerous other awards. The personal and highly profiled project of the historic Armstrong Kessler Mansion, a 26,000 sf Renaissance Mansion built in 1916 – 1919, completed in the Spring, 2019. Richard is very involved in the conception and design of all new developments.

In 2010, Richard Kessler in association with Bill Marriott, Jr., announced the formation of Marriott's Autograph Collection at the ALIS Conference in Los Angeles. Kessler initiated the brand concept launch by franchising the first seven hotels in the Autograph Collection. Kessler is currently the largest American franchise operator in Marriott's Autograph Collection.

In August, 2020, Kessler completed construction of the Plant Riverside District Hospitality and Entertainment Complex in Savannah, GA. This \$370,000,000+ complex is anchored by the 419 room JW Marriott, 14 food and beverage venues, live entertainment venue, approximately 22,000 sf of meeting space, 484 space parking deck, 20,000 sf of retail, and 1,100 lineal foot extension of the Savannah Riverwalk. This project was structured with conventional debt financing, participation from Marriott International with mezzanine financing, cash equity, and \$20,000,000 in historic tax credits, and a public/private partnership with the City of Savannah on the parking structure.

It should be noted that Kessler was successful in sponsoring legislation in the State of Georgia to increase the previous cap on state historic tax credits from \$350,000 to \$10,000,000 on a single project, a benefit which will be enjoyed by all developers in the interest of historic preservation in the State of Georgia.

In August 2020, Kessler opened the Grand Bohemian Hotel Charlotte, a 254 room Autograph Collection Hotel in uptown Charlotte, NC. In September 2022, the Grand Bohemian Lodge on the Reedy River opened in downtown Greenville, SC, a 187 room Autograph Collection hotel, styled after a national park lodge.

Kessler is a consummate supporter and leader of philanthropic causes. He has served as Chairman of the Board for Lutheran Brotherhood and championed the merger with Aid Association for Lutherans to become Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, today a Fortune 500 Minneapolis-based financial service organization with over eighty-three billion dollars in assets. He was the founder and for 35 years the Chairman of the New Ebenezer Conference and Retreat Center, founder and board member of Treutlen House for abused children, and founder and sustainer of The Kessler Reformation Collection at Emory University's Pitts Theological Library. The collection today is the largest Reformation collection in America. Kessler was also the founder of the annual Orange County Public School Visual & Performing Arts Teachers scholarship, and has sponsored additional scholarship programs for high schools and colleges.

In 2000, Kessler was awarded the Florida Master Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst & Young, and in 2014, the Safari Club International Patron's Award. His personal interests include art, music and outdoor recreation.

**The Kessler Enterprise, Inc.**

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