

People, etc.

High Museum unveils plans for downtown branch

By Jan Avgikos
Staff Writer

The High Museum of Art unveiled plans Thursday for a \$2 million, three-story branch museum at the Georgia-Pacific Center in downtown Atlanta.

Georgia-Pacific Corp. and Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., co-owners of the property, will pay for renovation of a 40-foot-high glass "greenhouse" structure located on the Houston Street side of the Georgia-Pacific Center.

The design, by Parker & Scogin Architects of Atlanta, will feature three tiered-rampways, skylights and natural lighting similar to Richard Meier's prize-winning design for the High Museum in Midtown.

"This is truly a cooperative endeavor, involving private enterprise, the cultural community and local government," said T. Marshall Hahn Jr., Georgia-Pacific's chairman and chief executive officer.

Museum Director Gudmund Vigtel said the satellite facility "is truly another step in our progress toward becoming the most important visual arts museum in the region."

Hahn, Vigtel and Michael Lomax, chairman of the Fulton County Commission, which will provide operating funds, unveiled plans for the satellite museum at a midmorning press conference.

The 12,000-square-foot downtown branch will expand the High's total space by almost 10 percent.

A large lower gallery and three smaller galleries will be available for exhibits. The topmost gallery will feature a vaulted ceiling of translucent glass and a glass brick floor. The design allows natural light to filter to the galleries below, while providing protection for the art from direct sunlight. A museum shop will be located on the lower level.

Portions of the space will be three-stories high, allowing the display of large sculptures. The wood and stainless steel ramps, which connect the galleries, will offer a view of the exhibits inside and the city outside.

The renovation, which is under way, is scheduled to be completed

in December. Branch hours will be 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. There will be no charge for admission.

Other major museums have experimented with the branch concept, notably the Whitney with its three satellite facilities in midtown and downtown New York.

For its branch, the High plans to present three shows a year of works from its permanent collection and supplement that with traveling exhibitions, Vigtel said.

The initial two-year series of exhibitions selected from the permanent collection will be an examination of American culture. Entitled "Tastes and Expressions of American Life," the six shows will pre-

mier with "Art of the Colonies and the Young Republic." Subsequent exhibitions will survey periods in the development of American art from the early 19th century to the present.

As many as eight traveling exhibitions a year are planned. They will feature works by artists from Atlanta and the Southeast as well as possible loans from other museums and private collectors.

The downtown branch will allow the High to bring additional traveling exhibitions to the city and highlight more of its permanent collection on a regular basis. Elizabeth Bacchetti, who has been on the

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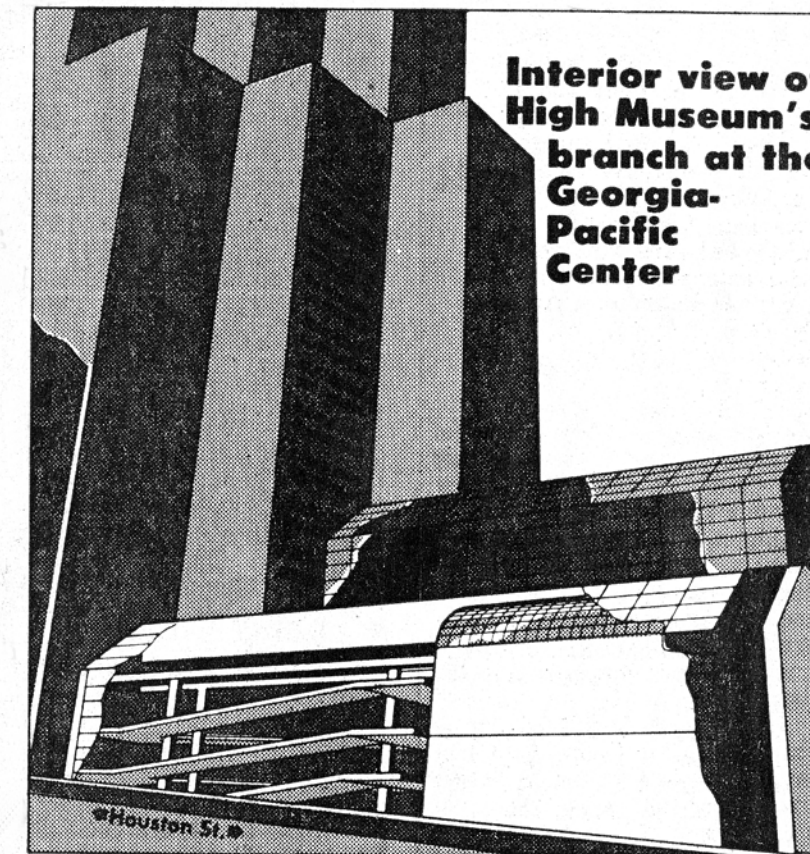
High's curatorial staff for three years, has been named curator of the satellite museum.

The Fulton County Arts Council will contribute \$100,000 this year toward the operating budget of the branch. Additional revenue would come from museum shop sales and rental of space for special evening events.

Georgia-Pacific has demonstrated an interest in the arts in Atlanta for several years with its popular "Art at the Heart" series that has brought a variety of performing arts to downtown.

Although original plans for the greenhouse structure called for a museum related to paper-making and the lumber industry, Georgia-Pacific decided after moving into the building that the space could be better used to participate in the Atlanta cultural community.

Lomax said the new High will be part of a "cultural triad" in downtown Atlanta that includes the



Interior view of High Museum's branch at the Georgia-Pacific Center

MIKE GOETTEE/Staff

Marcel Breuer-designed library, to be enhanced soon with a major outdoor sculpture, and a branch of the

Atlanta Historical Society planned for the Citizens and Southern Bank building within the next year.