

Financial woes doom Olympics' Atlanta Pavilion

But high-tech film is still hanging on, looking for site

By Lucy Soto
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The Atlanta Pavilion — the \$10 million “blockbuster on Peachtree” that was to be a piece of public art and a cultural welcome center

— has joined the long list of unfulfilled Olympic dreams.

With the Games 190 days away, lack of money and timing were just too much for the intriguing open-air pavilion proposed for land atop the Peachtree Center MARTA station. The complex canopy of special lumber and reflective architecture will remain a model on an architect's table, organizers said Wednesday. The pavilion was designed by Scogin, Elam and Bray Architects.

“We are not going to be able to secure the financing in the fashion to meet the ambitious and tight construction schedule,” said Clara Axam, director of the

Committee for Olympic Development in Atlanta.

CODA conceived the idea for the pavilion as part of its public spaces program, but the city and a private developer were working to knit the deal together. Georgia-Pacific, which had agreed to donate about \$3 million in material and support for the project, held off on backing the project because of financing concerns. Bank financing for the

rest of the deal never materialized.

But part of the pavilion dream is hanging on.

Axam said CODA is working on finding a new, less showy site to house the high-tech film, dubbed “The Atlanta Experience,” that was to have been the focal point of the pavilion.

The entertainment developer brought in to help cement the deal said the pavilion's failure

now means the film project is “in the black.”

“The good thing that came out of the Atlanta Pavilion was the fact that there was two projects,” CITYLIFE President Grant Weyman said. “The attraction was ‘The Atlanta Experience’ and then there was the pavilion, a beautiful piece of art that cost \$7 million.”

ERDAS, an Atlanta software

company whose advanced mapping was used in the Bosnia peace talks; and Space Imaging of Thornton, Colo., a venture backed by defense contractors Lockheed Martin Corp., Raytheon Corp./E-Systems and Mitsubishi Corp., said they have begun work on the film. Their contributions are worth about \$3 million, Weyman said.

The plan is to immerse visitors for four to five minutes in a

sort of life-size, advanced video game, except that the images will be of real people, places and events. It then will be technologically tweaked to give the feeling of flying through space in a high-speed aircraft.

Space Imaging is to begin later this month collecting photography of the metro area, including Olympic venues, using a specially equipped mapping aircraft.