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Branson plans new attractions

BRANSON (AP) — In an attempt to lure more families and younger people into town for the summer tourist season, Branson will have a new amusement park, more shopping, and a hybrid of a water flume-roller coaster ride at Silver Dollar City.

Springfield businessman Bob Wehr has invested millions of dollars in Branson USA, a 112-acre family amusement park that is on the site of the old Mutton Hollow Entertainment Park and Craft Village. Wehr bought Mutton out of bankruptcy after 20 years of operation.

Wehr said the park will have 20 shops, each with a different theme. Also planned are rides such as a 92-foot-tall Ferris wheel from Italy, a roller coaster from

Belgium and an elevated go-cart track.

Admission to the grounds will be free, and visitors can buy tickets for individual rides or an all-day ride pass.

"What we're not trying to do is further divide the pie in Branson," Wehr said. "We want this park to bring more people to Branson, more young families in particular."

Silver Dollar City, which drew more than 2 million visitors last year, will feature Buzzsaw Falls, a \$7 million ride that has been heavily promoted recently. The ride is scheduled to open this month.

Silver Dollar City also operates the water-themed White Water, Dixie Stampede dinner theater and Showboat Branson Belle, a huge paddle-wheeler that plies

Table Rock Lake with breakfast, lunch and dinner cruises.

"The Rugrats" is the latest family-oriented show to come to town. The popular Nickelodeon series is touring as "Rugrats — A Live Adventure" and will play the Welk Champagne Theatre July 13-31.

Many Branson business owners are looking more to steady visitor growth than to a boom similar to the one in the early '90s.

"My feeling, from an economic standpoint, is that we won't have another boom. But I do feel we are looking at steady growth," said Jim Thomas, a promoter who opened the Roy Clark Celebrity Theater with entertainer Clark in the early '80s, bringing in numerous Nashville stars for their first visit to the area.

Government cracks down on credit scam

Clipped By:
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Jan 13, 2026