

Silver Dollar City buys Branson USA

By Jefferson Strait
News-Leader

BRANSON — The Silver Dollar City empire — which owns attractions in Branson from White Water to the Showboat Branson Belle — just got larger.

Silver Dollar City Inc. announced Friday that it has purchased the Branson USA amusement park, located near the entertainment stretch of Missouri 76.

The agreement with Branson USA owner Bob Wehr includes

the sale of acreage located immediately behind Silver Dollar City's Grand Village to Wehr. The Grand Village itself is not part of the transaction.

"We think this is exciting for tourism of the Branson area," Mike Hutcherson, senior vice president of Silver Dollar City, said in a release.

Silver Dollar City would not disclose what plans it has for Branson USA's location, only to say its primary objective is to draw more visitors to the

Branson area.

The research and concept development timetable will prevent the attraction from opening any earlier than 2003, Hutcherson said. Wehr will develop plans independently for the land located directly behind the Village.

Although the release refers to the future development as a "park," Silver Dollar City spokeswoman Lisa Rau said Friday it's too early to say what form it will take.

"Because we're still develop-

ing ideas, it's premature to call it anything at this time," she said. She said a number of people are busy brainstorming entertainment options for the property. "And ideas are being developed as we speak — literally."

"Silver Dollar City has been actively looking to further develop corporate properties in the Branson area," Mel Bilbo, president and CEO of Silver Dollar City, said in the release. "Now we will match one of our concepts to this new host location."

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