

Branson's demographics

er Rick Huffman, owner

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Theme park announcement delayed

Because of accident, Silver Dollar City puts off unveiling new attraction plans.

By Kathryn Buckstaff
NEWS-LEADER

BRANSON — Silver Dollar City officials have delayed an announcement expected today about plans for a new theme park in Branson on the site of the former Branson USA amusement park.

The announcement was postponed until later this week after an accident at Silver Dollar City left 19 people with minor injuries after a walkway to a ride collapsed. One woman may have suffered leg fractures in the fall.

Silver Dollar City bought the property in November, and has spent the past several months formulating what to do with the 110 acres about

three miles east of their 1890s theme park.

"We are indeed promising a new theme park for Branson," said spokesperson Lisa Rau. "We've done thousands of surveys and months of concept development. We won't yet reveal all the bells and whistles, but we will be revealing major aspects of the new park."

Rau declined to give more details, saying they plan a corporatewide news release to employees later this week before details are released to the media.

"We feel very strongly about employees hearing the news first," Rau said.

The site has been a Branson attraction since the

park was called Mutton Hollow and featured arts and crafts beginning in 1970. Later, live music and a small theater were added.

The park underwent major renovations in 1996 when amusement rides were added, but fell on hard times, filing for bankruptcy-court protection from creditors in the spring of 1997.

Springfield businessman Bob Wehr bought the park for \$2.5 million in December 1998.

Area developer David Cushman, who last year sold his Sammy Lane Resort to the city of Branson, said he is working on plans for 300 acres he owns across from the park. The new theme park will be a big plus for Branson, he said.

"A new theme park com-

ing to town can attract new visitors from a greater distance," Cushman said. "With a park, they can actually create a demand."

It's also an advantage to have both theme parks under the same ownership, he said.

"Instead of having two separate entities competing, Silver Dollar City can offer a greater package to bring visitors independently rather than competitively, and communicate that in one ad versus confusing the marketplace," Cushman said.

Unlike other types of attractions, theme park can reinvent themselves by adding new rides and features, he said.

"It will continually create interest in revisitation," Cushman said.

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