

November 3, 2002 3B

# Coasting toward renovation's end

Nighttime theme park Celebration City will house 20 attractions and 3 roller coasters.

NEWS-LEADER STAFF

Despite light rain Saturday, construction workers put in place the 80-foot supports for the highest point on the Ozark WildCat, the \$4-million wooden roller coaster under construction at Celebration City on the west end of the strip on Missouri 76.

The coaster is part of a \$40-million renovation of the former Branson USA theme park, giving new owner Silver Dollar City a third family-oriented attraction in Branson.

"We're not just putting some paint on what was; this is a whole new theme park," said Silver Dollar City spokeswoman Lisa Rau, who said the park has a targeted opening date of May 2003.

Branson Mayor Lou Schaefer said the work is just part of overall improvements in the city. In the fiscal year that ended Sept. 31, Schaefer said, the city saw \$53 million in renovations and upgrades — with only a portion of the Celebration City expenditures counted.

"That's a million a week," he noted. "I think there are communities that would like to have a million a month."

He also noted that projections are showing Branson with 10 million visitors around 2006.

"It's going to get close to 8 million this (past) year," he said. "Ten million is a lot of people to entertain."

The new park is designed to be a nighttime attraction for families, with 20 rides and attractions — including nine major thrill rides, Rau said. The eight-story high, 2,600-foot long Ozark WildCat is one. The 90-second ride — being built by Great Coasters International of Sunbury, Pa. — will feature a 360-degree spiraling first drop, hit speeds of 66 miles per hour and can carry 960 guests per hour. There will be two steel coasters as well.



**Roller coaster construction**  
workers place the 80-foot-high supports of Ozark WildCat, a \$4 million wooden roller coaster, together Saturday at Branson's new nighttime theme park Celebration City. The park has a targeted opening date of May 2003.

DEAN CURTIS  
NEWS-LEADER



Rau



Schaefer

Another ride is The Accelerator. The tower ride launches riders 80 feet before plunging them back to earth. Also planned is the Electric Star Wheel, a 95-foot high classic Ferris Wheel.

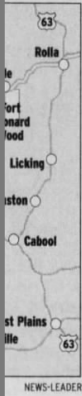
Three distinctly themed areas include Main Street, with fountains from the Victorian era; the Electric Boardwalk, with rides and arcades; and Route 66, celebrating the 1950s and '60s with vintage cars and drive-in diners. The night's activities will culminate with lasers and water features all set to music.

As part of a marketing strategy, the park will not open until 3 p.m. and will stay open until 11 p.m.

"We found in our research ...

that families were looking for another opportunity, one more layer of evening activity," Rau said. "This is a great opportunity to provide just that."

SDC will incorporate Celebration City into its season pass, offering unlimited visits to it, Silver Dollar City and White Water.



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