

Davie plans to become a tourist magnet. Here's how.



Davie is seeking to create a 24-acre Western Village downtown that would include lots of shopping, restaurants and entertainment, wrapped in western-themed architecture

Saddle up, cowboy. Davie is taking its **heritage** to new heights.

The town is hoping to create a major tourist draw by expanding its Western-themed downtown with a village that would include restaurants, a saloon, a museum, a hotel, shopping and entertainment. And it plans to celebrate its agricultural heritage with an 84-acre farm park, eight miles away.

“Miami has Wynwood. Every successful community has something unique that drives people from outside to come in, and this is what is going to do it for us. It will be the driver of the bus,” said council member Bryan Caletka.

Davie resembled an Old West outpost in its early days, and the main mode of transportation — horses — still figures prominently. The town hosts the annual Davie Pro Rodeo, which brings in nationally ranked cowboys. The town has miles of equestrian trails, and the local McDonald’s used to allow horses in its drive-through before it closed.

Under its new plan, **Town Hall** and the **Bergeron Rodeo Grounds** would serve as cornerstones of a 24-acre Western Village, situated between SW 39th Street and Griffin Road, east of Davie Road.

[\[Popular on SunSentinel.com\] In wake of Virginia Beach shooting, South Florida cities look to step up security »](#)

“It adds a destination in Broward County. The No. 1 destination is Sawgrass Mills Mall, and we’re not going to compete with retail, so what do you do? You come up with something that is unique,” Caletka said. “And it is in line with a previous study that we paid for which said double down on the Western theme.”

Among the things being contemplated:

-- A Western-themed luxury hotel with up to 70 suites.

-- A 10,000 square-foot museum dedicated to Davie’s history.

-- A \$1.5 million upgrade to the Bergeron Rodeo Grounds to attract more national rodeo competitions and other events.

A consultant’s review of the proposal estimates it would cost at least \$34 million.

[\[Popular on SunSentinel.com\] Company helping ‘rewire’ brains at new facility »](#)

Mayor Judy Paul asked whether a skating rink could be added. Caletka suggested a larger capacity hotel to attract national conferences.

Council member Susan Starkey suggested a taller parking garage and a small “splash pad” near a water fountain.

Town officials have discussed for decades the best way to expand the **town’s Old West theme**.

“It’s not a new idea. We were talking about that when I was in office in the ’80s,” said Kathy Cox, a former town council member who also served as mayor.

At the same time, plans are moving forward for the Gov. Leroy Collins Farm Park, which would offer visitors a hands-on agricultural experience. A welcome center and museum will be built, but otherwise the 84-acre site west of Interstate 75 will remain an open space with grazing animals.

Farming has always been part of the Davie landscape. In the ’50s, there were more than 5,000 acres of orange groves in town, bringing in over \$5 million annually. The town celebrates its citrus heyday with the annual Orange Blossom Festival, and that history will be on display at the farm park’s museum.

The two venues would offer visitors a dramatically different experience.

Frank Costoya, an architect who designed the farm park, said the Western Village project would be a perfect complement.

“It’s always been a vision to get Davie Road looking like Miracle Mile but with a western theme,” he said, referring to the district in Coral Gables that is awash in restaurants and shopping.