

The Daily Courier

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Black Canyon City park dream gets closer to reality

By [Bruce Colbert](#)

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When four shovel blades went into a patch of dry ground Monday in Black Canyon City, a dream of Phil and Jeane Albins came one step closer to reality.

"It's wonderful to see this," Jeane said during the groundbreaking ceremony for the Black Canyon Heritage Park. Phil died at the age of 88 in October 2009. "We always wanted this to be a park for the community, and now it's going to be."

The park promises to be a rare oasis at the northern edge of the Sonoran Desert. The Albinses donated the 30 acres for the park that is located on the banks of the Agua Fria River at the north end of Black Canyon City.

"We've been planning for this day since 2006," said Bob Cothorn, who is on the park's committee. Most everyone involved with the project credit Cothorn's drive, and ability to generate help and money, with the park's continued progress. "But this wouldn't have happened without Jeane and Phil Albins," Cothorn said.

The park started really moving forward after the Arizona Water Protection Fund of the Arizona Department of Water Resources gave the committee a grant of more than \$320,000. In addition to ADWR's help, the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument, Arizona Game and Fish, and scores of volunteers donated money, time, work and other resources for the construction



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Government officials and members of the public gathered Monday at Black Canyon City for a groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the future Black Canyon Heritage Park. From left: Joe Winfield, National Park Service; Fred Phillips, project designer; Stephen Tighe, Arizona Department of Water Services; Jeane Albins, who donated land for the 30-acre park; and Bob Cothorn of the park committee.

of the park.

The park committee envisions trails winding through stands of native vegetation, a wetlands and pond stocked with native fish, and a stream with several small waterfalls flowing from the east end of the park and draining into a large pond. The community association has the final say in the park's design.

Albins' former real estate office, located within the park boundaries, will serve as a visitor and information building. Several government and private organizations have expressed strong interest in setting up booths in the visitor center.

"We've been working with BLM interpreters to develop ideas, and make the visitor center a strong experience for people," said Peggy Biegler, Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument's outreach coordinator. "We've also been working with the Sonoran Desert Museum to get ideas."

Jess Mulcaire, of Mulcaire Excavating based in Prescott, is building the waterway portions of the park.

"We're building the stream and wetlands area, and reshaping the ponds," he said before the groundbreaking ceremony. "Then we're going to make an island in the middle of the pond."

Three solar-powered pumps will recirculate water from the pond up to the headwater fountain, which is the first waterfall.

Cothorn said he expects to open the park to the public toward the end of the year, possibly in September. After the construction is finished, the Black Canyon Historical Society is moving its historic museum building to park grounds.

"It's going extremely well, remarkably well," said Joseph Winfield of the National Park Service, who has been helping with the project since its inception five years ago. "You can have all the help and money you want, but without someone like Bob (Cothorn) leading it, community projects like this just don't get done."

Winfield added that the park "is going to be a gem and a magnet for visitors."

"I'm not dictating anything about the park, as long as it turns out to be a park," Jeane Albins said while gazing at the future park's site. "I can look out our front window and see what's going on."

"It's 30 acres. That's plenty of room for everyone."

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