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Lincoln Central Park gets \$20,000 donation

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The Lincoln Central Park took another step closer to completion last week when the Lincoln Cares program announced it would give the park \$20,000.

Lincoln Cares is a donation program that allows Lincoln Electric System customers to add \$1 to their monthly bill, which goes toward funding projects for the City of Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department. More than 6,000 customers donate to Lincoln Cares every month.

The park will be constructed as part of the Antelope Valley Project and cover a six-acre area between O and Vine streets. The park is expected to cost \$7.6 million.

The city will pay \$3 million to have the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers smooth and plant grass in the area and put the land in the right condition for a park.

An additional \$3.1 million will be raised by the parks and recreation department from community donations to build park structures including an amphitheater, fountains and sculptures. The 2015 Vision Group, a private Lincoln development organization, will contribute the remaining \$1.5 million to maintain the park.

"People can remain comfortable that the park will maintain it's vitality forever," said Susan Rodenburg, program manager for Lincoln Cares.

The Army Corps of Engineers will begin working on the area this summer and construction on park structures will begin in Summer 2009. The park is expected to be finished in mid-2010.

The Lincoln Cares donation is one of the first major contributions to the park, Rodenburg said, and the program plans to provide an additional \$20,000 for the next three years until the park is completed.

"It's really important people have an opportunity through Lincoln Cares to support the park so they can feel like they're helping," she said.

The department plans to begin major public fundraising efforts in March, said J.J. Yost, planning and construction manager for parks and recreation. Department employees have been encouraged by the response the park has received.

The Antelope Valley Project gives Lincoln a unique chance to work with the Army Corps of Engineers to build the park, Yost said, and he hopes that will encourage people to donate money.

"Honestly, it's a once in a lifetime opportunity to bring an amenity to Lincoln like none other the city has," Yost said.