

Ballpark is on schedule, officials say

Indians to start playing games there next February

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Drivers who travel on Estrella Parkway past the Goodyear ballpark site can see bulldozers, dirt piles and temporary fencing. From afar, it does not look as if much has been built.

But inside the site, the outline of a ballpark is taking shape.

A sizable hole has been carved into the earth, and 16 feet below ground is the muddy field where the Cleveland Indians will play Cactus League games a year from now.

Roads have been carved into the dirt. Infrastructure lines are being buried. Fields are being graded.

A year from opening day, officials say the Goodyear ballpark is on schedule.

"It's coming along. It's right on schedule," said John Ruggieri, president of Civica Development, which is developing private surrounding projects and laying infrastructure.

Today, Cactus League fans will watch the first games of the spring training season. The Arizona league has 12 teams and next year will add the Indians in Goodyear and the Los Angeles Dodgers in Glendale.

Goodyear also is negotiating to bring the Cincinnati Reds to the city in 2010.

Construction details

Construction crews have finished shoveling 110,000 cubic yards of dirt out of the ballpark pit. The extra soil was moved to parts of Civica's projects to elevate the land.

Standing at the bottom of the 16-foot hole, where the field will be, only the sky and mountains are visible.

Crews are pouring concrete, and dugouts are distinguishable.

Nearby, the Cleveland Indians clubhouse is taking shape. The facilities and practice fields will be ready for the team to use in August. A concrete elevator tower is visible from the street and marks the clubhouse site.

When the ballpark opens next spring, so will 8,800 square feet of retail space.

By early 2010, Civica will start opening the rest of its vision, which includes hotels, residential units and other retail sites.

"We recognize the market is a little slow right now, but this is a longer-term project," Ruggieri said.