

# Coming up roses – and vegetables

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**OF THE JOURNAL STAR**

*Posted Jun 10, 2009 @ 10:30 PM*

*Last update Jun 11, 2009 @ 04:58 PM*

PEORIA —

Gardening is always good for the soul, but this West Bluff community garden also will help feed the body.

In a couple of months, members of the Campaign for a Walkable West Bluff are hoping to harvest enough vegetables to feed the hungry who turn to local food banks for assistance.

The garden was initiated by members of the campaign who teamed up with the Western Avenue Greenway Project. The garden is a modest 20- by 30-foot patch along the traffic-heavy Western Avenue, with about 75 tomato plants in addition to cabbage, peppers and other vegetables.

"The idea for a community garden came about when our members of the Walkable West Bluff brainstormed for projects to do in the area," said Greg Tomlins. "We approached the Greenway people in April and they agreed."

The Campaign for a Walkable West Bluff is a grass-roots effort to make the area more pedestrian-friendly and to develop a more community-minded neighborhood environment.

"The location of the garden is actually the backyard of a house that was torn down last year," Tomlins said.

On Wednesday, Tomlins and a few others in his group, accompanied by some of their children, watered the garden, planted more tomatoes and placed donated wire cages.

Other donations came from Peoria-based LHF Compost Inc., which sent its Better Earth brand of organic compost; the Three Sisters Antique Tractor Club,

which plowed the land; and others who gave miscellaneous items.

"Yes, we allowed them to put in a vegetable garden where we've had some houses taken down last year," said Ray Ellington, a Greenway board member. "It's not been landscaped yet, so when they asked if they could put in a community garden, we agreed."

The community garden fits in with the Greenway's mission and goals, he said.

"One of our goals is to provide a buffer between the West Bluff neighborhood and the activities along Western Avenue," Ellington said. "Another one is to provide an open space for the West Bluff."

The Greenway project was started more than 20 years ago to develop a parklike setting on a stretch of land along Western Avenue from Callender Avenue to Main Street. The group purchased property and planted trees and flowers.

Now the gardeners are looking for more volunteers to maintain it during the summer.

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