

Community members rising up

As you know, Project VISION is a collection of mostly government agencies, business and nonprofit organizations working together to bring about positive change in Rutland. What they are doing is incredible and tangible, but the best kind of change comes when individuals in the community take the initiative to make the change. This is exactly what is happening in Hickory Street, the newer mixed-use housing development between Forest and Granger streets in Rutland.



Elsie
GILMORE
**Rutland
upRising**

About a half dozen residents of Hickory Street and what is left of the old Forest Park have come together to build raised-bed gardens in their development community.

Gardening when you live in an apartment is difficult; just ask resident Tracy Lambert, who has a

passion for gardening. "My family always had a garden growing up," Lambert told me.

Lambert and some other residents, including Jen Dufresne, approached Rutland Housing Authority about building the garden. Rutland Housing Authority manages the property and would only allow the garden to be on the old Forest Park section of the site. Phase 3 of the Hickory Street project will eventually transform that area in the next two to three years, and the

garden may have to be sacrificed at that point. However, Lambert and her fellow gardeners hope to convince the management company that the garden is worthwhile enough to keep.

Because many of the residents of Hickory Street

are low income, Lambert hopes that their participation in the garden project will help them become more self-sufficient. She said, "Weather affects the cost of food, and this garden could help alleviate the extra costs of eating healthy. It also helps cut down on our carbon footprint." When asked if each person would have a designated section of the garden, Lambert said, "The idea is to share."

Dufresne hopes to get kids involved in the garden this summer. She's lived in the Forest Park section of the development for 21 years and hopes this project will gather enthusiasm from other residents. She talked about how tight-knit the residents of the old Forest Park section are, noting that many are single parents. "We're one big family," she said. She explained how a lot of co-parenting and sharing of kid duties goes on there, along with impromptu barbecues in the shared yard.

Colton Francis, a community member who is involved with Project



PROVIDED PHOTO

Several residents of Hickory Street in Rutland work to build raised-bed gardens in their development community.

VISION, was contacted by Peg Gibbud of the Rutland Housing Authority and volunteered to facilitate the group's efforts.

When I arrived at Hickory Street on a beautiful day in May, the residents in attendance seemed anxious to work. Dirt was being shoveled,

and logistics were being discussed.

Since then, residents have planted tomatoes, broccoli, lettuce, cucumbers, carrots and herbs.

I'm excited to see how this project progresses, and I love the way these residents took the initiative to become engaged with

their community. Great work! And don't forget, if you have a community project you'd like assistance with, there is likely a member of Project VISION who would love to help you. Visit the website at www.projectvisionrutland.com to find the right contact.