



Indiana Historical Bureau

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NEWS

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“Better Homes of South Bend” Indiana State Historical Marker Will Be Dedicated in South Bend, Indiana

A public dedication ceremony for an Indiana state historical marker commemorating Better Homes of South Bend, an early African American housing co-op in the city, is scheduled for Saturday, July 8, 2017. The marker dedication, led by Mayor Pete Buttigieg, will begin at 11:00 a.m. at the corner of N. Elmer St. and Keller St., near 1702 N. Elmer St., South Bend. This location was the beginning of the Better Homes neighborhood. Parking for the event will be available along the adjacent streets in the neighborhood.

The text follows for the state marker entitled “**Better Homes of South Bend**”:

In 1950, workers at Studebaker formed an early African American building co-op in Indiana, Better Homes of South Bend. Many members moved from the South in 1940s to escape segregation and Jim Crow policies. However, federal lending and real estate policies here prevented them from obtaining mortgages equal to whites, limiting them to dilapidated homes in poor areas. To avoid racist backlash, co-op members kept their plans secret. The co-op’s collective power enabled members to secure land, loans, and contractors despite the prejudiced housing market. By mid-1950s, Better Homes of South Bend built 22 homes on 1700-1800 blocks of North Elmer St. and created a vibrant and peaceful community here in a formerly white neighborhood.

The public is invited to attend the dedication ceremony for this Indiana state historical marker that celebrates the co-op’s successful efforts to challenge housing discrimination and segregation in the mid-1900s. Over the course of a few years, the group succeeded in building 22 homes in a formerly white neighborhood. Special guests at the dedication ceremony will include Leroy Cobb, one of the founding members of the co-op, descendants of Better Homes, Mayor Pete Buttigieg, Tim Scott, councilperson for the district, representatives from the Far Northwest Neighborhood Association, including its president Rose Wilson, and community leaders who are all excited about this recognition of African American history in South Bend.

State historical markers commemorate significant individuals, organizations, places, and events in Indiana history. These markers help communities throughout the state promote, preserve, and present their history for the education and enjoyment of residents and tourists of all ages. For over 100 years the Indiana Historical Bureau, an agency of the State of Indiana, has been marking Indiana history. Since 1946, the marker format has been the large roadside marker, which has the familiar dark blue background with gold lettering and the outline of the state of Indiana at the top. Over 600 of these markers have been installed over the years.

For more information about the Indiana Historical Marker Program and other resources about Indiana, visit the Indiana Historical Bureau’s website at <http://www.IN.gov/history> or call (317) 232-2535. For more information about the marker dedication ceremony commemorating Better Homes of South Bend, please contact Gabrielle Robinson at grobinso@iusb.edu.