

FNWNA Meade St. Duplex

An Incremental Development Project



The Far Northwest Neighborhood Association was founded in 2013 to raise awareness about the need for affordable housing and to increase resident engagement with local government. Soon after, the passionate young people of our organization created Fremont Youth Foundation dedicated to making their neighborhood safe - a place where kids can be kids. Together, these two organizations have been on the forefront of advocacy for investment in the west side neighborhoods. We began by uncovering the story of the brave African American families who broke through redlining practices of the 1950s to pioneer our neighborhood by forming a nonprofit called Better Homes of South Bend. Their self-determination and persistence is one story of integration and is a critical part of the history of civil rights struggle in South Bend. We knew that if the people in city government could hear the stories of our community, they would see beyond the blight and decay of the vacant homes that littered our neighborhoods today and see a community of legacy families with a rich history that is worth preserving and worth investing in.

Although, historically, the City of South Bend has struggled to get authentic, productive engagement from poor people and people of color, the residents of the Far Northwest Neighborhood have made it their mission to engage in programming, initiatives, and opportunities the City makes available for residents to learn about local government and communicate their needs in a productive way. In addition to having the largest contingency of residents to attend the Neighborhood Leadership Academy; many neighbors enrolled two and even three years in a row, and participated in City sponsored events including (but not limited to) the list below:

- Citizen Budget Meetings
- City Council Meetings
- Mayor's Night Out
- Public Hearing on CDBG allocation
- Incremental Developer's Workshop
- Community Relations Committee meetings on Housing and Cooperative Businesses

We've even partnered with other community organizations like Indivisible and the Community Forum for Economic Justice to host public forums on housing, tax abatements, neighborhood organizing, and other topics of critical issue to the goal of strengthening neighborhoods.

Organization Accomplishments

All this hard work has paid off! We secured the City's investment of \$137,000 in the revitalization and upgrades to Fremont Park, identified a local author to pen a book about our historic Better Homes of South Bend neighborhood, established the historic marker commemorating the story of Better Homes, supported literacy development and social/emotional learning of youth through the Street Smarts program, and boast annual events including

- Neighborhood Clean Up
- Back to School Block Party
- Standing Together for Our Community
- Shakespeare in Fremont Park - partnership with Notre Dame

We are now working with neighbors from the farthest west neighborhoods including LaSalle Area, Kennedy Park, and LaSalle Park to align our work in order to benefit the entire west side. Our focus now is implementing activities that will make sure affordable housing is available to current residents so that they can remain through the revitalization that is coming to the west side. The work that we do will ensure development without displacement so that our legacy residents do not suffer the same fate as so many communities of color decimated by gentrification across the country. By working together and organizing residents, we empower ourselves to drive the revitalization of our own neighborhoods.

The Far Northwest Neighborhood Association has been on the forefront of advocacy for investment in the west side neighborhoods since the City's attention turned to the problem of vacant and abandoned houses that littered our community. The Meade St. Project grew out of our desire to provide affordable housing while building in a way to ensure our work is sustainable, that is, the association is not depended upon city support year after year.

Project Description: The proposal is to utilize three vacant lots on the Far Northwest Side to build a duplex for low-to-moderate income families. The house will be located at 1725 N Meade Street in the Far Northwest neighborhood. The duplex will be offered on land contract to one family and the other unit will be rented out to another family.

The goal of this program is to continue home revitalization efforts in the Far Northwest neighborhood by creating beautiful and affordable housing for low- to moderate- income families but also increase our self-sufficiency. The association will provide one family with an opportunity to progress towards homeownership while at the same time, the additional unit will generate revenue to create a revolving loan fund that will support additional residents with home repairs.

